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Great Utopian and Dystopian Works of Literature

Course Guidebook

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Disclaimer

This course contains discussions of sexuality and graphic violence. It may not be suitable for all audiences.

Great Utopian and Dystopian Works of Literature

The dream of a better society—a better place—did not begin with Sir Thomas More's 1516 work, *Utopia*. But the paradoxical term *utopia*, which suggests that the perfect place is no place, did begin a literary movement that encompasses some of the most compelling, chilling, and hopeful works of fiction that have been written over the past 500 years.

This series of lectures is arranged chronologically to address several questions that underlie our study of utopian and dystopian fiction: To what degree does historical context shape the features of an imagined perfect society? Or, do humans have an innate notion of what would constitute a perfect society that transcends time and place? Can literature impact the course of history? What are the stakes and possible impacts of writing a utopia that provides a blueprint for a better place or of writing a dystopia that provides a cautionary tale about the possible trajectory of contemporary society? Why do both utopias and dystopias so often combine humor with earnestness?

Beginning with More's foundational *Utopia*, the course traces early utopian imaginings across Europe and pauses to consider the satirical extremes explored by Jonathan Swift and Voltaire. The course then moves to the 19th century, with its rich offering of utopian masterpieces, like those of American Transcendentalists like Hawthorne and Alcott, through those of English and American Victorians like Samuel Butler and Edward Bellamy. Considering the late-19th-century backdrop of a new popular literature developed in the penny dreadfuls and the dime novels, the course then examines the move of utopia into the world of science fiction, where, by the 20th century, writers more often present the nightmare worlds of dystopia than peaceful images of utopia.

The 20th century, with its rich interchange of utopian and dystopian impulses, and its interest in the complex relationships between individual and social identities, is the focus of much of the course. In addition to literary and film classics like *Brave New World*, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and *A Clockwork Orange*, the couse examines works by feminist science fiction writers like Ursula K. Le Guin, Margaret Atwood, and Octavia Butler, as well as contemporary young adult literature including *The Hunger Games*, *Little Brother*, and *Feed*.

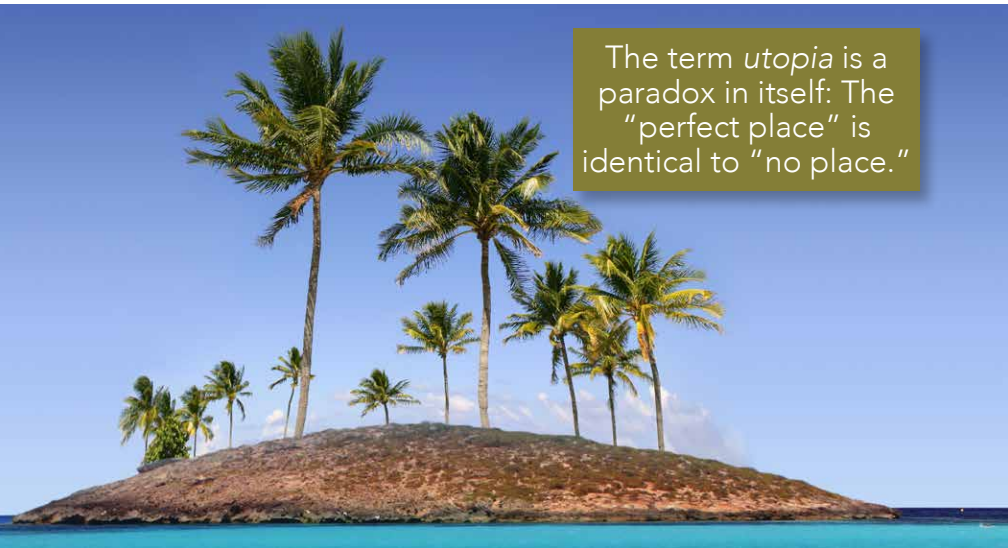
By examining a wide range of literary works extending from the peaceful to the nightmarish, and from the conservative to the subversive, you will come to understand the enormous variety of visions writers from the past five centuries have created in order to conceptualize what a better world might look like. Aimed at all kinds of audiences, from children through philosophers, utopian and dystopian literature provides an ideal space to consider some of the issues most important to writers and literary scholars. What does it mean to be human? How can we balance questions of freedom and security, and of stability and creativity?

Works of utopia and dystopia, often so different in their emphasis, all suggest a central truth about human nature: We have an innate drive towards optimism and toward imagining a better world. Even when we are sharing visions of horrific, even post-apocalyptic worlds, we sense that no matter what happens, we will not only survive, but thrive.

LECTURE 1

Utopia: The Perfect Nowhere

Long before Thomas More's *Utopia* was published in 1516, and in the 500 years since, humans have tried to find a shared understanding of what a perfect society might look like and how it could be achieved. And although the term *utopia* doesn't get us there—it tells us that it's impossible to get there, in fact—it nonetheless provides a rich philosophical and literary space for thinking about, if not a perfect place, at least a better place.



The term *utopia* is a paradox in itself: The "perfect place" is identical to "no place."

A Story

- We'll open this course with a summary of a story from 1973, written by Ursula K. Le Guin. It's called "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas."

- The story opens on a festival in the city of Omelas. The festival is joyous, and the first-person narrator immediately assures us that although this might sound kind of childish, it isn't. The reason: In Omelas, happiness is possible because the people believe in it.

- "The trouble," the narrator tells us, "is that we have a bad habit, encouraged by pedants and sophisticates, of considering happiness as something rather stupid. Only pain is intellectual, only evil interesting." When Le Guin's narrator says that we tend to devalue happiness, the more cynical among us will agree and go one step further: We have good reason to devalue happiness—war, sickness, loss of loved ones.

- So, what's making the people of Omelas so happy? The narrator says it can't really be described. Certainly Omelas doesn't have clergy, slavery, or soldiers. But otherwise, it's best for each reader to imagine it for her or himself.

- Eventually, we get all the details when the narrator takes us into a small, locked, windowless room in the basement of one of the grandest, most beautiful public buildings in all of Omelas.

- In the basement lives a child—a small, neglected, undernourished, naked child covered in sores from sitting in its own excrement. The child could be a boy or a girl and looks 6 years old but is actually closer to 10.

- The child remembers its mother's voice and the sunlight from before, but now lives in abject wretchedness. The child is terrified of the two mops that are leaned up against the wall in the corner of the tiny room.

- The people of Omelas know the child is there. The narrator tells us: "They all know that it has to be there. Some of them understand why, and some do not, but they all understand that their happiness, the beauty of their city, the tenderness of their friendships, the health of their children, the wisdom of their scholars, the skill of their makers, even the abundance of their harvest and the kindly weathers of their skies, depend wholly on this child's abominable misery."

- It's a paradox that answers the happiness question the cynical among us might have had at the opening of the story. The paradox can be read in two ways. First, the only people who can live in a utopia are those who understand that their happiness is built on someone else's misery. Or second, the only way to be able to even conceptualize happiness is to see its opposite: abjection.

- The story ends with a reflection on the construction and ethics of knowledge. The narrator explains that everyone in Omelas is told about the hopeless child in the broom closet when they are about the same age as the child: 8 to 12 years old. Most people rage impotently on the child's behalf at first, but then they come to accept the situation. That's the price of a well-functioning society, of a happy populace.

- The ending isn't about the happy, understanding utopians, though. It's about the outliers, the people who simply can't assimilate the knowledge of the sacrifice into their psyche. Here are the final lines of the story:

> They leave Omelas, they walk ahead into the darkness, and they do not come back. The place they go towards is a place even less imaginable to most of us than the city of happiness. I cannot describe it at all. It is possible that it does not exist. But they seem to know where they are going, the ones who walk away from Omelas.

Omelas as a Blueprint

- There's a way to see the story of Omelas as a blueprint for a utopian story. Here's a breakdown of its parts.
  - Part 1: Describe the perfect society. Or, in this case, note that you don't want to participate in that convention; Le Guin doesn't get into the details of the society in Omelas, but she points to the convention, telling the reader that it's their job to fill in whatever features they like best.
  - Part 2: Consider the cost. This is a common trope, too. We see what looks like a perfect society, and then find out that it's supported by something not so perfect: the sacrificial child.
  - Part 3: Describe the impact. A utopia is almost always described from the outside, usually by a visitor who stands in for the reader in learning about the features of the society. In the tale of Omelas the first-person narrator acts as a tour guide with no particular identity of her or his own. The visitor *is* the reader.
- As we are told about the ones who walk away from Omelas, the reader is forced to confront two questions: Would you stay or go? And what happens to the ones who walk away?
- The first question is, perhaps, one of the most important questions in not only utopian studies but in speculative fiction. Speculative fiction provides us an avenue to imagine different worlds, different times, different species, alternative histories—all, really, for the purpose of pushing the boundaries to a question literature always asks us to confront: Who am I as an individual?
- The second question provides us another lens, another mirror into our understanding of ourselves as individuals and as a community. Four options come to mind regarding what happens to those who walk away:

1. They walked away until they found a better place. This is the optimist's view, since it suggests there is a better place and it's worth looking for.

2. They walked away and they're still looking for a better place. This is the idealist's view, assuming that it's better to be seeking a better place than compromising your ethics.

3. They walked away, didn't find a better place, and returned to Omelas. This could be the cynic's view or the realist's view.

4. Walking away actually means suicide. Look at the quotation: "The place they go towards is a place even less imaginable to most of us than the city of happiness." That place could be seen as death.

- Though it can be tempting to latch onto the bleak, final option, this course suggests that utopia and dystopia are both, fundamentally, about hope. In this course, we'll examine some of the best works of utopian and dystopian fiction from the past two centuries, and we'll think about how those texts prepare us to look forward, into the future.

Genre: Formula

- Within literary studies, we have three basic definitions of genre. Shorthand, they are formula, marketing, and rhetoric. Formula covers the idea that a genre includes many formulas or conventions, and if we pick up a work in a stated genre, we know what to expect.

- Within a genre, there are constitutive features—things that a narrative must include to be considered part of the genre—as well as common conventions—features that appear often but not always.

- In utopian works, what are the constitutive features? Well, first, we need a place. *Utopia* literally means "no place." Early utopias were often set in isolated places on Earth—on islands or behind

gated communities. In the late 19th century, the utopia moves from exploring a society in a different place to exploring a society in a different time. Sometimes people call that a *euchronia*.

- A second feature: A utopia needs to include a high-functioning society that certainly isn't perfect, but that seeks perfection and is at least in some ways better than the society of the reader and writer.

- Third, we need to have a way to see the utopia. So, one of the most common conventions is the visitor trope: A visitor acts as a liaison between the reader and the utopian community. In many cases, it's actually three visitors who can provide three different perspectives on the society.

- Finally, a work of utopia must be aware of its own contradictions. There is no way to set up a perfect society, so the enterprise is always doomed even from its beginning. Yet, many of us think it's an important enterprise despite that.

- "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas" fits these genre requirements. It has a totally separate society, located in a specific place. The visitor/narrator tells us society is functioning at a high level. The story's told in the second person, which makes the reader the visitor. And the story is aware of its own paradoxes. The story does contain some of the main features of utopia, but it also plays with them enough that it creates an original take on an established genre.

Genre: Marketing

- The second approach to genre is its practical application: marketing. If we were to design a bookstore from scratch, we would use genre as a way to organize our products. A bookstore or library—real or virtual—would have a fairly small utopia section. We might put it near politics or philosophy or self-help.

- Right next to the utopia section would probably be a much larger dystopia section. People interested in a better world are quite probably also interested in a worse world. The tones might be different, but the cautionary message is the same.

Genre: Rhetoric

- The third approach to genre is the most complex, and the one we'll spend the most time with throughout the course: the rhetorical approach to genre. Carolyn Miller's widely used definition explains that genre is "typified rhetorical actions based in recurrent situations."

- This means that a genre develops in response to a specific situation, a specific problem or anxiety in the world. The genre, with its recognizable conventions, is a way of addressing or responding to that anxiety.

- Under this framework, utopia and dystopia represent two different rhetorical responses, often to the same social anxiety. Let's take technology as an example. Utopia is one rhetorical response; it would describe a society in a different place or time in which technology is less present, less terrifying, or both. Rhetorically, it functions as a blueprint: We can solve this problem if we take these certain steps.

- Dystopia is a different rhetorical response: It describes a society in which our fears have become reality. Rhetorically, it functions as a cautionary tale: Don't take these steps or this terrible reality will happen.

- A story like "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas" is valuable to utopian and dystopian critics alike because it allows the reader to determine whether it is a utopia or a dystopia. At the same time, it suggests that perhaps these two are not mutually exclusive.

- One theory is that "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas" is really all about fear—the fear that human nature is fundamentally flawed. This course will spend much time discussing fear. But in the end, although utopia and dystopia are both partly about fear, they're mostly about hope.

SUGGESTED READING

Le Guin, "The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas."
More, *Utopia*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Versions of the word *utopia* appear in many places. What is the power of this term? How is it generally understood in popular culture? Does thinking about it as a literary term change the way you might see its use in marketing?

2. How do you read the ending of "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas?"

3. What do you see as the rhetorical potential of the utopian genre? Do you think it's possible to conceive of a truly perfect society? If not, how do you explain so many writers over the past five centuries trying to do so?

LECTURE 2

Thomas More and Utopian Origins

Known to some as Sir Thomas More and to others as Saint Thomas More, the author of 1516's *Utopia*—and inventor of the word *utopia* itself—lived from 1478 to 1535. He was a man of great conviction, deep Catholic faith, and remarkable rhetorical skill. It's not often possible to trace the origins of an entire literary genre back to a single work, but there's an argument to be made that we can do that with *Utopia*. This lecture traces and studies the structure and impact of *Utopia*.

Thomas More

- More was, by training, a lawyer and a social philosopher. He had studied all the Greek philosophers. His *Utopia* speaks back, especially, to Plato's *Republic*. The *Republic*, written in approximately 380 B.C., is widely considered to be the first written text to thoroughly describe what we might call a utopian society.

- The *Republic* is not a novel. It's completely abstract, talking about the possibility of a better society as just that: an intellectual exercise.

Thomas More, a devout Catholic, disapproved of King Henry VIII's divorce. He was eventually charged with treason and executed in 1535.

- More's book isn't a novel either, but it's a lot closer to one: It has somewhat concrete characters, a setting (the island of Utopia), and was reasonably accessible to a 1516 audience. It was written in Latin, using the conversational, everyday prose of a well-educated Renaissance man.

Utopia

- *Utopia* doesn't have a plot exactly, but the philosophy is framed as a conversation, and we as a reader have a point of identification. This means that although we are presented with a clear argument about how to get to a better society (imitate the beautiful island of Utopia!), there's enough irony throughout the text that the reader is left to wrestle with figuring out what does and doesn't make sense in this society.

- We tend to think of More's book as containing a detailed description of a fictional island, but that's just book 1. There's actually a long introduction before we get to the island, and there we see the establishment of two conventions common to utopian literature: the frame narrative and the use of meaningful, allusional names.

Book 1

- Book 1 is written in Socratic dialogue, a common form of the day and one in which Thomas More was especially adept.

- The characters taking part have interesting names. Take Raphael Hythloday. Raphael, of course, is a biblical name, and the archangel Raphael is associated with healing and protection. Hythloday, by contrast, is a Greek compound that means "expert at nonsense." His name suggests earnestness and nonsense, which gives us a good introduction to the paradoxes of this text.

- Hythloday is talking to a man named Thomas Morus, a character with a Latin version of the author's name. Note that Thomas Morus the character has some views that are in sharp contrast to those of Thomas More, author and cleric.

- Their talk is on the following subject: Should resources be held by the king and distributed at his will? Or should resources be equally distributed among the people?

- At first, Hythloday argues that the king can maintain control through a tight control of resources, a position associated with Aristotle's *Politics*. But then, he immediately argues a different approach, one more closely tied to Thomas More speaking in his own person: A king should fundamentally control resources but keeping people poor only leads to rebellion and unrest.

- There's no agreement at the end of book 1, as is typical of both philosophical dialogues and of utopias. So, in book 1, we see three major conventions for utopian literature: the use of a frame narrative, the introduction of complex ironies that make it hard to pin down the author's real-world opinion, and the use of evocative names.

Book 2

- Book 2 sets up at least three more conventions of utopian literature: the relationship between the fictional and real world, the focus on the didactic over the narrative, and a set of clear prescriptions (although these might be undercut) for setting up a better society.

- *Utopia* connects the fictional and the real. Though it's shaped like a crescent moon, the island of Utopia bears striking similarities to England. Utopia has 54 city-states, with one, Amaurot, serving as the city in which much of the centralization of the society occurs.

- England isn't shaped like a crescent, but it's almost exactly the same size as the island of Utopia. Furthermore, it had, at the time, 53 counties plus London, similar to Utopia's 54 city-states.

- Despite all the levels of framing in *Utopia*, the text as a whole seems to encourage utopian dreaming. This leads us to another convention: the balance of the narrative and the didactic, with an emphasis on the didactic. The narrative is the story or the plot. The didactic is what the reader will actually learn from the text.

The Economy

- Most utopias address five topics: economy, government, crime, relations with the outside world, and religion.

- In *Utopia*, the island of Utopia basically has a functioning communist economy. Hythloday tells Morus the good people of Utopia work only six hours per day and yet they have everything they need for a fulfilling life. How is this accomplished when in Renaissance England, a roughly equivalent island, millions of people live in destitution?

- First, there is no money in Utopia. There's no need, since all goods are centrally held, to be drawn by citizens as needed. The Utopians also have huge stores of coins and rare jewels, even though they disdain these. They adorn their slaves and convicts with jewelry, just to ensure that citizens internalize the belief that these items are of no value whatsoever. (We'll come back to slaves shortly.)

- The second reason for Utopia's great wealth is that the entire population works. As Hythloday says in part, "You will easily appreciate … how large a part of the population in other countries exists without doing any work at all." Here's the footnote that the translators—George Logan and Robert Adams—included on that statement:

> A strange statement, in view of the fact that women had the same, or heavier, domestic duties in the sixteenth century as in the twentieth. In Utopia, they are responsible for some at least of these duties—cooking, childcare—in addition to practicing a craft and taking their turn at

> farm work. Small problems, such as who does the laundry, who cleans the house, who tends the garden, are solved by the simple expedient of not mentioning them.

- Hythloday does address the question of who produces food, explaining that each citizen spends some time learning agriculture. But citizens do not participate in one central agrarian act: the slaughter of animals. The butchery of animals is performed by the slaves.

- Hythloday initially tells Morus that each citizen labors only six hours per day due to efficiencies created by women in the labor force and by citizens' genuine engagement with their work, but that doesn't fully explain it. In addition to slaughtering animals, slaves "do all the particularly dirty and heavy chores." That explains quite a bit.

- Interestingly, Hythloday and Morus discuss the pragmatics of slavery, but not the ethics. Hythloday explains the rules:

> The Utopians keep as slaves only prisoners taken in wars fought by the Utopians themselves. The children of slaves are not born into slavery, nor are any slaves imported from foreign countries. Most are either their own citizens, enslaved for some heinous offence, or else foreigners who had been condemned to death in their own land.

Crimes and Government

- The discussion of slavery quickly turns to a discussion of two topics that may at first seem unrelated: marriage customs and criminal justice. Premarital sex is strictly forbidden, bringing shame to the household of offenders and a prohibition to ever marry. Unless the offender is pardoned by the prince, a common exception within Utopian criminal law.

- The Utopians have much more gender equity than do the English of the period. Brides are not used as objects of exchange to cement political or economic ties between two families. Instead, potential brides, like potential grooms, have the option of refusing a mate.

- In Utopia, adultery is the only crime that carries a fixed penalty: the strictest form of slavery for a first offense and death for a second. For all other crimes, there's a nuanced approach, with the senate listening to the facts—straight from the offender, as there are no lawyers in Utopia.

The Outside World

- Hythloday is not favorable in his account of the Utopians' decision to avoid treaties with other nations, saying that this practice comes from the fact that treaties are often badly kept. If the Utopians lived in England, Raphael Hythloday assures Thomas Morus, they would "doubtless … change their mind."

- How do the treaty-free Utopians deal with the outside world? Fortunately for them, they don't have to deal with it much. The island is pretty isolated, so the Utopians don't have to interact with other nations on a daily basis. They have few conflicts, and when they do, they tend to rely on sanctions rather than violence.

- In the rare case that they are attacked or that a friendly nation has been wronged, they respond pragmatically. First, they try to buy their way out of conflict. If forced, they raise a volunteer army. Women are as welcome on the battlefield as men.

- But the Utopians are a peaceful people, so they have few volunteer soldiers. Because of their great wealth, they usually hire soldiers to represent them in wars. After a war, the Utopians act with compassion and rationality, never burning crops or ravaging enemy territory.

Religion

- Hythloday tells us the Utopians have a wide variety of religious beliefs and practices. Although some Utopians are pantheists, most of them believe in a god not identical to—but not incompatible with—Christianity's God.

- As soon as Hythloday and his crew tell the Utopians about Christ, they're on board. Maybe there was something mystical about the conversion to Christianity of many Utopians, Hythloday speculates, imagining a possible "secret inspiration of God." More likely, though, the Utopians are attracted to Christianity because "Christ encouraged his disciplines to practice community of goods, and that among the truest groups of Christians, the practice still prevails." There's quite a lot to unpack there, and it's all in line with the paradoxical complexity inherent in the very practice of utopian thinking.

- First, there's a praise of Christianity in the account of so many of the happy, rational Utopians embracing it as soon as they hear of it. There's also a critique of modern Christian practice implied by the reminder that Christ (in the book of Acts) told his disciples to share their goods in what amounts to a communist practice.

- This is not how Renaissance Christians distributed resources, so readers could see this passage as an example of More being subversive, criticizing contemporary doctrinal interpretations used to justify inequity.

What the Book Does

- This book, to a remarkable extent, set the conventions for the modern utopian genre. It provides carefully elaborated details of the social, political, economic, and religious dimensions of a fully functioning society.

- At the same time, it includes a built-in critique of the very idea of utopia, largely through the frame narrative. Book 1 sets us up to be skeptical of book 2's detailed descriptions.

- At the very end of book 2, we go back to Thomas Morus, reflecting briefly on Hythloday's account of the island. Morus tells the reader that he sees many of the Utopian customs and laws as "absurd," especially the communal living and the moneyless economy.

- And yet, here's how book 2 ends: "I freely confess that in the Utopian commonwealth there are many features that in our own societies I would like rather than expect to see."

SUGGESTED READING

Hesiod, *Works and Days*.
More, *Utopia*. 1516.
Plato, *Republic*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1 To what degree can More's *Utopia* be considered a precursor to the genre of utopia? Is his greatest influence on utopian literature in the coining of the term *utopia* or in the conventions he sets up?

2 Why do you think More's utopian society is set on an island? Do you think it's just to clarify that Utopia can be read as another (better) version of England? Or do you think there's a sense that a perfect society is by nature isolated, geographically and perhaps in other ways, from other nations?

3 How do you read the use of slaves in *Utopia*? Is one person's (citizen's) utopia always inherently another person's (slave's) dystopia?

LECTURE 3

Swift, Voltaire, and Utopian Satire

After the appearance of Thomas More's *Utopia* in 1516, people didn't immediately start writing texts that doubled down on More's vision. Actually, things happened pretty slowly. But the early decades of the 17th century, right in the midst of the scientific revolution, included an enormous optimism about the potentials of science alongside a deep anxiety about how science might challenge religion. And the 18th century saw the rise of the satirical utopia, sometimes called the anti-utopia. Those are the focus of this lecture, which will look at two of the most famous satirical utopias: Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, from 1726, and Voltaire's *Candide*, from 1759.

Why Do We Laugh?

- We'll start with an old question: Why do we laugh? The best answers are all somewhat imperfect, perhaps because laughter is by its very nature ephemeral, involuntary, and often difficult to interpret. There are four general explanations: incongruity, superiority, community, and disruption.

- Incongruity is probably the most familiar. Laughter is often an instinctual response to seeing something in the wrong place, the wrong time, or the wrong situation.

- The laughter of superiority often has the purpose of making someone else feel small, to demean another perspective. But it can also be the laugh of defense against the bully: the laugh of a potential victim refusing to accept victimhood by laughing back.

- Likewise, the laugh of community, where shared laughter creates bonds between individuals, does not necessarily belong to the least powerful. Shared laughter provides social cohesion that can help groups bond for whatever task is at hand. At the same time, community humor can be closely linked with superiority, as when a community becomes an insider group that constructs others as outsiders.

- The laughter of disruption comes out of fairly new postmodern work on humor. For instance, Diane Davis, a scholar of rhetoric, believes laughter has the potential to destroy an idea or a shared belief, forcing us to replace it with something else.

Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*

- The 18th-century satirist Jonathan Swift is perhaps best known for his essay "A Modest Proposal," in which he suggests that the destitute Irish might raise funds by selling their children as food for the wealthy. *Gulliver's Travels* isn't quite that dark or angry, but it isn't exactly a walk in the park either.

- This book is narrated by Lemuel Gulliver, a family man who loves the sea and visits four extremely strange lands. Names matter in this book, and there's some disagreement even about the name Gulliver. Are we supposed to look down at him from the start because his name is so close to *gullible*? Are we supposed to sympathize with him as he goes through quite horrific adventures with apparent equanimity? Or are we supposed to question our own gullible natures in paying attention to anything this obvious fabricator tells us?

- The first two places Gulliver visits are in some sense mirror images of each other: Lilliput and Brobdingnag. Just saying "Brobdingnag" aloud lets the reader know that she is being mocked a bit, since the wondrous places in this book are not easy to say.

- In Lilliput and Brobdingnag, Gulliver meets creatures who are exactly like humans except for their size, as the Lilliputians are only six inches tall, making him a terrifying giant. The inhabitants of Brobdingnag, on the other hand, are 72 feet tall with appropriately sized surroundings, making poor tiny Gulliver nothing but a curiosity.

- Some of the laughs are based on incongruity: Gulliver is charged with treason in Lilliput when there is a terrible fire in the queen's quarters and he puts it out by urinating on it. In Brobdingnag,

on the other hand, he is traumatized when he is placed astride a giant woman's nipple. (That is a case of both incongruous and uncomfortable laughter).

- Clearly, the reader is being mocked. But we also may experience the book quite viscerally. There's pathos here, after all. In Lilliput, Gulliver becomes hyper-aware of his body, as he must think of every little movement he makes lest he inadvertently crush one of the tiny Lilliputians. In Brobdingnag, on the other hand, Gulliver is the tiny one whose body is always in danger, making the reader aware of his constant peril.

- Book 3, which narrates Gulliver's visits to the fantastic flying island of Laputa and its surroundings, continues the theme we'll see again in *Candide*. That theme is the satirizing of the everyday lives and customs of Europeans, focusing especially on the over-reliance on scientific teaching and the obsession with death. In Glubbdubdrib, Gulliver meets a necromancer, and in neighboring Luggnagg, he learns of the rare *struldbrugs*, or immortals.

- After painting an enthusiastic portrait of the pleasures and productivities he expects to encounter in these unusual humans, Gulliver finds out that immortality is the worst of curses. The *struldbrugs* do not stay young and healthy and use their limitless time to become captains of industry, as Gulliver has imagined. They age normally, but are never afforded the sweet release of death.

- In book 4, the incongruity is less exaggerated, so there is, perhaps, a movement between the laughter of superiority (at Gulliver) to the laughter of community (as Europeans united by silly customs).

- It is not until book 4 that we get the laughter of disruption, and maybe that's why it's my favorite book of Swift's wild travelogue: the journey to meet the Houyhnhnms. The Houyhnhnms, according to Gulliver, are creatures wonderful beyond compare. They are talking horses.

- They are plagued by only one thing: the Yahoos, humanoid creatures who lack language, dignity, and any social graces. The satire becomes particularly explosive when the Houyhnhnms, trying to imagine what they might do to keep the Yahoo pests under control, recall a strange cruelty Gulliver has shared with them regarding how humans treat horses: castrate most of the males before they reach adulthood.

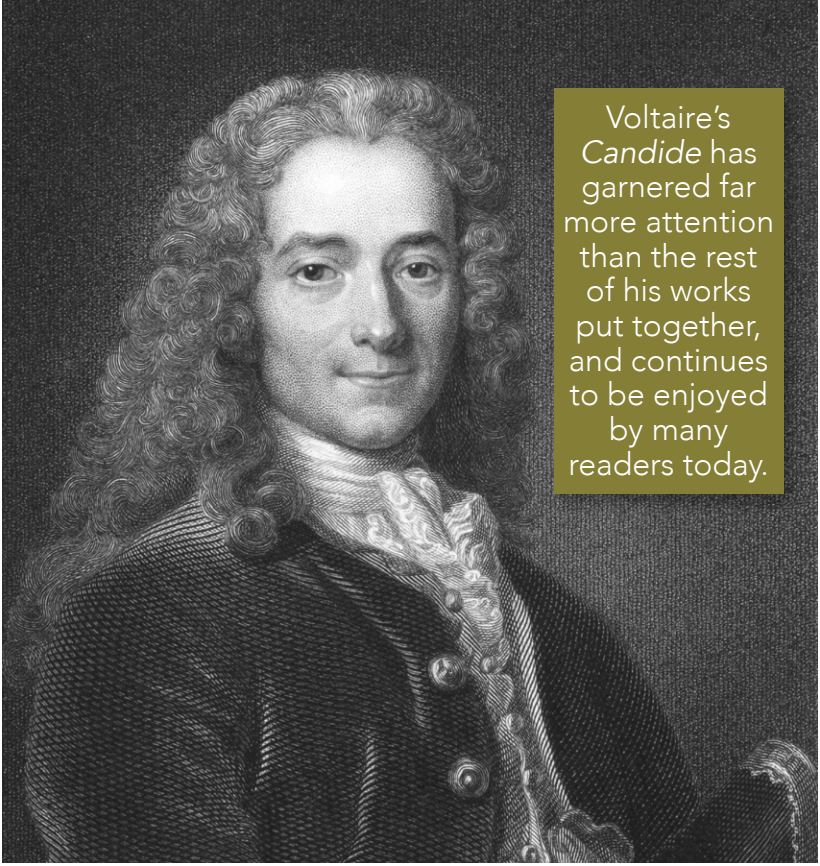
- Eventually, Gulliver is forced to return to Europe, since the Houyhnhnms ultimately see him as unworthy of sharing their utopian community because of his resemblance to the Yahoos. Back in England, Gulliver is miserable, realizing that his interactions with a utopia have done nothing more than make him unable to appreciate what little he has.

- Even as we laugh at Gulliver and his outlandish tale of talking horses, who are, perhaps, no more unlikely than More's happy Utopians, we may feel the same philosophical pressure as when we laugh uncomfortably at Swift's recipes for preparing Irish babies as sustenance for the wealthy. Can we really accept that humans are unutterably corrupt and cannot be transformed? Doesn't the very act of writing utopia—even satirical utopia—suggest a kind of disruptive optimism?

Voltaire's *Candide*

- François-Marie Arouet, known simply as Voltaire, was already well known as one of the great wits of Europe when he wrote *Candide* at age 64. He wrote this very short novel in order to satirize the then-popular philosophy of optimism, whose key proponents were English writer Alexander Pope and German mathematician Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz.

- The protagonist is Candide, a young man who lives in Germany on the estate of Baron Thunder-ten-tronckh. Candide, whose name at the time meant *gullible* in French, is desperately in love with



Cunégonde, the baron's daughter. The real-life Saint Cunégonde was a virgin martyr whose chastity would be in stark contrast to the worldliness of Candide's love interest.

- Candide's beloved tutor is Pangloss, a philosopher who teaches "metaphysico-theologo-cosmolo-nigology." *Pangloss* is a Greek compound; *pan* means "all" and *gloss* means "tongue," making "all tongue" or "all talk."

- In some sense, the novel makes the same joke over and over again: Horrible things happen to optimistic people, and yet they refuse to change their worldview to take the new information into account.

- In the opening chapter, Cunégonde and Candide kiss in the garden, and Candide's life will never be the same again. The baron throws him out, and he is immediately kidnapped and pressed into military service, where he is beaten to within an inch of life before participating in a major battle between the Bulgars and the Abares. In the midst of death and destruction on a massive scale, Candide escapes.

- As Candide experiences more than his fair share of violations, as he loses everyone he's ever cared about to various executions and slaughters, and as he witnesses horrors throughout the world, this young man continues to miss his tutor, Dr. Pangloss. Pangloss is the great believer in optimism, the man who knew without a doubt that this was the best world in the best of times.

- So, what kind of laughter does this evoke? There's an element of incongruity, certainly, as the narrator's matter-of-fact tone is in constant contrast to the pathos of the scenes he describes. More prominently, though, Voltaire's novel evokes the laughter of superiority. The reader can see how utterly absurd it is for Candide to maintain his optimism.

- But that's not quite all. Candide and his servant Cacambo travel through 13 lands in all. Eldorado is the seventh, or middle one. In each land before Eldorado, Candide expects to find a utopian society and is is sorely disappointed by the cruelty and corruption he finds instead.

- Eldorado is the exception. Candide and Cacambo reach Eldorado quite by chance, as they miraculously survive a 24-hour journey down a raging river until they reach this community, where resources are abundant and conflict is unknown.

- Faced with unlimited gold, silver, and gems, shared amongst all the people, Candide realizes something: Wealth is irrelevant unless it's compared to poverty. Having access to all the gold in the world is meaningless unless he can show it to the people back in Europe.

- And that's largely why Candide and his servant leave the utopian world of Eldorado. Candide says he misses Cunégonde and Cacambo says he misses the many European women he has known, but that's a pale motive for leaving paradise. The two Europeans leave with one hundred Eldoradan sheep, each heaped to excess with riches. Most of the sheep, of course, are lost through various misadventures, so our hero has no more proof of utopia than does any traveler who claims to have seen paradise.

- But Candide visits six more places (Surinam, France, England, Venice, Constantinople, and the Propontis shore), now accompanied by a true pessimist named Martin. His extreme pessimism is shown to be just as ludicrous as Pangloss's optimism.

- That brings us to the novel's conclusion. Here's the interpretive dilemma: Candide is foolish to continue along in the world with his optimism, but in some ways, he's also right. Everyone he thought was dead reappears alive and relatively well at novel's end. He is reunited with Cunégonde.

- Pangloss, of course, is just as annoying to the reader as ever, but Candide is happy to see him and to find him well. The little troupe of characters settles on a farm, where everyone does work to which he or she is suited, and life goes on.

SUGGESTED READING

Andreae, *Christianopolis.*
Anonymous, *Antangil.*
Bacon, *New Atlantis.*
Campanella, *The City of the Sun.*
Swift, *Gulliver's Travels.*
Voltaire, *Candide.*

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Swift's and Voltaire's novels clearly enter into conversation with the genre of utopia, but there is lots of debate about whether it's productive to consider them utopias, perhaps satirical utopias. What do you think? What is gained and/or lost by including them in the utopian canon, insofar as a utopian canon exists?

2. Which theory of laughter seems most relevant to the study of utopia? Reading is often an individual activity, while laughter is more often shared. To what degree do Swift and Voltaire make readers actually erupt into laughter? Do you think that laughter impacts what readers get out of these texts?

LECTURE 4

American Dreamers: Hawthorne and Alcott

The 19th century was an amazing time for technology, for literature, and for thought itself. It was the century of the utopia. According to Lyman Tower Sargent, one of the luminaries of utopian studies, there were about three times as many utopias written in the 19th century as were written in all the centuries before. This was the century when American literature became truly distinct from its European counterpart, through early storytellers like Washington Irving and Nathaniel Hawthorne; Transcendental philosophers like Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau; and women who made their livings with their pens, like Harriet Beecher Stowe and Louisa May Alcott.

Walden

- Imagine living in an austere cabin by a lake for two years in the mid-19th century. According to the book *Walden*, published in 1854, Henry David Thoreau found this experience as invigorating as it was enlightening. Technically, *Walden* is not a utopia. But it is crucial to understanding utopian thinking in America, especially in the 19th century.

- The Transcendentalists did not write utopian novels per se. But even *Walden*, with its focus on individualism and self-reliance, which seem in some ways the opposite of utopian, comes out of a place of deep optimism that shares much with more traditional utopian imaginings.

Communities and Influencers

- Between 1825 and 1860, there were almost a hundred planned utopian communities in the United States that tried to provide an alternative to mainstream 19th-century life, which was starting to bustle whether you lived in a rural or urban area.

- Some of these communities were religiously based, like those run by the Quakers, and many were non-denominational, like those based on the big European utopian socialist philosophers.

- Two utopian socialists were especially influential in America. Robert Owen, a Welshman, was an industrialist who eventually moved to the United States to set up the utopian community of New Harmony in Indiana. His commitment to treating all workers within a factory town with dignity and respect was central to other American utopian communities of the 1820s.

- The planned communities of the 1840s owed more of their philosophical underpinnings to Charles Fourier. Fourier's basic premise may have been sound: It's that humans would do well to deliberately plan communities instead of letting cities grow organically and often inefficiently.

- The problem, of course, is that his model, like most planned-community models, assumes that all community members will be equally willing to contribute their earnest labor to the utopian project. Fourier's plans for his utopian communities were very detailed. So detailed, in fact, that Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, "Fourier skipped no fact but one, namely life."

- Fourier identified 810 basic personality types. He envisioned a world in which each planned community would include 1,620 people, two of each personality type. Human life expectancy would increase to 144 years. And new docile animals like "anti-lions" would emerge.

- Fourier sounds more than just a little eccentric in his utopian imaginings. Perhaps unsurprisingly, he had trouble finding investors to build his communities. But he had three major ideas that appealed to many early-19th-century thinkers and social reformers:
  1. He thought about social problems from a sociological rather than a moral perspective.

  2. He didn't reject the advances of the Industrial Revolution; he just wanted the benefits of industrialized labor to go to the workers rather than the industrialists.

