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**“Rewriting and redefining Utopia; *minorities’ perfect existence*  
*or ultimate destruction.*”**

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## **Abstract**

Utopia as a construct within an ideology offers minority groups a feasible space from which to negotiate an identity within a dominant discourse. Continuing human atrocities have led to a 'spiral of oppression', in which oppression continues, never resolving itself and never diminishing, but rather moving away from the utopian space within the centre. As the dominant discourse is threatened by the minority, minority groups are placed spatially, within this spiral of oppression into a marginal position called the 'universal minority', from which they have to negotiate with the dominant discourse, the 'universal majority', however unsuccessfully. Science fiction and utopian writing offer spaces in which minority groups can break through the 'spiral of oppression' and negotiate directly with the dominant discourse. Trends in these two genres reveal which group is visioned as the 'universal minority', and the plight of the minority is highlighted in the alternative reality of these genres. Race (focussing on Hispanic discourse) and Sexuality (focussing on viable spaces for alternative sexuality) are two areas which are explored in this thesis as visions of the universal minority. Moreover, to understand the spiral of oppression, the Holocaust is reflected upon from a minority perspective, and literary responses as well as issues of post-holocaust compensation are addressed, reflecting the nature of the universal majority and universal minority. Finally, Utopia is often considered an unrealistic construct which cannot be attained by any legitimate agency other than an oligarchist regime or a strict governing body, which could lead to tyranny. Agency therefore is problematic; however, it will be argued that, even if full Utopia is not reached, the spiral of oppression can be broken and a utopian bridge of opportunity created through an idea of Brecht's called *Verfremdungseffekt* (prompting self-awareness), using the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission as an example of a vehicle for this agency. The agency then becomes the awareness, which leads to the direct negotiation with the dominant discourse.

## Opsomming

Utopie as 'n ideologie bied aan minderheidsgroepe 'n bereikbare ruimte van waar hulle oor 'n identiteit kan onderhandel binne 'n dominante diskoers. Voortgesette menslike wreedhede het tot 'n "spiraal van verdrukking" gelei waar onderdrukking voortduur, nooit opgelos word en nooit afneem nie, maar eerder wegbeweeg van die Utopiese ruimte in die sentrum. Binne dié "siklus van verdrukking" word minderheidsgroepe ruimtelik in 'n stelsel geplaas wat die "universele minderheid" genoem word en van waar hulle met die dominante diskoers - die "universele meerderheid" -- moet onderhandel. Dit is nie noodwendig suksesvol nie, want die dominante diskoers word deur die minderheid bedreig. Wetenskapfiksie en Utopiese skryfwerk bied ruimtes waar minderheidsgroepe die "spiraal van verdrukking" kan deurbreek en regstreeks met die dominante diskoers kan onderhandel. Neigings in dié twee genres wys watter groep is die "universele minderheid" waar die lot van die minderheid in 'n alternatiewe werklikheid uitgewys word. Ras (met die fokus op Spaans-Amerikaanse diskoers) en Seksualiteit (met die fokus op werkbare ruimtes vir alternatiewe seksualiteit) is twee gebiede wat in dié tesis verken word. Om die "spiraal van verdrukking" te begryp, word die Jodeslagting in die Nazi-tyd uit 'n minderheidsperspektief bekyk en sowel literêre response as kwessies oor kompensasie/vergoeding agterna kry aandag en die aard van die "universele meerderheid" en "universele minderheid" word weergegee. Utopie word as 'n onrealistiese ideologie beskou omdat dit nie legitieme bemagtiging bied om dit te behaal nie en eweneens 'n behoefte toon na 'n oligargiese bestel wat tot tirannie kan lei. Bemagtiging is dus problematies. Deur egter die Suid-Afrikaanse Waarheid- en Versoeningskommissie as 'n voorbeeld van die Utopiese brug tot geleentheid en as 'n medium vir bemagtiging te gebruik, sal aangevoer word dat "siklusse van verdrukking" verbreek kan word as die daad waardeur die Kommissie gelegitimiseer word en deur die idee van Brecht se Verfremdungseffekt (wat self-bewustheid aanmoedig) tot die

realisasie van verdrinking lei. Dan word die bemagtiging die bewustheid - wat lei tot die regstreekse onderhandeling met die dominante diskoers.

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***“Will the twentieth century be most remembered for its mass atrocities? The Holocaust of World War II. The killing fields of Cambodia. Argentina’s ‘Dirty War’ against subversion and regime of torture and killing. South Africa’s apartheid and the violence deployed to sustain it. The Turkish massacre of the Armenians. The Romanian terror both before and after communism. The East German system of pervasive spying and lethal enforcement around the Berlin Wall. The slaughter by Stalin. The Americans at My Lai. Uganda, Chile, Ethiopian government repression, mass tortures, and murders. Military regimes using terror and repression in Eastern Europe, Greece, Uruguay, Brazil and elsewhere. Each of these horrific events is unique, and incomparable. And yet, a century marked by human slaughter and torture, sadly, is not a unique century in human history.”***

Martha Minow, Professor of Law, Harvard University in her book *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness* (1998).

## **Introduction**

**Utopia and anti-utopia are mirror images of each other. Each can affect readers, even the same reader, in different ways at different times** (Kumar, 1991:100).

Sir Thomas More coined the term utopia<sup>1</sup> when he wrote *Utopia* in 1516. He was not however the first person to imagine a perfect society for there is evidence of imagining perfect societies in Plato's *Republic* (370-5 B.C), in Chinese writing in Tao Yuanming's (365-427) *The Peach Blossom Song*, and ideas of paradise in the Christian *Bible* or Nirvana in the *Bhagavad-Gita*. Thus utopia was and is created in a longing for something different to what exists in contemporary societies.

A general definition of utopia would be a longing for an alternative to what exists, or to what is presently possible. As Carey notes, "Utopia means *nowhere* or *no-place*"(1999:xi). However, the term utopia has multiple meanings. Two definitions by Lyman Tower Sargent are helpful in the understanding of how utopia is used in this thesis. He defines utopia as being, "[a] nonexistent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space" (Claeys et al, 2000:15), which supports the general definition of utopia as nonexistent, aligned to the alternative to what exists. Sargent further distinguishes a term 'eutopia' from 'utopia' by further defining eutopia as being the author's intention to offer the reader of the text a view "considerably better than the society in which that reader lived"(Claeys et al, 2000:15). Minorities, due to the fact that they are subjected to certain disempowerment, have a special interest in both

eutopias and utopias as they long for a space that is better than the one in which they find themselves currently in.

Luckily for minorities, utopia has been redefined over the last few hundred years to encompass not only perfect imaginary societies, but also perfect realities. More, Campagnella, and Bellamy, to name a few, created visions for societies with working and functional systems, as well as a movement towards more advanced consciousness. The cyclical change that utopia has undergone makes it now possible to reference it as one would reference hope, desire, dream and fascination. Although this is different from the original definition of utopia as nowhere, the new definition is evident in the way it is defined in modern dictionaries as, “an imaginary place or state of things where everything is perfect” (Pollard, 1994:885). The first part of the dictionary definition of “an imaginary place”<sup>2</sup> relates to the perfect societies as found in More’s *Utopia*, and the utopias of other authors’ mentioned with him. The second part of the definition makes reference to a “state of things,” which supports the idea of what utopia has become, a relative construction of perfection, as defined by a subject wishing its imaginary place into life.

The word utopia as used in this thesis hopes to combine these meanings and also include the meaning of ‘critical utopia’, a concept of society moving toward, even if not yet attaining a more perfect ‘eutopia’. More specifically, ‘critical utopia’, coined by Tom Moylan in his work *Demand the Impossible* (1986), refers to recent science fiction

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<sup>1</sup> In order to help differentiate between the theoretical concept of utopia and the island that More explored, utopia as a theory will be written without a capital letter = u. Utopia the island will be written with a capital letter =U.

<sup>2</sup> Single inverted commas are used in this thesis to indicate general theoretical terms, or to bring the readers attention to an issue. Double quotation marks are used for a word or words that have been quoted from a text used in this thesis, in the main body of the thesis text.

works in which practical utopias are created. The practical utopias are not completely idealistic as had been the case with utopias up until the mid-Twentieth Century, (e.g., Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*), but rather have problems and inconsistencies. These problems are in fact the nature of the critical utopia and are self-reflexive. The critical utopia focuses more on the movement towards utopia than the realisation of it.

Thus, through critical utopia, a space has been found that negotiates, not the fundamentals of utopia but the direction of the journey towards that ideal. Moylan's work, *Demand the Impossible*, examines this identity through the works *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976), and *The Female Man* (1975). The works cited are not perfect utopian societies, yet More's own Utopia is problematic, as will be proven in this thesis. Moreover, it is impossible to incorporate the idea of a movement toward utopia, filled with ideological conflict and leading towards a practical society, into the classical definition of utopia. Thus, the usefulness of the concept of critical utopia becomes apparent. As Moylan puts it:

A central concern in the critical utopia is the awareness of the limitations of the utopian tradition, so that these texts reject utopia as blueprint while preserving it as dream. Furthermore, the novels dwell on the conflict between the ordinary world and the utopian society opposed to it so that the process of social change is more directly articulated. Finally, the novels focus on the continuing presence of difference and imperfection within utopian society itself and thus finally render more recognizable and dynamic alternatives (Moylan, 1986:10-11).

A clearer more succinct way of handling utopia, as Moylan suggests would be through realising the possibility of never reaching a completely defined utopia but creating the necessary foundation or path for it. Instead, it would be beneficial to develop a working model or movement indicating change that reflects greater change than what came before.

In *Utopia*, More outlines a society that offers its people justice and thus equality, which is in contrast to a world in which oppression exists, as Minow outlines in the quote at the beginning of this work. This contrast of the real world to the world of Utopia reflects society as creating an endless cycle of atrocities in which difference is created and then fixed as a mark by which people are divided between those that have and those that do not. Contemporary science fiction or speculative fiction writers also try to address this difference in their writing.

Science fiction writing is a genre in which the suspension of disbelief is allowed to happen due to the basic expectations of the reader for the genre, and to the employment of a literary technique called, by Darko Suvin, 'novum'. 'Novum' means the possibility of otherness within science fiction writing or the creation of a "new world opened to description" (Parrinder, 2000:7). By using the idea of novum, More's literary protagonist in *Utopia*, Raphael Hythloday was able to travel to a never before discovered island and report the 'differences' back to the reader of *Utopia*. By allowing the reader to access the 'other' world, the text offers systems of great possibility for a writer wishing to highlight the differences, including the area of equality versus inequality, between two societies. In More's case, Henry the Eighth's England with its problems is compared to the just society of the Utopians<sup>3</sup>. Novum is also comparable to similar techniques such as Berthold Brecht's 'Verfremdungseffekt' (loosely translated as "prompting self awareness") and the concept of cognitive estrangement, which will be discussed in chapter one of this thesis.

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<sup>3</sup>As seen in the following quote, "so he reckoned up not a few things from which patterns might be taken for correcting the errors of these nations among whom we live" (More, 1997: 4).

The novum as a technique is still used in contemporary science fiction writing. In science fiction the writer is able to rewrite history, play with gender, and more commonly use time travel or alternative realities as a means by which to contrast the present with something that is different. As a result the injustices found by minority groups at the hand of those with power are highlighted by comparison with the equality that the same group has in the alternative reality. Thus, the systems presented within science fiction can become both a classical visioning of a nonexistent utopia and an agency of changing that utopia.

One criticism<sup>4</sup> of utopia is that, within any ideological system, it is theoretically sound but practically impossible because there is no available agency by which to reach the equality posited by the definition of utopia. This work looks at the systems by which minority groups negotiate this 'agency' and by which they try to negotiate a valid space within the existing systems they find themselves in. These dominant systems and the systems of minorities are able to be subverted and changed in science fiction writing, which allows minorities to question the system they find themselves in now.

In recent years, a large area of research in utopian work and science fiction writing has been focused on issues of rights and spaces, in which groups that had previously been disenfranchised have found an interim voice. This voice has enabled them to renegotiate with what could be considered the norm.

Gender Studies is one such example where studies specifically relating to gender and utopia are explored, as documented in the recent works of Krishan Kumar in his two works "Utopia and Anti-Utopia in the Twentieth Century" in *Utopia: The Search for the*

*Ideal Society in the Western World* (Claeys, G; Schaer, R.; Sargent, L. (eds.), 2000:262-3) and *Utopianism* (1991:101-107). In both works he makes reference to the rise in interest in utopia and gender studies. To offer an example of this, feminisms have found a voice in utopia because for feminists, utopian spaces are aligned with complete emancipation from the strains of patriarchy.

It is impossible to state how important these critical utopian spaces are. Without utopia as a space for negotiation of power, only after the dominant group has been exterminated through some disaster, or war, can new negotiations outside that of patriarchy, non-power based, begin. Up until this point the 'universal minority' are constantly negotiating with the 'universal majority' in a spiral of oppression. A simple definition of 'universal majority' would be the group that uses power to keep other groups, the 'universal minority', disempowered as a means to hold on to power. The use of the term 'universal' is to define the nature that minorities and majorities are found in every society. Although the oppression or systems of oppression are different, the way in which these groups are disempowered or empowered is a universal concept, as expressed by Minow at the beginning of this work. The list that Minow gives ranges from Asia to Europe to Africa. No society is exempt from some form of violence, or oppression, hence the naming of the concept with the adjective 'universal.' The use of the word minority implies a homogenous group instead of a heterogeneous group, which is not the case. The 'universal majority' implies individuals or groups who have power and exercise this power over those that are weaker. This weaker group is identified as being the 'universal minority,' for it is subject to negotiating with the 'universal majority' on the terms that the 'universal majority' set. These terms will be further explained in detail in Chapter Two and Three.

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<sup>4</sup> See Levitas, R. (1990). *The Concept of Utopia*.

Yet, through the spaces of utopian science fiction texts, even without such cataclysms in real society, minorities find themselves in spaces different to those that they exist in now, as science fiction writing where the possibility of anything happening can be realised. Disease can decimate Europe, making Eurocentric thought no longer valid<sup>5</sup>. Evolution in science can create a need to no longer have men, as women can impregnate themselves<sup>6</sup>. There are no boundaries in this genre of writing. The 'universal majority' and the role of power can also be broken and utopian societies created in their place. The power dynamic between those that oppress, the 'universal majority', and those that are oppressed, the 'universal minority,' is realigned so that a system of negotiation can exist between the two. Thus, the works of science fiction writers are crucial social studies, and the ideologies which are presented in them could become the blueprint of opportunity for true change.

*The Utopia Reader* (1999), a recent work published by Claeys and Sargent<sup>7</sup>, contains excerpts of what is defined by them as the canon of utopian work and includes an extract from *Herland*, (1915) a feminist utopian work from author Charlotte Perkins Gilman. It also makes reference to feminist utopian writer Ursula le Guin's work, *The Day Before the Revolution*, in which she explores the theme of fascist states more deeply than in her previously gender focused texts like *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1981). These two examples indicate the negotiation of gender within the science fiction

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<sup>5</sup> See Robinson, K.S. (2002). *The Years of Rice and Salt*.

<sup>6</sup> See Gilman, C.P. (1998) *Herland*.

<sup>7</sup> Lyman Tower Sargent is Professor of Political Science at the University of Missouri, St Louis. He is also the editor of the journal, *Utopian Studies*. Gregory Claeys is Professor of History of Political Thought, Royal Holloway and New Bedford College, University of London. Both have published extensively in the area of utopia. *Utopia: The Search for the Ideal Society in the Western World* was published for the utopia exhibition at the New York Public Library and the Bibliotheque Nationale de France.

discourse, and thus the subsequent comparison of feminist utopias with contemporary dystopia, where gender issues are still problematic.

Similar to feminist groups using science fiction writing to highlight injustice or inequality are groups with a focus on the environment. 'Ecotopia', as Kumar calls it, is a place where humankind lives in harmony with the environment. A new equilibrium is found between commerce and the destruction of the natural world.<sup>8</sup> Certain groups have set up model communities where they use only natural resources and subscribe to an ethos that does not threaten the natural order; thus placing themselves outside the model of what would be considered by society as 'the norm'.

Both these groups, the ecotopians and feminists, have found the validity of working in science fiction that displays a tendency towards utopian or dystopian/anti-utopian thinking. This is due to the 'novum', the possibility of alternate realities in which not only basic understandings but also practical systems are adopted that subscribe to the ethos of their discourse. A model state is thus set up in their writing in which the disempowered group in society is given a voice or space in the alternative reality. In this model state people have obtained an education which allows them to look logically, if not with complete reason, at the way they interact not only in their community but also in the larger world. This so called 'enlightenment' has led to mass advances within their community. To both ecotopians and feminists in the real world, then, these works of science fiction become agents of change toward utopia by providing a pluralistic outlook which allows for more negotiation inside and outside of the community. They are

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<sup>8</sup> Kumar also believes that ecotopia was born from feminist utopias, as women re-negotiate the way they interact with the environment. For example, in Marge Piercy's novel *Woman on the Edge Time*, the reality of pollution and disease is contrasted with the power sharing Ecotopia of Mattapoisett where respect for

moving towards their utopia, though one not defined by contemporary ideology or practice.

Yet, despite the clearly demonstrated potential of science fiction as a utopian agency for minority communities, contemporary utopian studies show a lack of research in minority voices, specifically race and sexuality. Utopian work and science fiction writing associated with it has created discourses and alternatives to the current patriarchal cycle. Race<sup>9</sup> and sexuality's non-inclusion into the canon, *The Utopia Reader*, or even into reference in Kumar's work leaves a bigger question when looking at the abundance of works on offer in science fiction writing or works that have been labeled specifically utopian by scholars.

In fact, race has been marginally explored in a recent work by Adam Roberts who dedicates a chapter of his work to race in *Science Fiction* (2000:118-145). He looks at how people of colour are imaged in science fiction work, yet his case study of the recent film *Men in Black* (1997) is more a comment on popular culture than on the rights of people of colour. A more interesting work that will be commented on later in the chapter on race and sexuality is John Akomfrah's documentary *The Last Angel of History* (1995) which comes to terms with utopia and how people of colour are moving into this utopian space, yet which is rarely mentioned in utopian literature as a resource on race. Tom Moylan in *Demand the Impossible* (1986) also mentions race in the chapter on Samuel Delany's *Trouble on Triton*<sup>10</sup> (1976), but the focus again is on its

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environment and the breakdown of the urban patriarchal construction offer the population a better quality of life (1991:103).

<sup>9</sup> *Caesar's Column* by Ignatius Donnelly is included, but contemporary racial utopias like *Kindred* and *Brown Girl in the Ring*, are not.

<sup>10</sup> Samuel Delany has come to be known as the father of black science fiction writing as noted in *The Last Angel of History*.

ambiguous heterotopia. Other than some token acknowledgement of research in this area, minority issues of race remain unexplored.

Similar to race, alternate sexualities have also been largely ignored in the critical discourse on utopia. *The Faber Book of Utopias* (1999), edited by John Carey, is a similar work to Claeys and Sargent's *Utopia Reader* in that it offers an anthology of utopian writing. It makes no overt reference to any utopian representations of homosexuality but does offer at least a reference to it in the index of the work. In some instances however, the image of homosexuality is far from positive or liberating. For example, there is an excerpt from Bacon's *New Atlantis* which is latently homophobic: "As for masculine love, they have no touch of it" (1999. 63). Moylan discusses sexuality in his work *Demand the Impossible*, but does not look at it in relation to science fiction texts, or analyze its function within science fiction texts.

Thus it can be seen by this example from Carey, although not exclusively referencing this as the only example in the work<sup>11</sup>, that although minority work has been explored<sup>12</sup>, it has only been done so as a kind of tokenism. Multiple minority issues available in science fiction and utopian writing have in fact remained untouched and unexplored. This work hopes to evaluate the process of the minority in negotiating an image and charter a course of an analysis of what minority representation is, and how minority groups could best negotiate an identity within existing power structures.

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<sup>11</sup>Similar examples are found in Fourier, who reduces homosexuality to the same act as eating spiders (pg. 215), Edward Lear's nonsense poetry as being latently homosexual (pg. 254), and Naomi Mitchinson's *Solution Three*, where population is controlled by promoting homosexuality (pg. 472).

<sup>12</sup>Race and sexuality are not the only minorities explored in science fiction writing. Religion, economic segregation, and ethnicity are written into the texts. However, race and sexuality will be the focus of research in Chapter Three and are thus explored here.

Although utopia does not necessarily imply equality for all, this thesis will argue that it does suggest a system in which the basic needs of all groups are addressed.

In order to better help locate the work, South Africa and apartheid will be deconstructed, as will the role that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) had in rewriting the minority voice. The acts of the TRC will be shown to play a similar role to the utopian narratives of science fiction, placing the constructs of power into a new space, no longer apartheid but also not a country in which revenge is sought for those that oppressed. Using the ideas of guilt and shame, and a dramatic application of the oral tradition the TRC was able to bring about catharsis for the oppressors and the oppressed and remove the power dynamic of apartheid, and this removal offers a testament to the possibility of negotiating identity after an atrocity and breaking the ongoing spiral of oppression that would otherwise result.

## **METHODOLOGY:**

This work crosses boundaries of cultural studies, literary analysis, utopian studies and creative writing. Due to the fractured nature of combining these disciplines it is imperative to set up a methodological outline. At times, due to the complex merging of ideas, definitions of ideas cannot be placed into concrete categories; such inconsistencies are explained in their relevant contexts as they occur.

First, a rationale for combining theoretical models with literary analysis and interviews: Work on utopia and minorities is limited, as previously explained, therefore there is a need to include research subjects in the thesis and to use their interview texts, not as primary sources of information, but rather as personal narratives or information that can be deconstructed for the purpose of analysing theoretical models that have been introduced. Another purpose of using both interviews and techniques from multiple disciplines is to provide a contemporary analysis of utopian minority issues. Each chapter of the thesis does not rely on the same conventions or chapter makeup. Each chapter therefore outlines its methods, organisational structure, and relationship with the overall project of the thesis.

The purpose of this work is twofold. It hopes to offer a study on minorities in science fiction writing and real life examples of oppression and how minorities negotiate identities in these oppressive states. This study is aimed at highlighting the ways in which minorities are represented in science fiction writing and how those authors writing these minorities into their work do so. In some cases the utopias presented in the works mirror dominant societies that oppress minorities, and in others they represent systems that provide an alternative to the opposition between 'us' and 'them'. This study could not

be done without using 'real life' examples of oppression and human atrocities to highlight either the ways in which dominant groups oppress or how minorities negotiate spaces for themselves. This is the second purpose of this work, to show the relationship between practical situations and utopian impulses, theory and literature.

A four step model will be introduced in offering a productive way of looking at the construction of power relationships and ideologies with regard to minority groups. Terms that are key to this model, 'difference' and 'Other' or 'othering', need to be explained.

'Difference' refers to a construction in society that identifies certain codes as being different to the norm, where the norm is what the dominant ideology considers normal. Difference has both positive and negative meanings. It can refer to different codes, systems or ideologies, based on the group that is associated with the 'difference', and not subscribing to the dominant norms. Difference does not automatically mean persecution or placement outside of what the dominant ideology is willing to negotiate with. Thus, a group that is labelled as 'different' may still be placed within the walls of society.

The term 'Other', however, reflects 'difference' that is registered as being outside society's walls. Groups placed into the position of 'Other' are placed into a position of inferiority from which they must negotiate with the dominant ideology, strictly on the terms of the dominant group. Once a group has been identified as 'Other' and placed into the uneven power relationship that it creates, the minority group, must struggle to access space, rights and an identity with the dominant group, but can never be thoroughly successful.

This process of 'othering' and difference can be imagined as a Four-step Model.

Stage One: In the initial state, one where the terms of 'difference' or othering do not exist and, moreover, where power is equal.

Stage Two: A power imbalance occurs. One group feels another is an impediment to their power or a detriment to their own group.

Stage Three: Language of Difference labels the minority as a necessary precursor to the final stage. Not everyone is equally a member of the group now. There are 'differences'.

Stage Four: 'Othering'. The Language of Difference leads to a set of associated values that place the minority outside the space of society. This sometimes happens, literally for example in South Africa under apartheid.

What could be disputed in this model is the assumption that society could ever have been equal, *i.e.* that a utopia existed at Stage One. Yet the nature of this work is utopian and its goal is to attempt to describe a path toward utopia. In this context, Stage One of the model becomes important precisely because it describes a utopian goal, placed at the beginning of time and assuming an equality. The validity of this theoretical assumption can be further analysed through the ideas of Krishan Kumar and Michel Foucault. To quote Kumar, utopia is "[t]o live in a world that cannot be but where one fervently wishes to be"(1991:1). This idea has elements of nostalgia, for it is in the 'wishing' of this other world, a longing for something that exists but that cannot be seen. Thus to use this utopian impulse and to imagine a world at the beginning would be to see all humans as equals. Even if this utopian space does not exist in reality it can therefore remain as a theoretical alternative world to which humanity aspires. Foucault, in his study of sexuality, raises a more serious objection to the theoretical Stage One

when he defines power as something that is always moving and always relevant to the place from which it is manufactured<sup>13</sup> (1990a :92-93). Power, in other words, changes according to systems that it finds itself in, and is never a static quality. Thus, it might be argued, that Stage One could only exist for the most infinitesimal of moments. This thesis will not try to argue otherwise, but it would like to work in part with the utopian impulse of equality or nostalgia that has been mentioned. It wants to believe that equality exists, not in a true historical sense, but as a utopian impulse for our guidance. In other words, humans may always have been unequal, but also always had the ability to imagine a better place.

In fact, the project of many minority groups visioning utopia is an attempt to reverse this Four-step Model of Othering and regain a valid space within the group or society. This in itself is problematic, for each minority group has its own issues, politics and processes of negotiation that it has to undertake in order to redress the present imbalance. Yet these processes can, together, be placed under the name of utopian agency and seen as an attempt to move back to Stage One, which is utopian in nature.

Thus utopia as an agency works to reverse the process of the Four-step Model. And it is within these four steps that minority groups negotiate with the dominant system, each in its own way, as has been mentioned before. The reversal of the Four-step Model takes place as follows:

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<sup>13</sup> “The omnipresence of power: not because it has the privilege of consolidating everything under its invincible unity, but because it is produced from one moment to the next, at every point, or rather in every relation from one point to another. Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere” (Foucault, 1990a:93).

Stage Four: Re-establishing a space for 'difference' that is shared with the majority.

This reverses the 'othering' process.

Stage Three: Eliminating the Language of Difference by redefining minority identity.

Stage Two: Eliminating power differences (within the utopian space). This happens simultaneously with Stage Three, as the utopian space redefines both language and power relationships.

Stage One: Effectively the minority has realized utopia and the utopian agency has been successful.

If a minority group follows this process, then effectively they renegotiate a space for themselves, one that is legitimate, otherwise utopian agency cannot be achieved.

It is important to note that the crucial step from Stage Three to Stage Four, and backwards, from Stage Four to Stage Three. Turning difference to otherness, and vice-versa, involves no overt material transfer of power, but happens through language. Thus, writing or imagining utopia is actively the agency that leads to utopia, or at least leads in the direction of utopia. Moreover, eliminating these crucial stages and simply having a revolution that redistributes material power with the naïve hope that it will bring Stage Four back to Stage One is what results in a spiral of oppression. A system that recreates power imbalance never resolves itself, but instead introduces new regimes that continue to oppress. Without eliminating the language of 'otherness' and 'difference', the system is unstable and will soon revert to a new stage of oppression, the only difference being that the new dominant group was formerly a minority. This then results in a hierarchy of minority forming where the newly replaced minority group creates 'otherness' even amongst minority groups, causing the further disempowerment of minorities.

Science fiction and utopian writing rely on literary techniques such as novum or cognitive estrangement (terms associated with alienating readers/audiences from the text so that some difference can be highlighted) in order to create utopian agency which realizes the utopian space that they yearn for. These literary techniques are therefore blueprints for opportunity as they suggest the possible routes that could be taken for the negotiation process. These texts coupled with systems of oppression make up the discussions of negotiation and oppression in this work.

In order to locate this work and in order to show a practical example of utopian agency at work, the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission will be deconstructed. The next chapter will look at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's role as an agent of Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*, to show in which way it has acted as an agency for change in South Africa.

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## **Chapter One**

### **Foundations for Change: Understanding Guilt**

#### **The TRC as Verfremdungseffekt**

**The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission illustrates an innovative and promising effort to combine an investigation into what happened, a forum for victim testimony, a process for developing reparations, and a mechanism for granting amnesty for perpetrators who honestly tell of their role in politically motivated violence (Minow, 1998:3).**

Bertolt Brecht, German playwright and theatre theorist wanted his theatre to be didactic, for the purpose of causing change in the audience that watched it. His technique of creating strangeness or alienation from the audience, for the purposes of making his work didactic was called 'Verfremdungseffekt'. Theatre scholar Martin Esslin defines the concept of Verfremdungseffekt as a process of assessing the action of the story, not identifying with a character and thus becoming a subjective viewer, but rather remaining rational and detached from the play and therefore critical (1984:115). Brecht was not the first to use this technique; he first saw it used by Chinese actor Mei Lan-fang, and the word itself came from Russian Formalist Viktor Shklovsky's equivalent, first used by Brecht's friend Sergei Tretiakov who had invited Mei Lan-fang to Russia (Etkind, 1980:84; Wollett, 1984: 219). Brecht, however, was the first to theorize it and thus place it in dramaturgy.

The Verfremdungseffekt (V Effect) is Brecht's technique of alienating the audience from the illusion of the theatre as representing real life; thus it worked against the 'suspension of disbelief' that theatres had been trying to create with the proscenium arch and associated theatric conventions. The proscenium style had meant that the audience believed that it was looking through the fourth wall at someone's life, and was not an active participant in the theatrical experience or responsible for the social issues mentioned. It is interesting to note that Brecht's Verfremdungseffekt and Suvin's 'novum' adopt similar techniques in cognitive estrangement. Cognitive estrangement<sup>14</sup> is described by Patrick Parrinder as way in which a text is able to cause an alienating technique and, "that by imagining strange worlds we come to see our own condition of life in a new and potentially revolutionary perspective" (2001:4). Suvin was influenced by Brecht, and wrote a book on Brecht's techniques entitled *To Brecht and Beyond* (1984).

In order to further clarify these two terms, 'novum' is associated with literary texts, especially the science fiction genre, and their possibilities, which could include revolution. Verfremdungseffekt is associated with a text that is performed, one where there is an audience to listen, see or experience the text and through this experience the possibilities of something better, although these possibilities are still left to the individual to realise.

This idea of performance and response could well be used when looking at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), due to the fact that the stories told to the

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<sup>14</sup> Adam Roberts cites cognitive estrangement as being directly related to Brecht's alienation: " 'Estrangement' is a term from Brecht, more usually rendered in English-language criticism as 'alienation', and in this context refers to that elements of SF [science fiction] that we recognise as different, that 'estranges' us from the familiar and everyday" (2000:8).

commission were often spoken, performed, and made public. These stories were, in fact, explicitly 'performed' for an audience for the purposes of educating them about what had happened under apartheid, South Africa's unique atrocity in which power was split unequally between those identified as having privilege and those that were identified as not.

This thesis goes on to deconstruct the performance of the TRC in relation to the utopian theories outlined in the introduction, but, it is important at the beginning of this kind of work to clarify definitions that will be used here and later in the thesis. The terms 'universal minority', 'universal majority', and 'anti-utopia' (or similarly 'dystopia') will now be explained in relation to the ideology of this work using Apartheid as an atrocity to be decoded.

The universal minority consists of any and all groups who identify themselves by indicating a difference based on any of the following, although not exclusively: economics, race, religion, creed, or sexuality. It is not necessarily a numerical minority, but, rather, a minority in that it possesses less power than the majority and is thus unable to dictate what societal norms or the terms of negotiation for a place within society may be. An example, which will be used to explain this idea of a universal minority, is that of South Africa and how the white ruling majority by exclusion chose not to see other racial groups as part of their 'utopian'<sup>15</sup> ideology. Thus, the white numerical minority becomes the 'universal majority' and the racial group majority becomes the 'universal minority'.

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<sup>15</sup> This idea of utopia and anti-utopia: From a totalitarian white supremacist point of view it was a utopia, however, from a person of colour or a liberal democrat's point of view it was something completely different.

This minority mostly falls into the 'Other' of what is acceptable by 'white' patriarchy<sup>16</sup>. This does not however suggest that patriarchy and patriarchy alone are what could be defined as the majority.

Based on this theory the majority's group identity is based on power to rule, dominate, and punish anything that is aberrant. The power comes from not having to yield to anything that the 'universal minority' may desire to have, be it rights or a voice. Or, simplified, being part of the 'universal majority' could be summed up as the freedom of living without having to negotiate anything with regard to identity politics<sup>17</sup>. As soon as power is unequal, one group uses power to gain more dominance over the other, and this 'universal majority' is created. This majority continues to exist even with changes of ideology; for a regime can change, but the impact of that change will always be based on the new ruling majority.

Anti-utopia is more difficult to define; for the very nature of the word indicates that it should be everything that utopia is not. However, this does not allow for definitions that include the reflection of one group's utopia onto another group that would not define the society as a utopia. Anti-utopia involves the ideology of others that for some could be utopian whereas for others the impact could be anti-utopian. The Apartheid government's utopia was the people in the township's anti-utopia. It exists as a parallel to utopia as Krishan Kumar, utopian theorist, suggests in the quote at the beginning of

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<sup>16</sup> Patriarchy as defined by white men's privilege. In Melissa Steyn's work *Whiteness Just Isn't What It Used to Be*, she traces the ideas that whiteness as a construction is changing. She defines privilege and whiteness as a construction for white men, for themselves, not for women and not for other race groups (2001:19).

<sup>17</sup>The definition of identity politics from the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* is helpful in explaining the definition used in this thesis: "Identity politics typically concerns the liberation of a specific constituency marginalized within its larger context. Members of that constituency assert or reclaim ways of understanding their distinctiveness that challenge dominant oppressive characterizations, with the goal of

the Introduction. They are mirrors of each other. The mirror is the fact that they are indeed one definition reflected onto another; they are an illusion that moves from not knowing which is which. The similarity of the two in many cases is due to this illusion and not knowing for sure which the subject is and which the reflection is.

Dystopia by definition of utopian theorists is constructed in a narrative<sup>18</sup>. Dystopia is similar to anti-utopia, but with an essential grounding in the real, rather than in the ideal, and it means a state of unrest that is here but not founded in sound theory. For example, dystopia in an apartheid state would be the narrative of a person of colour subjected to torture, and an inferior life with little possibility of change. Dystopia is more easily identified than anti-utopia, as it is detected through the breaking of an illusion of utopia, whereas both utopia and anti-utopia actually exist nowhere.

Utopia, by definition, is the balance of power that enables the 'universal minority' and 'universal majority' not to be imaged by each other as such. Thus utopia implies that change is/will be coming through an act of negotiation. Mahmood Mamdani, notes that, up until the Referendum in 1992, the ruling white government had made no attempt to acknowledge the 'Other' in the country. The first historical moment of change came by acknowledging that some change had to be made. Thus, the concept of a 'universal minority' and 'universal majority' becomes evident in a practical example of negotiation, as described by Mamdani, "In fact, it was a milestone... the historic moment in which for the first time, a white settler minority on the African continent reached out towards a settlement with the majority"(Krog, 1998:112-113). This could be said to be the first

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greater self-determination" (Heyes, 2002:electronic). The 'universal minority' want to have "greater self-determination" from the systems of the universal majority's "dominant oppressive characterizations".

<sup>18</sup> Krishan Kumar identifies this in his work *Utopianism*, Ruth Levitas in her work *Concepts of Utopia* (1990) and Claey's et.al. in their work *Utopia: The Search for the Ideal Society in the Western World*.

stage in reversal of the Four Step Model introduced in the Methodology section, as Stage Four is defined as "Re-establishing a space for 'difference' that is shared with the majority to reverse the othering process." This act of reaching out and recognizing that other people existed in South Africa reverses the 'Othering' process and acknowledged and opened the necessary space for negotiations to begin.

Eliminating the signifier of the minority and that of the majority renders them equal. Or, to relate this concept to Antjie Krog's work *Country of My Skull*<sup>19</sup>, the Truth Commission offers this utopian space of equality, because all people are equal and their stories are equally valid<sup>20</sup>, within their submissions. This is Stage Three of the reversal, for as Stage Three involves eliminating the Language of Difference by redefining minority identity. This is achieved as all experiences before the Commission are equal. As has been mentioned, Stages Two and Three happen simultaneously. Stage Two, eliminating power differences (within the utopian space) is achieved because the Truth Commission does not discriminate; it does not acknowledge power or position, and therefore is fair/equal and recognizes all those that come before it as equal. Both the African National Congress and the National Party had to account for their actions during apartheid. Even though the African National Congress were trying to gain a voice through an armed struggle, the fact that people suffered as a result of this meant that they also had to account for the inequality that they caused. The National Party on the other hand had to acknowledge the laws, discrimination that it had introduced. This mutual acknowledgement is possible because the utopian space afforded by the Truth Commission redefines both language and power relationships. Due to the fact that there

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<sup>19</sup> Krog's work is evaluated in detail in the second part of this Chapter.

<sup>20</sup> In *Country of My Skull* in the chapter entitled "The Political Tongue at Anchor" pg.124 it is evident in the submissions that all political parties are called to account for their roles. (For example the right wing group

was no civil war, although not implying that this is the only act that would have made the reversal of 'othering' successful in the Truth Commission, utopian agency is realized as people from South Africa are recognized as being valid citizens regardless of their racial identity. Thus Stage One is also achieved; effectively, the minority has realized utopia and the utopian agency has been successful.

No spiral of oppression happened in South Africa because the utopian agency was successful. The 'universal minority', black people in South Africa, did not try and replicate the 'universal majority' formerly composed of white South Africans because the South African Truth Commission offered a space in which both groups could take account of their actions. However, should there have been a coup d'etat, and no way of reversing the 'Othering' process then it is quite possible that a spiral of oppression would have occurred, as did in Rwanda.

Desmond Tutu echoes the idea of the 'universal minority' and the 'universal majority' in the following example for what he believed to be the action of the changing regimes in Rwanda, where the spiral of oppression continued, after the genocide there:

The top dog wanted to cling to its privileged position and the underdog strove to topple the top dog. When that happened, the new top dog engaged in an orgy of retribution to pay back the new underdog for all the pain and suffering it had inflicted when it was top dog. The new underdog fought like an enraged bull to topple the new top dog, storing in its memory all the pain and suffering it was enduring, forgetting that the new top dog was in its view only retaliating for all that it remembered it had suffered when the underdog had been its master. It was a sad history of reprisal provoking counterreprisal (Tutu, 2000:259).

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The Freedom Front and National Party as well as more left wing parties like the African National

In order to stop this kind of “counter reprisal” the spiral needs to be broken. Martha Minow, Harvard Law Professor and author of the book *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness: Facing History after Genocide and Mass Violence* (1998), compares the nature of healing through retribution and prosecution or through a truth commission. Her work identifies these systems with regard to some of the atrocities of the twentieth century. An objective of a truth commission, for Minow (1998:56), is that “restorative justice” be balanced with the search for truth. The idea of “restorative justice” is to restore trust and equality. The truth is an agency for that justice to be realised.

Analysis of white identity in South Africa further helps elucidate the effect and work that has been done there. White people’s identity in South Africa is changing, as suggested by Melissa Steyn in her work *Whiteness Just Isn’t What it Used to Be* (2001). She traces white privilege to European ideas, “which placed Christendom at the center of maps of the world” (2001.3). This for Steyn is what caused a “master narrative of whiteness”, based on the idea of the ‘master narrative’ found in the work of Craig Owens.<sup>21</sup> This term that Steyn borrows from Owens is “the conception of whiteness as ‘absolutely centered, unitary, masculine’” (Owens in Steyn, 2001:151). This idea of whiteness implies that white is the centre of knowledge, power and theory and that all other things around it are inferior to it. “Black”, Steyn (2001:5) notes, is the worst of all things that surround whiteness, for it is through the binary of “black versus white”, that whiteness is able to exist as superior.

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Congress).

<sup>21</sup> As quoted in Steyn (2001:151). Owens, C. (1992). *Beyond recognition: Representation, Power and Culture*. Berkley: University of California Press.

Steyn cites five kinds of examples of whites in her study, after the fall of Apartheid, dealing with their new white identity, one in which the “master narrative of whiteness” is no longer the dominant ideology in the country. The binaries that she creates in her study show that there are still those groups that wish to hold onto this narrative as a means to of holding onto their identity. These groups, which Steyn calls “Still Colonial after All These Years” and “This Shouldn’t Happen to a White” have not been able to renegotiate an identity for themselves. Due to this they harbor some anger and their “[f]aith in white superiority is unshaken”(Steyn,2001:69). It is necessary for these groups to have a mechanism to understand the atrocities of Apartheid through the stories of the Truth Commission. Even though the Commission had finished its work when Steyn was doing research for her work, texts like Krog’s *Country of my Skull* and *South Africa’s Human Spirit: an oral memoir of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (2000) exist to educate and create the necessary didactic means for groups that believe they are superior to acknowledge the atrocities of a regime in which there was a ‘universal majority’ rendering the lives of the ‘universal minority’ invalid due to the nature of the “master narrative of whiteness”.

To use an example from Krog’s own experiences to further explain this concept of superiority or indifference to the ‘Other’, she cites an example of a visit to a school friend during the time of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Krog questions a friend about her domestic servant’s needs and problems, and her friend’s replies include the following: “Maids don’t feel like other people about their children’...’Maids don’t get cold like white people’...’The reason she stinks I already know from the farm, where water is rolled along to the houses in big drums—they don’t like washing” (1998:190). These are the thoughts that certain white South Africans had, or have, and they became part of normal thought under apartheid. Thus, using the *Verfremdungseffekt*, or making

the idea that people are inferior or superior "strange", was necessary in order for a realignment of thought to occur.

Krog defines the process slightly differently as the creation of a myth, where myth is a manifestation of the language of difference, to help in the "overcoming of a contradiction", which in itself is an awareness that something is wrong but ignored (1998:190). This happens because the language of difference has incorporated this idea into its canon, and is therefore normal and not "strange." Yet, in both cases, a different reality has been created which needs to be rewritten so that atrocity no longer takes place.

Minow evaluates commissions and creates a list of twelve aspirations for what a truth commission should achieve. Point number ten is the most pertinent to this study, for it concludes that the commission should, "express and seek to achieve the aspiration that 'never again' shall such collective violence occur" (1998:88). There are two key conditions a truth commission must fulfill if it is to become a commission for breaking down power structures, rather than a simple enquiry into isolated human rights violations. Firstly, the commission needs to make society responsible and aware of atrocity, alienated from the current spirals of oppression. Secondly, it needs to create a leveled forum without any power systems, in which a future can be free from this kind of atrocity. These aspirations are also key to the Four Step Model which hopes that Stage One will always be prevalent in a society.

The operation of the TRC as a dramatic agency of change can also be illustrated through another definition of the *Verfremdungseffekt* by Esslin, "by inhibiting the process of identification between the spectator and the characters, by creating a distance

between them and enabling the audience to look at the action in a detached and critical spirit, familiar things, attitudes, and situations appear in a new and strange light, and create, through astonishment and wonder, a new understanding of the human situation” (1984:119). Collective violence in society under the spiral of oppression is related to the ‘universal minority’ and ‘universal majority’. Those in power (the ‘universal majority’) are unable to realise the oppression around them, because there is no ‘distance’ between the reality of the situation and the ideology of Apartheid. The idea that a problem exists is contrary to the interests of the majority, thus denial is better than acknowledgement of the truth. The only way for those with power to acknowledge the oppression is to be faced with it in a forum in which they account for their actions, one in which “familiar things, attitudes, and situations appear in a new and strange light.” An example of this comes not only through the testament of the victim of an atrocity at a Truth Commission hearing, but also through the witnesses and the people who watch and listen to the testament, for it is in the watching that the true nature of the oppression is realised. To hear, as Minow comments, the prosecution of a perpetrator, only the information pertinent to finding the perpetrator guilty is needed. Thus, the victims are left unable to be fully heard and the witness unable to fully grasp the extremity of the oppression. This realisation of atrocities is reflected in South Africa, when the ‘universal majority’ (whites) were confronted with the truth and realised that, “I should have done more to help resist.”<sup>22</sup> Only once the TRC was actively recording submissions did it cause people to analyse their involvement, or non-involvement in Apartheid.

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<sup>22</sup> Quoted from a white South African writing in the Register of Reconciliation in *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness: Facing History after Genocide and Mass Violence* (1998:75), and echoed in Steyn’s work by a respondent to her survey: “We did carry a huge moral and psychological burden even though many of us ACTIVELY opposed Apartheid. Always the question: ‘Should we not be doing more to oppose?’” (2001:105).

The change comes from the awareness of the truth. This change, this understanding, is in itself utopian agency of possibility. To expand the idea is to affect what Minow understands as being a core of the possibility of what a truth commission can do. In this case, “[k]now the truth and it will set you free; expose the terrible secrets of a sick society and heal that society” (1998:66).

The theatrical nature of the TRC is important because, in the case of a ‘universal majority’ oppressing a ‘universal minority’ as was true under apartheid, there is a need to confess to crimes that people did not think that they committed. The crime is indifference and the sustaining of oppression. If we look at the observations of Commissioner Ntsebeza<sup>23</sup>, one clear point is that it is not only those that were the victims of apartheid who are the victims but also those who learnt later about the atrocities that their family members had committed on the ‘universal minority’. These offenses are as traumatic as more direct ones, and cause a collective alliance of victims which highlights the fact that oppression is in itself a system that reduces both sides to victims.

The theory behind the nature of confession should be clearly analysed, for the possibility of a better society could lie in the mechanics of it. Forgiveness is seen by Minow as the key to a successful Truth and Reconciliation Commission because it offers hope and, most importantly, “[t]he act of forgiving can reconnect the offender and the victim and establish or renew a relationship; it can heal grief; forge new, constructive alliances; and break cycles of violence” (1998:14). It is the breaking down of the cycles of violence that will ultimately free the world of human rights violations. Theoretically this can be realised, and the example of the TRC provides hope of its realisation, even if,

from the history of atrocity, there seems to be no end to the cycle of violence and ensuing spiral of oppression.

Yet alienation from the unspoken assumptions of the universal majority and universal minority needs to come from more than shock mechanisms such as those employed in the theatre or on television. There needs to be some accessible means to be alienated from indifference and brought to a heightened state of consciousness, by offering and receiving testaments of those in the world. This can only be done when the agents of power distance themselves from that power. The problem is that the agents are not only those on top of the overt power structure but also the ordinary people, who need to take collective responsibility for the state of oppression.

How, then, can people avoid being manipulated and controlled by the universally present assumptions that make up the real power of the universal majority? White people in South Africa needed to confess to their role in the Apartheid regime, even if it was as small as buying goods from an apartheid business. Desmond Tutu wrote an account of his time as head of the TRC in *No Future Without Forgiveness* (2000). Tutu's key concern was this accountability for all responsible to admit that they were wrong. As Tutu points out, the whites were the creators of Apartheid, and "Apartheid could not have survived for a single day had it not been supported by this enfranchised, privileged minority" (2000:217). Tutu's was a utopian role model, and he is possibly the greatest utopian thinker of the twentieth century. His belief in pursuing truth and the possibilities that hearing the truth might bring about a fundamental change made him unpopular in both black and white circles of amnesty applicants. Yet his role as mediator between the atrocity and those that acted in some way against it, as in the case of Umkhonto We

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<sup>23</sup> See pg. 78 in *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness: Facing History after Genocide and Mass Violence*.

Sizwe (the armed wing of the African National Congress), is evident in his response to Winnie Mandela's hearing. To Winnie Mandela, "You are a great person and you don't know how your greatness would be enhanced if you were to say, 'Sorry, things went wrong, forgive me.' I beg you" (2000:174). Tutu would like all to come forth and confess, for whites, the 'universal majority', and those 'others', the 'universal minority', to level the oppression. Thus Tutu was asking for all South Africans to take responsibility in opening up wounds so that a healthy healing could begin. This could only be done if all groups were accountable.

It has been suggested by Krog and Minow that having Tutu as the chairperson of the Commission resulted in a positive outcome for South Africa, and resulted in peace rather than the possibility of a civil war. Tutu's role, with regard to the truth and the truth for all people, has enabled the minority to express itself and thus bring about the first steps to creating a negotiating voice with the systems that have oppressed them for so long.

The Commission in itself has been didactic, for as Judge Richard Goldstone indicates, "[o]ne only has to imagine where South Africa would be today but for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in order to appreciate what it has achieved" (Minow, 1998: xii). Examining the nature of the collective emancipation that this Commission has offered is to understand the theory of oppression. Oppression should be removed from the vocabulary of society. This can be done with the necessary means of systems like the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Change has come, as Steyn observes (2001:115-147) there are groups in South Africa that are changing, hoping to create a 'hybrid' between white and black cultures,

one that is not defined in the one or the other but in a 'new' South African culture. This change offers hope to many people, for there has been no bloody civil war that authors like J.M. Coetzee and Nadine Gordimer prophesied<sup>24</sup>. Instead, tolerance is being understood through Steyn's idea of "post-modern whiteness" (2001: 150), "[f]or the first time white South Africans are getting to know about African ways from Africans. Knowledge is circulating in the society generated from a different center" (Steyn, 2001:152).

In Steyn's book, in the chapter entitled "Under African Skies", white South Africans are negotiating directly with black South Africans. This *hybridization*<sup>25</sup> offers the possibility, of something better happening, and this hope for something better is one sort of utopia, as defined at the beginning of this work. Steyn echoes this hope for something better with the closing words of her work: "My hope is that if the story of whiteness is not going to end without trace, its fragments may at least be reshuffled in ways that can work for a better life for all. May our stories never again cause suffering as the master's story used to" (2001:171-2). This utopian possibility allows for a new identity, one not based on power constructions, as white and black both have significant power assumptions, but a joining together for reclaiming a new identity.

It is by moving through shame to guilt and to reconciliation that the alienating effect of atrocity is given a utopian element. It is the hope of utopian thinkers that in the future this kind of crime will not happen and that the minority will exist in ultimate freedom. Yet, should society continue to allocate shame in an unending spiral of

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<sup>24</sup> Coetzee's work *The Life and Times of Michael K*, (1983) is one such work in which South Africa is reduced to random acts of violence and a civil war ensues. Gordimer's work *July's People* (1982) tells of a white family forced to go and live with their domestic servants in hope that they will not be massacred because of apartheid.

oppression, without guilt felt by those involved and without reconciliation to end the spiral, it will be its ultimate destruction. In the next section Antjie Krog's work *Country of My Skull*, is discussed with regard to the change that has happened for reversing the 'Othering' process from a literary perspective.

### **Antjie Krog's *Country of My Skull***

Antjie Krog (Samuel) is a poet, writer and journalist. She was the South African Broadcasting Services (SABC) reporter appointed to cover the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, for which her team won the Pringle Award for excellence in journalism. *Country of my Skull* (1998) is her text that records the progress of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa and is a practical example of the rich utopian theory also found in science fiction writing. As has been explored in this chapter, *Country of my Skull* becomes a text that serves two purposes. Firstly, it takes personal suffering and stories that were kept in the realm of personal space and makes them public. This act makes the suffering universal. Secondly, it tells of an atrocity that used power to oppress, but when the text documenting that atrocity is published, literally 'made public', others can hope that, through the agency of this text, this kind of suffering will not be repeated. The text creates a new space in which there is an aspiration that something better will come.

For every theory there needs to be a practical response that has inspired it or that proves it. Apartheid<sup>26</sup> and other human atrocities are reflected in utopian science

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<sup>25</sup> Steyn uses italics in the original text, and for this reason italics are used in the text of this thesis.

<sup>26</sup> Apartheid is not the only atrocity that can be linked to this theory; all human atrocities can. In order to locate this work as coming from South Africa, Apartheid is used as the atrocity most relevant to the author. In Chapter Five of this work an in-depth analysis is done of the Nazi regime's Holocaust. Using this as a

fiction writing and its constructions (anti-utopia and dystopia). The writings become a direct response to these atrocities and try to make sense of the recurring cycles of minority and majority power dynamics. The concept of guilt in utopian writings is a defining factor when analysing utopian constructions and attempting to derive general principles from them. *Country of my Skull* analyses the atrocity of apartheid but is not able to understand the mechanics of it, as such mechanics are embroiled in the emotions of the people involved, including the writer. However, utopian and science fiction theories enable an objective understanding and critical response to the otherwise seemingly unique and limited situation Krog writes about.

*Country of My Skull* is a text that looks at the possibility of finding an agency to negotiate without the use of science fiction's novum. Krog, as an Afrikaner woman, evaluates the role of white people in Apartheid and analyzes the role of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in offering a system by which to remove the 'universal minority' and 'universal majority' from continuing oppression.

Krog opens her book *Country of my Skull*, with the following quote, "for every victim who had an Afrikaner surname on her lips" (1998: iii). Krog is referring to the multiple concepts of guilt that victims, perpetrators and people feel after some human atrocity, in this case Apartheid in South Africa. Victims and perpetrators are in fact people, but it is the guilt of the victim, who is also the perpetrator, that makes the lines of definition difficult.

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model of atrocity, the ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, Rwandan Genocide, or any system of oppression could be discussed.

Krog, unlike many white South Africans, is trying to allocate her guilt as neither victim nor perpetrator, but as a person who was a subject on which the crime was imprinted by association.<sup>27</sup> Being labeled Afrikaner in the apartheid era meant being associated directly with apartheid. Even today the genealogy of apartheid is a specifically Afrikaner one, even though many English speakers and English companies<sup>28</sup> were also the beneficiaries of the system.

Carli Coetzee, in *Going Native*, notes that “white South African writing has imagined a black interlocutor” whereas Krog does not do this.<sup>29</sup> To imagine that Krog may be heard as a valid voice, yet one not identified as Afrikaner, is to reflect on the guilt she feels that apartheid has brought. As Coetzee notes when Krog opens her book by dedicating it to those that were Afrikaner victims, she is making a “powerful statement about discontinuity, about the inability to continue with things as they were before” (Coetzee, 2001:688). Coetzee’s work identifies Krog as being placed into a space of neither being the voice of the black victims of apartheid or with the perpetrators who persecuted the victims. Krog as a person feeling guilt is part of the new identity of white South Africans wanting to be forgiven for apartheid, acknowledging the wrongs of apartheid, and wanting to be welcomed into a new space within the constructs of a new identity.

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<sup>27</sup> Although Krog did receive hate mail due to her liberal reporting. pg. 164

<sup>28</sup> In *Country of my Skull*, Krog reports on the hearings for big business attended by Julian Ogilvie Thompson of Anglo-American. pp. 239-41.

<sup>29</sup> See footnote no. 4, pg. 686 in Coetzee, C. (2001). “‘They never Wept, the men of my Race’: Antjie Krog’s *Country of my Skull* and the White South African Signature” in *The Journal of Southern African Studies*, Volume 27, Number 4, December 2001. pp. 685-696

Krog comments on many different types of guilt<sup>30</sup>, one being a metaphysical guilt: “I am guilty of my very existence”, which relates directly to Krog as an Afrikaner by association, although not contributing to Apartheid. *Country of my Skull* becomes her submission to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and an opportunity for allocating her guilt by acknowledging it, verbalizing it, and purging herself of it by placing it into the realm of public space, a book. Krog cannot change her identity—she is South African—hence the title of her submission, *Country of my Skull*.

Unlike the Khmer Rouge atrocities in Cambodia, where the skulls of thousands of victims were unearthed, Krog’s skull is part of the living and functioning in society and although it is not visible, it is indeed the skull of a South African person. This skull cannot be located elsewhere, for the mark that identifies it as belonging to Krog, a South African, comes from only one place—South Africa. Afrikaans heritage cannot be traced to any other location, because its Dutch, French Huguenot and other European ancestors are all part of its genealogy.<sup>31</sup> It is the same argument that Constandt Viljoen used in his submission to the TRC about being an Afrikaner, and one of the arguments that was used for creating Apartheid. The Afrikaner was created in Africa and is therefore nothing but African.<sup>32</sup>

*Country of my Skull* transcends the boundaries of the author placed in one role as the manufacturer of the text. Krog takes multiple roles in the book. She is the

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<sup>30</sup> On page 97 of *Country of my Skull* Krog contrasts the four kinds of guilt that were referenced after the Holocaust to those of Apartheid. Atrocity of any kind has a similarity in the guilt associated with it. The last kind of guilt is the metaphysical, one that could be applied to many white South Africans.

<sup>31</sup> Melissa Steyn traces this idea of the South Africans right to land, based on the fact that the settlers claim that they found the land before the African tribes did and therefore had claim to the land (2001:xxiv, 28-29,33). This was further enmeshed into identity after the Battle of Bloodriver in which they made a covenant with God, that if they won, then the soil on which they fought truly belonged to them (2001:33).

<sup>32</sup> See *Country of my Skull* pp. 106-7,127,131,262.

'Everyman' in the morality play, a person with no name. She also becomes a TRC Commissioner listening to the submissions and passing judgments on the submissions that she hears. Finally, she is an agent desiring change or as Carli Coetzee has noted a person aware about the inability to continue with things as they were before. As Everyman in the morality play, making sense of the new information from the submissions of the victims to the TRC, she analyses the testimonies that she hears hereby re-evaluating her involvement or non-involvement in Apartheid. A colleague of hers notes that her role in covering the TRC is a way to be included in the collective guilt, "[b]ecause you want to be included in their circle - the circle of guilt" (1998:264), and by being included she is offered some form of absolution.

Krog's journey through the TRC is also the journey of every South African. Colour becomes immaterial as guilt is allocated to every South African regardless of race. Guilt cannot be limited into one definition. Krog evaluates the guilt felt by South Africans in comparison to the guilt felt by the Germans after the holocaust: "criminal guilt - for the people who did the killings; political guilt—for the politicians and the people who voted them into power; moral guilt—for those who did not do enough, who did not resist, who were passive, and lastly, metaphysical guilt—I survived while the other was killed, I am guilty of my very existence" (Krog, 1998:97). In both cases, it is clear that atrocity creates guilt. The difference is the guilt does not stop further atrocities from being repeated unless there is some way to become alienated from it and to re-negotiate the conditions that brought on both the guilt and the atrocity itself.

The TRC thus becomes a necessary utopian bridge, from a place of oppression moving towards a possibility of equality. Equality, beyond human rights equality, it is the equality of being heard and understood, and the equality of having a Commission that

actively seeks out forgiveness for all. The actions of individuals, governments and political parties are more complex than right or wrong, as is evident in the hearings from the TRC. The white-government-controlled Vlakplaas commanders<sup>33</sup> are no different from the black people staging a consumer boycott that put the tyre around Lungelwa Madubedube in Queenstown, set it alight and were the agents of and witnesses to her death.<sup>34</sup> The atrocity creates oppression that both groups are subjected to. The government oppressing people of colour and the members of the armed struggle against apartheid oppressing those that refused to negotiate on their terms. Oppression itself thus further divides the members of a minority. Crimes against humanity are possible because of the way society has set up minorities and majorities. Rather than co-exist in peace (a utopian state) where all are educated and have fundamental freedoms, a society in the midst of the spiral of oppression would rather have a fragmented existence where power played against group, religion, race or creed allows for gains, whether they be material or other.

Allocating guilt by redefining Utopia may seem unconventional. One would more appropriately allocate blame or shame. Nomfundo Walaza, a South African psychologist, believes in the concept of shame over the idea of guilt: "Guilt is such a useless thing...Guilt immobilizes you. 'I am guilty—so what can I do?' Feelings of guilt are open to abuse by those who suffered: 'You are guilty - so give me a thousand rand.' I prefer shame. Because when you feel shame about something you really want to change it, because it's not comfortable to sit with shame" (Krog, 1998:161). However, shame or

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<sup>33</sup> An elite government group of white and black South Africans whose purpose it was to fight any insurgencies.

<sup>34</sup> As described in *Country of my Skull* on pp. 134-135. The black South African organizers of the consumer boycott did this to her because she bought from white owned stores. Consumer boycotts were organized to economically challenge the apartheid regime. To further explain this, Steyn notes that, because of an injustice being created in apartheid, a resistance was created which also had deaths and casualties, and

feeling shame is one in which a society does not necessarily feel it was wrong, but rather that it was caught.<sup>35</sup> Krog uses the example of the Japanese government who felt shame after World War Two because their honour had been compromised. As Krog notes guilt is internal and does not need an audience whereas shame does. Therefore the TRC, although a public event does not pass judgement on those who offer submissions but lets the act of guilt be internal, and lets the guilt work as an agency of change.

Krog as an Afrikaner becomes a metaphoric Commissioner in the TRC, and she listens to the testaments of regimes and the National Party government, and assesses their validity and their involvement. She comments about the failure of these people to acknowledge that they are wrong, for by doing this they admit that they are guilty, to acknowledge that they are guilty means acknowledging apartheid was wrong. Thus, her work ends on a dark note. A regime will never admit that it was wrong, and by their non-admission, Krog again has to re-allocate her guilt: "And behind me sinks the country of my skull like a sheet in the dark—and I hear a thin song, hooves, hedges of venom, fever and destruction fermenting and hissing underwater. I shrink and prickle. Against. Against my blood and the heritage thereof" (1998:130). For she realises that without all parties taking responsibility, atrocity will continue and apartheid will be referenced with the Holocaust and Minow's list of twentieth century "mass atrocities." This failure of the previous regime to be reflexive of its actions, results in possible future oppressions.

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used tactics that were non-peaceful, "strikes, boycotts, marches, riots, uprisings, sabotage. Alongside this 'white' history, runs a parallel history of political mobilization, struggle, and protest" (2001:39).

<sup>35</sup> See *Country of my Skull* pp. 262-3.

It is when assessing this statement by philosopher Jürgen Habermas, that the essence of crimes against humanities is understood:<sup>36</sup> “Collective guilt does not exist. Whoever is guilty will have to answer individually. At the same time there is such a thing as collective responsibility for a mental and cultural context which makes crimes against humanity possible”. The actions of the collective are not necessarily those of an individual in that society. The collective may in fact change name or ideology, but rarely changes as a group. ‘Guilt’ is used in this work to look at ways individuals respond to atrocity and how if successful bring about change.

*Country of my Skull* is a white work and offers a white voice to the reader. Carli Coetzee notes that *Country of my Skull* has been largely criticized for writing for “white consumption.” Sandile Dikeni<sup>37</sup> comments that white writers like Mark Behr<sup>38</sup> and Rian Malan<sup>39</sup> write for a white audience. The whites reading the books feel absolution is given because the writers do not accept responsibility for the atrocity but rather acknowledge that they were aware of it rather than an agent trying to stop it and the white reader is able to recognise the similarity. Yet Coetzee believes that *Country of my Skull* is not such a work, for Krog is not asking for forgiveness, but asking what kind of voice she may have in the representing her story to the “black interlocutor.”

This chapter has explored the idea of Apartheid and the power relations related to it. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's relationship to Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* highlights the need to educate people about the atrocities of the

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<sup>36</sup> As quoted by Adam Mischnik, a Polish philosopher, in *Country of my Skull* on pg. 24.

<sup>37</sup> See pg. 691 in Coetzee, C. (2001). “‘They never Wept, the men of my Race’: Antjie Krog’s *Country of my Skull* and the White South African Signature” in *The Journal of Southern African Studies*, Volume 27, Number 4, December 2001. Pp. 685-696.

<sup>38</sup> See *The Smell of Apples* (1996).

<sup>39</sup> See *My Traitor’s Heart* (1991).

past in order for a movement towards Steyn's idea of *hybridization*. It is the utopian possibility and the hope of something better than before, in this case for apartheid and the "master narrative of whiteness" being rewritten, which break spiral of ongoing oppression. *Country of My Skull* is a text that explores the shifting paradigms in racial identity, specifically white identity, from one of being a 'universal majority' to one where accountability offers recourse to a possibility of something better. In the next chapter, the idea of the 'universal minority' will be explored further.

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## Chapter Two

### The 'universal minority'

**[B]ut they think it unjust for a man to seek for pleasure, by snatching another man's pleasures from him** (More, 1998: 49).

Whereas the previous chapter has tried to define key terms used in this thesis, this section will focus on the idea of the 'universal minority', which is subject to the rules and norms of the 'universal majority.' In order to explain these concepts of minority and majority, Thomas More's work *Utopia* is deconstructed from a minority and majority perspective, indicating that in fact the idea of a majority and minority are evident in the text itself. Ghettoisation, a minority group's option of isolating itself in order to escape the role assigned to it by the universal majority, is explored as a mode that should be avoided. To further help explain the displacement and power structures evident in the 'universal minority' and 'universal majority', a case study of a science fiction text, Ursula le Guin's *The Telling*, will be used. Due to the nature of the novum, the cognitive estrangement of the multiple systems evident in the book show the possibility of negotiation with the dominant discourse, something that the 'universal minority' have to do in order to survive.

Thomas More perceived, in his *Utopia*, a space, though racked with inconsistencies, where all people would have the opportunity for an equal life. For one 'man' would not want to do injustice to another because of the human principles that had been attained in Utopia. Based on this premise, utopia has largely been debated as the route people should take in order to reach this state of reason that More outlined.

In this study of minority and utopia the emphasis will be on minority representation in Thomas More's *Utopia*. Although research has been done extensively in utopian studies on More and his island of Utopia, it is not as perfect as it would seem, and there are still major problems with More's idea of utopia. One such problem is that, even though he chooses a supposedly perfect society that is inhabited by the Utopians, there are still certain groups within the society that are not afforded equal status compared to other groups who are.

Specifically, slaves and their representation in Utopia reflect an understanding of the 'universal minority.' The 'universal minority' as mentioned before is placed in a disadvantageous space with which to negotiate with the 'universal majority.' These disadvantages can be summed up into the following four categories which will be discussed collectively, for they are synonymous with each other. These terms need to be seen as a continuation of the terms already introduced in the Four-step Model. These four categories can also be detected in other utopian science fiction texts, although with some variation:

- 1) A hierarchy of minority exists: As will be explained in *Utopia*, there are different categories of slaves, freemen (people) and roles in which freemen are placed over freewomen. These roles designate certain people as entitled to or lacking certain privileges, with free men at the top, descending to slaves from Utopia at the bottom.
- 2) The minority is branded through some signifier, visual or other. In the case of the slaves in Utopia, it is a gold earring. The role of this 'branding' is to display the inferiority of the subject to others, namely those in power, that do not need to be 'branded' as 'Other'.

- 3) The minorities find ways in which to negotiate with the dominant power, the 'universal majority.' In order to have a better life the neighbours of the Utopians place themselves into slavery, so that they may have a better life, even if this means a loss of certain privileges.
- 4) Those in power create certain systems to remain in power, because they are aware that through collective or individual revolution they can be displaced by a new majority. This is evident in the ways the Polylerits and Utopians deal with their slaves so that power is not challenged.

These terms will now be explicated in detail through an analysis of the role of slaves in Utopia. In the first book of *Utopia*, More comments on class and the exploitation of slaves, who are a minority, by the Polylerits, a society similar to the Utopians that are in fact the majority: "Those of every division of the country are distinguished by a peculiar mark: which it is capital for them to lay aside, to go out of their bounds, or to talk with a slave of another jurisdiction; and the very attempt of an escape is no less penal than an escape itself; it is death for any other slave to be accessory to it; and if a freeman engages in it he is condemned to slavery. Those that discover it are rewarded; if freemen, in money; and if slaves, with liberty, together with a pardon for being accessory to it, that so they might find their account, rather in repenting of their engaging in such a design, than in persisting in it" 1998:13). Although the Polylerits are not the utopian community of More's Utopia, the travels of Raphael Hythloday, More's narrator, in Utopia and other countries, was to illustrate that better societies existed, but ultimately Utopia was the best society of all.

Slaves are not treated well in Utopia and in fact are subject to hard labour and bondage. Yet there is some sense of progressiveness for 16<sup>th</sup> Century England, as slavery was only formally abolished in the next century. Some progressive ideas might be freeing the children of slaves, and not taking slaves as prisoners of war:

They do not make slaves of prisoners of war, except those that are taken in battle; nor of the sons of their slaves, nor of those of other nations: the slaves among them are only such as are condemned to die in those parts to which they trade, whom they sometimes redeem at low rates; and in the places have them for nothing. They are kept at perpetual labour, and are always chained, but with this difference, that their own natives are treated much worse than others; they are considered as more profligate than the rest, and since they could not be restrained by the advantages of so excellent an education, are judged worthy of harder usage (1998:57).

When judging the tasks that the Utopian slaves have to undergo, even More is critical of what they have to do. In Utopia, life and the preservation of it is of the utmost importance, and by undertaking the act of killing an animal, the spirit of the person killing it was thought to suffer. Yet the Utopian slaves are not only chained and unable to move around freely, but also given the burden of killing animals for the benefit of the society. "There are also, without their towns, places appointed near some running water, for killing their beasts, and for washing away their filth; which is done by their slaves, for they suffer none of their citizens to kill their cattle, because they think that pity and good nature, which are among the best of these affections that are born with us, are much impaired by the butchering of animals" (1998:38-39). Clearly, the slaves are seen as inferior beings without "pity and good nature."

More actually offers two examples of slavery in two societies in *Utopia*. The first example is Raphael Hythloday's journey to Persia and his anthropological study of the Polylerits, the second being the slaves of Utopia, the island. The Polylerits' slaves could

be said to have more just rights than those of the slaves of Utopia.<sup>40</sup> The Polylerits' slaves are free to move about unchained, are not reduced to sub-humans, and are not physically restrained.<sup>41</sup> In Utopia, slaves are put to hard labour as a means of deterring others from committing crimes, but, should they prove to be hostile, are as a last result the subjects of capital punishment:

For the most part, slavery is the punishment even of the greatest crimes, for as that is no less terrible to the criminals themselves than death, so they think the preserving them in a state of servitude is more for the interest of the commonwealth than killing them; since as their labour is a greater benefit to the public than their death could be, so the sight of their misery is a more lasting terror to other men than that which would be given by their death. If their slaves rebel, and will not bear their yoke, and submit to the labour that is enjoined them, they are treated as wild beasts that cannot be kept in order, neither by a prison, nor by their chains; and are at last put to death (More, 1997:60).

Both slave groups also have markings that distinguish them as slaves. For the Polylerits it is a "peculiar mark,"<sup>42</sup> but for the Utopians it is a gold earring<sup>43</sup>. This is a visual signifier to identify them as others. As these marks equal a symbol of low status, they are branded as a minority. Like in Kafka's *In the Penal Colony* (1914), where the prisoners come to death through having their crimes tattooed onto them, here the guilt of what it is to be a minority is branded onto the slaves, which equates to a life of servitude and minority status. The slaves stand for what will later be commented on as being the

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<sup>40</sup> On pg. 57 in the sub-chapter entitled 'Of Their Slaves, and of their Marriages' of *Utopia*, More outlines the treatment, identification and life of slaves in Utopia.

<sup>41</sup> See *Utopia* pg.13, "but are neither imprisoned, nor chained, unless there happened to be some extraordinary circumstances in their crime." Hythloday is referring to the prisoners, who as he notes are called slaves by Polyleritis society.

<sup>42</sup> "They all wear a peculiar habit, of one certain colour, and their hair is cropped a little above their ears, and a piece of one of their ears is cut off" (More, 1998: 13).

<sup>43</sup> "[O]f the same metals [gold and silver] they likewise make chains and fetters for their slaves; to some of which, as a badge of infamy, they hang an ear-ring of gold" (More, 1998: 44).

'universal minority', the group made up of a variety of actual minority groups that are constantly persecuted simply for being that universal minority<sup>44</sup>.

Even when minorities are put together there is a hierarchy of minority. It is not only the universal majority, but also the minority groups that have created the hierarchy due to the way in which each minority group interacts with the majority. Certain groups are placed in more favour and thus although the hierarchy is created by the minority group, it is largely influenced by the majority. Thus the united power of the minority is fractured and causes the minority never to be a united force, for a divided minority is not a threat. Thus the Polylerits forbid slaves to talk to other slaves for fear that they might find solidarity in the distinction of 'Otherness'.

The second kind of slave that More has in Utopia is a group of people from other countries who choose to place themselves into slavery so that they may live and work in Utopia. This voluntary act of servitude is so that the quality of their lives may be improved. "Another sort of slaves are the poor of the neighbouring countries, which offer of their own accord to come and serve them; they treat these better, and use them in all other respects as well as their own countrymen, except their imposing more labour upon them, which is no hard task to those that have been accustomed to it; and if any of these have a mind to go back to their own country, which indeed falls out but seldom, as they do not force them to stay, so they do not send them away empty-handed" (1998:57). The contradiction with the idea of slave versus freeman is problematic, as it implies that

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<sup>44</sup> It should be noted that one cannot equate criminals with minority groups. Some of the slaves in these societies were criminals and hence served out their time as slaves. To thus say that all minority groups are criminals would be to over-simplify the idea of utopia. These 'better' societies found ways to empower all members of the community. However, by the controlling groups definitions there were still those that fell into the category of 'not-equal' and thus given the status of slave. If the society were as advanced as More

Utopia is exclusive. People from other countries are not allowed to apply to live and work there and can only do this by giving up their liberties. Raphael Hythloday was allowed to visit Utopia and only wished to return to England so that he could let others know of its greatness. Thus, Hythloday was allowed to stay in Utopia, yet citizens of the neighbouring countries were not allowed to do so. This indicates that Utopians did in fact look down on citizens of their neighbouring countries. So, again, a group of people suffers as a minority and are not allowed to enter Utopia unless they compromise their liberties. Although they are able to leave when they choose, they have to serve out their time in Utopia as a sub-citizen, without equal status. This by no means indicates a 'perfect' society, for surely a 'perfect' society would be one which has no hierarchy of liberties.

In order to address equality in *Utopia*, and to establish a basis for examining contemporary trends in science fiction and utopian writing, an examination of gender equality in More's Utopia is also instructive. More's Utopia is not a positive place for women. The only advance in the rights of women over their state in 16th century England is the fact that men and women both serve in the army. Raphael Hythloday notes that the clothing style was similar and that the only distinguishing factor was the colour of the clothes, which showed the gender of the wearer. It also signified whether the person was free or a slave. The need to differentiate between the two implies that a hierarchy exists, for otherwise no distinction would be necessary. "Throughout the island they wear the same sort of clothes without any other distinction, except what is necessary to distinguish the two sexes, and the married and unmarried" (1998:33). Yet

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hoped, there would be no slaves, criminals or deviants, as, to return to More's quote at the beginning of this chapter, "no man places himself above another."

the differentiation still brands women as 'Other', and this subscribes to the male order of patriarchy.

More, although liberal for sixteenth century England, did not see women as equals. Women in More's Utopia are located in the kitchen for the purposes of serving their men, where they are placed only one level higher than slaves. As slaves were seen as being unworthy, they were required to butcher animals. After they had finished their work, it was up to the women to cook the food: "All the uneasy and sordid services about these halls are performed by their slaves; but the dressing and cooking their meat, and the ordering their tables, belong only to the women" (1998:40).

Both gender and slaves are explored in a separate heading of Book Two entitled "OF THEIR SLAVES, AND OF THEIR MARRIAGE" (More, 1998:57). By referencing the two of them together More must have thought of them in the same light, and/or reverence, for there are many other headings that he could have placed marriage in. "OF THE RELIGIONS OF THE UTOPIANS" (More, 1998: 57) would have been a more appropriate place to place marriage, as it could be linked to responsibility and ethics, rather than slavery, as the former heading suggests. This is by no means an oversight for an author who created his perfect society in such detail. More is meticulous in setting out information for his reader; every aspect of Utopia is addressed. So it seems that More did not consider any progressive goals for women when writing his *Utopia*.

By contrast, in Kumar's work (1991), feminism and utopia are synonymous with each other. "It was perhaps inevitable that women should take to utopia. Where else would they be free and equal?" (Kumar,1991:102) Kumar, however does not engage with More's *Utopia*, but rather cites recent feminist works as signs of the "free and equal"

place accorded to women. Though Kumar is right to suggest that feminism has a strong interest in utopia, adopting his suggestion that they are synonymous seems too limited. As has been suggested, More's Utopia was not an empowered place for women, and had many other flaws by present standards, yet it still was a utopia, in the sense of being a search for something better; therefore it would be contradictory to make feminism and utopia synonymous with each other, as this would indicate embracing a tradition that merely re-iterates all about patriarchy that women have fought for so long to overthrow.

Yet the reason why feminism and utopia find some common ideology now can be discovered through rhetoric studies, which allows for interpretation of texts as the reader wishes. Slaves no longer exist; therefore the roles assigned by More must change, and the roles of women would also change in a contemporary utopia. Portuguese writer, Pina Martins has written a contemporary experience of utopia, *Utopia III*<sup>45</sup>, where all slaves have been freed and where gender is no longer a part of utopia. Modern thinkers in utopian writing are doing similar things, using the ideology and possibility of a better world based on modern trends and adherence of equality.

Change is inevitable. As a result, texts that were once not part of certain discourse can now be re-read in an alternative manner. Therefore, Martins' account of a utopia without slavery is valid, and Martins' example suggests that people of alternative sexuality might be afforded the same reception in a modern utopia. However, this is problematic as will be explained. Unlike gender or race, sexuality is not always acknowledged as being a valid minority. Although it is not impossible to change race or gender, it is difficult to do so, and groups who wish to appear androgynous or where

race is not acknowledged by skin still have very visible signifiers that image them as 'different'. Yet, often, these groups are not accorded the repressive designation of 'Other'. Ironically, due to the dubious nature in which patriarchy still responds to sexuality rights, homosexuals still are placed at the bottom of the 'hierarchy' of minorities, and nearly always 'Other' despite lacking a visible sign of difference.

Thus the concept of utopia can and must be flexible and large enough to be the goal of any group that finds itself labeled as the 'universal minority'. In the words of More, there should be no hierarchies to judge people superior or inferior:

[F]or there is no man so much raised above the rest of mankind as to be the only favourite of Nature, who, on the contrary, seems to have placed on a level all those that belong to the same species. Upon this they infer that no man ought to seek his own conveniences so eagerly as to prejudice others; and therefore they think that not only all agreements between private persons ought to be observed; ...for distributing those conveniences of life which afford us all our pleasures (1997:48-9).

Based on this quote from *Utopia*, no group should be raised above another to judge another. By searching for happiness and not dismissing and labeling people as 'Other', then all forms of justice and equality can be found within More's work. This allows for all minority groups to embrace utopia.

This section has explored the inconsistencies in equality in More's *Utopia*. It has mentioned that feminism and utopia have found a correlation with each other, even though women are portrayed negatively in *Utopia*. Using this premise, sexuality is

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<sup>45</sup> Vieira, F (2001). *Utopia III, by Pina Martins: a Portuguese Sequel to Thomas More's Utopia*. Conference proceedings of the European Utopian Studies Society Conference. Conducted by the European Utopian Studies Society. New Lanark: Scotland.

therefore also redefined and placed within the realms of utopian possibility. The next section looks at how ghettoisation is not a practical means to negotiate with the majority.

### **Hierarchies of Ghettoisation**

**Sagiv and Schwartz (1995) discuss social dominance as a contextual factor, arguing that, for minority group members, their social identity as group members is more salient than for dominant group members. Hence, minority group members view contact with dominant group members more in terms of group differences and characteristics. Their readiness for outgroup contact is more strongly influenced by the norms, attitudes, and stereotypes toward the outgroup prevalent in their own group. In contrast, members of dominant groups, for whom group membership is less salient, view contact with minority group members in more individual terms. They are therefore more influenced by their personal experiences and characteristics such as their values (Gudykunst; Bond, 1997:135-136).<sup>46</sup>**

Ghettoisation is a term which is best referenced when a group or individual, places themselves into a 'ghetto', or safe space, or constructed space in which they are not allowed to leave. In this space, whether it is safe or forced, they remove ties with other groups and therefore hinder their negotiation opportunities and abilities. This is partly based on the fact that the group wishes to protect its identity and feels the only alternative to this is to withdraw and stop the negotiation process with the majority. The ability to overcome or negotiate ghettoisation has led to fierce debate. It has caused for-

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<sup>46</sup> Gudykunst, WB, and Bond, MH (1997). Intergroup relations across cultures. In JW Berry, MH Segall, & C. Kagitcibasi (Eds.), *Handbook of cross-cultural psychology*, Vol. 3 (pp. 119-162)

and-against splits in both conservative and liberal groups to be created, with no agency apparent by which to negotiate a compromise. Two groups that have been entangled in the rhetoric of ghettoisation are queer and feminist theories. Yet contemporary science fiction writers have found a way to bridge the divide between the ghetto, and those that choose to live ideologically outside of the ghetto.

If ghettoisation is inevitable, the argument would be that no possibility for negotiation outside of these walls of ideology or indoctrination is possible, as no negotiation created the ghetto in the first place. This in many ways is utopian, as it creates a system in which a group chooses how to live and sets its own rules to abide by. The problem that any group living in a ghetto faces is that, although ideologically separating themselves from the rest of humanity, they are unable to do this economically or from a perspective of spatial relations (physical acquisition of land).

As an example, should a group wish to set up a commune and purchase land, the land that they have occupied could be reclaimed at any time, should the country change laws of land acquisition. The country to which they belong could enforce martial law and the ghetto would find itself without any ability to continue in the way that it constructed itself, as it would have no way to resist the agency of law enforcement. The Group Areas Act (1950) is a practical South African example, which highlights the inconsistent nature of land rights. The apartheid regime refused to recognise the choice of minorities to ghettoize according to their own principles in this act, and moved groups that did not fit into the government's classification. This argument would be the same for a ghetto constructed simply out of ideology, where a group does not have any spatial rights. Living and reasoning in an isolated space is impossible, because it ignores the existence of others who impact directly or indirectly on the group. Therefore, there

needs to be some kind of dialogue between the ghetto and what lies beyond it. This dialogue may best be achieved through a utopian project, yet the problem remains of just what kind of utopian project may be envisioned under real-world circumstances.

Minority groups have many differing issues and interests to be argued. Even within minority groups there are some groups on the far right who see no parity with the politics of the left. As an experiment to ascertain whether minority groups did in fact yearn for some kind of utopia, the following question was placed on two e-mail discussion forums. "How do you image utopia as a woman, person of alternative sexuality or as a person of colour?" One question was created for the Feminist Science Fiction listserv<sup>47</sup> and the other for the Queer Studies listserv. The responses had one thing in common; a large group of subjects were unable to answer this question for they found their identities to be too fragmented, and thus not able to place a necessary answer into the parameters that were set for them. A woman who was black and lesbian for example felt it impossible to look at herself as black, divorced from her other minority identity, in this case her alternative sexuality. Others responded to the notion that women are imaged as a minority. Only a small group of people responded to the question offering an explanation or a utopian ideal. This was a desire to be acknowledged as a minority, and thus create a language of possible negotiation with patriarchy. This experiment in fact failed, for the complexity of identity politics led to this study in which the 'universal majority' has created a language that has enabled minorities to feel fractured and disconnected from each other, possibly coupled with the limitations or oversimplification of the question. In utopian theory the yearning to be connected and not labeled as 'other' is still relevant and valued for minority groups. Yet

the exact nature of the utopia, or even of the group itself, cannot be defined as easily as suggested in the question. So, the question remains of how utopia may best be visioned.

It is important to note that minority representation does not imply a mere numerical equation where the physical amount is calculated and contrasted to another group (for e.g., the majority). One of the responses from the e-mail forum pointed out some very valid facts about statistics available showing that women constitute 52% of the world population and are thus the numerical majority. This thesis looks at groups that are imaged as a minority, not due to their numbers, but rather due to the use of power through which they assume the role of a minority, and vice versa. The two areas that will be explored are minority groups with alternative sexualities and people of colour.

These groups constantly look to campaign, draft legislation and advocate their rights in systems of legislation. They are treated as minority groups in the sense that their rights are sometimes compromised; they face sexism, racism and general discrimination, and have to find ways to ensure that their interests are adequately protected. For these kinds of groups a utopia may not be a valid space to look forward to, by conventional terms, but rather as a space where their freedom is granted and where their equality is not compromised. This may be idealistic, but valid because it is a goal that can be recognised by most members of those groups.

The possibility of this ambitious task cannot easily be realised through action. Instead, science fiction writing offers an accomplished platform from which to look at minorities in utopia because in the realm of science fiction writing anything is possible.

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<sup>47</sup> Members of this listserv had a discussion on race, which prompted the question about race. However the response to this question was small. The question was opened to gender in the hope that race would be

Advances in thinking and technology allow for enlightenment and understanding that have been prohibited by the evolution of oppression facing the world today. The language of oppression does not allow groups to move to their utopian spaces. In many ways, there is very little to image what utopia would be. For some it would be a political system, for others an economic alternative, and still for others it would be a dream of a way of life. For a minority it would mean some recognition and negotiated middle ground. Politically it would be through the idea that equality would be offered regardless of power dynamics. Economically, it would be that the minority would still be able to work within the framework of the majority but again with some kind of equal status. For many it is the idea that they are no longer imaged as a minority.

Authors of contemporary science fiction and utopian writing have not created absolutely perfect societies where everyone lives in some kind of forced equality or forced perfection. This would simply perpetuate what we have now and would be unrealistic. Moreover, the majority never easily concedes to allow for representation of all minority rights, due to self-interest being compromised. To use South Africa as an example, although South Africa has a new constitution and embraces all aspects of equality, the government is unable to enforce some of its equality legislation. Economics and channels that have long held power refuse to change. Here, minority groups with rights negotiate spaces and legislation as part of their daily life. All legislation from the old regime has to be challenged in court before the new legislation can be enforced.

One group that has benefited from this is people of colour, for whom legislative equality is no longer an issue, with a firm system of affirmative action and government intervention. White male dominated boardrooms are being replaced with equal

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included in the discussion.

opportunity systems. Similarly, women find themselves also able to take up positions proportionally to their representation in the general population and are enjoying positions not previously offered to them. There are also groups that have not benefited, or for whom the process has been more problematic. People in low-income groups are still without basics like water supplies or housing. People of alternative sexuality have been given the opportunity of having the same equal rights, but partner benefit, marriage and healthcare are some areas that have still not been resolved. Thus, not all groups are able to benefit equally.

Science fiction writers are aware of these practical difficulties, and, rather than creating perfect societies, often create 'critical utopias', worlds imagined as something better than what now exists, even if imperfect. In an opinion expressed by Mary Doria Russell, author of *The Sparrow*<sup>48</sup>, authors are aware of the fact that the world exists with structures and rules and people in the societies do not always have the choice they believe they have:

There are more or less coherent political cultures here and there, now and then, and they all work well for 10 percent of the population and they are all awful for another 10 percent of the population, and the remaining 80 percent just muddle along from day to day. My books reflect that attitude. Some people thrive, others suffer, and most people just keep their heads down and take care of themselves and their families, day by day.<sup>49</sup>

What is important, then, is not perfection, but the way science fiction allows minority representation to be negotiated in relation to our own, real-world society. As has been stated before, one common trope in works like those of Ursula le Guin is to imagine a real-world minority group true to its ideals sets up some kind of space that adheres to its values, and where its values are not compromised. However, in reality it

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<sup>48</sup> A science fiction work that will be explored in Chapter Four.

is impossible that the minority groups will ever have the defining voice because, for this to be realised, the majority would have to give up part of its power. Instead, these works of science fiction seek to create negotiating space that lets a minority end its ghettoization or escape from 'Other' back into the realm of accepted difference within society.

More's Utopia may never be reached, for that would be far too idealistic and similarly problematic for women and other ethnic groups, but for minority groups the journey towards it offers a movement towards a common negotiating forum. It is the journey, the breaking down of obstacles along the way that ultimately does the good. Contemporary science fiction in a way speaks as a visionary would, offering spaces, realities and systems that are achievable. The writings do not offer false hopes, but rather offer something that could be aspired to, something that will make a future generation more optimistic. As the world changes and as priorities within minorities change, in order to survive and create an architecture for positive change, ways to negotiate with the majority are a necessity.

This section has looked at the impractical nature of ghettoisation as a means of removing a commonality in negotiation. The examples of South Africa's Group Areas Act and of numerical inconsistencies regarding numerical minorities that are 'universal majorities' and numerical majorities that are 'universal minorities' further highlight the need to negotiate with the dominant discourse. The next section is a case study in which the theories of the 'universal minority', 'universal majority', and utopian possibility

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<sup>49</sup> Mary Doria Russell ([MDRSparrow@aol.com](mailto:MDRSparrow@aol.com)). (14 November 2000). *Utopia*. E-mail to Jason le Grange. ([jasonleg@chollian.net](mailto:jasonleg@chollian.net)).

through negotiation are analysed with regard to a recent science fiction text, *The Telling*, by acclaimed writer Ursula le Guin.

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## **A Case study of the 'universal minority': Ursula le Guin's *The Telling***

**The margin between collusion and respect can be narrow... Unfortunately, we exist in that margin, here** (Le Guin, 2000:21).

Ursula le Guin can be described as a foremost authority in the science fiction community and a writer whose work is solidly entrenched in utopian possibility. Like her contemporaries she uses science fiction as a didactic tool to mirror this world with the ones that she creates in her novels. Her popularity is largely due to the multiple themes and the boundaries of her books and they stretch as far as gender rights, to imaging people of colour into communities where they are accepted and where the society accepts them.<sup>50</sup>

Le Guin has successfully negotiated a space for minority groups in her works, especially in the Hainish series, of which *The Dispossessed* (1974), *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) and most recently *The Telling* (2000) are a part. What makes Le Guin unique in this sense is that she writes the minority into her work as a group that either negotiates successfully with the 'universal majority', or explores themes of overt oppression where the very nature of the extremity of the oppression makes the work subversive, through the technique of cognitive estrangement.

*The Telling* is a case study in point. *The Telling* offers multiple workings for the theory of the 'universal minority' and the 'universal majority'. The book is structured as a

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<sup>50</sup> Le Guin explores race in *The Left Hand of Darkness*, in which she bridges racial tension through focussing on the similarities within the communities and not through identity politics.

narrative that offers not one or two worlds and their histories<sup>51</sup>, but two worlds with their multiple histories, which have shaped their past. Terra, what today is known as earth, has passed from being a place that was in turmoil, very similar to pre-World War II Germany, into a state run by a religious fanatic. The society then moves back to an advanced state of technological and scientific exploration, which is imaged as an ideal state. This is compared to Aka, which existed in books, tales and 'the telling' (a complicated way of passing on knowledge through a deeper awareness of spirituality). This was then replaced by a fascist state that banned the practice of the telling and all imagery language and history was destroyed, in theory.

The maz, the society from Aka, first existed in equality, and through time created a language of difference thereby eliminating equality in the hierarchical society with a group of maz naming themselves 'boss maz' and incorporating power into their rule. A fascist Corporation State then emerged which desired to completely erase all forms of culture and spirituality in the desire to create a state where people were uniformed, conformed and programmed with propaganda and intimidation. This state mirrors Orwell's *1984*, (1949) in which Big Brother<sup>52</sup> watches, responds and silences. These two vastly different states, both with points of similarity and difference are compared with each other. It is the stark similarity between the two that makes the plight of the 'universal minority' even more interesting and complex. This complexity will be explained as representations of the minority are explored in various situations and through different definitions.

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<sup>51</sup> When saying this generally science fiction writing offers a comparison between two worlds, like in *The Dispossessed*, Terra and Annares. What Le Guin successfully negotiates is a comparison contrast between the world with its previous alternative history, and the contemporary world, which is a clear contrast from the previous history. Thus taking this idea Le Guin offers a second planet with which she uses the same technique, constructing four possible states of governance and political structures, ranging from totalitarianism to limited communism.

The corporation state of Aka sees itself as a third world inferior planet compared to that of Terran, and as a result believes that they should emulate all that is 'better' about Terran. Sutti, the protagonist from Terra, has to re-inforce the truth against the propagandist stereotypes that are thought to be a part of her world:

[Goiri, a maz] All I know of you world, yoz...  
[Sutti] Is that we fly around in space ships bringing enlightenment to, lesser, backward worlds" (Le Guin, 2000:215).

It is the belief of minorities, the Akans, that they are inferior, by propaganda that is collected by those wishing to exploit it. The minority finds itself negotiating with hearsay without any ability to verify it, thus further disempowering it.