  3. He believed in universal reform that was all about equality—across class, race, and gender.

Brook Farm

- Brook Farm, also known as the Brook Farm Institute of Agriculture and Education, was founded by the Unitarian minister George Ripley and his wife Sophia in 1841. Located in West Roxbury, Massachusetts, it was technically a joint stock company of which members could purchase shares.

- Ripley wanted to promote a more wholesome life and the combination of intellectual and manual labor. These goals are very much in keeping with the philosophies Ralph Waldo Emerson, a good friend of Ripley's, laid out as he became the face of American Transcendentalism in the 1830s and 1840s. He published famous essays like "Nature," "Self-Reliance," and the deeply poetic prose piece, "The Over-Soul."

- Brook Farm operated from 1841 to 1846. It started as a Transcendentalist community before adopting, in its last three years, a limited Fourier approach (without the 1,620 members or the 810 personality types).

- As it shifted towards Fourierism, some changes occurred. For one, the farm made a profit for the first time. It began to attract more tradespeople. It also became viewed even more suspiciously as a bastion of licentiousness, since Fourier was quite famously a proponent of free love.

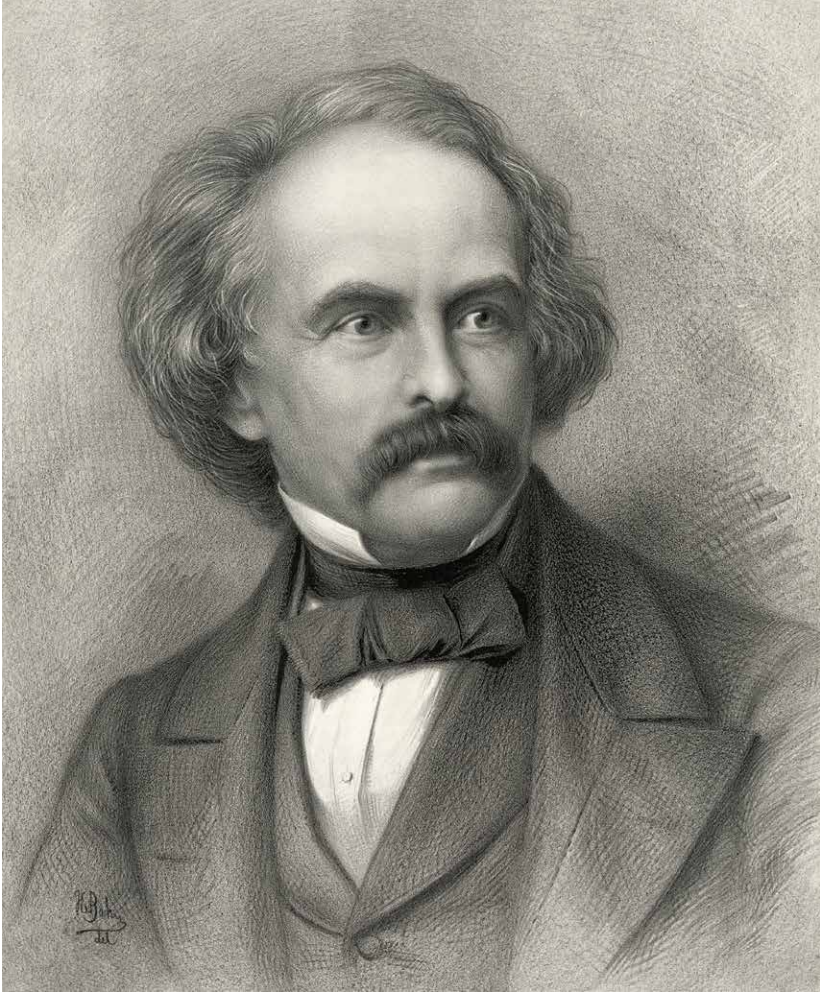
- As the community members became increasingly invested in their project, they began building a Fourier-style phalanstery, or communal living space. Unfortunately, the partially constructed edifice caught fire in 1847; no one was injured, but the fire effectively brought an end to not only the new Fourierism, but to the Brook Farm project.

Hawthorne

- Nathaniel Hawthorne was a founding member of Brook Farm and one of its co-directors of agriculture. Hawthorne is best known for his novel of Puritan scandal, *The Scarlet Letter*, and for his gothic short story "Young Goodman Brown." Hawthorne also published, in 1852, *The Blithedale Romance*, which is based in part on his experiences—and his deep reservations—about Brook Farm and the utopian project it represented.

- *The Blithedale Romance* isn't a utopia in the classic sense. However, Hawthorne only wrote four novels, and this one is set in a utopian planned community. It's of interest to utopian scholars.

- Hawthorne gives us a first-person narrator named Miles Coverdale, a handsome Boston poet who is taking a break from his privileged life of leisure and socializing. Coverdale joins a planned community



The Blithedale Romance, by Nathaniel Hawthorne, suggests that contemporary urban life leaves a lot of people empty, and the solutions to that problem are not to be found in utopian communities or utopian writings.

called Blithedale, which is based on Brook Farm. Myles Coverdale is the name of a historical figure, the author of the first complete translation of the Bible into English.

- On his first evening, the character Coverdale finds a spring snowstorm. And as he reflects on that snow, he realizes that in the city the snow looks almost dingy, but in its rural form, it is pure. He also meets people who seem pure, too: Silas, the weather-worn farmer; Hollingsworth, a charismatic visionary obsessed with prison reform; and Zenobia, a strong, vivacious woman.

- Coverdale goes through a lengthy illness, but eventually recovers from this experience. He takes up farming and is transformed, becoming fit and almost brawny with the hard physical labor.

- Coverdale, Hollingsworth, Priscilla, and Zenobia make an odd foursome, with explicit erotic entanglements, although these are never quite unraveled. Eventually Coverdale leaves Blithedale and returns to Boston.

- Now everything is different for him, although certainly it is not better. He has uncovered the identity of a character called the Veiled Lady, who in his former life represented a corrupted access to spirituality. He has flirted with various relationship possibilities and has gone back to his bachelor life. He no longer writes poetry.

- He concludes that utopia is a great project, if you can believe in it. He can't, and wishes he could.

Fruitlands

- Coverdale's idea is addressed by the other, very different, American semi-utopia we'll look at in this lecture. This one is based on Fruitlands. Founded in 1843 by a small group of earnest utopians affiliated with the Latter-day Saints, it was based on typical philosophical underpinnings of the time: Society corrupts,

money-based economy alienates, nature is to be respected rather than exploited, and self-fulfillment comes from self-reliance and independence.

- Fruitlands was a small community. Its founders were extreme in their practices, which included strict vegetarianism, a refusal to participate in the money-based economy, and a division of labor in which members found their own preferred tasks. Those who preferred to spend their time in deep thought were permitted to do so.

- This small community, which survived only seven months, was unable to make it through its first New England winter. It was founded by Charles Lane and Amos Bronson Alcott, father of the famous writer of *Little Women*, Louisa May Alcott.

- Alcott wrote a short story about her adventures as a child in this community that she published in *The Independent*, a New York newspaper, in 1873. She called it "Transcendental Wild Oats: A Chapter from an Unwritten Romance." Alcott provides a feminist, satirical look at Fruitlands, mocking the utopian enterprise as well as the types of people (especially the men) attracted to planned communities.

- "Transcendental Wild Oats" lays its cards on the table from the opening, describing a small horse being driven by a man who doesn't really know how to drive it. He's accompanied by a child on his knee, a boy holding a bust of Socrates, and an "energetic-looking woman."

- The energetic woman's name happens to be Hope. The narrator says she's full of hope and courage, and we can see from the start that she's going to need it. The group arrives, eventually, to the dilapidated farmhouse where they are planning to plant crops and support themselves, all without using animal labor or products.

- The learned men are completely confident in their strong philosophical stances: against meat, but without any alternate source of protein; against leather, but with no other suggestions

for how to make shoes; and against money, but with nothing else to barter for the many many necessities they can't produce in their community.

- Hope, the practical woman who actually knows how to get things done, nods agreeably and does her best to keep everyone fed and somewhat clothed (although one of the members does prefer nudity). In the end, predictably, the enterprise—in the short story as in real life—goes belly up.

- The father who was so delighted by the inaccessible farmhouse in the spring almost dies in the fall, refusing to talk or eat, because he sees no way out of starvation for himself and his family. But Hope's practicality wins out, and she arranges for the family to move into a rental home and return to employment in the corrupt world of a typical New England village.

- F.O. Matthiessen, one of the great mid-20th-century scholars of American literature, identified six writers as central to the American Renaissance. Those writers were Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman, Hawthorne, Melville, and Stowe. For this discussion, and because she was important to popular literature, we're going to add Alcott to this list.

- Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman were Transcendentalists through and through, with their deep faith in humanity. We can see them as representing the earnest side of utopia.

- Hawthorne, Melville, Stowe, and Alcott, on the other hand, were skeptics. For instance, Hawthorne recognized the darkness in human nature that made a utopian community impossible, and the utopian longings of Melville's characters are always undercut with the dark side: Ishmael's romantic musings are checked by the real dangers under the surface of the sea.

- Stowe is also a naysayer as she debunks the romantic plantation myth of the South. Alcott's own skepticism is evident in "Transcendental Wild Oats."

- There's an elegant "doubleness" to the balance of idealism and skepticism we find in the major American writers of the 1840s and 1850s, a balance that reminds us of what Robert Elliott calls the "shape" of utopia—the idea that the very project of utopia has an inherent doubleness that includes optimism and satire.

SUGGESTED READING

Alcott, "Transcendental Wild Oats."
Hawthorne, *The Blithedale Romance*.
Thoreau, *Walden*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1 What do you see as the relationship between utopian literature and intentional communities? Why did 19th-century America see such an interest in both?

2 What do scholars of 19th-century American literature gain by thinking of Hawthorne's *The Blithedale Romance* as interacting with the genre of utopia even though it certainly isn't a literary utopia itself?

3 Why does utopian writing so often include humor, as in Alcott's "Transcendental Wild Oats?" Is this just a cynical acknowledgement that utopia is always an inherently unachievable end? Or does humor provide a productive space for critique and transgression?

LECTURE 5

Samuel Butler and Utopian Technologies

In 1870, an Englishman named Samuel Butler wrote a rather innovative and unusual novel after returning home from a stint in New Zealand as a sheep farmer. When this gentleman brought the manuscript around to various publishers in 1871, they turned him down. But fortunately for him, Butler tried again seven months later with very different results. This time, the book, *Erewhon*, whose title is an unsubtle anagram of *nowhere*, was picked up—by one of the publishing houses that had turned him down the first time.

Genre Fiction

- What brought on *Erewhon*'s 1871 publication? Genre fiction. The middle of the century saw the birth of genre fiction as part of a new publishing industry that included very cheap fiction—the penny dreadfuls in England and the dime novels in the U.S.—as well as an increasingly profitable middle-brow press, which is where Butler published. In those seven intervening months, a particular subgenre had gained considerable success.

- Sometimes called the hollow-Earth novels, these books were largely imitators of *The Coming Race* by Lord Edward Bulwer-Lytton. It introduced a resurgence of utopian novels with its introduction of a hidden subterranean society.

- These books speak to a Victorian anxiety about the vanishing frontier. By the 1870s, there weren't too many unmapped places left on the globe. There were only the subterranean, the maritime, and the aerial, all spaces that were becoming increasingly explored in science fiction.

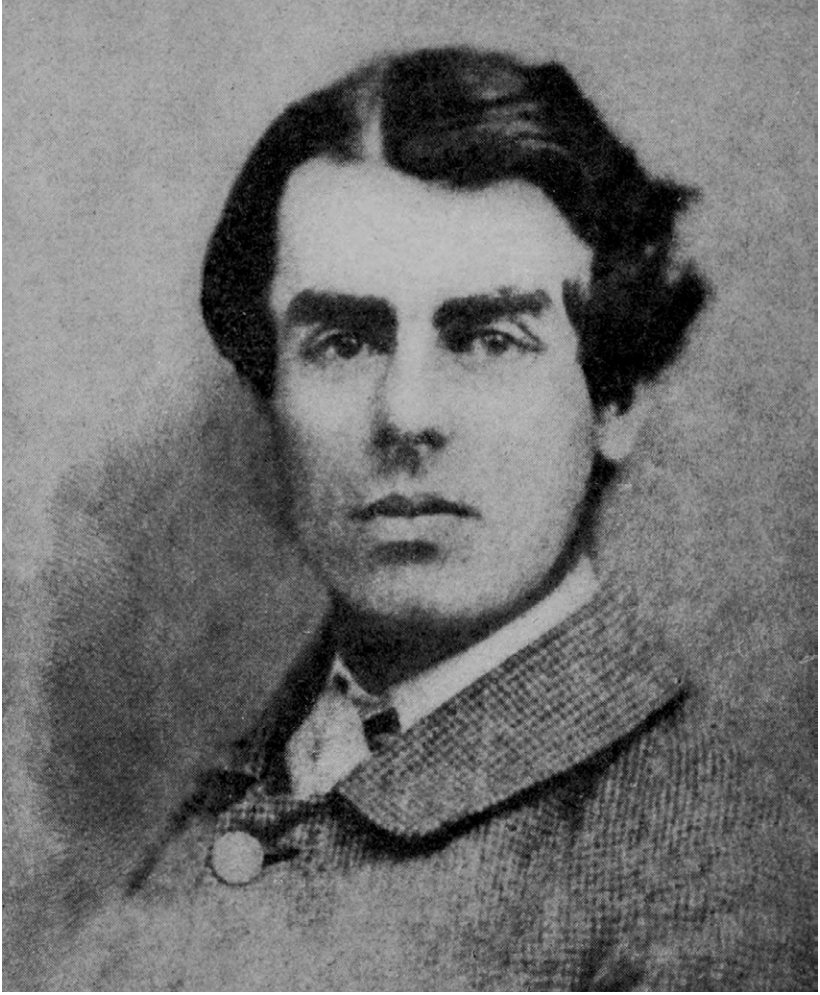
- *Erewhon*, in fact, isn't a hollow-Earth novel. It's set on a large lush tract of land located beyond a mountain pass in an unmapped space. There's something a little nostalgic about this setting, something that makes clear that the myth of idyllic expansion that had long driven colonialism was still at least partially alive. The book was popular and remains so to this day.

The Society

- The narrator of *Erewhon* is Higgs, who does not reveal the location of this adventure, but does explain that he has been sheep farming in a colony. The savvy reader might notice that the terrain looks a lot like New Zealand, especially when we know that Butler was a sheep farmer there.

- Higgs is an intrepid young man who, once the shearing is done, goes exploring in the company of an alcoholic aboriginal guide named Chowbok. Eventually, they reach what Chowbok says is a forbidden valley, and the aborigine deserts the explorer in terror.

- Higgs is unperturbed. Traveling alone, Higgs builds a raft and makes a difficult river crossing before climbing up to a mountain pass where he is faced with something awesome and horrifying: a ring of 10 giant statues through which the wind blows, creating an eerie melody that he has heard Chowbok perform.



Erewhon, by Samuel Butler, has a long philosophical treatise stuck in the middle that provides two opposing models for thinking about the relationship between man and machine.

- Faced with these statues, Higgs faints. It is common in utopian stories for a character entering an unknown society to experience a real or symbolic near-death experience and thus a rebirth that opens up the narrator's perspectives as they prepares to see utopia.

Religion in Erewhon

- When he recovers, Higgs walks into Erewhon, where the people are gorgeous and healthy. The land is lush and productive. And the social norms are interesting. There are many social norms to choose from in thinking about exactly how Butler constructs his satire, but we'll focus on three: religion, health, and education, in that order.

- Perhaps the first fully developed satirical moment in the novel comes when Higgs looks upon the fine people of Erewhon and wonders where in the world they came from. He thinks they "might be the lost ten tribes of Israel," and that he might be the instrument of their conversion.

- Since Higgs, whom we know as a first-person narrator, never thinks about God except with regards to converting the heathens, and he never shows any signs of being particularly pious, he can be read as a clear jab at Hythloday's instant conversion of the Utopians.

- Hythloday was able to convert the Utopians almost instantaneously, perhaps in part because their communism was in keeping with Christ's teachings, so it wasn't that big a leap for them. Butler may well be making fun of Morus's unquestioning acceptance of the notion that a group of people living in a perfect society will happily adopt a new religion. He might also be critiquing Christianity as justification for what is fundamentally an economic scheme.

- Erewhon has two religious movements, both containing substantial humor: the Musical Banks and the goddess Ydgrun. The Musical Banks are the official churches of Erewhon. Higgs visits the Musical Banks with great interest, only to find that they are mostly empty, completely respected by lip-service, but in actual fact considered old, empty institutions.

- Higgs also learns that many Erewhonians worship the goddess Ydgrun. The name Ydgrun is an anagram for Grundy, as in Mrs. Grundy, from an 18th-century play, a namesake for hypocrisy and prudery. Ydgrun is the goddess that Erewhonians aren't supposed to care about, but that most of them actually worship secretly.

Health in Erewhon

- In Erewhon, people face punishment for having a physical ailment—jail time or even, in the case of incurable or chronic conditions, execution. If a person commits a crime, on the other hand, they get medical attention and sympathy from friends and family.

- The Erewhonians are just as surprised to hear about European approaches to health and crime as Higgs is to learn about theirs. They explain that there are physicians living secretly among them and these aren't actively prosecuted; after all, it's understandable that people would want to hide their illnesses to avoid punishment and might even abet family members in doing so.

- But if doctors were allowed to "become frequent visitors in every household," one of the Erewhonians explains to Higgs, "their organization and their intimate acquaintance with all family secrets would give them a power, both social and political, which nothing could resist."

- The issue of eugenics will never be far from our explorations of utopia as we move forward chronologically. The Erewhonians seem to practice negative eugenics (the idea of limiting reproduction by the less fit) but not positive eugenics (the idea of encouraging reproduction in the more fit).

Education in Erewhon

- A promising young Erewhonian would attend one of the Colleges of Unreason, which nurture scholars in the advanced study of hypotheticals as well as the basic disciplines of inconsistency and evasion.

- Higgs is told—but absolutely refuses to accept—that the problem with reason is that it "betrays men into the drawing of hard and fast lines, and to the defining by language—language being like the sun, which rears and then scorches."

- The idea that reason justifies the human tendency to see the world in black and white contains perils that are, for the Erewhonians, very real. Take, for example, the issue of vegetarianism. Centuries before, a major thinker made a decree that animals are intelligent creatures and should thus not be killed. It was considered fine to eat the meat of animals that had died of natural causes, including suicide, which led to "suicidal mania" among many animals.

- Things continued on in this absurd way until another person came along and made another argument: Vegetables are intelligent creatures too. The result? The Erewhonians stopped worrying about eating intelligent creatures, since they certainly couldn't survive with neither animal nor vegetable substance.

Book of the Machines

- The big difference between Europe and Erewhon is laid out in the famous Erewhonian *Book of the Machines*, a large chunk of which is included verbatim in Butler's novel. It's the Erewhonians' most important philosophical tome.

- The topic of machines comes up when Higgs arrives in the hidden society. The very first people he meets bristle at his having a watch. Once Higgs reads *Book of the Machines*, he learns exactly why the Erewhonians have ceased to use most mechanical tools. They have instead preserved them as a cautionary tale in a technology museum, where, incidentally, they place his watch.

- The Erewhonians believe in the possibility of machine consciousness. *Book of the Machines* provides two possible arguments about the future of machines, and both of these are still relevant today.

- The first is that machines will eventually become an extension of the humans that have built them, like an extra limb that increases efficiency. The second is that the humans will eventually become an extension or appendage of the machines they have built—nothing but a pet to the far superior machine race.

- Higgs provides much of *Book of the Machines* unfiltered, allowing the reader to interact with the philosophy directly. We get direct access to the argument that machines have the potential to develop intelligence using Darwinian selection.

- We are still having this conversation today. In 2015, Vernor Vinge, a contemporary science fiction writer, suggested that technology is changing so fast that the humans of the future will think of us as having the cognitive abilities of goldfish.

- For Vinge and others, computers have the possibility of changing our brains, changing the way we think, and changing the very essence of what it means to be human—to the point that humans in their current form won't even recognize humans in their future form. For some that is not an exciting thought.

- Butler wasn't personally anti-machine; he invested the money he earned in New Zealand in machine tool production. But he clearly thought it was worth thinking about the future of technology in conceptualizing human futures more broadly.

- What were Europeans, in 1872, to do about the prospect that machines might one day become the dominant species, relegating humans to the role of appendage? They were to read about a fantastic utopian society that acted upon a fear of technology.

- Erewhon was a society whose members chose to turn their backs on machines. They were utterly illogical and perhaps even immoral. They were eugenicists in their treatment of physical disability as a possible weakness in the species that had to be eradicated. This was a society from which our narrator escaped by hot-air balloon.

- Readers of *Erewhon* were treated to an engaging novel with all the expected features of utopia—the thought experiment about what a perfect society would look like, the utopian society's satirical analysis of weaknesses in the reader's society, and the weaknesses of the utopian society unnoticed by the narrator but perhaps noticed by the reader.

SUGGESTED READING

Bulwer-Lytton, *The Coming Race*.
Butler, "Darwin Among the Machines."
———, *Erewhon*.
———, *Erewhon Revisited*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. To what degree do you think Butler's notion about the threat of machines was prescient? Is there a possibility of machine intelligence actually evolving? Should machines be seen as an appendage to humans, or vice versa?

2. *Erewhon* often gets compared to *Gulliver's Travels*, since both present satirical utopias for English consumption. In what ways do you think they differ most? To what degree does each read as a period piece or as a timeless story?

3. What do you think the hot air balloon at the end of *Erewhon* represents? How do you think the Erewhonians would understand the balloon? (Your answer might change based on whether or not you've read *Erewhon Revisited*.) How might readers understand it?

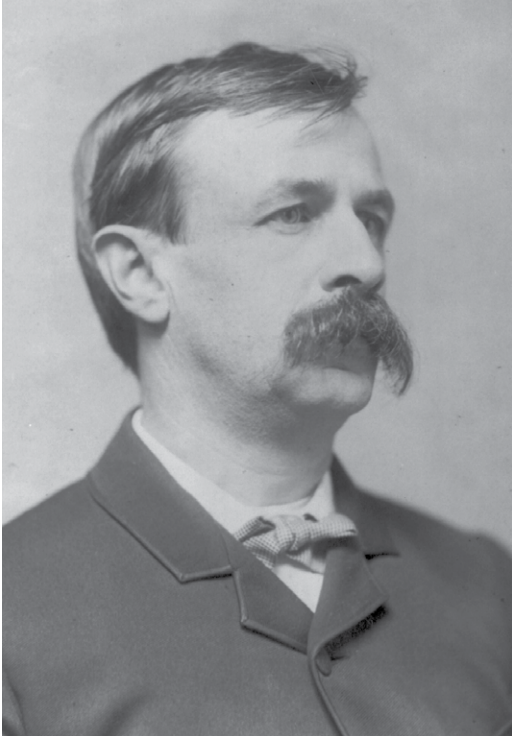
LECTURE 6

Edward Bellamy and Utopian Activism

How much does literature matter? There's no doubt that literature can matter a lot to the individual. Individuals can be changed by reading stories and can become aware of issues or problems because of a novel. But what about at a larger level? Can literature really change a society? This lecture will see if Edward Bellamy's 1888 utopia, *Looking Backward*, can provide an answer. In particular, the lecture will focus on Bellamy's powerful use of metaphors.

Looking Backward

- Whether we think Bellamy's novel had an impact on the real world or not, we know for sure that it was very widely purchased and read. There is some debate, but most historians think this book was behind only the Bible and *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 19th-century American book sales.



Edward Bellamy started out writing a social fantasy rather than a blueprint for political change, but he got involved in political writing and activism with *Looking Backward*'s unexpected popularity.

- This wasn't just a book that people read at home and then put on a shelf. This was a book that lots of people read in Nationalist Clubs, specialized book clubs that focused on actualizing the utopian ideas put forward in Bellamy's book. There were at least 150 Bellamy clubs in America in the 1880s and 1890s.

- The clubs were associated with a number of magazines, including *The Nationalist* and *The New Nation*. These periodicals discussed various aspects of nationalizing industry, which is the main thrust of Bellamy's utopian society.

- Three features make Bellamy's novel a true contender as a literary work with real-world impact: euchronia, provocative metaphors, and explicit engagement with "the woman question."

Time and Place

- *Looking Backward* is technically a euchronia, meaning that it's set in a different time rather than a different place. It's set in Boston. The main character, Julian Best, goes into a mesmeric sleep one night in 1887 and wakes up in the Boston of the year 2000, not having aged a day. There he meets a doctor, the doctor's wife, and the doctor's beautiful daughter.

- Future Boston has none of the rampant poverty, crime, or inequality that plagued the Boston of Victorian America. This suggests that there's a certain political energy to a euchronia: If you can sell a vision of the future to readers, they may be moved to act.

- The euchronia also gives the novel a fair bit of narrative momentum. When we have a visitor who has arrived by ship, we can imagine that he might also leave by ship. But mesmeric time travel? We can't guess how that's going to end.

Metaphors

- The second reason this novel was so popular is its powerful metaphors. On the surface, metaphors are figurative language: a comparison that doesn't use *like* or *as*. But they're much more. The scholars George Lakoff and Mark Johnson give dozens of examples of extended metaphors, where the language from one concept appears in the language describing another concept.

- Take, for example, the phrase "time is money." The way we talk about time in English is based on that central metaphorical entailment, where we "spend time" or "save time" or think of time as having value.

- Bellamy uses two different kinds of metaphors in *Looking Backward*, some clearly figurative and some more embedded. Both kinds have the power to change our perspective on central social issues.

- In this lecture, we'll look at five of Bellamy's metaphors. Three are figurative: the prodigious stagecoach, the private umbrella, and the rosebush in the swamp. Two are more embedded: the industrial army and credit cards.

The Prodigious Stagecoach

- The prodigious stagecoach is perhaps the most famous of Bellamy's provocative metaphors. It appears in the opening pages of the novel, when Julian, newly arrived in the year 2000, compares society in the Gilded Age to "a prodigious coach which the masses of humanity were harnessed to and dragged toilsomely along a very hilly and sandy road."

- The folks on top of the stagecoach, he explains, were very comfortable physically and morally. They never thought about getting off to help those below, since they didn't want to lose their seat. So they called out encouragement to the masses who were pulling the coach when the road got particularly steep. Mostly, they just enjoyed the view.

- Once Julian gets to know the good people of utopian future Boston, he realizes the "incredible inhumanity" of his day. He does have two explanations, though he fully recognizes these are not excuses.
  - First, this is the only way people knew that a society could function.

  - Second, the people at the top somehow thought that they were different from the people at the bottom—that they were made of better stuff. He quickly comes to describe this last as a "singular hallucination," a "delusion."

- We can see an updated version of this metaphor in the enormous train at the center of the critically acclaimed 2013 film *Snowpiercer*.

The Private Umbrella

- The private umbrella metaphor is funny and whimsical, but it also has much potential to open up conversation. One day Julian goes out for dinner with his hosts. A terrible rainstorm begins and Julian realizes no one has brought galoshes or umbrellas.

- This isn't a problem because an ingenious system of sidewalk coverings is launched and the crowd goes about its business as usual. Dr. Leete says that, "in the nineteenth century, when it rained, the people of Boston put up three hundred thousand umbrellas over as many heads, and in the twentieth century they put up one umbrella over all the heads."

- It's easy to imagine people discussing the metaphor: Is the private umbrella a good example of our insularity? Would it make more sense to create a shared public umbrella than to each have small, flimsy umbrellas that we don't always carry with us?

The Industrial Army

- We find a more socially embedded metaphor in the main economic driver of utopian Boston: the industrial army. In this euchronia, work is conceptualized in military terms, with ranks and promotions and 24 years of mandatory military service.

- Julian asks disbelieving questions: How do you get all men to join this industrial army for such a long time? Who makes decisions in this army? And why 24 years?

- This isn't a dangerous army, Dr. Leete explains. A man's service in the industrial army is his professional life. In the year 2000, everyone has access to excellent education, and uses this access to acquire basic knowledge of all kinds and to pursue areas of special interest.

- No one works until age 21, and everyone is discharged from the Army at age 45. And the work hours aren't onerous at all—often only four hours per day. Contrast that with the 1880s, when most workers had a 60-hour workweek and child labor law enforcement was lax.

- The industrial army is hierarchical, Dr. Leete explains. Every man does menial labor for a few years, and then moves on to different kinds of jobs as he gains more experience in his chosen field.
  - Many people sort themselves into appropriate categories of work just based on their personal interests and aptitudes. And with excellent education, many people have multiple interests and will apply to different areas of work at different times in their short work lives.

  - But some jobs are inherently difficult and unpleasant, like mining. The nation counters this with hours: Those choosing unpleasant jobs work way fewer hours than everyone else.

  - In Bellamy's book, the phrase "time is money" is literalized. The pay is the hours, since everyone gets the exact same share of the national product. If you work in an occupation that attracts a lot of potential workers, you work longer hours, which causes some of those potential workers to choose different occupations with shorter hours.

The Credit Card

- Bellamy imagines a moneyless economy, just like Thomas More and many earlier utopians did, but he recognizes the need for an economic system that tracks individual spending.

- In the year 2000, a credit card is issued yearly to every citizen, and everyone gets the same number of credits for the year to spend as they'd like. The bureaucracy is fairly simple, since there's only one supplier—the nation.

- Unused credits are simply discarded at the end of the year when the new credits are given out. And the reason Boston is so impressively beautified in the year 2000 is that unused resources are spent towards the common good: making public spaces as pleasant and delightful as possible.

The Rosebush in the Swamp

- The idea of a credit economy in which everyone has an equal share is shocking to Julian. The idea that Julian didn't see it coming is equally shocking to Dr. Leete. Dr. Leete is short on details of exactly how the bloodless revolution was accomplished, but he does provide a metaphor: the rosebush in the swamp.

- Human nature is like the rosebush, he explains. "Innumerable generations of gardeners had done their best to make it bloom," Dr. Leete says, "but beyond an occasional half-opened bud with a worm at the heart, their efforts had been unsuccessful.

- The gardeners/moral philosophers struggled with this rosebush for a very long time until there came a period of "general despondency," and with it the idea of transplanting the bush out of the swamp. With transplantation into nationalism, humans in Boston and all over the world began to achieve their full potential, as a society and as individuals.

The "Woman Question"

- Eventually the time comes for Julian to ask a crucial question: What about women? Dr. Leete explains women are part of the industrial army too. But it's a different industrial army, segregated from the men's army. Its leaders are elected by the alumni, up to a female general-in-chief. To be eligible for that highest office, a woman must be both a wife and a mother.

- Women also possess credit cards. The place of women in Bellamy's future would surely have been much discussed at Bellamy clubs, since there was much overlap between political activists and feminists; Bellamy himself was well known as a male feminist.

- From a 21st-century perspective, he's pretty conservative in his vision of women of the future, who have separate professional streams within the industrial army that mean they aren't eligible for the head position (equivalent to president of the United States).

- But Bellamy's avoidance of radical feminist changes in his utopian vision may have been very well calculated. Nineteenth-century feminists, just like feminists today, had lots of different ideas about women's rights. By including some form of equality for women, including payment for domestic work and childrearing, Bellamy opens up his utopia for women readers.

- But he also leaves plenty of space for feminists to discuss how some of their most pressing issues would be handled in the future, like temperance, women's fashion, and women's health.

The Book's Impact

- It's hard to look at *Looking Backward* and say that this novel had tremendous real-world impacts. Modern-day America does not resemble the Boston Bellamy describes.

- But still, young people reading this novel over a century after its publication find it interesting and relevant, especially the conversations Julian and Dr. Leete have about income and wealth disparity.

- Maybe that's evidence that utopian literature does not have an impact: We're still having the same conversations. Or maybe those are conversations we wouldn't be having in quite the same way without the literature that points out some of the issues that need to be considered in imagining a better future.

SUGGESTED READING

Bellamy, *Equality.*
———, *Looking Backward.*
Morris, *News from Nowhere.*

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. To what degree do you think literature can make a difference in an individual's attitudes and identities? What about in a society's approach to a question or problem?

2. What's the difference between a utopia and a euchronia? Which do you think is more compelling for readers, and why?

3. Which of Bellamy's many powerful metaphors (the prodigious stagecoach, the private umbrella, the industrial army, the credit card, and the rosebush in the swamp) is most productive for thinking about new approaches to dealing with income equality?

4. Do we have any groups like Bellamy clubs today?

LECTURE 7

H. G. Wells and Utopian Science Fiction

Herbert George Wells, usually known as H. G. Wells, followed up on the potential tapped into by Samuel Butler in *Erewhon*: to use utopia as a space for exploring the possible futures of technology. Most of Wells's novels fit broadly within the genre of science fiction, and many contain utopian or dystopian overtones. Wells is the perfect writer to help us ask questions that come up in the late 19th century: What is the impact of placing utopian imaginings within the context of science fiction? And, relatedly, is there a way to see utopia as being inherently part of the science fiction project?

Defining Science Fiction

- Science fiction might be the genre fiction with the most contentious set of definitions. Below are two representative definitions.

- The author Damon Knight's definition from 1952 is famous, or maybe infamous: "Science fiction is what we point to when we say it." This may sound like a copout, but he's right: There's a very broad range of texts that we consider science fiction. That's partly because there's a very broad range of disciplines that we consider

science—from natural sciences like physics, chemistry and biology, to applied sciences like engineering and medicine, to social sciences like sociology, psychology, and economics.

- The critic Darko Suvin's definition from 1972 continues to be highly respected and discussed: Science fiction is "a literary genre whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition, and whose main formal device is an imaginative framework alternative to the author's empirical environment."

- When we're reading or watching sci-fi, many of us enjoy the fact that we're thinking hard and learning, all because we're presented with something unfamiliar—what Suvin calls "an imaginative framework alternative to the author's empirical environment."

- Is that also true of utopia? We'll take a look at two of Wells's most acclaimed novels in considering that question: *The Time Machine*, from 1895, and *A Modern Utopia*, from 1905.

The Time Machine: Time Travel

- In thinking about *The Time Machine*, we're going to look especially at what happens to utopia when we engage fictionally with three different topics in science: time travel, the scientific method, and evolution.

- *The Time Machine* is a euchronia, like Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, in which the visitor to the utopia is going to a different time instead of a different place. In Wells's hands, the time travel isn't mysterious or supernatural; it's a result of technology. The main character, known only as the Time Traveler, has built a time machine that allows him to travel forward and backward in time.

- The frame for the utopia is that, one night at a weekly dinner of scientific-minded friends, the traveler gives a lecture on time as the fourth dimension. The Time Traveler tells his companions about

this wonderful machine one day, and one week later he tells them he's just back from a voyage through time in which he witnessed an intriguing future.

- What's the impact of giving a scientific explanation for the euchronia instead of just leaving it as an unexplained phenomenon of the Rip Van Winkle or Edward Bellamy persuasion? It connects the genres, repositioning utopia within science fiction. It also provides us with a scientist as a main character, which becomes important to how the utopia works.

- On a rhetorical level, the gap removes the story from the realm of political activism. There is nothing we can do right now to impact a future over 800,000 years away.

The Time Machine: The Scientific Method

- The Time Traveler is a scientist, and as such, he uses the scientific method and tells his story with all the hypotheses showing. He explains that when he first arrives in the future, he finds a society of beings called the Eloi—small, elegant humans who appear to live a happy, egalitarian lifestyle in which they do very little labor.

- He initially imagines they are alone in their utopian communities and that their general lack of curiosity about him and his machine results from the comfort of their well-balanced, relatively static life. This is hypothesis 1.

- Eventually he learns that the Eloi are not alone in their world. They live aboveground. But beneath the ground lives another fully developed society, the Morlocks. They are sensitive to light and look almost like apes. They have machinery, just like the new subways of London, critics have noted.

- And all that machinery—all that energy and labor beneath the surface—makes possible the passive, enlightened lifestyle of the Eloi. Hypothesis 2: the Eloi (the leisure class) subjugate the Morlocks (the working class). That hypothesis fits into turn-of-the-century thinking quite nicely.

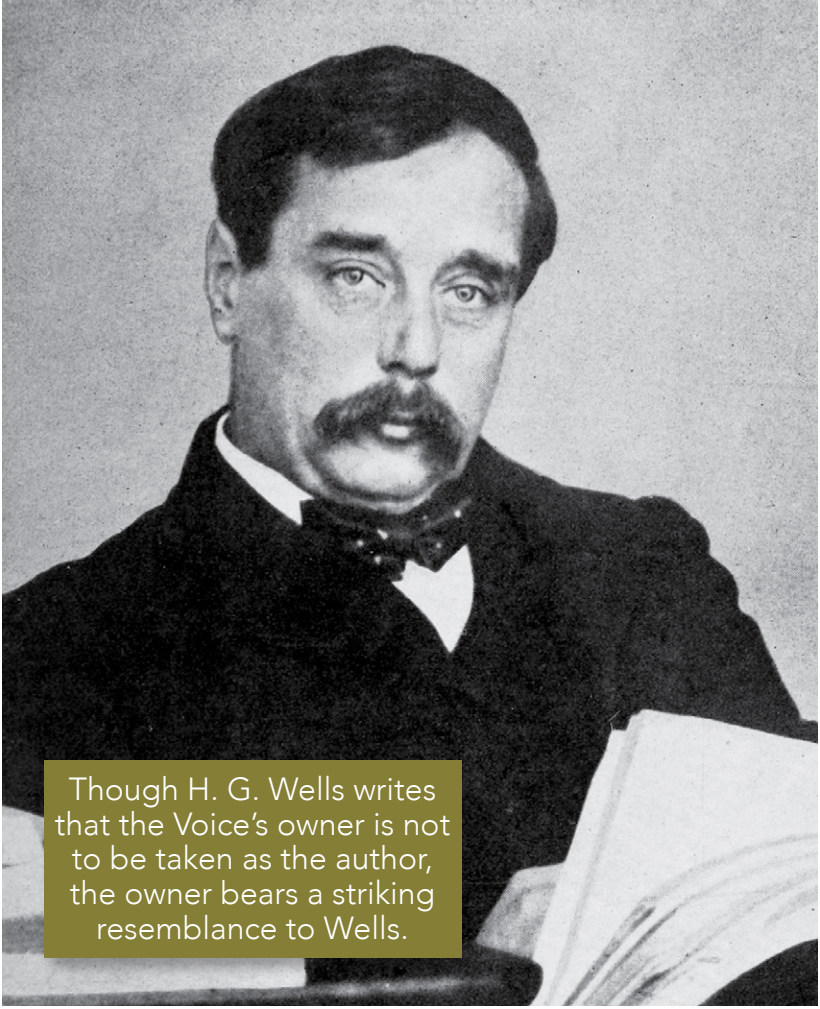
- As the Time Traveler explores underground trying to figure out how to get back his time machine, which the Morlocks have appropriated, he questions his second hypothesis. The Eloi certainly don't act like masters and the Morlocks, except for their day-blindness, don't act like slaves, which brings him to hypothesis 3: the Eloi and Morlocks are in conflict with one another, and perhaps on the brink of a war.