Ironically, what the Corporation State has copied are all the negative ideologies and standards of Terra. The Corporation State of Aka has placed itself into the role of minority, by choice. By choosing to do this they in turn force all their groups to conform into something 'other', a uniformed fascist state, believing that without any dissidents or rogue groups the planet that they so wish to emulate will respect them. Respect therefore becomes the agency of action.

The planet of Terra had in fact, during its fascist phase, sent two envoys to Aka. The first had introduced their information and technology to the 'new' planet, which impressed the 'psychologically' colonized planet into wanting to emulate everything about this new planet. With this process in motion the second envoy arrived, with his fascist religion and leader, and sought to further change the society. The

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<sup>52</sup> The name given to the mechanism of the state to control each of its citizens, by collating information that

'psychologically' colonized power response, however, was different. It asked the guests to leave, moved about criminalizing all forms of religion, and stopped any signs of 'difference' other than those that the corporation set out. As a result, spirituality, which was considered an uncontrollable act of the human mind, became the target of this enforcement. They rid the planet of the language that had been used during the time when "the telling" was told; they outlawed meetings of maz, the storytellers, and insisted on party slogans in the place of traditional maz activities. In order to create total order without any dissidence, and like the slaves of utopia, the punishment for any dissidence was deportation to a re-education camp or death: "The government of this world, to gain technological power and intellectual freedom, had outlawed the past... To this government who had declared they would be free of tradition, custom, and history, all old habits, ways, modes, manners, ideas, pieties were sources of pestilence, rotten corpses to be burned or buried. The writing that had persevered them was to be erased" (Le Guin, 2000: 61)

Thus, the Corporation State wishes not only for total obedience, but as body politics theorist Elizabeth Grosz notes, a total re-writing on the text of the body.<sup>53</sup> Removing any previous writings and records and leaving the subject to be re-written by the controlling power, is what the Corporation State, in this case, desires. By doing this, the Corporation State hopes not for equality, as its actions would suggest, but complete obedience to the state. The Corporation State therefore tries to reverse the 'Othering' process by literally rewriting the language of difference, but rather than rewriting the language of difference, it silences the difference and assumes that it doesn't exist. Thus the reversing process fails and a spiral of oppression ensues. The maz do not wish to

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identify the citizens as doing or saying deviant things against it.

<sup>53</sup> Grosz, E. (1994). *Volatile Bodies* The Association of American University Presses, Washington.

overthrow the Corporation State but they do withdraw into safe spaces and continue to practice the telling in hiding.

The converse of this is that although Terra might be a superior state, it has gained all its knowledge from another planet, and like the Akans did to the Terrans, tried to emulate what it has seen from the envoys from these regions. A hierarchy has formed within the planets, each trying to emulate the next, and each believing the other to be superior. The concept of the 'universal minority' is validated with the hierarchy that is formed. "How was it that everybody in the world was willing to move in the same direction, talk the same language, believe the same things? Fear of being evil, or fear of being different?" (Le Guin, 2000:67) What is evident in this passage, and what Le Guin sets up, is a system that groups construct so as not to show difference. A minority is only imaged as different if it displays a signifier of difference. By simulating one group through another, and so on, a language of negotiation emerges meeting the 'universal majority' sans signifiers, while creating the forum to possibly negotiate at a later stage. However, no ethnic or religious group is willing to reprogram their ethnicity themselves or reject their religion.

Sutty is from Terra, the supposedly superior planet, yet she is a minority on Aka. Besides her there are only a few other "aliens", as they are referred to. The Corporation uses them as a form of tokenism and no real exchange happens in the form of dialogues, exchanges of knowledge, or interactions in order to try and understand the differences or similarities between the two cultures. Sutty is made to feel like the minority, like a visitor and an unwelcome one at that. In fact, Sutty's presence on Aka is questionable as she is labeled as 'Other', an alien. She is a minority that is imaged to believe that she is

vulnerable and could be suppressed at any point. The Corporation State signified her as 'Other', and using the media, persuaded many citizens to feel the same.

Only by leaving the propagandist headquarters and moving to a remote town on the boundaries of Aka is she able to start a language of negotiation with the people of Aka. The reason the Corporation State desires this alienation of the citizens from Suttu is that although the Akans welcome observers, they also desire to have power over this one individual and over the knowledge of the core of their history. They do not desire their language to be sent back to Terra for observation, excluding responsibility should they be deemed barbarians for not subscribing to the ideology of the 'more sophisticated' Terrans. It is a dissimulation of power with very little practical outcome.

The exploration of minority in *The Telling*, beyond a theoretical one, extends to include practical minorities. There is a focus on alternative sexuality and race. Suttu, an Indo-Canadian (as she refers to herself), is lesbian having found a monogamous relationship with Pao, a Sino-Canadian woman, on the planet of Terra. Le Guin forces the reader not only to confront homosexuality, but further subverts the nature of the minority to include race as a signifier of further difference. By doing this Le Guin marks the acceptability of the relationship that the two characters have, and by moving to incorporate race into the paradigm shifts the focus from a work that is exclusively subversive and re-images the narrative. The narrative is thus not about difference. The focus is on the relationship of love, not the sexuality of those in it. Due to the identity politics of the characters being so complex, there is no longer a stereotype of alternative sexuality identity. The work transcends the boundaries of protest work to simply become omnisciently focused on the story rather than that of the issue. Le Guin chooses to disclose the sexuality of her protagonist as a didactic means for understanding tolerance.

Thus, the reader moves from acknowledging difference to acknowledging the characters beyond their identity politics.

Both Aka and Terra have shifting ideologies. For example, on Terra, during the time of the fascist Unist State, it was illegal for Sutti to have sexual relations with a woman. However, her society changed and she was later able to live freely with her lover. Sutti was easily able to adapt to societal expectations on Aka, as on Aka under the Corporation State it is illegal to have homosexual relations. But on Aka, under the original hierarchy of the boss maz, they were able to couple up regardless of their sexuality.

However, with the regime change what was once a human right becomes a reason for punishment, or vice versa, as seen in the comparison of societies by Sutti: “[t]he Unist fathers declared the same thing. Because God created women to be vessels for men’s semen. But after freedom we didn’t have to hide for fear of being sent to revival camps. Like your maz couples who got sent to rehabilitation centres” (Le Guin, 2000:237). This movement criminalizes a minority group and then emancipates them, showing cycles of acceptance, but never allowing the minority acceptance. Instead it offers a false sense of equality, one that the next regime could easily displace. The fundamental core identity of the maz is that of acceptance built into their society, as seen in the classification of coupling: “Because the maz were couples. They were always couples. A sexual partnership, heterosexual or homosexual, monogamous, lifelong. More than a lifelong, for if widowed they never remarried” (Le Guin, 2000:112). The nature of their sexuality is recognised, it is the shifting uncertainty of whether the minority will be accepted by the new regime that is always of concern to them.

Sutty's race is further complicated when she agrees to go to Aka. On earth she is part of a community, and compares this world to the one she now finds herself in. Her memories focus on two groups: her family with specific references to the Indian community and a relationship she had with a Chinese lover, and the hilarity of the incongruity that the two cultures share. On Aka she is a token alien, imaged as 'Other', made to feel different and completely alienated from the culture. She is so heavily watched and shown only what the Corporation deem safe for her to see that she never truly can be the anthropologist that she wishes to be, exploring and sharing and moving towards understanding the 'Other' that she is observing.

Sutty on Aka represents the 'universal minority'. She has to negotiate her identity in Akan society and at the same time negotiate the memories of what she called 'home'. When she is eventually granted leave by the Corporation to pursue a study of a culture on the outskirts of Aka, which has not had as much influence by the Corporation, she is welcomed into another society, the maz, that does not image her as different. They know no better, as they are a minority themselves and therefore more tolerant. If they were not tolerant they would not respond as a maz child does when he first meets Sutty: "[H]e accepted with aplomb the fact that an Observer of the Ekumen, an alien whom he could have expected to see only as an electronic image sent from the capital, was living in his house. Not a trace of the xenophobia she had diagnosed in the disagreeable man [an agent of the Corporation State] on the boat" (Le Guin, 2000:50).

It is on the outskirts that she is able to come into contact with the maz, for this is the space that has been relegated to them as a group that remains on the outskirts of power away from the centre the Corporation State. The maz are a group of Akans who possess a special gift linked to the core of pre-Corporation identity. The telling, not a

religion or a way of life, was an exchange of the oral tradition that involved fable, tale and history but with a distinct difference. There were no morals to the story. The language of pre-Corporation State was utopian for no hierarchy existed. When addressing others a special term was used to imply not only equality but a sense of community: "These teachers of the old language and the old way, the 'educated people' were called maz. Yoz was a term indicating respectful equality; maz as an address indicated increased respect"(Le Guin, 2000: 108). Even though these people were 'educated', and this meant a difference had been introduced, it did not mean that they found themselves to be superior to the yoz. The system of the telling implied a transaction, "If telling was the skill of the maz, listening was the skill of the yoz. As they all liked to remark, neither one was any use without the other" (Le Guin, 2000:123). This balance of power meant the society had a need for existing even with those that had increased respect, according to the minority model this is contradictory for there cannot be a 'difference' without a power imbalance. However, the best explanation would be that power was not used for purposes of control. Later in the history of the maz, the "boss maz" destroy the balance of power introducing the language of difference, because they used power for their gain. Through this example it can be seen that the respect of the maz was not a system of power that was used to control the yoz.

This minority, the maz and yoz (people of the telling), have now found themselves torn between two systems. They too are the 'universal minority', the people of the telling, for they have to constantly negotiate with the 'universal majority', the Corporation State. The Corporation State has banned all books that have come from the telling in order to silence the language that teaches freethinking within the community. By burning libraries, creating dissidents of those that tell stories and by using language as the weapon of absolute control the Corporation State tries to

completely silence and eradicate the telling. However, as could be understood from world history, this is impossible. No minority is ever completely eradicated, silenced or destroyed, for they all have the ability to survive and negotiate their way out of the situation that they find themselves in. Even if it remains only in their history through some means, in this case the oral tradition.

The Akan society is a homogenous one with no difference, in the conventional sense of difference explored in identity politics. Yet to image anything as 'Other' is to create difference. The maz, personified as the image of the pre-Corporation State, an outlawed group, are no longer able to practice, and therefore they become 'Other'. Suttu is respectful of the way that the society of the maz have removed hierarchy and replaced it with respect, as can be seen in the following example: "It was a simple fact, but one remarkably difficult for the Terran mind to comprehend. No aliens. No others, in the deadly sense otherness that existed on Terra, the implacable division between tribes, arbitrary and impassable borders, the ethnic hatreds cherished over centuries and millennia" (Le Guin, 2000:106). The fundamental signifier of the maz is the ability to tell a story. The fundamental signifier of the Corporation State is totalitarian worship and not thinking independently. Thus, the two create an 'us' and 'them'. Although the Corporation State is able to change language hierarchy, they remove the pleasantries of the language in that there are no words like thank-you or please. Language is replaced with a certain sterility removing previous modes of communication.

The fundamental idea of the 'universal majority' and the 'universal minority' can be assessed in relation to the changing status of the maz in *The Telling*. A small group of maz were in power before the Corporation State and they were called "boss maz,"

and lost power after corruption became too great:<sup>54</sup> “In Dovza the maz were oppressors of the poor... They refused to let people have the new justice, the new learning—“ (Le Guin, 2000:230). The Corporation State outlawed the telling because it too closely resembled a religion. The maz were given power, collected taxes and generally benefited from their positions. By losing status and moving from being the ‘ruling minority’ to that of being the ‘universal minority’, all pretences of power relations changed and the maz no longer had the power to dominate, rendering them subject to domination. When the Corporation State took over power they did not reverse the ‘Othering’ process and thus stop the spiral of oppression, instead they tried to jump immediately to Step One, believing that a utopia would exist. However, this is not the case, as the maz continue to live and, although they don’t plan to overthrow the regime, power was unequal and a new ‘us’ and ‘them’ was created. This is so much so, that the Corporation State tried to completely rewrite their existence.

All liberation for a minority group is utopian, because it is the movement towards realizing something better. As has been stated in this work, utopia is relevant, and can be better understood as a movement towards a working model. But this "working" model must, indeed work. The universal majority wants power. They want to control, and they ignore the fundamentals of human nature and human need. For the ‘universal majority’, it is a quest to keep power and do so completely. And, if the universal minority adopts this ethos, they will only become the new universal majority in a spiral of oppression. One only has to look to the slogans of Orwell in *Animal Farm* (1945) to see this: “ALL ANIMALS ARE EQUAL. BUT SOME ANIMALS ARE MORE EQUAL THAN

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<sup>54</sup> This was when the maz were also considered barbarians and not fit to do anything other than fight with each other and other groups. See *The Telling* Pg. 179. Power had corrupted them and hierarchies existed within the society, leading to groups becoming disempowered, and reduced to the status of ‘universal minority’.

OTHERS” (Orwell, 1970:114). Power creates greed and greed topples a regime. People are patient for a while, waiting for the change that has been promised and when it does not come they replace the regime with a new one. Although the regime changes, little else does. Hitler was able to dominate Germany for the same reasons that the Unists described in *The Telling* were able to dominate Terra (Earth). Suttly is able to realize this when she summarizes the reasons that the Unists were given power: “You see, my people, I mean all of us on Earth, had done a lot of damage to our world, fought over it, used it up, wasted it. There’d been plagues, famines, misery for so long. People wanted comfort and help. They wanted to believe they were doing something right. I guess if they joined the Unists, they could believe everything they did was right” (Le Guin, 2000:229). The Unists were eventually ousted once they did not make any changes and their power had corrupted them “absolutely.”<sup>55</sup> Thus the maz were “[b]ewildered by foreign concepts, by the very concept of foreignness, they had let the ideologues of Dovza dominate and impoverish them. As the ideologues of Communocapitalism in the twentieth century, and the zealots of Unism in her own century, had dominated and impoverished the Earth” (Le Guin, 2000.120).

It is at the end of the novel that the cycle looks to change again on Aka. The maz wish to negotiate a new space for themselves and begin a dialogue that can reduce the extremities of power that are in effect in the Corporation State. The Monitor, an official that has been following Suttly to make sure that she does no wrong (meet with dissident maz), follows Suttly to the hidden libraries of the maz. The vehicle he is transported in crashes into the mountain, leaving him vulnerable. Through dialogues with Suttly and the maz he realises that his fascist state is not the truth that he sought,

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<sup>55</sup>“Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely”. (Acton, 1887). Available from (<http://phrases.shu.ac.uk/meanings/22900.html>). (Accessed 12 March 2002).

and finds himself estranged from his belief systems. As he was unauthorised by the state to follow Suttu and upon return would face a tribunal, his only choice is to live as a prisoner of the maz, for he knows the location of the hidden libraries of the maz. Therefore, he commits suicide and frees himself from the spiral of oppression. It is this sacrifice for the state, through his realization of what he has done, that makes Suttu want to negotiate with the very core of the Corporation State. She knows that because the Monitor was able to understand their plight, and he was a fanatic member of the core, then the rest of the Corporation State will also understand and will want to negotiate. This causes Suttu to say, "I can carry that message... Though bigots have small ears" (Le Guin, 2000:217), aware that the negotiation will be a complex matter.

Suttu represents the possibility of negotiation for, as an outsider, she will be able to mediate between the two groups, the maz and the Corporation State. Through this mediation a language of negotiation creates a new space and could begin the reverse of the Four-step Model. It is through Suttu's message, the message of understanding, and the message of freedom that the possibility of change occurs. Suttu represents and in turn becomes the voice of the 'universal minority'.

This analysis of *The Telling* reflects the cyclical nature of oppression set out in the descriptions of the 'universal majority' and the 'universal minority'. Possibility thus becomes the mode of utopia and the creation of a better-negotiated future. Le Guin ends her novel at this point. For the future is left at the beginning of a new route, with the hope that this opportunity will be the new discourse of utopian thinking.

This chapter has explored minority and majority issues in the original utopian text, *Utopia*, as well as looked at the ways in which negotiation with dominant structures is impossible if minority groups ghettoize themselves from a negotiation structure. The case study of *The Telling* has shown how science fiction writing is able to transcend the boundaries of normal fiction by using multiple histories and realities to highlight the cycles of oppression evident in contemporary society. In the next section race and sexuality are explored in recent science fiction and other texts that fall into alternative texts, which offer negotiation with a dominant discourse, now that key concepts have been defined.

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## **Chapter Three**

### **Race/Sexuality**

**Utopia negates the contradictions in a social system by forging visions of what is not yet realized either in theory or practice. In generating figures of hope, utopia contributes to the open space of opposition (Moylan, 1986:1-2).**

Race and sexuality are both criteria for placing groups into the role of 'universal minority'. People of alternative sexualities and different races face homophobia and racism from the language of difference created by the 'universal majority', and the 'othering' process of the Four-step Model. Effective modes of negotiation have not always been available and thus have left these groups struggling with identity and the acquisition of rights. This chapter explores the modes of negotiation that these two groups use, as well as the ways in which the universal majority uses methods to disempower the 'Other'.

As a counterforce to this disempowerment, Darko Suvin's novum offers the possibility of changed or altered realities in which power systems have been transformed. Science fiction may not exist in reality, but writers identify contemporary problems and re-write alternative realities where the possibility of improvement is highlighted. People of alternative races to white and alternative sexuality to hetero- find their identities compromised. As in More's case they image the better or the perfect utopia. It would be an impossible task to create a utopia for all groups, but it is possible to identify that which is oppressive and create systems to change the repression. Science fiction acts as the illuminating agent of contrast between the speculative world where minority groups have realised equality and the contemporary world of inequality.

There are many reasons why the areas of race and sexuality are as widely explored within utopian fiction as they are. As mentioned in the Introduction, it is the possibility of something better, a space where alterity is no longer defined as a negative signifier, that allows writers incorporating these elements into their work to be agents of change.

The period from the 1950's to the present has culminated in the realisation of rights for members of minority groups. These have not always been easily sustainable outcomes, but have relied on activism and mission statements that define this cause. The cause has tried to create a language that will possibly negotiate with the dominant discourse or develop a proposed model of negotiation. Due to the inability to agree on the terms of identity the cause of identity and equality have been largely fragmented, alienating the minority further.

This chapter will outline some theoretical background on these two groups and offer some literary works as examples of potential utopian visions they may have. By looking to the books classified as 'critical utopias', namely science fiction works from the 70's to now, a plenteous canon of minority writing can be explored. Race and sexuality are recurring issues in these works, and there is a notable tendency towards acceptance of these two minorities. Race and Sexuality are two very contrasting and unique signifiers in identity politics. It would be implausible to try and assimilate the nature of the struggle of both identity signifiers into one definition or cause. Thus, this chapter will look at the ways in which these signifiers are presented or represented within the discourse that offers the "possibility" that Moylan reflects on for each group.

## Race

### **Race and Afrofuturism**

People from races other than Caucasian have tended to suffer, for example illegal Hispanic workers or legal but marginalized Hispanics and people of Asian descent (Middle Eastern and Oriental) in America, due to the nature of American society, in which Caucasians have a monopolization of superiority. The assumption that Caucasians are in fact the 'universal majority' would be a fair one. Patrick Parrinder, in his introduction to *Learning from Other Worlds* (2001), argues that the imaging of anything other than European is on one hand European racism towards other races, but also Europeans' guilt for their "reflexive self-knowledge about imperialism"(2000:12-13). The 'universal majority', Caucasians, have enjoyed the same space within science fiction writing.

The utopian agency discussed in this section reflects the racial needs of the Afro-American, black, identity and the Hispanic identity. The dual/nostalgic/futuristic nature of Afrofuturism (based on the long history of African Americans as the paradigmatic minority) and the labour issues and arbitrary grouping based on language faced by Hispanics are seen as unique elements of the language of difference and are addressed through utopian agency.

In order to understand the politics of race in science fiction writing, one needs to analyse how racial groups are imaged. Race and identity politics have always been referenced into the category of privileged and 'Other'. The privileged have tended to be

the white economically able. They could thus be titled the 'universal majority' who exploited the 'Other'; those who are non-white. A hierarchy exists within race, with some groups feeling more empowered than others.

Adam Roberts, in his work *Science Fiction* (2000), identifies science fiction as having come from the "Age of Empires" (65), one in which 'Same' and 'Other' are offered certain signifiers. 'Same' is "male, white, Western, and associated with military power and technology" (66). This is in contrast to 'Other' which is given multiple identities, "history has given us the Other as Jew, as black, as Arab, as East Asian ('the Yellow Peril'), and as Woman" (66).

From this definition of difference it seems that in his chapter dedicated to race there would be some of the discussions of 'Other' mentioned. However, Roberts tends to focus his chapter Race as being mostly a black construction, concerned primarily with black issues.<sup>56</sup> Roberts's argument is that the United States has been the place from which black science fiction writing is produced, and therefore it would be fitting to place blackness and race into the same category.

This is a fair assumption that science fiction has come mostly from America. It is interesting to note that no science fiction for the purposes of subversion came from South Africa, a place where the very nature of 'Otherness' for someone of colour was real. This has been a shared history with America and therefore it would seem apt that subversive writing would have come from South Africa. But then as Roberts has noted science fiction writing has largely come from America. Currently there is only one

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<sup>56</sup> There are some references to other race groups, Japanese, Native Americans and Hispanics (2000:131), but the central discussion is on 'blackness'

English writing South African science fiction writer who has gained prominence, Dave Freer. His works however do not deal with race. Claude Nunes is another author who wrote science fiction in the past. There are no science fiction writers that the Science Fiction South Africa organisation are able to identify, who deal with race specifically as a means of overcoming apartheid or of dealing with blackness in South Africa.

The two works that are closest to alternative realities are *The Life and Times of Michael K* by J.M. Coetzee and *July's People* by Nadine Gordimer. Both works explore an alternative future in which a civil war ravages South Africa during the Apartheid government's control of South Africa as a result of Apartheid's repression. In Coetzee's work the protagonist Michael K tries to take his mother into a rural area to escape the war. Gordimer's work is different in that it deals with a white family who are protected by their domestic servant July, in an informal settlement. Due to the speculative nature of these works, they could be considered science fiction, but Coetzee and Gordimer are not considered science fiction writers. This lack of writing would be an interesting study in the future for scholars.

Roberts states at the beginning of the chapter that he intends to look at the "coding" of blackness (2000:119) and the way in which it has been demonized in science fiction writing. One cannot criticize the focus of the work, with the premise that Roberts has set up, but his work is intended to be a discussion of science fiction as he states in chapter one, the examples of race he uses when defining science fiction, novum and cognitive estrangement are all to do with black science fiction (2000:5,18,25-26) and the multiple 'Other' that Roberts defines are not fully discussed in this chapter.

Roberts argues that the creation of science fiction and blackness is due to the civil rights movements of the 60s, and then the intense identity politics of the 70s rising into further racial tensions in the 80s and early 90s that has produced an American phenomenon of the alien being synonymous with blacks. He argues that writers like Samuel Delany, *Trouble on Triton* (1976), and Octavia E. Butler, *Kindred* (1979), have responded and tried to re-image and re-empower black people in science fiction writing. In *Kindred*, racism towards people of colour exists, and it does so in the present as well as the past alternative realities. Dana, the African-American protagonist, is transported back through time travel to the slave era of the American South. In this time frame she is subjected to direct forms of oppression. However, in the contemporary society, where blackness is not 'Other' Dana is not a slave. Thus, it is the comparison of slave contrasted to free woman that indicates that African-Americans are closer to utopia than before, but by no means is their utopia realised.

It would have been beneficial to Roberts work to include the 'Other' that he has identified as being in contrast to the 'Same', for these works do exist. Science fiction writing (Haldeman, 2000; Piercy, 1990; Russell, 1996 and 1998) has offered not only black people a space from which to react but also offered a similar space to other groups like Hispanics. More recently it has given people of Middle-Eastern descent the opportunity to react to the world in which they live (Robinson, 2002)<sup>57</sup>.

In this chapter on race it would be appropriate to indicate that there lies a possibility of incongruity in discussing 'identity politics' for a minority group, when certain authors are writing from outside of their 'identity politics'. Piercy, Haldeman,

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<sup>57</sup> This work was published after Roberts work and is cited only to show that texts on Orientalism and race do exist.

Russell and Robinson are whites writing about the politics of people of colour. These writers are however not placed in opposition to those of colour writing in the same genre like Samuel Delany or Octavia Butler, for science fiction as a genre is already subversive, and when reading a science fiction text the novum offers multiple possibilities. This is not however meant to be a debate about authenticity of the author; in each case analysed the issues in the texts are reflective of some minorities' issues.

Roberts comments that aliens in pulp fiction movies have always been imaged as sharing characteristics with people of African descent; thus Africans would be the 'universal minority', for they would be the target of racism from Europeans as described by Parrinder. According to Roberts's study, people of African descent are actively negotiating their image, due to their having been imaged as the alien and their wish to redress this negative stereotype. As it was given that Caucasians were the group with power and that blacks were disempowered, people of African descent needed to find a way to negotiate with the 'universal majority', and re-image themselves out of the definition of black=aliens and black='universal minority'. Taking Roberts's idea one step beyond a single-race alien signifier and into a multiple-race signifier is thus possible using Parrinder's observation that all races other than Caucasian are subjected to racism.

The politics of race are changing rapidly within the structures of utopia and science fiction writing. Most importantly is the emergence of new voices from within race. Science fiction has been a platform from which African-American science fiction writers have found a way to realise their utopias. Samuel Delany author of *Trouble on Triton* (1976) and *Dhalgren* (1974), and Octavia E. Butler, author of *Kindred*, are examples of the voices that have emerged from the 70s. African- American identity has been shaped

over the last 50 years, heightened by its incorporation within the science fiction and fantasy genre.

Butler and Delany, both of African descent, have created these worlds of possibility, where race is no longer the focus of the book in the conventional sense of 'black equals oppressed' and 'without opportunity'. The speculative nature of science fiction is the core of the subversion. For example, in Butler's work *Kindred*, it is not space or aliens that are the thesis of oppression, but the novum is the travel in this world from the 70s to the slave era of the United States. The verisimilitude of *Kindred* to reality is what makes it subversive. In the world of slaves, the protagonist Dana is forced to negotiate with oppression, to come from the 70s where she was working, independent and most importantly free, and to move into a world where she loses all of this. That is the nature of her journey towards utopia. To look at the book the utopian possibilities lie in the 70s, a time in which African-American rights were not necessarily at their best, but were much better than the world of slavery in which Dana finds herself.

The spaces of the past are by no means pleasant, as in the case of slavery in the United States, but compared to the present where the protagonist is free, educated and has some basic human rights, they are vastly different. In a sense, the utopian element comes in the way the female protagonist is able to change the future, or in this case restore the future to its natural equilibrium. The change is simply re-imagining what the future holds. Impacting on the present in such a way that will allow some kind of change no matter how small it is, and will be fully realised in the future. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., never saw his dream come true, but his impact will never be forgotten. Rights of African Americans are that much closer to utopia when compared to the history of some fifty years ago.

In recent science fiction work the movement is now towards Hispanic identity. This is the case when looking at three prominent science fiction works, *The Sparrow* (1996) by Mary Doria Russell, *The Coming* (2000) by Joe Haldeman and *Woman on the Edge of Time* by Marge Piercy.<sup>58</sup> *Trouble on Triton*, by Samuel Delany, established a discourse for other writers to explore race in their work. Exploring the Hispanic identity and place within the hierarchy of minority, believed to be even lower than African-American, is one such response. Hispanics, as will be argued, find themselves under African-Americans, for, in many cases they are illegal workers and thus subject to inequality.

Roberts has supplied the base for race studies and science fiction writing, for in his work he states, "in societies such as ours where Otherness is often demonized, SF can pierce the constraints of this ideology by circumventing the conventions of traditional fiction"(2000:30). Using this idea of the demonized 'Other', and not using it for 'blackness' but rather Hispanic identity is also possible. Hispanic groups in America face constant harassment and discrimination. What makes Hispanic oppression different from African-American discrimination lies in the legality of their status as Americans. The Hispanics that have come to work illegally in the United States have rights which are severely limited as compared to African-Americans living under the law.<sup>59</sup> But the fact that black people have reached the pinnacle of their equality consciousness, as has

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<sup>58</sup> Chapter Four deals with these authors in more detail.

<sup>59</sup> This does not mean that African-Americans do not suffer racism, but rather the nature of hierarchy of power would surmise that those without legal status would be subject to more racism, because by not having rights by which to protect themselves, they are subjected to exploitation and they are viewed as 'Other'.

been described through John Akomfrah's *The Last Angel of History*<sup>60</sup> (1996), offers other racial groups the possibility of a similar opportunity.

Afrofuturism, of which *The Last Angel of History* is a part, can be labeled as the manifesto for a minority's journey towards utopia. It encompasses a manifesto that is conscious of the need to no longer negotiate an identity within the system of power, but to re-empower a racial group by moving beyond definition and into action. Roberts hints at the idea of Afrofuturism in his work *Science Fiction*, "George Clinton and Funkadelic (for instance) employ the vocabulary of space travel and the 'mothership' as a means of articulating racial difference in a positive manner; and more recently Tricky and Goldie have matched the futuristic timbre of their techno music with the iconography of SF" (2000:127).

Afrofuturism is a utopian construction that transcends all barriers that have contained the advancement of racial identity. One of the definitions of Afrofuturism is:

The Afrofuturism Zone is a place where the issues that have come to be defined as core aspects of African American ethnicity in its unfolding in the American disappeared, replaced by a zone of electro-magnetic interactions- simulations, coded exchanges of ideology... legacies of displacement, translated into the binary space between the algorithms electromodernity together. Urban culture, transitory flows of identity along the lines of flight, demarcated by the streets, the lights, the sounds, the representations, hold it all together.<sup>61</sup>

This definition shows that race and utopia are perfect matches with each other because of the ability to image a workable space free from identity politics. Identity politics have limited the advancement of racial identity, sexuality, and feminism because of its nature

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<sup>60</sup> *The Last Angel of History* is an example of Afrofuturism where technology enables a space of the future in which utopia is realized. Utopian agency and the realization of Afrofuturism are therefore intrinsically linked.

to fragment the identity of a person, thus socializing people into believing that they are fractured and unable to transcend identity.

Afrofuturism can be described as the agency of negotiation for people of African descent. Afrofuturism does not rely on a single doctrine but is made of many manifestos. Three key theorists in this manifesto are Rammellzee, Siphon Seepe and Paul Miller, better known as “DJ Spooky that Subliminal Kid”.<sup>62</sup> Each theorist’s definition of what Afrofuturism could be is specific to the area, which they are associated with, Art, Education and Music respectively.

“Rammellzee is a New York artist who makes art that formalizes an armored, militaristic approach to life. His work attacks the use of written letters, numbers, even musical notes and their power on culture and society.”<sup>63</sup> Rammellzee creates a manifesto very difficult to understand, by neophyte definition, filled with vivid imagery and reading more as a rant than as a manifesto. What can be referenced as an Afrofuturism concept is the ‘attack’ on the conventional ways of manufacturing knowledge as Rammellzee does in the expectancy of breaking down power in culture and society as related to these agents of manufactured knowledge. It is through the remaining two manifestos that an easier understanding of Afrofuturism can be reached. Unlike the science fiction and race that Roberts references the zone of Afrofuturism is not situated in any space, country or culture, but includes influences from around the world.

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<sup>61</sup> Miller, P. (n.d.) “*Afrofuturism: A Statement of Intentions—Outside In, Inside Out.*” Available at: <http://www.afrofuturism.net/text/Manifestos/Miller01.html> (Accessed 13 June 2002).

<sup>62</sup> These three authors have written manifestos that have been published on the Afrofuturism web site at [www.afrofuturism.net](http://www.afrofuturism.net). Although not claiming to be the only contributors to the study of Afrofuturism, on this web site and through the works that are cited in film, literature and other sources, a working meaning can be made from their definitions.

Professor Sipho Seepe, from South Africa's Vista University, is cited as being a founding member within the manifesto, specifically for his role in the "Africanisation of knowledge." As quoted in an article from *Education Correspondent Africa*, Seepe describes his task as being one in which, "[t]he African identity of the institution should be located in the treatment of African issues not as a by product but by moving African issues in the academic, social, political, and economical milieu from the periphery to the centre."<sup>64</sup> Seepe, as an Afro-futurist progenitor, is described as someone with, "[h]is own particular research and academic interests [in which he explores] the cultural, social, political dimensions of mathematics, science education. His other pet subject is investigating the employment of African languages for teaching mathematics and science, and he says his new role affords him the chance to put his theories into practice."<sup>65</sup>

The third Afrofuturist founder is Paul Miller, who has published three essays on Afrofuturism, each of them offering a new dimension into the identity and purpose of Afrofuturism. Two of the essays argue what Afrofuturism defines itself as, one from a historical perspective and the other from working towards a definition. Miller identifies the historical influences of Afrofuturism as coming from the musician Sun Ra. For Miller, Sun Ra created the opportunity for a future utopia through a realisation that history and the future utopia are in fact directly linked through the digital age: "His situation was a metaphor, and he became a way for people to analyze their situations and create

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<sup>63</sup>Crown Point Press "Rammellzee" (n.d.) Available from: <http://www.crownpoint.com/artists/rammellzee> (Accessed 13 June 2003).

<sup>64</sup>Mecoamere, V. (1999). "The Africanisation of Knowledge" Available from: <http://www.afrofuturism.net/text/Manifestos/Sipho.html> (Accessed 13 June 2002).

<sup>65</sup>Ibid.

alternate myths, so that they could truly break down the situations they were inhabiting”<sup>66</sup>

The breaking down of the situations is the key concern for Afrofuturists as it creates a future where Africans are not imaged as victims, but liberated.

Miller further elaborates:

There is a kind of catharsis in living through the past as a kind of reflection site for future permutations in african identity—in the present....Is that the kind of non-linear type of psychological engagement that seems to be a part and parcel of african-american culture has become a visual trope... it's a stream of consciousness, but what shapes it is the current. Akomfrah speaks about some of his work as a research into how people continuously explore the wounds of the past as a kind of loop circuit or a kind of transsubstantiation; 'I think necrophilia is at the heart of black film making. Not in a literal sense but in a post-modern sense in which people are invoking figures'... There is a level of morbidity, which I think people have to realise in the quest for identity. Identities are a morbid business.<sup>67</sup>

Miller reiterates that African American ethnicity has disappeared. This ethnicity is replaced with urban culture, relocated out of theory and into the city. This is represented through the ordinary. The theory becomes sense based and the senses create representations which “hold it all together.” The ethnicity does not claim a victim status but rather reinvents itself as electro-magnetic interactions out of the definition of the ‘universal majority’. This idea is explored in *Last Angel of History*, where the data thief is able to transport himself through the discourse of electromodernity and Afrofuturism.

Nalo Hopkinson, a speculative fiction writer referenced as a contributor within the Afrofuturist discourse, comments that Akomfrah’s *Last Angel of History* indicates that:

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<sup>66</sup> Miller, P. (n.d.) “*Quantum Consciousness*” Available at: <http://www.afrofuturism.net/text/Manifestos/Miller02.htm> (Accessed 13 June 2002).

<sup>67</sup> Miller, P. (n.d.) “living through the past as a kind of reflection site for future permutations.” Available at : <http://www.afrofuturism.net/text/Manifestos/Miller03.html> (Accessed 13 June 2002).

“African artistic expressions of the future happen largely in media other than text.”<sup>68</sup> It is the expressions not limited to written text that allows for the spreading of the Afrofuturist manifesto. However, it is not only in music, but also in the oral tradition or other mediums of expression that the future is imagined. Akomfrah references Dr. Bernard A Harris Jr., the first African-American in space as a kind of Afrofuturist role model. Moving beyond the boundaries of physics and defying gravity by going into space, Harris subverts the alien suggested by Roberts from alien (attacker) to explorer. It is through an offering of a practical example of re-empowerment displacing the African American from the alien and redefining the alterity of African-Americans.

The morbidity of identity as Akomfrah, director of *The Last Angel of History* points out is the ability to be lost in a single identity, one that has been imaged as negative and can never be liberated because the very nature of the hierarchy within minorities has left it placed as always being an alterity to whiteness, perceived at the top of this hierarchy. Akomfrah is not asking that the past be completely ignored, but embraced and redefined so that the future does not have to dwell on the oppression of the past but the possibility of the future.

The thesis behind the film as described by a reviewer at a French film festival referenced it as the way to “unearth black culture’s speculations about the future. Piece together these speculations and you will find the secret of the Mothership Connection- the black secret technology, which will unlock your future.” The clue to the Mothership Connection comes in the phrase “the boundary between science fiction and social reality

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<sup>68</sup>Afrofuturism (n.d.) “Films, Videos and Software” Available at: <http://www.afrofuturism.net/text/film.html> (Accessed 13 June 2002).

is an optical illusion”<sup>69</sup> It is this optical illusion that is the realm of possibility for change, for if all that stops oppression is an optical illusion then African-American empowerment is much closer than is thought.

Globally people of African descent are taking this concept of Afrofuturism, and redefining what it means to be black. The last fifty years have been years of struggle for identity, and struggles for civil liberty. Now that people of African descent are more comfortable with the space that they inhabit, the focus has shifted from simply excusing themselves and imaging themselves as being something different to that of Caucasian, and moved towards a space where utopia is Afrofuturism, a black space.

Although Roberts may be sympathetic in noting that aliens in science fiction have been associated with black people, the writers and authors of science fiction writing have found ways to negotiate out of the state of the ‘victim’ to the state of the empowered. In the ideologies of Afrofuturism the world inhabited by people of colour is a positive and empowered one, one clearly in which the ‘Othering’ process described in the four step model has been reversed. Afrofuturism offers a rewriting of the language of difference for it uses multiple techniques to write a language specifically for race and blackness in this case. As Seepe has mentioned it is by creating knowledge and sharing knowledge created by the minority group that creates the utopian agency.

This change is evident in new black writers like Nalo Hopkinson. In Hopkinson’s work, *Brown Girl in the Ring* (1998), she no longer focuses on Afro-Canadian disempowerment, but a strange surreptitious voodoo world, where society and the core

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<sup>69</sup> This is referenced in the following website, and makes reference to the Data Thief, the Afrofuturist character. Centre Pompidou (n.d.) “*The Last Angel of History*.” Available at:

of power have been overthrown. The 'universal majority' in this case are large states at war. The 'universal majority' is no longer based within power or hierarchical structures but based within survival tactics. Hopkinson's interest in feminist issues as well as an Afrofuturist model gives power and knowledge to a band of women, who are in synch with the spirits and powers of voodoo. Their ability to heal and survive the impetuosity of their surroundings is a key concern of Afrofuturism. Hopkinson does not embrace a utopia, for *Brown Girl in the Ring* would definitely fit within the definition of dystopian literature. Yet this too is one way that Afrofuturists have negotiated their space; one that does not apologise for its roots or previous disadvantages, but one that images the future of possibility.

Afrofuturism is thus a culmination and heightened consciousness of people of African descent. Focus no longer lies on the disempowered but on re-empowerment; this is a practical means for a 'universal minority' to negotiate with the 'universal majority', and realize their utopia by reversing the 'Othering' process.

### **The new 'universal minority'**

As has been concluded, African American science fiction writing has reached a level of consciousness, which transcends the boundaries of oppression. Now the latest work to emerge in terms of race relations in science fiction writing is Hispanic identity. Hispanics form the new group that are trying to come to terms with their identity.

A definition of someone who is Hispanic is best expressed in Geoffrey Fox's *Hispanic Nation*: "people from more than twenty Spanish speaking countries and

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[http://www2.centrepompidou.fr/beware/eng\\_homens/moth.html](http://www2.centrepompidou.fr/beware/eng_homens/moth.html) (Accessed 13 June 2002).

hundreds of regions that previously had little contact end up crowded into the same neighborhoods and begin creating communities based on their shared language and shared new experiences in this country” (1996:5). Language has become the signifier of identity and the mode by and from which all these groups are able to feel secure within their identity. The second signifier is ‘Other’, which in this case could be defined as within a short distance from the border of America, but not American.

This is no different from the African-American identity, and the way in which African-American has been shaped. For example, although English is the language adopted by the African-Americans through force, it was something that was common to all groups within African Americans. Likewise, though Hispanics were never forced to speak Spanish, it was a common signifier, therefore language is a commonality. “The people lumped together as Hispanics start out with two things in common: their Spanish language heritage and the fact that they are lumped together as Hispanics” (Fox, 1996:178-179). Slaves that had been brought from Africa spoke different languages and came from different tribes, and thus were bonded together with language and their slavery. After the abolishment of slavery, they found themselves also “crowded into the same neighborhoods.” Segregation laws lifted in the 50s meant that the community was only then able to start struggling with an identity, culminating in Afrofuturism.

Joe Haldeman’s work, *The Coming* (2000), pre-indicates a possibility for a redefined Hispanic identity. On one level, it is a utopian agent for Hispanics similar to the Afrofuturist agency used by African-Americans. *The Coming* is the beginning of the text that will later create the utopian bridge towards ‘Hispanic futurism.’

With any group, the politics of naming is amongst the key concerns at the beginning of the struggle. Naming, re-naming, or more importantly redefining a word is the focus of the movement. Fox notes “[t]he clearest instance of a defiant, intentionally insolent self-naming by Hispanics was the adoption by some young Mexican-Americans twenty five years ago of the slang word *chicano* when other Mexican-Americans considered it offensive or vulgar” (1996:12-13). Connie, the protagonist in *Woman on the Edge of Time*, does the same thing when asserting herself within the culture of America: “Herself with a police record and a psychiatric record, a fat Chicana aged thirty-seven without a man.”(Piercy, 1990:22) What makes this significant is that identity for Hispanics is largely to do with language, and language, tied together with race (South American) is what is seen as the signifiers of ‘Other’. The reversing process therefore needs to address language in order for utopian agency to be realized. In the 70s the word Chicano still had a negative meaning. When labeling herself with all the possible negative images, Connie distinctly places this word as a clear part of her identity, an identity created by the standards she is discriminated by. Thus by adopting a more affirmative word Hispanic, whose origins lie in the definition “of Spain” (Fox, 1996:12), all the negative stereotypes are broken down. Using the word Chicano in contemporary times would not imply the same meaning as the language of hate speech. Chicano has been re-empowered by the Mexican-Americans using it themselves, and removing the power given to the word when used in a discriminatory way.

*Woman on the Edge of Time* offers other examples of the Hispanic struggle, which can be found at the beginnings of the Hispanic identity struggle. Connie longs for Mexican food (Piercy, 1990:21) when she compares it to Puerto Rican food. Connie in many ways loathes being placed into this definition of what it is to be Hispanic. She longs to forge out a Mexican-American identity, but is aware of the identity politics of the

'universal majority'. She is completely removed from her culture and forced to adopt a new Hispanic culture, which has been mentioned before as coming only from her language and origin in one of the "Spanish speaking countries". It is ironic that the only food that Connie is able to afford to eat is Chinese, as it is the cheapest. Her experience as a member of society displaced by the 'universal majority' of white America, leaves her at the quietus of multiple systems; public welfare being an operative one.

Public law gives another, even clearer example of how the Hispanic identity has come to be associated with the universal minority, specifically California's Proposition 187, passed in November, 1994. As Fox notes, the "S.O.S. or Proposition 187, was approved, 59 percent to 41 percent, by Californian voters in November 1994. It is intended to deny undocumented immigrants any form of Californian public welfare, including nonemergency medical and prenatal care and public schooling" (1996:19). A group's not having the benefits or opportunities that others have means that oppression continues within that community. Thus, Proposition 187, becomes the theoretical signifier of 'Otherness', as basic rights are denied to the "undocumented immigrants", largely Hispanics.

A similar problem to the one felt by Connie is the multiple identities found under the definition of Hispanic when reflecting a misunderstanding of an American census question, "[m]any, probably most, Anglo-Americans understand 'Hispanic' as a synonym for 'Spanish speaking', but the census category is about 'origin or descent', not current language use, and it includes many people who speak mostly or exclusively English" (Fox, 1996:32). Caucasians and others have created a misnomer about the definition of what being Hispanic is, and thus a culture has been created in which people respond and create legislation not knowing the core group they are legislating against. The

stereotypes of Hispanics are, “To the most paranoid Americans... Hispanics are imagined as a combination of these things: dark-skinned, foreign in speech and manner, and mostly unable or unwilling to adapt to U.S. laws, culture, and norms of hygiene” (Fox, 1996:33). As has been mentioned, the ‘Other’ are from across America’s borders. They are completely un-American, as Fox’s notes, completely ‘Other’.

As such, fictional spaces are the only space allowed by the majority where Hispanics can begin to renegotiate their identity, a process which is only now beginning to take place. Mary Doria Russell’s books, *The Sparrow* (1996) and *Children of God* (1998), use multiple Hispanic protagonists. Russell admits that she did not intend to highlight any social issues within the Hispanic community and that any such focus would be incidental.<sup>70</sup> Russell’s intention of using Hispanics was “because I knew that the protagonist was going to keep his secrets until the end of the book. There is still a considerable element of machismo in Puerto Rican society, and I don’t expect that to change in the next 30 years, so it made sense to have the main character be a Latino”. Her protagonist Emilio Sandoz and his identity were based around a strong machismo.

The activism found in Piercy’s work in the 70s is replaced with issues of identity politics and contemporary social problems in Russell’s work, but they are no longer the primary focus of Hispanic identity. The role of Sofia, another Hispanic character, is also indirectly linked to issues of slavery that some undocumented immigrants face. In order to survive, they are willing to opt for unreasonable working hours. To them this is a system, which has improved. The Hispanics are the one group of Thomas More’s slaves in *Utopia*, the group that voluntarily place themselves into slavery for a better life.

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<sup>70</sup> Mary Doria Russell ([MDRSparrow@aol.com](mailto:MDRSparrow@aol.com)). (14 November 2000). *Utopia*. E-mail to Jason le Grange. ([jasonleg@chollian.net](mailto:jasonleg@chollian.net)).

The Hispanics return with money to their countries eventually allowing themselves a better life. However, while they are in America, they are subject to living with very little money and sub-standard conditions. Fox contends that, “[m]any economists have argued that Hispanics and other minority groups operate in the bottom half of a ‘dual labor market’. That is, they compete against one another and sometimes exploit one another in an economic sector of low-paid, mostly non-union, off-the-books jobs in an economic subsystem that is in effect walled off from the better paying-jobs that can lead to the middle class. In other words, you can’t get here from there” (1996:169). In Sofia’s case, her intellectual rights are sold to a pimp who then sells her work abilities to others, gathering commission for this work. This is a contemporary issue because many Hispanics, illegal and without rights, are forced into inferior working conditions with limited compensation. As indicated by Fox, that is the ‘universal majority’s’ ability to force Hispanics to “compete against each other.” By doing this, the ‘universal minority’ remains fractured.