- It isn't until quite late in the story that the Time Traveler realizes what is actually going on. Hypothesis 4: the Morlocks and the Eloi live in a symbiotic relationship, but it isn't one of master and slave; it's one of consumer and consumed. It is the Morlocks who control the Eloi, basically treating them as cattle, fattening them up so they can eventually devour them.

- We could see the Time Traveler's hypotheses as a metacritical commentary on the development of utopian literature, where at first utopia is located on an island, in what is basically isolation from other societies. But then, we realize that there is a cost to the highly functioning society, like the slaves of More's Utopia or the sacrifice of technology in Samuel Butler's *Erewhon*. And then, eventually, we realize that the people we think are living in a utopia may in fact be living in a dystopia.

A Modern Utopia

- If *The Time Machine* is in some sense a metacritical commentary on utopia, it certainly isn't the only one Wells wrote. *A Modern Utopia*, his 1905 "novel," certainly fits the bill. This is a strange book: It's not quite science fictoin, not quite utopia (despite the title), and not quite a novel.



Though H. G. Wells writes that the Voice's owner is not to be taken as the author, the owner bears a striking resemblance to Wells.

- This is a book much devoted to the concept of doubles. The book opens with a two-page segment called "The Owner of the Voice," which begins "There are works, and this is one of them, that are best begun with a portrait of the author."

- Wells goes on to say "Now this Voice … is not to be taken as the Voice of the ostensible author who fathers these pages." But then he describes the Voice's owner as a "whitish plump man" with

many other features that Wells himself possesses: slight baldness on the crown, agile movements, a convex front, and blue eyes. So where does this self-portrait leave us?

- The Voice isn't just a double for the author. It's also a double for the narrator, who tells us of a utopian society with pretty typical features of a modern liberal society.

- The narrator is the one who actually visits the utopia. He visits with an acquaintance he refers to only as the Botanist. The Botanist acts as a kind of opposing double, so that each time the narrator finds a new feature of utopia, the Botanist comes in and complains about said feature.

- The utopian setting itself is based on doubling. It's set in a parallel world, on a planet just like Earth, except utopian. On this planet, there is a version—a double—of each person currently living on Earth.

- That provides the main impetus of the story: the narrator's quest for his utopian double. The Botanist, true to character, continues to pine for his true love, who had no interest in him on Earth and, the reader imagines, will be equally uninterested on utopian Earth.

- What does this doubling down on doubles accomplish? First, it speaks to late-19th-century scientific trends, especially in the fields of psychology and statistics, which were starting to set up research projects with experimental and control groups, including twin studies.

- Second, the doubling within the text speaks to the doubling within the genre, to the idea that utopia as a genre is always both fiction and philosophy. It also always contains two societies, implicitly or explicitly: the utopian society and contemporary society.

- In Wells's utopia, there's a premium on travel, and the people of the parallel planet are migratory, regularly visiting and even moving to new places on their planet.

- Women are considered equal, and motherhood is subsidized by the state. People need to earn over a specified amount in order to marry. The modern utopia is racially diverse. Residential areas are in temperate zones, with children growing up in comfortable and beautiful areas. Research is encouraged through careful organization.

- Crime is rare and the state plays a pretty small role in people's lives. The state is responsible for the well-being of children, but has absolutely no interest in regulating sexuality.

- Everyone is healthy. This is something the narrator thinks about as he seeks his double. He assumes that his double will be healthier, more fit, with a longer life expectancy. And he's right.

- But here's the surprise: The modern utopia is not a representative democracy. A special class of people known as the Samurai makes all decisions. When the narrator meets his utopian double, the double explains all, since he is a Samurai, part of the "voluntary nobility … [that is] essential in the scheme of the Utopian state."

- The utopians can't imagine a world in which all people are treated as equivalent, as having the same impact on the political system. In the modern utopia, people fall into one of four classes: the Poetic, the Kinetic, the Dull, and the Base.

- The Poetic are creative, and they're responsible for art and for inventions. The Kinetic are energetic, and they include administrators, scientists, preachers, and actors. The Dull are the stupid and incompetent people. The Base can be poetic, kinetic, or dull, but they turn their energies inward, having no moral sense.

- With this system of broad categories in mind, the founders of the World State—which is what its inhabitants call their world—created a classification that would be unattractive for the Dull or the Base, but that would provide leadership from among the

Poetic and Kinetic: the Samurai. These people are the only ones who get to vote. But they must agree to follow a very specific lifestyle in order to become Samurai.

- They live an ascetic life—no drinking or drugs. They are allowed to marry, but can spend only limited time with their family, usually sleeping alone. They must take a wilderness voyage one week of the year to push themselves.

The Impact

- Wells's *A Modern Utopia* was no *Looking Backward* in the way it activated real-world readers. But it *did* have an impact. A few small groups formed as a result of the novel and tried to live according to the precepts of the Samurai.

- Perhaps most famously—and scandalously—a Cambridge undergraduate named Amber Reeves, whose parents were both Fabians (a British socialist organization), created an all-women's club called the Utopians, who were based on Wells's book.

- The scandalous part comes when the much younger Reeves, a great admirer of Wells, became pregnant with his child.

- Several utopian groups based on the novel had rather brief flirtations with the Samurai lifestyle, and their writings on these experiences can be found among Wells's papers.

SUGGESTED READING

Wells, *A Modern Utopia*.
———, *The Sleeper Awakes*.
———, *The Time Machine*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1 What's your definition of science fiction? Is utopia always part of science fiction for you, or does it sit next to science fiction under the larger umbrella of speculative fiction?

2 Have you seen any of the film, radio, or TV adaptations of *The Time Machine*? How do you explain this text's continued popularity?

3 To what degree do you see a split between utopia and dystopia in Wells's writing? Should *The Time Machine* be considered the first great dystopia? Why do you think we usually go to Zamyatin's *We* for that honor? (This might be easier to answer after Lecture 9.)

LECTURE 8

Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Gendered Utopia

Today, the author Charlotte Perkins Gilman's most famous novel is *Herland*. This utopian novel was published serially in 1915 in a magazine, *The Forerunner*, which Gilman managed and wrote—in its entirety—every month. It wasn't until 1979 that *Herland* was published in book form, and then it enjoyed a great resurgence, especially among feminist scholars. This book is somewhat unique, especially for 1915: It's a novel about a utopian society made up of only women.

Questions

- *Herland* was an early novel using the same separatist techniques as contemporary writers in thinking through some of the major questions of gender studies. Those were questions like:
  - How much of gender identity is biologically determined and how much is socially constructed?
  - How do we explain the power differences that are so common between men and women?

- How can women achieve professional or artistic success if so much of their time goes—quite naturally, perhaps—to the activities surrounding childbearing and childrearing?

- Should feminists focus on the similarities or the differences between men and women in thinking our way toward a better future?

- One way to think through these questions might be to imagine a world populated by just women or just men. Without the influence of the other gender, what would happen and what kind of society would emerge?

Background on Feminism

- Charles Fourier, the socialist utopian of the early 19th century, is credited with inventing the term *feminism*. Fourier believed that a utopian community would include equality among all members. A big obstacle to organizing such a community was certainly the systemic social bias against women. Even Thomas More, in 1516, realized that a utopian society would treat women as more than second-class citizens.

- Feminism is a complex set of ideas with a complex history. A thumbnail sketch of this history will help us better understand the context in which Gilman was writing as well as the quite different context of the 1970s, with the resurgence of feminist utopias.
  - First-wave feminism, which started at the end of the 19th century, was focused, in America, on gaining legal rights for women, especially the rights to hold property and to vote.

  - Second-wave feminism, which began in the 1950s and 1960s, tends to address more systemic types of gender discrimination, the kinds that can't always be addressed through legal solutions, like issues of work-life balance. Second- and third-wave feminism coexist in time.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman considered herself a humanist rather than a feminist, but history has placed her in the feminist tradition in which she participated through her writing and lecturing.

- Third-wave feminism emerged in the 1980s and 1990s as a backlash against the exclusivity of the first two waves, which were peopled almost entirely by white, middle- or upper-class women, usually straight and educated, and usually thinking mostly about the interests of that group.

- What about women of color? Lesbians? Poor women? Third-wave feminism is much more inclusive, practically and philosophically, which means it's open to more people—including men. It also opens up terms like *gender* and *sexuality* as more fluid concepts.

- Today we are at the brink of what we might begin to call fourth-wave feminism, unless we dispense with the wave metaphor altogether, since it gives an impression that simplifies women's movements.

About *Herland*

- *Herland* has a first-person narrator named Vandyck Jennings, who goes by Van. He and two friends—Jeff and Terry—are exploring somewhere. In typical utopian fashion, he won't tell the reader where, ostensibly because he doesn't want to give away the location of Herland.

- Their aboriginal guides tell them a crazy tall tale: There's a land nearby that has only women. The three explorers can't stop thinking about this, so they make a plan. They fly a biplane over the big cliffs the guides have indicated, and there they are. They find the tale is true.

- They are also, almost immediately, captured by very strong, very unafraid women. And for nine months they live in luxurious captivity as they are reborn. Private tutors teach them the language and customs of Herland, and ask many questions about their land, America.

- These three male visitors represent three models of masculinity. Jeff is the gentleman. Terry is the opposite. Van tells us of Terry: "He was a man's man, very much so, generous and brave and clever; but I don't think any of us in college days was quite pleased to have him with our sisters." Van is the sociologist, the one who sees the world—or at least thinks he sees the world—in an unbiased, rational way.

- The three of them often argue, with Terry demeaning women, Jeff idealizing them, and Van seeking to understand them. The whole novel, in a sense, details the progress these three men make on the woman question as they spend upward of a year in a land where there are about three million women and exactly three men. And, of course, that's the progress the reader might make, if we see utopian literature as having a didactic function, as trying to teach us something.

- Here's what our three male visitors learn about Herland: It's amazing. About the size of Holland, it's perfectly organized for its population of healthy, intelligent, community-driven women. The women decided centuries ago that keeping livestock was an inefficient use of resources, so they have a vegetarian lifestyle.

- Their lands are exquisitely kept, using sustainable farming techniques. Each woman chooses one or more trades to learn and pursue, and the women live in comfortable, efficient communities with a perfect blend of private and public spaces.

- How did this amazing society develop without men? About 2,000 years ago, there was a polygamous, slaveholding society. Many of the men were killed in war and the group fled to a defensible valley behind a mountain pass. A volcano erupted while most of the men were defending the pass and the survivors were almost all women.

- The few surviving slave men killed all the male masters and tried to dominate the women, who, in self-defense, killed every last man. However, about 10 years later, a miracle occurred, and one

of the women became pregnant with a gift from the gods. That woman bore five daughters. And those five daughters bore five daughters each.

- This went on until the land reached the optimal population and the women decided they needed to limit births to one per person. They could do this by turning their energies elsewhere when they began to feel the urge towards fertility.

- Why don't they have more conflict? Well, they don't compete for mates and they are tremendously good stewards of their resources, so they have no unmet need.

- They worship the institution of motherhood; they have the very brightest members of their society in charge of teaching the children. The children take part in what we would call experiential learning, where children learn from playing, doing, and asking.

The Costs

- What are the costs of this utopia? To Van, the only thing about this society that isn't great is the art. The stories written and told by the great women of Herland are a bit on the dull side. There is another cost, not that Van frames it that way: There are no men.

- What does this end up meaning for the women? Clearly, since they dealt with—or had a deus ex machina solution to—the problem of how to procreate 2,000 years ago, they seem not to miss men. Our three men eventually make matches—with the first three women they meet, in classic romance fashion—but these women make clear they aren't interested in sex with males.

- What is the cost of having no men? To Van, there is something lost, although the narrative doesn't necessarily frame it as a bad thing. Instead, Van considers it in a very complex way:

> What we were slow in understanding was how these ultra-women, inheriting only from women, had eliminated not only certain masculine characteristics, which of course we did not look for, but so much of what we had always thought essentially feminine.

- The absence of masculinity becomes, in a sense, an absence of a referent. Without its opposite term, femininity is just as lost as masculinity.

- This is a basic philosophical dilemma of feminism, and one much discussed in its second wave, as feminists of different orientations think about the benefits of focusing on similarities versus differences. The "American" feminists were generally in favor of minimizing the differences between men and women in order to focus on equality.

- The "French" feminists, on the other hand, feared the loss of what makes women unique. Subtly, Gilman's novel anticipates this debate, which is central to the feminist separatist utopian movement of the 1970s and 1980s.

Echoing Debates

- Gilman underlines several issues relevant to feminist thought in the time since the initial publication of *Herland*:
  - Motherhood—how to achieve a celebration of children and their needs without necessitating a sacrifice of the self by the mother.
  - Autonomy—how to create men and women as equal partners who both have the freedom to pursue their own interests.
  - Sustainability—how to steward the Earth's resources, environmental and human, in a way that allows for an ideal present and future.

- Sexual choices—how to ensure that women are enabled to make their own sexual choices and that they are not victims of sexual violence.

- The issue of sexual choices has led to some fascinating scholarship on *Herland*. Unlike feminist separatist utopias of the 1970s and 1980s, which acknowledge the possibility of sexual violence between women, Herland is a space without sexual assault—until the men arrive.

- Just as the three men represent three models of masculinity, so too do their three "marriages" with Herland women represent three models of heterosexual relationships. The women have no concept of monogamous unions and agree to marry Jeff, Van, and Terry only because it's important to the men. The relationships between Jeff and Celis, Van and Ellador, and Terry and Alima are not marriages in any kind of American sense.

- Terry can't accept that, which is why, at the novel's end, he tries to rape his new wife, not that he would think of it as rape. Alima defends herself, and the women of Herland, shocked beyond belief at this assault, step in to anesthetize Terry until they can decide what to do.

- They exile Terry, sending him away on the biplane with his promise he won't tell anyone about them. Van and Elladore go with him, Elladore being an especially curious soul and thus an excellent complement to her "husband." The community leaves it to Elladore to decide whether or not they should open communications to the outside world based on what she finds out there. That's how it ends.

- The scholar Kathleen Lant argues that the very appearance of the three men in their biplane represents a kind of symbolic rape of Herland, so the novel's form—and its use of a male narrator—in a sense undercuts the feminist message of the novel. Perhaps the novel isn't entirely in earnest.

- Regardless, the novel quite deliberately leaves us with a very provocative question: Would an all-woman society be better than a mixed-gender society? This question will be taken up again in the 1970s, with rather different results.

SUGGESTED READING

Gilman, *Herland*.
———, "The Yellow Wallpaper."
———, *Women and Economics*.
Lane, *Mizora*.
Scott, *A Description of Millenium Hall*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1 Why do you think most of the utopias (as opposed to dystopias) of the 20th century are by writers particularly interested in gender relations?

2 Is it possible for a writer to use the utopian genre in complete earnest, or is there always a satirical element to utopia?

3 What do you think a society of only women would look like? What about a society of only men?

LECTURE 9

Yevgeny Zamyatin and Dystopian Uniformity

Pinning down the meaning of the word *dystopia* isn't as simple as it looks. The sense of dystopia as the opposite of utopia is pretty typical. Utopia is a good place and dystopia is a bad place. Except, of course, we know that utopia is much more than a good place. It is simultaneously a perfect place and no place. What does that mean for dystopia, then? This lecture begins to explore dystopias with a look at Yevgeny Zamyatin's novel *We*, completed in 1921.

Toward Dystopia

- Though dystopian works existed earlier, there was a general shift from utopia to dystopia in the early 20th century. The World Wars definitely contributed to an interest in dystopia, but they weren't alone. Another possible explanation is the influence of technological advances, which people realized could lead to a huge income gap. Eugenics were a negative consideration as well.

- For a more positive explanation, we might also look to the democratization of literature in the second half of the 19th century due to higher literacy rates and an abundance of popular literature in the penny dreadfuls and the dime novels.

- In a dystopia, a writer lays out a horrifying future and leaves it to the reader—the active reader—to figure out how not to go there. An example of such a tale is Zamyatin's *We*.

We

- Although it was written in Russian, *We*'s English translation has been seen as hugely influential, especially on Aldous Huxley and George Orwell. Zamyatin was a political dissident, and *We* has the dubious honor of being the first novel banned, in 1921, by the Soviet Censorship Bureau.

- The book was published in English in 1924 and in Czech in 1927. It wasn't published in the original Russian until 1952, and even then it wasn't published in the Soviet Union until 1988. Although it's set 1,000 years in the future, the novel's relevance was obvious to censors.

- Here are the details: 1,000 years ago, we learn in the opening, all the petty conflicts on Earth were subdued, and today everyone lives in complete safety and rationality in the One State, headed by the aptly named Benefactor.

- In this society, everyone's needs are fully met. Each citizen, called a number, has food (petroleum-based cubes), shelter (a glass room of his or her own), and a well-organized life with the perfect balance between productivity and leisure. Each number has the right to have a guest and pull the shades at state-approved times upon issue of what is delicately called the pink coupon.

- Our narrator, named D-503, is the chief builder of the *Integral*, an amazing spaceship. We are reading his journal, which is to be included in the spaceship as it brings the advanced philosophies of the One State to the farthest reaches of the universe.

- To D-503, in the beginning, his society clearly represents the pinnacle of human achievement. It is utopia. To the readers, of course, it sounds awful: Glass houses? Constant surveillance? Petroleum cubes?

Life in the One State

- In most ways, D-503 is just like everybody else in the One State. He follows the Table of Hours to a tee, which means he gets up at the same time as everyone else. He eats breakfast at the same time as everyone else, using the recommended 50 chews per petroleum cube.

On flowers, D-503 opines that "Personally, I see nothing beautiful in flowers, or in anything belonging to the primitive world long exiled beyond the Green Wall."

- As he says, "At the same hour, in million-headed unison, we start work; and in million-headed unison we end it." He also makes use of his two leisure hours each day to do completely normal, state-approved activities like taking a stroll.

- There's only one thing about D-503 that's different, and it isn't that different. But it's embarrassing because it's such a clear reminder that he is a human animal with instincts and desires beyond the control of the One State. D-503 has hairy hands. It bothers him, but he muddles through.

- Although the One State covers most of the Earth, there is a section beyond this perfect society, beyond the Green Wall. D-503 has never been particularly curious about it, and thinks of it only as a place where unattractive things—like flowers rather than machines—are found.

- What about creativity? It's not that numbers of the One State aren't creative, according to D-503. It's just different now: He describes a supposed love poem—about lovers two by two—that to him is about math, not love.

- D-503 provides similarly un-nuanced reflections on freedom. When he learns that some numbers in the One State are plotting a liberation from the "beneficent yoke of rationality," he is appalled by this criminal behavior.

Love in the One State

- Art, creativity, and freedom have all been carefully thought through in the One State, and D-503 is confident that his society is on the right side of all these issues. But what about love? Surely love is the one thing that is inherently separate from the state, right? In a sense, love—and who controls loves—is the central topic of this novel. In fact, it's a central topic of many dystopias.

- In the One State, procreation is absolutely controlled by the state, which makes decisions using the techniques of animal husbandry to devise genetic matches for its numbers. Sex is a leisure activity, encouraged in appropriate moderation. Each number is seen as a commodity available to each other number. One need only apply for a pink coupon.

- The novel's momentum lies in D-503's complicated response to I-330, a female number who approaches him erotically. D-503 usually uses his pink coupons with O-90, but they're not monogamous. I-330 is completely different from any female number D-503 has ever known. She wants to see him at non-leisure times, and she even has one of her friends who is a doctor write a false medical excuse for them both.

- By having sex without a coupon, D-503 and I-330 commit a theft—a theft of their worktime. As D-503 writes in his journal, "There was no pink coupon, no accounting, no State, not even myself."

- In the context of the One State, with its million-headed body, the concept of the self is not self-evident. In fact, it is connecting with another number through illicit sex that leads D-503 to see himself as an individual.

D-503 and I-330

- D-503 feels something for I-330 that he hasn't felt before, but he doesn't conceptualize it as love. As he wonders how he can possibly break so many rules in order to see I-330, and how he can even steal from the One State, we start to realize that D-503 can't conceptualize the relationship as love. He sees his own actions only with confusion.

- It's likely that the relationship isn't about love for I-330 either, who is involved in a revolution in which the revolutionaries plan to steal the *Integral* and prevent it from its mission of spreading rationality throughout the universe. When she sees D-503's hairy hands, she thinks he might be recruitable.

- Certainly, as the builder of the *Integral*, he is an ideal addition to their group. The link between sex and revolution is therefore very clearly laid out, and it's a link that's regularly developed in utopian as well as dystopian writing.

- For D-503, whatever he feels for I-330—a new sense of self or a nascent sense of love or a surging desire for revolution—terrifies him. It reminds him of the first time he learned about the square root of –1, an image that comes up again and again throughout the novel.

- He was just a little boy and his teacher was introducing irrational numbers. As D-503 recounts, the idea of –1 "devoured me—it was impossible to conceive, to render harmless, because it was outside *ratio*." If you aren't a math person, you might think, wow, square root of negative 1, irrational number, this is an interesting exploration of how conformity is socially constructed.

- Yet the square root of –1 isn't an irrational number. It's an imaginary number that's been in use for centuries. This is something an engineer should know, and Yevgeny Zamyatin was an engineer. In fact, the critics Bretton Dennis and Rafeeq McGiveron have posited that this is not an oversight but rather a moment of quite sophisticated satire.

Satire

- The satire in this novel is pervasive: There's no way we're supposed to read about details like the delightful chewing of petroleum cubes without a derisive snort. D-503's world is clearly a utopia gone wrong. It is utopia taken to the point of totalitarianism, with all the loss of self and loss of meaning that entails.

- Readers become somewhat engaged with D-503's plight, but reactions may not be as visceral as when readers learn about the perils faced by Bernard Marx in *Brave New World* and especially Winston Smith from *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

- The naming convention has an impact: Someone named D-503 seems less real than someone named Marx or Smith, even though those last names aren't particularly real either, representing two major economic philosophers (Karl Marx and Adam Smith).

- As readers of *We*, we find our empathy dulled by the fact that D-503 seems like a cog in the machine. The joke, then, is partly on us. By immersing ourselves in an extreme totalitarian society, we lose some of our compassion and some of the power of identification that comes from a highly developed sense of self.

- At the end of *We*, things don't end well for the revolutionary lovers. But readers don't necessarily weep. The whole project was always an intellectual exercise, with the satire so broad the numbers never became quite real.

- *We* shows that a dystopia, like most utopias, reflects a historical moment (in this case, a specific anxiety about totalitarianism). Second, it includes a mix of satire and earnestness, heavy on the satire. This is not unusual of utopias, as we've seen. Third, it is didactic, although perhaps more subtly so than most utopias.

- Certainly, we could imagine readers of *We* being just as prone to act—politically and socially—as readers of utopia, perhaps not because the novel has made them think, as utopias often do, but because the novel has made them feel. At the same time, *We*, like most dystopias, breaks with the utopian convention of using a visitor as the main point of identification, providing instead an actual member of the society as the main point-of-view character.

SUGGESTED READING

Forster, "The Machine Stops."
London, *The Iron Heel*.
Zamyatin, *We*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. To what degree is our understanding of *We* contingent on understanding the socio-political contexts of the Soviet Union in the 1920s? Does this novel represent specific anxieties or does it speak to concerns that transcend its time and place? Perhaps both?

2. What's the impact of having characters whose names are numbers?

3. This novel is framed as being the journal of D-503. Does thinking about that frame change anything in the way you read the novel? Does it provide any ironic distance?

LECTURE 10

Aldous Huxley and Dystopian Pleasure

The society described in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*—seen as a utopia by most of its citizens and as a dystopia by its readers and a few brave characters—is based in pleasure that is completely humiliating. How does Huxley achieve this effect? His society has strong commitments to several real-world areas of scientific research: genetic engineering, behavioral studies, operations management, and pharmaceuticals. By taking these to their logical extreme, the society controls sexuality and aesthetics, which are, in Huxley's dark vision, all you really need to control in order to have a highly functional—and highly compliant—citizenry with extremely low resistance and, for the most part, a high happiness quotient.

The Novel

- Here are a few questions to keep in mind as we dive into this novel:
  - Was Huxley right, in 1958, to fear that society was getting closer to his nightmarish vision rather than further away?

- What about today? Are we living in a world more similar to *We*, to *Brave New World*, or to *Nineteen Eighty-Four*?

- Thinking about the utopian project of Huxley's writing, do you think this novel has had or could have any effect as a cautionary tale?

- In terms of that last question, it's certainly been read enough to have an impact. The book has been widely taught in Britain and the U.S. and is the subject of hundreds of articles of literary criticism. It has also raised controversy, usually a sign that a novel is having an effect.

- Interestingly, although parents have complained often about this novel being required reading, most high schools have maintained their commitment to teaching it. One of the few parent groups that succeeded in having the book removed from a classroom was in Miller, Missouri in 1980. The complaint? It made promiscuous sex "look like fun."

- In the first few chapters, Huxley lays out all the features of the society through the Director of Hatcheries and Conditioning giving a thorough tour of the facility to a group of students.

The World

- The first thing we learn is that in this year of stability, A.F. 632 (After Ford, roughly the 26th century A.D.), everyone is born in the Hatchery out of a test tube. In *Brave New World*, everyone is genetically engineered. They're programmed to perform specific functions in society and be content doing it.

- The natural tendencies built into the genotype are enhanced by a well-developed program of operant—or behavioral—conditioning. In *Brave New World*, behavioral conditioning includes negative stimuli like the use of electric shock to create a negative association with behaviors that are undesirable to the society.

- The first negative reinforcement we see is for babies. They are shown books and flowers, allowed to look at them and touch them, and then treated with electric shock. The purpose is to ensure that the lower castes—these children are Gammas, Deltas, and Epsilons—have "an 'instinctive' hatred of books and flowers."

- Having lower castes reading would waste the society's time. And the lower castes were once conditioned to like flowers, which would encourage them to go out to the country, therefore consuming transport. But once there, they wouldn't consume anything else, since enjoying the beauties of nature is free, contributing nothing to the economics of the World State.

- Now, the Director explains proudly, they're conditioned to dislike the country but to love country sports, thus consuming both transport and the "elaborate apparatus" needed for such leisure activities.

- Hypnopaedia, or sleep training, also occurs. It's unclear if Huxley took sleep conditioning very seriously as a scientific practice, but it plays a role in *Brave New World*. Here's an example of Beta children being sleep conditioned:

> "All wear green," said a soft but very distinct voice, beginning in the middle of a sentence, "and Delta children wear khaki. Oh no, I don't want to play with Delta children. And Epsilons are still worse. They're too stupid to be able to read and write. Besides they wear black, which is such a beastly color. I'm *so* glad I'm a Beta."

- The voice goes on to explain that Alphas have to work too hard, therefore showing that kids are conditioned to respect but not envy those in higher castes, while looking down—instinctively, unquestioningly—on those of lower castes.

- Huxley's structure is unusual in that he describes the "utopia" so fully before really immersing us in the story. Instead of the features of the future society slowly being revealed, we get an information dump before we even meet the main characters.

In his 1958 nonfiction work *Brave New World Revisited*, Aldous Huxley worried that young people do not value freedom.

Huxley's Worry

- Huxley's concern with all these technologies and new ways of thinking is that they will rob us not only of our freedom but of our desire for freedom. Through several fascinating characters, he suggests that the cost of a eugenic system that is fully integrated with behavioral science is borne as much by those at the top of the planned hierarchy as by those at the bottom. In fact, the cost at the top may be higher.

- The unnamed Deltas we see working away at their menial tasks look forward to the erotic and pharmaceutical pleasures provided by their society. But one character, Alpha-Plus Bernard Marx, is smart enough to realize that the pleasures that placate may be fundamentally empty.

- In *Brave New World*, people are encouraged to use pharmaceuticals anytime they feel anything less than completely content. They're also encouraged to keep an eye on friends, to make sure others remember that pharmaceuticals are always available. Overreliance on pharmaceuticals is perhaps still a concern today.

Sexuality

- Within dystopia, as we saw in *We*, sex is often linked to revolution. But why would sex be linked to revolution? To answer that, we'll turn to a book that came out decades after Huxley's dystopia, in 1976: Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality*. With this book, Foucault basically changed the way we think about sexuality, or at least how we talk about sexuality.

- Foucault was articulating something that the three big classic dystopias—*We*, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and *Brave New World*—were exploring years earlier. Foucault says that sexuality is "an especially dense transfer point for relations of power."

- *Dense* in this context means complicated, but it also means deeply influential. Sex is a space where power relations get worked out in particularly important or influential ways. Sex allows people to know each other in a different way than any other kind of contact or communication. And knowledge is power.

- For most—maybe all—dystopias, controlling people's sexuality is a key to controlling their access to power, and even their access to thinking about power. In *We*, sex is a commodity to be purchased from other numbers through the use of the pink coupon. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, sex is strictly controlled by the state through the institution of marriage, and again, we see unregulated sexual activity clearly linked to revolution.

- *Brave New World* treats sexuality in a quite different way. The World State, headed by the World Controllers, promotes what may appear to be a free and comfortable climate for sexuality. In the World State, "everyone belongs to everyone else." This is such an important precept that it's part of sleep conditioning, so people will hear this phrase 62,400 times by the time they begin sexual play as children and sexual intercourse as adolescents.

- Sexuality is kept entirely separate from procreation, and is thus associated only with pleasure. At least that's how the authorities frame it. Some people might find enforced sexual pleasure to be unpleasant.

- For teenagers reading the book, the sexuality in Huxley's novel may seem truly utopian—not the test tubes and the genetic engineering, but the idea that people could explore sexuality with different partners, and that sex wouldn't be a taboo subject.

- On the other hand, the idea of "everyone belongs to everyone else" might also sound complicated and exhausting and not worth the erotic and emotional energy. There are a lot of costs, like not having the right to choose monogamy, polyamory, or chastity, and never feeling the deep bonds of a committed, long-term relationship.

- In Huxley's novel, children learn that sexuality is natural when they engage in public sexual play in their prepubescent years. Adults are very open about their sex lives and even offer each other correctives if they think a friend has become too emotionally invested in another individual. For example, we see Bernard Marx being corrected by his peers when he becomes attached to a single woman: Lenina Crowne.

Art

- In *Brave New World*, art gets discussed repeatedly through Shakespeare. The title refers to an ironic line from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, in which the "brave new world" actually contains the worst of humanity.

- The two main perspective characters are an unusual insider, Bernard Marx, and John, who visits from the Savage Reservation. John enjoys the comforts of civilization at first, but he very rapidly sees the costs: freedom, monogamy, and art.

- After a trip to the "feelies,"—movies that provide a full sensory experience—he has an intense conversation with Bernard and with Mustapha Mond, the Controller. The conversation turns quickly to John's beloved Shakespeare, as he rails at the terrible quality of the feelies.

- To John's—and Bernard's—surprise, Mustapha Mond recognizes a passage from *The Tempest*. He explains that reading Shakespeare is prohibited, but he makes the laws, so he can break them. Shakespeare is prohibited because it's old, Mustapha says, and civilization works better when people want new things. John is unconvinced.

- Another point in favor of its ban: The people of the brave new world wouldn't understand it. John and Bernard can both easily see that that's true. "That's the price we have to pay for stability," the Controller explains. "You've got to choose between happiness and what people used to call high art."

- A mandatory pharmaceutical process called Violent Passion Surrogate floods the body with adrenaline once a month. It gives people the feeling of fear and rage they would get from *Othello*, all in the comfort of a laboratory.

- This is shallow comfort to John. "But I don't want comfort," he says. "I want God, I want poetry, I want real danger, I want freedom, I want goodness. I want sin."

- Mustapha Mond has chosen happiness over art on behalf of the citizens he controls. Bernard and John are left to make choices at the end, too. In a sense, so is the reader.

SUGGESTED READING

Huxley, *Ape and Essence*.
———, *Brave New World*.
———, *Brave New World Revisited*.
———, *Island*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1 Why do you think *Brave New World* is so often taught in high school and college classrooms, even today, almost a century after its initial publication? What does this novel provide for young readers?

2 In this novel, we see two kinds of outsiders in the persons of Bernard Marx and of John. What is the power of this formula (the true outsider and the outsider inside)? Can you think of any more contemporary texts in which this formula is used?

3 This novel is about social suppression (of love, sexual choice, critical thinking, art, etc.) through pleasure. Do you think it's possible for social forces to suppress free will through pleasure? Does this remain an issue today?

LECTURE 11

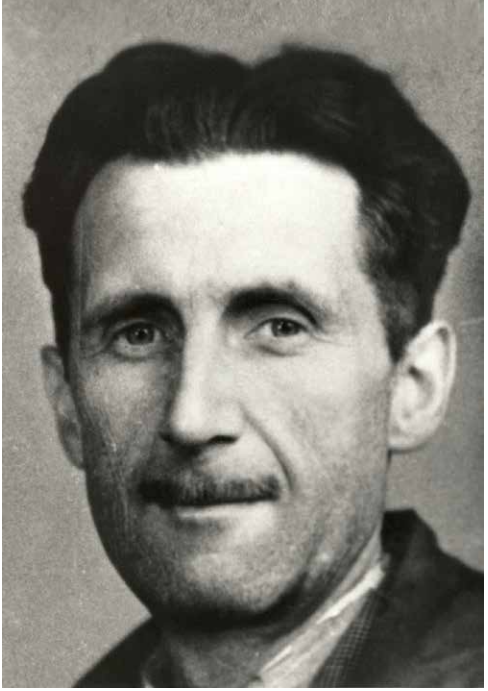
George Orwell and Totalitarian Dystopia

Big Brother. The thought police. Doublethink. Room 101. These are all neologisms introduced in George Orwell's most famous novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. And the ideas have stuck with us. Just as acclaimed as Huxley's *Brave New World*, Orwell's dark novel has evoked just as much scholarship. It serves to complement Zamyatin's and Huxley's visions of possible dark futures.

Nineteen Eighty-Four

- Here's the compelling aspect of Orwell's 1948 masterpiece: Even though the anxieties of 1948 have been replaced with new and different anxieties, and even though the year 1984 is now very much in our past, the novel still carries with it an enormous sense of urgency.

- Orwell's prose is spare, stark, and completely visceral. And his novel focuses on very important issues—the ones that make dystopia so popular still today.



By setting his dystopia only 35 years in the future, George Orwell boosted the tale's sense of urgency.

- This novel is all about power: Within a totalitarian structure, how is the individual kept powerless in the face of the State? Orwell's portrait of political power was a major influence on dystopias to follow.

- Orwell was deeply committed to clear language. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* embodies the power of language to shape thought for good or for ill, and explores the devastating potential of language to destroy both personal and cultural identity when used to preserve a totalitarian system of government.

- The frame narrative, which is crucial to many utopias, is equally important here. Orwell may take the frame even a little further than most.

- Orwell, like Zamyatin and Huxley, explores the idea that sexuality is a key means of both control and rebellion in a dystopia.

Winston Smith

- Winston Smith is the novel's point-of-view character, and his is the only perspective we ever get in this novel. He lives in Oceania and thinks some very subversive and dangerous things. This is particularly interesting because Winston seems like such an ordinary guy: He's 39, separated from his wife, and slightly out of shape because of a varicose ulcer above his left ankle.

- These mundane details are part of the immersive capacity of dystopia, in contrast to what is usually the more intellectual work of utopia. Winston isn't just a mind thinking through the best—or worst—ways to organize a society. He is a person with a body, a body that suffers from the aches and pains of middle age. A body that reacts to Julia, a much younger woman who takes an unexplained erotic interest in him.

- As an embodied narrator in a complex relationship to power—the power of the State and the power of Julia's sexuality—Winston is vulnerable.

- But Winston isn't completely powerless. He is a member of the Outer Party, which means he always wears overalls, a former symbol of oppression the Party has rebranded by making it the uniform of the ruling class.

- He works at the ironically named Ministry of Truth. He is good at his job, which is to correct errors in the historical record. For example, if the chocolate ration is one day lowered from 30 grams to 20 grams, Winston's office goes back and changes the record to show that the chocolate ration has always been at 20 grams. That way no one can complain—and eventually, no one can remember.

O'Brien

- How could it be possible for Winston to do that work without being to some degree contaminated with knowledge? For an answer to that question, we need to turn to O'Brien, one of the most wonderfully sinister characters we'll meet in this course.

- O'Brien initially approaches Winston as a fellow subversive who gives Winston a book allegedly written by a member of the Brotherhood, a rebel group. The book is *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism.*

- It's O'Brien, a member of the Inner Party, whose party affiliation is in question for the first two parts of the novel, who explains the concept of doublethink. For O'Brien, it's easy being in charge of changing history and also believing the changes: You just think the rations were 20 grams and 30 grams at the same time. According to the bureaucracy of Oceania, if you tell a lie enough times, it becomes the truth.

- Doublethink is about cognitive limits—not only for the characters who have to do it, but for the readers who have to process it and think about what it means. It raises questions: Is Orwell saying we are living in a world where doublethink already exists? He creates a world in which history itself is suspect, so how does that impact how we read the novel?

The Context

- Orwell is interested in how knowledge is constructed and communicated. And this was a specific anxiety about totalitarian rule. In the late 1940s, Orwell wasn't the only one worrying about this issue. At exactly the same time he was writing *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, a German-born political theorist named Hannah

Arendt was putting together an enormous, three-volume study called *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, in which she examined the history, politics, psychology, and economics of totalitarianism, using Stalinist Russia and Nazi Germany as her main subjects of inquiry.

- The subversive book O'Brien gives Winston, *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism*, touches upon many of the exact same points of analysis Arendt covers in her historical explorations of the mechanisms of totalitarian rule.

- A totalitarian movement, for example, requires organized loneliness as a pre-condition, according to Arendt, and certainly Orwell demonstrates systemic loneliness and isolation that are part of Winston's life until he meets Julia and enters into their illicit sexual relationship.

- The leader of a totalitarian movement, for Arendt, "assumes the ultimate victory of lie and fiction over truth and reality." Totalitarian rulers "feel more threatened by their own than by foreign people." Totalitarian power depends upon a situation in which "all men, without a single exception, are reliably dominated in every aspect of their life." All of these are present in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

Torture and Rehabilitation

- O'Brien detects Winston's rebellion and extracts a confession, but instead of simply having Winston killed, he puts Winston through an empty rehabilitation into society. O'Brien explains that the torture/rehabilitation is about power.

- In one of the most difficult scenes to read, O'Brien asks Winston why the Party wants power. Every time Winston gives an answer—to protect society, the protect the weak, for the good of the citizens—the answer is met by increased torture, until O'Brien finally spells it out: "The Party seeks power entirely for its own sake."

- He needs what Arendt describes in her study of totalitarianism. Every man must be "reliably dominated in every aspect." And as Arendt says in her work, totalitarian regimes bring with them a new and unprecedented concept of reality.

- The utopian scholar who addresses new notions of reality most provocatively is Jean Baudrillard. To Baudrillard, prisons exist in order to give the illusion that they're a space where people are imprisoned, so people don't realize that in actuality we're all in prisons of a kind.

- To cement this idea, he uses the example of Disneyland: "Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, when in fact all of Los Angeles and the America surrounding it are no longer real, but of the order of the hyperreal and of simulation." In the analyses we see in both Orwell's novel and Arendt's historical tomes, there is a commitment to showing the potential of a totalitarian government to deliberately challenge the notion of the real.

Unclear Language

- For Orwell, unclear language isn't just a matter of linguistic evolution or cultural decadence. It's rhetorical. He was particularly concerned with the language used by politicians. Owing to terrible deeds committed by governments, Orwell writes, "Political language has to consist largely of euphemism, question-begging and sheer cloudy vagueness." And it's not like this approach to language doesn't matter. "If thought corrupts language," he says, "language can also corrupt thought."

- In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, he produces a different kind of language—a language with no euphemism or cloudiness at all: Newspeak. We learn a fair bit about Newspeak by watching Winston work with it, but the real explanation comes at the end of the novel, in an odd appendix that causes us to revisit the entire novel.

- The appendix, titled "The Principles of Newspeak," opens in the past tense: "Newspeak was the official language of Oceania and had been devised to meet the ideological needs of Ingsoc, or English Socialism. In the year 1984 there was not as yet anyone who used Newspeak as his sole means of communication, either in speech or writing."

- The Appendix then provides a linguistic analysis of the language, explaining its elimination of redundant words. In Newspeak you would say that chocolate, for example, or Big Brother, is "doubleplusgood" instead of having to choose adjectives that might introduce unnecessary shades of meaning.

- Translation was difficult in the era of Newspeak, and the Appendix shows us why by giving us several lines from the Declaration of Independence starting with "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal …."

- Here's the problem, the narrator explains: "It would have been quite impossible to render this into Newspeak while keeping to the sense of the original. The nearest one could come to doing so would be to swallow the whole passage up in the single word *crimethink*."

- This is one of the most wonderful moments of satire in a novel where sinister reality—or unreality—is the go-to mode of describing a stark totalitarian future.

- It's also one of the only moments of hope in the novel. Notice the past conditional: "It would have been quite impossible." That's different from "It was quite impossible" or "It will be quite impossible." This passage suggests rather strongly that the era of Newspeak, though fully imaginable, will never come—that this version of 1984 will be averted.

Avoiding Dystopia

- Orwell's novel doesn't provide an answer to the question of how to avoid dystopia. Neither does Zamyatin's *We*, although it offers a similar tendril of hope in its use of D-503's journal as the frame for the whole novel.

- Orwell and Zamyatin both show sexuality as a major tool of subversion, since both include main characters who have completely prohibited sexual relationships with women tied to rebel groups.

- In both novels, these subversive couples are forcefully ended by the state. The scene in which the relationship between Winston and Julia is destroyed is one of the most heart-wrenching, powerful scenes in this enormously compelling novel.

- If the state has total control of who citizens love, then those citizens no longer have access to the human bonds that give individuals motivation to fight for their free will. We don't see examples of couples whose rebellious sexuality allows them to create a true challenge to the State. But in these early examples of dystopian literature, we see sexuality as a possible path towards governmental overthrow.

- It's easy to say that dystopias function as cautionary tales. But what really concerns Zamyatin, Huxley, and Orwell is the notion of relative reality. The caution they give is not to avoid specific technological or political changes. It's to avoid the cognitive slippage where we can no longer be quite sure of what we consider *real*.

SUGGESTED READING

Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.
———, "Politics and the English Language."

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1 What's your favorite of the big three dystopias (*We*, *Brave New World*, and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*), and why?

2 Orwell has stated that he wrote *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in order to warn of the dangers of totalitarianism. Do you think he is successful in this endeavor? Why or why not?

3 Is there any humor in this novel? Is there any of the satire we see so clearly in *We* and *Brave New World*?

LECTURE 12

John Wyndham and Young Adult Dystopia

John Wyndham's *The Chrysalids* is one of the earliest examples of young adult dystopian fiction. This lecture will focus on it for three reasons. First, it clearly demonstrates the potential of dystopian literature to comment on timely social anxieties. Secondly, it allows us to think about the very complicated relationship between dystopian and postapocalyptic literature. And finally, it set the stage for bringing dystopia to younger readers in what was to become an extremely rich strain of dystopian literature.

The Chrysalids

- *The Chrysalids* provides a cautionary tale about not only the dangers of the Cold War, which readers probably can't do all that much about, but also about the dangers of exiling or dismissing those who are different—a practice where readers can potentially make a difference.

Some critics have started to consider John Wyndham as a pioneer in science fiction, especially in the kind of science fiction that explores the utopian potentials of catastrophe.

- There's a didactic dimension to Wyndham's writing: Expelling the "other" from society isn't just an ethical problem. It may well become a pragmatic problem because that might be rejecting the very individuals who contain the features that will become central to the future of humanity.

- It's a powerful political statement, and not an easy or cozy one. Wyndham wasn't the only writer in the 1950s exploring this idea. Richard Matheson's 1954 vampire apocalypse novel *I Am Legend* is another example.

- In both *I Am Legend* and *The Chrysalids*, we have an apocalyptic event. In *The Chrysalids*, we also have a dystopia. Dystopias and apocalypses are often confused in common parlance, but they're actually quite different. There are four popular dark narratives in this vein:
  1. A strict dystopia, where a repressive government is part of the bad place (with no apocalypse).

2 A strict apocalypse, where a cataclysmic event has thrown the world into chaos (with no dystopian government).

3 A dystopian society that appears to be heading towards apocalypse and perhaps even narrates that apocalypse within its pages.

4 A dystopian society that has developed after an apocalyptic event.

- In *The Chrysalids*, we have the fourth option. Perhaps unsurprisingly for a book published in 1955, the apocalyptic event was nuclear war. The dystopian government that has developed in the millennium-plus since the war is repressive in the extreme, as it classifies not only human beings, but all living things, according to their match to the perfect image. The perfect image of humans is the Old People, who were created in a perfect likeness of God.

- The ruling class relies upon Nicholson's *Repentances*, a tome produced long after the cataclysm, for the definitions of traits required in all species. Non-standard livestock are killed in a sacrificial ritual and whole fields of contaminated produce are destroyed by fire (sometimes leading to hunger). The case of defective humans is a bit more complicated.

David Strorm

- David Strorm is the main character and first-person narrator of *The Chrysalids*. He shows us his society through his eyes, first as a 10-year-old and then, by the end, as a man in his early 20s. David is an unusual sort of protagonist. He's neither an adventure hero nor an inventor, the two roles most common to teenagers in science fiction novels of this period.

- He is, by necessity, a quiet boy, since there are no boisterous children in his world. David's home is especially quiet, since his father is a regular preacher at the local church as well as the

largest landowner in Waknuk, a tight-knit community of very religious people known throughout the district for its deep devotion to Purity—with a capital P.

- As David grows up in this strict society and stricter home, he becomes increasingly aware not only of the repressive nature of his community, but also of his own terrifying difference. This draws the reader, regardless of age, into a sort of blossoming understanding.

- **Spoiler alert**: If you haven't read this novel and you'll enjoy it less from knowing where it's heading, go read it before continuing this lecture. It's a short book and many adult readers consume it in a single sitting.

Deviation

- The reader of the novel gets drawn into scenes in which David confronts situations of human deviation.

- The first deviation we meet is a mysterious little girl named Sophie who lives in the depths of the wood and doesn't participate in community events. Although David knows there's something strange about Sophie, the two become fast friends.

- One day, Sophie gets trapped near the river and is forced to reveal to David her horrifying secret: She has six toes on each foot. This is David's first chance to put into the practice the surveillance he knows is at the center of not only Waknuk's reputation for Purity, but also of the survival of the human race. He must report Sophie immediately to the authorities, including his father and the town's Inspector.

- And he doesn't. At the age of 10, David shows himself to be a rebel within the society. When Sophie is discovered by someone else, David gets punishment, in the form of a horrific beating from his father, to help Sophie and her family escape.

- David is also aberrant: He a few other children in the District are telepathic. He tries to explain to the other child telepaths that "I told them about Sophie. … I tried to explain that a person with a deviation—a small deviation, at any rate—wasn't the monstrosity we had been told. … They received that very doubtfully indeed."

- Even the kids in the neighborhood who share his telepathic talents can't quite wrap their minds around the idea that a deviation might not be disgusting and evil.

Another Encounter

- After this early interaction with Sophie and her small mutation, David has two more childhood encounters with deviations. The second is tragic, and Wyndham makes full use of his child narrator to wring as much pathos as possible from the situation.

- The pathos begins when David has a long conversation with his uncle, Axel, who offers to give David details about the outside world as long as he can keep them quiet. Axel reveals:

> You'll find islands where the people are all thickset, and others where they're thin; there are even said to be some islands where both the men and women would be passed as true images if it weren't that some strange deviation has turned them all completely black. … But what's more worrying is that most of them—whether they have seven fingers, or four arms, or hair all over, or six breasts, or whatever it is that's wrong with them—think that their type is the true pattern of the Old People, and anything different is a Deviation.

- It's with Axel's words still fresh in his ears—and still raising all kinds of questions in his mind—that David experiences the birth of his little sister. David tells us that his mother is pregnant, a

cause for great anxiety, since in Waknuk, people don't celebrate a pregnancy until the inspector has issued a certificate declaring "a human baby in the true image."

- David's mother is especially at risk, since after giving birth to David, who was certified as human, she gave birth to two Blasphemies, babies who did not meet the true image. If she produces a third inferior child, it is her husband's right to expel her to the Fringes and take another wife who is less offensive in the eyes of God. In the end, the Inspector declares the baby a true human. David's mother is pure, and David has a little sister.

- However, David's Aunt Harriet has just had a baby too, and she has come to visit on a terrible errand. Her baby has a deviation and she has come to ask her sister if she can borrow the perfect baby almost exactly the same age for the inspection of her mutant child. David's telepathy allows him to find all this out.

- This is a turning point for David. Is he committed to Purity or not? The baby in question is a stranger, someone who isn't even thought of as a person yet.

- David is devastated when his mother not only says no, but tells David's father. And when David's father scolds his sister-in-law, the reader realizes that David is in great jeopardy if anyone ever learns his secret. Aunt Harriet's body is found in the river the next day, with no mention of the baby.

- David never finds out—so can never tell us—exactly what was "wrong" with the baby. Each reader can fill in whatever is more emotionally powerful: For some readers, the pathos might lie in the baby having a very noticeable difference that doesn't prevent Aunt Harriet from loving her, while for other readers the pathos might lie in a baby that has a miniscule difference that leads to, presumably, the baby's death.

Young Adulthood

- Seeing through David's eyes is nowhere more challenging—and powerful—than when he grows into young adulthood. He embarks, with his lover and his little sister (an extremely powerful telepath), upon an adventure complete with escape to the Fringes, capture by mutants, telepathic military strategy, and a reunion with six-toed Sophie, all grown up and highly ambivalent about seeing her childhood friend again.

- As David and his cohort are truly upon the road to escape, David begins to understand what the reader may already have intuited: The telepaths are far more frightening than other kinds of mutations, because they are, in fact, more powerful than the humans "in God's image."

- When we meet a group of telepaths who have flown from New Zealand to save our protagonist and his friends, we learn that telepaths elsewhere are already taking control. And as soon as the leader of the New Zealand telepaths enters the scene, everything is different.

- To those powerful telepaths, the humans David has always considered pure—his family, his community, everyone he has ever known except his fellow telepaths—represent a less advanced, less fit species, since their communications technologies leave them emotionally alone and militarily weak.

- The fundamentalist town leaders engage in a kind of non-technological version of the surveillance we saw in *We* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, where each member of the society is responsible for self-surveillance as well as surveillance of his or her neighbors and family members.

- Adults will enjoy this novel. But the true power of *The Chrysalids* is in its opening up the genre of dystopia to younger readers, a move that has become especially prevalent in the 21st century. This makes sense: As young people try to figure out their place in the world, they are also—at some times more than others—trying to understand the state of the world they're living in.

- As John Wyndham showed us in 1955, dystopian literature provides a powerful space for teens to reframe not only their own questions and concerns, but also the potentials for resolutions available even in worlds drastically more frightening than their own.

SUGGESTED READING

Golding, *Lord of the Flies*.
Matheson, *I Am Legend*.
Wyndham, *The Chrysalids*.
———, *The Day of the Triffids*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1 Why do you think dystopia is so popular with young adults? What does Wyndham tap into in *The Chrysalids* that makes the novel appealing to younger readers?

2 In *The Chrysalids*, we have a society that was created after a worldwide disaster rather than one that developed more organically. What does the cataclysm offer to the genre of dystopia?

3 The mutation can be seen as an involuntary form of nonconformity. How does Wyndham explore notions of free will and conformity?

LECTURE 13

Philip K. Dick's Dystopian Crime Prevention

Going all the way back to Thomas More, we've seen criminality addressed in most of our utopias and dystopias. In 1956, Philip K. Dick provided a fresh approach to the questions of free will and criminality in dystopian literature in a short story, which was made into a blockbuster film almost 50 years later. It's a story that uses the issue of crime to address the broader conflicts between security and freedom. This story is *Minority Report*.

The Story

- People who have only seen the movie may be surprised to see how simple Dick's original story is. The scenario provides an elegant thought experiment for considering how we define crime and, especially, criminals.

- The situation is this: Three humans—called precog mutants in the story and simply precogs in the movie—have the ability (a curse to them, an apparent blessing to their society) to see crimes before they happen. The precrime unit, a special division of the police, has been developed around the precogs, and police now arrest people before they commit their crimes.

- Our point-of-view character in this story is the police officer who heads the Pre-Crime Unit, John Anderton (played by Tom Cruise in the movie). Anderton is a true believer in the use of precogs in policing.

- Steven Spielberg's rewriting of the story moves it from New York City to Washington DC, where Anderton gets a visit from a federal agency, since there's consideration of using pre-crime for policing across the nation. Anderton, who is usually the man with the power of surveillance, is now under the microscope himself, showing his operation to a critical outsider.

- The precogs live in an underground area with a pool and biometric paraphernalia emphasizing their nature as cyborgs, a point we'll come back to. Above the pool is a futuristic office with many computer displays, including flat-screens and holographic panels. But, strangely, instead of revealing the names of those to be saved and those to be imprisoned through the computing equipment, there's a contraption that looks like it belongs to a lottery game, with balls rolling down long glass tubes.

- In the movie, the audience waits with expectation as Anderton stands at the bottom of the chute waiting for a red ball to roll slowly down—a red ball is for the crime of murder. Anderton slowly picks up the ball, rolls it around in his hand, and finds his own name.

- Anderton has been identified as a would-be murderer who will, under the current system, be apprehended before he has a chance to commit the murder and will be locked up for a crime that he hasn't yet committed but that he will commit, according to the precogs.

Though he died when he was just 53, Philip K. Dick had already written 44 novels and over 100 short stories.

- The movie version provides a chilling vision of the detention facility where the pre-criminals are kept. It has none of the chaos or violence of contemporary prison representations; it's worse. It is entirely sterile, each criminal preserved—as if through cryogenics of some kind—in a separate upright tube.

- Regarding the story's genre: Once we hit the 1950s, we see far fewer pure utopias or pure dystopias. Think about *The Chrysalids*, for example, with its extremely ambiguous ending. *Minority Report* doesn't just provide a dystopian vision under the rubric of science fiction, although it certainly does do that. It also blends science fiction tropes with those of detective fiction.

Anderton's Problem

- John Anderton knows he is the predicted murderer, but he's never even heard the name of the man he is supposed to kill, Leo Crow in the movie. Why would he kill this guy? Is this a legitimate case of precognition by the precogs, or is he being set up?

- The pleasure of the story, which is especially highlighted in the movie, lies with its genre hybridity. The detective elements function in familiar ways, pushing us to probe into the various possible solutions to the mysteries.

- We also have to consider that John Anderton may be an unreliable point-of-view character. Maybe he does know Crow, which opens up more arrays:
  1. He knows Crow but doesn't intend to kill him.

  2. He knows Crow and does intend to kill him.

  3. He knows Crow, intends to kill him, and yet his surprise at the red ball is real because he thought he had somehow outsmarted the precog system.

The World

- The science fiction elements of this story are very prominent. We have a world with lots of new technologies, each of which opens up some ethical questions (beyond the central tech of the precogs), and many of which speak to contemporary anxieties.

- The technologies hinted at in the short story are front and center in the film, and as they've been updated to the 21st century, they continue to provide these questions: Do the technologies that seemingly make our lives better also contain the dark underpinnings that lead to dystopia? And, taken further, are we currently living in a dystopia even though we don't know it?

- Consider the ancillary technologies in Spielberg's version. There's direct marketing at a whole new level, where people walking by electronic billboards are addressed by name (as a result of ubiquitous retinal scan technology) and marketed to. "The road you're on, John Anderton," says a Lexus billboard to our police-chief-on-the-run, "is a road less traveled."

- Direct advertising is now an everyday reality as corporations use data mining techniques to make very good guesses about what each of us wants. Is this a marker of utopia or dystopia? Is it a convenience or a sign that we are voluntarily handing over our free will to corporations?

- The movie also contains wearable computing. For example, there's a wonderful scene in which Anderton, wearing a computer glove, is able to view a crime scene being projected holographically from the precogs' consciousnesses as if he's a conductor directing a high-quality orchestra. This reminds us of wearable fitness trackers and all kinds of other technologies that are connected to our bodies and interact with computers.

- Spielberg's movie does a terrific job of capturing Dick's ironic descriptions of this idyllic world. Spielberg does a particularly great job in his use of contrast. We see suburbs that are recognizably 1950s, with matching lawns, sprinklers, newspaper delivery, and manicured neighborhood parks with mid-century playscapes. This is in contrast to the high-tech future.

- These contrasts were certainly an homage to Dick—a reminder that the story was written in the 1950s by one of science fiction's most complex and prescient practitioners. But they also serve as a subtle reminder that crime has long been a perfect contested space to explore the conflicts between security and freedom that have been at the center of dystopian societies. The imagined counterpart of the nostalgic 1950s crime-free suburb, after all, is the crime-ridden inner city.

The Precogs

- In the short story, the precogs have little personality and are portrayed only as tools in the machine. Here is how Dick represents them:

> All day long the idiots babbled, imprisoned in their special high-backed chairs, held in one rigid position by metal bands, and bundles of wiring, clamps. Their physical needs were taken care of automatically. They had no spiritual needs. Vegetable-like, they muttered and dozed and existed. Their minds were dull, confused, lost in shadows.

- Spielberg's vision is completely different. It is faithful to the setup: The precogs have wasted bodies and big heads, lost in the wiring of the machinery that works to translate their visions into something usable by police. But the precogs are not just tools; they are people. Spielberg gives them ironic names: Agatha, Arthur, and Dashiell, as in Agatha Christie, Arthur Conan Doyle, and Dashiell Hammett, seminal writers of detective fiction.

- Spielberg's Anderton actually takes Agatha from her cyborg apparatus, and she's able to function reasonably well in the great world outside. She also provides a sinister perspective on Anderton's world when she repeats, in her slightly disembodied voice, the same sentence in several tense moments: "Can you see?"

- He thinks she means, "Can you see important evidence?" And in a sense, she does mean that. But she also could mean, "Can you see *me*?" and "Can you see your way through the ethics of this situation?" That last question is in reference to the way the system treats precogs (humans, after all) and also pre-criminals—people who have not committed crimes and, perhaps, will not commit crimes.

The Past 50 Years

- The preponderance of digital technologies has been a huge development over the last 50 years. That means that we've changed the way we think about cyborgs—beings who are partly biological, partly digital—as these precogs appear to be. The dystopian treatment of cyborgs is part of what makes *Minority Report* so powerful.

- The "minority report" within the Pre-Crime Unit is a report produced when the three precogs do not agree. It occurs when two of them see one vision and the third sees a different one. Convicting people of crimes they didn't commit on a two-to-one vote is problematic, of course.

- The minority report, obviously, represents a huge challenge to the whole system. But it also may refer back to one of the most famous quotations from Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, when Winston Smith wonders if he is a lunatic: "Perhaps a lunatic was simply a minority of one. At one time it had been a sign of madness to believe that the Earth goes round the Sun; today, to believe the past is inalterable. He might be alone in holding this belief, and if alone, then a lunatic."

- As Orwell makes clear, to be alone—to be in the minority—may be to invite the label of madness or lunacy. But it isn't to be wrong. In fact, being in the minority, and holding on to what you know, might be the only way to be right when the world is spiraling out of control.

- The short story and the novel appear to end in completely different ways. But go watch and read, if you haven't, and think about what those two endings mean. The endings are radically different on the surface (in how things end for John Anderton), but remarkably similar in what they say about the tension between security and free will.

SUGGESTED READING

Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451.*
Dick, *A Scanner Darkly.*
———, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*
———, *Minority Report.*
———, *The World Jones Made.*
Vonnegut, *Player Piano.*

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1 If you've read the novella and seen the movie, which did you like better and why?

2 How important is the issue of crime in detailing a utopian or dystopian world? What does focusing on crime tell us about how a society functions? What does it tell us about how a society values safety and individual liberties?

3 What is the impact of providing more detail about the needs and personalities of the precogs in more recent adaptations of Dick's novella (both the Spielberg film and the Fox TV series)?

LECTURE 14

Anthony Burgess, Free Will, and Dystopia

The time has come to meet Alexander the Large (or Alex), the terrifyingly complex protagonist of Anthony Burgess's 1962 novel, *A Clockwork Orange*. He was brought eerily to life by Malcolm McDowell in Stanley Kubrick's strange and disturbing film adaptation nearly 10 years later. Alex isn't just into horseplay and juvenile hijinks. He's into ultra-violence—complete with rape and sadism and murder—and we need to be fully aware of that before we can begin to understand and assess how the state—specifically, the institution of the prison—deals with him.

The Story

- Let's get a general sense of Burgess's story in order to address two central questions: How does *A Clockwork Orange* help us reconsider the contributions of past dystopias? And how does it contribute to future dystopias, especially those aimed at young adults?

- The publisher of the American version insisted on cutting the 21st chapter, which Burgess allowed at the time because he needed the money. Stanley Kubrick did the same thing when he made the film. That means Burgess's novel and its much more famous film adaptation have completely different endings, which means completely different answers to the questions developed around Alex and his ultra-violence.

- The novel is set in 1960s London, and it follows our central protagonist into the worlds of gang violence, prison, and post-prison. The first seven chapters show Alex as the leader of a gang of four hoodlums. In identical creepy costumes, the four of them engage in destructive rampages of various kinds.

- The key events of part 1 repeatedly show Alex as an ultra-violent aggressor:
  1. The gang beats an elderly homeless man.

  2. The gang interrupts a rival gang as they're about to rape a young woman. Alex's group of four gleefully attack the five guys in the other gang, leaving them beaten and bloodied.

  3. Alex talks his way into the home of a wealthy writer, where the gang ties up the writer and forces him to watch as they gang-rape his wife.

  4. Alex asserts dominance over the other guys in his gang through physical violence.

  5. Alex talks his way into the home of a female art collector, the Cat Woman, who resists when he tries to rape her.

- Here's how Alex describes what happens, using Nadsat, the hybrid Anglo-Russian language Burgess invented for this novel: "So then I creeched: 'You filthy old soomka,' and upped with the little malenky like silver statue and cracked her a fine fair tolchock on the Gulliver and that shut her up real horror-show and lovely."

- Alex is taken into police custody, where he remains insolent in the face of police brutality. Finally, though, the police chief comes in and Alex realizes the woman he attacked has died in hospital.

Part 2

- Alex's young age is important to part 2, which details Alex's time in prison, setting up the central moral problem of the story. As a result of good behavior, Alex is chosen to be part of an early-release program testing a new medical treatment for prisoners.

- The so-called Ludovico technique is designed to render him incapable of violence through negative behavioral conditioning. Alex's eyes are held open with clamps so he must watch scenes of horrifying violence (the kind he would usually relish) while he is treated with drugs that induce extreme nausea, all while listening to music by his favorite composer, whom he calls simply Ludwig van.

- By the end of this treatment, Alex has an automatic response of extreme nausea not only when he thinks about sex or violence, but also whenever he hears Beethoven's Symphony no. 9.

- This section of the book ends with a demonstration of Alex's "cure" to a number of prison and government officials, when Alex licks the boot of a man he desperately wants to hit and then finds himself unable to even touch a beautiful half-nude woman.

Part 3

- Part 3 follows Alex back out into the world in his new debilitated state. He meets most of the people he has wronged, now to find himself helpless as they return to him the violence he has dealt them.

- His former gang members, now police officers, take him out to the woods, where they torture him with near drowning and leave him for dead.

While in prison, Alex becomes a serious reader of the Bible; little does the chaplain realize that Alex is especially drawn to the story of Christ's crucifixion because he imagines himself torturing Christ.

- The most extensive scene of revenge is at the hands of F. Alexander, the writer whose wife Alex had raped. In the initial attack in Burgess's novel, Mr. Alexander is writing a novel called *A Clockwork Orange* when Alex and his crew arrive. As he engages in all kinds of vandalism and violence, Alex rips apart Mr. Alexander's work in progress, titled identically to the very novel in which he appears.

- Mr. Alexander, a member of the literati, can be read as in some sense a creator of young hoodlum Alex. Certainly his revenge on Alex aligns him with the state: The writer tortures the young criminal with Beethoven until Alex tries to kill himself.

- It is his attempted suicide that eventually leads Alex to another state institution—the hospital—where he is finally deprogrammed, left free to make his own choices and to listen to his beloved Beethoven. Chapter 20 ends with Alex listening to "the glorious Ninth of Ludwig van. Oh, it was gorgeoisty and yumyumyum. … I was cured all right." That's the end of the American version and the end of the movie.

The Impact

- Burgess's novel met with little success when published in 1962 and was mostly forgotten until Kubrick's film adaptation brought it to international prominence—and controversy—almost 10 years later. The film raised criticisms for its frank portrayals of ultra-violence, including sexual violence.

- The film quite deliberately leaves us uncomfortable and uneasy and unsettled, partly because of the details, but also because it so clearly captures the central problem Burgess lays out in his novel: Does the state have the right to punish its criminals by removing their free will?

- Burgess tells us there were lots of reasons for choosing this title:

> I had always loved the Cockney phrase "queer as a clockwork orange," that being the queerest thing imaginable, and I had saved up the expression for years, hoping some day to use it as a title. When I began to write the book, I saw that this title would be appropriate for a story about the application of Pavlovian, or mechanical, laws to an organism which, like a fruit, was capable of color and sweetness. But I had also served in Malaya, where the word for a human being is *orang*.

- What would a clockwork human look like? Maybe a bit like the numbered individuals in Zamyatin's *We*, who walk and eat in perfect lockstep according to the Table of Hours. Or perhaps like the abject subjects of Orwell's Oceania.

- The use of the word *queer* is important too, since Burgess was specifically appalled by the practice of operant conditioning of sexual desire, a practice to which some gay men submitted voluntarily. The subject (the gay man) would be shown provocative images; if they were of men, he would receive an electric shock, and if they were of women, he would receive, as Burgess puts it, "a soothing sensation of genital massage."

- Here are the problems Burgess had with conversion therapy: First, there's little evidence that it works. Second, it pathologizes homosexuality. Third, and perhaps most importantly, if it were to work, conversion therapy would remove a person's free will, turning a person into a kind of clockwork orange.

The Final Chapter

- If the novel ends at the conclusion of chapter 20, we have a deconditioned criminal returned to society, complete with his free will. But Burgess wrote a final chapter.

- It's an ornery, complicated final chapter that recasts the entire novel by showing a new Alex, a deprogrammed Alex who has reached maturity. He has outgrown his childish obsession with ultra-violence and has decided—of his own free will—to eschew criminal behavior.

- Burgess believed that the key to transformation was free will. A person who can only perform good or evil is a "clockwork toy to be wound up by God or the Devil or (since this is increasingly replacing both) the Almighty State." In this sense, Alex is a clear descendant of Orwell's Winston Smith, controlled completely by the state.

- And it's only when Alex gets his free will back—and the community gets the threat of Alex back—that the community stops being a totalitarian dystopia.

1985

- In 1978, Burgess wrote a work called *1985*. It's in three parts: a long essay, a novella, and an extremely evocative appendix. Part 1, which is called *1984*, is an informally written and extremely insightful piece of literary criticism on Orwell—his biography, the historical contexts in which he wrote *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and some musings about the issues Orwell raises in that novel, like the nature of freedom, free will, and government.

- Burgess also provides an assessment of *A Clockwork Orange*: He thinks it isn't very good, but did present his "abhorrence of the view that some people were criminal and others not." Burgess would get more disagreements with the first point than the second: Many people think this is a brilliant and influential novel.

- After the preliminary literary criticism comes the novella. The first chapter, titled "The Yuletide Fire," opens with the rather provocative line, "It was the week before Christmas, Monday midday, mild and muggy, and the muezzins of West London were yodeling about there being no God but Allah."

- London is clearly a site of religious tensions, since the narrative point of view thinks of Christmas while acknowledging the prevalence of a Muslim voice in the street. The protagonist Bev Jones is heading home at lunchtime to check in on his 13-year-old daughter, who is home alone while his wife is in hospital.

- On his way home, Bev is mugged by a group of seven teen hoodlums. The teachers are on strike so there's no school.

- He stumbles home, tripping on the body of a nice young kid from his building who has been beaten and raped, presumably by these same hoodlums. Bev tells the building's janitor, not at all sure he'll pass the information along to authorities.

- He sits down for lunch only to see on television that the hospital where his wife is being treated has caught on fire. The hospital fire isn't being fought since the firemen are on strike. Bev rushes there; his wife expires but tells Bev to avenge her before she does.

- And for the rest of the story, Bev does his very best to avenge his wife's death, in a society in which the state belongs to the workers and which unions are all-powerful.

- In many ways, *1985* lays out just as clearly what Burgess states in his long introductory essay, *1984*:

> Readers [of *A Clockwork Orange*], and viewers of the film made from the book, have assumed that I, a most unviolent man, am in love with violence. I am not, but I am committed to freedom of choice, which means that if I cannot choose to do evil neither can I choose to do good. It is better to have our streets infested with murderous young hoodlums than to deny individual freedom of choice.

- Is Burgess right? Is it worth sacrificing security in favor of free will? This is tough to answer, but it is a central concern of many—perhaps all—dystopian novels.

SUGGESTED READING

Burgess, *1985*.
———, *A Clockwork Orange*.
Skinner, *Walden Two*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1 In what ways do you see *A Clockwork Orange* as an updating of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*? Does Burgess's study of free will in *A Clockwork Orange* or in *1985* provide new insights into Orwell's classic dystopian novel?

2 Why do you think the Kubrick film was so much more popular than Burgess's novel? Which do you like better and why?

3 Burgess was very grumpy in *1985* about the decision of the American publisher and of Kubrick to end their versions of his story without chapter 21, in which a free-willed Alex basically renounces ultra-violence. Which ending do you think is more effective and why? What is gained from each ending?

LECTURE 15

The Feminist Utopian Movement of the 1970s

The feminist utopian movement that began in the 1970s does not include a lot of straight-up utopias with a visitor finding a new society and reporting back with a mix of earnest admiration and satire. This new kind of utopia has a rather guarded optimism. It's also not at all static, including plenty of the dangers and conflicts that made dystopia so much more viable in the 20th century. There's danger, conflict, and many questions about whether the utopian societies being explored really are utopias.

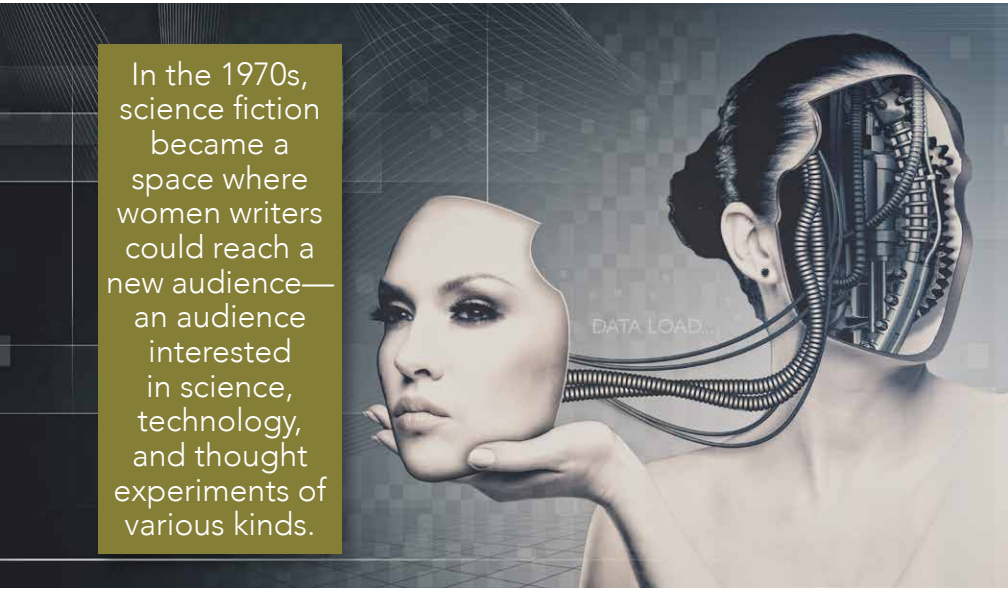
Houston, Houston, Do You Read?

- This lecture looks at a specific type of utopian move that we've seen before: the feminist separatist utopia, a society without men. We'll examine two very different ways it has been used for feminist ends. For this, we first turn to James Tiptree Jr.'s novella *Houston, Houston, Do You Read?* (from 1976) and then to Joanna Russ's *The Female Man* (from 1975).

- James Tiptree Jr. was the penname of Alice Sheldon (who also wrote under the penname Raccoona Sheldon), and who started publishing science fiction in 1967.

- *Houston, Houston, Do You Read?* sets up the potentials of utopia within feminist science fiction writing. Tiptree uses three techniques to create a very moderate brand of feminist separatist utopia: an appeal to male readers, an updating of Gilman, and a nuanced ending that leaves the reader thinking about whether he or she has just read about a utopian or dystopian society.

- It's very easy to imagine that *Houston, Houston Do You Read?* was written by a man. The opening paragraph depicts the character Lorimer in a crowded cabin as he recalls an event of gender confusion from his past: As a male, he was in the wrong place (the girl's bathroom); he was filled with embarrassment when faced with the female gaze. The voice feels like a male astronaut rather than a female writer.



- Tiptree's story is a clear updating of Gilman's *Herland*, starting with the three male visitors to the all-female society. The context is perfect for the 1970s. Instead of exploring some unnamed jungle area in the early 20th century, these men are exploring a new frontier.

- They are astronauts, and they find themselves lost in space, their equipment damaged after they have gone through a solar flare. When they try to contact NASA headquarters, as suggested by the title, they at first get no response. Then, suddenly, there's a voice. "Judy?" asks a girl's voice. "Judy, what are you doing on this band?"

- The men are stunned. Where's Houston? Who in the world is Judy? Dave responds, and there's some confusion. There are multiple women on the band, and none of them seem to be from NASA headquarters.

- Finally, Dave pulls rank. "This is Major Davis commanding United States Mission *Sunbird* on course for Earth," he radios. "You are intercepting official traffic from the United States Space Mission to Houston Control. If you cannot relay to Houston get off the air, you are committing a federal offense."

- The women are confused. They say the *Sunbird* isn't heading towards Earth at all. And then the men overhear some communications among the women, who have found something in the historical record. Centuries ago, there was a *Sunbird* space flight, commanded by Major Norman Davis, but it was lost in space during a sun flare.