Much more than Russell’s work, Joe Haldeman’s work, *The Coming*, could be labeled as a manifesto for Hispanic-futurism. Haldeman no longer focuses on identity politics, but with a futurist state in which the Hispanic way of life is the same as the ‘universal majority’. Spanish is the language that Americans recognize as being the first language. Hispanics occupy prominent public offices. Even the way religion is conducted is different, as the Catholic heritage of many Hispanic countries is a strong foundation of moral order. In this highly advanced technological world, communities are not isolated, the ‘universal majority’ is hard to identify, and power dynamics within racial groups are limited.

“There can be coexistence, (between the majority and minority) but usually it means the absorption of the minority by the majority“ (Haldeman, 2000: Personal electronic communication)<sup>71</sup>. If contemporary America could take Haldeman’s argument into consideration then *The Coming* images itself as a utopia for the Hispanic people of America. In *The Coming* the image of America has undergone extensive change. The language being spoken is Spanish and the values of the Catholic Church are imposed heavily on the nation, making homosexuality illegal.

One only has to look to the recent 1996 California language crisis, trying to make Spanish and English the dual educational languages. It is fair to acknowledge that the world that Haldeman is writing about is not that different from the policy changes being debated in California that could later become legislation.

*The Coming* represents a Hispanic utopia, due to the nature of how American society is imaged. The ‘universal majority’ is Hispanic. However, rather than a poor country, as normally stereotyped with when thinking of countries in South America, America is a technologically, economically stable and functioning country. The utopian element is assisted by the disappearance of socioeconomic racial profiling. The image of Hispanics as farm labourers and domestic servants has been replaced with images of Hispanics in positions of power. Haldeman’s key utopian possibility is that this has all happened without a revolution or a new spiral of oppression. America has not been reduced to a barbarous state, impoverished and lacking basic necessities. Instead, the world that the Hispanic characters find themselves in *The Coming* is utopian in the sense that, for Hispanics, language, social values and aspirations for power have been

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<sup>71</sup> Joe Haldeman ([Haldeman@mit.edu](mailto:Haldeman@mit.edu)). (26 November 2000). *Writing Utopias*. E-mail to Jason le Grange. ([jasonleg@chollian.net](mailto:jasonleg@chollian.net)).

realised and recognised, even if this utopia still has flaws when considered from other perspectives (for example, people of alternative sexuality have become the minority, being prosecuted for being gay).

In contemporary criticism on race in science fiction writing, more attention will be drawn to the ways in which groups negotiate space. Once the Hispanic movement of equality reaches a level found within Afrofuturism, with clearly defined sets of manifestos, a way will be found to negotiate out of the role as 'universal minority' and into the role of equality, though, as has been mentioned before, there will always be a group defined as the 'universal minority' and the 'universal majority' due to the language of difference.

To sum up, race is a contemporary issue that is not easily understood, and one that still causes injustice. The mode of science fiction is to address these injustices using possibility as the signifier of change. Utopias have been found for some racial groups, which offer racial groups an understanding of what it is to be that racial group. Science fiction writing will continue to be the vehicle of change and the mirror of a possible reality. This section has explored the multiple examples of race in science fiction writing and films. It has looked at how these representations have both shaped an identity for race, and how racial identity is transcending stereotypical ideas of race creating utopian agency, as in the example of Afrofuturism. Hispanic identity is identified as being prevalent in the three authors to be discussed in the next chapter.

## Sexuality

In the previous section on race, a signifier of difference was identified as a means by which a group negotiates with what is considered the dominant ideology or Whiteness. In this section the idea of 'Otherness' is further explored, however it is the complexities of sexuality that are addressed.

It is through science fiction that sexuality is removed from a state of alterity and into a state of normativity. The patriarchal construction of heteronormativity has long dominated the sexual discourse, framing all differences into the category of 'Other'. Heteronormativity could thus be described as the barrier to realizing utopian agency. In this case heterosexuality is the signifier for normal, and everything else is abnormal or deviant. This framing of the 'Other' is different in that it is impossible to change the sexuality of a person, even though the dominant ideology would prefer it that way, and it is impossible to have an all-homosexual or an all-heterosexual society.

It is therefore difficult for the 'universal majority', heterosexuality, to negotiate with the 'universal minority', homosexuality, based on codes of acceptability of what is defined as 'normal' and 'abnormal'. Thus it could be said that homosexuality remains outside the walls of the 'universal majority' and is never granted the opportunity to begin negotiating an identity within the system of the 'universal majority'. The problem lies in the imaging and the definition of what homosexuality is. For the 'universal majority', homosexuals are the deviant group that does not conform to 'normal' practices of procreating as set up in the model of heterosexuality. Homosexuals are not imaged as another kind of sexual creature, for homosexuality is considerably reduced to an act of

sex. Homosexuals are defined as a species not willing to conform to heterosexual discourse.

Aligning this theory of 'universal majority' and 'universal minority' with the thinking of contemporary sexuality theorist, Michel Foucault, reveals that practically as well as theoretically these systems exist. Foucault introduces the idea of the "prude" Victorian as still being the dominant discourse in sexuality theory. Foucault argues, "the imperial prude is emblazoned on our restrained, mute, and hypocritical sexuality" (1990a:3). It is the imaging of sexuality within the dominant Victorian discourse that identifies those who are within the 'limits' of sexuality, 'virtuous heterosexuals', and those that are outside of those limits, in other words, 'deviant' sexualities and adulterous heterosexuals. The role of sexuality was moved from the public space into the home, where rules governing the manufacture of sexual discourse were silenced. According to Foucault the home and the space associated with the home are what created 'heteronormativity', sexuality produced for purposes of procreation. All other forms of sexuality were removed to the mental hospital. As Foucault notes, "The brothel and the mental hospital would be those places of tolerance" (1990a: 4), in sharp contrast to the home that was centered on "the parent's bedroom", and therefore the place that produces children.<sup>72</sup>

By placing the tolerant spaces in areas of social myopia, the patients or pimps and prostitutes are removed from the valid into the invalid and are imaged as directly confronting the "parent's bedroom" and reproduction. Homosexuals therefore are part of the 'universal minority' for they have been placed outside of what is normal, by definition

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<sup>72</sup> This idea of Victorian prudishness was outlined in Foucault first volume of Sexuality *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*. In the first section of the book "We 'Other Victorians' ", Foucault locates alternative sexualities as being the group identified in "Other Victorians" as coined by Steven Marcus in reference to those that located themselves outside of the space of heteronormativity by Victorian definition.

of the 'universal majority', those that have been constructed with the repressive Victorian sexual system, and the only spaces of tolerance are institutions without validity and therefore without power. The mental hospital becomes the space of those who failed in the conditioning of sexuality, removing them from the normalcy of the 'heterosexual bedroom', and effectively, from society, and allowing the repressive cycles to continue.

Similar systems of oppression are found in other eras of sexuality. In Foucault's *The Use of Pleasure: The History of Sexuality: Volume 2* he contrasts the changing attitudes of sexuality discourse. The ancient Greek civilization is critiqued from a view of tolerance. Same sex liaisons were acceptable in ancient Greece between men and 'boys'. Foucault argues at great length that "nothing prevented or prohibited an adolescent from being the openly recognized sexual partner of a man (1990b: 217). Most Greeks accepted these relationships because they were considered natural in the pursuit of beauty. The relationships were accepted because the 'boys' are defined not only by their youth but also by their beauty. The tolerance offered by the Greeks to an "adolescent" boy and man but not necessarily relationships between men and men, was possible because "one could take exception to the very act that was carried out between two male individuals on the grounds that it was *para physin* because it *feminized* one of the partners, whereas the desire that one could have for beauty was nevertheless regarded as natural" (1990b: 222). The 'boys' became objects of beauty, and due to their age, were not seen as men, but as "feminized" partners. The argument against homosexual relations between men is based on this very act of "feminizing" one of the partners, and locating him in the position of submissive male. This demonstrates that the loss of 'manhood' is the basis of the antipathy directed against adult male homosexual intercourse, which becomes therefore repugnant.

The homosexual male in ancient Greece is therefore only accepted if the object of his desire is a 'boy'. For if it is a man, the implication lies in the roles of sex, whereby the "passivity" or "feminization" of one of the partners would be necessary. This tolerance is therefore limited, and, although defined as tolerant, restrictive. To say that the Greeks were more tolerant than the Victorians would be fair, but to say that their culture was a utopia for sexuality is not justifiable. Tolerance towards homosexuals becomes the object of negotiation, for whatever system exists, homosexuals are placed outside of it and have to work as the 'universal minority'.

Even in situations of tolerance what makes it difficult for homosexuals to find any kind of space to inhabit within patriarchy, is that among some, homosexuality is not considered as a viable option at all in terms of patriarchy. Thus it is not recognised, by not being recognised; it thus becomes invisible within negotiating spaces. To offer a practical example, it is all very well to say that homosexuality may have been decriminalised in South Africa for example, but that does not mean that all people within South Africa accept homosexuals. In fact, intolerance is still very high in South Africa with regard to the way in which homosexuals have to conduct their lives. People do not recognise the difference of homosexuality the same way in which they recognise race. There is the signifier of colour that identifies a certain race group but there is no such visual signifier within homosexuality, and thus it becomes harder to address the difference or to change people's perceptions of it.

Homosexuality is actually a fairly new construction, for although it existed before, it was only given the name homosexuality in the Eighteenth century. This was done to define a medical disease in which people of the same sex felt sexual attraction to each other, clearly not a positive construction of the term. Modern studies have also been

unable to lose the initial medical identification of 'Otherness' resulting in everything from Freud's oedipal theories to research into biology as found in the book *A Separate Creation: The Search for Biological Origins of Sexual Orientation* (1996) by Chandler Burr. Without solid definition, or a solid signifier, homosexuality is doomed by heteronormative standards. By not being able to define itself, the ability to negotiate becomes invalid for any systems of patriarchy, thus placing homosexuality at the bottom of the hierarchy in the 'universal minority'.

This is where the invalidity of negotiation becomes problematic. A racial group arguing that they are identified as a certain colour and that they suffer as a result of this signifier, are given a space to be a minority. They are recognised and, even if execrated, at least given a 'certificate of validation' to be recognised as thus. Yet, for religious groups, especially, the inability to understand homosexuality or willingness to offer a category of 'difference' not 'Otherness' means that homosexuality is located elsewhere in minority discourse. Unlike the utopian bridge of Afrofuturism and Hispanic-futurism, Homo-futurism does not seem to be an available discourse of realisation. This means that utopian agency is difficult and the modes of negotiation problematic. Science fiction texts and the techniques of novum and cognitive estrangement are therefore of the utmost importance, for they constitute 'hope' for these groups.

Thus the utopian framework and science fiction texts become the main source for creating a positive identity and for creating a system of negotiation with the majority. This negotiation is different from the ideologies of Afrofuturism, as the major, focus process, and mechanics of agency are different for each minority group, due to each minority's unique struggle to emerge from relationship of 'universal minority' and

'universal majority'. Homosexuals, as an especially vilified and 'othered' minority, must deal with an active struggle with dystopia as well as utopia.

This identification of invalidated minority is an archetype of homosexuals around the world, where in some countries like India or Zimbabwe it is still illegal to be homosexual or engage in homosexual activity. Countries may decriminalize homosexuality in one regime only for it to be made deviant when the regime changes. Due to the 'universal majority' not always understanding the nature of homosexuality, and research being unable to scientifically determine the nature of homosexuality, it will remain in this shifting state.

Thus science fiction writing offers a unique portal by which to negotiate a space with the 'universal majority'. The spaces offered within the communities that are created by science fiction writing are tolerant and accepting. In speculative fiction if written in utopian space, or even sometimes within dystopian spaces, homosexuals are not imaged as 'Other' but simply as of a different sexuality. An example of this would be Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), where the babies are allowed to find their own sexuality and their choice is accepted. Huxley outlines gay partnerships and gay characters that do not have to live closeted lives, but open and honest ones. When viewed by society they are not seen as the anti-norm but valid members of the community. *Brave New World*, as a novel has a society that has been re-created. The nature of patriarchy has been destroyed, and people live in a pluralistic existence rather than an egoistic one. Huxley's tolerance is a key issue in the negotiation of 'Otherness', which then leads to the negotiation of identity for the 'universal majority', especially homosexuals.

There are other examples within science fiction writing that offer positive spaces for homosexuality. And there are those that do not, but instead reaffirm the inability to negotiate with homosexuality as a discourse. The next section explores this dichotomy of 'difference' and 'Otherness'.

### **Heteronormativity Re-Written into Dystopia**

In order to further furnish an example of how minority groups have to negotiate their specific agency, the problem of homosexuality is interesting for it not always seen as being a valid minority and the rules of sexuality according to Freud have been placed into their own ghetto. Homosexuality has a dual space in science fiction writing and utopian discourse. Firstly, it has a space in the scientific realm of science fiction. In the second case it is placed in the utopian element.

When defining homosexuality within the scientific space of science fiction, a negative stereotype is often created. Antony Burgess and Joe Haldeman have, for example, envisioned homosexuals as a device by which to help control the population explosion, essentially reinforcing their 'Otherness'. If heteronormativity could be described as 'the norm' in contemporary society, its nemesis in a world without problems like overpopulation would be 'homonormativity'. If 'Heteronormativity' is described as a male and female act of copulation for the purposes of producing offspring, 'Homonormativity' could be defined as the 'norm' only so as to control copulation and the effects of copulation, to stop the birth of more humans. 'Homonormativity' in this sense is not imaged as a positive discourse. All that 'homonormativity' does is replace the space in which heteronormativity existed, and this space locates people into categories according to their sexuality. Thus instead of creating a space in which there was no

derivative of any kind of 'normativity', 'homonormativity' requires its society to subscribe to certain ideologies. Or, to connect this reversal to Foucault's idea of the "parent's bedroom" constructed only for the purpose of reproduction, 'heteronormativity' is the state Foucault describes, while 'Homonormativity' becomes the opposite of reproduction. 'Heteronormativity' defines itself by the ability to reproduce whereas 'homonormativity' would define itself by the lack of reproduction. The complete rejection of the system of the body moves the identity from from the body as producer to the body as consumer.

Homosexuality is therefore encouraged in these fictional societies that have been imagined to restrict population growth. Heterosexuality is considered deviant. If one is identified as being heterosexual then certain penalties occur, like job loss, or inability to be promoted. Certain health and social welfare benefits are also restricted. This is a mirroring of what homosexuals face today and does not reflect a movement towards acceptance. As has been mentioned, it is the scientific element of being able to define a person's sexuality into 'right' and 'wrong' that causes power hierarchies.

Yet, under utopian thinking, the alterity of sexuality cannot be placed into categories of right and wrong, for the very nature of this indicates a power fracas of what is good and bad. A heuristic approach to sex exists in these societies. Rather than having evolved into tolerant societies, the solution to a problem of overpopulation is reducing the threat of pregnancy by normalizing homosexuality. Homosexuality becomes the new choice of the government and is thus coded as 'normal'. Homosexuality is disrespected in these kinds of discourses for the implication that any group should have to follow any kind of sexuality, as it is prescribed as the norm, is completely disrespectful to sexuality. Foucault's theory of *Scientia Sexualis* which "was fixated on finding the (shameful) truth about sexuality and used the process of

*confession* as its key method of finding it” (Spargo, 1999:15), is thus in fact recreated within the discourse of ‘homonormativity’. Sexuality is not subversive and thus further alienated from minority discourse.

An example of an even more homophobic text is *The Wanting Seed* (1962), by Anthony Burgess. What may seem to be a subversive and rather homo-friendly work when carefully deconstructed, borders on hate speech.

The book opens with a scene in which a woman has lost her child, and is aware that the body of the child will become fertilizer. The opening poem acerbically declaring,

’My adorable Fred:  
He’s so, so sweet,  
From the crown of his head  
To the soles of his feet.  
He’s my meat’ (Burgess, 1996:3).

The mother of the child, Beatrice-Joanna Foxe, is framed as subject to the malevolence of the homosexual doctors. As she has had a child, she has been imaged as an agent working against the norm. Her child grew ill; the society in *The Wanting Seed* is not pro-life and therefore offered no help to him. As a result, the child died. The poem is sung, by the doctors, and the name of her child is even misquoted for it is not Fred, it is Roger. In this dystopia, homosexuals are framed as the despots of the deviant ‘Other’.

Burgess sets up certain safety mechanisms so that the work is not openly a hate text. The reason that the ruling government has these systems is due to the instability of world order. The instability is as a result of overpopulation. The ruling government is set up as a totalitarian government and is not without certain propaganda slogans: ‘We care

about stability. We care about not letting the earth get overrun. We care about everybody getting enough to eat"(Burgess, 1996:5). These slogans help to demonstrate that a population problem is what is causing the lack of food, and homosexuality a solution to this, for a way of not letting the earth get "overrun" is to stop reproduction of more people. Rather than having restrictive birth control methods, which would also be a solution, Burgess imagines a homosexual regime in birth control's place. But, in this world, the mirroring of inverted homophobia into heterophobia portrays heterosexuals as being unnatural hence the renaming of heteronormativity into 'homonormativity'. As a result homosexuals are the supposed new 'universal majority', and due to the nature of power, not positively portrayed. The thought that homosexuals simply mimic the ways in which heterosexuals have stigmatized homosexuals, but in reverse, is a negative image.

This is one of the many examples in which the text portrays homophobic discourse. This 'homonormativity' can best be seen in quote from Burgess's work: "you've broken no law. You've not done a thing you theoretically shouldn't have. You're entitled to marry if you want to, you're entitled to one birth in the family, though, of course, the best people just don't. Just don't" (1996:30). Tristram, a protagonist in the novel, is unable to get a promotion because of his sexual preference. This is a reflection of a contemporary problem that homosexuals face. Disclosing their sexuality and being 'outed' they face the chance of discrimination, not only through legal means but also indirectly through other prejudices. This is therefore not subversive to heteronormativity, and only reconstitutes heteronormativity as homonormativity.

In the novel, a second example of the persecution of heterosexuals, mirroring contemporary society's relationship to homosexuality, is the heterosexual community that Beatrice's sister is part of. They are a vigilante community living in the

rural areas, the areas in science fiction writing that are always the space for the deviants, or groups that do not wish to negotiate with the 'universal majority' directly. This society is set up not to disclose, or compromise, their doctrines of living. Beatrice's sister's community is still Christian, when religion is scorned in the cities. They still farm whereas people in the cities eat completely processed foods. They continue to have multiple children, whereas people in the cities are discouraged from having children and are only allowed to have a maximum of one.

Burgess takes 'homonormativity' and exploits its possibility. In the world that has been created, homosexuals are seen as the preferred sexuality. However, they are also imaged as being the people in control. Tristram's brother Derek works as the Chief of Police but is in fact heterosexual, hiding his true sexuality. He does this in order to advance his career. Nothing about this society in *The Wanting Seed* is positive. Food is no longer grown, and therefore there is a lack of it. People's sexuality is repressed, and all controls of government have been redefined as explained by the Prime Minister: "we could, if we wanted, kill off three-quarters of the world's population like that... But government is not concerned with killing but with keeping people alive. We outlawed war, we made war a terrible dream of the past... That is progress, that is the fulfillment of part of our liberal aspirations" (Burgess, 1996:111). The text has utopian elements in the sense that people no longer dying. Yet what this text demonstrates is a failure to reverse the steps of the Four-step Model. By making homosexuality the 'token' or dominant system without redressing the language of difference recreates a spiral of oppression with one regime replacing the next. The heterosexuals are replaced by the homosexuals who are then replaced by the heterosexuals. It is a chaotic farce of regimes wanting to realize their 'dreams' but without finding a suitable agency to do so.

This failed reversal is evident in the characters of Derek and Beatrice. Derek is conniving in pursuit of power. At the end of the novel the homosexual regime is replaced by a heterosexual one. Whereas, in the previous regime, children were the signifier of deviance and oppression, in the new regime, children are the signifier of heterosexuality and liberation. Derek is a good male because he had children with Beatrice, even if these were out of wedlock. (Wedlock was not conceived of in the homosexual totalitarian state). Up until this point in the novel Beatrice has been a vigilante. She lost her first child and was forbidden by the previous regime to have any more children; however she ends up having an affair with Derek and conceives twins. In the new regime she notes, "In the old days...I'd have been told that I've already exceeded my ration. And now your Ministry tells me that I've not fulfilled my quota" (Burgess, 1996:218). The swing back to 'heteronormativity', where people seem happier, is contrasted to 'homonormativity' when people were disillusioned.

Population control in this new world is still a problem, as there are still too many people in the world. However, the government is able to create a plan to curb the population through war. Rather than simply making people change their controls on sexuality, as had been previously done, they introduce ineffectual wars for the purpose of mass homicide. Burgess uses this dual population control to highlight the options to save the world. Homosexuality is placed into the same category as war; destructive systems. Tristram is recruited to take part in a war with the incentive of being paid well. However, these wars have been created for one purpose only, to kill people. The 'war game' is simply a destructive device, imaged as being in the interests of protecting the state. The enemy is never seen. This leads Tristram to conclude that he was actually fighting in a war against fellow members of his country. This is a further example of the extremity the government will go to in order to control the population. When Tristram

confronts the government on these issues he is told “The Global Population Limitation Authority... They merely report on population in relation to food-supply always with an eye to the future, of course” (Burgess, 1996:277). Thus *The Wanting Seed* mixes sentiments of big-brother control as well as governments’ ability to manipulate, with hypocrisy focused on sexuality. Thus the new regime takes the place of the ‘universal majority’, which was held by the homosexuals and adopts the use of power to control others. The population is imaged as happier with the new regime.

The natural reaction to all of this oppression is to have a revolution culminating in an absolute rejection of the ruling party. What makes *The Wanting Seed* homophobic is the implication that ‘heteronormativity’ is the state to which the world returns. The state in which the world was repressed by the ruling ‘homosexual’ was oppressive. The revolution begins in remote areas, as described in the following example: “a middle-aged man named Thomas Wharton, going home from work shortly after midnight, was set upon by youths. These knifed him, stripped him, spitted him, basted him, carved him, served him—all openly and without shame in one of the squares of the town” (Burgess, 1996:130). This action indirectly blames the ruling government of denying people the rights to meat, flesh symbolic for heterosexuality. No alternative is left but to resort to the most primal instincts, and flesh and sex are two such examples that Burgess explores. Thus people resort to cannibalism to satisfy their desire for meat. The anarchy that is manifested is thus again leveled at homosexuals, as it was their government who caused this mayhem.

As Foucault (1990a) suggests sexuality is as a result of cultural discourse and cannot be reduced to the act of procreation only. Burgess's narrative implies that the nature of homosexuality denies the basic premise of heteronormativity; the act of

procreation. Other elements of the homophobic nature of Burgess's text can be detected through Judith Butler's ideas of performativity of gender. According to Butler, "performativity is the vehicle through which ontological effects are established" (Butler, 1996:111-112). Burgess writes the performative nature of homosexuality by using the stereotypes of fops for men and butches for women. This is then incorporated into the text through the heterosexual Beatrice observing homosexuals: "[T]alking animatedly with a flash of rings to a foppish colleague, making point after point on unfolding flashing fingers. Seeing the superb mime of orthodox homosexual behavior she could not quell entirely the spark of contempt that arose in her loins" (Burgess, 1996:21). Burgess does not attempt to be subversive at all in his work, and thus the book reads as a concentrated view of homophobia.

This kind of text symbolises the negative dystopias of homosexual reference in science fiction writing. A new imaging of sexuality, where there is no binary of right, heteronormativity and wrong homosexuality is necessary.

### **Homosexual Utopia Realised**

Certain writers of science fiction have emerged that offer well-created and functional utopias where sexuality has advanced beyond the imaging of the act of sex. Prominent authors include Aldous Huxley, Ursula le Guin, Joanna Russ and Marge Piercy. The way that they have posited a new sexuality and space is by no longer naming it as 'Other'. This space is defined by the disappearance of alterity in sexuality and the disappearance of differences in power or language in the ideologies of sexuality. They are able to achieve this space through novum.

What makes this utopian space different from heteronormativity and homonormativity is that the sexuality of individuals is not considered important in their identity politics. People in Piercy's utopian community in Mattapoissett in *Woman on the Edge of Time*, function by no longer defining themselves as the 'ego', (where ego refers to imaging themselves as different within their communities), but as living in a pluralistic society, (where un-advanced egoism has resulted in complete and utter respect for society). These societies do not educate 'Otherness' but rather respect and educate 'difference'.

Piercy contrasts the contemporary world with the one from her utopian world of Mattapoissett. It is not through an integrated explanation, that the new world of possibility has come to form. It is through Piercy's practical offering of the Huxley model of re-writing society, its values and the way in which sex is conducted and performed that is utopian.<sup>73</sup> Piercy labels the sexual partners of Mattapoissett as "sweet friends" rather than partner or wife, deconstructing the necessity to define sex as being not only linked to heteronormative ideas or a partnership of male and female. By using "sweet friend" the boundaries of sexuality are opened. The stereotype of sex as commodity, normally associated with homosexuals is removed and replaced with "friend". This enables a relationship to be formed that is associated with the psyche beyond body politics.

Relationships in *Woman on the Edge of Time* in the alternative reality of Mattapoissett are those of both heterosexual and alternative sexuality. Homosexuality is accepted; there is no frowning upon it, as seen in the life of Luciente, the woman who

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<sup>73</sup> Piercy, like Huxley's *Brave New World*, chooses to have children no longer raised as the heteronormative norm, where the very fact of existence is to produce offspring, and the very function of sex to be the same thing. Huxley's model of children being grown in laboratories is replaced with Piercy's natural childbirth,

communicates with Connie from the contemporary world: "In truth the most intense mating of my life was a woman named Diana... But I love Diana still and sometimes we come together... Mostly I like males" (Piercy, 1990:56). This is unlike the dystopian scenario the novel creates on earth where the character Skip, a homosexual youth, is forced into therapy designed to change him into a heterosexual.

It is not a physical change to the body, but it is an endeavor to reprogram the very core of his identity politics. That is the greatest crime of the doctors in the hospital, as explained by Skip: "They don't like us, you know, We're lepers... You know what the last experiment was they pulled on me? They stuck electrodes on my prick and showed me dirty pictures, and when I got a hard-on about men, they shocked me" (Piercy, 1990: 157). By making his homosexuality equal to that of an impulse and reducing it to the simple act of sex, the medical fraternity shows their lack of knowledge about homosexuality. This Pavlovian act simply numbs the sexual stimuli; it does not change someone's sexual preferences. The archaic nature of the therapy may seem dated, but it is what some counselor's suggest as a means of 'becoming straight', as seen in the recent film *But I'm a Cheerleader* (2000). Skip at the end of the therapy may be non-sexual, but is left feeling as if, "They won something. I don't feel like fucking anybody. Or loving anybody. I don't feel any love at all. I feel like a big block of ice" (Piercy, 1990:279). Skip is left vacuous of anything at all, leading to his suicide.

Skip's parents are typically homophobic middle-class people, embarrassed by their son. They refuse to acknowledge that their son is comfortable with his sexuality. Rather than accepting Skip's choice, they refuse to acknowledge that there could be any

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but yet both sets of children are raised in communal spaces teaching children how to respect and live with other children.

other sexuality besides heterosexual. They have no understanding about what it means to be homosexual, and send him off to be 'fixed up' and 're-programmed'. Skip is not committed for his sexual deviancy but for possession of drugs, an excuse that is more acceptable to his parents. Skip, to his parents, does not function as a human being: "My parents thought I didn't work right, so they sent me to be fixed. You know, you send the riding mower back to the factory to be fixed if you get a lemon. Why not a son?" (Piercy, 1990:136)

Piercy creates a martyr and a freedom fighter within the character of Skip. He learns how to play by the rules and win. Even though he commits suicide, he transcends control and the controller. He becomes the path by which other homosexuals can take space, by not selling out to the core of their identity, their homosexuality. Skip negotiates with his parents and the medical fraternity. "Oh, like they ask you would you rather fly a plane or play with dolls. Follow the stereotypes. But why should I have to pretend I'd rather watch a football game than a ballet not to be labeled queer?" (Piercy, 1990:136) The psychiatrists, who ought to have multiple diagnoses of Skip's situation, ultimately misunderstand him because they cannot accept the reality of what the problem is. In the case of Skip it is not a problem of sexuality, but inability to feel loved by his parents. In the case of Sybil, another patient in the hospital, "The hospital regarded Sybil as a lesbian. Actually she had no sex life" (Piercy, 1990:77). Due to her performing a spiritual existence, the doctors' label her as queer, for queer and different are stereotypically linked.

Ultimately Skip is dead, his parents no longer have a problem, the medical fraternity had a case that did not work and Skip has had his desire quelled but not his soul as Connie experiences: "Drs. Redding and Morgan were right thinking they had

cured Skip, she thought, fighting the tilting aisle. Before he had only been able to attempt suicide, cries for help carved on his body. They had cured him of fumbling, of indecision. They had taught him to act, they had taught him the value of a quick clean death” (Piercy, 1990:280). Skip escapes all of the hate and despair in the world. He liberates himself from intolerance and ignorance, and emerges as the most sane, intelligent and humane of the triangle of himself, his parents and the doctors. Piercy’s political statement about homosexuality and gay rights is noteworthy for a writer in 1976. By understanding and writing about homosexuality not as a disease but as an integral part of identity, Piercy’s work is truly utopian.

Ursula Le Guin has also created a special language for sexuality. Like Piercy’s, it creates a language of possibility one that could be the charter for sexual futurism. Tom Moylan identifies Le Guin as being a prominent voice for subversive writing of race, sexuality and gender. Moylan also comments on this new wave of writer, exploring the ‘novum’ within sexual discourse. In the chapter dedicated to Le Guin’s *The Dispossessed* (1974), Moylan notes about Le Guin’s choices in writing sexuality, “Annareis is also a society in which sexual activity is unfettered from childhood on and is non-exploitive. Heterosexual, homosexual, and bisexual preferences are recognised. No penalty or taboo applies to any sexual practices... Odonian partnership is a matter of commitment and free choice between equals choosing the bond: ‘So long as it worked, it worked, and if it didn’t work, it stopped being. It was not an institution but a function. It had no sanction but that of private conscience’ (T.D.197)” (Moylan, 1986:99-100). The fact that sexuality is not an institution (one which has power to dictate rules) but rather a function (one in which people perform sex for pleasure), makes Le Guin a tolerant writer.

In *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969), LeGuin realises an eradication of sexual stereotypes and writes a 'bridge' of sexuality between heterosexuality and homosexuality, as quoted in the following example:

When you meet a Gethenian, you cannot and must not do what a bisexual naturally does, which is to cast him in the role of Man or Woman, while adopting towards him a corresponding role dependent on your expectations of the patterned or possible interactions between persons of the same or opposite sex. Our entire pattern of socio-sexual interaction is nonexistent here. They cannot play the game. They do not see one another as men or women. This is almost impossible for our imagination to accept (Le Guin, 1981:85).

It is the possibility of no longer defining gender or sexual stereotypes that offers the possibility of sexual futurism that Afrofuturism offers people of colour. Le Guin continues to write these ideas of sexual futurism, up to an including her most recent work, *The Telling*, as described in the previous chapter.

The reduction of the homosexual/heterosexual binary, creating a mind space of neutrality, offers an ideology of possibility. Or, as in the case of Piercy, highlighting the realities faced by gay youth, she creates a subversive text that empowers those that are stigmatized.

This chapter has looked at two specific types of minorities, race and sexuality, and has traced certain degrees of 'Otherness' and the ways in which the groups are excluded from the dominant ideology, or the ways in which these groups negotiate with the dominant ideology. The differences between race and sexuality are evident in the ways in which they are represented. Race is seen as being a visual signifier of difference, which is acknowledged as being 'different'. However, sexuality is found placing itself into the realm of what is defined as being normal, heteronormativity, and 'Other', homosexual. Science fiction as a genre is able to use techniques like cognitive

estrangement and novum to create systems of negotiation with dominant discourses. In the next chapter, science fiction writers' concepts of minority writing are explored in more depth.

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## **Chapter Four**

### **Writing Minorities**

In many instances, minorities are constructed into utopian and science fiction writing. Whether the choice is intentional or not is defined by the authors of the work. Three prominent writers<sup>74</sup> in the genre, Mary Doria Russell, Joe Haldeman and Marge Piercy agreed to short interviews in order to expostulate on minority writing and evaluate what writing minorities would mean. Each writer's unique style, ideology and insight into minority rights can be better understood through an analysis of their individual work.

### **Methodology**

As this is an analysis of literature and not social sciences this outline of the relevant methodology does not follow the same guidelines of a social study. The focus of this study is not solely on the interviews of the authors but also the work of the authors in relation to the concepts of the four step model, the 'universal minority' and the 'universal majority.' A basic outline of the methodology used in conducting the interviews is outlined under the following headings: Reasons for Conducting the Interviews, Format, Limitations and Outcome and Conclusions.

### **Reasons for Conducting the Interviews:**

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<sup>74</sup> All three authors have been acknowledged for their writings and for works that will be used later in this chapter. Mary Doria Russell won the Arthur C. Clarke award (1998) and the James Triptree Jr. award (1996) for *The Sparrow*. She was also short-listed for the Nebula Award (1998) and the Hugo award (1999). Joe Haldeman won the coveted Hugo (1976) and Nebula (1975) awards for science fiction writing, for his work *The Forever War*. He won another four Hugo's and three Nebulas, and has received other prizes since then. Marge Piercy was given the James Triptree Jr. award (1995) for *Woman on the Edge of Time* and the Arthur C. Clarke Award for *He, She and It* (1993).

The reason the interviews were conducted was to see if a relationship existed between the writers and the minority issues in their texts. Ideas of minority and majority were discussed, and authors were asked how they defined these terms and how they identified these terms in their works.

#### Format:

The interviews were held via e-mail and regular mail, with the authors answering questions about their writing and utopia. In the cases of Russell and Haldeman, the authors answered the questions directly through e-mail. A follow up e-mail to Haldeman was able to clarify some of his answers. Russell was more open to discussion and a correspondence ensued over six months, with a range of questions being discussed. Piercy was different in that she sent a letter with a general statement of ideas to all the questions. The answers were thus not in direct relation to a specific question but rather to the series of questions. A follow up e-mail further clarified some of her statements.

#### Limitations:

This work is by no means conclusive in looking at minority and majority in science fiction writing. The study was largely focused on the authors that agreed to be interviewed. Of the six authors initially planned for in the study, only three agreed to be interviewed. The common themes of Hispanic identity and alternative sexuality had already been identified in the six authors' work and these were the reasons these authors were selected. The race, age, sex and nationality of the authors was not the focus of the study, although Russell and Piercy are female, Haldeman is male, and all three authors are heterosexual,<sup>75</sup> American and Caucasian.

The sample of writers is thus very small and the conclusions of this chapter should be read as not being conclusive in science fiction writing but with regard to certain writers in the field of science fiction writing.

#### Outcome and conclusion:

The outcome of each interviewee's material is incorporated into an analysis of their work. Each author's interview has been analyzed in relation to their relevant works, with some cross analysis occurring. Each section under the author's name comes to its own conclusions and analyses based on the interviews.

None of the three authors classify themselves as utopian writers, and all three had ideological differences about the labeling of their work as utopian. Although the writers do not classify themselves as utopian, themes, groups, nations and societies within their novels are utopian. They mostly placed themselves into the dystopian genre. The authors are not necessarily aware that for dystopia to exist, utopia must too. As has been suggested by Kumar, they are "mirrors of each other." Utopia, in *Utopia*, is a place of perfection, and a model of what is most commonly thought of as being the definition of utopia, yet, as has been explained, some inconsistencies exist. In order for utopia to exist, its construction dystopia is also evident in More's work. Utopia can only be recognised as such if it is compared with a similar belief system, dystopia. In *Utopia*, More's England would be the dystopia, as More reflects when his narrative personae, Raphael Hythloday critiques the problems facing England<sup>75</sup> in comparison to the

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<sup>75</sup> All three are married. Haldeman to Marygay Potter, Russell to Don Russell and Piercy to Ira Wood.

<sup>76</sup> Book 1 of *Utopia*, is a comparison of societies other than Utopia, which is explained in the second book, with England. As has been mentioned in the Introduction of this work, Raphael Hythloday visited numerous societies on his travels, some more barbaric than England, but others that were closer to the

societies that he has met. This can be related to the writers critiqued in this section, who image themselves as dystopian writers, or not as utopian writers. However, all three move through two societies and create alternative spaces. The earth is compared with post-revolution Rakhat in Russell's *The Sparrow* and *Children of God*, life in America in the 1970's with Mattapoisett in Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time*, and the multiple societies on earth with the final destination for Mandala and Marygay in Haldeman's *Forever War*.

Utopia should not be divorced from the utopia/dystopia dualism. Writing utopias, as a study would indicate that the societies created, critiqued or responded to, exist within this framework. Science fiction writing has the advantage of highlighting the differences in societies via aliens, alternative societies, and space travel, making it the preferred version of utopian and dystopian dualism.

The dynamic of power in hierarchy cannot be ignored, as has been expressed before, because human nature decrees that if there is to be an exchange of power then there is a hierarchy. None of these authors offer a space where equality exists in the perfect sense, where the boundaries of patriarchy are diffused and power sharing is completely equal, as radical utopian writers have tended to do. However, all of them offer an interesting world where changes have happened, some for the better and some for the worse, and where there are examples of the 'universal majority' and the 'universal minority'. Moylan's 'critical utopia' could be a better descriptor for their work than simply 'utopia', due to the nature of their work as working towards a perfect society or better life.

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Utopian model as well. He comments, "So he reckoned up not a few things from which patterns might be taken for correcting the errors of these nations among whom we live" (More, 1997:4).

There are very few similarities in the way in which the authors write their minorities' negotiation with the 'universal majority', yet clear themes can be traced through all three works. Within each discussion of an author that follows, subjects and minority studies that are applicable to that writer are explored. With themes ranging from 'universal majority' and 'universal minority' studies to sexuality and race, the authors' ideology on writing as well as ideology on minority, are explored.

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## Mary Doria Russell

### Definitions of Utopia, Minority and Majority

I never thought of the culture on Rakhat as a true utopia, because I don't believe such systems could exist, even fictionally. But I did toy with the reader a bit on this subject. I meant for the initial impression to be that Rakhat was an Eden. It was in some sense an environmentalist's dream: unspoiled by its dominant species, still almost pristine ecologically. I deliberately contrasted that with Earth, polluted and overpopulated (Russell, 2000: Personal electronic communication)<sup>77</sup>.

Mary Doria Russell's concept in her two works *The Sparrow* and *Children of God* reflects a comparison between the present world and alternative realities. The worlds of Rakhat and Earth are ecologically binary opposites as Russell indicates in her interview. The Earth is "polluted and overpopulated," while Rakhat is "still almost pristine ecologically". Using this as the element of cognitive estrangement, Russell's analysis of minority representation is comprehensive.

Russell indicates that writing minorities into her work is not a conscience choice. Her characters are well defined, and she finds that the story develops based on the characters choices, not necessarily her own. In fact, the characters end up writing the story, and this evolves through the way in which they interact with each other: "I judge the success of my characters by whether or not they can surprise me by saying something I didn't know or expect, or by refusing to do things I'd planned for them all

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<sup>77</sup>Mary Doria Russell ([MDRSparrow@aol.com](mailto:MDRSparrow@aol.com)). (14 November 2000). *Utopia*. E-mail to Jason le Grange. ([jasonleg@chollian.net](mailto:jasonleg@chollian.net)).

along. That's when I know that a character has developed a personal integrity that's going to be seen as real" (Russell, 2001: Personal electronic communication)<sup>78</sup>.

Russell's writing is empowering and tolerant. To compare her to Marge Piercy, Piercy offers the reader some of the rules and ideology in a structured analysis for the purpose of informing the reader of the facts and utopian elements of her fictional society. The society and its operating systems of Mattapoissett are explained in detail to the protagonist Connie, from another time reality (the contemporary world), and thus in turn to the reader. Russell's utopian possibilities are not explained in such a direct way, but rather through her characters explorations in the societies that they find themselves in, the ways in which they are treated and the observations that they make. Russell's work also offers a case study similar to *The Telling*, with the notions of the 'universal majority' and the 'universal minority' being explored.

Minority Representation in Russell's *The Sparrow* works in two conventions. The humans that go to space are a minority within the new community (the Runa) that they find themselves in. Within this new planet the Runa are a minority themselves, not by number, but are ironically controlled by Jana'ata, the majority. The minority Runa in *The Sparrow* are an example of minority groups re-imaged in space. When discussing notions of race hierarchies, there is a leveling of many races within the hierarchy, encumbered in the politics and discourse of race relations in rhetoric. Russell's work simplifies ideas of race. The signifier of difference exists, identifying the two groups as either those with claws, the 'universal majority', and those without, the 'universal minority' and there is a definite language of difference evident, so much so that the

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<sup>78</sup> Mary Doria Russell ([MDRSparrow@aol.com](mailto:MDRSparrow@aol.com)). (24 February 2001). *A New Approach*. E-mail to Jason le Grange. ([jasonleg@chollian.net](mailto:jasonleg@chollian.net)).

'Other', the Runa are considered low enough in the hierarchy of power to be eaten by the Jana'ata.

By using only two species, the reader is not alienated by a complicated hierarchy, but is able to view simplified issues of race that exist. The majority controls the Runa and everything is in balance, by definition of the majority. This minority in many ways has become content with their lives, but with an outside catalyst, the humans in this case, they learn that they should take a stand against ritual culling. Russell creates architecture for systems of negotiation. Although the humans do not create the language of negotiation, by coming to Rakhat and offering their knowledge of equality to the minority they are effectively offering societies the opportunity of improvement, thus offering them a movement towards the Runa's utopia.

Russell's work is also able to offer an example of how changing regimes never offer better solutions. The system changes on Rakhat to replace the ruling majority. In this case, the Jana'ata are replaced with the Runa, who in turn persecute them. Russell is conscious of the system of power as expressed in the following excerpt from an interview: "The trick is, as Emilio says, 'the VaRakhati pay a terrible price for this system.' All cultures have their rewards and their price. All systems have winners and losers. Change the system, and you'll certainly change the rewards, the price, the ones who win and the ones who lose. But even after the revolution, there will once again be rewards, prices, winners, losers" (Russell. 2000: Personal electronic communication)<sup>79</sup>.

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<sup>79</sup> Mary Doria Russell ([MDRSparrow@aol.com](mailto:MDRSparrow@aol.com)). (15 November 2000). *Re: Utopia*. E-mail to Jason le Grange. ([jasonleg@chollian.net](mailto:jasonleg@chollian.net)).

This comment is apt when comparing it to the Four-step Model. If the Runa had been offered a system of negotiation that would have reversed the 'Othering' process then they would probably have negotiated with the Jana' ata and the spiral of oppression would have been broken. However, no system of negotiation was available and the Runa simply replace the existing regime. Rather than recognizing the Jana'ata as fellow citizens of Rakhat, the Runa emulate them and begin a new cycle of branding the 'Other', more severe than the regime that was run by the Jana'ata. For although the Jana'ata ate the Runa, they did not wish to obliterate the Runa. However, when the Runa gain power they want to completely remove the Jana'ata from the planet.

The psychology of the oppressor and oppressed is coupled with power, as can be seen from the practical example the history of South Africa, where the ruling minority was able to segregate and disempower the majority within the country, through the psychology of fear as well as the economic power that the whites had. It could be argued that this suppression was allowed because of issues of economics, knowledge and skill. On the planet of Rakhat the ruling minority disempower the majority through the same techniques of control with a combination of their superior bodies, their claws, and the language of minority. The different groups on the planet are equally intelligent. It is the use of power to control that enables them to 'cull' the population if it gets too big, a system of control that ensures the survival of the 'universal majority'.

The important thing to note is that the minority (the oppressed group) has equal intelligence, but has been programmed into believing that they are powerless. They allow the excess in their society to be culled without protesting or even trying to challenge what is happening because they know no better. Only through contact with a new group are they offered a chance to question, when the new group, the humans, do

the questioning for them. The result is not a positive one. As for any group in power, the Jana'ata are not willing to allow a rebellion of any sorts, as this would compromise their power structure, and many of the Runa are killed in a senseless massacre caused by the fear of the rebellion<sup>80</sup>. The situation of the minority, although imaged as an alien one, brings about questions of power and control on earth as well as elsewhere.

The Jana'ata, when introduced to the reader are the dominant species on the planet of Rakhat. They control all matters of commerce, industry and government. They are considered intellectually superior, but only because of their access to knowledge. They have a caste system within the Jana'ata allowing certain marriages, detailing etiquette and manners and behaviour for different members of the caste, further augmenting the position of *The Sparrow* and *Children of God* in terms of texts relating to hierarchies of ghettoisation:

[Y]ou must understand it was not only the Runa who were born to their fate—we all were! Birth rank, the rank of one's family—even for a man, those determined every detail of life! The length of his claws, which door he was permitted to pass through. Whom he could marry, what his work would be. The number of earrings he could wear, the grade of perfumes he could buy! And yes- what portion of Runa carcass his meat would come from (Russell, 1998:264).

With a hierarchy in existence amongst their own species, it seems apt that considerations for the Runa would be non-existent, for the Jana'ata are enmeshed in negotiation their own identity within their own hierarchy.