- Finally, the two spaceships coordinate a rendezvous, and the men go onto the women's ship. It seems to the men disorganized, with plants and animals and none of the uniforms and command structures they're used to. There are also many sisters among the astronauts on board.

- The women eventually decide the men are ready for the truth: A major pandemic has wiped out most of Earth's population, and all of the men, so they have stepped into an all-female society that procreates through cloning.

Echoes of *Herland*

- Just as in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's 1915 feminist separatist utopian novel *Herland*, the three male visitors represent different brands of masculinity, and thus three different approaches to gender relations.

- Lorimer has an objective perspective in the face of the all-woman society, as opposed to Dave, who sees the women as lost souls and himself as a kind of Christian missionary. Bud is the update to Terry, seeing the women in purely sexual terms. Tiptree gets much more graphic than Gilman, perhaps under the guise of her male writer name.

- Also as in *Herland*, the men aren't quite sure what to make of the all-female utopia. They're a bit creeped out by the cloning and by the fact that the women were left with only 11,000 genotypes after the pandemic, meaning that there are several Judies or Connies of different ages but with the same genotype.

- Even with Tiptree's less ethical female society, the men introduce an element of violence unknown to the women.

- At one point, Lorimer says that the women don't understand the male contributions to history, the way men have traditionally protected women. The female captain genuinely tries to understand his argument, but she can't: "Of course we enjoy your inventions and we do appreciate your evolutionary role," she said. "But you must see there's a problem. As I understand it, what you protected people from was largely other males, wasn't it?" Lorimer doesn't have a really good answer to that.

- At the end of the book, Lorimer has been shot by one of his fellow astronauts—a man. The women wouldn't even think of having firearms. And he, like all the women, realize that men cannot survive in this society and the society cannot survive the threat the men represent. But does that make the spacefaring cloned female society a utopia? Or does a complete inability for men and women to move past their differences represent a dystopia? It's an ambiguous ending.

The Female Man

- Joanna Russ's *The Female Man* is more complex—partly because it's a novel rather than a story, but also because, as a radical feminist, Russ was deeply invested in writing fiction likely to challenge readers' assumptions about the world as well as about the very nature of narrative.

- Russ believed that science fiction was supposed to be didactic. She also believed that women should fully acknowledge the gender discrimination they faced and shouldn't hesitate to write from a place of anger.

- She and James Tiptree Jr. wrote each other many letters, arguing about how feminism should work. Tiptree once, famously, wrote to Russ:

> Do you imagine that anyone with half a functional neuron can read your work and not have his fingers smoked by the bitter, multi-layered anger in it? It smells and smolders like a volcano buried so long and deadly it is just beginning to wonder if it can explode.

- Russ thought anger at injustice should smolder and should burn the reader just a bit. Her *Female Man* is a very unusual novel. It's told in dozens of vignettes, many of them under a page in length. It uses two related literary techniques to reshape the utopian genre to its feminist goals: juxtaposition and a cluster protagonist.

- The cluster protagonist is available only to science fiction or postmodern writers since it's the use of multiple protagonists who are all versions of the same person. In the case of *The Female Man*, we have four women, each living in a different world but with—we eventually learn—the same DNA.

- Russ creates a future with infinite possible worlds that are constantly splitting off into the twisted braids of time. What are we to make of this conception of time? Of this multiplication of possibility?

- In some ways, it doubles down on the paradox of utopia. Everything matters: Every little action, down to how we tie our shoes, has an impact if it creates a new world. At the same time, nothing matters: Infinite worlds are being created all the time, so none of these worlds has meaning. Except each of these worlds has meaning for the people who live in them. Russ is reveling here in the pleasure of recursive realities—the acknowledgment that all thought experiments have the potential to end in absurdity.

- This world of parallel universes with time travel allows Russ to create her cluster protagonist, since on each of the worlds visited by Janet, from the planet Whileaway (an Earth of the future in a future not our own), she meets another version of herself.

- Janet herself is from an all-female world that has the features Russ identifies as typical of feminist separatist utopias. It's an ecology-minded, classless society focused on peaceful, communal living. When Janet ends up on Earth (our Earth), she is interviewed on television by a male newscaster who makes a set of assumptions about an all-woman society.

- They talk about the death of men 800 years earlier in a plague. Janet explains, to the newscaster's consternation, that men were missed for a generation or two, but then were mostly forgotten. Do the women of Whileaway want Earth men to come to Whileaway? Not particularly, says Janet. She's married, has kids, and has love.

- This interview is an example of the juxtaposition between Whileaway and other worlds that we see throughout the novel. One is the world of Jael, in which men and women live separately, violently, and at war with each other. In this world where the battle of the sexes is literalized, Jael is an assassin. This is a world of extreme dystopia.

- The other two worlds are versions of Earth around 1970, versions in which the protagonists deal with the kind of limited notions of female sexuality we see in the interview with Janet. Jeannine is timid, subjugated by her boyfriend, but focused on her goal of marriage. Joanna is the female man of the title, ready to be fully a person—just as much a well-rounded person as any man.

- This lecture has only scratched the surface of the feminist utopian movement that began in the 1970s. The movement has a sense of great possibility inflected with realism. Perhaps most notably, there's a sense that feminism is a really complicated set of ideas, and that utopia is an equally complicated genre that's perfect for playing out those ideas in ways that are hopefully just as interesting and provocative to female and male readers.

SUGGESTED READING

Elgin, *Native Tongue.*
McIntyre, *Starfarers.*
Piercy, *He, She, and It.*
———, *Woman on the Edge of Time.*
Russ, *The Female Man.*
Sargent, *The Shore of Women.*
———, ed., *Women of Wonder.*
Scott, *A Description of Millenium Hall.*
Slonczewski, *A Door into Ocean.*
Tepper, *The Gate to Women's Country.*
Tiptree Jr., *Houston, Houston, Do You Read?*
Wittig, *Les Guérrières.*

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1 Why do you think the main utopian movement of the 20th century occurred within the feminist literary movement? What does utopia offer feminism?

2 Tiptree and Russ take very different approaches to telling stories about feminist separatist utopias, representing (in a simplified way) radical and moderate feminisms. Which approach do you think is more likely to result in social activism, and why?

3 What's the role of men in feminism? How do the feminist utopias of the 1970s and since address this extremely important question?

LECTURE 16

Ursula K. Le Guin and the Ambiguous Utopia

Ursula K. Le Guin has always embraced the label of science fiction. The way that Le Guin has embraced this category has helped to broaden the notion that science fiction can also be literary fiction. She wrote, in 1974, about the potential of the genre: "If science fiction has a major gift to offer literature, I think it is just this: the capacity to face an open universe. Physically open, psychically open. No doors shut." And that's very much what Le Guin herself does: She approaches various fictional worlds and situations with an open mind, drawing upon disciplines like physics, anthropology, and fine arts.

The Left Hand of Darkness

- This lecture will focus on two of Le Guin's best-known utopian works, both from her Hainish Cycle: *The Left Hand of Darkness*, 1969, and *The Dispossessed*, 1974.

- The Hainish Cycle is set in a world where hundreds of thousands of years ago, beings developed on the planet of Hain and then colonized hundreds of worlds, including Earth. A group of 80 or so planets now work together in a loose association called the Ekumen.

- They don't have faster-than-light space travel, but they do have the ansible, a technology that allows instantaneous communication. Le Guin writes numerous short stories and novels in this world, often focusing on moments of interplanetary encounters.

- *The Left Hand of Darkness* is a novel set on the planet of Gethen, or Winter, where the climate is extremely cold, right at the edge of what human beings can tolerate. The Gethenians look like humans, but they enact gender differently than any other place in the Ekumen. They are without notable sex differences except during kemmer, which occurs at 26-day cycles.

- When in kemmer, people develop female or male characteristics and engage in sexual activity; if they don't use contraceptives, they may become pregnant or impregnate another. It's normal for the same person to have mothered some children and fathered others.

- Is Gethen a utopian planet? Sort of. There are actually some really interesting advantages to their gender system and their philosophies of time. But there are also some rather unsavory politics.

- What about the Ekumen? Is it a utopian idea, even if the individual planets may not all be utopian? Certainly it's a great space to explore how different societies might emerge and how different forms of government and philosophy might function.

Genly Ai

- We see both the Ekumen and Gethen through our main point-of-view character, Genly Ai. The novel embodies the Gethenian notion of time. They think about time differently than we do. First, they live in the present, literally: In Gethen, it is always Year One, and they number past and future years based by, as Genly puts it, "count[ing] backwards or forwards from the unitary Now."

- This means that the Gethenians see their history through the prism of their own experience instead of through an event that has been deemed important enough to number years from before and after. For them, as Genly explains, "progress is less important than presence."

- Genly is an interplanetary ambassador, a man who has chosen to devote his life to meeting new people and learning about them. Le Guin makes it hard for Genly to accept Gethenian gender on its own terms, where people don't identify as male or female except during those couple days a month they are sexually active.

- What is Le Guin saying with that choice? Part of what she might be saying is that accepting difference, no matter how open we are to it, is hard.

- A physicist and gender theorist named Evelyn Fox Keller wrote an essay called "How Gender Matters; or, Why It's So Hard for us to Count Past Two." In that essay, Keller argues that gender and science have both been thought about largely in binary terms: male and female, hard science and soft science.

- If we could get beyond these binaries, Keller says, "we might discover new kinds of stories [in ourselves and in nature] … we might discover what we never imagined possible—games that require us to count past two, or between one and two." That could mean more than two gender identities.

- Le Guin's novel, *The Left Hand of Darkness*, came out decades before Keller's essay and before the mainstreaming of LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer) rights, but Le Guin, like other feminist science fiction writers, is clearly using sci-fi and utopia to explore these issues.

- Genly is intrigued by the Gethenians, and finds it somewhat disappointing to think their gender system is almost certainly the result of a Hainish experiment rather than a natural evolutionary shift. After all, he sees the advantages: All Gethenians of childbearing

age know that they might become pregnant, that they might nurse a baby. This means that the burdens and privileges of childbearing are shared out equally. There is no rape and no inequality.

- But Le Guin doesn't just leave it at that. Through Genly, she notes that it isn't only hard to move past gendered thinking about others; it's hard to imagine being seen without the evidence of the communities we belong to—communities of shared gender, race, age, and so on. It's almost like laying yourself bare, as if, in a way, those categories create protection for our individual identities.

The Dispossessed

- The opening of another Le Guin novel, *The Dispossessed*, describes a wall that is flimsy in physical construction but strong as a philosophical idea. Then comes the second paragraph of the novel: "Like all walls it was ambiguous, two-faced. What was inside it and what was outside it depended upon which side of it you were on."

- The novel's protagonist is Shevek. He is crossing the wall in order to get onto a freight spaceship that travels regularly between Urras and Annares. It hasn't taken a passenger in almost 200 years.

- Almost two centuries ago, led by the philosophical writings of an anarchist woman named Odo, a group of people from the planet of Urras became so frustrated by what they saw as a corrupt capitalist system that they emigrated, permanently, to their moon, Annares. The colony on the moon was set up as a more community-based way of life putting into practice the principles of ethical anarchy.

- Shevek, a physicist, enters this society. He volunteers for various work details, helps other people with their math and physics homework, and copulates with other young people, male and female, although he has a preference for girls.

- Shevek grows up, becomes permanently partnered with a woman, has two children, and creates a whole new theory of simultaneity, an extension of Einstein's theory of relativity.

- To the consternation of many on the moon, he decides to go to the planet, and eventually shares his theory with the whole of the Ekumen. This becomes the basis for the ansible, which allows instantaneous communication between all those planets.

- Annares is one utopian model: the moon where the environment is so harsh it brings out the best in people. Urras is more familiar: the wealthy planet that is easy to read as a version of Earth. There's lots of agriculture and industry, big cities, excellent universities, and lots of different cultures.

- Shevek, the ethical anarchist, has a lot of trouble accepting two things about the planet. First, there's a lot of inequity on the planet. Resources are not equally shared. What really shocks Shevek is that people go hungry even when there isn't a famine. And the people who have food know about the people who don't have food. They just don't share. It boggles his mind.

- Second, he goes to a university to work with other physicists and finds himself surrounded by men. "Where are the women?" he asks. His male colleague gives a startling response, saying what Shevek knows from experience to be untrue: that women aren't intellectually equal.

- He keeps thinking about that lie:

> This matter of superiority and inferiority must be a central one in Urrasti social life. If to respect himself Kimoe [his colleague] had to consider half the human race as inferior to him, how then did women manage to respect themselves—did they consider men inferior? And how did all that affect their sex lives?

- These are somewhat descriptive, rather than predictive, questions. But there's also, perhaps, a predictive portion of this ambiguous utopia. The more we learn the planet, the more it feels like Earth. But at the end, Shevek flees to an embassy on Urras, and there he meets none other than the ambassador from Earth.

- What she says isn't pretty. To her, the planet of Urras is paradise because the people of Earth have destroyed their planet, and they survive only because the Hainish came and saved them. But still, things on Earth are very hard, since the planet is now just as stark as Shevek's moon, but without the ethical anarchy that makes it work.

- This raises several questions: Is that gutted Earth the prediction? Is Urras the prediction? Is Annares? Or is each a different description—a description of the ways we can imagine ourselves and our relationships with each other?

- In the end, Shevek goes back to his home, and a Hainish man comes with him. Shevek tells him it won't be easy. Here is the Hainish man's response:

> My race is very old. We have been civilized for a thousand millennia. We have histories of hundreds of those millennia. We have tried everything. Anarchism, with the rest. But *I* have not tried it.

- That's what makes the Ekumen seem like a true utopia: the notion that eventually a society tries everything, and still leaves a way for its citizens to experience different lifestyles as individuals.

SUGGESTED READING

Le Guin, *Always Coming Home.*
———, "Nine Lives." 1969.
———, *The Dispossessed.*
———, *The Left Hand of Darkness.*
———, "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas."

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Do you agree with Le Guin's assertion that science fiction and utopia are descriptive rather than predictive or prescriptive? Why or why not?

2. Le Guin's Ekumen, the backbone of the Hainish books, is a loose association of planets that trade in communication much more than in goods or people. Is this enormous social network the most utopian system Le Guin describes? Or do you see any of the planets described in the Hainish Cycle as utopias in their own right?

3. Genly and Shevek are both male visitors to a strange land, but they are otherwise quite different. Which is the better observer and why? Which do you connect with more closely and why? If you were teaching a class in which you had to choose between *The Left Hand of Darkness* and *The Dispossessed*, which would you choose and why?

LECTURE 17

Samuel Delany and the Heterotopia

Samuel Delany has published much fiction and literary criticism, and he's equally acclaimed as a thinker and a writer. He's won all of science fiction's major awards at one time or another, and he's won a Stonewall Book Award—the American Library Association's award for best novels addressing LGBTQ themes. His influence goes beyond marginalized worlds like science fiction and LGBTQ literature, though. In 2010, he was one of five judges for the National Book Award for fiction. The book we'll focus on in this lecture is Delany's 12th novel, published in 1976. It was initially published as *Triton* but was republished in 1996 as *Trouble on Triton.*

Heterotopia

- This novel has a very interesting subtitle: *An Ambiguous Heterotopia.* What in the world is a heterotopia?

- Delany himself has pointed scholars to the *Oxford English Dictionary* for a definition. In standard definitions, we get misplacement or displacement, as of an organ or misplaced tissue. A skin graft, as Delany has said, is a heterotopy, as is a sex change.

- Delany includes two rather perplexing appendices in *Trouble on Triton*. Appendix B opens with an epigraph from philosopher Michel Foucault, who wrote at length about heterotopia. Here's the important bit: "*Utopias* afford consolation: although they have no real locality there is nevertheless a fantastic, untroubled region in which they are able to unfold."

- A little later, he writes, "*Heterotopias* are disturbing, probably because they make it impossible to name this and that, because they shatter or tangle common names, because they destroy 'syntax' in advance." As the Foucault quotation goes on to explain, utopias exist within language, while heterotopias challenge our linguistic structures.

Bodies

- How can you write a book that questions the possibility of grammar? Delany works with that idea by sliding from words to bodies.

- This relates to an idea discussed at some length by gender theorist Judith Butler in her 1990 book, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. The word *Trouble* is important here: Recall that Delany changed the title of his novel about fluid gender identities from *Triton* to *Trouble on Triton* in 1996, six years after Butler's book came out.

- Butler's book was a groundbreaker. For a long time before Butler, feminists had made a distinction between biological sex (male or female) and gender (what you perform, i.e., masculine or feminine traits).

- Butler's argument in *Gender Trouble* was that not only is gender socially constructed, but sex is too. Sex is not a simple binary. It's a continuum, with more possibilities than we initially thought.

- Butler suggests that gender is a performance. Performing one's gender—differently in different contexts if one likes—is a form of freedom, a way for an individual to really shape and understand and control their identity.

- Butler's work became one of the cornerstones of queer theory—of a gender politics that takes back the word *queer*, refusing to think of it as derogatory. This actually uses queer as a noun, an adjective, and even a verb. *To queer* is to to problematize or question definitions.

Trouble on Triton

- *Trouble on Triton* very much anticipates Butler's work. On Triton, Neptune's largest moon—which is a lovely terraformed locale with a nice dome that controls gravity and temperature—there is a lot of gender trouble and queering of gender identity. This is trouble in the positive sense: the sense of questioning identity categories, of opening them up.

- The people of Triton live in a society where categories of identity like sex, race, religion, and sexual preference are all seen as things that can be changed anytime without anyone in your life minding.

- The main character is an unreliable narrator, Bron Helstrom, who seems somewhere between clueless and self-centered. The fact that he's hard to relate to makes him the perfect point-of-view character for an ambiguous heterotopia, since we're never completely with him in his perspective.

- Bron is a Martian who emigrated to Triton several years ago. He's a tall, good-looking, 37-year-old blond guy who lives in a men's co-op. On the first page, he thinks to himself, "I am a reasonably happy man."

- Perhaps part of the problem with Bron is that he's a metalogician, so he studies the logic of logic. He regularly spends a great deal of time deconstructing not only his interactions with others but also his performance in those interactions—and his thoughts about his performance. For a reader, that kind of infinite perspective on perspective is hard to identify with.

- Why would Delany push our notions of logical narrative strategy so far? It all goes back to the queering mentioned earlier. If we start to really think how gender works, it pushes us into an unfamiliar cognitive space where we sort of know what's going on, but many of our familiar bearings are unavailable.

Micro-Theater

- Delany addresses this in *Trouble on Triton* with micro-theater. As Bron walks along, we are introduced to micro-theater. One night Bron leaves his office where he works as a metalogician and walks home through the unlawful sector.

- He looks back and sees a beautiful topless woman, who seems not to realize that there's a huge man chasing her, almost upon her. As Bron tries to warn her, the giant man knocks the woman down and yells at her, telling her to leave him (gesturing at Bron) alone. The man tells Bron the woman won't bother him anymore and runs off.

- Disoriented, Bron tries to explain to the woman that he has no idea what the big man was talking about, which leads to an awkward conversation. But then she takes his hand and leads him through an archway, where things get a bit surreal. There are musicians and acrobats and people doing all kinds of unusual things.

- Bron watches, and the viewing experience is incredible—visceral and energizing. But he's totally confused when all the people who have been singing and dancing and doing gymnastics stop and clap for him.

- The beautiful topless woman sees his confusion. "Oh," she says. "This is a theatrical commune. We're operating on a Government Arts Endowment to produce micro-theater for unique audiences."

- Once Bron starts to understand that *he* is the unique audience, she turns her hand over to show that she has a metal disc in her palm. She tells him she hopes he doesn't mind that she drugged him just a little—to open up his senses—when she took his hand earlier.

- Bron doesn't mind. But this kind of theatrical interruption signals that the novel will not proceed as expected. At any moment, we might move out of the narrative proper and into a theatrical fugue. All notions of reality are up for grabs.

Back to the Narrative

- After the micro-theater, Bron becomes a bit obsessed with the beautiful topless woman who drugged him without his consent. She's an incredibly talented actress and director known only as the Spike.

- Eventually they sleep together, and the Spike tells Bron she's impressed; he's really good at this. He used to be a professional, he explains, back when he was a younger man living on Mars. And even though he doesn't really believe in love, Bron starts to think about the Spike a lot more than he usually thinks about people he meets and sleeps with.

- Many events happen in this novel. There are office politics, commune politics, and lots of awkward conversations with co-workers, acquaintances, and, especially, with the Spike.

- Triton goes to war with Earth. Travelling with a friend who works in intelligence, Bron goes to Earth on what he thinks is a holiday but ends up being detained and tortured by Earth authorities. Triton's dome is breached and Bron acts semi-heroically.

- The Spike does not return Bron's affections. In fact, she sends him a rather nasty letter to that effect, which is when Bron decides to have a sex change. He wants to change not only his body but his whole set of sexual preferences; he doesn't want to be particularly attracted to women any more.

- After receiving the nasty letter from the Spike, Bron has a deep conversation with his neighbor, a 76-year-old gay man named Lawrence. Bron complains that women just don't understand. "They don't understand *you*," Lawrence says. Lawrence gets along with women just fine.

- Lawrence eventually explains that men have been treated as human beings for thousands of years, but for women, it's only been the past 65 years or so. "The result of this historical anomaly," Lawrence goes on, "is simply that, on a statistical basis, women are just a little less willing to put up with certain kinds of [stuff] than men."

- The problem with Bron is that he's looking for a woman who is a logical masochist: a woman who will, basically, put up with Bron's unpleasantries out of bed as well as in.

- The woman Bron wants simply doesn't exist. But Bron rejects this, eventually saying, "Women don't understand." Bron adds that gay men don't understand either. This statement reveals so much about Bron: his intellectual arrogance, his lack of respect for women and gay men, and his complete lack of understanding of anything Lawrence has just said.

The Reassignment

- Bron's next move is to go to a sex-change clinic and become a woman, with the mental reassignment as well as the physical. From that moment, about three-quarters of the way through the novel, Bron is a woman, with female pronouns.

- She has to move out of the men's commune, of course. Her friends and acquaintances are a little surprised at first, but they adjust quickly, since many of them have made major changes to their bodies for various reasons, including in order to become a mother or a father.

- Bron takes a little longer to adjust, especially at her work, where she struggles with focus. "It's possible you just may be somebody who believes that women are less efficient. So you're just living up to your own image," her gender reassignment counselor suggests.

Triton as a Whole

- The culture of Triton represents personal liberty—the great casualty of the early-20th-century dystopias—being taken to an extreme most of us would never even have imagined. Shouldn't that feel more utopic than this novel feels?

- In a word, no. Delany is showing us, with his ambiguous heterotopia, that a perfect place is impossible.

- Delany presents a world in which extreme liberty does not equate to utopia. But it doesn't equate to dystopia either.

- He gives us the notion that although the "other" place is more achievable—or at least more imaginable—than the "perfect" place, that's still a conversation worth having. In *Trouble on Triton* there's no earnest hope for utopia. But there's a strong commitment to taking a wild, metalogical, postmodern ride through the complex corridors of utopian thought.

SUGGESTED READING

Delany, *Babel-17*.
———, *Tales of Nevèrÿon*.
———, *The Einstein Intersection*.
———, *Trouble on Triton*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1 Joanna Russ includes *Trouble on Triton* in her study of feminist utopias. Do you see this as a feminist utopia? Why or why not?

2 What's the impact of having a protagonist like Bron, who is unreliable and fairly unpleasant? Do you think he's the kind of character that might emerge from a society organized like Triton? Or is he, rather, an unusual character who provides Delany with a particular lens to show us this society effectively?

3 In *Trouble on Triton*, we get the opportunity to see the world through the eyes of the same character as a man and a woman. What's the impact of that? What do you think motivated Bron to choose the sex-change procedure?

LECTURE 18

Octavia Butler and the Utopian Alien

Octavia Butler was not a utopian in the vein of Ursula K. Le Guin. But she did believe that science fiction could make a difference. None of her works fit perfectly into the categories of utopia or dystopia—or any category, really. Instead, each of her works is shot through with a utopian impulse as she imagines radically different worlds, always showing multiple perspectives and gesturing toward the importance of working toward social change. Her utopian writing represents a turning point that moves us from the feminist utopian renaissance of the 1970s to the more complex negotiation between utopian and dystopian impulses that has helped shape the genres as they are today.

Aliens

- Butler has plenty of aliens throughout her body of work, but in this lecture we'll focus on those in "Bloodchild" and the *Xenogenesis* trilogy, since these two make distinct contributions to the utopian genre.

- Intersectionality is the idea that we can't fully understand the experience of someone who is doubly "othered," a black woman, for example, without considering both her race and her gender. Intersectional thinking asks us to consider how multiple elements of personal identity—race, class, gender, sexuality, and so on—intersect in the way a person relates to issues of power.

- Butler adds another category of otherness: species. Think about a straight, able-bodied, well-educated white man. Now, add aliens who are head and shoulders above this white man in every identity category you can imagine: The aliens are smarter, stronger, and more knowledgeable about the world, which has changed dramatically so that now the man barely understands it.

- Further, the aliens have such a different worldview that they don't even know they're supposed to be impressed, or intimidated, or whatever response the man is used to getting regarding his race, class, and gender.

"Bloodchild" and Change

- For Butler, survival requires change. And sometimes, people might not want to survive the changes they'll be forced to make. Butler puts her characters through a lot, as in her early short story, "Bloodchild," first published in *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine* in 1984. This is a challenging story.

- The setting is pure dystopia, with the humans on an alien planet, living on the Preserve, a large enclosed community from which they cannot escape. They live in symbiotic relationships with the Tlic, very large insect-like aliens.

- We open with the first-person narrator, Gan, a human male teenager. He and his family are at home eating sterile Tlic eggs, which contain a powerful narcotic that extends life and good health. These eggs are produced by T'Gatoi, an alien who is to Gan something between a family friend, a lover, and a captor.

- The bliss of the evening is interrupted by a medical emergency when a neighbor goes into labor while his Tlic mate is too ill to properly care for him. The pregnant man is brought into Gan's home. Gan helps T'Gatoi in delivering the babies and in saving his neighbor's life. Shocked at witnessing the pains of childbirth, Gan says he won't do it—he will not allow himself to become pregnant.

- The humans giving birth to Tlic babies have no genetic connection to those babies. The humans—usually men, which adds a wrinkle to the gender analysis—are merely hosts to the alien babies. And those babies are born hungry, and as they are carnivorous, their first instinct is to consume their host. Part of helping out with childbirth is actually getting the new babies to eat a livestock animal instead of the human.

- In the end, Gan does agree to be impregnated. The last line, which follows his erotic encounter with T'Gatoi, is pronounced by the alien: "'I'll take care of you.'"

- We are left with two uncomfortable readings of this intersectional story:
  1. Gan is so subtly enslaved that even his creator doesn't acknowledge it.

  2. Gan must fundamentally change his identity—and maybe readers must change how we understand questions of identity—in order to survive and thrive in a new context, a new world.

Xenogenesis

- In the *Xenogenesis* trilogy, Butler doubles down on the most unbalancing aspects of "Bloodchild." This series is also in its omnibus edition, which is titled *Lilith's Brood*. There is much to discuss here, including the series' interest in the psychology of survivorship. The setting is a devastated Earth.

- We experience the beginning from the perspective of Lilith, a grief-stricken 26-year-old black woman who has lost her husband and child in the wars that have devastated Earth. As the series opens, she is in a plain gray room with no furniture except the built-in platform on which she was sleeping.

- The floor and walls are all of the same material, smooth and featureless, but somehow strange. Lilith is naked. She doesn't know where she is or what's going on, but she knows she has been here before. She realizes that she is a visitor to another society.

- Enter Jdahya, the first alien Lilith meets. He is an Oankali, which means "gene-trader," since these aliens trade genes with each new species they encounter. They are deeply committed to adaptation, which means that different strains of Oankali might be extremely different from one another based on the various species each has encountered in their intergalactic travels.

- Jdahya has been bred to be as similar to humans as possible: He has a humanoid body, grey skin, and sensory organs on his face in the general arrangement of eyes, nose, and mouth.

- He also has something that looks like hair. But as Lilith gets a little closer—not too close—she realizes that the hair and the facial features are actually tentacles, some large, some small. Each of them automatically follows her movements, since each tentacle is a very sensitive sensory organ.

- Jdahya tells Lilith that she has been chosen by the Oankali to be a leader of her people and a mediator between the two groups. Unlike many humans, she responds to change well. She is a survivor.

- He explains that when the Oankali saw the humans destroying themselves and their planet, the aliens assumed they were witnessing a consensual species suicide.

- When they realized, horrified, that some humans wanted to survive, they rescued those they could and placed them in a long-term stasis while they waited over a century for the Earth to begin to repair herself so some of the humans could be returned.

- Lilith thinks this is fascinating, but she's also distracted, filled with fear and loathing. Eventually she asks Jdahya why she can't get past her fear of his alienness. Jdhaya explains that she's doing relatively well; for instance, in comparison, some humans tried to kill him.

Xenophobia

- In the *Xenogenesis* trilogy, xenophobia isn't just a euphemism for racism. It's an uncontrollable fear in open-minded humans as they try to adapt to the aliens who have saved their species.

- The Oankali experience xenophobia too. To the Oankali, the humans have great potential. But the humans have two incompatible traits: intelligence and competition. The only outcome that can follow from such a contradiction is species death.

- The Oankali proclaim that the only way for humans to find a better, more equitable life—and to avoid self-destruction—is to fundamentally change, at the genetic level.

- The Oankali society has many utopian elements. The Oankali are master environmentalists. And their proto-utopian society does not suffer from the boredom of utopia in theory. The Oankali are unwaveringly curious, always excited to learn new environments and new species. They have a genuine love of life and living things that is contagious.

- But the gene-trade with the Oankali, which includes alien sex and hybrid families, is full of complex power dynamics. In Oankali sexuality, there are three genders: male, female, and ooloi.

- The ooloi have special sensory arms that provide them with the ability to do deep gene manipulation, and the humans soon come to see the ooloi as the ones with power. A family has five adult members: a male and female Oankali, a male and female human, and an ooloi. These five will have many children, and the children will each represent a new adaptation.

- In an Oankali family, the two mothers generally have babies at the same time, and the babies are born without gender. Gender isn't determined until after transition, an extreme form of puberty, but most kids develop a sense of gender identity by the time they're four or five.

- The two babies are closely linked (they're called pair siblings), and their gender is therefore linked. They will either both become ooloi, and go off to two different families, or they will become a male and a female, and will grow to become mates.

Lilith

- As she gets to know the Oankali, Lilith's initial visceral disgust turns into something more complicated: a dual feeling of attraction and repulsion.

- As Lilith and the other humans soon learn, the ooloi encapsulate the repulsion and the attraction all the humans feel towards the Oankali. The ooloi, after all, are master genetic manipulators. They can easily identify and correct any diseases in humans. They also provide powerful erotic experiences.

- The sensation is far beyond anything Lilith has ever experienced: pure neurological pleasure spiced with a hint of revulsion. Each human experiences a complex reaction, a complex xenophobia that results from their unwillingness to give up control of their own sexuality. For many, it feels like rape.

- Within the world of *Xenogenesis*, if a human tries to attack an Oankali, the Oankali can easily subdue the human with a single chemical injection. An ooloi can carefully deliver an injection that only renders the human unconscious, but the male and female Oankali, who don't have that kind of control, involuntarily deliver fatal injections if attacked without warning.

- The humans conceive of their new situation in many terms, none of them complimentary: slavery, imprisonment, and prostitution.

- It appears to be the kind of situation we often see in totalitarian dystopias: Most people accept the social structures, no matter how restrictive. And a few people that we come to care about rebel against the totalitarian machine, only to be thwarted in the attempt. The reader feels suitably chastened, suitably warned by the cautionary tale.

- Yet Butler doesn't go with that ending. Instead, she writes books 2 and 3 from alien perspectives, showing the humans to the reader in some of the same ways we have just been shown the aliens.

- Book 2 is told from the point of view of Akin, one of Lilith's children, a hybrid male who is kidnapped as a baby by rebel humans and grows up part Oankali in a human village that reviles the aliens. Book 3 is told from an even more alien perspective, that of the first hybrid ooloi.

- These books are an important part of a recent literary movement that includes Le Guin and Atwood but goes even further in blurring the lines between utopia, dystopia and even apocalypse. Butler regularly casts a utopian tinge over other genres too, a now quite common move in contemporary fiction.

SUGGESTED READING

Butler, *Bloodchild and Other Stories*.
———, *Lilith's Brood*.
Imarisha and Brown, eds., *Octavia's Brood*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1 "Bloodchild" is a difficult short story that includes a graphic depiction of a pregnant man giving birth to wormlike alien offspring. It's the kind of story that might get a "target warning" in education circles, meaning that educators warn students that the story might upset them and, possibly, allow students to elect not to read the story. Do you think target warnings are helpful? Or should students be required to read stories like these, especially when they are purely fictional?

2 What is the value of adding the category of species to our understanding of intersectionality?

3 How much can we learn about what it means to be human by placing humans into challenging situations with fictional aliens?

LECTURE 19

Octavia Butler and Utopian Hybridity

Utopian literature sometimes suffers because a perfect place may also be a static place, so it's hard for the writer to maintain narrative momentum. Dystopian literature, on the other hand, may have a great deal of interest, but may be short on strategies for actually dealing with the dystopian elements of the society and their analogues in our current society. Octavia Butler's works are neither purely utopian nor dystopian, and they suffer from neither a lack of movement nor a lack of strategies. They are, in fact, all about change. They're about being open to not only understanding other perspectives, no matter how alienating they may seem, but even to assimilating such perspectives into our worldview.

Kindred

- Butler's breakthrough 1979 novel *Kindred* is a fine example of genre hybridity: It has a slave narrative combined with time travel. *Kindred* tells the tale of Dana, a black woman living in Los Angeles in the 1970s, fairly happily married to her white husband, Kevin.

- One day, Dana experiences a phenomenon that is to change her forever. She is transported from their apartment to a new place, where a little white boy who has fallen into a river is calling for help.

- She saves the child and soon comes to realize that the people in this strange place think that, simply because of her skin color, she is a slave. When her life is threatened, she returns to her present-day existence in Los Angeles.

- The novel never explains the mechanism for Dana's travels, which she eventually figures out are travels through both time and space. She goes—physically, not metaphorically—to antebellum Maryland, where she is called upon repeatedly to rescue her ancestors, a slave woman named Alice and her white master Rufus, the little drowning boy from Dana's first journey.

- Rufus regularly assaults slave women, and even attempts to rape Dana at one point, but he is not shown merely as an evil white slaveholder. Rather, he is shown as a man who is constructed by the cultural and economic circumstances of his birth and life. It's not that he shouldn't take responsibility for his actions, but his very sense of responsibility is structured by the institution in which he finds himself.

- The novel's message is that the only way to begin imagining a better future is to confront the past head-on. In contemporary America, that means a real confrontation with the legacy of slavery.

The *Patternist* Series

- Butler's *Patternist* series, published in the 1970s and 1980s, consists of five novels set in a world that may remind us a bit of John Wyndham's *The Chrysalids*, since the major difference between this world and ours is human telepathy.

- In a distant future, a group of humans eventually known as the Patternists has developed telepathy and has, as a result, become extremely powerful. Each novel showcases a conflict resulting from the telepathic humans as they deal with other humans, with aliens, and even with a group of post-humans developed from a different mutation.

- The first book of Butler's series takes us to a distant future, probably on Earth, in which millions of people are connected together through telepathic links in a Pattern, run by the Patternmaster. Those belonging to the Pattern (the telepaths) basically enslave the "mutes," who are without this sense. And the Pattern gives them a great advantage in the ongoing war against the Clayarks, a different mutation of humans.

- Throughout the series, we see the applications of the telepathy. There are the military applications: In the ongoing war, the Clayark minds are so different the Patternists can't read them, but they can still use the Pattern as advanced communications technology.

- The telepathy also has strong medical applications, since a telepathic healer can go into another person's mind and diagnose an illness, making repairs without surgical intervention. The flip side of this, of course, is that all healers have the potential to be killers who can stop the heart through telepathy alone.

- Book 2 of the series, *Mind of my Mind*, takes us back in time, to the present day and the origin of the Pattern. Here we meet Mary, a bright, compassionate young woman whose mother is a drug addict. As a teenager, Mary develops a powerful telepathic ability.

- Mary's telepathy is the work of Doro, a prehistoric being who has, for thousands of years, been working towards such mutations. Doro can inhabit other people's bodies. Every time he nears death, he goes into the body of whoever is closest to him. And for generations, he has been doing human husbandry, trying to breed humans for superhuman ability.

- Mary becomes enormously powerful, and eventually creates—unintentionally—the Pattern, which links together people with a great deal of telepathic power as well as, eventually, people with only a little mental instinct.

- In a way, this Pattern provides the underlying structure through which we can imagine change, potentially utopian or potentially dystopian. But any kind of structure has those two possibilities for imagining the future.

Fledgling

- In Butler's work, how we imagine a better society is always very much bound up in our own personal perspectives. That is evident in the very last novel that Butler published, in 2003: *Fledgling*. This is a fantastic novel that takes all of the tropes of the vampire and reshapes them to merge the vampire narrative with the narrative of the utopian planned community.

- The vampires in the world of *Fledgling* are called the Ina, and they have many vampiric qualities: they need to drink human blood in order to survive, they can't go out in the sunlight, they're very clannish, and they tend to be tall, thin, and pale.

- Like many contemporary vampires, they're not one-dimensionally evil, and they are not vulnerable to religious symbols or garlic. Also like contemporary vampires, they are very powerful and very seductive.

- The novel is narrated by Shori, a young Ina woman who has been left for dead in a raid on her planned community. As Shori learns about the community and its cultural values, so too does the reader.

- Each Ina needs a certain number of humans—usually five or six adults—to preserve him or herself. In these symbiotic relationships, the Ina gets blood and people to represent her in the daylight. The human symbionts get longevity, health, and incredible sex.