The Jana'ata suppress the Runa, consider them to be a species fit for consumption, or as one of the crew of the Bruno notes, "A Runao is, for all practical

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<sup>80</sup> This can be contrasted to an event like Sharpeville in South Africa, where the police with their controlling mechanism guns, armed and in the majority, opened fire on demonstrators that were neither

purposes, a cow with an opinion”(Russell, 1998:249). They consider the Runa to be a meal when they are hungry, setting aside no thought or preferential treatment for the most loyal, intelligent, lovable Runa, whom it is assumed should know their fate. The sacrifice is not contested and the Jana’ata have succeeded in socializing their prey to accept their fate. Russell exemplifies the same characteristics and definition for the Jana’ata:

The Jana'ata are quite literally a Master Race. Their technology is biological, not manufactured. They breed their tools. And this has been going on for unnumbered generations. The thing is they've bred the Runa past the point of mere obedience. They've got some breeds of Runa who have reached parity in intelligence, and that's beginning to dawn on the most thoughtful of the Jana'ata. [Hana'ala] gets it. [Supaari] figures it out as well, and he himself was once a very marginal person, alive only [on] sufferance. Together, they attempt to reform the society, but the change gets ahead of them, as it usually does. Reformers are always on thin ice, and revolutionaries<sup>81</sup> are the ones who break” (Russell, 2001: Personal electronic communication)<sup>82</sup>.

It can be seen that Russell’s Jana’ata are in fact the ‘universal majority’, a minority in control, and with the knowledge of how to suppress the masses. They also have hierarchies within their social system and do not negotiate with the ‘universal minority’, because they have set rules and boundaries that mean they do not have to.

Russell wrote the Runa into her books for ecological reasons and not as a minority suffering under the oppression of a superior race:

As for the Runa, I really thought of them in ecological terms, not political ones, while writing the first book. I was thinking, “What would civilization look like if an intelligent predator species domesticated its prey, and then bred them not just for meat but also for docility and intelligence so that

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armed nor wanting to clash with the police. In both examples, the ‘universal majority’, the numerical minority, feels threatened by the ‘universal minority’, in this case the numerical majority.

<sup>81</sup> These reformers could also be placed in the position of ‘universal majority’, for the revolutionaries will displace them. This indicates that the catalyst for a regime change does not necessarily lie in a totalitarian regime but one that possibly allows for the inability to agree within a party causing all the opportunities for cooperation to disintegrate.

<sup>82</sup> Mary Doria Russell ([MDRSparrow@aol.com](mailto:MDRSparrow@aol.com)). (24 February 2001). *A New Approach*. E-mail to Jason le Grange. ([jasonleg@chollian.net](mailto:jasonleg@chollian.net)).

they could perform specific tasks?” I was thinking of the Runa as a variable species plastic enough to be bred like sheep and like dogs. In the second book, the political issues came forward decisively, of course. But the basic rules of the planet's societies were already set. I happen to believe that's pretty good anthropology. Ecological and economic realities dictate a lot of how cultures work (Russell, 2001: Personal electronic communication) 83.

The Runa fit the definition of the 'universal minority' through the way they are treated by the Jana'ata, and the way in which they negotiate what few rights they have. Although larger in number than the Jana'ata, they believe and accept their fate and find no reason to challenge the Jana'ata. For a racial group to have undergone negative re-enforcement at this level allows for any group doing the re-enforcing to control them.

The following example from *Children of God* illustrates this point: “[They were N]ot kept on short rations by Jana'ata breeders who wished to control their reproductive status and their labor and their lives” (Russell, 1998:299). By nature the Runa are domesticated, caring and functional. They live within the Jana'ata society occupying positions of importance, although not positions of power. Yet the Runa play a political role in Russell's second work, *Children of God* that displaces them from their role as the 'universal minority', which highlights the unpredictability of regimes to remain in power.

This fundamental injustice of being consumed by their 'universal majority' manifests itself into a revolution, changing the 'universal majority' and the 'universal majority', and changing the way each society is empowered and disempowered. It is the visitors from earth, specifically Sofia Mendes<sup>84</sup>, herself a minority on earth owned and

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<sup>83</sup> Mary Doria Russell ([MDRSparrow@aol.com](mailto:MDRSparrow@aol.com)). (24 February 2001). *A New Approach*.. E-mail to Jason le Grange. ([jasonleg@chollian.net](mailto:jasonleg@chollian.net)).

<sup>84</sup> Sofia is a protagonist in the work who through her own issues of oppression, forced prostitution and human trafficking, creates a functional need for fairness in others as a projection of her own injustice.

controlled by a man who bought her intellectual rights, who empowers the Runa in militaristic action against their oppressors.

Sofia witnesses an unnecessary culling which is indirectly caused due to the crew of earthlings,<sup>85</sup> and her simple words to the Runa letting them know the obvious, that there are more Runa than there are Jana'ata, brings about the first moments of understanding of oppression. This becomes the mode of self-release for Sofia. By empowering the Runa, she empowers herself. As continued in *Children of God*, Sofia actively participates in the displacement of the Jana'ata. The injustice that she suffered as a minority becomes the metaphor for and struggle for the Runa. The language of oppression that resulted in its construction is expressed by the Runa to Sofia: "They kept us enslaved and fed us only enough to make us good slaves. Until your people came and showed us what we could feed ourselves as much as we needed, our minds were kept small and slow so that we'd accept our slavery... Never again. Those times are gone forever. We will never be slaves again. Never" (Russell, 1998:375).

The Runa gradually leave the services of the Jana'ata, and with more militance and more fervour start to eliminate their oppressors in the same way that they themselves were massacred (Russell, 1998:374). Through military offences and sheer resilience the Runa are able to take control of Rakhat, extirpate the Jana'ata from the towns and force them into hiding, and scourge and burn any Jana'ata that they find. This is evident as Russel notes: "On Rakhat, a few people do understand that there's something fundamentally unfair about their society, but nobody knows that the culture is

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<sup>85</sup> The humans taught the Runa how to garden, which meant an abundance of food, resulting in the Runa producing more offspring than normal, which the Jana'ata wanted to suppress for power reasons. Any births over the quota considered to be stable were considered excess and were killed. The following

at the tipping point. That, as the lady said on page one, is only ‘predictable in hindsight’” (Russell, 2001: Personal electronic communication)<sup>86</sup>.

Highlighting a further point that the once ‘universal majority’, the Jana’ata, are replaced by the new ‘universal majority’, the Runas’ treatment of the Jana’ata is a simulacrum of their own treatment. “Like sleepers awakening from a dream of impotence, the Runa awoke to their own power and unleashed a force whose potential was previously understood only by the Jana’ata, who had rightly feared it” (Russell, 1998:296). The circle, or spiral of oppression<sup>87</sup> is therefore not broken and continues with a new regime, a new name and no significant change.

In fact, the Jana’ata are facing extinction by the end of the novel and negotiations to have them put into reservations fail<sup>88</sup>, as they are still seen as the enemy. Sofia becomes the fundamentalist patron of the cause to eradicate the Jana’ata and becomes so ghettoized within it that she loses sight of the fact that she knew and even cared for a child of a Jana’ata. Further emphasising the lack of change or movement towards a better world because of the hypocrisy of the ghettoized leaders, Sofia says:

For nearly thirty years, we-[Sofia and the Runa]-but-not-you [Sandoz] fought an enemy whose whole civilization was the purest expression of the most characteristic form of evil: the willingness to erase the humanity of others and turn them into commodities. In life, the Runa were conveniences... slaves, assistants, sex toys. In death, raw materials—meat, hides, bones. Labor first, livestock in the end! But the Runa are more than meat (Russell, 1998:480).

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example from *Children of God* illustrates this: “[E]veryone on the Stella Maris crew had agreed to grow the gardens, and no-one could have anticipated what happened because of them” (Russell, 1998:342).

<sup>86</sup> Mary Doria Russell ([MDRSparrow@aol.com](mailto:MDRSparrow@aol.com)). (24 February 2001). *A New Approach*.. E-mail to Jason le Grange. ([jasonleg@chollian.net](mailto:jasonleg@chollian.net)).

<sup>87</sup> This does not imply that the centre of the spiral is one in which equality exists. Oppression exists at the centre too, but the cycles of repetition are repeated again and again, never allowing for accountability of actions.

<sup>88</sup> The Jana’ata appeal three times to the Runa and Sofia for some space outside that of the ‘universal majority’s’ space, where the Jana’ata will have a better chance of finding food, as now they are in the mountains and eating is difficult. These appeals can be found in *Children of God* on pp. 422,493 and 504.

This cause comes not only from seeing the culling of the Runa, but the guilt of a Jana'ata named Supaari. Supaari was exiled from the Jana'ata because he allowed a daughter to live, one that should have been killed due to Supaari's familial hierarchy. Supaari found refuge amongst the Runa, and slowly the guilt of kindness that he found amongst the Runa started to make him question his eating patterns and the eating patterns of the Jana'ata in general. As he notes, Runa are not the only species from which they can get protein on Rakhat. There are many other species that are edible. This enlightenment leads to his daughter proclaiming about the Jana'ata, "Kill them, one by one-until they trouble us no longer" (Russell, 1998:281). This is what Sofia and the Runa actualize and what becomes the base on which the Jana'ata's downfall is founded. From within, and as Russell suggests, Supaari is the revolutionary who breaks the ice. Thus a comparison can be made to *Country of my Skull* in which Antjie Krog also questions what it is to be white. Supaari is Krog's character in *Country of My Skull*, for he comes from the dominant regime, but through the actions of witnessing a change, or being an agent who listens to the testimonies of the oppressed, wishes to no longer be identified with the oppression, but to be identified in a new space. Both do not want to be associated with what was before, but look to a new space being created.

Trying to reverse the 'Othering' process in Russell's work fails, although it is attempted. This is in a large part due to the fact that the Runa were consumed by the Jana'ata and therefore do not feel that that the Jana'ata should be negotiated with. There are certain groups of Jana'ata who try to do good, do not eat Runa and try to survive in a utopian community: "She [Ha'anala] founded a sort of utopian society up in the mountains. It's probably doomed—like all utopias. But she tried! All three of our species live together up there, Sofia—Runa, Jana'ata even Isaac [Sofia's son]" (Russell,

1998:483). The founder of this community is Ha'anala, the child that Sofia helped to raise. Although unwelcome amongst her own people, she realises that eating Runa is not ethically correct. All her life she is aware that the balance of power is incorrect. When speaking to her prospective husband she proclaims, "It is wrong to eat Runa" (Russell, 1998:359). She is a negotiator trying to change people's thinking rather than taking up arms to do so. "Ha'anala could not, would not, turn against Runa, whom she loved and understood; neither could she idly witness the destruction of her own kind" (Russell, 1998:359). The paradox for any revolutionary is the possible oppression that could happen after the revolution has occurred and with no way to successfully negotiate a powerless society.

Ha'anala sets up a camp in the mountains welcoming all the Jana'ata that have been displaced by the war, though their ability to stay in the village is subject to giving up eating Runa. For many it is a struggle, with some members of the Jana'ata attacking others for compromising their 'innate' make up and rights to eat Runa. However, Hana'ala is able to negotiate with them, allowing those that wish to stay to stay and those that do not to join a band of vigilante Jana'ata in the hills. Russell includes the struggles with newfound positions of power displacement, which generates the mirror between utopia and anti-utopia. For utopia, as Kumar suggests, allows one reading to be defined as utopian, while another reading of the same situation could be defined as anti-utopian. The displaced Ja'anata represent the revolutionaries, post-power, adjusting to new discourse of identity and possible suffering.

Ha'anala, however, can not seem to find a way to negotiate with the new 'universal majority', the Runa, as by their definition all Jana'ata are bad. "[T]here were Jana'ata who were good and decent, that justice could become tainted with revenge.

But she knew what the people thought of those who collaborated with the *djanada*, no matter how nuanced, her words would be understood for treachery” (Russell, 1998:362). For members of the new majority and Sofia, who is ghettoized into the cause, they refuse to negotiate, bringing about more pain and destruction. Ha’anala does not abnegate her responsibility in trying to negotiate on behalf of the Jana’ata who wish to co-exist with the Runa in a space where they will at least be comfortable. “We’re [the Jana’ata] not asking them [the Runa] for anything. Just leave us alone. Let us live” (Russell, 1998:455).

At the end of the novel the ominous reality is known as the Jana’ata are denied their reservation in which to live, although they are not hunted as much. Oppression has replaced oppression, the Jana’ata originally oppressed the Runa, and when the Runa attained power they oppressed the Jana’ata. Russell’s validation that not all people in a system are bad indicates her deeper understanding of human nature. Even though she does it through the world of aliens, their systems clearly resemble the systems within the contemporary world.

### **The Language of Minority**

The language Russell uses offers a utopian possibility, for there is empowerment offered as a result of redefining and re-writing language, in large part to renegotiate the language of difference. Language has too often been used to disempower. One word is normally tagged onto a minority by the ‘ruling majority’, who are then labeled and have the name branded on them as the signifier of their minority status. This tattoo of language may be condemned in public, but out of the public eye, out of reach from the censors, these words impact, cause hate, and fester into hate crimes. The ‘ruling

majority' very rarely thinks of the people behind the name, for the name itself bears the brand of 'other' and people are reduced to a word, to a negative response. All of this is a result of the language of difference.

Many minority groups are aware of the power of language to kill and maim. Matthew Shepard<sup>89</sup> is an example of this, beaten to death and left to die as a scarecrow on a fence, because he was a 'fag'. The human in Shepard disappeared and was replaced with a non-person, a word, a piece of hateful language. Shepard's death is an example of words that have the power to kill. These minorities have found ways to negotiate with the language and move towards re-empowering themselves. An example of this is found in Gloria Naylor, whose work *A Question of Language* (2001), indicates that a person of colour calling another person of colour "nigger", is a way of gaining power over negative language. By taking the power away from the hateful word, the minority takes space that would otherwise be occupied with prejudice, and, in Brecht's terms, 'alienate' the word from the people it is referring to. The minority are aware that the 'universal majority' and all those that create hate are not going to change, and words like Jew, nigger, fag, honky and Guido are part of the 'canon' of oppression, leaving them no way to change them. Thus, their alternative for negotiating space it is to reduce the hurtful power of the language by using it for their own purposes.

Russell has an example of language empowerment in *Children of God*. Until the revolution between the Jana'ata and Runa is realised, the Runa have been imaged and

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<sup>89</sup> Mathew Shepard's death became the signifier of hate crimes against people of alternative sexuality. Shepard was an American university student who was brutally beaten to death by two fellow students after disclosing his sexuality to them. After being beaten, he was tied to a fence like a scarecrow, and left to die. The aftermath of his death caused a public outcry as pro-family lobbyists descended onto the town in which he was killed and tried to disrupt the funeral. Thus Shepard, by alternative sexuality definition, is the

associated with 'meat'. Members of the Earth party are aware of the hierarchy of language associated with meat. Sofia, the most aware of the power that the language holds says, "The meat defiant, the meat insurgent, the meat fighting... The meat in full cry" (Russell, 1998:386). Sofia hopes that the commodity of meat will be replaced so that it will never have to be imaged in that way again, making the nature of language self-conscious.

Similarly, although not said in the same way that Sofia says it (as a form of intellectual reasoning and reflection), a Runa army member named Puska ridicules the language. She is Runa, and her fate would have been to become meat, so when she proclaims, "Oh, eat me", to the scandalized laughter of the other girls... and she had chosen the mildest of vulgarities that came to mind" (Russell, 1998:326), she is in fact disempowering the language of hate, by reclaiming the power from it.

Who can and cannot use this language is also defined in the example set above. Puska finds herself to be victim of a joke between herself and Hana'ala concerning the concept of meat. Puska comments on what Hana'ala is eating, remembering that Hana'ala is Jana'ata, and when she jokes she implies to Puska that she has no alternative but to eat her and makes a move as to eat Puska, Puska responds with anger, "Consider the alternative," Ha'anala said, shooting a foot out to grip Puska's ankle. 'Oh, Puska! Someone was joking!' she cried when Puska jumped and wrenched her leg free. 'Well don't. Don't ever joke like that!' Puska shuddered" (Russell, 1998:328). For Puska, a Runa, to use the language is acceptable, as she is a member

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representative of the power hate speech has. Hate speech has the power to kill. Thus language should be held accountable for Shepard's death.

of the group that is identified with that word, but no one from the 'universal majority' can use the word, as even as a joke it is disempowering.

Making these kinds of statements are also offensive to people that are not comfortable with the use of negative language. Some find that outside of the cycle of oppression those who use the words forget the power of what it is to hate. Regardless of the subversive nature of the word, hate will be perpetuated should these words be used.

### **The Utopian Possibility**

**“I’m far too old and cranky to persist in any notions about utopias. I don’t think they exist. I don’t believe in dystopias either. About all I’d be willing to say in a general sort of way is, there are more or less coherent political cultures here and there, now and then, and they all work well for 10 percent of the population and they are all awful for another 10 percent of the population, and the remaining 80 percent just muddle along from day to day. My books reflect that attitude. Some people thrive, others suffer, and most people just keep their heads down and take care of themselves and their families, day by day”**<sup>90</sup> (Russell, 2000: Personal electronic communication).

It should be noted that in the statistic that Russell offers there is a kind of hierarchy or existence of 'Other'. The 10 percent of the population that 'it works for' is the small group that benefits from the ideology. This is not meant as an attack on

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<sup>90</sup> Mary Doria Russell ([MDRSparrow@aol.com](mailto:MDRSparrow@aol.com)). (14 November 2000). *Utopia*. E-mail to Jason le Grange. ([jasonleg@chollian.net](mailto:jasonleg@chollian.net)).

Russell's comment, for within lies a valuable analysis that has similarities to one that was offered in the beginning of this work. For the 80 percent that 'muddle along', these are the core group that make up the 'universal majority's' control point. The 10 percent "that it works for" are able to manipulate and coerce the rest into accepting their point of view. Antonio Gramsci concludes when looking at the role and functions of the state that one "is to raise the great mass of the population to a particular cultural and moral level, a level which corresponds to the needs of the productive forces of development and hence to the interests of the ruling classes" (Moylan, 1986:17). But there is also the utopian converse, of this, which is the move towards better understanding of how society can be positively influenced. As Russell notes, in a comment that can serve as a counterweight to the one above, "Modern South Africa and Revolutionary America are both extraordinarily fortunate in their founding fathers. Nelson Mandela and George Washington were remarkable in their abilities to preside over revolutionary reforms, achieved with minimal violence"<sup>91</sup> (Russell, 2001: Personal electronic communication).

The final utopian possibility lies in the novum of going to space, to try and find the unknown. A possibly better society could offer the architecture of change needed to reform ideology on this planet, which is exactly the possibility Russell explores. The humans that have ventured into space are doing so on a whim, thinking that they will meet some extraordinary culture. The humans that have ventured to this planet in search of their utopia, a place that communicates with music, find themselves also subject to the rules and values of the new space. The reason that the humans go into space in the first instance is because they pick up a sound wave from Rakhat, singing, and like what they hear: "They aren't totally naive, but they are subconsciously assuming

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<sup>91</sup> Mary Doria Russell ([MDRSparrow@aol.com](mailto:MDRSparrow@aol.com)). (24 February 2001). *A New Approach*. E-mail to Jason le Grange. ([jasonleg@chollian.net](mailto:jasonleg@chollian.net)).

that if you like the songs, you'll like the singers"<sup>92</sup> (Russell, 2001: Personal electronic communication).

It is maybe for this reason that they try so hard to impact the Runa, by choosing to educate them about their oppression from a 'Western' perspective in the way they do. This disempowers them in the sense that they come with their Western world ideology and try to impact the society that they have come to, while still trying to negotiate a space for themselves. Where they fail is simply through numbers. They are unable to sustain the small group that they have, and people die. In the end, through disease and poison, there is only one person left. In essence this man, the protagonist Emilio, is left behind. He represents the ultimate minority and becomes the guinea pig to this nation. In the end he is brutally raped, and reduced to a concubine in a harem. Sans humanity, he becomes the minority of humanity.<sup>93</sup>

This is an appropriate end to the first novel. 'Sophisticated societies' try to impact other less 'sophisticated societies' in a quest for worldwide 'utopian' branding. These 'sophisticated societies' believe that they are there to save, communicate and re-educate those that they meet, re-imagining their 'sophisticated utopia' onto the unsophisticated society. Emilio is a representative of that, and when he is left with nothing, it is a reminder to the world, that respect, more than anything else, should be the key to negotiating spaces with other societies and within societies.

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<sup>92</sup> Mary Doria Russell ([MDRSparrow@aol.com](mailto:MDRSparrow@aol.com)). (24 February 2001). *A New Approach*. E-mail to Jason le Grange. ([jasonleg@chollian.net](mailto:jasonleg@chollian.net)).

<sup>93</sup> Although Russell feels differently, "I hate to keep arguing with you. But I think that I was more focused on God not being able to live up to Emilio's expectations. Unconsciously, Emilio feels that he's signed a contract stipulating that if he is good and patient and works hard, and concentrates his life on serving God, then God will reward him in some way that he can recognize as a reward. But God's signature isn't on that contract. He's got a universe to run, and He's not micromanaging it to suit little Emilio Sandoz, even though he's a hell of a nice guy" Mary Doria Russell ([MDRSparrow@aol.com](mailto:MDRSparrow@aol.com)). (24 February 2001). *A New Approach*. E-mail to Jason le Grange. ([jasonleg@chollian.net](mailto:jasonleg@chollian.net)).

## Joe Haldeman

Haldeman also constructs opportunities and spaces for minorities in his work. His recent novel *The Coming* is one such example of the renegotiating minority working with the 'universal majority'. His other works, *Forever War* and *Forever Free*, also have a strong minority presence.

Haldeman firmly believes that he is not a utopian writer and can only be classified as a dystopian writer. "I don't think I've ever written about a utopia. Lots of dystopias" (Haldeman, 2000: Personal electronic communication)<sup>94</sup>. Haldeman looks to the perfect Utopian definition (Book 2 in More's *Utopia*) as reflecting what utopia is. His books reflect nothing of this perfect society. Therefore, he is justified, on one level, in stating that his works are not utopian. But if one considers his work with reference to Moylan's critical utopia, then it could be considered utopian.

In fact, in his work *The Forever War*, the constant changing ideology of the ruling party and the displacement, by declaring war and fighting within in different time frames (galaxies light years away), means that the enemy is easily changeable. By using time travel, crossing back and forth through space travel and always arriving back on earth decades later, Mandala and Marygay, the protagonists of the novel, move through different governance regimes. Due to the nature of change and not being able to watch and analyse the changes happening within the societies, they are left feeling alienated from them. Unlike other regimes that change with time, allowing the people who are part

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<sup>94</sup> Joe Haldeman ([Haldeman@mit.edu](mailto:Haldeman@mit.edu)). (26 November 2000). *Writing Utopias*. E-mail to Jason le Grange. ([jasonleg@chollian.net](mailto:jasonleg@chollian.net)).

of the society to change with them, these characters have to adapt immediately to the new regime.

Haldeman comments that utopia is a place where there is no conflict, where dialogue and communication channels are so well developed that the very idea of conflict is no longer in existence. More's *Utopia* is such a place. What makes utopia appealing to any reader is the difference between the 'perfect well-developed' society, and contemporary society. Haldeman would never fit into the category of writing a story that is reflective of a well-developed society, free and fair and without conflict. For Haldeman, like most writers, conflict is the very core of the storytelling tradition, and Haldeman's definition of utopia is: "I immediately think of the common meaning of the word, a theoretically perfect society. There's also a 'cautionary' implication for me as a science fiction writer. If you write about an environment that is literally utopian, you're probably going to write a boring story, because the essence of storytelling is conflict" (Haldeman, 2000: Personal electronic communication)<sup>95</sup>. However, utopian works, like Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (1887), are not considered boring. The distance felt from this kind of society is considered the point of interest, as it is so alienated from contemporary society.

Haldeman argues against the theory of utopia as presented in this work because, for him, it limits the possibility of what utopia is. "I think the statement necessarily limits the definition of a utopia. That is, you're saying that the world in which they live is a fine for those in power, but unpleasant for those who are not. So to my way of thinking it's not a utopia at all—just business as usual" (Haldeman, 2000: Personal electronic

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<sup>95</sup>Joe Haldeman ([Haldeman@mit.edu](mailto:Haldeman@mit.edu)). (26 November 2000). *Writing Utopias*. E-mail to Jason le Grange. ([jasonleg@chollian.net](mailto:jasonleg@chollian.net)).

communication)<sup>96</sup>. Yet, “business as usual” is a practical example of utopia. Utopia has changed its definition, and the evolution of utopia is what we find today in the writings of authors like Haldeman. Haldeman offers hope to many of his minority readers. He identifies issues that a contemporary audience realises as mirroring those of their world, not one in the future. This alienation technique does make for some thoughts of social change, and a workable utopia to be aspired to. By the end of *The Forever War*, after moving through multiple regimes of heterosexual and homosexual dominance, the protagonists are able to go to their ‘utopian’ planet, where they are allowed to live as they wish, which in itself is utopian. It offers the choice to the characters of existing in a space in which their identity politics are recognised and respected.

Haldeman goes on to argue that, like the definition of what a ‘universal minority’ may be it is not a numerical one. He uses the word “outs”, to emphasise those that do not fit into the ruling ‘universal majority’s’ idea of what is “in”: “I guess the minority are the people who are ‘outs—that is, they don’t have to be a minority in the sense of numbers. Women were a minority in Victorian America, for instance, their civil rights limited by law, but there were more women than men” (Haldeman, 2000: Personal electronic communication)<sup>97</sup>. Exclusion in any sense, as Haldeman reflects, is his idea of “outs.” It is a signifier of minority; a minority not afforded equality in the equation of that which is “in.” The importance of this statement is clearly evident in his novel *The Coming*, where his protagonist’s husband is an “out,” a homosexual living in the closet and married to survive in the ruling majorities “in” world. Similarly, Haldeman’s

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<sup>96</sup> Joe Haldeman ([Haldeman@mit.edu](mailto:Haldeman@mit.edu)). (26 November 2000). *Writing Utopias*. E-mail to Jason le Grange. ([jasonleg@chollian.net](mailto:jasonleg@chollian.net)).

<sup>97</sup> Joe Haldeman ([Haldeman@mit.edu](mailto:Haldeman@mit.edu)). (26 November 2000). *Writing Utopias*. E-mail to Jason le Grange. ([jasonleg@chollian.net](mailto:jasonleg@chollian.net)).

comments about Victorian America are reflective of the ideology that numerical majorities are not always the 'universal majority'.

Similarly, for Haldeman, the oppression that the minority undergoes is not as a result of their actions, but the subscription and ideology that the then power asserts over the controlling group. In *The Forever War*, it is the intellectual minority that is sent off to war to fight the alien 'evil'. The ruling 'majority' has a need and the 'intellectual minority' is able to provide it. This, as Haldeman has said, was a mirroring of what Vietnam was for him. He felt that he had been sent off as an agent of the government, but one without a voice, to be used as a being that could go on behalf of the ruling regime to remove what was considered undesirable by that regime, but not necessarily by the person acting as the agent of that regime. Haldeman tries to find a balance for what he considers "business as usual", and, for him life seems to be a reflection of Kumar's mirror of utopia and dystopia.

Haldeman's attempts to understand how minority concerns lie within the parameters of oppression. "I don't think you can generalize. The Jews in Nazi Germany were not responsible for their oppression; nor were African black people who were sold to slave traders in Africa and brought to America. There are more subtle kinds of oppression. In some Moslem communities, women have severely restricted legal rights—but they also run almost every aspect of everyday life. It seems to be a comfortable trade-off for them; they have a satisfying social life with other women, and no problems with self-esteem, because they understand the system and, in a sense, are in control of it. Yet if you were to say, 'this minority is responsible for its own repression,' you would be at least partly right" (Haldeman, 2000: Personal electronic

communication)<sup>98</sup>. The politics of minority identity cannot be explained in simplistic terms, for a paradox exists in the resulting nature of identity construction. As Haldeman suggests it is the “subtle kinds of oppressions” that restrict and empower the minority. Ultimately it is a system, and once the system is understood, possibility opens up.

Thus, Haldeman explores many areas of minority interest in his work. His wit and ability to subvert ideas make for an interesting parody of today’s world without having to be confrontational about it. The benefit of writing in science fiction is that nothing is explained in black and white terms. Haldeman seems to work comfortably in this area.

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<sup>98</sup> Joe Haldeman ([Haldeman@mit.edu](mailto:Haldeman@mit.edu)). (26 November 2000). *Writing Utopias*. E-mail to Jason le Grange. ([jasonleg@chollian.net](mailto:jasonleg@chollian.net)).

## Marge Piercy

Utopian theorists have recognised Marge Piercy for her political novel *Woman on the Edge of Time*. This work has been referenced in multiple disciplines in utopian studies, Feminism and other literary discourses.

Marge Piercy marks utopia as a specific literary genre, not as one based in political or social theory: “It is a literary genre’, more openly ideological and political than most” (Piercy, 2000: Personal Communication)<sup>99</sup>. By indicating that it is more “openly ideological” indicates the notion that the work is not based in the complexities of theory, but in fact accessible to be analysed and understood from an ideological point of view. This definition of utopia is possibility within her writing. Although she defines herself to be outside the writings of utopia, her work is “more openly ideological and political,” as seen in *He, She and It* (1991) and *Woman on the Edge of Time*.

When first presented with the idea behind this thesis Piercy said, “It appears to me that you are working with a particular thesis in mind and are trying to fit writers into it. There isn’t a majority posited in *Woman on the Edge of Time*. In *He, She and It*, there are minorities, but the majority (those who live on Glop) are certainly disenfranchised by the corporate minorities” (Piercy, 2000: Personal Communication)<sup>100</sup>. Piercy believes that this thesis was founded in theory, and after that practical examples were sought. However, one only has to read *Woman on the Edge of Time* (the source for the original idea behind this thesis) to realise the utopian possibilities within it. The majority in the work is represented by a hospital in which mental patients have been committed. The

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<sup>99</sup> Piercy, M (7 December 2000). *Writing Utopias*. Unpublished letter to le Grange, J.

<sup>100</sup> Piercy, M (7 December 2000). *Writing Utopias*. Unpublished letter to le Grange, J.

majority are the doctors. Moylan agrees with this idea, and *Woman on the Edge of Time* was included in his work on critical utopias in *Demand the Impossible*. Nonetheless, Piercy asserts: “All the business about minority and majority is not relevant for me since I live in a pluralistic society where nobody seems to be in the majority any longer, as seen by our recent Presidential election<sup>101</sup>” (Piercy, 2000: Personal Communication)<sup>102</sup>.

Yet, in its political principles, there are many examples of why *Woman on the Edge of Time* could be classified as a utopian work, as seen in the comparisons between *Woman on the Edge of Time* and *Utopia*. More’s *Utopia* could be placed in the category of a pluralistic society. Although a prince or magistrate presides over the land (More, 1997:32-33), he has limited power to make decisions. All people share power, and all decisions lie within the community. In the alternative reality of Mattapoisett in *Woman on the Edge of Time*, the same kind of power sharing exists. Geographically the city no longer exists, and in its place remain small rural communities. The work done in Mattapoisett is physical, where all members of the community, both male and female, are involved in manual labour: “We do more physical work than most did in your time, I believe” (Piercy, 1990: 59). This sharing of physical work in utopia also exists: “Agriculture is that which is universally understood among them, that no person, either man or woman, is ignorant of it... where they not only see others at work, but are likewise exercised in it themselves” (More, 1997:33).

Due to the fact that both the Mattapoisett society and the society of Utopia are not based on capital output and money, not all the time is spent in the fields working. With the philosophy that there will be enough food to feed them, the rest of the time in

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<sup>101</sup> George W. Bush won the 2000 American Presidential election. This was not through a popular vote but an electoral vote.

both communities is available for personal advancement in education, arts and crafts, and other pursuits of pleasure: “How many hours does it take to grow food and make useful objects? Beyond that we care for our brooder, cook in our fooder, care for animals, do basic routines like cleaning, politic and meet. That leaves hours to talk, to study, to play, to love, to enjoy the river” (Piercy, 1990:120). The similarity to More’s work is salient: “[t]he rest of their time besides that taken up in work, eating and sleeping, is left to every man’s discretion; yet they are not to abuse that interval to luxury and idleness, but must employ it in some proper exercise according to their various inclinations, which is for the most part reading” (More, 1997:34). Other similarities can be found in raising children, eating, the government, moral conduct, resolving conflict, the military and money.<sup>103</sup>

Although Piercy may believe in the pluralistic society that she refers to in her interview, this is quite different from the worlds she creates in her writings. Pluralism by dictionary definition is “a form of society with many minority groups and cultures” (Pollard ed., 1994:615). Yet there are definite minorities referenced in the work of Piercy. In *Woman on the Edge of Time*, Connie is a representation of a Latin-American minority. In the real world that she inhabits she is constantly discriminated against due to her racial origins. The other character that is significant is Skip. He is a different minority, a homosexual undergoing ‘being re-sexualized’. The doctors at the hospital and his parents are trying to remove his homosexual desires. His parents are trying to re-program him, so that he will fit in with their milieu, even if the reaction will mean loss of identity for Skip. Both these minority groups, Hispanics and homosexuals, try to find

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<sup>102</sup> Piercy, M (7 December 2000). *Writing Utopias*. Unpublished letter to le Grange, J.

<sup>103</sup> In *Woman on the Edge of Time*, raising children pg. 67, eating pg. 68, government pg. 142-3, moral conduct pg. 112, resolving conflict 200-201, military operations pg. 216 and money pg. 241-2. In *Utopia*,

spaces that are safe, where they are able to live in an equal opportunity space, and where they are not discriminated against because of their sexuality or race. The dystopia of Earth is juxtaposed to the utopian society on Mattapoissett. Therefore, for Piercy to say that there are no minorities indicates a difference in definition.

Unlike Russell's work that hints at a successful utopian agency or Haldeman's utopia which is only realized at the end of the book, the cognitive estrangement evident in Piercy's work is sustained throughout the work. The utopian agency is not realized as such, but rather as a utopia already in place. *Woman on the Edge of Time* moves between a world, Mattapoissett, where utopian agency allows its citizens certain freedoms, where power is in balance and where minorities are recognized as different but not 'Other' and a world, the contemporary world, where these liberties and freedoms are ignored, marginalized and defined as 'Other'.

The hospital that Connie has been admitted to is a representation of the contemporary world. Moylan notes this as "Connie and the other patients—non-white, female, aged, young, gay of various non-rational bents—are second class citizens and victims of an establishment of white, middle-class, male doctors and psychologists" (Moylan, 1986:127). In the hospital, those with the power are "white male doctors." They can be labeled as the 'universal majority', subjecting their power and control over the minority. In this case the minority are of multiple races, genders and sexualities, which are seen as 'Other'. The 'universal minority' are critical in the hospital in *Woman on the Edge of Time*, for Piercy offers the reader some distance from them, and in this case that distance is 'madness', madness that is defined, controlled and constructed to

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raising children pg. 37 and 79, eating pg. 40, government pg. 32, moral conduct pg. 48-49, resolving conflict pg. 33, military operations pg. 64 and money pg. 45

disempower even the sanest, for the definition is adaptable for the doctors to use at their will.

Natalie Rosinsky, feminist literary critic, analyses how, in *Woman on the Edge of Time*, the utopian space of Mattapoissett, in which utopian agency is realized, has parallel characters of the minorities in the hospital. In the hospital the characters are programmed, oppressed and generally mistreated, whereas in Mattapoissett Rosinsky notes, "their parallels in Mattapoissett- Luciente [Connie], Jackrabbit [Skip], and Diana [Sybil] lead happy and productive lives"(1984:92). The utopian possibility of these minorities being acceptable in society is one that offers hope. People living on the borderline of poverty like Connie, who through this system are forced to become dehumanized, would not be held responsible for the breakdown that they suffer. Skip would not have to feel alienated, for heteronormativity is not the dominant discourse. Sybil, who is considered 'witchlike', would be free to follow her own spirituality.

The world of Mattapoissett has realized this utopian agency, but not through a practical system such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission or a journey of reversal, for, as has been stated, the dual worlds run parallel with each other, even though the one world that of Mattapoissett is in the future. Thus cognitive estrangement is the only way to realize this world and the didactic nature of the work evolves as the reader compares the two realities presented to him/her. The novum in this case allows the reader to feel alienated from the world in which s/he exists, the contemporary world, and long for the imaginary world of Mattapoissett. This in itself helps to realize that utopian agency, for the reader is empowered to emulate all that is good about Mattapoissett.

Marge Piercy has also been able to merge minority rights in her writing. In two of her works she successfully negotiates a space for her minorities within the existing social structure. The fundamental difference between Piercy's world and that which we find ourselves in today is that she has made a space where minorities have not only a safe space, but a space where they are not in conflict with a majority. In *He, She and It*, the world has been split into "multis" which are governments that are made up of organizations that are corporate, similar to Huxley's *Brave New World*. All groups that do not wish to be part of these multis are able to survive on the outskirts, assuming the identity of freetowns. The comparison between the two, one which is run as a company with rules, social codes and so on, is contrasted with an ecological town that values old traditions, humanity and a place where the minority who choose to live in it are embraced and not imaged as other. The community of Tikva, the freetown in which the novel is set, is mainly Jewish. Tikva is not the only community that has renegotiated its space within the world. A settlement in what was once Israel is another example, where women, specifically, have found a community that is free from some of the patriarchal hierarchies that exist in the multis. These freetowns on the periphery are constantly negotiating with the multis. In order to survive, they have no choice but to do this.

Contrasting the freetowns to Thomas More's *Utopia*, they are much closer to creating an identity than the multis. The freetowns exist as commercial as well as humanist centres. The inhabitants have choice and understanding, but also have the opportunity for personal freedom that a multi would not allow, just as More's Utopians were allowed education, were free of desire in a capitalist sense, and were keen to help and do good for other communities.

In *Woman on the Edge of Time*, the majority of the characters live in a society based on power. Connie, as a woman living on welfare, Hispanic and single, is at the bottom of the hierarchy of minorities. This is evident when her niece's gangster boyfriend beats her up as well as her niece, and her brother wants her committed to a mental institution because he believes her to be the unstable party, fragmenting truth. Connie lost her child due to the pressures of living on the poverty line for so long, as a victim of society. Rather than seeing Connie as a woman trapped into a social system people see Connie as a 'woman' with mental illness. Being Hispanic is a further problem with which she has to contend. Through the power of the medical fraternity, Connie is institutionalized and rendered powerless: "Once she had heard a social worker talking about Puerto Ricans, or 'them' as they were called in that clinic, saying that 'they' got old fast and died young" (Piercy, 1990:27). This is contrasted very strongly with the world of Mattapoissett where the world is based on your skills and their benefit to the rest of the community. The group on Mattapoissett live in a completely well defined utopia, sharing information through computers and enjoying other such advantages.

"I don't believe a perfect society can exist any more than a 'perfect' anything. That's a theoretical concept, not a real one. In the real world, peonies have ants and everybody dies. The problems change, that's all, and ordinary people have more freedom, more of what they need" (Piercy, 2001: Personal electronic communication)<sup>104</sup>. Piercy's belief that there is no perfect society is valid, as there will never be one, but what Piercy offers is a path by which minorities can try and negotiate their way into the ghetto of the 'universal majority', whether it is to highlight the difference of the living conditions of the Jews today in comparison to the holocaust, or to illustrate the history of

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<sup>104</sup> Piercy, M. ([hagolem@c4.net](mailto:hagolem@c4.net)). (28 March 2001). *Minority Representation*. E-mail to le Grange, J. ([jasonleg@chollian.net](mailto:jasonleg@chollian.net)).

persecution that the Jews have been subject to, the fact that 'problems change' but not much else does.

In the chapter on *Woman on the Edge of Time* in *Demand the Impossible*, Moylan looks at the practical reality required to bring about the change that Piercy envisions. These steps come from what Moylan believes are Piercy's understandings of the reality of society: "She makes clear to the reader that the future is not a matter of inevitable victory for the oppressed of the world and that the present structures of power are immense and require careful, courageous, and collective work by all the forces of opposition to shape history in favor of social revolution" (Moylan, 1986:137). It is the "collective work" by the minorities that limits the "social revolution" Piercy hopes for. As has been argued, the minority is not a homogenous group working for social change, but fragmented groups alienated and removed from each other through the hierarchy of minority. Thus, the change cannot come from the collective action of the group as Piercy suggests. Piercy's is noted for her ideology of a future space where equality is valued. This is considered by Moylan as a base from which to create a necessary architecture towards building the bridge for the social revolution that could signal the break of the cycle of oppression. Moylan acknowledges that Piercy calls for an alliance, a system to create the collective. Thus Piercy's role in utopian studies is significant for, if the ideas in the following quote were realised, they could lead to utopia:

The ideological message of *Woman on the Edge of Time* is that of the need for an alliance of those seeking human emancipation informed by a feminist, socialist, ecological, libertarian, and liberation politics. It calls for a collective action and cooperation among members of racial, ethnic or national groups, workers, neighborhoods organizers, mental health and education reformers, anti-nuclear, anti-military, anti-intervention activist, radical ecologists, and others in the diverse lot opposed to the dominant system (Moylan, 1986:146).

Marge Piercy looks at the art of writing as not based within rules and structures, but as an art form and forum by which to bring about change, as she says, “[a] utopian novel has to be at least as well written as any other kind” (Piercy, 2000: Personal Communication)<sup>105</sup>. It could be said that Piercy’s work *Woman on the Edge of Time* is one such example in which the blue print of utopian agency exists.

### **Writing Minorities/Creating Change**

Russell, Haldeman and Piercy do not write minorities into their writing in the same ways. Russell’s work is multi-cultural; Haldeman’s is critical of systems and Piercy’s outlines a utopian agency. Yet each writer’s work has clearly defined ‘universal minorities’ and ‘universal majorities’ and creates an alternative space for negotiation with the majority and the potential reversal of the ‘Othering’ process. Although writing in different time frames or even in different decades, the oppression and prejudice that minority groups’ face and their subsequent negotiation are in the forefront of their work. Utopia according to them is not the genre, which they wish to be associated. Yet, each work clearly defines a space for minorities and systems that mirror Moylan’s ‘critical utopia’.

This chapter has looked at how writers write minorities or majorities into their work. The first part of the chapter outlined the methodology used to conduct the research. The outcome of the research was then placed into three subsequent sections focusing on the three authors that were interviewed. The idea of the ‘universal minority’ and the ‘universal majority’ were explored in the authors’ work to help further understand the concepts of defined in chapter two, with a focus on race and sexuality. The next

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<sup>105</sup>Piercy, M (7 December 2000). *Writing Utopias*. Unpublished letter to le Grange, J.

chapter further explores how the breakdown of negotiation can lead to a spiral of oppression, using the Holocaust as a case study.

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## **Chapter Five**

### **The Holocaust**

**We know that at least eighteen million Europeans passed through the system, that at least eleven million died in it, and that at least four million died at Auschwitz/Birkenau alone. We know that the Nazis murdered approximately six million Jews. The Nazis also purposefully and systematically murdered at least another five million non-Jews (Feig in Berenbaum ed, 1990:162).**

In this chapter the failed spiral of oppression will be discussed with regard to the Holocaust. Unlike the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission that was able to reverse the 'Othering' process, post-Holocaust actions and the Nuremberg trials were unable to do this. For this analysis, the Holocaust has been chosen as an example of how history may have been re-written, but in fact has not been due to minorities not being able to take ownership of this experience.

The Holocaust is a loaded word filled with multiple meanings. This is largely due to the event in the Second World War in which eleven million people were killed in a genocide that has now become synonymous with the word Holocaust. The Holocaust is representative on a grand scale of the 'Othering' process found in the Four-step Model and there are multiple examples of this process found in the history of this Holocaust. One of these would be the way that homosexuals found a safe space in Germany in the 20s, only to be pushed rapidly into the position of 'Other' by the mid-1930s.

Magnus Hirschfeld<sup>106</sup> had set up his Institute for Sexual Research in 1919 and sexuality studies were prevalent. Through texts like Christopher Isherwood's *Christopher and His Kind*, sexuality seemed to be fairly open. Paragraph 175<sup>107</sup> of the penal code in Germany outlawed or criminalized homosexuality, but Hirschfeld and Isherwood make no references to people being arrested for their sexuality in the 20s<sup>108</sup>, so this law was in fact not used. Thus it could be said that homosexuality shared a recognized space in Germany in the 20s. In fact there were even members of the Nazi party who were gay, like Ernst Roehm.

However, as happens in the second stage of the four step model, when one group feels another is an impediment to their power or a detriment to their own group, differences are labeled and one group is labeled as the minority. In this case, members of Hitler's inner core felt a threat from homosexuals in the party and, on the Night of the Long Knives, Ernst Roehm was murdered, creating an imbalance of power. This happened systematically with stage three, in which difference was recorded and registered. The law, Paragraph 175, was then used to persecute homosexuals and place them into the space of 'Other'. Homosexuals were not the only group to suffer, for the Holocaust is mostly linked to the suffering of the six million Jews who died within internment camps. The same process of 'Othering' belongs to all groups that died in the Holocaust. For the Jews, the language of difference was recorded in the "Final Solution", Hitler's plan to rid Europe of all Jews. For the Gypsies, the same Final Solution would

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<sup>106</sup> Hirschfeld has campaigned to have Paragraph 175 repealed. In 1921 he was attacked at one of his assemblies for his proactive gay stance, although this was not done by the government. The first government action against Hirschfeld came on the 6 May 1933 when they destroyed the Institute and burnt the books in his library.

<sup>107</sup> "In Germany a nation-wide ordinance had existed since 1871 in the shape of Section 175 of the Reich Penal Code" (Grau, 1995:1). Section 175 identified homosexuality as something deviant and thus prosecutable. This code existed to control reproduction and general morality.

<sup>108</sup> In fact there were movements to have Paragraph 175 repealed. See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gay\\_rights\\_timeline#1920s](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gay_rights_timeline#1920s) Accessed on the 12 May 2004.

have been their fate. For physically disabled people, their bodies became the language of difference which led to the 'Othering' process. They all, however, were placed into a category of victims of the Holocaust. Thus all equal in their oppression.<sup>109</sup>

In this chapter, the Holocaust is deconstructed from a minority perspective, largely focusing on homosexual victims, to indicate how hierarchies are formed, 'Othering' is done, and ways in which the changing 'universal minority' negotiates with the dominant regime, or is displaced, as will be seen in the way compensation is problematic with regard to the survivors of the Holocaust. The chapter comprises of an introduction questioning Hitler's utopian vision as contrasted to the dystopian vision implied for women in another science fiction text that rewrites history. This is followed by an analysis of how minorities were labeled and treated in concentration camps during the Second World War. The validity of labeling the Holocaust as a Jewish experience, while ignoring the other non-Jewish victims, and the subsequent hierarchies of compensation and knowledge production which were created as a result of this labeling is then discussed, with reference to the previous section discussing the hierarchy of minorities. Ultimately, all of these points are shown as leading to the spiral of oppression, for there has been no level negotiating process by which all groups are able to be recognized as valid participants in the negotiation process. Thus it is left up to science fiction texts to rewrite history, specifically looking at the cases of the allies losing the war and the implications of this act, for the reversal of the 'Othering' process that still remains to be successful.

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<sup>109</sup> This however is not felt by Jewish historians and academics, who believe the Final Solution to be a uniquely Jewish experience. This will be discussed in detail at the end of this chapter. See Finkelstein (2000) *The Holocaust Industry*.

The Holocaust has come to mean, as Norman Finkelstein<sup>110</sup> notes, an image of the “worst crime against humanity.” There is no doubt that there is a severity accorded to the Holocaust, but this is a further example for a definition of the ‘spiral of oppression’, for it is impossible to label any atrocity as having more value than another. After the Holocaust experience, humanity has made no great changes in the way it has responded to atrocity, rendering its “worst” image pointless, and making it an act of disregard, rather than a catalyst to change the way humans regard each other. The Holocaust has come to mean nothing. Instead, genocide continues in Rwanda, Bosnia apartheid South Africa, and elsewhere, moving further and further from the source of acknowledgement, mapping out the same mistakes in history. The same crimes are being repeated continuously under new regimes, or within minority groups themselves.

Yet the Holocaust offers several points of analysis to investigate the idea of the ‘universal majority’ and the ‘universal minority’. One point of interest is the way Hitler and the Nazi party coerced the German people into believing in their utopia, as will be discussed in the next section. In addition, the Holocaust serves to clarify the way hierarchies can exist within minority groups. The ‘universal minority’ were all the ‘Others’ that did not fit in with Hitler’s ideology; yet the Holocaust has been marketed as one in which Jews suffered to the exclusion of many other minorities; homosexuals, Poles, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Gypsies and the physically challenged. These groups are the few who negotiated with the ‘universal majority’ for the most basic of rights, the rights to life, and therefore need a place amongst the Jewish people in Holocaust memory.

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<sup>110</sup> Finkelstein, Norman (2000). *The Holocaust Industry*. This work will be analysed in this chapter.

## Hitler's Utopia and the Creation of the 'Other'

Fascist, anti-Christ, murderer, holocaust, anti-Semitic are some of the words that are associated with Adolf Hitler. Utopian thinker, socialist and humanitarian are not words that could be easily linked with him, yet they are valid for the man who will be noted in history as one of the most evil men of all time.

Carey notes that “[a]fter the Holocaust, utopianism could never be the same” (1999:423). Hitler’s ideology of utopia was the first that inextricably linked the idea of utopia and dystopia together in a practical example. The link was what would become the record of what Jewish theorist Jacob Neusner labeled as an atrocity “without parallel in human history” (Finkelstein, 2000:42)<sup>111</sup>. The Holocaust was not only the base of utopian/dystopian alignment, but also introduced fragmented historicism which has taken years to extricate and evaluate, moving further away from the base of the genocide, Hitler’s utopia.

Carey labels Hitler as a utopian thinker, which is controversial, for scholars have tended to discredit Hitler from the discipline on the grounds of the dystopia that emerged from his original ideology. Ruth Levitas, a utopian scholar, is one such person to discredit Hitler as a utopian scholar for she believes that “most people are unwilling to include in the category of utopia prognoses or plans as morally offensive as Nazism, although we would no doubt draw the line in different places”(1990:183). Whereas Carey has included Hitler in utopian thinkers, M. Keith Booker has referenced Hitler in his work entitled *Dystopian Literature*.

Booker is keen to interpret the theories of Freud to understand the nature of Hitler's utopia, and rather than labeling it as utopian or dystopian, labels it as "erotic fascination" (1994:31). Booker contends in *Civilization and Its Discontents* that Freud relates this "erotic fascination" as coming from, "protection against suffering through a delusional remoulding of reality"(1994:31). Booker's reading of Freud's text brings the conclusion that Hitler and Stalin created their totalitarian states due to a lack of a strong father figure. From the state and the power that was afforded them, this "erotic fascination" allowed them to re-create that father figure. Yet it is unclear whether it is as Booker's interpretation suggests, an "erotic fascination", or whether, ultimately, Hitler desired to have a utopia; a land based on glory of the Reich, but sought it out through means of destruction.

Scholars tend to focus on Hitler and equate him with fascism, the ideology governing him. Taking into account the fragile state of Germany after the Versailles Treaty, any utopian thinker- a Marx, an Engel's, an Owen, could have implemented great change in Germany. However, the utopian scholar was not one of these men but rather Adolf Hitler. His schemes, as Carey points out, are noble in the sense that they had the sentiments of some of the German people<sup>112</sup> at heart in labour-related industry and agriculture. This is no different from Thomas More, who also believed in systems based on a labour force made up of the nation and without a hierarchy of power-based leaders.

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<sup>111</sup> This is highly contentious, yet I believe atrocity cannot be ranked according to severity, for this undermines our concern for the genocides of Rwanda, Cambodia and South Africa, to offer but a few examples.

<sup>112</sup> In this case one must be aware that Jews and undesirables that did not fit into Hitler's idea of Aryan utopia would not be included in those "some."

Hitler's attainment of his utopia is what Carey suggests as the re-writing of the meaning of utopia. Yet Hitler's Final (to his eyes, utopian) Solution became the dystopia of millions of people. For Hitler, the fate of the Jews was to be "no other solution but Extermination" (Carey, 1999:423). Hitler created his utopia, not by education, negotiating for a better life for all of the German people, but through a senseless genocide of those who did not fit into his totalitarian definition of utopia, as Hitler believed "[d]ictatorship, rule by the strong, will replace democracy."<sup>113</sup>

Hitler's idea of an Aryan master race has been parodied in science fiction writing, in Katharine Burdekind's *Swastika Night*, which depicts a perfect master-race that is powerful, uncompromising and a foe, one that is aware of its superiority to those around it. A strong Aryan race, healthy, perfect and pure was what Hitler fantasised as the source of characters in his utopia. This desire for something beautiful meant that, on one level, Hitler turned his utopia into an aesthetic breeding ground for his own pleasure.

"Inferior races do not merit education. To train a negro, 'a being who is only an anthropoid by birth', to become a doctor or lawyer, would be an 'act of criminal insanity'."<sup>114</sup> From statements that Hitler made like this, and ones about the Jews being the cause of degeneracy, it can be seen that there is no place in Hitler's utopia for any kind of minority. Anything that does not subscribe to a very rigid set of aesthetic and special interests set out in Hitler's utopian work *Mein Kampf* (1925) and in his philosophies was set for extermination. The base of morality that Hitler indoctrinated in his philosophy was not one made up from a Judeo-centric nature. Ultimately, he persecuted Christians who would not acknowledge the Reich as the ultimate religion.

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<sup>113</sup> Quoted in Carey, 1999: 424.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid, pg. 424.

Thus, these basics were set into the doctrines of what it meant to be a member of the Reich, and moral guidelines created by it. Thus from the outset the language of difference was created by Hitler and the minorities had no control over their 'Othering' process.

"For the Good of the Aryan race, too, it must be made impossible for 'defective people' to propagate."<sup>115</sup> All people that were handicapped, physically or mentally, (as Hitler thought of homosexuals) also made the lists. It was part of the definition of Hitler's utopia that these people are not given the chance to propagate and hence burden the utopian ideals.

In Burdekin's work *Swastika Night*, she explores Hitler's utopia and the impending dystopia for women. It is significant that Burdekin wrote *Swastika Night* in 1937, before the enormity of Hitler's genocide was fully understood. Due to not having the information on the outcome of the war, Burdekin's critique is more on Hitler's ideology than on Hitler, the exterminator of the Jews. She critiques the principal ideologies of Hitler's utopia, his desire for a German utopian state of supremacy in which Germany was lauded as the great and the educated, though not necessarily academic, and, most importantly, recognised by the other states, England for one, as being the source from which the very root of culture came. She also explored his utopian desire for creating perfect Aryan men through the 'breeding' facilities. Sexuality of women did not matter to Himmler for he concluded, "lesbians can give birth" (Feig in Berenbaum ed., 1990:163). Thus, women could offer their reproduction for the Reich and men could tend the 'utopian' land, farming the German soil.

Carey points out that Hitler's utopian desire was for a strong work force, not one that was academic. He wanted a labor force that was able to make plants grow and who were solid and firm in their knowledge of what it meant to be a German. The Aryan qualities of blonde hair and blue eyes are also the basic characteristic of a good German. Burdekin critiques this kind of person through a character named Hans, whose life is pleasurable because he has been socialised to believe that working on a farm is what a good 'Nazi' should do. He is devoted to the rhetoric of Nazi Germany, and unbending in his pursuit of being a model citizen. The character of Hans is strongly contrasted with a man named Alfred from the country formally known as England, who is a minority in the system of hierarchy of post-war Europe, where anything that is not German is considered vile, dirty and a sub-species of the perfect race. Alfred is aware of the system, the lies, and the brainwashing, and believes that he is going to change things.

Hitler's ideology of women as the 'breeders' of the nation is maximised, with women being kept in concentration camps, like ghettos, where they are at the mercy of men. Aesthetics of beauty are replaced with functional disempowerment. Women's heads are shaved, they have to wear certain uniforms, and they have been completely socialised into believing that they are the lowest things on earth: "Von Wied's theory was that the rejection right of women was an insult to Manhood, that family life was an insult to Manhood, and that it was the wickedest possible folly to allow an animal (for women were nothing more than that) to have complete control over human beings" (Burdekin, 1985:81). Women are socialised into thinking that rape is acceptable and that they should never argue with men, but submit to their duty. As a result of the stress of being in these compounds the women are producing more boys than girls, inhibiting the possible future growth of the Reich. Should they bear a girl it is kept in the compound to

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid, pg. 424.

be raised as one of them, but if it is a boy then it is kept only for a few months in the compound, until it is old enough to live with the father.

Burdekin could be proclaimed as a prophet of an alternative future in which women might have been completely destroyed because they did not fit into Hitler's ideology of utopia. It is ironic that, throughout the Third Reich, Hitler found no need to persecute lesbians under paragraph 175. For Hitler, a woman, regardless of her sexuality, was a potential incubator for life. Her breeding capabilities far outweighed her sexual habits. This could be likened to the way in which women are treated in *Swastika Night*.

Within the structures of Burdekin's dystopia, Hitler's implied homosexual fantasy of the Aryan male is also criticised. The efforts to identify and glorify male beauty were carefully encoded in the films of Leni Riefenstahl, *Triumph of the Will* (1934) and *Olympia* (1936)<sup>116</sup>. This beauty was paramount to the identity of the male. The beautiful male, the male for the male's gaze, with movement towards feelings of same sex desire. Burdekin mirrors this in her portrayal of Hans' fascination with the beautiful male youth that sing in choirs. In an act of transference of his own homosexuality Hans kills a boy for wanting to have sex with a girl, when it is in his fantasy, as another character points out, with Hans that the sex should have taken place.

Burdekin could never have known the prophetic possibility of her work when she wrote: "The other way is to make the subject races think themselves fundamentally inferior, believing that they are being ruled by a sacred race" (Burdekin.1985.134). Only

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<sup>116</sup> In a comment by the author. "Ms. Riefenstahl herself defined the exultant physicality that Hitler would later appropriate as an Aryan virtue." The New York Times (13 March 1994). *Just What Did Leni*

post-analysis of Hitler's utopia allows scholars to realise this pertinent point of control, and the way in which the 'universal majority', the German Reich, control the 'universal minority', the 'Other', although women rather than a racial minority in the case of Burdekin's work. The German Reich was able to impose laws onto women, so that women were branded as inferior and forced to be placed into a hierarchy of genders where they were placed under male.

This section has focused on the converse relationships between a perceived utopia for one group, Hitler and fascism, and its subsequent dystopia for another group, women and the allies. The following section identifies the nature of the Holocaust in terms of minorities' actual dystopia, unlike Burdekin's, and the implications for different minority groups to negotiate with the 'universal majority', although largely focused on homosexual victims.

### **Minorities' Dystopia**

Burdekin, writing in 1937, was only able to have limited foresight of what the holocaust would come to mean. A feminist concerned with women's issues, her work focused more on the way in which women were being treated in Germany at the time and the way in which they would be treated should Hitler eventually win the war. The concept of other minorities is not found in her book, nor are the other dystopias that were created as a result of Hitler's desired utopia.

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*Riefenstahl's Lens See?* Available at <http://www.english.upenn.edu/%7Eafilreis/Holocaust/maslin.html> (Accessed 17 May 2002).

The Holocaust is synonymous with the suffering of the Jews. Along with the Jews, other groups did not fit into Hitler's ideology either. As a result, the Jews, Homosexuals, Gypsies and other groups previously referenced suffered, without the opportunity to be allowed a passage out of the holocaust. As has been mentioned before, it is inevitable for minority groups to create feasible ways to negotiate with the 'universal majority', in this case Hitler, in order to survive. Two examples can be offered where such a situation is founded in the Holocaust. Gad Beck, in his book *An Underground Life: Memoirs of a Gay Jew in Nazi Berlin* (1999), offers examples of how he and a group of dedicated freedom fighters found ways to smuggle letters in and out of Germany, send people across the border, and even in one instance get a friend of theirs out of a death train, by posing as youth of the Hitler Guard. These examples express the minority's ability to find ways in which to negotiate, sometimes illegally by German standards, ways of resistance within the system.

Secondly, in the literary text *Bent* (1979), by Martin Sherman, a gay character not wanting to be labeled as such makes a deal with the Gestapo to rather get a yellow star of David than a pink triangle. In the film version of *Bent* (1997) he rapes a woman to prove that he was in fact able to perform as a heterosexual. Sherman reiterates the hierarchy of minority, for it was better to be labeled as a Jew, amongst fellow prisoners and the SS, than as a Jew and a homosexual.

Konnilyn Feig, Dean of Social Sciences at Foothill College, Los Altos California, in her studies of Non-Jews in Concentration Camps, notes that different groups within the concentration camp system were there for different reasons. "The Nazis and their collaborators targeted many groups for a range of special abuses as they sought to impose several types of solutions—temporary, partial, haphazard as well as the total,

systemized, Final Solution” (Feig in Berenbaum, 1990:161). Through this kind of system the minority groups underwent these various solutions divided, as not all were destined for the Final Solution. Although the Final Solution meant death, all inmates underwent similar treatment with regard to daily life. Many groups were used as free labour, while others did menial jobs with no purpose. Feig acknowledges that, “The Jews were always at risk; they were exterminated everywhere the Nazis came to power” (Berenbaum,1990:161). It would be impossible not to acknowledge that within the system the fate of the Jewish people was death, yet in terms of treatment it should be referenced that, “Non-Jews were killed everywhere throughout the system. Clearly, important differences existed among groups, particularly in the rules legislated for them and the proper behaviour demanded of them”(Feig in Berenbaum ed.,1990:162).

To understand the holocaust and the way in which minorities were imaged and survived, one has to look at some of the minorities critically. The Jews were in the most prominently disempowered situation, for they were placed only in the category of the “Final Solution”. The “Final Solution” had only one ending; death. Thus those that survived would at some point have been exterminated. Even the Jews living in the Ghettoes within Berlin, like Gad Beck, were simply lucky, as within time they would too have become a statistic of the atrocities of the Holocaust. To critically respond to the “Final Solution”, the Jews had no choices, very few rights and very little or mostly no chance of survival. Thus in the minority section it could be said that they were potentially offered the least chance of survival.

Other groups in the camps were not there to die, although this was not ruled out, but to be re-educated. However, in practical terms, they faced treatment just as bad as that designated for the Jews. As has been mentioned under Paragraph 175,

homosexual men were rounded up, either through previous convictions or through information being traded with them in a hope for a lighter punishment. Yet the re-education and possibility of release were not easily obtainable. Heger indicates in several passages of the excessive cruelty inflicted on homosexual inmates by the Nazis and the other inmates alike.

The Nazi idea of homosexual re-education was as base as forcing homosexuals to attend the camp brothel and have intercourse with a female prostitute. "If a candidate performed 'properly' with a prostitute, he might be released as cured. If he failed and agreed to castration, he might be released for heavy labor" (Feig in Berenbaum ed.,1990:168). The coarse and somewhat recidivistic nature of this re-education was ineffectual. A second example helps to further inform the ideologies or explanations used in re-education: "Himmler's idea, however, was that those of us in the pink triangle category should be 'cured' of our homosexual disposition by compulsory regular visits to the brothel" (Heger, 1994:98). The opportunity for re-education was offered to some like Pierre Seel, author of *Liberation Was For Others* (1994), who was released after serving time in the concentration camp only to be further persecuted after the war ended. The suffering continued for this minority group due to the fact that they were not recognised as a legitimate minority, for homosexuality is still not tolerated or accepted by society.

The different groups had very little or no interest in each other. They were a divided minority from the outset. The German government set up a system of hierarchy, which will be explored in the next section, and used force and intimidation to rule, tools which are not for negotiating by any means. In order to offer a response to this idea, one only has to look at an example of where prostitutes were brought into the camp and the way in which each of the groups responded to this action. "The 'greens' and the

Gypsies were most keen on the idea of a brothel, whereas the politicals were against it and held that it was simply a diversion on the part of the Nazis to conceal the bad state of the war. The Jehovah's witnesses refused to visit the brothel on grounds of conscience" (Heger, 1994:98). With so many differing ideologies, the 'universal majority' succeeded in retaining power.

Other forms of creating difference was through the use of visual signifiers of difference:

I noticed a small, enigmatic blue bar on my shirt and my cap. It was part of the indecipherable prison code that was known only to our jailers. According to the documents that I eventually checked, blue meant that I was catholic or asocial. In this camp, blue also included homosexual, while in Germany the homosexual inmates were already marked by the pink triangle. (Seel, 1994:30).

Seel's observation of his blue bar, and noting that it was different to homosexuals in Germany, indicates that significance has been placed on certain symbols and the holocaust. These signifiers of difference were not always the same. The idea of the yellow Star of David, or the pink triangle for other groups, cannot be given the sole role of the signifier. By using colours, shapes or simply writing the 'crime' of the inmate they, the Nazis, were trying to image the subjects in the camp as 'Other', reducing their status as people and equating them with something else. The minority had no opportunity to negotiate any other space. During the Third Reich; it was only the utopia of the 'ruling majority' that was considered the way, and all 'Other' had to endure the suffering as a result of not being aligned with the utopia.

## Hierarchy of Minorities

The previous section dealt with modes of negotiation with the dominant discourse, which is contrasted to the ways in which the various groups negotiated with each other in the concentration camps. The following account of the life for victims in the camps, indicates that a hierarchy of minorities existed. The concepts of identification amongst these groups is the point of interest in this section and the implications that these identities had.

“The prisoners’ uniforms were marked with a coloured cloth triangle to denote their offence or origin. Their prison number was sewn below the triangle too. The triangle was about five centimetres across and placed point down, and was stitched onto the left breast of the jacket and coat and the outside right trouser leg. The colours of the triangles were as follows:

Black for antisocial types	Yellow for Jews
Red for political prisoners	Blue for emigrants
Purple for Jehovah’s Witnesses	Green for criminals
Pink for homosexuals	Brown for Gypsies” (Heger, 1994:31)

Within the systems of the concentration camps lay a hierarchy amongst the minorities. This system was set up through the creation of difference, as can be seen by the different coloured cloth given to each prisoner to reflect their crime or source of becoming the ‘Other’. By doing this, the Nazis avoided having a united camp of inmates, but rather had one that placed people into categories, thus making sure that a hierarchy was created within the minority groups.

As with any hierarchy there were those at the top, criminals (greens) and political prisoners (reds), and those at the bottom, Jews (yellows), Gypsies (brown) and homosexuals (pinks)<sup>117</sup> As would be stated in the theory of hierarchy, those who are on top of the hierarchy, or who are afforded more power or privilege, naturally acted in a superior way to those on the lower ends of the hierarchy. This was no different within the camps of the holocaust. Not all prisoners, the criminals for example, were there for the 'Final Solution', but, rather, some knew they would be released after re-education. These camps were not death camps for them but simply a penal system. Thus, the "greens" are referenced as having positions of power in the camps, in most cases: "Our block senior and his aides were 'greens'- that is, criminals. They looked it. And behaved like it too. Brutal and merciless towards us 'queers', and concerned only with their own privilege and advantage, they were as much feared by us as the SS" (Heger, 1994:34). Power was directly related to the way in which they responded to other prisoners. But with power relations remaining in daily life, it is impossible to believe that in a situation like a concentration camp the inmates would take pity on other groups afforded fewer rights than themselves. As has been stated, the "greens" were as much feared as the SS themselves. In a comment from one of the survivors of the holocaust: "*Kapos*, who were prisoners, usually camp elders, appointed by the commandant, charged with ensuring obedience and discipline in the barracks... They rejected foreigners, especially Slavs, Jews and Gypsies, and they loathed homosexuals, clergymen and artists" (Plant, 1986:161).

A minority, when oppressed, often finds cohesive community spirit within the minority group and ghettoises itself for security, not allowing any 'Other' to penetrate its

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<sup>117</sup> In Seel's book *Liberation Was for Others* and Heger's *Men with the Pink Triangle*, they outline a hierarchy of minority.

walls, even if that other 'Other' finds itself in the same place. The very nature of 'survival of the fittest' becomes the mode of survival, and, in order for one group to survive, it might mean sacrificing another. So, by torturing or destroying other communities, those with the power to do so were reclaiming their identity and asserting that they were not part of this 'Other' community, as seen in the example of the Capos in the camp. "For all the 'green' capos stuck together and were always prepared to help one another out" (Heger, 1994:83).

The converse of the privileges enjoyed by the most empowered minorities is those that were at the bottom of the list, namely the Jews, Gypsies and homosexuals, suffered more: "Jews, homosexuals and Gypsies, the yellow, pink and brown triangles, were the prisoners who suffered the most frequently and most severely from the tortures and blows of the SS and the Capos. They were described as the scum of humanity, who had no right to live on German soil and should be exterminated... But the lowest of the low in this 'scum' were we, the men with the pink triangle" (Heger, 1994: 32). The Jews were in the lowest category because Hitler had identified them as the source of 'moral corruption' within Germany and the world, and thus sought to exterminate them and end the corruption. The Gypsies were seen more in terms of 'literal filth', as scavengers not worthy of the land and resources of the nation. The homosexuals were 'filthy perverts' whose acts of sodomy were against the very core of human nature.

Within this system there were further discriminations against, for example, a Jew who might also be a homosexual. The victim had to endure the stigma attached to both minority groups, making him the ultimate minority. For being both does not mean acceptance by either one of the communities that he belonged to:

One of my fellow prisoners, still recognisable as an intellectual despite his battered face and clay spattered body, was a Jew as well. Beneath the pink triangle he wore the yellow triangle, so that the two together made a Star of David. He had to suffer twice-over the chicanery of the SS and the 'green' capos, for being not only queer, but a Jew into the bargain (Heger, 1994:39).

Jews and homosexuals were also forced to undergo other forms of branding. Whereas most prisoners only had their heads shaved, Jews and homosexuals had to endure a further signifier by having their pubic hair shorn, in addition to their heads. The very nature of removing this hair would be to further set them apart from other inmates, for, even unclothed, when the symbols of the coloured triangles were removed, these groups were further stigmatised as being 'Other': "According to at least one witness, homosexuals and Jews were not only given the worst beatings, but their pubic hair was shorn, others lost only their head hair" (Plant, 1986:163).

Signifiers are an integral part of branding, tattooing, or writing on the body the crime, differences, or status of victims. In the case of the Holocaust the cloth that prisoners received was a signifier of difference and of ridicule. The homosexuals in some cases had these pieces of cloth, which not only signified themselves on the lowest end of the hierarchy, but they were also larger. This was a further humiliation, for as the quote says; they could be easily spotted and avoided: "The pink triangle, however, was about 2 or 3 centimetres larger than the others, so that we could be clearly recognised from a distance"(Heger, 1994: 32).

Heger maintains that homosexuals were in fact on the bottom of the hierarchy. Whereas Jews were destined for the 'Final Solution' which was death, and only death, homosexuals had the opportunity, if not very slim of being re-educated. For Heger, Seel and other homosexual holocaust victims, their argument and testimonies of medical

experiments cannot be the sole claim of homosexuals. Gypsies, Jews and what were considered freaks, dwarfs and hunchbacks were also categorized for human experiments:<sup>118</sup> “We who wore the pink triangle were prioritised for medical experiments, and these generally ended in death” (Heger, 1994:34). Yet one cannot ignore the fact that the abuse suffered by homosexuals within the camps was justifiably worse than that suffered by most other groups.

“What put homosexuals into a low- if not the lowest- category of prisoner, were several factors, some easy to formulate, others more elusive” (Plant, 1986:165). The basic premise that homosexuality is a disease, could be the practical example, felt by Plant. Whereas some victims, like Jews, were being persecuted for their creed, inmates of the camps believed that homosexuals were ‘sexual freaks’ and deserved their fate as seen in the recent work *The Pink Swastika* (2001 4<sup>th</sup> edn.)<sup>119</sup>.

### **Reversing the ‘Other’ process: Failed**

When it has come to reversing this process of ‘Othering’ there have been significant failures. First and foremost would be the failures of Nuremberg. Minow acknowledges that Nuremberg largely began the process of seeking out justice for the victims of the Holocaust (1998:27-28). However, she also comments that the crimes of all parties concerned in World War Two were not addressed. The Americans were not prosecuted for Hiroshima or Nagasaki, and thus only the losers were accountable for

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<sup>118</sup> Feig, K (1990) “Non-Jewish Victims in the Concentration Camps,” in *A Mosaic of Victims* pg.163-4.

<sup>119</sup> This book is published by the Abiding Ministries, whose creed is to stop the advancement and equal rights of homosexuals in the world. *The Pink Swastika*, by Scott Lively and Kevin Abrams, 4<sup>th</sup> edition (2001) Veritas Aeterna Press. Other books that they have published are, *Coming out Straight* by Richard Cohen, *Homosexuality: Legitimate, Alternate Deathstyles* by Dick Hafer, and *Why and How to Defeat the*

their actions (Minow, 1998: 45). Secondly, according to Minow survivors felt that the attitudes of those being prosecuted did not feel genuine largely due to the fact that there is a “shortfall between the capacity of the trial form with its rule of law and the nature of mass atrocities” (1998:47), for the victims of the process were not made to feel a part of the process. Due to the fact that the South African Truth Commission was able to learn from other atrocities it seems unfair to judge Nuremberg by comparison. But reconciliation with the Holocaust has also been attempted through memory and reparation, and both of these have also failed to reverse the process of Othering that occurred or end the spiral of oppression.

Post-Holocaust, things have changed dramatically in terms of the hierarchy when it comes to compensation or reparation. Out of the three groups that were considered at the bottom of the hierarchy of minorities, two have benefited and one has not. Jewish survivors or Jewish organisations (Finkelstein, 2000:86) have been able to gain compensation. Recently homosexual survivors were also able to gain compensation.<sup>120</sup> Gypsies and other minority groups, however, have not been recognised as suitable for compensation.

Controversial Holocaust critic Norman Finkelstein attempts to show why minorities other than those of Jewish descent were not financially compensated. Finkelstein believes that the Jewish community, who were not survivors but rather part of Jewish organisations, which campaigned for Jewish Holocaust memory, misappropriated the cause of the holocaust from the Jewish survivors and other minority holocaust survivors. Finkelstein compares two ways in which the holocaust is imaged in

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*Gay Movement* by Scott Lively. These books and information about this “pro-family group” can be found at [www.abidingtruth.com](http://www.abidingtruth.com).

contemporary society. Firstly, 'Holocaust memory', which encompasses those who endured the holocaust and for whom the Holocaust is not a spectacle, and secondly, "The Holocaust", where people have laid claim not to the atrocities of the genocide of the holocaust but rather found a way to market and sell the holocaust. This latter image induces a paradigm of thought focussing on non-survivors' supposed empathy for the victims (one which has its base on a pity system from which the mere mention of the word holocaust displays a tragedy, a tragedy more tragic than other acts of genocide in the world). "As the 'benchmark of oppression and atrocity,' it tends to trivializ[e] crimes of lesser magnitude. Yet the Nazi holocaust can also sensitize us to these injustices" (Finkelstein, 2000:148). Finkelstein's work *The Holocaust Industry* (2000) is named so to critique the acquiring of rights by the Jewish people over the Holocaust. Finkelstein, himself Jewish and the son of a Holocaust survivor, believes that Jews have marketed the Holocaust as the worst case of genocide against any group in the history of the world, for the reason of getting compensation money, or for commercial reasons: "The standard claim is that the Final Solution was a uniquely efficient, assembly-line, industrial extermination. But if, as the Holocaust industry suggests, many hundreds of thousands of Jews survived, the Final Solution couldn't have been that efficient after all" (Finkelstein, 2000:128).

Finkelstein further criticises the ironies involved with the Holocaust as an American obsession. Finkelstein questions why a Holocaust museum is located in Washington D.C., on a prominent avenue. A similar museum had been planned for the atrocities against African-Americans, from slavery to post-Martin Luther King Jr., but this was never realised because the American public was not ready to face what had been done on its own ground. America would rather welcome something that it could claim as

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<sup>120</sup>See the Introduction of Finkelstein, N. (2001). *The Holocaust Industry* Revised edition.

a critique on oppression, where the finger was not pointing at itself. As Finkelstein wryly observes, it is as strange as building an African-American museum in Berlin (2000:72,148). Finkelstein argues that the Holocaust there has become desensitized, for having a major holocaust museum within a country that had no victims (Elie Wiesel and others immigrated there after the war) further alienates the Holocaust from “The Holocaust”.

As an additional problem, the Jewish community did not want the inclusion of other minority victims in the museum, the Gypsies in this case, because they felt that if this group were included then it would no longer be “theirs”. In another example of this kind, Jews opposed the inclusion of homosexuals in the New York Holocaust Commission’s exhibit on the Holocaust citing the following reasons, “The memorializing of homosexuals of the Nazi era is not only objectionable on religious grounds to the plaintiffs, it wrongly memorializes Nazi-era homosexuals, who were prominent founders and leaders of the Nazi Party.”<sup>121</sup> The Holocaust museum in Cape Town is part of the Jewish community centre and has an exhibit that traces non-Jewish survivors in the holocaust (on display is a uniform with a pink triangle on it). As the Centre is a community centre for Jews specifically, it would be understandable for them to choose to highlight Jewish suffering in the Holocaust, as a sole exhibit, and not make mention of other minorities. The same could not be said of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington<sup>122</sup>, which is not a solely Jewish museum, but rather one that aims to document the Holocaust. So the hierarchies of the Holocaust era have been

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<sup>121</sup> Chicago Tribune (8 September 1997) *Holocaust Museum Sued for Inclusion of Gays* Available at: <http://www.dataounge.com/dataounge/news/record.html?record=2327&searchwords=holocaust,rabbis> (Accessed 19 May 2002).

<sup>122</sup> Information about the museum can be found on their web site, [www.ushmm.org](http://www.ushmm.org).

shifted, but not undone. Jews have gained the most benefit from the holocaust in terms of identity. But if the holocaust has been reserved for them, other minorities have had to try and negotiate themselves into a new post-holocaust identity.

The other survivors are also unable to access the money for Holocaust compensation as they are not recognised as legitimate survivors or victims, as has been previously argued. In the hierarchy created by the victims, Jews top the list and receive the largest share of the compensation while the homosexuals come second, benefiting from the money allocated by the Swiss banks. The other victims, such as Jehovah's witnesses, Gypsies, Poles, and physically disabled people are left at the bottom of the hierarchy without any access to compensation.

And, it is not only in the area of compensation that a hierarchy exists, but also in academia, history, and the way in which the Holocaust has been imaged that re-iterates that the Holocaust was not the ultimate destruction that was able to stop all further genocidal atrocities. The reason for this is the way in which minority groups have been imaged with regard to their status as victims of the Holocaust, as can be shown in the following example.

On the 23 February 1987, a conference was held to investigate and explore the Non-Jews that were killed during the Nazi German period. This conference invited all groups that were considered the non-rightful heirs to the Holocaust to come and share facts and statistics. The time lapse between the atrocity and the conference is questionable, as it took place forty-two years after the end of the Nazi era, when

Holocaust issues were raised as early as 1967<sup>123</sup>. As has been stated before, eleven million people died: six million Jews and five million non-Jews. The non-Jews should also have claim to the atrocity.

The answer to the question of why it has taken so long for the other minority groups to gain importance lies very much in the field of academia and history. There is such a fear that academics will de-Judaize the Holocaust, that an overt political correctness has been created. *A Mosaic of Victims: Non-Jews Persecuted and murdered by the Nazis* (1990) was published after the conference was concluded, and includes papers presented at the conference. This book<sup>124</sup> is the key to understanding the reasons for non-inclusion issues, even though many minority groups perished in a very similar manner to the Jews who had gone through the same system. On the back of the book the following appears: “*A Mosaic of Victims* does not distort history or the Judeo-centric nature of the Holocaust itself.” It is assertive in maintaining that the book and the conference are not meant to take away the “ownership” of the Holocaust that has been imaged as a Jewish one.

The Foreword of the book by Carol Rittner opens with a quote about the six million Jews that died during the Holocaust, making a token mention of Gypsies that had gone through a similar fate, in the following paragraphs. This was accompanied by the following quote from Bohdan Wytwycky, so as not to undermine the Jewish suffering kept strictly at the core of all reflections on the holocaust, “However, the German mania

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<sup>123</sup> Norman Finkelstein, in his work *The Holocaust Industry*, argues that after 1967 the Holocaust became the mode by which Israel’s identity was constructed. (2000:16).

<sup>124</sup> This does not however mean that the essays included in the work are not of value to academia, because they are. It is the fact that the way the book is marketed, through the blurb on the back and some examples that will be given, in relation to the Holocaust as being a Judeo-centric phenomena, undermining the ‘other victims’ rights to the Holocaust.

for exterminating the Gypsies did not quite achieve the same pitch of madness as that directed toward the Jews” (Berenbaum ed., 1990:xi). Thus, from the outset of the text the minorities that were persecuted are imaged as less important than the Jews. Later in her foreword Rittner states, “the conference never degenerated into a kind of ‘suffering one upmanship’” (Berenbaum ed., 2000: xiv). Yet the language she uses specifically excludes the other victims of the Holocaust from rights to it. She and other academics at the conference have created the “upmanship.”<sup>125</sup>

Michael Berenbaum, the then Project Director of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, made the following statement: “It showed us how to include the other victims of Nazism without distorting history or backing away from the Judeo-centric nature of the Holocaust itself” (Berenbaum ed., 1990: xiv). This statement further entrenches that “upmanship” that Rittner tried so politically correctly to avert from. Similarly, the choice of the first article in the book is one about genocide. Rubenstein, in his essay “Modernization and the Politics of Extermination” (Berenbaum, 2000:3-19), argues that the Holocaust was unique and one that was specifically aimed at the Jews. There is little mention of the “mosaic of victims” in this essay<sup>126</sup>, though that was the reason for the conference and the reason for the book.

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<sup>125</sup> Elie Wiesel helped to organize the conference with the help of Carol Rittner. This is by no means an attack on either party for their work in realizing a conference on dealing with other victims. The problematic element is the relation to who has the “rights” to the Holocaust. Rittner’s introduction speaks of Elie Wiesel’s desire to see a conference of other victims, but at the same time “as a scholar he knew there were risks that such a conference might blur the unique aspect of the Jewish tragedy during the Holocaust” (Berenbaum ed, 1990: xiii). This language creates an ‘us’ and ‘them’. ‘Us’ refers to those ‘unique’ victims, the Jews, ‘those’ to the other victims. The other victims are placed under one title, ‘Non-Jewish Victims’, even though their crimes were unique and at times unlinked, for example Gypsies exterminated for being second class citizens versus Jehovah’s witnesses exterminated on religious grounds. So, for one group to claim a title to the Holocaust is problematic when the Holocaust was unique for each group persecuted during this period, even though the nature of the extermination, the ways in which victims were tortured or the speed at which the genocide occurred notes that Jewish suffering was the worst.

In all three instances there is something problematic with the way in which this conference and book are packaged and marketed to readers. This is a case of tokenism, where some pressure has been placed on the Holocaust history, and so mention has to be made of the other five million people who died. It would be a grave oversight to ignore the way that language is used in the book and the constantly apologetic note referenced to this conference in terms of removing the focus from the “Judeocentric nature of the Holocaust.” This is not a work that tries to find common goals or find bridges to unite the communities. Instead, it further divides the one minority group, “the Jews,” from the “other victims.” This kind of tokenism simply re-iterates the point that the other victims should not try to gain any rights to the Holocaust, because one group has already claimed them. This is a model case of the hierarchy of minorities. Instead of working together against the common evil, minorities try to gain certain titles and certain rights to events that are then imaged as being their cause and their problem, fragmenting them from any solidarity as joint victims of a system.

Michael Berenbaum, in his essay “The Uniqueness and Universality of the Holocaust” (1990: 20-36), argues as to why Jews should have the sole name rights to the Holocaust. As Project Director of the Holocaust museum in America, at that time, he notes that, the “United States Holocaust Memorial Museum—the American national memorial to the Holocaust. The museum is committed to including all the victims of nazism while remaining faithful to the uniqueness of the Jewish experience”(1990:1). He clearly believes that the Holocaust belongs to the Jews, and in his paper finds ways to give the uniqueness of the Holocaust a platform from which Jews gain all the rights, to the exclusion of other minority victims.

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<sup>126</sup> Rubenstein does mention the “Slavs” whom Hitler wanted to eradicate because of a need for their land. This comparison is three paragraphs, or one page, out of the sixteen page chapter (Berenbaum, 1990:8-9).

Berenbaum traces two examples of the way in which the Holocaust should not be imaged as one that belongs to any other group through an analysis of two theorists in this matter, Elie Wiesel and Simon Wiesenthal. Wiesenthal includes all people in the holocaust, and Berenbaum believes that this is because "Wiesenthal's insistence that the non-Jew was also a victim of the Holocaust mirrors his experience in Mauthausen where Jews constituted only a minority of those incarcerated" (1990: 21). Wiesel, on the other hand, "fears that Wiesenthal's definition of the Holocaust may trigger an irreversible process that will erase the memory of six million Jews" (Berenbaum, 1990: 22). This is in reference to Wiesel's experience on the United States Memorial Council in which a Gypsy representative wanted to be recognised as a member, and eventually was, and then mirrored by Berenbaum's own experience when he "encountered a tendency among the professional staff to move from inclusion of non-Jewish victims to a no differentiation among the victims" (1990:35 end note 3).

This fear of erasing memory, that Wiesel and Berenbaum implore would be the case if non-Jews were to be fully acknowledged, implies that they believe that the non-Jews were either treated differently or were deserving of their fate. Berenbaum makes a note that in many cases the "Jewish survivors also harbored historic resentments toward other victims of nazism who they felt might have collaborated with the enemy in the Final Solution" (1990:1). This reference may be a reference to homosexuals. Ernst Roehm, a known homosexual, was a founding member of the Nazi party. But to label all homosexuals as the creators of the Final Solution would be unreasonable, as Roehm died on the Night of the Long Knives for being an undesirable member of the Nazi Party. *The Pink Swastika* is a book that right wing Christian groups have compiled which looks at the theory of Roehm having been a member of the gay conspiracy of the evil of the

Holocaust. However, to take this theory literally is to ignore the work of Günter Grau, in his book, *Hidden Holocaust: Gay and Lesbian Persecution in Germany 1933-1945* (1993). He traces the laws created to suppress homosexuals, and the programs that homosexuals had to undergo to be re-educated. He has included documents that were circulated by the Nazis, including documentation against Roehm, thus further dispelling the theory of homosexuals' collaboration in the "Final Solution." The Gypsies and other minorities like Jehovah's Witnesses cannot be scrutinized as possible collaborators. It seems highly unlikely that either, clearly ranked deplorable by the SS, would now come to light as having played a role in the demise of others sentenced to similar fates.

"How the terrible crime was committed, as much as its theoretical conception, distinguishes the Holocaust from previous manifestations of evil" (Berenbaum, 1990:26). Berenbaum offers other examples of the nature of the "Final Solution." "Jews were killed not for *what* they were or for what they practiced or believed, but for the *fact* that they were—all Jews were—to be exterminated, not merely the Jewish soul... they were regarded as subhuman and were thus eliminated" (1990:31). Yet the same claim could be made for the Gypsies. The historians at this conference make constant reference to the fact that the fate of the Gypsies may have been the same, but the sheer immensity of the Solution was too great for it to be fully realised. The Final Solution machine literally ran out of time before it could accomplish its vision. The fact that a significant number of the Gypsy population was spared purely due to the halting of Hitler by the Allies' victory should be embraced, but does not in any way change the fact that they were destined for the same fate as the Jews. The fact that they were second or third in line does not seem to be a valid enough reason to dismiss them as lesser to any other group. Hence Wiesel and Berenbaum's apprehension for a Romani, as a committee

member on the Holocaust council. To do so is to give up the rights to the title of Holocaust rather than accepting that the Gypsies perished on mass as well.

Konnilyn Feig, in her essay "Non-Jewish Victims in the Concentration Camps" (Berenbaum ed., 1990: 161-178), tries to understand what it would mean for a Gypsy family coming to terms with why they had been sent to a concentration camp: "Out of the second car spill Gypsy families, an array of bright colours standing in sharp contrast to the gray surroundings, with faces filled with confusion and bewilderment. They move off in a group to the family camp- to recover, they think, from their journey, but in truth to spend their days idly until the proper night when the gas chambers and crematoria are freed to erase the entire enclave"(1990:163). This is similar to the "Final Solution." The ultimate end for the Gypsies was not re-habilitation but death, like the Jews. Unfortunately, one only has to look at how Berenbaum and Wytwycky comment on the plight of the Gypsies in comparison to the Jews, as if suffering and death has a hierarchy within itself. Wytwycky is quoted in the foreword of the Mosaic of Victims as saying, "Jews were slated for total annihilation as a people, and Hitler in fact managed to kill an estimated 65 to 70% of all European Jewry, including virtually all of the German and East European Jews. The circle neighboring that of the Jews was reserved for the Gypsies, *who also were designated for complete extinction* [italics used for emphasis]. However, the German mania for exterminating the Gypsies *did not quite achieve the same pitch of madness as that directed toward the Jews.*" However, if one were to compare the statistics of the gypsies deaths, "The Nazi Gypsy Solution killed three-quarters of the German and one-half of the Austrian Gypsies. By 1945, the Nazis had murdered at least 220 000 of the estimated 700 000 European Gypsies" (Berenbaum ed., 1990:168). That implies that 31.4% of the Gypsy population died, still a significant number. Yet Berenbaum believes that the number is not enough to lay claim to the

Holocaust. “The number of Gypsies was not as vast, and individual death by gassing was far less certain than it was for the Jews. This is not to diminish or minimize Gypsy suffering, which was intense, sustained, and harsh, but to focus on those dimensions of the holocaust that were unique” (Berenbaum, 1990: 33). One could not only equate numbers to the Holocaust, for this implies again that the other groups that died were not valid and did not sustain enough deaths to be mentioned as Holocaust victims, and in turn reiterates the “upmanship” that Berenbaum was concerned about.

There are other examples that could be cited from Berenbaum’s two works, but the point of reference for all of this should be the basic premise that eleven million people died. Six million were Jews and five million were non-Jews. But it is the deaths that should be the focus of the Holocaust, not the individual groups that died within that. Otherwise, no reversal of the spiral of oppression can occur, only new oppression can arise as some of those eleven million become the new 'universal majority' while others remain the 'universal minority'.

There is no denying the scale of the Holocaust and the way in which the fate of the Jews and Non-Jews was uncertain. Hitler was aware that in order to attain his utopia he would have to exterminate many people. Rubenstein’s acute understanding of this extermination is clear: “One of the differences between Hitler and his predecessors was his lack of hypocrisy and illusion concerning the extent to which his project entailed mass murder” (Berenbaum ed., 1990:9).

The hierarchy of minority has not gone un-noticed in Holocaust studies. Bohdan Wytwycky comments on a hierarchy in, *The Other Holocaust: The Many Circles of Hell*. “The Jews occupied the centre of hell with the concentric rings extending outward to

incorporate many other victims much as waves spread outward with *diminishing intensity* [italics used for emphasis] from a stone tossed into a lake.”<sup>127</sup> The very nature of making a comment like this would be to image a hierarchy, for by standards of oppression there has to be a hierarchy, in order to gain rights to the atrocity.

Rubenstein also notes about hierarchy or minority majority control that, “[a]ll minorities suffer some discrimination and experience some degree of resentment and incomplete identification with the majority, a situation that is as obvious to the majority as to the minority” (Berenbaum ed., 1990:15). Rather than using the Wiesenthal statement that eleven million people have died, it is easier to use the Wiesel one, and accord certain rights to one group only, leaving the other victims silenced, without compensation, and without the rights to an atrocity that should be commented on in its entirety. It is impossible to ignore the eleven million, as Berenbaum himself concludes: “In fact, the examination of all victims is not only politically desirable but pedagogically mandatory, if we are to demonstrate the claim of uniqueness. History should guide the portrayal of all victims of nazism- Jews and non-Jews”(1990:32). Yet again the criteria for this examination is to maintain the Jewish cause as being the rightful heir to the title of “Holocaust Survivor”.

The Holocaust could have some significance. It could be the truth that could stop all further genocide, if it were treated exactly as that. However, it is not. It was not the point that changed people’s thinking of atrocity. In fact, genocides all over the world have continued to flourish. “It is my thesis that the relative silence on the subject of genocide stems from the unwillingness of both the scholars and their audiences to confront the fact that, far from being a relapse into barbarism, genocide is an intrinsic

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<sup>127</sup> Quoted in Berenbaum ed., 1990:33.

expression of modern civilization as we know it”(Berenbaum ed., 1990:3). Rubenstein’s acknowledgement that genocide continues within modern civilization is a clear marker that the Holocaust has not been able to successfully educate about genocide. Too much importance and uniqueness is given to the Holocaust, for it can be publicised and sold by the media as being different. It is not that different from other people dying in genocides all over the world, but too many groups do not have the means to create remembrances to their Holocausts. Death is ranked according to financial means and the actual loss of life trivialized with irresponsible attitudes.