- The symbionts live with their Ina in small planned communities that follow utopian blueprints. These humans have many choices about the kinds of lives they can live—urban or rural, professional or leisurely—but they need the Ina in an addictive way, raising questions about consent, free will, and what it means to be human.

- This novel includes hybrid characters, since the human symbionts are deeply changed by their relationships with Ina and the resulting 200-year-plus lifespan. And as hybrid humans—willing to change—they are also open to the potential of real utopian experience.

Earthseed

- The *Earthseed* series draws together all the elements we see in other novels. It's also the only series Butler wrote that does not have a science fiction or fantasy trope. Its speculations are strictly about the future—a very imaginable future—of Earth.

- There are two *Earthseed* books: *The Parable of the Sower*, which came out in 1993, and *The Parable of the Talents*, from 1998.

- The series opens in a California of 2030, and it narrates two decades of extreme decline in U.S. power due to poor resource management, corrupt politics, and an increasing inability or unwillingness for people to accept the multiplicity of identity politics in the 21st century.

- They're told from the perspective of Lauren Olamina. She is the young woman who will eventually become to many people Prophet Lauren Olamina, founder and leader of the new religion, Earthseed.

- When we first meet her, Lauren is a desperate teenaged girl in a desperate situation. Living in a gated community in Robledo, California with her beloved father and stepmom and her three younger brothers, 15-year-old Lauren can see the writing on the wall.

- Life in the community has become increasingly difficult, with overcrowding, increasingly thin margins on food production through gardens and small livestock, and more and more frequent marauders breaking in at night.

- Outside the walls, life is even worse. Homeless families squat where they can, water costs more than food, hygiene and sanitation are deplorable, and most jobs pay only in food and not in wages. Criminals (even petty thieves in a world where to eat may be to steal) are fitted with electronic slave collars and put to work—often sex work.

- Just to make this already harrowing situation even worse, a new designer drug called Pyro has hit the streets. As its name suggests, this drug makes people set fires.

- Lauren has hyperempathy syndrome, a delusional condition that is the result of the experimental "smart drug," Paraceto, taken by her now-dead biological mother during pregnancy so she could do well in grad school. Lauren, like other "sharers" born with this condition, thinks she can share the pain or pleasure of others.

- This means that when she leaves the gated compound, always with a large armed group of others from her community, she describes the horrific conditions of the people on the streets not only as she sees them but also from the perspective of feeling their pain.

- Eventually, the wall is breached and Lauren's community is set on fire, with only 18-year-old Lauren and a couple of others getting out alive. This starts an apocalyptic road narrative that uses some of the standard conventions of this story and creates some new ones.

- The difference comes largely from Earthseed, the spiritual idea that Lauren has been developing for several years. She has long been writing verses of Earthseed. The verses are so true to her that she almost feels like she hasn't invented them, but has received them.

- At the same time, she shows us that she writes many many revisions of each of the texts that she produces and eventually collates in what she calls *Earthseed: The Book of the Living*. Here's an excerpt: "The only lasting truth / Is Change."

- Lauren's adventures are riveting, as they include a long and arduous trek north by the displaced and dispossessed poor of California, the foundation of a utopian planned community in which Lauren spreads the word of Earthseed, and the destruction of that community by Christian fundamentalists. Other events include the kidnapping of Lauren's daughter and the enslavement (with electronic collars) of many members of Earthseed.

- Through these perils and successes, Butler continually explores questions of power and of identity: How much do these people need to change to survive?

- She also uses a trope seen in Zamyatin's *We* and Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, in that the *Earthseed* novels are documents that provide a counter-narrative to what's happening.

- The first novel, *Parable of the Sower*, is Lauren's journal, so the very fact that we are reading this journal indicates that there's a future beyond the terrifying events in the novel. *Parable of the Talents* has two narrators: Lauren's daughter is curating and commenting upon her mother's life and writing. Again, this means that even as the reader gets drawn into Lauren's terrifying adventures, we know that she and Earthseed will survive.

- Butler, perhaps more forcefully than any other writer, demonstrates again and again that utopia and dystopia are never quite opposites. Instead, they are always constitutive of each other. And the most productive way to imagine either one is through a focus on change.

SUGGESTED READING

Butler, *Fledgling*. 2005.
———, *Kindred*. 1979.
———, *Parable of the Sower*. 1993.
———, *Patternmaster*. New York: Warner, 1976. Print.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1 Why do you think utopian thinking plays so well with other genres? What advantage does genre hybridity offer over more formal use of a single genre's conventions?

2 What do you think about *Earthseed* as a philosophy? What would be the ramifications of a major spiritual movement celebrating the idea that God is change?

3 What are the strengths and weaknesses of setting stories with utopian projects in a very plausible near-future on Earth versus a more distant setting in the far future or on another planet?

LECTURE 20

Margaret Atwood and Environmental Dystopia

Margaret Atwood is not always an earnest writer; satire and other forms of humor are present even in her darkest works. But she is a deeply earnest thinker. In this lecture, we'll look at Atwood's feminist dystopia, *The Handmaid's Tale*, from 1985, as well as at her more recent dystopian/apocalyptic work, the *MaddAddam* trilogy.

Four Angles

- As we work through these texts, all of which contain very dark elements, think about these four ways Atwood has helped to shape utopian thought:
  1. The double edge of language control, a tool of totalitarian government *and* of those who subvert it.
  2. The importance of telling to not only understanding but also changing society.
  3. The pleasures of sliding into the space between utopia and dystopia, what Atwood has dubbed (somewhat unsuccessfully) *ustopia*.

4 Deep ecology, or the idea that the best way to save the Earth is to destroy the humans that have proven themselves its enemy.

The Handmaid's Tale

- In *The Handmaid's Tale*, the handmaids have odd names, especially the narrator, Offred. This isn't the narrator's birth name. Instead, this name is a sign of her subjugation to her commander, named Fred, making her Of-Fred. Offred never does tell us her real name; she says its use is forbidden.

- Offred—before she becomes Offred—is a happily married working mother who goes to the ATM one day and is refused cash. She soon learns that it isn't a problem with her bank. It's a new regime that restricts women's access to money.

- To Offred's surprise, her loving and progressive husband isn't nearly as appalled by the antics of the new government as she is. For him, it's easy to slip into a position of power.

- In the new military theocracy Gilead, Offred is a handmaid, one of the few precious women who has the power to bear children after a nuclear disaster. As a handmaid, Offred wears red, for fertility.

- After her training, she is placed in the home of Fred, where Fred's barren wife, Serena Joy, wearing blue, runs the household and makes Offred feel very small. We get the handmaid's perspective on the many suppressive practices of the society, but let's focus here on two: sexuality and language.

- The rape of handmaids is horrifyingly sterile. One night per month, the ceremony begins with Fred reading from the Bible before he attempts to impregnate Offred, who is lying back, partially on top of Serena Joy. We get a rather graphic description of this act.

- After one of the ceremonies, Nick, Fred's chauffeur and Offred's soon-to-be illicit lover, comes to her room to say that the

commander wishes to see her tomorrow. Offred says that she feels fragile but wants to be with someone other than Fred and his wife—someone like Nick, who would amount to an act of rebellion.

- In Gilead, women aren't allowed access to the written word, not even the Bible. Offred, who used to work in a library, longs for writing, any writing. She even reads a cushion embroidered with the word *Faith* over and over again.

- Eventually, Fred asks Offred to come to his office, an impossible position for her, as she is not allowed to be alone with him or to refuse his commands. Of course she goes, and of course she expects that he wants sex. Instead, he wants Scrabble. Here's how Offred describes it:

> We play two games. *Larynx*, I spell. *Valance. Quince. Zygote*. I hold the glossy counters with their smooth edges, finger the letters. The feeling is voluptuous. This is freedom, an eyeblink of it. *Limp*, I spell. *Gorge*. What a luxury. The counters are like candies, made of peppermint, cool like that. Humbugs, those were called. I would like to put them into my mouth. They would taste also of lime. The letter *C*. Crisp, slightly acid on the tongue, delicious.
>
> I win the first game, I let him win the second: I still haven't discovered what the terms are, what I will be able to ask for, in exchange.

- There is sensuality in this passage, but also rebellion. After the game, Fred stands up and walks Offred to the door, trying to make it feel like a date. "I want you to kiss me," he says. She thinks about smuggling in a weapon next time and stabbing him—but then recants: "In fact I don't think about anything of the kind. I put it in only afterwards. Maybe I should have thought about that, at the time, but I didn't. As I said, this is a reconstruction."

- The final chapter of the novel is called "Historical Notes," and it recasts the entire preceding narrative as an object of study at

a symposium on Gileadean studies, held in 2195. We find out Offred's story was dictated into a tape recorder, but the tapes were out of order and have been transcribed and ordered by a male historian who may or may not have been accurate.

- The very fact that we are reading this document shows that the dystopian period is now over, which suggests that subversion is always possible.

The *MaddAddam* Trilogy

- Atwood uses that technique again in her *MaddAddam* trilogy, which includes *Oryx and Crake*, *The Year of the Flood*, and *MaddAddam*, published between 2003 and 2013. Atwood calls the later books siblings rather than sequels because the three novels overlap in time between their flashbacks and different perspectives.

- Let's start with the title of the first novel, *Oryx and Crake*. In this novel's unspecified future, oryx—large, horned antelope—


Oryx have sharp antlers capable of killing lions.

are recently extinct animals. Oryx in the novel is also the hacker name of a girl whose real name we never learn.

- Our main point-of-view character, Jimmy, first saw this girl during high school when he and his best friend Glenn were watching child pornography. Child pornography—a horrific industry—is treated casually in this novel, and it's a powerful move on Atwood's part. This dystopic society is so consumer-driven that nothing is protected anymore.

- There's something about Oryx that haunts Jimmy. He and his friend both see it, so they print out an image of exactly the way this little girl looks at the camera. Years later, when the antelope oryx is completely extinct, Jimmy and his friend actually find the girl (or at least they think it's her) and she becomes Crake's girlfriend and Jimmy's lover.

- The oryx, at once ordinary and extraordinary, can be seen as a beautiful, tough, ephemeral creature that stands as a symbol of both the pros and cons of deep ecology. As for Crake? He's Jimmy's best friend, Glenn.

- The red-necked crake may be familiar; it is a New Guinea bird whose conservation status is currently "least concern." It would be easy to imagine that if the crake became endangered, it wouldn't be at the top of global conservation efforts—it's just an ordinary little bird that would never be featured on a fund-raising poster.

- It's therefore a simple but powerful symbol for Glenn, who masterminds an upgrade to humans that he dubs the Crakers. The Crakers are designed to have a minimal impact on the environment.

- They are designed to have no interest in hierarchy or possessions, and like many mammals, their sexuality functions through estrus. When a female goes into estrus, she makes this clear by turning partially blue, at which point she chooses four males, who also indicate their desire through blue genitalia. The five mate, with no notion of paternity to create competition between the males.

- The Crakers sing a lot and ask a lot of questions, but they have no sense of humor. They are simple, loving, and physically beautiful. They die, without fuss, at the age of 30. They're exactly the kind of beings who would be destroyed one way or another by humans, with our propensity for enslavement, commodification, and all kinds of cultural colonizations.

- Given this understanding of human nature, Crake does what he thinks he must do. He bio-engineers a pandemic that he delivers to the human population. By moving humans into the extinct category, Crake can make space for the Crakers and other species that will be less destructive to the Earth.

- We might see Crake as a monster, a young man whose emotional and ethical abilities have been dulled by the world in which he grew up—a world many might argue looks a lot like our world.

- Or we might see Crake as a visionary, willing to make the big move that is necessary to create a new future. This is tough, though, because although Crake's bio-engineered humans have solved many problems ranging from sunburn to sexual assault, they're also fairly laughable, with their blue genitals and their complete lack of humor.

- Built-in sunscreen may be a great idea, but does Atwood really think that genetically engineering human estrus would solve the problems of sexual assault? Even the books suggest not.

Interpreting the Trilogy

- Jimmy is even more slippery than Crake. He has early developed a strong sense of humor to counter what might seem like a difficult childhood. Note that his benign neglect by busy parents (his father is a scientist, his mother an activist) is in sharp contrast to what is frequently experienced by Pleeblands children: sexual slavery. In the Pleeblands, overpopulation, desperate poverty, and sex slavery of various sorts are the order of the day.

- Jimmy seems to have a deep sense of empathy, and yet he regularly watches snuff films and child pornography. He explains how he gets women: He tells them from the start that he's too messed up for a serious relationship, which makes them want to transform him and take care of him.

- But in the end, he already has his exit line when they get too close, which simultaneously proves that he is telling the truth (he *is* messed up) and that he is lying (while taking advantage of the good nature of the women he's attracted to).

- In the first novel, Jimmy, always the class clown, is left to shepherd the Crakers, who have been designed without a sense of humor. The Crakers desperately want origin stories. Throughout the three novels, we watch as first Jimmy and then Toby tell the Crakers stories about who they are and about their "parents," Oryx and Crake.

- The characters—and, by extension, the readers—are constantly forced to face the difficulties inherent in telling any story, let alone the creation story of a bio-engineered species whose survival depends on the annihilation of the species that created it.

- Atwood's characters think a great deal about the simultaneous importance and impossibility of adequate stories. In book 1, the post-apocalyptic Jimmy has lots of time to think about his dead lover:

> How long had it taken him to piece [Oryx] together from the slivers of her he'd gathered and hoarded so carefully? There was Crake's story about her, and Jimmy's story about her as well, a more romantic version; and then there was her own story about herself, which was different from both, and not very romantic at all.

- The character Toby has a similar reflection in book 3. Her book of the series ends up being not the story she tells the Crakers, but the story of her constructing the story she tells the Crakers.

That's the power of narrative, Atwood is saying. We write stories and they matter. But it's only by understanding that every story is only a small window into the past and future that we can interact with the stories other people tell to develop our own approach to the future.

SUGGESTED READING

Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*.
———, *MaddAddam*. 2013.
———, *The Handmaid's Tale*. 1985.
———, *The Year of the Flood*. 2009.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1 *The Handmaid's Tale* is one in a long line of dystopias that include an appendix that reframes the narrative. In what ways does Atwood's appendix speak back to earlier dystopias? Does this appendix do anything different?

2 The *MaddAddam* trilogy offers a number of perspectives on the devastation of the world as we know it. What do the different perspectives offer the reader? How do they all fit together? Do they point to dystopia or utopia?

3 Do you find the *MaddAddam* trilogy funny? Why or why not? What's the impact of laughing at outlandish technological advances like the pigoons or the Crakers' sexual signaling system?

4 Atwood has, controversially, refused to characterize her work as science fiction. What do you make of that stance? Do you think generic categories really matter, in the case of understanding Atwood's project and more generally?

LECTURE 21

Suzanne Collins and Dystopian Games

Today's young people are not lacking for anxieties. The literary scholars Carrie Hintz, Balaka Basu, and Katherine Broad divide up these anxieties in their scholarship about young adult dystopia. They use four categories: 1) liberty and choice, 2) environment, 3) justice, and 4) relationship between self and technology. We can add a fifth category: economic security. All of these anxieties clearly map onto the dystopian genre. And many of them, as we'll see in this lecture, are directly addressed in Suzanne Collins's trilogy, *The Hunger Games*.

Overview of *The Hunger Games*

- In the world of Panem, there are a capital and 12 districts. There used to be 13 districts, but District 13 was destroyed when it tried to rebel. The capital is a place of excess and wealth, while the districts are the opposite, with varying levels of poverty and hunger.

- Once a year, the Hunger Games occur. This is a massive televised event—required viewing for every citizen—in which each of the twelve districts sends two randomly chosen teens: They are 12–18 years old, one girl and one boy. They're called tributes.

- The tributes participate in a reality game show where contestants are taken to a dangerous setting and eliminated one by one until only one remains. Elimination equals death.

- This game doesn't even try to pretend it's fair. Some contestants will die in avalanches—generated randomly or deliberately by the Gamemakers—and others will die at the hands of other, stronger tributes. Some will have sponsors who can deliver supplies into the gamespace, while others—usually from poorer districts—have nothing but what they find within the game.

- Some have been training for their entire lives—the so-called Careers of Districts 1, 2, and 4—while others have been selected for the task because they've increased their odds of being chosen in order to gain extra grain for their starving families.

- The protagonist, Katniss Everdeen, is from District 12, the poorest of the districts. Although she is feisty and inspiring, she is also small, starving, and constantly in danger. She is exactly the underdog people love.

- Beyond Collins's expert pacing of the novel, four features explain not only the runaway success of this series, but also its ability to spawn many imitators. These features are engagement with war, critique of the culture industry, a queer heroine, and a capacity for fan response.

War

- In a 2011 *New York Times* interview, Collins made her intentions clear. "I don't write about adolescence," she said. "I write about war. For adolescents."

- The first novel of the series came out in 2008, during the economic crash and at the height of war weariness, as Americans wondered how long the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan would last.

- In the first novel, we see the 74th Hunger Games, which means that for the 74th year in a row, children are being chosen—and poor kids have much higher odds of being chosen—and sent far away. They are forced to fight to the death against other children as part of a macabre and sinister spectacle that makes sure everyone knows where power lies: in the capital.

- By the time we get to *Mockingjay*, the third novel of the series, Collins's interest in representing war can no longer be ignored. The final book is not set in a game arena, like the first two. Now the war is real as the districts undertake a large-scale revolt against the capital. Katniss Everdeen, the mockingjay of the title, is at the center of not only the fighting but also the planning.

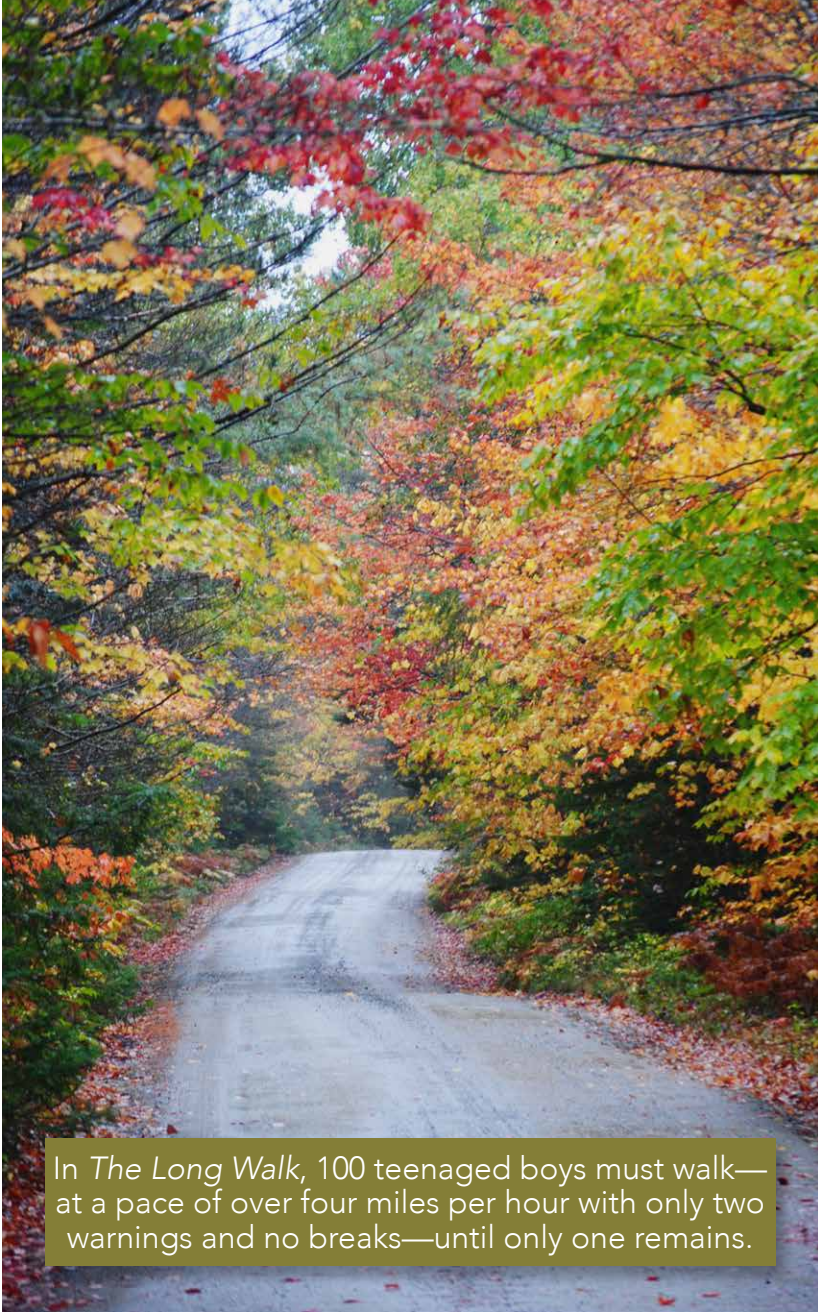
- Katniss becomes a symbol for the rebels because of her celebrity in the Hunger Games, but being a symbol doesn't mean she isn't also a fighter. And Collins doesn't hold back in terms of the narrative tension or the implied political critique.

- There's behavior modification of a captured soldier through torture and quasi-science-fiction memory modification techniques. And there's a moment in which Katniss, in the heat of battle, kills indiscriminately, knowing she will regret this for the rest of her life but unable to stop herself.

- There are decisions taken in rebel headquarters that turn the real field of war into a sort of game where military leaders must decide which citizens must be sacrificed in order to win the war. And there's death by friendly fire. The final novel of the series is devastating—and, of course, extremely appealing because of this.

Cultural Critique

- *The Hunger Games* also acts as a critique of the culture industry and, especially, the way popular culture can be used to obscure or justify economic inequality. Reality TV is highly watched, and reality game shows are at the center of this phenomenon.



In *The Long Walk*, 100 teenaged boys must walk—at a pace of over four miles per hour with only two warnings and no breaks—until only one remains.

- These have long been seen as having good narrative potential. Stephen King wrote two highly successful novels about reality game shows under his pseudonym, Richard Bachman: *The Running Man* and *The Long Walk*.

- *The Hunger Games* taps into the same horror that likely drew Stephen King to this topic: Mass media may have the potential to dull feelings of empathy in favor of the pleasures of spectacle. In reality TV, there's a certain distance between the viewer and the viewed. The whole production apparatus makes the reality seem distant as well as possibly inaccurate.

- If reality TV dulls empathy and we watch a lot of it, what happens to the way we watch the news? Does the news become just another spectacle to be consumed? Do reality and fiction begin to blur for viewers? How far are we from a place where people could accept something like the Hunger Games? Suzanne Collins quite deliberately raises these questions, trying to engage teen readers.

Katniss as a Queer Heroine

- Collins also provides teens with some interesting models for gender, which brings us to the notion of Katniss as a queer heroine. Katniss has two potential love interests, both male, but many scholars have argued that Katniss's androgyny can productively be read as queer. Queer, in today's gender theory, doesn't always have to mean gay; it can mean making deliberate choices about gender identity that go beyond heteronormative society.

- Katniss exhibits in about equal measures qualities that her society—and ours—would consider masculine and feminine. She is first introduced as a hunter, and a pretty masculine one. Not only does she hunt illegally and then successfully navigate the black market with her huntings and trappings, but she also does so in order to take over the role of "man of the house" after her father is killed in a mining accident. She must provide for her mother and sister.

- Her best friend is Gale, an androgynously named boy a couple years older than Katniss. Gale is clearly in love with her, which suggests that she's a physically attractive girl.

- Katniss's identity goes from androgynous to queer when she becomes a tribute in the 74th Hunger Games. She is selected to represent District 12 along with Peeta Mellark, a young man whose family owns the town bakery, and who is thus much more connected to the domestic than not only Gale, the other love interest, but also Katniss herself.

- Katniss is thus caught up in the typical teen love triangle, with two young men to choose from: Gale, the classic alpha male with his mining and hunting skills, and Peeta, the classic beta male, who can not only bake bread (sustenance) but also decorate cakes (aesthetic talent).

- We get inklings of Katniss's complex gender identity right from the start. Katniss does not deliberate between the two young men and eventually choose one. Instead, she states that she isn't interested in boys.

- She doesn't say this because she's gay or not ready, but because she recognizes that she lives in a dystopian society. She recognizes that erotic relationships lead to children and she cannot bring a child into a world structured by the power imbalances that characterize the capital and the districts.

- Katniss becomes visibly queer when she and Peeta go to the capital for the Hunger Games. Surrounded by stylists and media specialists, Katniss is transformed and beautified. But Katniss hates her transformation into a waved and coiffed beauty. In her practice interviews, her scorn for the Games, for the Capital, and for the worship of beauty comes through loud and clear.

- It is the character Haymitch who tells Katniss the hard truth about her attitude: If she adopts the mantle of beauty without performing it, she will not stand a chance in the Games. She will

die. So Katniss performs her gender and her sexuality. For most of the rest of the trilogy, Katniss takes on exactly the kind of performance that is valued by queer theorists: performance that draws attention to difference and undercuts the politics of power.

Fan Fiction

- Fan fiction is the practice of writing fiction using someone else's main characters and/or setting. A lot of us might think of fan fiction as a fairly new phenomenon linked to the upsurge in social media that is connected to the recent surge in self-publishing of all kinds.

- *The Hunger Games* is especially inviting to fan fiction. We have a fully developed world in which a televised fight to the death occurs annually, and has been for over 70 years.

- Collins provides little details about some of the previous Hunger Games, but not much. Many fans have written detailed accounts of some of the Hunger Games 1–73.

- There is also lots of romance and erotic fiction exploring various character pairings. Following the great success of *Twilight*, which featured fan creations of Team Edward and Team Jacob (depending on which love interest a fan preferred), *The Hunger Games* has a great deal of fan fiction and merchandising around Team Gale and Team Peeta.

- Fan fiction is a way for fans to feel involved, not only in the development of a world created by someone else, but also in the creation of new narratives. Fan fiction is a crucial element today in the marketing and continued appeal of young adult popular culture.

- Dystopia is and will continue to be a crucial element in stories for young adults. Dystopia is a genre that provides the right balance of stresses and potential solutions to appeal to young readers and viewers for the foreseeable future.

SUGGESTED READING

Bachman, *The Long Walk*.
———, *The Running Man*.
Collins, *Catching Fire*.
———, *Mockingjay*.
———, *The Hunger Games*.
Dashner, *The Maze Runner*.
Roth, *Divergent*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1 *The Hunger Games* became the biggest young adult franchise around when it came out, following in the footsteps of the *Harry Potter* series with its wizards and the *Twilight* series with its good vampires. How do you explain this shift from high fantasy to dystopia in the popular imagination of young people? Are there any issues or anxieties you think Collins taps into?

2 Did you prefer the novels or the movies? Why?

3 What debt, if any, do you think Collins owes to the big three dystopias of the 20th century: *We*, *Brave New World*, and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*? Which of those models does *The Hunger Games* resemble most? What is completely different from the conventions established by those foundational dystopias?

LECTURE 22

Cyberpunk Dystopia: Doctorow and Anderson

For many people, the concept of the cyborg—a combination of organic and mechanical matter—might be a way to get to a utopian place in which gender differences are neither divisive nor laden with power imbalances. There's a utopian impulse associated with the cyborg, and with the cyberpunk genre. Cyberpunk novels often feature advanced information technology that allows much of the action to take place in cyber space rather than physical space. The characters who navigate cyberspace, whether they have implanted devices or not, are often "punks," performing identities—often subversive identities—that are not dependent on their physical bodies.

Cyberpunk

- We might initially think of a "punk" as an undesirable person, perhaps a hoodlum. But if you have a totalitarian society—a dystopia—a punk can be a hero, someone who subverts the power structures.

- Cyberpunk privileges the outsider, or sometimes the group of outsiders, who are usually young and incredibly talented hackers. They mount a seemingly impossible attack against the megacorporations that attempt to fully control cyberspace. But where there's utopian potential, there's also dystopian potential.

- This lecture will focus on two young adult cyberpunk books, popular with teen and adult readers alike. One of them embodies the most powerful energies—utopian and dystopian—of cyberpunk: Cory Doctorow's *Little Brother*, from 2008. The other may be the most chilling of all the dystopias we've looked at so far: M.T. Anderson's *Feed*, which came out in 2002.

Little Brother

- *Little Brother* clearly demonstrates many of the features of cyberpunk even as it explores its utopian impulses. The narrator is 17-year-old Marcus Yallow, who lives in San Francisco.

- He attends a high school that provides a laptop for each student—a laptop that monitors and reports on each student's Internet activities, automatically locking down activities that are processed as inappropriate or subversive. The laptops also track students who bring them home.

- Marcus is a serious computer geek who regularly finds holes in his high school's surveillance programs and passes out patches to his classmates for free. In typical young adult fashion, the novel begins with Marcus getting called to the vice principal's office.

- When the vice principal, Mr. Benson, accuses him of subverting the school's security system, Marcus goes on the offensive. Marcus sassily advises Mr. Benson to call the police and his parents. Marcus definitely fits the definition of a punk: smart, sassy, and deeply committed to irony.

- Marcus eventually undergoes a common trauma for a cyberpunk: He is entirely separated from the cyberworld, and being left with only his own mind and body gives him new perspectives on exactly who he is.

- In Marcus's case, he is captured by the Department of Homeland Security as a potential terrorist and is sent to prison not far from San Francisco, where he is stripped of his many electronics, confined, and eventually tortured.

- Through this horrifying experience, Marcus learns that his capacity for resistance lies in his computer skills. In fact, he comes to believe that in his world, cyberspace holds the potential for utopian change—for freedom from what amounts to a totalitarian government that uses the rhetoric of security in order to oppress its citizens.

- *Little Brother* is basically set in the present day. And Doctorow doesn't just provide a cautionary tale whose clear inference is that we should make some changes in order to avoid catastrophe and dystopian governmental structures. Doctorow tells his readers how.

- Marcus, who is a first-person narrator, frequently interrupts the narrative to explain how a specific coding concept works and to then dispense specific—and very well-researched—hacking advice. There are also two afterwords and a bibliography on security, technology, hacking, and hacktivism.

- *Little Brother* is a cyborg narrative in its slipperiness. On one hand, Marcus lives in a dystopia—or at least a society with strong dystopian elements—and the novel examines the dark potential of information technology to support what is basically a totalitarian government.

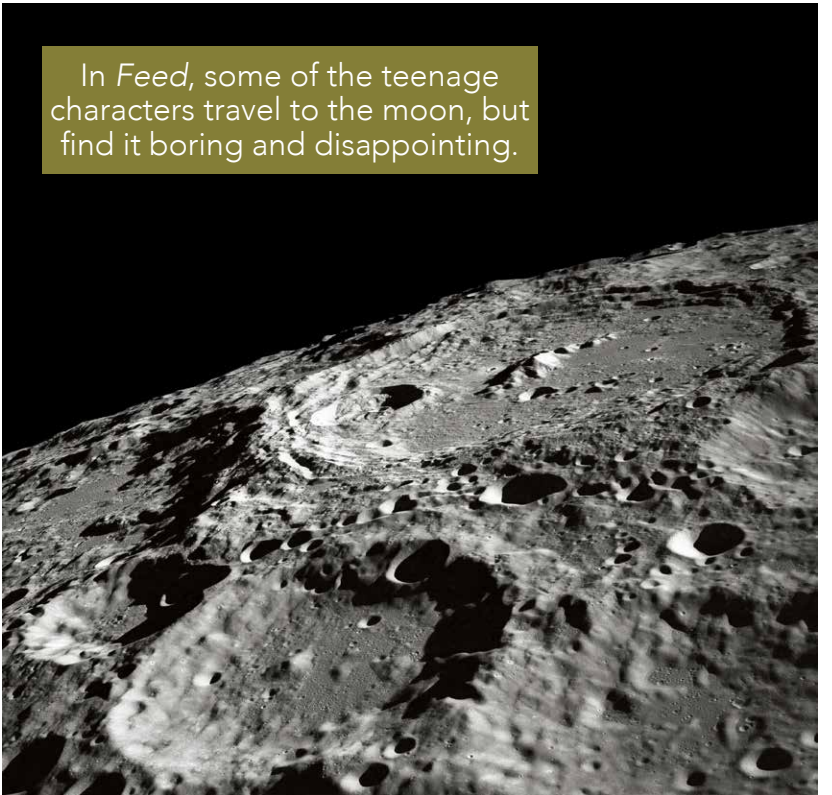
- Like other young adult, and especially cyberpunk, novels, the dystopia is disrupted by a teenaged protagonist who outsmarts the system and reveals its flaws to the citizens. The citizens range from resigned to reasonably content in their repressive society.

- But Doctorow goes further than most. By providing not only a narrative that moves toward a better society but also gives concrete information that readers can use to achieve more information transparency, Doctorow's novel also includes elements of utopia.

Feed

- Titus, from M.T. Anderson's *Feed*, is a very different first-person narrator from Marcus. Titus is not nearly as smart as Marcus.

- Anderson goes pretty far to insult youth culture. The novel's opening clearly sets up the protagonist's voice: He complains that he and his friends went to the moon to "have fun, but the moon turned out to completely suck."



In *Feed*, some of the teenage characters travel to the moon, but find it boring and disappointing.

- The moon does "completely suck," because when Titus and his group of friends get there, they find hundreds of other bored teenagers just like them who are trying to find fun stuff to do. But it's always just the same stuff: getting high, having sex, and listening to music.

- The best part, really, has nothing to do with the moon. It's all the awesome products suggested by the Feed, which is the microchip in everyone's brain. It gives instant communication with friends and access to whatever information one wants, but also, most importantly, keeps one up to date with all the latest products one needs to truly be an individual.

- The technology of the Feed suggests cyberpunk, as does this futuristic Earth, which has perfected space travel around the solar system as well as many other efficiencies. People now use air farms to produce oxygen instead of the more cumbersome method of trees. Kids still go to school, but they no longer need to learn history and math there, since they can get all that from the Feed.

- As Titus tells us, "Everyone is supersmart now. You can look things up automatic, like science and history, like if you want to know which battles of the Civil War George Washington fought in." That's right: George Washington fighting in the Civil War.

- The total reliance on Feed technology sucks the humanity out of humans. It also provides distractions rather than solutions, as when humans around the world start to develop unexplained facial lesions, presumably in response to environmental degradation.

- Do people freak out and become anxious about their deteriorating world? Absolutely not. The mega hit show *Oh? Wow! Thing!* features such lesions prominently as a new fashion statement. After that, people feel good about their large, festering, unexplained sores. Some people even get cosmetic surgery to have extra sores added.

The Problem

- This world is a perfect backdrop for a great cyberpunk narrative. But here's the problem: This is cyberpunk without the punk. Titus and his friends can't hack the Feed. They have no idea how it works. In fact, they have no idea how anything works. When Titus and Violet go to the beach, they stand beside the ocean. "It was dead," Titus says, "but colorful," and he goes on to describe all the different colors you can see in the way the sun hits the sea.

- For Titus, living in the dystopia to end all dystopias, the main challenges are choosing the right vehicle (called an upcar) and dealing with the fact that his friends aren't really all that crazy about his weird girlfriend, Violet.

- Violet's parents were grad students when the Feed came out, and they were very late adopters, because they feared the feed would lead them to lose the very skills they were trying to gain from a graduate education in the liberal arts.

- Violet's parents' suspicions of the system make her a potential punk and a potential victim. Because of her parents, Violet didn't get her Feed until she was seven—way later than Titus and his friends. As a result, she has all kinds of weird skills: She can read and write. She can even think critically.

- On the night Titus and Violet meet, during spring break on the Moon, they are hacked. In a club with lots of dancing teens, an old man enters, begins yelling crazy ideas, and broadcasts a doomsday message on the Feed.

- Suddenly, Titus is doing the same thing, as are a whole bunch of other people. The old man has hacked the feed and compelled dozens of people to join him in broadcasting, in unison. It's the kind of violation Titus has never even heard of. Even after police kill the hacker, Titus and his friends can't stop broadcasting.

- Titus and his friends have to leave the cyberworld entirely for several hours while their Feeds are being repaired. This could lead to a moment of self-knowledge, where the punk's removal from the cyberworld helps him or her return stronger than ever.

- But that doesn't happen. Just as Titus and Violet start to discover the world without the Feed—the very dead world—the medical personnel arrive with the great news that the Feed is back. A rapid-fire series of ads, images, and news flashes are shared with the reader to round out part 2 of the novel. Part 3, in which the teens return to their normal life, is called, very ironically, "Utopia."

- Violet's recovery from the attack on her Feed is less complete, partly because of her late adoption of Feed technology. And because of an earlier shopping mall prank she pulled, she is marked as an unreliable consumer, so there's no corporation willing to pay her medical bills when her Feed needs more attention.

Genre

- How do *Little Brother* and *Feed* fit into our overall exploration of the paradoxical pleasures of utopian literature? Let's start with genre as formula.

- Cyberpunk dystopia draws on conventions from cyberpunk and young adult literature. In both these novels, we see the blended spaces of cyber and physical worlds and the potential of the punk to change the world for the better. We also see the focus on first relationships, since both Marcus and Titus meet their first serious girlfriend as the plot develops.

- The novels show two different approaches to cyberpunk. *Little Brother* draws on the didacticism of science fiction in providing accurate and useful information. *Feed*, on the other hand, explicitly states that it teaches nothing, explicitly drawing on the long tradition of satire in utopia and dystopia.

- Now for genre as marketing. Both novels are extreme. In Doctorow, we see extremist political views combined with a strong confidence that the reader wants to change the world. Readers who enjoyed this book might want to read the many non-fiction books about computer programming and hacktivism listed in Doctorow's afterword. They might also want to read text that's available online for free as part of the open-access movement.

- They might also want to read *Feed*. In some sense, *Feed* is coming at the same issues of the dangers of extensive data mining and the way these data are used by totalitarian entities—governments or corporations which, as both novels imply, may be the same thing.

- Regarding genre as rhetoric, both of these novels make very strong arguments. They make some of the same arguments from opposite directions.

- We get at the same anxieties about contemporary American society: The Internet has amazing potential to create a better, more egalitarian world, but we may be going about it all wrong in allowing totalitarian governments or corporations to control it. That, in turn, may lead us to create not only a more oppressive world, but also a new generation of young people who rely on technology without truly understanding it.

SUGGESTED READING

Anderson, *Feed*.
———, *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing*.
Doctorow, *Little Brother*.
———, *Homeland*. 2013.
Gibson, *Neuromancer*.
Stephenson, *Snow Crash*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Do you think combining dystopia with cyberpunk makes it more or less appealing to the young adult reader?

2. Many adults regularly read young adult literature. What do you think they get out of such reading?

3. Marcus is a brilliant creator of computer code, while Titus is a somewhat dull-witted consumer. What are the benefits of each protagonist type? What are the different insights we gain from each?

4. Young adult and dystopian literature both tend to be didactic, trying to teach a lesson. What strategies do Doctorow and Anderson use in teaching lessons? Which do you think is more effective and why?

LECTURE 23

Apocalyptic Literature in the 21st Century

The apocalypse is linked to revelation—to the unveiling or revealing of the truths that lie beneath. There's a whole body of literature—some philosophical, some theological—on apocalypse. This lecture looks at post-apocalyptic literature, which examines the aftermath of a cataclysmic event. These cataclysms tend to fall into four major categories: technological, biomedical, environmental, or supernatural.

Types of Cataclysm

- A technological example from the 19th century is rail travel, which changed people's conceptions of scale (place) and also of speed (time). This is the kind of exciting and terrifying concept that might give birth to a whole genre of literature: science fiction. Within that genre emerged technological apocalypse, which narrates the outcomes of new technologies ranging from nuclear energy to artificial intelligence and any number of other technologies that raise anxieties.

- Biomedical apocalypse tends to focus on another anxiety: global pandemic. In today's globally linked world, it's frighteningly easy to imagine a scenario in which some pathogen leads to an epidemic that spreads throughout the world before scientists can contain it.

- Environmental apocalypse has also experienced a huge upsurge in the 21st century.
  - New statistics about warming patterns and coastal erosion raise real fears about the future of the planet and its most dominant species.

- Another factor is the political backlash against the science of global warming. The question of climate change, and especially of the human role in changing weather patterns, is a deeply contested issue in the United States, which makes it a very rich space for science fiction narratives.

- There are many variations on the theme of supernatural apocalypse, but one of the most prevalent is the zombie apocalypse.
  - Although some zombie books and films frame the narrative through a quest to understand how the apocalypse began or how it can be curtailed or reversed, many zombie narratives are not particularly interested in these questions.

  - The zombie apocalypse, by nature, is a supernatural apocalypse. In such tales, what's happened to the world often cannot be explained under the typical rational rubrics. This speaks to our fear of what we can't understand.

The Road

- In some apocalyptic literature, survival may be possible, but it won't be worthwhile. Or, in the extreme, survival is not even remotely possible. Cormac McCarthy's novel *The Road* is an example within the environmental disaster category that gives us an answer to the question: Is survival possible and worthwhile?

- *The Road*'s main characters are simply known as the boy and the man. In their world, the Earth is dead. The only living things are a few fungi, some mangy dogs, and some humans, most of which have now turned to cannibalism for survival.

- The man and the boy are father and son, the mother having killed herself some years ago. They are hardened, of course, since they are among the Earth's last survivors. But they have somehow maintained a sense of what we might think of as their humanity. We are pretty sure that no matter how hungry they get, they will not turn to cannibalism.

- The man has a serious cough and he does not expect to survive the winter. The man pushes a shopping cart; they are travelling to the sea, where they hope to find more resources despite the well-known fact that there are no more resources. They have two bullets left for their gun, one for protection and one for the boy if they are captured by cannibals, as is very likely.

- The novel is dedicated to McCarthy's son, and the author has said that some of the conversations between the man and the boy are based on those of the author and his young son.

- The deep love between the man and the boy is diametrically opposed to the scrabble for survival that has turned most other survivors into monsters. This novel has two other important tropes: the road and the idyll.

- The road is a central trope in American literature. It has long served as a metaphor for a journey through a human life or, more broadly, through notions of human expansion.
  - In McCarthy's hands, the road is seen in the rearview mirror of a shopping cart pushed by a man who knows that he and his son cannot survive. The dream of progress is dead.

- That brings us to the idyll. After a narrow escape, the man and the boy stumble upon a hidden bunker that was obviously set up as a bomb shelter. It contains more food than they've seen in ages as well as medical supplies and, perhaps even more importantly, safety from marauders.
  - But of course that's just an illusion. The shelter is just a more comfortable version of the completely unsustainable world outside, and eventually the man and boy leave.

  - The man knows he's going to die, and he wants to get the boy somewhere safe before that actually happens. He still believes, despite all the evidence, that there still is somewhere safe.

- We don't see the safe place, but we meet another family with an adult who has been able to protect children from what has become their usual fate in this appalling world. Technically, there's no reason to hope. And yet, at the end of this dark novel, the reader is left with a tiny ray of hope—a tiny bit of utopian thinking.

The Walking Dead

- Surprisingly, there's a substantial utopian element to one of the most popular of the ambivalent apocalyptic narratives of the 21st century: AMC's *The Walking Dead*, adapted from the graphic novels by Robert Kirkman and Tony Moore, and complete with a spin-off series, *Fear the Walking Dead*.

- In *The Walking Dead*, the world has been taken over by walkers (the name given by our main survivor group to the zombies). The walkers are a masterpiece of hideous decay. When they are killed, the killings are carefully staged to be disturbing, never crossing the line into the parody that's central to the zombie film tradition.

- There's plenty of personal drama between the survivors we follow, with erotic entanglements, disagreements, and betrayals. There's also an extremely strong sense of community. That bond between people has great narrative power. It's the kind of bond that may be at the basis of believable utopia.

- The show also relies heavily on the technique of juxtaposition, where a particularly terrifying encounter with a horde of zombies—or an organized group of evil humans, sometimes even scarier—is followed by a moment of quiet reflection.

- "Just look at her and tell me the world isn't gonna change," says a dying survivor, gesturing to the baby who represents both great danger (because the walkers will hear the baby's cries) and great hope.

- We do look. And we know that if the world does change, the show is over. It's the constant dangers to the community, with its influx of new members and its killing off of old ones, that keep us watching.

Station Eleven

- The most hopeful of this lecture's three apocalyptic texts is Emily St. John Mandel's post-pandemic novel *Station Eleven*. The main character, Kirsten Raymonde, was eight when the pandemic hit. Now, 20 years later, she is a member of the Traveling Symphony, a ragtag group of artists who perform Shakespeare and Beethoven in various small towns in exchange for food and other bartered goods.

- This is a very atypical view of the post-apocalyptic landscape. No one has tried to get the power grid back up. No one drives cars; the narrator explains that the fuel was only good for a few years, and that although airplane fuel lasted longer, that has expired years ago as well. People survive. They form back into communities, but without nearly as much technology.

- *Station Eleven* examines art in many forms through flashbacks and in the present. The novel opens on the night the pandemic starts, when Kirsten is a child actor in a performance of *King Lear* at a theatre in Toronto.

- The actor who plays Lear suffers a heart attack during the performance, and young Kirsten doesn't know what to do in the ensuing chaos; her mother doesn't pick her up until 11:00 and the production person who usually watches out for her is nowhere to be found. A stranger from the audience briefly cares for her.

- Kirsten asks if the actor playing Lear is going to be OK, and the stranger, Jeevan, hesitates. He's not a kid person and doesn't know what to do. The dialogue is simple but compelling:

> "My point is, if acting was the last thing he ever did," Jeevan said, "the last thing he ever did was something that made him happy."
>
> "Was that the last thing he ever did?"
>
> "I think it was. I'm so sorry."

- This little moment between Kirsten and the stranger sets up the main themes of the novel: the value of art and the kindness of strangers. It also sets up some of the poignancy. Jeevan and Kirsten are both to be survivors, although neither of them knows that it's already day one of the pandemic. Kirsten is to think of Jeevan often as she moves through the world.

- Kirsten interacts with art in many ways, large and small, and each of these interactions serve to form a tapestry that argues against the idea that high art must be sacrificed for utopia.

- Whenever Kirsten scavenges a home, she seeks out the magazines, looking for mentions of Arthur Leander, the actor who played Lear. And she always keeps an eye out for *Station Eleven*, a comic book of which she has one of the few prototypes. Further, Kirsten has three tattoos. One is the troupe's motto, tattooed on her arm: "Survival is insufficient."

- The other two are more complex: two black knives on Kirsten's wrist. They are the tattoos people get after they have killed someone. Kirsten has killed two people. They are a reminder and a penitence, but also a signal to others. Kirsten is a survivor.

- In his 1950 Nobel Prize acceptance speech, William Faulkner reflected upon the post-atomic-bomb world, and about the bomb's influence on literature. Young writers were often unable to think beyond the question: "When will I be blown up?" Here's Faulkner's response:

> I decline to accept the end of man. I believe that man will not merely endure: he will prevail. He is immortal, not because he alone among creatures has an inexhaustible voice, but because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance. The poet's, the writer's, duty is to write about these things.

As *Station Eleven* shows, the utopian thinking that believes in the innate power of the human spirit to always make meaning can be found in Shakespeare or Faulkner, but it can also be found in graphic novels and sci-fi TV shows. The details don't matter. It's the very fact of telling stories—of imagining—that will allow humans to not only survive, but to prevail.

SUGGESTED READING

Kirkman and Moore, *The Walking Dead* series.
Mandel, *Station Eleven.*
McCarthy, *The Road.*

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1 What is the main difference between apocalyptic and dystopian literature? How useful is this distinction, in your opinion?

2 What are the ethical implications of representing a near-extinction-level event as a possible reset button for humanity?

3 Do you see any hope in the ending of *The Road*? What is the impact of juxtaposing the complete environmental devastation of most of the novel with the possibly hopeful ending?

4 Do you think apocalyptic literature can have an impact on the way readers or viewers act? Might it cause social or environmental change? Might it cause depression or anxiety?

LECTURE 24

The Future of Utopia and Dystopia

This lecture covers many modern works of utopia and dystopia, and takes a look at where such works might go in the future. In particular, we'll get an overview of the first two episodes of a television series called *Black Mirror*, launched in 2011. Then we'll take a look at three predictions for the future of utopia and dystopia involving genre hybridity, appeal to young readers and viewers, and an increase in multimedia applications.

Black Mirror

- The first episode of the first season of the BBC's *Black Mirror* series has an intriguing premise: In what looks like contemporary London, the prime minister of Britain is awakened by aides and told that a popular British princess has been kidnapped. There's a very strange ransom demand made on YouTube: The princess will be released if the prime minister has sex with a pig on live TV later that day. Otherwise, she will be killed, also on YouTube.

- Eventually, the prime minister actually accedes to the ridiculous demand. He's being forced into radically non-consensual sex. He won't be destroyed only by the humiliation; he'll be destroyed

by the rape. We watch as the British public comes to this same conclusion, mirroring our own dawning comprehension.

- The second episode begins with no sign of the prime minister or contemporary London. It starts in a box. A young black man is sleeping on a mattress inside a box the size of a prison cell, and when he awakens, we see that the walls are actually screens.

- He prepares for his day in this technologically dominated space, and we see the continuous display of his merits. The merits are economic credits, and he has over 15 million of them. They go down as he takes toothpaste or an apple, for example.

- He dresses in grey sweats and walks down a windowless hall and takes an elevator with other identically dressed people. He ends up on one of a seemingly endless row of stationary bicycles, where his display shows his merits increasing as he produces energy.

- This is a dystopia. Human slaves are caught in a cycle of energy production in which their every choice is severely limited. They have no way out unless, as we soon learn, they compete in various reality television shows.

- Citizens are continually barraged with media on the screens that are always in front of them, and they actually have to pay a merit penalty in order to turn off media streaming of vapid and often pornographic programming.

- Our protagonist often chooses to spend his merits on refusal of programming, and he eventually, in classic dystopian fashion, meets a girl who appears to have a rebellious streak as well. They both attempt to leave their cycling space for the only other world available to them: that of reality TV.

- This episode's depiction of the enslavement of the populace in a world where reality TV hosts have more power than whoever is running the human energy farms is chilling, especially when we realize that it reflects back on the power dynamics of the first episode.

- Like any good work of dystopia, this program isn't just showing us another place or time. It is showing us the darker side of contemporary reality right here in our connected global world.

Young Adult Dystopia Recommendations

Scott Westerfeld's *Uglies* series provides thought-provoking satire as it describes a "utopian" society in which everyone gets a "pretty" surgery at age 16 to normalize aesthetics.

Veronica Roth's *Divergent* series provides a powerful female heroine in Tris Prior, who has been enormously popular.

Ally Condie's *Matched* series uses many of the tropes of *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent*, but adds a wonderful element by focusing explicitly on the role of art in subverting a dystopian government.

The First Prediction: Genre Hybridity

- We can predict some changes based on current movements within literature quite broadly and genre fiction specifically. Let's look at three quite likely directions for utopia in the 21st century: first, increasing genre hybridity; second, a broadening of the audience, with special attention to younger readers and viewers; and third, increasingly multimedia versions of utopian and dystopian narratives, especially those that focus on the environment.

- Within genre fiction, we've been seeing a blurring of boundaries for a few years now. Over the past decade or so, we've seen a big move toward genre hybridity, where utopia or dystopia doesn't just appear

within science fiction, as it long has. Elements of detective and crime fiction often appear in science fiction stories with dystopian settings. But elements of utopian imaginings—and dystopian threats—have also crossed into mainstream, literary fiction, as in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* or many of Margaret Atwood's novels.

The Second Prediction: Appeal to Young Readers

- Many of the dystopias being written in the 21st century are aimed at young readers. And as we've seen in our discussions of *The Hunger Games*, *Little Brother*, and *Feed*, there's a ton of great energy in young adult dystopia, which runs the gamut from rather earnest utopian imaginings, as in Cory Doctorow's *Little Brother*, to broad yet incisive satire, as in M.T. Anderson's *Feed*.

- There has also been an increasing number of dystopias aimed at children. A classic children's dystopia is Lois Lowry's *The Giver*. Published in 1993, this is surely the most critically acclaimed novel of its kind. In Lowry's novel, we have:
  1. A totalitarian society that uses ubiquitous surveillance and extreme conformity to keep its citizens safe, thus giving up the most dangerous—and perhaps also the most precious—aspects of life, like music, color, and love.

  2. A 12-year-old boy who thinks he lives in a utopia until he comes of age and starts to question the restrictions he has always accepted as necessary.

  3. A society that feels it's better if most citizens have only limited access to their own history.

  4. The eventual uncovering of dark rituals, in this case the fact that when people are "released," they don't actually go elsewhere. They are killed. Even the babies.

- The protagonist, Jonas, is to be the new Receiver, a job so secret he hadn't even known it existed. The Receiver, he learns when he begins his training, is the only person who holds the cultural memories of the society.

- Through his training with the Giver of the title, Jonas receives not only the culture's history, but also a number of important new sensations: pain, hunger, fury, joy, even love. And he sees new things, most importantly colors. The Giver explains that the colors are so solid, so lasting compared to the other memories Jonas receives because there was a time when color just was.

- Jonas's wisdom comes quickly. In fact, only one year after he begins training as the Receiver, he mounts a coup on his totalitarian society, leading to an uncertain ending which is part of the pleasure of this novel.

- Is dystopia an appropriate genre for children? There's some debate, but *The Giver* and dystopia novels in general can be seen as texts with the potential to introduce children to a love of reading, increase their critical reading capabilities, see the importance of civic engagement, and open up important ethical conversations.

- A more recent series that accomplishes these goals within children's dystopia is Jeanne DuPrau's *The City of Ember* series, whose four novels came out between 2003 and 2008. The situation here is pretty dire, since Ember is an underground city built 200 years before our story begins as an insurance policy against impending cataclysm. Fifty couples, each with two children, were ensconced in the underground city with all kinds of supplies and modern conveniences.

- Today the city is reaching the end of its supplies, but there's a problem: No one knows how to leave the city—the instructions for departure, secretly passed from mayor to mayor, have been lost. Two smart, brave 11-year-old kids, Lina Mayfleet and Doon Harrow, figure out how to escape their dying city and lead the

people of Ember to the great outside world, where they are faced for the first time with such novelties as the sun and the sky, the trees, the horizon, and uncontrollable weather.

- They are also faced, they quickly realize, with a vast empty landscape and no food or shelter. For the next four days, the bedraggled people of Ember walk, still led by the two child heroes. Finally, they arrive at Spark, a town with a population of just over 300 that is by far the biggest town in the area.

- As Doon becomes embroiled in the petty battles and negotiations between the people of Ember and Spark, Lina runs away to explore the vast lands left behind after the disasters of the past, which included wars as well as pandemics.

- On her journey, Lina has long talks with a wise young woman named Maddy. Maddy educates Lina—and presumably, the young reader—about various possible responses to group conflict, including physical battle, diplomacy, and passive resistance. At the same time, Lina and Doon also learn about how food gets made and distributed, and how trade and conflict work.

- Lina and Doon show that pre-teens can have an impact. They should not simply sit by and be placated when adults say there's no problem or be passive when adults say they're working on the problem. Children should work the problem too.

The Third Prediction: Increase in Multimedia

- This lecture's third prediction is that utopia and dystopia will become increasingly multimedia. That's especially believable given their increased focus on environmental degradation as a reason to imagine more utopian, sustainable communities of the future—or imagine nightmarish scenarios where dystopian communities are the only way to deal with a devastated world.

- We already have many popular video games that place users in dystopian scenarios. *Bioshock*, for example, is an enormously successful first-person shooter game set in an underwater city called Rapture that was set up as a utopia but that, of course, turns out to have a rotten inner core.

- Other influential games that allow users to explore dystopian and utopian approaches to building and maintaining societies include the *Civilization* and *Fallout* series. We can expect to see many more games that expand our utopian imaginings and our dystopian fears as video game technology continues to become more immersive.

Back to the Beginning

- Thomas More couldn't have foreseen most or perhaps any of these developments. But in 1516, he tapped into a powerful insight with *Utopia,* an insight that would be dramatized almost five centuries later in Ursula Le Guin's elegant little story, "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas."

- In Omelas, the utopia is explicitly made possible by the horrifying misery of a child in the basement, revealing that the entire utopian chord is built on a deeply dystopian bass note. As we have seen in our journeys through various dystopian landscapes, there is, similarly, always a utopian yearning along the sinister road that leads to dystopia.

- That complex paradox, where we both yearn and fear, is why this genre works. It works formulaically because we enjoy the conventions of utopia and dystopia. It works from a marketing perspective, as we see easily when we look through bestseller lists and blockbuster films. And it works rhetorically because of the contradiction: the perfect place that is no place. It embodies a simultaneous optimism and cynicism that is, perhaps, an inherent part of the human condition.

SUGGESTED READING

Condie, *Matched.*
DuPrau, Jeanne. *The City of Ember.*
Lowry, *The Giver.*
———, *Son.*
Robinson, *Red Mars.*
Westerfeld, *Uglies.*
———, *Extras.*

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1 What do you see as the future of utopia? Do you imagine we'll continue to have many more dystopias than utopias? Under what circumstances could you imagine a resurgence in utopia?

2 Have you ever played a utopian or dystopian video game? Would you want to? How much potential do you think games have in helping users think through important social and cultural issues?

3 In the 19th century, we saw the establishments of genre fictions (detective, horror, romance, science fiction, western, etc.). In the 21st century, we seem to be seeing an increasing hybridity among the genres, so that many popular novels and films include elements of many genres. Do you enjoy these new hybrid genres? Why or why not?

4 Why do you think so much of the energy of utopia and dystopia is in the young adult market? Are younger readers somehow more predisposed to enjoying these genres? Why or why not?

Bibliography

Note: In many cases where the work is available in multiple editions, no publisher is listed.

Primary Sources

NOVELS AND SHORT STORIES

Alcott, Louisa May. "Transcendental Wild Oats." 1873. Short story, first published in a newspaper, *The Independent*, reflecting upon Alcott's childhood experience in the utopian planned community, Fruitlands. Includes broad satire as well as reflections on religion, economy, sustainable agriculture, and gender relations. [Lecture 4]

Anderson, M.T. *Feed*. 2002. Satirical young adult dystopia set on a near-future Earth in which environmental degradation has forced most humans into enormous domed cities. Most humans are wired with the Feed, implanted digital tech that advertises constantly and keeps the populace compliant. Memorable teen characters in Titus and Violet. Addresses climate change, digital technologies, and education. [Lecture 22]

———. *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing, Traitor to the Nation, Volume 1: The Pox Party*. 2006. Winner of the National Book Award for Young People's Literature, this very serious novel about a dark episode in America's history (chattel slavery) acts as a perfect complement to Anderson's *Feed*, with its lighter tone but equally serious subject matter. Sequel is excellent as well. [Lecture 22]

Andreae, Johann Valentin. *Christianopolis*. 1619. Early German utopia has an emphasis on education, scientific and aesthetic, focusing on the importance of religion and science working together. [Lecture 3]

Anonymous. *Antangil*. 1616. Early French utopia follows from More in examining a utopian island with attention to economics, politics, military, education, and religion. Includes satire of contemporary religious and political conflicts. [Lecture 3]

Atwood, Margaret. *Oryx and Crake*. 2003. First book of the *MaddAddam* series, focuses on Jimmy (the Snowman), who is left to shepherd the Crakers, a group of gentle genetically engineered humans, after an engineered extinction event has rid the Earth of most of its human population. Addresses deep ecology, biotechnologies, storytelling with blend of satire and earnest. [Lecture 20]

———. *MaddAddam*. 2013. Third book of the *MaddAddam* series, considered a sibling rather than sequel to *The Year of the Flood*, as events overlap. Multiple perspectives, with increased attention to the Crakers as beings independent of their human creator. Provides a satisfying ending to Atwood's lengthy "ustopian" explorations of a post-apocalyptic society. [Lecture 20]

———. *The Handmaid's Tale*. 1985. Acclaimed feminist dystopia describes a post-nuclear society in which many are subjugated, especially women. Brilliantly written, this novel focuses on questions of power, specifically how control of language, sexuality, and history can contribute to the creation and maintenance of a dystopian society. [Lecture 20]

———. *The Year of the Flood*. 2009. Second book of the *MaddAddam* series, considered a sibling rather than prequel to *MaddAddam*, as events overlap. Focuses on Toby, a middle-aged female gardener who has survived the Extinction Event and provides a view complementary to that of Jimmy's from *Oryx and Crake*. Focus on storytelling, gendered identities, intersections of organic gardens and narratives.

Bachman, Richard (Stephen King). *The Long Walk.* 1979. Early young adult dystopia describes a reality TV game show in which teens compete to the death. Influential to 21st-century young adult dystopia, especially *The Hunger Games.* [Lecture 21]

———. *The Running Man.* 1982. Dystopian novel features a near-future society in which enormous economic disparity has led to a reality TV game show in which contestants knowingly sacrifice their lives for the chance of earning money for their survivors. Examines dystopian topics such as hyperreality and constructions of power. [Lecture 21]

Bacon, Francis. *New Atlantis.* 1627. Posthumously published early utopia set on the island of Bensalem. Emphasizes the importance of education to utopia, making the college even more powerful than the state. [Lecture 3]

Bellamy, Edward. *Equality.* 1897. Sequel to the much more famous *Looking Backward*, this novel expands the descriptions of utopian future Boston, with particular attention to women's roles. [Lecture 6]

———. *Looking Backward: 2000–1887.* 1888. Earnest utopia set in Boston of the year 2000 explores corruption of Victorian America and argues that Nationalism is a politically and economically viable response. Spawned Bellamy Clubs, socially and politically active book groups discussing the novel. [Lecture 6]

Bulwer-Lytton, Edward. *The Coming Race.* 1871. Science fiction/utopian novel in which a society is found underground where beings have supernatural powers including telepathy and they control the mysterious energy force, Vril. There was some discussion of the novel as revealing an occult truth among the Theosophists. Likely contributed to the success of Butler's *Erewhon.* [Lecture 5]

Bradbury, Ray. *Fahrenheit 451.* 1953. Dystopian novel in which all reading is banned, and "firemen" are those who ferret out and burn any contraband books. Focuses on typical dystopian themes like censorship, tension between individual freedom and state control, mass media. [Lecture 13]

Burgess, Anthony. *1985*. 1978. Dystopian novella written in deep conversation with George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The volume is presented in three parts: a long introductory essay titled "1984" that provides analysis of Orwell's novel and the dystopian genre; the novella, a dark dystopia that imagines a London in which unions are all-powerful; an afterword (mimicking *Nineteen Eighty-Four*) that reflects upon language usage in dystopia. [Lecture 14]

———. *A Clockwork Orange*. 1962. Dystopian novel that introduces Alexander the Large, a teen hoodlum in a near-future London who terrorizes his neighborhood before being apprehended for murder and receiving state-sponsored behavioral conditioning. Explores tensions between security and free will, coming down on the side of free will, as Burgess explicitly states elsewhere. [Lecture 14]

Butler, Samuel. "Darwin Among the Machines." 1863. Butler's essay lays out many of the argument from *The Book of the Machines* found in *Erewhon*. Namely, machines will eventually make humans their slaves, and although the machines will likely be benevolent, we should destroy all machines now while we still can. Tone here, as in *Erewhon*, is difficult to ascertain—serious, satire, or both? [Lecture 5]

———. *Erewhon*. 1872. New York: Prometheus Books, 1998. Print. This Victorian satirical utopia includes a long section called *The Book of the Machines*, in which the Erewhonian philosophy about machines is revealed: the use of machinery is prohibited in anticipation of the eventuality that machines will enslave humans. [Lecture 5]

———. *Erewhon Revisited*. 1901. Sequel to *Erewhon* has Higg's son narrating Higg's returning to Erewhon, where he is now worshiped as the Sunchild. Satire is much broader than in original, here targeting institutions of religion. [Lecture 5]

Butler, Octavia E. *Bloodchild and Other Stories*. 1995, 2005. This short story collection is worth it for the title story alone, which explores many of the same dynamics as the *Xenogenesis* trilogy. The

2005 edition includes two new stories, "Amnesty" and "The Book of Martha." Explores intersectionality, language, apocalypse, and cultural conflict. [Lecture 18]

———. *Fledgling*. 2005. Hybrid vampire novel set in contemporary America in which the Ina (an ancient vampire race) have created utopian intentional communities. They live in psychological and physiological symbiosis with humans and face threats from other humans and Ina. Explores genre hybridity, species hybridity, intentional communities, and cultural conflict. [Lecture 19]

———. *Kindred*. 1979. Time-travel novel in which a 1970s black woman travels involuntarily to antebellum Maryland, where she is treated as a slave and must protect the lives of her ancestors, a slave woman and her white master. Explores intersectionality, American history, legacy of slavery, and cultural conflict. [Lecture 19]

———. *Lilith's Brood*. 2000. Omnibus edition of the *Xenogenesis* trilogy, containing *Dawn* (1987), *Adulthood Rites* (1988), and *Imago* (1989). Three novels, each from a different perspective, tell the story of humans joining with the tri-gendered aliens, the Oankali, after the Earth has been destroyed and the human population almost extinguished. Explores intersectionality, cultural conflict, heterotopia. [Lecture 18]

———. *Parable of the Sower*. 1993. First of the Earthseed series, which unfortunately stands at only two novels (with *Parable of the Talents*, 1998) due to Butler's death. Novel is set in contemporary L.A. in which the walls around gated communities come down due to limited resources. Young adult protagonist travels to supposed safer place and founds a new religion. Explores intersectionality, religion, the road, apocalypse in action. [Lectures 19, 23]

———. *Patternmaster*. New York: Warner, 1976. Print. First of five novels exploring a future world in which a small group of humans has developed telepathy. Explores intersectionality, power, cultural conflict, heterotopia. [Lecture 19]

Campanella, Tommaso. *The City of the Sun*. 1623. Early Italian utopia previews centrality of eugenics in later utopias and dystopias as astrology is used in pregnancy planning to ensure that all citizens are born under favorable astrological conditions. [Lecture 3]

Collins, Suzanne. *Catching Fire*. 2009. Second book of *The Hunger Games* trilogy, features Katniss Everdeen back for a second round of The Hunger Games. Breaks the fourth wall as the game space blends with reality, exploring the issue of hyperreality at the center of postmodern dystopia. [Lecture 21]

———. *Mockingjay*. 2010. Third and final book of *The Hunger Games* moves the game trope onto the field of war. Includes a strong female heroine deliberately performing her gender identity and her two-sided rebel persona. Includes a serious look at the ravages of war from the overthrow of a totalitarian regime. [Lecture 21]

———. *The Hunger Games*. 2008. First book of blockbuster young adult dystopia trilogy features an androgynous teen girl who becomes a beautiful rebel when forced to participate in a reality game show that pits youth against each other to the death. Explores issues of gender identity, revolution, and mass media. [Lecture 21]

Condie, Ally. *Matched*. 2010. Young adult dystopia shares many features with *The Hunger Games*, but also includes an exploration of eugenics, rewriting of history, and art as a tool of rebellion. [Lecture 24]

Dashner, James. *The Maze Runner*. 2009. Young adult dystopia features a male protagonist in a post-apocalyptic world in which a game space has been set up to prepare a group of teens to save the real world. Explores constructions of individual and cultural memory, conflict resolution, and gender identity. [Lecture 21]

Delany, Samuel R. *Babel-17*. 1966. Nebula-award-winning novel examines intersections of language and state, positing a world in which the language of Babel-17 is used as an explicit weapon of war to change the enemy's thoughts and perceptions. Focus on aesthetics and language as tools of subversion and conformity. [Lecture 17]

———. *Tales of Nevèrÿon.* 1979. First volume of the *Return to Nevèrÿon* series. The five short stories in this volume introduce several main characters of the larger world of Nevèrÿon, a place with many analogs to Earth in its complex histories and stories. Explores dynamics of power, identity, and race in a way that is at once utopian and dystopian. [Lecture 17]

———. *The Einstein Intersection.* 1967. Nebula-award-winning novel explores alien encounter with a focus on questions of power, language, myth, and personal identity. [Lecture 17]

———. *Trouble on Triton.* 1976. This novel uses an unreliable narrator to speak to questions central to the genres of utopia and dystopia, including those around gender identity, power, aesthetics, and torture. [Lecture 17]

Dick, Philip K. *A Scanner Darkly.* 1977. Set in a dystopian Orange County of the near future, this novel pushes the boundaries of reality in its analysis of drug culture. Source for the film of the same name. [Lecture 13]

———. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* 1968. Novel set in a post-apocalyptic world where cyborg replicants are virtually indistinguishable from biological humans. Source for the blockbuster film, *Blade Runner.* [Lecture 13]

———. *Minority Report.* 1956. Novella set in a "utopian" New York City in which crime has been drastically reduced by the use of precogs, three altered humans who can foresee criminal acts in the future. Explores tensions between free will and state control. Source for the film of the same name. [Lecture 13]

———. *The World Jones Made.* 1956. Post-apocalyptic dystopian novel explores an Earth after nuclear warfare in which the principles of relativism are taken to extremes. Explores tensions between individual freedom and state control. [Lecture 13]

Doctorow, Cory. *Little Brother*. 2008. Young adult cyberpunk novel presents Marcus Yallow (screenname w1nSt0n), a teen hacker detained and tortured by the Department of Homeland Security after a terrorist attack on modern-day San Francisco. References to Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* suggest that contemporary America can be read as a dystopia. The novel provides in-depth information about computer hacking. All of Doctorow's creative work is freely available online as he is a proponent of Open Access. [Lecture 22]

———. *Homeland*. 2013. Sequel to *Little Brother* shows us Marcus Yallow after he has dropped out of college, still a cyberpunk hero as he takes on Big Brother government. Like all Doctorow's work, freely available online. [Lecture 22]

DuPrau, Jeanne. *The City of Ember*. 2003. First of four novels of an independent reader series geared at pre-teen readers. Two eleven-year-olds (a girl and a boy) solve the resource and power problems faced by an underground city created 200 years earlier immediately before wars and plagues have devastated the Earth. Subsequent novels detail the group's explorations and adventures trying to survive in the outside world. [Lecture 24]

Elgin, Suzette Haden. *Native Tongue*. 1984. Feminist novel in which linguists have much prestige given numerous alien trade partners. Even in linguist communities, women are subjugated to men, and the novel, written by a linguist, narrates the deliberate construction of a women's language among the busy female linguists. First novel of a compelling trilogy. [Lecture 15]

Forster, E.M. "The Machine Stops." 1909. One of the earliest post-apocalyptic dystopias. Here humans are forced to live underground in sanitized, mechanized cells. They use advanced communications technology and have limited transportation opportunities. Provides perspectives of a satisfied citizen and a rebel. [Lecture 9]

Gibson, William. *Neuromancer*. 1984. Founding text for cyberpunk. Award-winning novel has been enormously influential in providing ways to set fiction within cyberworlds, with hackers moving smoothly between physical and cyber identities and settings as they rebel against their dystopian society. Influential on YA dystopia. [Lecture 22]

Gilman, Charlotte Perkins. *Herland*. 1915. One of the earliest and most intriguing early feminist separatist utopias. This novel has three men, representing three models of masculinity, visiting a land in which three million women live happy fulfilling lives without men. This novel was published in 1915 without much fanfare, but was recovered by feminist scholars in the 1970s and has since received much critical attention. [Lecture 8]

———. "The Yellow Wallpaper." 1892. Gilman's best-known short story, in the genre of gothic marital. Demonstrates her mastery of the unreliable narrator and speaks to one of her most successful approaches to feminist activism, which is later developed in her utopian novel, *Herland*. [Lecture 8]

———. *Women and Economics: A Study of the Economic Relation between Men and Women as a Factor in Social Evolution*. 1898. Non-fiction analysis by Gilman of the importance of systemic economic inequalities in constructing gendered roles for men and women. This book propelled Gilman onto the lecture circuit, where she addressed "the Woman Question" of the turn of the 20th century. [Lecture 8]

Golding, William. *Lord of the Flies*. 1954. Desert-island story of teen boys forced to create their own society. Sets up some of the power dynamics of utopia and dystopia in a way that is influential to young adult dystopia. [Lecture 12]

Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *The Blithedale Romance*. 1852. Novel based on Hawthorne's experiences at Brook Farm, a Fourier-influenced utopian planned community in 1840s Massachussetts. Explores where utopia is possible, with attention to social reform, gender, national identity, and the occult. [Lecture 4]

Hesiod. *Works and Days*. Written approximately 700 B.C., this 800-line didactic poem is largely concerned with agricultural instruction. It also discusses the Myth of the Ages, starting with the Golden Age (a precursor for utopia) and following the decline of the human condition. [Lecture 2]

Huxley, Aldous. *Ape and Essence*. 1948. Odd but compelling novel of a dystopian society that emerges from the ruins of nuclear war. Includes many of the themes of *Brave New World*. Has a particularly unique narrative frame, as the main narrative is a script discovered in the trash on the day of Ghandi's murder. [Lecture 10]

———. *Brave New World*. 1932. One of the big three dystopias of the early 20th century. This one focuses on control through pleasure, and explores topical issues like genetic engineering, behavioral conditioning, and pharmacological dependency. Compelling characters and a strong balance between driving plot and philosophical musings. A must-read of dystopia. [Lecture 10]

———. *Brave New World Revisited*. 1958. Long essay in which Huxley revisits his famous novel a quarter century later. He finds that his dystopian predictions were frighteningly accurate, and sees the world heading towards totalitarianism even more quickly than he had anticipated. Very readable, and offers good insights into *Brave New World* and his utopia, *Island*. [Lecture 10]

———. *Island*. 1962. Utopian novel in which a journalist deliberately shipwrecks in order to gain access to a utopian island culture. Features many of the technologies of *Brave New World*, including drug use, communal living, and assisted reproduction, but here it's the individual who chooses these techs instead of the state. [Lecture 10]

Imarisha, Walidah, and Adrienne Maree Brown, Eds. *Octavia's Brood: Science Fiction Stories from Social Justice Movements*. 2015. Short story collection in homage to Octavia Butler brings together texts from many genres—science fiction, utopia, magical realism, and fantasy—to consider how genre fiction can be used for social activism. [Lecture 18]

Kirkman, Robert, and Tony Moore. *The Walking Dead* series. Began 2003. Award-winning series of comic books exploring various social configurations arising out of a zombie apocalypse. Source for AMC's *The Walking Dead* TV show. [Lecture 23]

Lane, Mary E. Bradley. *Mizora: A Prophecy.* 1880–81. Early feminist separatist utopian novel published serially in 1880-81, and then printed as a single volume in 1890. Like Gilman's *Herland*, this novel was recovered by feminist scholars in the 1970s. A hollow earth novel that includes interesting technology like videophones, it is considered problematic because of its racism, where the utopian women practice eugenics to achieve an all-blonde Aryan society. [Lecture 8]

Le Guin, Ursula K. *Always Coming Home.* 1985. Multi-faceted exploration of the Kesh, a culture in a post-apocalyptic future. Includes poems, illustrations (by Margaret Chodos) and anthropological data under a novelistic frame. May be accompanied by an audio disc called *Music and Poetry of the Kesh*, featuring performances by Todd Barton. Complex explorations of utopia. [Lecture 16]

———. "Nine Lives." 1969. Short story originally published in *Playboy* is probably the most clearly "sci-fi" of Le Guin's writings. Uses cloning to explore concepts of identity, masculinity, and social stability. [Lecture 16]

———. *The Dispossessed.* 1974. This novel is part of the Hainish Cycle and won the Hugo and Nebula Awards for science fiction. Provides a complex exploration of anarchy as a form of government and gives us perhaps the most memorable fictional physicist concerned with the construction of time in Shevek. Brilliant and compelling. [Lecture 16]