If one were to compare the money spent on memorials to the Holocaust all over the world, with the pitiful memorials in Cambodia, a single stupa at the place where thousands were killed, and the S-21 museum, the place where people were interrogated and abused and finally murdered, seems hypocritical to memory and money. Similarly, the Apartheid museum in Johannesburg South Africa is a modest building, where the primary focus is on the atrocities that happened within the country of the crime. So, sadly, here is a model example of the hierarchy of minority in operation. Rather than working together to overcome the evil of genocide, the minorities have ghettoized themselves into their own separate identities and have tried to find individual ways to respond to the Holocaust.

It is in the examples of genocide that this kind of hierarchy is at its strongest. It was not the Jews, but the idea and nature of minorities that is to blame for the way the Holocaust has been imaged as a Judaeocentric one. It is impossible to make a stand as one group. Fragmented, the cause is weaker. Thus the fragmented minority groups that were created in the concentration camps still find no commonality as they were branded as different and still use this branding when negotiating with each other on issues of

memory. This ultimately leads to a failure of reversing the 'Othering' process and instead of the Holocaust being used as an experience that is able to be didactic in terms of genocide and atrocity, it is turned into a spiral of oppression where power remains imbalanced, the minority remain divided and memory and history are not written responsibly.

### **Reversing the Process: Novum and the Holocaust**

There have been some works to emerge from the genre' of utopian and science fiction possibility that try to challenge this 'spiral of oppression'. Three notable works are Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle* (1962), Katharine Burdekin's *Swastika Night* (1937), which has already been discussed, and Stephen Fry's *Making History* (1995). All three of these works are mirrored in an alternative reality. They are not futuristic novels, but rather representative of alternative societies where the Nazis could have won the war in 1944 and re-written history.

Brian Mc Hale introduces the idea of alternative histories as a "garden of forking paths" (1991:61). This idea refers to the choices that have been made by people, and possible implications that alternative choices might have made. Elisabeth Wesseling (1991: viii) labels these "forking paths" as uchronias, looking at the rewriting of history from the losers' perspective. Wesseling does not wish to analyze writers who rewrite history, but revolutionize it by means of showing some form of difference that reflects a society changed from the one in which history is actually written. For Wesseling, "Postmodernist writers do not consider it their task to propagate historical knowledge, but to inquire into the very possibility, nature, and use of historical knowledge" (1991: 73).

As an example of this process, in Dick's alternative reality the allies lose the war and this results in a dramatic reduction of the Jewish people, more so than during Hitler's regime. In Burdekin's work it results in women being reduced to the basic act of producing male offspring. Lastly, in Fry's work it results in Hitler's death, as a child, and a subsequent regime that wins the war against the allies. These alternative histories seem worse than the actual events that took place, as will be reflected in a brief analysis of each work. Burdekin's work has already been analysed in the separate section entitled "Hitler's Utopia."

In his science fiction classic *The Man in the High Castle*, Philip K. Dick writes an alternative history to the Second World War, where the allies lose the war to Germany and Japan, leaving America a colony to them. With the exception of a few survivors, anyone labeled the 'Other' by the Nazi's have been exterminated.

Within *The Man in the High Castle* lies a literary text that Dick introduces. It is a book written about the allies winning, entitled, "The Grasshopper Lies Heavy." This meta-self-consciousness allows Dick to offer not one but two realities of the Holocaust experience and of history. In the first case, *The Man in the High Castle* is a text that exposes the evil of the Holocaust as a system that continues to persecute those labeled as 'Other' by the Nazi regime. For example, Dick says the atrocity against the Jews pre-1945 was nothing compared to that of which happened post 1948 once an Officer named Lammer took over from Goebbels: "That's when that murdering and those concentration camps really began" (Dick.1965.70), even though as those reading the book would be aware, at least six million Jews would have already died by this time. By doing this, being aware of the number of deaths involved in the Holocaust, and being aware that very few Jews still are alive in *The Man in the High Castle*, Dick alienates the

Holocaust from events that could have happened after what has been recorded as the history of the Holocaust.

The second reality is the one represented in the alternative or utopian work of “The Grasshopper lies Heavy.” In the novel, America and the Allies have conquered Nazi Germany and the Japanese forces, although this history is not recorded in the same way as contemporary history of the Second World War is. The winning for the Allies brought about utopian enlightenment, alleviated third world problems, encompassed social programs, and educated the third world through the use of media and the information age, as seen in the following passage: “Crouching before the screen, the youths of the village—and often the elders as well—saw words. Instructions. How to read, first. Then the rest. How to dig a deeper well. Plough a deeper furrow. How to purify their water, heal their sick. Overhead, the American artificial moon wheeled, distributing the signal, carrying it everywhere” (Dick 1965.154).<sup>128</sup> This is not the only difference. The president of America, Mr. Tugwell, has initiated a ‘New Deal’. Not the same one as Roosevelt’s, but one created specifically for “The Grasshopper Lies Heavy.” Other changes include China not following the doctrines of Communism but working with the Western world.

Dick’s meta-self-consciousness in not writing the facts about twentieth century history as is known, but rather as a utopian text of possibility, distinguishes him in the category of an augur of utopia. As readers of his text will be aware, the possibility of change was referenced after the Holocaust experience. Thus, if humanity felt repugnance for the atrocity, the ‘spiral of oppression’ could have been broken and a

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<sup>128</sup> The full extent of the changes can be seen through pages 154-161.

movement towards a more just society realised. However, there was no accountability for the actions of those that oppressed and the Nuremberg trials and latter day compensation does not seem to have been an agency of change. Thus the uchronic world of “The Grasshopper lies Heavy” does not mirror the world of today, where people in Africa still live in poverty, which brings about an act of cognitive estrangement in which the reader questions their current world, through the uchronic world of what could have been. This act of questioning as a means of a didactic technique of science fiction challenges the ‘spiral of oppression.’

*Making History* is another example where there are two worlds mirrored with each other. In the novel, Fry moves between contemporary society to an alternative reality where the Germans won the war. Fry uses the idea of tolerance in his work. In the world in which the Nazis have won, the persecution of homosexuals is still practiced. Fry’s narrative persona, Michael, leaves his current reality and is transported into a world of alternative history. In this world he meets and falls in love with a man named Steve. The police are still compiling files on suspected homosexuals, as was done during the Holocaust<sup>129</sup>, and in this case they have a suspicion that Steve is one. In an investigation they have the following on file about Steve: “That was the voice of an undergraduate named Steven Burns, a junior year history of science major. We have nothing against him other than that he is a suspected homosexual” (Fry, 1996:396).

The utopian opportunity possibility lies in the fact that homosexuals in Britain and America have legal rights on paper now, and this would not have been possible had the Germans won the war. For, unlike the Jews, who were a race and could be extinguished, homosexuals would continue to be born, and the homosexual

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<sup>129</sup> See Seel, P (1994). *Liberation was for Others: Memoirs of a Gay Survivor of the Nazi Holocaust*.

extermination would continue as long as the Germans were in power and homosexual children were born.

Fry is suggestive about the idea that Hitler is murdered through a time machine before his utopian holocaust could come into reality. Fry, like Dick, creates a more militant, more dangerous person to take his place. In this case, Rudolf Gloder. In *Making History*, it is exactly this act of eliminating Hitler that allows the alternative history to happen. Bringing on the defeat of the Allied Forces and turning the world into German control, Fry's Gloder and Hitler have the similar backgrounds. The rise of the Nazi party is exactly the same with Fry recreating the circumstances by which Hitler rose to power and substituting Gloder into them. Even the senior members of the SS are the same, with names like Roehm and Goebbels. The death of Archduke Ferdinand is still the catalyst for anti- Semitism<sup>130</sup>.

These novels suggest that the eradication of one man would not have changed the way in which the Second World War's genocide was realised. If one takes into account the 'spiral of oppression' alternative history may be written, but the outcome in terms of atrocity remains the same, for unlike Dick's meta-history in *The Man In the High Castle*, there is no meta-history in *Making History*. Thus, the uchronia is limited to only one alternative to what has existed, rather than a comparison of contemporary society to the meta-history as seen in the example of "The Grasshopper Lies Heavy". Real history is written and the same outcome is inevitable, although, as is mentioned in Fry's novel, Steve and Michael would be afforded the right to love one another in today's British or American Society.

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<sup>130</sup> Fry's biography of Gloder is detailed in a history book that Michael looks up on arriving in the alternative history of German occupied America, on (1996: 345-353).

Therefore, science fiction writing acts as the utopian bridge, for it is through creating the alternative realities, where further atrocities could have happened, that humanity is able to realise the nature of oppression and understand ‘the spiral of oppression’. Through an analysis of Hitler’s utopia, and what it meant for the ‘Others’, concepts of the hierarchies of minorities can also be explored fictionally to evaluate the ideology that, even within a group of minorities, there will be a hierarchy from least disempowered to most disempowered.

This section has identified the way that science fiction writing is able to rewrite history through what Elisabeth Wesseling labels uchronic fiction. The alternative realities of real events force the reader of texts to question the implications of alternative histories. This is used as a didactic tool, through techniques of cognitive estrangement, to illustrate the nature of change or utopian or dystopian possibilities. *The Man in the High Castle* is one text which has an alternate reality, but, more importantly one in which the world is a better place as seen in “The Grasshopper Lies Heavy”, the meta-alternative reality within the text. Another example is *Making History*, which imagines a world in which fascist control exists which would be detrimental to those victims labeled as ‘Other;’ by Hitler.

This chapter has attempted to analyse how minorities and their systems of negotiation with Hitler’s fascist regime reflect the nature of the ‘universal minority’ and the ‘universal majority’ and ultimately the spiral of oppression. This dynamic is also seen through the way victims of the Holocaust created a hierarchy of minorities during the internment at the camps, and the reversal of the hierarchy with regard to compensation. The notion of ‘ownership’ further creates difference as seen in the examples of *A Mosaic*

*of Victims*, in which, even though the thesis behind the book and conference was to focus on non-Jewish victims, the non-Jewish victims, just by naming them 'non-Jewish,' were placed in opposition to the Jews as victims of the Holocaust. This has led to a division amongst the victims, without anything being learnt from the atrocity that was committed. The only solution seems to lie in uchronic fiction where the novum is used to redress the atrocities of the genocide. The practical or real life example seems unable to break the 'spiral of oppression'.

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## **Chapter Six**

### **Where to now?**

**All postmodernism theory is the telling of the future, with an imperfect deck (Fredric Jameson).<sup>131</sup>**

Individual action seems to be the key to reversing the 'Othering' process described in the four step model. For if individuals take responsibility then collective change will soon follow. This chapter explores ideas of responsibility as being one of the agents of change in multiple examples. In the first instance, an interview with an individual who lived in a community as a minority and then later as a majority is a practical example of how an individual responds to or negotiates an identity. This is followed by an analysis of Fredric Jameson's work *The Seeds of Time*, in which Jameson argues amongst other things that responsibility is largely left up to the individual to change. *The Zoo Project*, a play written for this thesis as an artistic response to a solution for change, reflects on the role the individual has in implementing change, using the idea of responsibility and guilt. This is not the only response there is to the lackluster nature of the individual, which is further exemplified, with an analysis of Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* and Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*.

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<sup>131</sup> This quote comes from noted theorist Fredric Jameson's list of lectures on Utopia (Jameson chooses to refer to Utopia with a capital U) and later published into a work entitled *The Seeds of Time* (1990: xii).

## **Utopia: a journey upward and onward**

The previous section looked at how an individual negotiated with the systems of power. In this section the changing definition of utopia is problematic and the role of the individual is also obscured. Using examples of ghettoisation and Frederic Jameson's utopian work *The Seeds of Time*, possible systems of negotiation are identified in relation to individual responsibility.

The definition of utopia has been ossified in the canon of academia; yet its meaning is not bound in definition to More, Plato or the philosophers who have imprisoned it. For even though More may have coined the term, the idea of something better is possibly at the core of the human psyche. This possibility, obtainable through some mechanism of human imagination and human intervention is the politics of life. An ideal life can be constructed by anyone wanting to choose the perfect society in which they wish to live. The variation of utopia, as theorists like Levitas point out (1990:162), is open for all people, for in the world of Cockayne<sup>132</sup> there is abundance of man's basest desires, food, drink and sexual pleasures, compared to Arcadia<sup>133</sup>, where everything is available but within limits. These two worlds then compared to More's *Utopia*, in which the society is bound by its rather more conservative rules, express the variety available within the definitions of utopia. To discredit utopia is to acknowledge that no better life is possible. To accept a movement towards utopia is to accept that change can come from

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<sup>132</sup> Cockayne is a utopian world created in a medieval folk poem. The world has an excess of food, and male desire, specifically, is catered for.

<sup>133</sup> *Arcadia* was written by Philip Sidney and deals with a more conservative utopia, where there are definite limits as to how much each person should be allowed.

the individual, and not only from the collective. This should not, however, imply that those who believe in some kind of utopist possibility are following theory that is unreachable and therefore idealistic. Marxism and the Communist state are always quoted as the failure of a possible utopia. Ruth Levitas quotes Krishan Kumar as saying, "socialism is doomed as utopia because of the experience of Stalinism, the nature of actually existing socialism and the 'increasing evidence of cynicism and disbelief in Marxism among the intelligentsia of Eastern Europe" (1990:168). Yet other utopias, even if imperfect, have been shown to be practical, as discussed in previous chapters.

As an agency of utopia, groups that are imaged as 'Other', different from society and in this case the minority, create a language, a new semiotic, in order to negotiate a way out of a power dynamic and into a neutral and utopian space. Feminisms<sup>134</sup> and queer theories are centrally located in this language as they try to redefine themselves from the previous patriarchal constructions and ideology. Even though feminisms have re-invented themselves, they are also trying to create a bridge towards neutrality. Camille Paglia, controversial feminist scholar, in her address at M.I.T. University in America, outlined the divide in feminism between those feminists that ghettoized themselves by refusing to acknowledge aesthetics and psychology in feminist discourse. Paglia feels that feminism has two possibilities, neither pleasant. One is that it could self implode into a ghetto and simulate patriarchy, for which she blames "white upper-middle-class women. They don't even realize the extent to which they are trapped in their own class. And they just have to be broken out of it" (Paglia, 1991:29). Although extreme in her views, Paglia does address a crisis in ghettoization, in which one group excludes others due their inability to "break out" of their ideological boundaries. The second

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<sup>134</sup> This is by no means to indicate that women are a minority or should be treated as such, but women do find themselves having to negotiate with the constructions of patriarchy.

possibility for feminism is to wait for a disaster to happen so that it may be freed through an external force. The first option, besides being pessimistic, is anti-utopian. It offers no valuable solution and removes humanity from society. The second is cataclysmic and unpredictable. Thus, a new skill in negotiating seems necessary to bridge the divide and avoid Paglia's dead-end results. For racial minorities, a similar problem exists. On one hand, rights have been won, but, on the other hand there now exist factions within each race that wish to further ghettoize the group from others.

In Fredric Jameson's work on utopia, *The Seeds of Time*, he indicates what the necessary tools for creating a utopia may be. In the chapter entitled "The Antinomies of Postmodernity," Jameson incorporates the theories of Freud, Heigel and Kant in his analysis of the end of history. This history is the end of capitalism. Jameson has an interesting definition of utopia: "Utopia was always an ambiguous ideal, urging some on to desperate and impossible realizations about which it re-assured the other that they could never come into being in the first place: so it whipped the passionate and the dogmatic into a frenzy while plunging the liberal lukewarm into an immobilizing intellectual comfort (Jameson, 1994:52-53). Due to this definition of utopia, Jameson is right in assuming that people should be disillusioned with it, or want to distance themselves from it. This definition could lead to the individual losing touch with a utopian impulse. Jameson's chapter is not a futuristic look at the end of the world, but an analysis of the degeneration of society that seems to have reached the very core of destruction, and from which there seems to be no, or at least only a very complicated way out.

Jameson's and Paglia's pessimism is rooted in the fact that the spiral of oppression is ongoing, never stopping, breaking or changing course. Jameson's quote,

gives a valuable understanding of why. Liberals have become too comfortable with the idea of utopia as echoed by Russell Jacoby's chapter "Intellectuals: From Utopia to Myopia" in *The End of Utopia* (1999). Jacoby criticizes the way intellectuals have become indolent and more interested in their tenure track than in acting as agents of critical knowledge. It is through conservative liberalism in which they do not wish to offend the institution they work for that they become "apathetic", as Jacoby puts it. The intellectuals thus do not enforce liberal ideas but rather contain them. This, coupled with Jameson's look at previous utopian impulses, implies that utopia has lost its 'drive.'

As a solution, Jameson recommends looking beyond the systems of capitalism. But our consumer society hypnotised by capitalism seems doomed, by Jameson's thinking. The ecological destruction of the Earth may finally lead a new kind of utopia called Ecotopia, but there seems no drive for fundamental change at present. This is not an attack on capitalism or on any system, but rather a questioning of how long oppression, caused by others for purposes of greed, jealousy or religious means will continue. For Jameson, "[i]t seems to be easier for us today to imagine the thoroughgoing deterioration of the earth and of nature than the breakdown of late capitalism; perhaps that is due to some weakness in our imaginations"(1994:xii). Thus, society has become laissez-faire in its attitudes towards itself, rendered the intellectual immobile, and offered those that are passionate and dogmatic chances to realize bizarre and sometimes dangerous personalized totalitarian utopias.

As has been argued before, Hitler believed in his utopia. He wished to transform his society into understanding and accepting his 'utopian possibility'. One cannot discredit Hitler, for by his definition, not More's, he was following a path towards creating and founding an island. The complacency of others not to understand his utopia, as laid

out in the previous chapter, left millions dead. Jameson comments on Hitler, or fascist-like utopianism, as “anti-Utopianism meets post-modernism” (1994:53). For it is the very nature of borrowing from other genres that post-modernism that has created more exploiters and more exploited.

It would be inaccurate to say that there is no social change, but war, famine, disease, and ignorance continue to kill and control vast societies. What could have possibly been the catalyst of change for social uprisings such as the French revolution of 1789, the Russian revolution of 1917 and more recently the student uprisings of the 60s continues to yield casualties, and people return to modes of complacency. Revolution, or the mode of violent uprising, does therefore not seem a feasible option. For if revolutionary movements to action are considered the climax of change, they have not only been unsuccessful, but have destroyed human life in the covenant of utopia, and that is anti-utopian by nature.

According to Kumar, contemporary utopian writing has also lost its ability to cause significant thought and change. Kumar critiques authors like Le Guin, Delany, Russ and Piercy, and argues that “they have retreated into private worlds, concerning themselves with inner space rather than the transformation of the outer public world. They are therefore unable to carry out the utopian function of social transformation” (Levitas, 1990:166). This may be true if one reflects on previous novels that have caused actual change. Levitas uses Bellamy’s *Looking Backward* as an example of a book that caused change, in contrast to works like mentioned by Kumar that do not. However, these works may become the canon of the future revolutionaries, as blueprints of possibility through the alternative worlds where equality is realised. To necessarily say that no literary works are strongly utopian is to ignore the communities as referenced

in Piercy's world of Mattapoissett, where the power is given to the community, regardless of their specific ideologies. Thus there is a danger to criticize contemporary utopian writing as being inactive or ineffective for contemporary literary works still have the ability to question and create alternative realities of opportunity.

It is, rather, the inability of these academics to acknowledge the possibility of change that is also allowing the complacency to continue. For in works like Levitas *Concept of Utopia*, Kumar's *Utopia and anti-Utopia in Modern Times*, and even *The Seeds of Time* by Fredric Jameson, the works argue rhetoric and definition, and discredit the nature of utopia. Not many options are accepted by these academics. Even Tom Moylan's critical utopia, an analysis of the flawed yet practical utopia, is discredited by Levitas as it "makes no distinction between oppositional and alternative forms" (1990:174).

Levitas observation about the nature of a utopian text is, "[d]esire must be transformed into hope, the wish to change into the will for change and the belief that there is an agency available to execute it" (1990:174). As Levitas comments, it is the inability to create an agency that leads to the discrediting of utopia in general. Yet utopia cannot be reduced to a definition of agency alone. There must be a way to move from idea to actual utopia, through to reality, by looking beyond the structures of Capitalism as Jameson previously concluded. Juda Bennett's practical reality is thus an example of practical negotiation, one that theoretical models will not necessarily solve. For theory, and specifically utopian theory, is not easily defined, and its rhetoric can be interpretable.

This section has tried to find the problems that utopia posits and the ways in which the individual responds to these problems. In the next section, literary responses

to this problem of individual responsibility is highlighted in a comparison of Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, written in 1888 and Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* written in 2003.

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## Literary Responses to the Future

### Questioning the Future through Atrocity: Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* and Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*

The whole world is now one vast uncontrollable experiment- the way it always was (*Oryx and Crake*, Margaret Atwood, pg.228).

In order to further explore this idea of the alienated individual *Oryx and Crake* (2003) and Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (1888) are analysed for their systems of awareness. *Oryx and Crake* by Margaret Atwood<sup>135</sup> predicts a genetically modified future based on speculative studies in cloning and genetics. Bellamy's work on the other hand uses cognitive estrangement to highlight two worlds, the world of 2000 with the world of 1888. Both works deal with individual responsibility and the lack of the individual to make changes. Each work will be deconstructed, looking at the worlds that they create and the relationship of the individual to this work.

Atwood is scrupulous in identifying *Oryx and Crake* as "speculative fiction" rather than science fiction writing<sup>136</sup>. The purpose for this classification of her work is based on newspaper clippings that Atwood compiled while writing the novel: "[The book] contains nothing humans haven't done, or aren't thinking about doing" (Pepper, 2003:49).

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<sup>135</sup> Margaret Atwood is Booker award winning author of *The Blind Assassin*. This is her second dystopian novel. In her first novel *The Handmaid's Tale* (1986), Atwood critiques the role of women and Christian conservatism towards women.

<sup>136</sup> "Atwood attributes her changing vision of the future to scientific advances. Everything that happens in 'Oryx and Crake,' she says, is within the realm of possibility. She thus considers her latest novel 'speculative', that is, imaginable in this world, rather than science fiction" (Pepper, 2003:49).

Thus, *Oryx and Crake* is similar to *The Zoo Project*, for it uses contemporary news as a signifier of the oppression facing society and reveals the level to which the human psyche has reached a new definition of Kant's 'categorical imperative.'

*Oryx and Crake* reflects the human condition with regard to atrocity mentioned in *The Zoo Project*. The privileged- mostly white<sup>137</sup>-economically empowered-intellectually superior-heterosexual<sup>138</sup> society reflected in the corporation state has been conditioned and controlled through their internal media propaganda and have become victims of extreme capitalism<sup>139</sup>. People are able to change their identities at whim: "Gender, sexual orientation, height, colour of skin and eyes—it's all on order, it can all be done or redone" (Atwood, 2003:289). Atwood takes Fredric Jameson's critique of society as agents of this economic system to the extremes. Her characters are selfish, materialistic and irresponsible to anything outside of their milieu and compound. The world reflected as the other-dirty-uneducated-uncivilized-dangerous is there in contrast to the corporation. The corporation therefore is able to attract intelligent, well-educated and financially viable people to work for it, feel responsibility towards it and thus relinquish their privacy, which occurs through being constantly monitored in case of leaks in information. Thus autonomy is limited and, through never leaving the compound and thus being further subjected to control by the corporation and without knowing what

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<sup>137</sup> This can be inferred from the observations of the protagonist, Jimmy. 'Other' races are evident in positions of subservience as illustrated by his Filipino nanny: "All he'd known was that Dolores, the live-in from the Philippines, had been sent away" (Atwood, 2003:30). Other examples of white privileged people living in the corporation states are evident when Jimmy first goes out of the corporation states and into the "pleeblands" for he observes: "All skin colours, all sizes"(Atwood, 2003:288). Other ways the corporation segregates is through exploiting people from poorer countries through drug trials: "From the poorer countries. Pay them a few dollars; they don't even know what they are taking" (Atwood, 2003:296).

<sup>138</sup> As part of this study is into sexuality *Oryx and Crake* has also been read from a perspective of sexuality. Heterosexuality is the norm as Jimmy clearly labels his friendship with Crake as being platonic and not sexual (pg.76). The headmaster of the Martha Graham Academy is stereotypically represented as being incriminated in a sexual misdemeanor with a student (pg.174) and student services are able to organise gay prostitutes for those requiring their services at elite universities or research institutes (pg 208).

<sup>139</sup> As noted "That everything has a price" (Atwood, 2003:139).

happens outside of these compounds, atrocities have no meaning. Governments do exist but, due to their ineffectual nature, “they were toppled and replaced with such rapidity that it hardly mattered” (Atwood, 2003:82).

The kinds of entertainment on offer to society are reflected through the protagonist Jimmy’s life. Jimmy plays a game called “Blood and Roses” in which the purpose of the game is to outwit the other side, with one player having intellect, reason and art (Rose), playing against the other player who has the greatest human atrocities (Blood) as placed directly opposite each other, with equal strength. Human atrocities could be traded for some intellectual or human achievement, but as Jimmy notes, “the Blood player usually won, but winning meant you inherited a waste land” (Atwood, 2003:80). This implies that human atrocities have happened more than achievements, and though atrocities may win in the end, achievement is thwarted every time there is a genocide, war or famine.

Other forms of entertainment in his youth are the Internet sites he accesses most: pornography<sup>140</sup> and reality television executions. The over stimulus of negative images of bodies and sex, and atrocity and violence are the sites of choice for the teenage Jimmy and his friend Crake.<sup>141</sup> Rather than being shocked or abhorred by the loss of life, or being the voyeur into a human’s most private moment of death and sex,

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<sup>140</sup> The pornography and sex industry is also represented as out of control. Child prostitutes from third world countries are sold into sexual slavery, for the pleasure of those in the corporation state. Oryx, a former prostitute is seen by Jimmy and Crake, in one of their pornography viewing sessions, and makes an impact on both of them as she is ‘exotic’ and directly confronts the voyeur by looking at the camera and therefore makes contact with those people viewing the pornography.

<sup>141</sup> As illustrated in the following example: “So they’d roll a few joints and smoke them while watching the executions and porn—the body parts moving around on the screen in slow motion, an underwater ballet of flesh and blood under stress, hard and soft joining and separating, groans and screams, close-ups of clenched eyes and clenched teeth, spurts of this or that. If you switched back and forth fast, it all came to look like the same event” (Atwood, 2003:86).

they are oblivious to them, leaving Jimmy to feel that “[h]e didn’t seem to be affected by anything he saw” (Atwood, 2003: 86).

The work is set in New York City in the future, although the immediate future and not something hundreds of years from becoming a reality. The city no longer exists as it is divided between the corporation state, privileged, and the “pleeblands”, everything other than privileged. Disease and ecological disasters have changed the landscape dramatically, partially due to the ice caps melting and the opposite extremes resulting, with new deserts being created. “[A]s time went on and the coastal aquifers turned salty and the northern permafrost melted and the vast tundra bubbled with methane, and the drought in the midcontinental plains regions went on and on, and the Asian steppes turned to sand dunes” (Atwood, 2003:24). This action of irresponsibility towards nature is not heeded as humans continue to challenge nature. Disease is one of the tools ‘nature’ uses to restrict the humans from completely destroying the world, completely. In 2003 Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), a strain of the flu virus caused paranoia in Asia and Canada limiting free movement around the globe, and causing heightened health control measures<sup>142</sup>. This disease is reflected in Atwood’s speculative work in a disease names JUNE. Diseases, biological terrorism or acts of nature, and acts of terrorism are the two greatest problems affecting the corporation states and thus ‘the rest of the world’. They instigate systems of paranoia so that they are able to control their subjects from these two threats.

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<sup>142</sup> A similar epidemic in the years between 1997-2003 has been mad cow disease, which has been critiqued as being directly related to genetically modified feed. In *Oryx and Crake* mad cow disease is still prevalent when disease strikes the compound and animals have to be burnt. “The animals were dead. They were like steaks and sausages, only they still had their skins on” (Atwood, 2003:18).

Paranoia is ingrained into the members of the corporation state, for Jimmy as a child knows about the dangers facing the corporation state, through propaganda circulating in the schools, television and conversations with the people in the corporation state, he learns about “[t]he other side, or the other sides: it wasn’t just one other side you had to watch out for. Other companies, other countries, various factions and plotters” (Atwood, 2003:27). With an enemy with no face, the corporation has extreme control on its subject and is able to maintain loyalty to it through using a combination of power and basic bullying techniques. Jimmy’s mother is revolutionary in that she rejects the corporation that she works for and escapes into the pleeblands. Jimmy is aware that his mother is not defined as ‘normal’ for she does and says things that are contrary to what is quid pro quo in the corporation: “According to Jimmy’s mother their phones and e-mail were bugged” (Atwood, 203:54). At the end of the novel, Jimmy witnesses his own mother’s execution and, unlike the previous executions that he viewed as a child, this affects him. The corporation state also wishes him to see it as a warning to him not to do anything similar.

People in Atwood’s society in *Oryx and Crake* are deemed not responsible for their actions, as they have been subjected to and placed into a system of extreme capitalism. The result for Jimmy is “[He grew up in] walled spaces, and then he had become one. He had shut things out” (Atwood, 2003:184). Similarly, through the constant paranoia against the ‘Other’, one without a face, personal responsibility is further diminished. As *The Zoo Project* imagines the world at the end of capitalism, *Oryx and Crake* analyzes the transition from capitalism to primitive hunter-gatherer society in which the survival of the fittest is paramount. Big corporations have created villages and towns within secure compounds, where the inhabitants of these compounds never have to be in direct contact with people from the pleeblands or urban areas at all. Inside the

corporations there is an abundance of food, recreational facilities and comfort in contrast to the desert like imagery used for the pleeblands.

The society within *Oryx and Crake* feel so alienated from everything outside of their compound walls that they have become unaffected and numb to all things that are not familiar, in this case, their pursuit for better bodies, food and money. Their society enables them to live longer through breeding pigs with multiple organs to be used in transplants, to have plastic surgery using genetics to re-grow skin and have enough food through chickens, which have multiple legs and no eyes and are produced only for the purpose of supplying meat. With this base of excessive capitalism, the society within this system is unable to look beyond its own needs.

Everything other than this world within the corporation state is considered unimportant. What Atwood posits is contemporary society on the extreme of not needing to take accountability for actions, due to the inaccessibility of agency to change or reform the continuing oppression. This is evident in Jimmy's everyday life: "Or he'd watch the news: more plagues, more famines, more floods, more insect or microbe or small-mammal outbreaks, more droughts, more chickenshit boy-soldier wars in distant countries. Why was everything so much like itself?" (Atwood, 2003:253-254) The incongruity in Jimmy's response indicates the level that he is apathetic to his surroundings and ultimately himself.

Genetic modification and manipulation represents the individualistic nature and unaffected response and implication of actions. All of the genetic modifications are based on the government's desire to control nature and control society. The scientists, the direct agents of the corporation states are given the freedom to clone, modify and re-

program nature, not for the purpose of creating better conditions for humanity, but rather for making money, as only then are they able to take advantage of the products that these animals yield. Thus, the God like status afforded these scientists reflects their own distance from reality, for they do not think of the implications of their experimenting but rather the satisfaction of ego and attainment of power through it. "There'd been a lot of fooling around in those days: create-an-animal was so much fun, said the guys doing it; it made you feel like God" (Atwood, 2003:51).

*Oryx and Crake* makes a strong statement about modifying nature and the implications of that modification. In the work the scientists who have genetically modified animals, humans and plants believe that the knowledge that they have is sufficient enough, and that their mechanisms of control are sound. However, in the cases of the animals and the humans, the model and theory do not complement the reality of nature. Both the animals and the humans that have been cloned are not easily controlled without regulations and systems, and as soon as these systems are removed the natural tendencies are replaced. In the animals, the pigeons that were created for the purpose of supplying a consumer need for transplant victims<sup>143</sup>, for those that could afford it, become violent and turn into hunters even though their 'natural tendencies', created by the scientists, were passive.<sup>144</sup>

Crake, the inventor of the Crakers (cloned humans), wanted to create humans without power hierarchies and thus created a group of humans who resembled simpler forms of humans. For Crake, these systems of atrocity can be accounted for in the

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<sup>143</sup> "Pigeon was only a nickname... The Goal of the pigeon project was to grow an assortment of foolproof human-tissue organs... organs that would transplant smoothly and avoid rejection... and now they were perfecting a pigeon that could grow five or six kidneys at a time" (Atwood, 2003:22).

following philosophy, “[w]atch out for the leaders... First the leaders and the led, then the tyrants and the slaves, then the massacres. That’s how it’s always gone” (Atwood, 2003:155). When creating his human clones, he genetically modifies them to exclude any notions of hierarchy and the subsequent power related dynamics. “Hierarchy could not exist among them, because they lacked the neural complexes that would have created it” (Atwood, 2003:305). Crake believed that the core of violence and human atrocities lie in sex. He thus programmed the Crakers to have basic primal sexual needs, in which women’s bottom’s would turn blue when they wanted to procreate, the Craker men have multiple sexual intercourses with her, as the skin around her vagina is much thicker due to modification and thus able to withstand the repeated intercourse without pain, until she falls pregnant. Once she falls pregnant then the men no longer need to have sex and the woman’s bottom no longer shows blue. In order for them to not place themselves in positions of power in nature they are created vegetarian so as not to kill or know what killing means. Finally, in order for them to feel a sense of community, they urinate in a circle around the area that they inhabit in order to keep other animals from coming near to them. They were thus born and created without knowledge however they start to simulate religion by building an effigy to Snowman (Jimmy), when he goes on a journey to get supplies, and thus start learning the “language of difference” which starts to create a “hierarchy of minority” in their society. This act is in direct contrast with Crake’s purpose of programming the Crakers not to have religion, “[s]ymbolic thinking of any kind would signal downfall” (Atwood, 2003:361).

Atwood offers a further dystopia in *Oryx and Crake*. In the dystopia, a disease manufactured by Oryx is distributed to the major corporations in and out of the

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<sup>144</sup> Another example is the bobkittens, also created originally to be pets, that without control “soon got out of control in their turn” (Atwood, 2003:164).

pleeblands. The disease, similar to the Plague, devastates the world's human population while letting the genetically modified animals and people survive. This narrative is interspersed with the narrative of excessive capitalism, with the extremities between the two explored throughout the novel. Jimmy the protagonist is able to survive, as he is sealed into a room with the Crakers that had been created specifically for the purpose of protection against a worldwide atrocity like this one happening. The genetically modified animals are immune to the human virus and thus the pigeons and the bobkittens are able to create their own survival techniques, which are to hunt any animals for food, as the humans are no longer supplying them with food. The Crakers are left as the only possible future, but with only a few Crakers, the possibility of long term survival is questionable as Atwood believes, "[b]reak the link in time between one generation and the next, and it's game over forever." (Atwood, 2003:223).

Jimmy changes his name to Snowman. But Jimmy, from the previously capitalistic society, is not the same person as Snowman, the person in the new primitive society. Computers and electronics, that are such a necessity in the capitalist society, cannot and do not work as there is no more electricity. The pursuit of capitalism is reduced to nothing, as the only skills that are needed in this society are basic survival skills. The reality of transformation from the one society to the other is Atwood's warning of what could happen should society remain alienated from nature, and indirectly from humanity. Jimmy represents a possible human of the future. His life story becomes the case study for the alienated, marginalized, and capricious 'agent' of society. "Once upon a time, Snowman wasn't Snowman. Instead he was Jimmy. He'd been a good boy then" (Atwood, 2003:15). Even though, during the "then" he had been anything but good.

The devastation that Atwood posits is that history is lost, without the means for future generations or societies to look back and re-read history nothing, has meaning. Jimmy as the survivor contemplates, “[b]ut even a castaway assumes a future reader, someone who’ll come along later and find his bones and his ledger, and learn his fate. Snowman can make no assumptions: he’ll have no future reader, because the Crakers can’t read. Any reader he can imagine is in the past” (Atwood, 2003:41). Atwood’s message is clear, play with nature through overt use of the ego and nature will take control again. All of this is as a result of human selfishness towards the pursuits and desires of something better, in this case all that capitalism has to offer. Remain alienated and disasters, which cannot be controlled by humans, will follow.

*The Zoo Project and Oryx and Crake* are not particularly original in commenting about society’s lack of responsibility and detachment. Edward Bellamy’s work *Looking Backward* (1888) dealt with these issues 115 years ago. *Looking Backward* compares 1888 to a ‘speculative’ 2000, in which utopia has been realised to a much greater degree than in More’s *Utopia*. Bellamy hoped that his utopia, projected into the future of 112 years would come into fruition through humanity’s desire to better itself. On return from the utopian 2000, Mr. Julian West, the protagonist, is disappointed at his society’s inability to engage with inequalities that he highlights. As he notes, “I saw that, far from being stirred as I was, their faces expressed a cold and hard astonishment” (Bellamy, 1996:159). This ‘cold and hard’ view of West’s ideology is a key factor to continuing oppression. The ‘universal majority’ does not wish to lose that which has kept it superior to the rest. The reaction, in this case and in other cases of confrontation, is hostility. It is the ‘universal minority’s’ direct threat to the power dynamic wishing the ‘universal majority’ to account for its actions that keeps the ‘universal majority’ in control. The ‘universal majority’ refuses to acknowledge that there is any injustice. This is largely

through the privilege of always having power or gaining power and enjoying the 'perks' that go with it. By normalizing the oppression, the 'universal majority' is distanced from it and considered not to be the agent of oppression. The privilege of the power deems any threats to it as being a conspiracy to overthrow it. Rather than acknowledging that oppression exists and creating a necessary agency by which to rid society of this oppression and the subsequent power struggles that are associated with it, control remains as a method to remain 'with power' rather than 'without it'.

Not all the blame can be attributed to these citizens of the world however, for they need to undergo some alienation technique in order to understand the nature of oppression. West had the opportunity to be confronted with a perfect society as did Raphael Hythloday; thus, returning to the familiar, the societies that they were socialised into, they were appalled by the limited understanding others had of society. Indifference, as Bellamy refers to it in the following extract from *Looking Backward*, is the 'numbing of society' by an over stimulus of oppression, where oppression has no effect and the power inequality is no longer seen as being fundamentally unfair. On returning to Boston from 2000 to 1888 West notices, "Now on the contrary the glaring disparities in the dress and condition of the men and women who brushed each other on the sidewalks shocked me at every step, and yet more the entire indifference which the prosperous showed to the plight of the unfortunate" (Bellamy, 1996:151). The 'indifference' is another name for the language of the minority. Bellamy's Boston society, a member of which Mr. West was a part, had always been the 'universal majority' and thus not aware of the language and plight of the minority.

The utopian thinker sometimes forgets that society plays a fundamental role in dehumanizing people, creating systems of oppression and reducing life in the world to

an ongoing power struggle that neglects human life. Alas, it is not only the oligarchy in control of power systems that are to blame for the cycle of oppressions, but every member of society that refuses to acknowledge their role in the continuing cycles of oppression. To return to Bellamy and contrast his society with contemporary society would be through Mr. West's key observation of the continuing nature of oppression. Mr. West notes that oppression does not only happen through a system out of reach for all citizens of the world, but rather through the citizens not wishing to respond to the ongoing problem: "What hope was there for the wretched, for the world, if thoughtful men and tender women were not moved by things like these!" (Bellamy, 1996:159) Admitting that all people are involved in the system in some way or the other is to begin building utopian bridges.

Thus, *Oryx and Crake* and *Looking Backward* attempt to bring about change through highlighting what could happen in the future, a dystopian landscape in *Oryx and Crake*, or a utopian landscape filled with opportunity in *Looking Backward*. What sets *The Zoo Project* apart from these works is that it attempts to look at the mechanics of the individual's responsibility in a 'science fiction' setting, not a speculative setting like the other two. Where as Atwood has noted there is a possibility of her book being realised, *The Zoo Project* remains only a work of fiction which has been created in order to indicate the level of alienation that people find themselves in. As with all utopian texts it is the world of Bellamy's Boston that would be the better choice for society rather than the wasteland of Atwood's New York.

This chapter has tried to find ways in which the individual can negotiate oppression. The practical examples of Bennett's experience are the first method of identifying ways in which a system of negotiation is created in order for the individual to

survive. The second section dealt with theoretical concepts of utopia, and definitions of attaining utopia, and the individual's responsibility was explored. The two sections focusing on literary responses to attaining utopia focused on a play, recently written for the purpose of this thesis, and, secondly, the works of Bellamy and Atwood, which indicated that the individual's alienation from society was noted as far back as 1888, and continues in 2004. The individual should therefore take some responsibility in finding ways to negotiate with oppression. In the next section, Orientalism is defined as the new 'universal minority' with the recent focus on the East after the September eleventh attacks. This implies that the cyclical nature of oppression continues, and instead of there being solutions as suggested in this chapter, oppression continues in new forms.

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## **Chapter Seven**

### **Re-Writing *Orientalism*: Relative Utopias, towards relative realities**

**The Arab occupies space enough for attention; it is as a negative value. He is seen as the disrupter of Israel's and the West's existence (Said, 1995:286).**

The idea of a 'universal majority' and a 'universal minority' have been introduced to explain the power struggle of ideology to dominate and replicate oppression, and reaction to this situation without individual assumption of guilt or negotiation in a neutral space has been shown to create a spiral of oppression which resists movement toward utopia. Two examples of this can be found in a theoretical and historical analysis<sup>145</sup> of the phenomenon of Orientalism. This chapter placed at the end of the work is symbolic of the fact that a new minority has been imaged in the face of a new wave of Orientalism, and even though the previous chapter enquired about the future possibilities, this chapter reiterates the need to transcend the 'universal minority.' With 9/11<sup>146</sup> as the event that has created a new wave of Orientalism, the theoretical will be addressed through an analysis of how science fiction and utopian writings react to and re-iterate the ideology of Orientalism. This is due to America, the 'universal majority' imaging the Orient and more specifically the Orient of the Middle East as the 'universal minority.'

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<sup>145</sup> In the chapter "The Holocaust," a practical example of the 'universal minority' and 'universal majority' is given looking at the Holocaust from a historical perspective. The theoretical example is given in Chapters 1 and 2.

<sup>146</sup> 9/11 refers to the event in which two planes flew into the Twin Towers, World Trade Center, New York on September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001. This event is significant in that Osama Bin Laden, an assumed Muslim fundamentalist is believed to have orchestrated the event. Bin Laden is imaged in the stereotypical manner of the 'Arab' that Edward Said refers to in his work *Orientalism*. As a result new hate crimes are being committed against Arab-Americans (Abdelkarim, 2002)

Edward Said, noted Orientalism scholar and author of *Orientalism* (1978) envisions that through his study of Orientalism something better will come: “[I]f this stimulates a new kind of dealing with the orient, indeed if it eliminates the ‘Orient’ and ‘Occident’ altogether, then we shall have advanced a little” (Said, 1995:27). This utopian impulse comes through the fact that, for Said, growing up ‘Oriental’ had a significant effect on him (1995:24-26), one that was negative, and one that is even more relevant today when the idea of the Orientalism is linked to Osama Bin Laden and the Al Qaeda terrorists. The stereotypical fear of the Arab as “disrupter of the world” has new meaning and the actions of a few have resulted in a new oppression<sup>147</sup>.

This utopian impulse is relevant post-9/11, where the idea of a person from the Middle-East has been placed again into the role of the “disrupter” of world peace. Post 9/11, the imaging of Islam has been a negative one. However, hate crimes and discrimination can be traced further back than 9/11. In the *Report of Hate Crimes and Discrimination Against Arab Americans* (2001), case summaries of hate crimes are recorded, including “institutional discrimination, such as airline passenger profiling and selective enforcement of immigration laws, and instances of discrimination in the media” (Ferral.2002: 433).

Additionally, Said believes that, like the Orient is imaged as exotic, the religious institutions within the discourse are not seen positively. He concludes:

Islam is judged to be a fraudulent new version of some previous experience, in this case Christianity. The threat is muted, familiar values impose themselves, and in the end the mind reduces the pressure upon it by accommodating things to itself as either “original” or “repetitious”.

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<sup>147</sup> The images of abuse in Iraqi jails in April-May 2004 by American troops caused a scandal in which the American troops looked at the prisoners as ‘Others’, toys to be played with forcing them into simulated sexual acts, positions of fear (being harassed by dogs) and general human rights abuses that Amnesty International and the rest of the world deplored.

Islam thereafter is “handled”: its novelty and its suggestiveness are brought under control so that relatively nuanced discriminations are now made that would have been impossible had the raw novelty of Islam been left unattended. The Orient at large, therefore, vacillates between the West’s contempt for what is familiar and its shivers of delight in-or fear of-novelty (Said, 1995:59).

The “threat” in this case, is the attack on Christian principles. The discrimination that has been reported is an example of Western societies imaging Islam as ‘Other,’ and subjecting ‘Otherness’ onto the ‘subject’. Islam, as the “novelty”, is the signifier of minority and of ‘difference’ within the West. Thus, the “contempt” felt for people of Middle Eastern descent after 9/11.

Orientalism is a dominant discourse that was manufactured as a result of the Western minds’ fascination with the ‘Other’. The ‘Other’, the Orient, encompasses Asia and the Middle East. The dominant agents were the British and the French,<sup>148</sup> but now America has replaced these colonial powers. Orientalism, as a discourse, was created by the West in order to control and objectify the East, so that consumption of it could be conducted for the pleasure and the benefit of the West. The ideology commodifies and controls the region of the East, and continues today in new mutant forms of Orientalism: “The fact is that Orientalism has been successfully accommodated to the new imperialism, where its ruling paradigms do not contest, and even confirm, the continuing imperial design to dominate Asia” (Said, 1995:322). America, as the new producer of Orientalism and its discourse, continues to control the East through its military presence in Korea and Japan, in dominating Israel, and removing regimes that do not comply with its ideologies, Iraq.

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<sup>148</sup> “To speak of Orientalism therefore is to speak mainly, although not exclusively, of a British and French cultural enterprise” (Said, 1995:4).