———. *The Left Hand of Darkness.* 1969. Part of the Hainish Cycle, this novel won both the Hugo and the Nebula Awards for science fiction. Genly Ai, an ambassador from a confederation of planets called the Ekumen, visits the planet of Gethen (Winter), where inhabitants have no stable gender identities, developing male or female characteristics approximately once a month during kemmer, their fertile time. Complex representations of gender and colonization. [Lectures 15 and 16]

———. "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas." 1975. Brilliant short story showcases the symbiotic relationships of utopia and dystopia in a simple narrative that provides the image of the child in the basement who provides the sacrificial foundation for utopian society. [Lecture 1 and 16]

———. *The Word for World is Forest*. New York: Berkley/Putnam, 1976. Print. This Hugo-winning novella is part of the Hainish Cycle. One of Le Guin's more political novel, it explores issues of colonial exploitation, human slavery, and environmental degradation. [Lecture 16]

London, Jack. *The Iron Heel*. 1908. Early dystopian novel highlights London's socialist views through a near-future American society. Includes innovative use of scholarly footnotes that presage the scholarly afterword of Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale.* [Lecture 9]

Lowry, Lois. *The Giver*. 1993. Dystopia for children includes a post-apocalyptic society in which conformity is so extreme that music and colors can no longer be perceived. Award-winning novel continues to be taught in middle schools. [Lecture 24]

———. *Son*. 2012. Fourth novel set in the dystopian world for children introduced by *The Giver*. Provides a fascinating and quite idealistic perspective in looking forward the future of this world. Focus on art as rebellion. [Lecture 24]

Mandel, Emily St. John. *Station Eleven*. 2014. Oddly hopeful post-apocalyptic novel that follows a troupe of Shakespearean actors through a world in which over 99 percent of the human population has been killed by pandemic. Great characters and lots of postmodern explorations of the power of drama and other modes of popular culture in dealing with the end of the world. [Lecture 23]

Matheson, Richard. *I Am Legend*. 1954. Post-apocalyptic novel follows the apparent lone survivor of an epidemic that looks like a zombie apocalypse. Explores anxieties around technology, race relations, and sanity/madness. Source material for three different films. [Lecture 12]

McCarthy, Cormac. *The Road*. 2006. One of the starkest and most poignant post-apocalyptic novels ever written. Winner of the Pulitzer Prize and many other accolades, the novel tells the story of a father and son traveling through a world without hope. Also a major film. [Lecture 23]

McIntyre, Vonda. *Starfarers*. 1989. First novel in a science fiction series that follows a colonization ship through a set of social experiments and the conflicts that arise within a seemingly utopian society. Explores power, gender, and sexuality. [Lecture 15]

More, Thomas. *Utopia*. 1516. Eds. George M. Logan and Robert M. Adams. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1975. More's book coined the term *utopia* with its fictional island. Written in two volumes (a dialogue and a description), this text introduces several key conventions of both utopia and dystopia, including the frame narrative, the invitation to readers for meaning-making, the detailed description of social mores and institutions including government, economy, religion, and foreign affairs. The excellent edition by Logan and Adams provides a short but helpful introduction, highly readable footnotes, and useful source material. [Lectures 1, 2]

Morris, William. *News from Nowhere*. 1890. Famous utopian novel that clearly responds to Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, since William Guest (as opposed to Bellamy's Julian West) finds himself in a utopian future. Differs from Bellamy in how it imagines utopia: socialist, agrarian, focused on nature rather than technological advances. [Lecture 6]

Orwell, George. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. 1949. One of the big three dystopias of the early 20th century. Speaks to the urgency of dystopian writing by setting the totalitarian world only thirty-five years in the future. Introduces well-known neologisms like *Big Brother*, *Room 101*, and *Thought Police*, and continues Orwell's concerns about the importance of language in framing how we understand history as well as personal and cultural identity. [Lecture 11]

———. "Politics and the English Language." 1947. Well-known essay published by Orwell shortly before *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in which he expresses his concern that the English language is being degraded by sloppy usage. Most famously, he argues that "If thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought." Continues to be assigned reading in many high school and college writing classrooms. [Lecture 11]

Piercy, Marge. *He, She, and It.* 1991. Published as *Body of Glass* in the United Kingdom, this feminist science fiction novel is set in a dystopian future of extreme income disparity. Explores questions of power, revolution, and cyberspace. Includes an android (the *It* of the title) as a major character. [Lecture 15]

———. *Woman on the Edge of Time.* 1976. Feminist utopian novel made ambiguous by its unreliable narrator, a woman in a mental asylum who encounters a visitor from a better future (whose presence may be explained by science fiction or by mental illness). Explores questions of gender identity, power, revolution, and free will. [Lecture 15]

Plato. *Republic.* Approx. 380 B.C. This philosophical volume uses Socratic dialogue to consider the aesthetic, political, and economic features that might be part of an ideal republic. Enormously influential on modern philosophy in general, and referenced often in More's *Utopia.* [Lecture 2]

Robinson, Kim Stanley. *Red Mars.* 1993. First novel of an award-winning trilogy with a two-century span that tells the story of the settlement of Mars, with attention to social, cultural, and technological elements and conflicts. [Lecture 24]

Roth, Veronica. *Divergent.* 2012. First book of young adult dystopia series in which a strong female protagonist battles for individual identity within a restrictive society. Includes revolution, blurring of fiction and reality, and mind-control through pharmaceuticals. Source for a movie franchise. [Lecture 21]

Russ, Joanna. *The Female Man.* 1975. Major novel in the feminist utopian movement of the 1970s. Includes four versions of the same female protagonist (same DNA, at least) on four parallel worlds that range from dystopia to utopia to present-day. Known for its innovative and challenging narrative style. [Lecture 15]

Sargent, Pamela. *The Shore of Women.* 1986. Separatist feminist utopia in which the women of a post-apocalyptic society have expelled men from their communities and bring them back only for a mating ritual. Gender politics are complicated by the use of a young female protagonist who is expelled to live among the men when she challenges the gender separation. [Lecture 15]

———, ed. *Women of Wonder.* 1975. First book in a series of short story collections of female science fiction writers. Includes an excellent introduction to feminist science fiction by Sargent as well as stories by such famous feminist utopian/science fiction writers as Ursula K. Le Guin, Vonda McIntyre, Kate Wilhelm, and Joanna Russ. [Lecture 15]

Scott, Sarah. *A Description of Millenium Hall.* 1762. One of the earliest feminist separatist utopias, this novel describes a community of loving, supportive, celibate women who pursue their utopian yearnings through religious education and seclusion from men. [Lectures 8 and 15]

Skinner, B.F. *Walden Two.* A rare utopia in the 1950s. A professor and some graduate students visit a utopian community with hundreds of members that appears to have solved the problems of planned utopian living. Includes earnest discussion of utopian strategies as well as a somewhat sinister take on the community's leader. [Lecture 14]

Slonczewski, Joan. *A Door into Ocean.* 1986. Feminist utopian novel written by a microbiologist includes a focus on nonviolent revolution and environmental sustainability. Challenging and accessible. [Lecture 15]

Stephenson, Neal. *Snow Crash.* 1992. Influential cyberpunk novel presents Hiro Protagonist, pizza delivery guy and super-hacker, in a postmodern work that pushes at the boundaries between reality and fiction, and between utopia and dystopia. [Lecture 22]

Swift, Jonathan. *Gulliver's Travels.* 1726. Extremely popular satirical utopia recounts a sailor's travels to four difficult-to-pronounce lands, each with markedly different features that showcase critiques of European society. Ends with Gulliver's encounter with the Houyhnhnms and Yahoos, remarkable talking horses and horrible humanoid pests. Gulliver realizes that humans are like Yahoos and that we can likely never reach the utopian state of Houyhnhnms. [Lecture 3]

Tepper, Sheri S. *The Gate to Women's Country.* 1988. Separatist feminist utopia set in a post-apocalyptic world in which the women's country is based on environmental sustainability and community governance, with most men living beyond the gates as warriors with the exception of a few male servants. Explores questions of gender identity, power, social structures. [Lecture 15]

Tiptree Jr., James. *Houston, Houston, Do You Read?* 1976. Award-winning novella updates the basic premise of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's 1915 *Herland* to the space age, when three stranded male astronauts time-travel as a result of a solar flare and find themselves in a woman-only future in which reproduction is through cloning and the women live full and happy lives. [Lecture 15]

Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden.* 1854. Key Transcendentalist work of mid-19th-century America in which Thoreau recounts his two years of living alone in a cabin on the banks of Walden Pond, in Massachusetts. Although not a classic utopia in that it describes a single individual rather than a society, this reflective work covers many of the same issues as the utopias of its day. [Lecture 4]

Voltaire (Francois-Marie Arouet). *Candide.* 1759. Extremely popular satirical utopia provides incisive critique of the philosophy of optimism through its title character, a young man whose misadventures take him to thirteen different lands, including the mythic land of Eldorado. Arguably the most influential work of an extremely influential philosopher. [Lecture 3]

Vonnegut Jr., Kurt. *Player Piano*. 1952. Satirical dystopia presents a deeply mechanized society in which workers are entirely alienated from not only their work, but also their leisure. Includes many features of the Cold War dystopias. [Lecture 13]

Wells, H. G. *A Modern Utopia*. 1905. Satirical utopia sets the perfect place in a parallel universe that includes all the same people, but improved to correspond with their improved social norms. Inspired a small real-world following. [Lecture 7]

———. *The Time Machine*. 1895. Early example of scientific time travel to set up a euchronia. What appears to be a utopia is actually a dystopia. Addresses questions around the scientific method, human evolution, and Marxist analysis. [Lecture 7]

———. *The Sleeper Awakes*. 1910. Revised version of the earlier novella, *When the Sleeper Wakes* (1899). Dystopian novel set about a hundred years in the future includes totalitarian techniques of both pleasure and impoverishment, thus influencing both *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. [Lecture 7]

Westerfeld, Scott. *Uglies*. 2005. First novel of a satirical YA dystopia series in which everyone gets a "Pretty" surgery at sixteen in order to fit a standardized norm of beauty. Includes themes of revolution, conformity, and gendered identity. [Lecture 24]

———. *Extras*. 2007. Fourth and final novel of the *Uglies* series. This novel is especially important as it recasts the first three novels, which are, together, a single long story in three books. This book introduces a new point of view and recasts the analysis of the first three novels in a postmodern way. Focus on hyperreality, cyberpunk, and teen revolution. [Lecture 24]

Wittig, Monique. *Les Guérrières*. 1969. Trans into English 1971. Feminist novel in which the war between the sexes is literalized by impressive warrior women. A fictionalized version of Wittig's feminist

philosophy, this novel provides a thought experiment of what might happen if categories of "woman" and "lesbian" were no longer central to female identity. [Lecture 15]

Wyndham, John. *The Chrysalids*. 1955. Early young adult dystopia explores a post-apocalyptic totalitarian society challenged from within by teens with telepathy. A frequent introduction to dystopia for middle school children in the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia. [Lecture 12]

———. *The Day of the Triffids*. 1951. Apocalyptic science fiction novel in which 10-foot-tall carnivorous plants developed to counteract food shortages unexpectedly attack humans by first blinding them and then slowly killing them. Addresses anxieties about overpopulation, genetic engineering, and human blindness to the dangers of technology. [Lecture 12]

Zamyatin, Yevgeny. *We* (1921). Trans. Mirra Ginsburg. New York: Viking, 1972. Print. Often considered the first of the modern dystopias, this novel is narrated by D-503, the main builder of a new space ship intended to bring perfect rationality throughout the universe. Explores dystopia, panopticon, sexual repression, and totalitarianism. [Lecture 9]

FILMS AND TELEVISION

28 Days Later. Dir. Danny Boyle. 2002. Relatively earnest apocalypse movie in which pandemic ravages the world. Explores themes of human survival and possible rebuilding of society. [Lecture 23]

Battlestar Galactica. Created by Ronald D. Moore. 2004–2009. Re-imagined version of the 1978 television program of the same name. Post-apocalyptic space adventure includes a long-lasting war between humans and the cyborgs they have created who, in the 21st-century version, look exactly like humans. Addresses themes of governance, military conflict, cyborg. [Lecture 22]

Black Mirror. Created by Charlie Brooker. Started 2011. Innovative television series has a different cast, setting, and story in each episode, all reflecting on contemporary society in ways (often satirical, often earnest) reminiscent of the earliest utopias. [Lecture 24]

Blade Runner. Dir. Ridley Scott. 1982. Based on Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, this popular film uses a post-apocalyptic setting to explore cyborgs who look like humans. Themes of individual freedom and state control, personal identity, technology. [Lecture 13 and 22]

Clockwork Orange, A. Dir. Stanley Kubrick. 1971. Controversial and acclaimed adaptation of Anthony Burgess's 1962 novel of the same name. Explores tensions between individual freedom and state control. [Lecture 14]

Contagion. Dir. Stephen Soderbergh. 2011. Relatively accurate representation of the spread and response to a worldwide pandemic. One of the more realistic and thoughtful takes on the apocalyptic scenarios popular in 21st-century films. [Lecture 23]

Day of the Triffids, The. Dir. Steve Sekely. 1962. Film adaptation of John Wyndham's novel of the same name. Explores unexpected consequences of technological responses to environmental degradation. [Lecture 12]

Divergent. Dir. Neil Burger. 2014. Film adaptation of Veronica Roth's novel. Young adult dystopia addresses themes of free will, revolution, resistance to thought control, and gender identity. [Lecture 21]

Hunger Games, The. Dir. Gary Ross. 2012. First in the franchise of films based on Suzanne Collins's young adult dystopia trilogy. Explores themes of post-apocalyptic survival, income inequality, reality TV, military conflict, gender identity, and revolution. [Lecture 21]

Maze Runner, The. Dir. Wes Ball. 2014. Highly successful first film in the franchise adapted from James Dashner's YA dystopia trilogy. Includes teens dealing with a pandemic in a world where the lines between reality and virtual reality are often blurred. [Lecture 21]

Minority Report. Dir. Steven Spielberg. 2002. Film adaptation of Philip K. Dick's novella. Blends crime fiction and science fiction to explore tensions between individual free will and state-sponsored security. Includes analysis of cyborgs, criminality, revolution. [Lecture 13]

Polymath; or, The Life and Opinions of Samuel R. Delany, Gentleman. Dir. Fred Barney Taylor. 2007. Documentary film about the life and philosophies of Samuel R. Delany, who has written several ambiguous utopias, including *Trouble on Triton*. [Lecture 17]

Road, The. Dir. John Hillcoat. 2009. Critically acclaimed adaptation of Cormac McCarthy's post-apocalyptic novel of the same name. Explores themes of family, survival, and hope. [Lecture 23]

Running Man, The. Dir. Paul Michael Glaser. 1987. Based on the Richard Bachman (Stephen King) novel by the same name, this film showcases a dystopian society in which a reality TV gameshow that is always fatal to contestants is nonetheless popular given the lack of resources. Influential on 21st-century YA dystopias like *The Hunger Games*. [Lecture 21]

Scanner Darkly, A. Dir. Richard Linklater. 2006. Based on the Philip K. Dick novel of the same name, this film provides a surreal look at a totalitarian dystopian society in which drug use blurs the lines between fiction and reality. [Lecture 13]

Snowpiercer. Dir. Bong Joon-ho. 2013. Critically acclaimed South Korean film embodies Edward Bellamy's notion of the prodigious stagecoach (1888) with a post-apocalyptic train that embodies the social, cultural, and military responses to extreme inequalities in a society. [Lecture 6]

Soylent Green. Dir. Richard Fleischer. 1973. Based loosely on Harry Harrison's 1966 novel, *Make Room! Make Room!*, this film explores a dystopian society that arises from overpopulation and environmental degradation. Includes the chilling (and now humorous) line "Soylent Green is people." [Lecture 7]

This Is the End. Dirs. Evan Goldberg and Seth Rogen. 2013. Postmodern satirical film focuses on the blurring between fiction and reality in the midst of a global apocalypse. [Lecture 23]

Walking Dead, The. Created by Frank Darabont. Began 2010. AMC TV series based on the graphic novels by Robert Kirkman and Tony Moore. Gory and earnest explorations of themes of survival, governance, and hope in the midst of zombie apocalypse. [Lecture 23]

World War Z. Dir. Mark Forster. 2013. Film adaptation loosely based on Max Brooks' *World War Z: An Oral History of the Zombie War*. Contemporary take on the zombie apocalypse, complete with stunning visuals, conspiracy theories, science fiction elements, and an underpinning of hope. [Lecture 23]

Secondary Sources

ARTICLES

Baccolini, Raffaella. "Gender and Genre in the Feminist Critical Dystopias of Katharine Burdekin, Margaret Atwood, and Octavia Butler." *Future Females, The Next Generation: New Voices and Velocities in Feminist Science Fiction Criticism*. Ed. Marleen S. Barr. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000. 12–34. Print. In this accessible essay, Baccolini combines utopian theory and close reading to examine genre blurring a new direction for utopian writing, especially among feminist writers. Insightful readings of Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, and two Butler novels: *Kindred* and *Parable of the Sower*. [Lectures 18, 19, 20]

Baym, Nina. "*The Blithedale Romance*: A Radical Reading." *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 67 (1968): 545-69. Print. Classic essay on *The Blithedale Romance*, to the point that all essays to follow must account for Baym's arguments, especially that 1) the whole novel can be read as occurring in Coverdale's psyche; and 2) the weal-world feminist Margaret Fuller can be read as representing Priscilla, rather than the more conventional connection of Fuller to Zenobia. [Lecture 4]

Berlant, Lauren. "Fantasies of Utopia in *The Blithedale Romance*." *American Literary History* 1.1 (1989): 30-62. Print. One of the many excellent articles that attempt to unravel the complex psycho-sexual dynamics of *The Blithedale Romance*. Berlant elegantly links the gender representations in the novel to the central narratives of American history. [Lecture 4]

Caldwell, Larry W. "Wells, Orwell, and Atwood: (EPI)Logic and Eu/Utopia." *Extrapolation* 33.4 (1992): 333-45. Print. Highly readable article separates utopias into programmatic (stabilizing) and problematic (destabilizing), suggesting the most compelling examples of utopian texts fall into the latter category. Contains especially useful analysis of the frame narratives of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *The Handmaid's Tale*. [Lectures 11 and 20]

Connor, James. "Zamyatin's *We* and the Genesis of *1984*." *Modern Fiction Studies* 21.1 (1975). This essay addresses the fascinating issue of influence between *We* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, with some mention of *Brave New World*. Provides key points to both sides of the debate in arguing that Zamyatin was interested mostly in the dangers of mechanization, while Orwell's primary interest was in the perils attendant to totalitarianism. [Lectures 9 and 11]

Faulkner, William. "Banquet Speech." *Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech*. 10 December 1950. Stockholm. http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel _ prizes/literature/laureates/1949/faulkner-speech.html. Web. Print and audio versions are available of Faulkner's short and moving acceptance speech of the 1949 Novel Prize for Literature, which lays

out a powerful argument for the importance of literature in a post-war world in danger of succumbing to fears of human annihilation. [Lectures 6 and 23]

Foucault, Michel. "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias." *Architecture/Movement/Continuité*. Trans. Jay Miskowiec. 1984. Web: http://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/foucault1.pdf. Public domain version of a lecture given by Foucault in 1967. Lays out the theoretical foundation for thinking of heterotopias (other places) picked up by Delany in *Trouble on Triton*. [Lecture 17]

Helford, Elyce Rae. "'Would you really rather die than bear my young?': The Construction of Gender, Race, and Species in Octavia E. Butler's 'Bloodchild.'" *African American Review* 28.2 (1994): 259–71. Print. Excellent article examines "Bloodchild" as simultaneously about metaphors for slavery (against Butler's own reading) and for power relations. Useful work on Butler as mediating between "high" and popular culture and as placing the reader simultaneously in emotional and intellectual perspectives. [Lecture 18]

Houston, Chlöe. "Utopia, Dystopia or Anti-utopia? *Gulliver's Travels* and the Utopian Mode of Discourse. *Utopian Studies* 18.3 (2007): 425–42. Print. Accessible analysis of *Gulliver's Travels* genre troubles, with a final conclusion that utopian satire was necessary in the development of anti-utopia and dystopia, and that the novel can usefully be considered as simultaneously a utopia and a dystopia. [Lecture 3]

Jesser, Nancy. "Blood, Genes and Gender in Octavia Butler's *Kindred* and *Dawn*." *Extrapolation* 43.1 (2002): 36–61. Print. Engaging character analysis of Dana (from *Kindred*) and Lilith (from the *Xenogenesis* trilogy) that captures the complexity of Butler's brand of feminism and of the feminist theory it has engendered, all in a fairly accessible way. [Lecture 18]

Keyser, Elizabeth. "Looking Backward: From *Herland* to *Gulliver's Travels*." *Studies in American Fiction* 11.1 (1983): 31–46. Print. Accessible article provides a reading of *Herland* and its sequel, *With Her in Ourland*, as a rewriting of Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*,

especially the fourth voyage to the land of the Houyhnhnms and the Yahoos, who can be analogized as women and men. Concludes that Gilman agrees with Swift's dark vision of human nature, but has more optimism that it can be overcome. [Lecture 8]

Kunsa, Ashely. "'Maps of the World in Its Becoming': Post-Apocalyptical Naming in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*." *Journal of Modern Literature* 33.1 (2009): 57-74. Print. Kunsa argues, against Michael Chabon's reading of *The Road* as "empty at its core," that McCarthy's novel provides a hopeful ending in which the boy has a chance to make a new life in the dead world. Kunsa reads this as a statement about the possibility of meaningful fiction after postmodernism. [Lecture 23]

Lant, Kathleen Margaret. "The Rape of the Text: Charlotte Gilman's Violation of Herland." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 9.2 (1990): 291-308. Print. Provocative article uses feminist and postmodern theory to argue that *Herland*'s message of female empowerment is undercut by the novel's form, in which the male visitors' entry into the separatist utopia is repeatedly characterized as a rape. [Lecture 8]

Luckhurst, Roger. "'Horror and Beauty in Rare Combination': The Miscegenate Fictions of Octavia Butler." *Women: A Cultural Review* 7.1 (1996): 28-38. Print. Quite theoretical exploration of Butler's early works (especially *Kindred*, "Bloodchild," and the *Xenogenesis* trilogy) argues that her approach is more than *hybrid* (as suggested by Donna Haraway) and can productively be considered *miscegenate* writing. [Lecture 18]

Melzer, Patricia. "'All that you touch you change': Utopian Desire and the Concept of Change in Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower* and *Parable of the Talents*." *FemSpec* 3.2 (2002): 31–52. Print. This highly readable article provides a detailed analysis of both of Octavia Butler's *Parable* novels, focusing especially on the ways they embody, rewrite, and extend the conventions of utopian writing within feminist science fiction. [Lecture 19]

Neill, Anna. "The Machinate Literary Animal: Butlerian Science for the Twenty-First Century." *Configurations* 22.1 (2014) 57–77. Print. Fascinating recent article argues that while Butler's views on use inheritance (qualities developed within an individual's lifetime can be passed on to progeny) were derided by 20th-century scientists, more recent scholarship on the role of human and information culture on evolutionary development may show Butler's prescience on considering print culture as part of our evolutionary models. [Lecture 5]

Parrinder, Patrick. "Entering Dystopia, Entering *Erewhon*." *Critical Survey* 17.1 (2005): 6–21. Print. Provocative article examines the moment of entry into the society in several utopian and dystopian novels of the late 19th and early 20th centuries (*Erewhon*, *The Time Traveler*, *Brave New World*, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and others), arguing that ultimately *Erewhon* belongs to what he calls the "eugenic utopian tradition." [Lecture 5]

Parrinder, Patrick. "Wells and the Aesthetics of Utopia." *Caliban* 22 (1985): 19–27. Print. Brief, accessible article positions Wells as a writer of science fiction and utopia, tracing influences on him and his influences on utopian writing. Focus is on *A Modern Utopia*, with special attention to his invention of the Samurai. [Lecture 7]

Partington, John S. "*The Time Machine* and *A Modern Utopia*: The Static and Kinetic Utopias of the Early H.G. Wells." *Utopian Studies* 13.1 (2002): 57–68. Print. Useful article examines *The Time Machine* and *A Modern Utopia* as contrasting examples of, respectively, a static utopia (necessarily dystopic) and a kinetic utopia. Provides helpful context on Wells' attitudes towards positive and negative eugenics. [Lecture 7]

Phillips, Jerry. "The Intuition of the Future: Utopia and Catastrophe in Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower*. *A Forum on Fiction* 35.2-3 (2002): 299–311. Print. Phillips weaves contemporary cultural theory into his reading of Butler's *Parable of the Sower*, which he sees as "utopianism after the end of utopia" (308), situation the novel against the problematic real-world utopian visions of the early and mid-20th century. [Lecture 19]

Potts, Stephen W. "'We Keep Playing the Same Record': A Conversation with Octavia E. Butler." *Science-Fiction Studies* 23 (1996): 331–338. Print. Rare scholarly interview with Butler in which she discusses, frankly but charmingly, her decision to avoid reading literary theory, her opinions on sociobiology, and her responses to reader interpretations of her novels. [Lecture 18]

Rielly, Edward J. "Irony in *Gulliver's Travels* and *Utopia*. *Utopian Studies* 3.1 (1992): 70–83. Print. Persuasive article provides several compelling points of comparison between More's *Utopia* and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, including similarities in the frame narratives, the complex representations of religion, and the ironic celebration of reason in the allegedly utopian societies described by Hythlodae and Gulliver. [Lectures 2 and 3]

Zemka, Sue. "*Erewhon* and the End of Utopian Humanism." *ELH* 69.2 (2002): 439–72. Print. Wide-ranging article positions *Erewhon* as responding in part to the 19th-century myth of idyllic expansion, providing detailed readings of the novel's engagement with questions of criminality, illness, religion, and technology. [Lecture 5]

BOOKS

Arendt, Hannah. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. San Diego: Harcourt, Inc. 1948. Print. Classic three-volume analysis of the history and impact of totalitarianism. Volume three is especially useful in thinking about the major works of dystopia in the early 20th century. [Lecture 11]

Atwood, Margaret. *In Other Worlds: SF and the Human Imagination*. New York: Doubleday, 2011. Print. Collection of Atwood's writings on science fiction dedicated to Ursula K. Le Guin, with whom she has had an ongoing debate about the definitions of science fiction and speculative fiction. Reprints of her reviews of science fiction novels as well as several original essays, including "Dire Cartographies: The

Roads to Ustopia," in which Atwood explains why she has dubbed the term "ustopia" to indicate the way utopia and dystopia are always intertwined. [Lecture 20]

Avilés, Miguel A. Ramiro, and J.C. Davis. *Utopian Moments: Reading Utopian Texts*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2012. Print. Collection of 21 short, readable essays on moments in utopia. Particularly useful as a source on the often overlooked utopias of the 17th and 18th centuries. Most chapters focus on literary utopias, but a few address planned communities as well. [Lecture 3]

Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulation and Simulacra*. Trans. Sheila Glaser. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991. Print. Major postmodern work of cultural theory that examines questions of hyperreality. Provides a particularly interesting argument that Disneyland reframes our notion of reality, which has impacts for both utopian yearnings and dystopian fears. [Lecture 11]

Bernardo, Susan M., and Graham J. Murphy. *Ursula K. Le Guin: A Critical Companion*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006. Print. Part of the Critical Companions to Popular Contemporary Writers series, this book provides an accessible and insightful introduction to Le Guin's biography and her most influential novels, including chapters on *The Left Hand of Darkness* and *The Dispossessed*. [Lecture 16]

Booker, M. Keith. *Critical Insights: Dystopia*. Ipswich, MA: Salem Press, 2013. Print. Edited collection includes 16 recent essays on dystopia as well as a fairly brief list of key additional readings, fictional and critical. See, especially, Booker's introductory chapter, Booker's chapter on Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* and Anderson's *Feed*, and Peter Stillman's essay on Zamyatin's *We*. [Lectures 9 and 21]

———. *Dystopian Literature: A Theory and Research Guide*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994. Print. Useful guide to dystopia organized in five sections: 1) an introduction to philosophers whose thinking is relevant to dystopia, including Foucault, Freud, Marx, and Nietzsche; 2) an introduction to a small selection of utopian works; and 3, 4, and 5) an introduction to a much broader selection of works of

dystopian fiction, dystopian drama, and dystopian film. Provides an extensive reading list and notes on many of the works explored in the course. [Lectures 1 and 9]

———. *The Dystopian Impulse in Modern Literature*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994. Print. Excellent introduction to major 20th-century dystopias that situates dystopias within current cultural criticism. Relies heavily on philosophers like Mikhail Bakhtin, Jean Baudrillard, Michel Foucault, and others. Discusses *We*, *Brave New World*, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, *A Handmaid's Tale* among others. [Lectures 9, 10, 11, and 20]

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1990. Print. Central work of queer and feminist theory, argues that sex and gender are both culturally constructed. Enormously influential work whose main tenets can be seen in many utopian and dystopian novels dealing with gender, including those of Samuel R. Delany, Octavia Butler, and Suzanne Collins. [Lecture 17, 18, 21]

Davis, D. Diane. *Breaking Up [at] Totality: A Rhetoric of Laughter*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2000. Print. Wild and crazy introduction to postmodern approaches to laughter, including unexpected changes in font and text size. Deeply theoretical, intelligently references numerous scholars of rhetoric and of cultural studies, and yet also laugh-out-loud funny. Of interest to those concerned with the study of laughter. [Lecture 3]

Donawerth, Jane L. and Carol A. Kolmerten. *Utopian and Science Fiction by Women: Worlds of Difference*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1994. Print. Essay collection of feminist literary critics covers a broad range of women's writing in utopia, including chapters on Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Octavia Butler, as well as numerous mentions of Ursula Le Guin. [Lecture 15]

Elliott, Robert C. *The Shape of Utopia: Studies in a Literary Genre*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1970. Print. Classic monograph on utopia as a literary genre, with a focus on More's *Utopia*. Makes the crucial

argument that utopia is always dually structured, simultaneously presenting an optimistic view of a better society *and* a biting critique of the current society. [Lecture 1]

Erlich, Richard D., and Thomas P. Dunn, Eds. *Clockwork Worlds: Mechanized Environments in SF*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983. Print. Essay collection addresses some of the science fiction utopias and dystopias of this course, including *Looking Backward* and *We*, and also provides detailed readings of works I mention in passing, including several by Wells, Vonnegut, and Dick. [Lectures 7 and 13]

Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*. Trans. Robert Hurley. New York: Random House, 1978. Print. Classic work of gender theory provides historical context and cultural analysis of the various constructions of sexuality that inflect our cultural and literary identities. Foundational to many utopian writers interested in gender. [Lectures 15, 16, and 17]

Fourier, Charles. *Utopian Vision: Harmonian Man*. Ed. And trans. Mark Poster. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971. Print. Fourier's full body of work is available in French, but his most important texts have been translated into English. This book gives details about his philosophies as well as about how to set up a phalanx in a utopian community. [Lecture 4]

Gordin, Michael D., Helen Tilley, and Gyan Prakash, Eds. *Utopia/Dystopia: Conditions of Historical Possibility*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2010. Print. Valuable collection of essays exploring the complex relationship between utopia and dystopia, which are not quite opposites. Entire collection is deeply influenced by Foucault's "conditions of possibility." Includes important methodological essay by Fredric Jameson. [Lectures 1 and 9]

Guarneri, Carl J. *The Utopian Alternative: Fourierism in Nineteenth-Century America*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1991. Print. Detailed historical exploration of Fourier's philosophies as well as their impact on 19th-

century American utopian communities, including Brook Farm. Extensive footnotes and lots of specifics for the committed student of history. [Lecture 4]

Hallman, J.C. *In Utopia: Six Kinds of Eden and the Search for a Better Paradise*. New York: St. Martin's, 2010. Print. Engaged scholarly approach combines Hallman's own personal experiences with utopia and detailed critical insights into utopia as a lens on life and a literary genre. Full of quotable quotes, this monograph reads like a mix of investigative journalism and literary criticism. [Lecture 1]

Haraway, Donna J. *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York: Routledge, 1991. Print. Brilliant theoretical analysis of how nature has been variously conceived. Includes the famous essay, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century" as well as an excellent analysis of Octavia Butler's *Xenogenesis* series. [Lectures 18 and 22]

Hintz, Carrie, Balaka Basu, and Katherine R. Broad, Eds. *Contemporary Dystopian Literature for Young Adults*. New York: Routledge, 2013. Essay collection about young adult dystopias, with a focus on current anxieties like environmental degradation, individual freedom, new technologies, and income inequality. Provides a good reading list as well as insightful approaches to *The Hunger Games* and *Feed*. [Lecture 21 and 22]

Howells, Coral Ann, Ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Margaret Atwood*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. Print. Essay collection covers Atwood's biography and cultural context as a Canadian, and includes chapters on the major themes of her work, including power politics, gender representations, and environmentalism. Chapter on Atwood's dystopian visions by Howells (the editor) is particularly insightful. [Lecture 20]

Jacoby, Russell. *Picture Imperfect: Utopian Thought for an Anti-Utopian Age*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005. Print. This philosophical discussion of the concept of utopia starts with the premise that in the 21st century, the concept of utopia seems naïve

at best and dangerous at worst. Exploring numerous major thinkers of the 20th century, including Hannah Arendt, Karl Marx, and Karl Popper, Jacoby concludes that utopianism is crucial to an ethical politics. [Lecture 1]

Jameson, Fredric. *The Seeds of Time*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994. Print. Brilliant theoretical analysis of utopia within a postmodern world, through a postmodern frame. Argues that utopia and dystopia are false opposites. The third part uses architectural drawings to posit the limits of utopian thought within late capitalism. [Lectures 7 and 9]

Jones, Libby Falk, and Sarah Webster Goodwin, Eds. *Feminism, Utopia, and Narrative*. Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 1990. Print. Excellent collection of accessible essays covers early feminist utopias as well as the feminist utopian movement of the 1970s and '80s. Standout essays by Ellen Peel (on skeptical feminism, including a strong reading of *The Left Hand of Darkness*) and by Peter Fitting (on the utopian impulses of seemingly dystopian feminist works of the 1980s, including Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*). [Lectures 15, 16, and 20]

Lakoff, George, and Mark Johnson. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980. Print. Foundational and accessible introduction to the concept of metaphor as not only a specialized literary figure but also a way of thought embedded into our language. [Lecture 6]

Moylan, Tom. *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000. Print. A must-read for serious scholars of utopia, as it includes a comprehensive review (with excellent notes and bibliography) of the history of utopian scholarship until 2000. Moylan is a master at finding the fine distinctions between terms, and here he discusses utopia, dystopia, critical dystopia, and anti-utopia at length. There is one chapter on Octavia Butler's *Earthseed* series, and extended readings of the classic dystopias by Zamyatin, Huxley, and Orwell, as well as a fine consideration of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*. [Lectures 9, 10, 11, 19, and 20]

Moylan, Tom, and Raffaella Baccolini, eds. *Utopia Method Vision: The Use Value of Social Dreaming*. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007. Print. Excellent collection of essays from some of Utopian Studies' top scholars, including the editors as well as Lucy Sargisson, Peter Fitting, Gregory Claeys, and Lyman Tower Sargent. A focus on how utopia works rhetorically, with a stand-out essay on utopia as method by Ruth Levitas. [Lecture 1]

Murphet, Julian, and Mark Steven, eds. *Styles of Extinction in Cormac McCarthy's* The Road. London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2012. Print. Essay collection provides excellent historical, cultural, and literary contexts for understanding McCarthy's post-apocalyptic novel. Highly readable essays with a good blend of close reading and cultural studies approaches. [Lecture 23]

Patai, Daphne, Ed. *Looking Backward, 1988–1888: Essays on Edward Bellamy*. Amherst, Mass: The University of Massachussetts Press, 1988. Print. Essay collection provides readings on the historical, cultural, and critical approaches taken to Bellamy as a historical figure as well as to *Looking Backward* as a major work of utopian literature. Stand-out essay by Sylvia Strauss on intersections of class, race, and gender in utopia. [Lecture 6]

Phillips, Julie. *James Tiptree Jr.: The Double Life of Alice B. Sheldon*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2006. Print. Definitive biography of James Tiptree Jr., the writing persona of Alice B. Sheldon. Exhaustive research and insightful analysis in explaining the complex gendered performances of this science fiction writer. [Lecture 15]

Sargisson, Lucy. *Utopian Bodies and the Politics of Transgression*. London: Routledge, 2000. Print. Highly accessible monograph reports on detailed interviews Sargisson conducted with members of intentional communities in the U.K. asking about their experiences, motivations, and philosophies in choosing this alternate lifestyle. Placing these testimonials alongside theoretical perspectives from feminism, postmodernism, post-structuralism, and deep ecology, Sargisson argues that utopian thought is not a blueprint for a perfect place or a

perfect life, but rather, it provides a space for both critique of current social and cultural mores and imagination of modes of transgression and resistance. [Lecture 4]

Sawyer, Andy, and David Seed. *Speaking Science Fiction: Dialogues and Interpretations*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000. Print. Excellent essay collection provides insightful and accessible readings to several works of science fiction that appear in our discussions of utopian and dystopian literature. Includes several chapters on feminist science fiction. [Lecture 15]

Siebers, Tobin, Ed. *Heterotopia: Postmodern Utopia and the Body Politic*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997. Print. Collection of essays about heterotopia (other place), including an excellent essay by Samuel Delany. Theoretically oriented, by Siebers' introduction makes the volume reasonably accessible. [Lecture 17]

Zunshine, Lisa. *Why We Read Fiction: Theory of Mind and the Novel*. Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2006. Print. Delightful introduction to applying concepts from cognitive science to literary analysis. Provides a number of answers to the question of why we enjoy reading fiction, arguing that stories often push our cognitive limits in pleasurable ways. [Lecture 11]

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