What threatens the West, and the cause of anxiety that reiterates Western stereotypes of Islam is the idea of “jihad” against Western Imperialism. As Said noted in 1978, “[I]urking behind all of these images is the menace of *jihad*. Consequence: a fear that the Muslims (or Arabs) will take over the world” (1995:287). The stereotypical images of despotism, sensuality and character are contrasted with death, destruction and war for Islam. People of Middle Eastern descent have displaced Hispanics in America as the ‘universal minority’ post-9/11. Hate crimes have increased, as explored in a report prepared by the America-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee Research Institute<sup>149</sup>. The 141 page report is supported by the statistics from the American Federal Bureau of Investigation, which shows a 1,600% rise in Arab American hate crimes. “It continues to increase despite the fact that discrimination against other ethnic and religious groups has been understood to be both morally reprehensible and politically incorrect.”<sup>150</sup>

What makes Orientalism relevant in the study of ‘universal minority’ and ‘universal majority’ is the incongruency found between a dominant discourse and its subject, as found in Said’s work: “Orientalism responded more to the culture that produced it than to its putative object, which was also produced by the West. Thus the history of Orientalism has both an internal consistency and a highly articulated set of relationships to the dominant culture surrounding it” (Said, 1995:22). As has been mentioned, Orientalism was created by the West, for the West’s consumption. The West, as the ‘universal majority’, asserts itself completely over the East, the ‘universal minority’,

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<sup>149</sup> American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee Research Institute (2003). *Report on Hate Crimes and Discrimination Against Arab Americans: The Post-September 11 Backlash: September 11, 2001 to October 11, 2002* Available at: [www.adc.org](http://www.adc.org) (Accessed on the 23 March 2003).

<sup>150</sup> Ibid. [http://www.adc.org/hate\\_crimes.htm](http://www.adc.org/hate_crimes.htm) (Accessed 23 March April 2003).

under the restrictions of Orientalism, an ideology specifically created to invalidate the East's legitimacy as a free agent.

The idea of Orientalism is not an issue of race. Although being Asian or Middle-Eastern is a racial signifier of the subject in Orientalism, it is different due to the nature of consumption. As Said points out, the 'exotic' image of the East is what lured the West. "Beneath the idioms there was a layer of doctrine about the Orient; this doctrine was fashioned out of the experiences of many Europeans, all of them converging upon such essential aspects of the Orient as the Oriental character, Oriental despotism, Oriental sensuality, and the like"(Said, 1995:203). According to Said there is a fascination with Asia, and one that is not necessarily shared with the same light as, for example, colonial Africa, which is "savage".<sup>151</sup>

Two literary works can be offered to explain how writers are trying to reclaim an identity from the West. The first work to be explored is Kim Stanley Robinson's<sup>152</sup>, *The Years of Rice and Salt* (2002), a science fiction novel with an alternative history, and David Henry Hwang's play *M. Butterfly* (1989), which redefines the 'Other' in Orientalism. These are two cases in which the 'universal minority' tries to find plausible ways to negotiate with the 'universal majority' in order to legitimize identity within the discourse. By creating an identity, they are then able to directly negotiate spatially with the 'majority' for purposes of greater liberty.

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<sup>151</sup> Steyn uses the idea that "Colonialism was locked into a dialectic of attraction and repulsion (Young,1995). This mixture of disgust and fatal attraction, is evident in the fear of going native" (2001:15).

<sup>152</sup> Kim Stanley Robinson is considered one of the best contemporary science fiction writers. He has won two Nebula Awards and one Hugo Award. *The Years of Rice and Salt* was nominated for the 2003 Hugo award.

In order to obtain the ideological space that Said posits, the one in which the 'Occident' and the 'Orient' are in contrast to each other but in neutral territory where power can be renegotiated, Kim Stanley Robinson's work *The Years of Rice and Salt* offers an alternative future. In this work Islam is not seen as a novelty. As the dominant ideology, shared with Buddhism, Islamic society is respected and not contrasted to Judeo-Christian principles and ethics as it is now. Robinson's book was published in 2002, and although it may have been written before 9/11, if so it could foresee that prejudice towards people of Middle Eastern descent was increasing. This indicates that Robinson wanted to create a discourse of negotiation for this group in order for the Western audience to rethink Orientalism and Middle Eastern stereotyping.

This ideological space of Said is mostly theoretical, but science fiction texts, like uchronic fiction which rewrites history, writes an alternative future, where the 'bad guys' win, as in the case of Robinson's work, and thus subverting the negative image of the Orient. China and the Persian empire of the Middle East are not 'bad guys' in the literal sense today, but as has been argued Middle Eastern countries are given a 'rogue' state stereotype as defined by Said and China is still thought of as a place where communism rules, albeit differently to the times of the Cultural Revolution. Thus by writing an alternative history one in which the "forking path" is one where Orientalism disappears helps to break down the power structure that Orientalism has.

Orientalism has long been the way in which the West has dominated the East. However, there are theoretical examples emerging that re-create the 'Other' and redefine Western stereotypes of the East. *The Years of Rice and Salt* is not as subversive as *M Butterfly* in negotiating an identity and deconstructing the ideology of Orientalism. Due to the nature and definition of Orientalism, it is difficult for a white

American author like Robinson to be given credibility in writing about the Orient<sup>153</sup>, and him not subscribing to Orientalism discourse or being judged as subscribing to Orientalism discourse. There are examples of Robinson's position, as re-iterating the stereotypes of Orientalism, in *The Years of Rice and Salt*, by writing and imaging the 'exotic' of the East as he traces his alternative history. Images of Said's Orientalism's stereotypes are evident in this work. "Oriental character" is evident in the continuity of the book. The book has the same characters re-incarnated into the next life and the next portion of history, reinforcing the mysticism of the "Oriental character" as having lived many lives, and thus having many experiences from which to draw on. "Oriental despotism" is seen in the rulers of the Kingdoms as the Khan in the section entitled "The Alchemist." It can be seen again in the material decadence of the Sultan in "The Age of Great Progress," and the religious fundamentalists that try to take over the country and impose sharia law in the "Nsara" section. There seems to be ongoing fighting and tyranny, but then this is no different from contemporary history where despots reign. "Oriental sensuality" is reflected in some of the lesser female characters, although not all, who are helpless and weak, as in the example of Peng-ti, who is helpless and saved by a Japanese houseboy, named Kiyooki, (The Age of Great Progress). Other examples can be found in the context of the harem, which has come to be the symbol of "oriental sensuality", in "Nsara".

Having pointed out the faults of the novel, and how in some ways it subscribes to the Orientalism philosophy, there are also valuable spaces created for minorities, and

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<sup>153</sup>Said believes that writers can write from an alternative perspective but that ultimately they are constructed by their colonial ties and then secondly as individuals writing on the Orient: "to be a European or American first, as an individual second... It meant and means being aware, however dimly, that one belongs to a power with definite interests in the Orient" (Said,1995:11). Said uses this example for early British and French writers, but also connects it to contemporary thought.

ways in which the Orient is redefined and reinvented. The following is an account of the ways in which *The Years of Rice and Salt* negotiates spaces.

*The Years of Rice and Salt* is innovative, in that the last eight hundred years of history have been re-written: not from a European perspective but an Oriental one. The book begins during the time of the Plague in Europe. Instead of Europe emerging from the disease, its inhabitants partially disappear. 'Europeans' thus disappear, save a few. This changes the course of history from a Western power based history with Judeo-Christian belief systems and enlightenment, to an Asian and Oriental power system base and its subsequent enlightenment. Hierarchies and power struggles do not change as a result of this alternative history, nor does the idea of colonialization, wars of conquest, and technical and scientific achievements, for they are all similar. Instead of having superpowers like England, France and America, Said's core of Orientalism discourse, Chinese Buddhism and Middle Eastern Islam are the new "Eastern" superpowers. The significance in rewriting the European and American tradition is that under these systems Orientalism was born and flourished. Thus by removing the 'universal majority', the West, and replacing it with the 'universal minority', the East, a theoretical utopian space is found for people of the Orient. The novum is rewriting history for purposes of creating new ideologies, power dynamics and possibility.

The contrast of America coming to terms with a post-9/11 identity is very different from the one Robinson writes that has Native American Indians living in harmony with nature. America, in *The Years of Rice and Salt* is considered barbaric and wild when compared to China or the Middle East. This is a direct system of negotiation with Orientalism and the structures that it employs. For as Said notes, "[s]ince World War II America has dominated the Orient, and approaches it as France and Britain once did"

(Said, 1995:4). The centre of technology, development and scientific achievement mostly lies in the Middle Eastern area of Robinson's history, rather than in the America of today or in the American dominated North Asia region. This tool of an alternative history is utopian, for it offers a better life economically as well as politically for Asia. To further highlight this point would be to use the reference of the sweatshop as an example of the West's desire to imprint itself onto the Orient. Poorer Asian countries are subjected to Western capitalist systems of exploitation for commercial purposes. By taking the money out of Europe and America and locating it in Asia, these kinds of Western imprints disappear and are replaced with Islamic systems of responsibility of commercial trading as in compliance with the Koran.

Similarly, the Chinese in Robinson's work colonize the Japanese. Prior to World War II the Japanese had colonized China, Korea, Singapore and parts of South East Asia. The Japanese tortured the local people and suppressed any uprising with firearms. The women of the occupied territories were forced into sexual slavery for purposes of satisfying the Japanese armed forces' desires. This is all eradicated in *The Years of Rice and Salt*, where the Japanese and Nippon, as it is called, is nothing more than a barbarian state colonized by the new superpower China, and in turn is treated, in the alternative reality, how it treated China in contemporary history.

Robinson does not write a traditional utopian work in which the society evolves into one which overtly offers freedom to its entire people. The similarities between his alternative history and real history are the incongruous signifier of human nature. Technology has achieved similar levels, the difference is nuclear threats are real in the contemporary world; Robinson hints that by empowering the scientists of the ruling majority and those outside of this power base, the scientists claim the power not to

destroy. The scientists create a council, which does not allow governments to manipulate them into making weapons of mass destruction, thus abolishing the threat of nuclear weapons from the history of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. This is a strong contrast to today where countries like India, Pakistan and North Korea use them as a means of negotiation.

There are also examples of the locality of freedom from the systems of Judeo-Christian thought, as seen in this example from *The Years of Rice and Salt*. In an observation after the plague has worked through Europe, the first Arab settlers are under the impression that the years of tyranny are over, due to the end of Christianity as a dominant religion and centre of power. "But the Christians were torturers... All living things are free. Anyway they're gone now, and we're here" (Robinson, 2002:135). Christianity or Judeo-Christian thought has looked to Islam as being directly in opposition to it. Hence referencing Christianity as a 'bad religion', in the same way as Islam is referenced now, challenges readers' thinking of Christianity.

Feminism in Islam is explored in *The Years of Rice and Salt*, not as a reaction not to the West's perception of what Oriental women should be, but as systems of negotiation within Islam. In order to understand the impact of feminism in Robinson's book, a brief explanation of feminism in the Orient is necessary. Feminism, in Said's *Orientalism*, is noted but not explored fully according to Lilia Abu Lughod, Islamic Feminist scholar. Abu-Lughod questions feminist identity in Said's *Orientalism* and in Islamic studies. Abu-Lughod does not believe that feminism and women's identity should have to be shaped according to Western liberalism or Said's Orientalism discourse. For even though Said has noted that women specifically are objectified, Abu-Lughod feels that "[w]e have to ask what Western liberal values we may be unreflectively

validating in proving that 'Eastern' women have agency, too"(Abu-Lughod, 2001:105). This validation in itself perpetuates the Orientalism stereotype and further subscribes to further disempowerment and the loss of the Islamic feminist voice.

The loss of the feminist voice comes from the West's desire to silence the East, and yet liberate the East with Western ethical, moral and political viewpoints. This duality is best explored by looking at Gayatri Spivak's, a post-colonial theorist, idea of positionality. Spivak, herself of Indian descent, notes that she as a writer is also responsible for validating a voice: "So if I'm read as giving her a voice, there again this is a sort of transaction of the positionality between the Western feminist listener who listens to me, and myself, signified as a Third World informant"<sup>154</sup>. The fact that she is seen as a Third World informant alienates her from the East and West. This is relevant to other writers who are alienated by both societies, because the listeners are "Western feminists" and Spivak is a "third world informant," and therefore not trusted by the East.

The idea of Islam as "novelty" is again viewed as archaic and disempowering from a cultural Imperialist perspective, where the discourse of the West canonizes all discourse of the East as being "novel," invalid, and therefore unable to be respected as a plausible system by which to operate. Feminism, placed into this "invalid" system is the most disempowered, for as Abu-Lughod notes, women feel that they have to prove they have "agency" rather than prove they have legitimacy. Abu-Lughod feels that an alliance of Islamic or Eastern feminists with Western discourses only results in further alienation from Islamic society as mirrored by Spivak's observation. Abu-Lughod realizes that systems are oppressive within the societies that women in the Middle East find

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<sup>154</sup> From an interview with Spivak by Adamson, W. (1990). "The Problem of Cultural Self-representation" in *The Postcolonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues* (57).

themselves, but the imperialist nature of comparison of the Western discourse and wanting to reinvent and rewrite the Eastern discourse is not a feasible solution. As Abu-Lughod says, “although negative images of women or gender relations in the region are certainly to be deplored, offering positive images or ‘nondistorted’ images will not solve the basic problem posed by Said’s analysis of Orientalism” (Abu-Lughod, 2001:105).

Orientalism continues due to the nature of the ‘objectified other’. The West and its academics feel the need to free the East and the ‘objectified subject’, as an apology for the system that it has created. The result however, is creating further layers of oppression, for Western academia responds and imprints the oriental subject with its own values. Somehow, Asian and Middle-Eastern feminists need to find neutral territory, or displace themselves away from this system, and *The Years of Rice and Salt* partially allows them space to do this.

However, the issue of displacement is by no means simple. This can be seen using the works of two scholars that explore remembering history and space. Firstly, Lee Morrissey<sup>155</sup> looks at Jacques Derrida’s idea of “Nostalgeria,” one in which he, as a national of Algeria living there till he was 19, felt in remembering his time there. Derrida felt ruptured from the landscape of Algeria, causing him to look at the space in which he existed, to the new space, which was foreign. Due to this “nostalgeria” he returned to Algeria and lived for two years, hoping to re-create the past. However, the rupturing comes from the alienation from the past. He is also alienated from the future, creating a third space, which lies outside of history and the present. It is this space that Orientalism Feminist Scholars locate themselves in.

Secondly, H el ene Cixous notes that women are likely to be “possessed” by the ways in which they are manufactured by history. “One can, of course, as History has always done, exploit feminine reception through alienation. A woman, by her opening up, is open to being ‘possessed’, which is to say, dispossessed of herself” (Sellers, 1994:42). Women become alienated and “possessed” through dominant systems entrenched in Orientalism.

This concept of nostalgia is one of the core concepts of science fiction. Adam Roberts believes that “SF uses the trappings of fantasy to explore age-old issues; or, to put it another way, the chief mode of science fiction is not prophecy, but *nostalgia*” (2000:33). And yet, nostalgia for women is problematic in Orientalism when it is defined within a theoretical concept where the manufacture of knowledge does not belong to women in the Orient, or scholars in the Orient, but rather to the West. Thus the feminist concepts explored in *The Years of Rice and Salt* become interesting efforts to find that nostalgia.

As Abu-Lughod and women in Middle-Eastern countries note, the systems that exist are not necessarily positive for women. The dichotomy lies in where the identity of Islamic feminists should be. To use the example of the Women and Memory Forum, a feminist group from Egypt, “identifying exclusively with the west means rejecting the Arab heritage, while rejecting the west and cleaving to ‘tradition’ means accepting patriarchal structures of subordination and inferiorization”<sup>156</sup> Thus, Islamic women need to create a new space, identified as their own, not subscribing to Western expectations, but neither accepting existing patriarchal oppression.

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<sup>155</sup> Morrissey, L (1999). “Derrida, Algeria, and ‘Structure, Sign, and Play’” in *Post Modern Culture Journal*.

Feminism is explored in *The Years of Rice and Salt*. Robinson has written women who have a validity and an 'agency' that is not judged by Western standards. The structure of the story is a linear progression from the plague in Europe to present day. Continuing with the idea of the 'spiral of oppression' and directly relating it to Robinson's work, three examples of feminist discourse outside of Orientalism will be explored.

In the section entitled "The Haj in the Heart," Robinson creates a complex feminist and Islamic critic in the character of Sultana Katima. The feminist discourse that she offers is very similar to the example of Abu-Lughod's idea of women having to prove that they have agency, in the context of comparison to a foreign eye. Katima discusses at length with Bistami, a Sufi wanderer of Indian origin, her interpretation of the role of women in Islam. The three points that she brings up are the veil, domestic violence against women and gender equality. These issues are in accordance with Western stereotypes of Islamic women's oppression. In each case, Robinson has Katima quoting directly from the Quran for evidence:

The Quran says nothing about the veil, except for an injunction to veil the bosom, which is obvious (2002:138)

And I don't believe that there is any sanction given in the Quran for the husband to beat his wife, do you? The only possible suggestion of such a thing is Sura 4:34, 'As to those women on whose part you fear disloyalty and ill-conduct, admonish them, next refuse to share their beds'- how horrible that would be—'last beat them lightly.' Daraba, not darraba, which is really the word 'to beat' after all. Daraba is 'nudge,' or even 'stroke with a feather,' as in the poem, or even to provoke while lovemaking, you know, daraba, daraba. Muhammad made it very clear (2002:138).

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<sup>156</sup> As quoted in Lila Abu-Lughod's "Orientalism and Middle East Feminist Studies" *Feminist Studies*, Spring 2001, Vol. 27 Issue 1, pg. 110.

Sura 2:223 says that 'your wife is as your farm to you, so treat her as you would your farm.' The ulema have quoted this as if it meant you could treat women like the dirt under your feet, but these clerics, who stand as unneeded intercessors between us and God, are never farmers, and farmers read the Quran right, and see their wives are their food, their drink, their work, the bed they lie on at night, the very ground under their feet... Give thanks to God for giving us the sacred Quran and all its wisdom (2002:138).

Katima goes on to create a city with her husband, away from the conservative elders in the Moslem faith. She is able to do this due to her liberal husband, and their money. They believed that they needed to physically relocate themselves in order to have this kind of freedom. The women in the new town that is created do not have to wear veils and are seen as equals to men, with direct reference to the quoted passages from the Quran as the ontological evidence to support it. The town interprets Islam according to the first teachings of Muhammad. In this case, the mosque is built for men and women to gather together and discuss the holy writings. There is no separation of gender. This is, however, all destroyed when the city is overtaken and Katima has to flee. She manages to establish another city, Nsara, but it also disappears. Therefore, this utopian feminist's gender experiment only exists in one town and place. The rest of Islamic society in the book does not benefit from it. And when Katima and Bistami die, so do the utopian systems realised there.<sup>157</sup>

The second example of feminism in *The Years of Rice and Salt* is the role of the Chinese women. The character of the restaurateur's wife I-li in the first book, "Awake to Emptiness," is observed as saying, "I want to know everything" (Robinson, 2002:47). This is unusual in Western perceptions of empowered Chinese women in the East. She is in control of her husband's business, manages it, cooks in it, and the success of the

restaurant is largely due to her ability to run it, not her husband's. The power in the household lies with her, and all executive decisions are as a direct result of her actions.

Similarly, in "Widow Kang," the widow is introduced as being a strong and empowered businesswoman: "[T]he whole process of silk production, filature, and embroidery was under her command. No house under a district magistrate was ruled with any more iron hand" (2002:344). Widow Kang represents a strong sense of Chinese Confucianism refusing to think about remarriage or any other duties other than her duties to family and her dead husband's spirit. In terms of the novel as a whole, she is representative of the one superpower, China. She meets a religious scholar, Ibrahim ibn Hasam, who represents the other superpower, Islam. They become closely acquainted, and through their exchange it is evident that Widow Kang is as educated, if not more educated, than Ibrahim. Their marriage symbolizes for both of them the fusing of the two cultures. Together they move to Iran to create systems of negotiation between the two superpowers. While there, Kang falls pregnant and together they decide, "if this is a daughter we have been given—there will be no more foot binding" (2002:405). This is another example of an isolated community not necessarily negotiating directly with the majority, but trying to find systems that work. The future of their daughter would be empowerment, but this would not change the status of women in China or in the Middle East.

The example that is closest to Abu-Lughod's Feminist ideology is found in the section "Nsara." Abu-Lughod contrasts the role of feminist writers of the Middle East as "representing Middle East women as complex agents (that is, not as passive victims of

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<sup>157</sup> Later in the book, in the section "Nsara", there is a mention of discovering the town and realizing that it was run by women, and women were equal, but it is an archeological observation, not one that necessitates

Islamic or 'traditional' culture), mostly to the West, and advocating their rights at home, which usually involves a critique of local patriarchal structures" (Abu-Lughod, 2001:107). It is advocating the rights of women at home, and negotiating with patriarchal structures, that is realised in the "Nsara" section. Unlike Katima or Widow Kang, the women in this section are directly negotiating within the systems they find themselves, to create better spaces and opportunities. Unlike the other two examples, which could be seen as subscribing to the West's view of what is acceptable for feminists of the East, the women in "Nsara" do not have to prove that they are empowered. They have worked and negotiated with the dominant system, and not removed themselves physically, but rather spatially.

The women have found ways to negotiate around the harem, as the Western stereotype of the place where men keep women. In the place of the harem, women have created a "zawiyya." They realize that they will not be allowed to function freely from patriarchy, so instead they create communities of women who live in boarding houses and therefore in 'safe' communal spaces. At the "zawiyya" women are removed from their men (husband and father). Thus, the options available to women open up and create a legitimate agency away from men, even if not necessarily from patriarchy. Budur and her aunt Idelba leave their family harem and relocate to a "zawiyya" in another town. Idelba, a nuclear physicist, has discovered nuclear energy and is stifled within the confines of her brother's house. Her niece follows her and this leads to them both moving to the "zawiyya." At the "zawiyya," Idelba is able to continue studying without constraints, free from the role expected of her as a woman.

Budur is also fortunate, for she is able to study now that she has left the harem. During the course of her studies she meets another prominent feminist teacher, Kirana, who smokes freely and has radical ideas on Islam. She venerates the doctrines of Islam, but criticizes those that suppress the free thought that Islam offers. Budur's life changes, and instead of systems of controls which act as agents of oppression in her father's house, she is able to create a space of opportunity. Her subsequent impact on society is through her space in the "zawiyya." Had she remained in the system of patriarchal oppression, knowledge would have directly suffered as a result. She also has a brief sexual relationship with Kirana. Robinson's choice to include alternative sexuality in this book creates further levels of empowerment for his characters. They are allowed to explore freedom from patriarchy as well as control over their bodies. The body changes from being used for consumption, reproduction, to something that consumes, to being sexual.

The scene in the book, which realizes the agency the women project, happens when a military group tries to overthrow the existing law and impose Shariah law. Kirana, Budur and the women of the community rally together in defiance to negotiate with the injustice. It is Kirana who rallies the people to the squares. Rather than shun her as a woman and a non-legitimate voice, the people of Nsara look to her for advice. She continues to advocate that there should be no more religious-based governments, but ones elected by the people to govern themselves as a secular society. After a rigorous and violent campaign, the instigators of the coup flee the country, and Kirana and the women of the "zawiyya" emerge as legitimized voices.

The parallel between science fiction writing and discrimination for minority groups is interlinked, through the writer's projections of the minority's psyche. As has been

traced in the chapter on race and sexuality, at the height of the injustice science fiction writing was a form of minority expression of the subversive alternative utopian realities of better lives, be they better in spiritual quality, economically or politically for the minority groups that were written into the alternative text.

Nonetheless, *The Years of Rice and Salt* is also the latest in a series of works acknowledging the ongoing cycle of oppression, and is further proof that the 'universal majority' will continue to find ways to disempower the 'universal minority'. To use the example of the superpowers in the work contrasted to the superpowers now, a dominant system is in control in both societies, Islam and Buddhism in Robinson's work and America and Britain in contemporary society. In the alternative world of Robinson's what is and was done to the 'universal minority', groups encompassed in Orientalism, is imposed on the 'universal majority,' the West, in order to subvert the oppression that these groups face now, as seen in previous discrimination and more recently the backlash to the 9/11 event.

The second work that reclaims Orientalism for the West is David Henry Hwang's *M. Butterfly* (1988). It is a complex play that deals with imaging the Orient, and is a direct confrontation to Orientalism. The story focuses on a true life experience in which a French diplomat was involved in a sexual relationship for twenty years with a Chinese opera singer, who was male, but whom the diplomat thought was female.<sup>158</sup> Responses to the play have been mixed, and an area of research that tends to have a central theme when discussing *M. Butterfly*, is homosexuality, or the queer 'Other'. It would be

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<sup>158</sup> "A former French diplomat and a Chinese opera singer have been sentenced to six years in jail for spying for China after a two day trial that traced a story of clandestine love and mistaken sexual identity... Mr. Bouriscot was accused of passing information to China after he fell in love with Mr. Shi,

precarious to queer *M Butterfly* on the basis of the fact that two men copulate and have anal sex. For, in this case, the line between the anus and the vagina is slurred for Gallimard. Gallimard, the “French diplomat,” never gets to see Song, the male Chinese opera<sup>159</sup> performer, naked, during their twenty years of lovemaking.

Hwang introduces the paradox that Gallimard faces at the beginning of the play. In the second scene, people are discussing the case that is causing the current scandal, for this reason of confused gender identity:

MAN 2 (Laughing): He says....it was dark....and she was very modest!  
The trio break into laughter (Hwang, 1989:3).

The audience becomes the jury, for there is a court case going on in the play, to whether or not Gallimard is an accomplice to Song, and therefore a bisexual man, aware of Song's male sexual organ, or whether Gallimard is a stereotypical male as described in Said's Orientalism as thinking all Eastern women as being: “usually the creatures of a male power-fantasy. They express unlimited sensuality, they are more or less stupid, and above all they are willing” (Said, 1995:207).

Depending on the verdict of the jury, the work is subversive and confronts Orientalism, in which case the ‘objectified subject’ is empowered and displaces the dominant power, the West, or reiterates stereotyping by choosing minority as the scapegoat for Orientalism, labeling this as a queer or homosexual fantasy, in which case Orientalism and the West emerge victorious, for queer is ‘Other’ and not legitimate by

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whom he believed for twenty years to be a woman” (quoted from “The New York Times, May 11, 1986” in the Playwright's Notes in *M Butterfly*).

<sup>159</sup> Men played the role of women in Chinese operas. Song, the protagonist is a female performer in the opera, and it is with this female performer that Gallimard falls in love.

the West's definition, as are the 'objectified Others' in the case of women and Oriental discourse.

The second case, using 'queer' as the scapegoat, is not subversive and plays into homophobic stereotyping. Andrew Shin writes, "[i]n the gay realm of *M. Butterfly* the liberatory promptings of performance and artifice reach an impasse because the success of this project hinges on a contract between partners that is not available to the gay couple manqué" (Shin, 2002:180). Shin identifies the characters as gay, due to the nature of their sexual relations. The contract between the two, Gallimard and Song versus a gay couple, is that there is no deception between the gay couple for both of them know the sex of their partner. Shin's article contrasts the view of two Asian American critics of *M Butterfly*. James Moy argues that the character of Song is negative for Asians. Moy argues, "deconstruction fails" due to the "laughable" character that is created in Song. The Asian is represented as a "disfigured" person and one that ultimately has anal sex with the West. It is this act, nor oral or masturbatory sex that is seen as reprehensible and laughable, as seen in the example from scene two in which the trio laugh at Gallimard for not knowing the difference between a 'western vagina' and an 'eastern vagina'.

The second critic in Shin's article, Quentin Lee, wants "Asian American representation to be elastic and expansive enough to accommodate articulations of gay Asian American desire" (Shin, 2002:182). Both of these criticisms against Hwang imply that *M Butterfly* should only be read as a queer text, which has deceitful and negative stereotypical gay Asian characters. There is no recognition by either critic that the play could be read in terms of gender performativity rather than read as queer. Lee identifies Song as being an accomplice to "the celebration of Western masculinity as heterosexual

mastery” (Shin, 2002:181), because of his gender performance and reverting back to wearing a male Giorgio Armani suit when testifying in the case. Yet, it is this case which will be argued as subversive and performative against Orientalism.

Robert Clark believes that the Orient and male homosexuality have been censored. He blames Said and other theorists of the Orient like Hastings, for refusing to acknowledge what exists, or silencing it by its non-inclusion. Clark interprets the “cross-dresser” as being the metaphor for a queer Orientalism. The premise for his paper is, “I propose to make the figure of the cross-dresser the focus of an investigation of what one might call ‘Orientalist performance’” (Clark, 1999:338). The performative nature here is different from drag, for the stage offers many new ways of “experiencing the other,” as suggested by Said. The definition of this gender performativity is “racial cross-dressing,” as coined by Clark. It involves race and class, unlike conventional transgender drag. However, they do share “the same kinds of desire and appropriation of the Other which most often characterize dressing across gender boundaries” (Clark, 1999:341). It is the ‘Other’ here that has to perform authentically, not under the definition of drag, but under the category of gender performativity.

The first argument is best proved using the idea of the performativity of gender, which is subversive and directly confronts Orientalism and the West. Western perceptions of drag need to be separated from Oriental ideas of performance. This idea in itself further perpetuates stereotypes of the East and the role of artists in Chinese opera, for example. Yet drag in its purest form, according to Bullough, a gender performativity theorist, is subversive in its nature. “Gender bending emphasizes not so much traditional kinds of cross dressing but a confusion of costume whereby the illusion of assuming the opposite sex is not intended to convince the viewer of authenticity but to

suggest ambiguity” (Bullough, 1993:246). This ambiguity is the source of the reaction to the trio’s laughter and to Moy’s disbelief at “how for twenty years Gallimard could have confused Song’s rectum for a vagina” (Shin, 2002:182). For to judge the body, as representative of an “ambiguity” is to suggest that the artist performing the gender wanted the subject, in this case Gallimard, to know that there should be some confusion.

E. Suan Juan, Jr. has written about the confrontation between the suspension of disbelief of Song being a woman and the maintenance of it. He argues that Gallimard does not want to undress Song for he believes, rather than knows, that Song is a man, and does not wish to confront the truth. He feels that there is a “parodic melodrama” (Juan: 2002) in the following scene:

SONG: Well, come. Strip me. Whatever happens, know that you have willed it.... I’m helpless, before my man.

GALLIMARD: Did I not undress her because I knew, somewhere deep down, what I would find? Perhaps. Happiness is so rare that our mind can turn somersaults to protect it.

...

SONG: I’m pregnant. (Beat) I’m pregnant. (Beat) I’m pregnant. (Beat).

GALLIAMRD: I want to marry you! (Hwang, 1989:60-1).

Juan’s analysis of this scene believes that Gallimard wants to strike Song when he says, “I want to marry you.” This identifies this scene as being a role reversal based on commodity aesthetics, moving from producer to consumer. The problem with this theory is that it ignores the dynamic of the gender performance artist, suspending disbelief, where the artist has to work within the boundaries of disbelief, not necessarily ‘ambiguity’, as suggested in drag. The act of wishing to marry Song is rooted in the West’s desire to completely possess the ‘Other’ and to return to Hélène Cixous’s definition of writing, create a way to completely dispossess the women of any power at all.

But Song's character, as read in the traditional mode as a Chinese opera performer, is not the same as an artist working in drag. The performative nature is different, for the knowledge of the Chinese opera performer is the art form to suspend the disbelief completely, not to make the audience question the gender of the performer at any time. The "oriental sensuality" can be performed for the Western man. The artist, Song, is aware of this; she is the meta-self-consciousness of Orientalism. She not only understands the idea of the Western male and his fascination for the East, but she is able to entertain that fantasy under the guise of Chinese opera, the epitome of Western male desire for "oriental sensuality":

"SONG: Now, what would happen if you divorced your wife to marry a Communist Chinese actress? ... But I am not worthy to end the career of one of the West's most promising diplomats" (Hwang, 1989:65).

Returning to Said's stereotypes of Oriental women, Song performs the gender of the Oriental women and is able to have mystery and modesty, the opposite of the Western woman. By flattering his ego, she performs her role and is able to continue the suspension of disbelief, locking herself and him into the gender roles of Orientalism.

The second point about Said's Oriental women is that she is willing. She will not 'resist her man'. Song is able to perform this flawlessly, as seen in the scene where she is able to fool Gallimard into not taking off her clothes, and in having created the 'perfect woman' for Gallimard. For even at the end of the play once he knows of Song's deceit he yearns for what she has created as a gender performance artist of the Orient:

"GALLIMARD: I have a vision. Of the Orient. That, deep within its almond eyes, there are still women. Women willing to sacrifice themselves for the love of a man. Even a man whose love is completely without worth" (Hwang, 1989:92).

The main argument against this idea of Song as a gender performance artist comes from the scene in which Song strips for Gallimard in his cell and offers his phallus for view by Gallimard. This is the first time that Gallimard sees Song naked, and yet he does not vomit, he is not shocked, he is not even disgusted. These reactions do not imply that he is homosexual, but rather that the man in the Armani suit is not the character that seduced him. To offer another example between drag and gender performativity, the phallus is the signifier of difference between the two. The gender performance artist phallus has no power, for the performance is not 'ambiguous' and therefore the power attained from the ambiguity is lost. This is different from drag because "Drag 'knows' that beneath the surface or outward appearance is a phallus, a phallus that will not be removed, for these drag artists do not wish to become women but to imitate them" (le Grange, 1999:26).

Marjorie Garber, cultural theorist and author of *Vested Interests* (1992)<sup>160</sup> notes that *M. Butterfly* is particularly subversive for its "blurred" definitions of transvestitism, causes a "category crisis." Garber reiterates that transvestitism is a performance for the purposes of "pleasure" and the performer gains pleasure from being able to transform the body from one performative gender to another with the same sexual organ. The "category crisis" is when the 'audience' of the gender performance, are themselves confused by the performance, when there is no obvious signifier of performance. Thus, *M. Butterfly* cannot be read only as a queer text, for in this case the lines of gender are not obvious and "a failure of definitional distinction, a borderline that becomes permeable, that permits of border crossing from one (apparently distinct) category to another,"

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<sup>160</sup> *Vested Interests* is the first comprehensive study on transvestitism. Garber dedicates a chapter to *M. Butterfly* entitled "Phantoms of the Opera: Actor, Diplomat, Transvestite, Spy" (234-266). Garber's other definition of the 'safe' transvestite is illustrated as "the transvestite is looked through or away from, appropriated to tell another kind of story, a story less disturbing and dangerous" (Garber, 1992:123)

occurs (Garber, 1992:125). In transvestitism as has been noted, the role of the transvestite is not to completely simulate but rather indicate that they are performing a gender, where the audience feels comfortable knowing about this performance. It is this “failure” that causes Gallimard to laugh at the character of Song in male drag, for Gallimard expects to be able to see “through” the performativity and thus recognise the ‘Other’.

Gallimard accepts that he has been deceived by the system, by the stereotype:

GALLIAMRD: Look at you! You’re a man! (he bursts into laughter again)

SONG: I fail to see what’s so funny!

GALLIAMARD: “You fail to see—!” I mean, you never did have much of a sense of humor. Did you? I just think it’s ridiculously funny that I’ve wasted so much time on just a man (Hwang, 1989:88).

The laughter in this case, unlike the laughter by the trio at the beginning, is for the quality of the illusion that Song, as gender performance artist, has performed and the authenticity of maintaining their relationship. Gallimard realizes the triviality of Orientalism, and rather than continue with the performance, or lack thereof, he commits suicide, to re-enter the fantasy, for Orientalism and Orientalism and women have changed forever. The women are no longer the ‘objectified other’, for men are able to perform them and suspend the disbelief of the Western male.

This section has dealt with the way in which the theories of Said’s *Orientalism* have deconstructed the power dynamic evident in the unequal relationship between the Occident and the Orient. *The Years of Rice and Salt* has found ways to rewrite and renegotiate an image for the Orient. Its use of cognitive estrangement distances the alternative future from the reality of the oppression found amongst the Arab and Asian

American communities, and this distance helps to subvert stereotypes that have been causing the real problems that the community has been subject to since 9/11. The role of the Oriental 'women' is further elucidated through looking at ways in which women negotiate with the dominant ideology in *The Years of Rice and Salt* and the way gender performativity is used as a subversive technique in *M. Butterfly*. In the next section these ideas of silence and submission are explored in relation to Eastern utopian texts and their representation in Western academia.

### **Orientalism and Academia**

It would seem that even utopian academia isolates the East, as a result of Orientalism. Eastern utopian theorist Longxi Zhang maintains that western stereotypes of utopian thinking have created an exclusionary discourse, locating utopia and utopian studies in the west. Zhang notes that Krishan Kumar recognizes other societies "as having an element of paradise, they are not utopias but rather 'myths of a golden Age of justice and equality'" (Zhang, 2002:5). This is based on Kumar's definition of utopia as "a fundamental secularism, defined against the medieval and Augustinian idea of the original sin<sup>161</sup>" (Zhang, 2000:5), and thus concludes that "utopia is not universal" (Zhang, 2000:5). For Kumar, other societies have paradise but not utopia. Kumar does, however, make an exception for China, but then using a source from 1960 Jean Chesneaux, he reiterates the Christian based model of utopia. This could be likened to Said's idea of the novelty of Islam being directly opposed to Judeo-Christian thought.

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<sup>161</sup> Zhang traces the idea of the "original sin" to the teachings of St Augustine. From the moment of the original sin, sharing the forbidden fruit with Eve, Adam and future generations were corrupted. "Augustine and the medieval church under his influence saw human nature as essentially bad"(3). Thus, only through redemption in this case the intervention of Jesus Christ as the saviour would Salvation be possible. This salvation is what was linked to the utopia that Kumar defines as being a construction of a Western and Christian discourse.

Jean Chesneaux, according to Longxi, “ignores the social and political philosophy of Confucianism” (2002:6), for he focuses on the idea of successful socialism as seen in China as having come from egalitarian ideas: “He meant to set up a cultural and historical context in which the political situation of contemporary China would seem to make better sense” (2000:6). Although Chesneaux mentions that certain literary utopias exist Zhang believes that the ideas are “mostly Taoist and Buddhist, and mostly religious and political” (2000:6), thus locating them in other traditions rather than in utopian discourse.

Lyman Tower Sargent is mentioned as being more open to the idea of an Eastern utopia, and Zhang quotes him from his work, *Utopia: a Search for the Ideal Society in the Western World*, as noting utopias other than those in the “western world.” Yet, the very nature of the title of the work is exclusionary. It would therefore seem understandable why Zhang would wish to clarify a utopian tradition, for identity is based on utopia, and, as Zhang quotes Oscar Wilde, “progress is the realization of utopias” (Zhang, 2000:1). Thus, in an attempt to define a utopia for the west, Zhang seeks to define a parallel one for the East.

*The Peach Blossom Spring*, a poem written by Tao Yuanming (365-427) is believed to be the finest example of the utopian tradition in the East, according to Zhang. In his argument he compares the geographical isolation of the community in *The Peach Blossom Spring* to More’s community, “this community in Peach Blossom Spring was isolated from the rest of the world by water, mountains, and dense forests” (Zhang.2002.14). Similarly, Zhang notes “the sense of timeless is important for all utopias as they are conceived to be a good society that stays unchanged... he (the

fisherman and protagonist of the story) is a man from the world of changes and finitude that contrasts with the timeless world of the utopian community” (Zhang, 2002:14).

The fact that Zhang feels he has to justify that utopia can exist in the East is reflective of the exclusionary discourse that Orientalism has created. The exotic definition of the Orient in Orientalism cannot allow two competing traditions, and both Orientalism and utopia are based on the unreal and the exotic. Neither exists in reality, but both are a figment of the West’s imagination. Yet it would be best to reflect on Zhang’s closing from his article when critiquing utopia so far: “we may just do it better in the future as we build a more open, tolerant, and humane society respectful of individual rights as well as collective interests, a society that will combine the best of the East and West” (2002.19). This is Zhang’s utopian vision for society and it could be taken as representative of academia’s response to Eastern utopianism. Yet it also implies that utopianism cannot come from one source, the West, or the East, but through a collective action.

Zhang’s apology for Communism in China is reflected in his noting that “individual rights as well as collective interests”, have not been realised. He does not validate Mao’s Cultural Revolution as a failed utopia, but rather as a system of extreme control. His desire for a combination of East and West is venerable for it reflects the thought that neither side has found viable utopias, but through possible combinations of both systems, a utopia may exist.

As the East’s strategic and economic importance increases, more focus will shift towards it, and Orientalism as a discourse will no longer have importance. As Robinson and Hwang note in their literature, spaces are shifting away from Orientalism. As

scholars notice the East's utopian tradition through Zhang's pioneering work, the 'Other' is empowered. Said's catalyst has created positive and negative discourses, but most importantly it has highlighted the West's desire, which is now conscious and therefore accountable to the East. Hopefully this will destroy the idea of the 'Occident' and the 'Orientalist', as Said hopes for through the study of Orientalism.

This chapter has identified a new 'universal minority' in the role of the Orientalism discourse and its signifier, the Arab-American or Asian. 9/11 is seen as the catalyst for further entrenching Orientalism ideologies. However, through science fiction's subversive techniques in the work of Kim Stanley Robinson and performative roles in David Henry Hwang, the texts found ways to reclaim an identity through subversion of existing power structures. Moreover, the role of utopian scholars in academia was then examined and the assertion by Zhang that the East has had utopian texts is valid, despite the fact that Western scholars have generally not legitimized Eastern scholars or texts, for the purposes of making utopia exclusionary. This analysis has further entrenched the basis of Orientalism in the dualistic thinking that the Occident is superior and therefore able to control the Orient, which is weak and inferior, which is constructed in theory. Yet, at the same time, this analysis has demonstrated the weakness of such Orientalist thinking and predicted its demise.

## Conclusion

***Looking Backward* was written in the belief that the Golden Age lies before us and not behind us, and is not far away. Our children will surely see it, and we too, who are already men and women, if we deserve it by our faith and by our works** (Bellamy, 1996:165).

Utopia and the importance of imagining something better cannot be ignored because legitimacy or agency is problematic. To only assume a devastated landscape and devastated humanity as reflected in so many works of dystopian writing is pessimistic for it implies that the human condition is pitiful. However, it is in reading these dystopian texts as subversive and as the agents of criticism of existing systems that gives them a more optimistic role. As criticisms, these texts redefine what utopia could be, systems of possibility or improvement that are reflected when contemporary society is contrasted with these realities. By using Moylan's idea of the 'critical utopia', working utopias that offer practical realities, these texts can appear as a source for negotiating utopia and the movement towards it and therefore as agents of necessary change.

Careful attention needs to be afforded the science fiction and utopian writers who have founded systems that offer these literary equalities. For it is in these systems that the problems facing society are reflected, and solutions are being created. Any utopia is a social criticism of the society from which it was written, and to indicate 'perfection' and realised dreams is to negotiate theoretically out of the quagmire that individuals find themselves in. The literary writers that have been referenced in this work are aware of certain inequalities in the way their societies function. Rather than

remaining alienated from that change they have created literary texts of opportunity. An analysis of these texts reveals the systems which trap society from realising that there is an intrinsic need to be responsible for individual as well as communal action.

Ultimately the reason that minorities are represented in works of science fiction writing is due to the subversive writing techniques offered within the discourse. Cognitive estrangement, or the *novum*, help to place the reader into a modified and changed society that is aware of the concerns of the individual, where the minority is not imaged as a minority anymore, but as a member of the community.

Minorities continue to face oppression and are caught in the 'spiral of oppression', which seems to have problematic issues with regard to agency which would enable it to have a means by which to negotiate with the dominant discourse. Utopia, or the journey towards it, is primarily a theoretical institution with discrepancies arising about its validity or functionality. Yet, it remains most relevant as an agency when studying minority empowerment. The systems of oppression found in contemporary society leave minorities disempowered and unable to successfully negotiate a spatial relationship with the systems that exert control. The minorities in science fiction writing, however, are further along the path to realizing this agency and a legitimate space by which to exist and function.

As has been argued, in More's *Utopia* equality was not clearly defined for slaves, and women were not accorded the same status as the male inhabitants of Utopia. However, using the premise of opportunity and a movement towards something better, utopia has by definition become the 'desire' for 'perfect society', not the static imaging of such a society. In contemporary writing such as Le Guin's *The Telling*, minorities such

as the Maz, who were once the 'universal majority', have been displaced and are now the 'universal minority'. The interchangeable nature of power is highlighted by the trivial means by which power corrupts and in turn causes the demise of the ruling regime, only to be replaced with something that emulates what was before. Thus the novel shows that finding the effective system of negotiation is crucial as evident in the realised utopias of the minorities that have removed the 'cycle of oppression' and the language of difference' from their identity politics.

Other contemporary writers like Haldeman, Piercy and Russell also offer texts of opportunity that reflect their unique ideology of systems of power. The minorities in these books—Hispanics, people of alternative sexualities and people that are economically disadvantaged—have new systems of negotiation that begin to explore direct negotiation between the 'universal majority' and the 'universal minority'. Although these writers do not necessarily locate their work within utopian literature themselves, the systems in place in their fictional worlds can be equated to utopian ideology.

Likewise, when viewed from the perspective of utopian theory, history and human atrocity, and the way in which they are remembered, reflect an ongoing cycle by which history is trapped in a 'spiral' without being able to locate itself back to a stable or neutral core, which could be defined as a place of learning from atrocity. The historicity of the "Holocaust" and 'remembering' becomes exclusive from the perspective of ownership, as seen in works like *A Mosaic of Victims*. The 'Other' survivors, other than Jewish, are marginalized and not allowed ownership based on a definition of the system that oppressed them: The Final Solution. This disregards the 5 million other victims who were not Jewish that died in the Holocaust and engenders an elitist consciousness that trivializes oppression of the 'Other'. This in turn highlights the concentration camps of

the Holocaust from a historical perspective. A hierarchy of minorities existed in the camps based on signifiers of race or sexuality. The victims of the Holocaust, rather than being accorded the same status of 'victim', were fragmented and not unified against the oppressors, due the signifiers of difference.

This has led people to re-evaluate what it means to be a minority functioning within a system, as seen in the interview with Juda Bennett. Practical systems of negotiation are not necessarily available, even within liberal spaces like a commune. Jameson's argument that theory is paralyzed for people who would more easily conceive of the end of the world than the systems of capitalism and power that go with them highlights the power that the 'universal majority' has. Through the media, ideology and theory the 'universal majority' continues to exert control; this comes about because of society's inability to feel accountable for the systems in which it is engaged. *The Zoo Project* offers an idea of the kind of systems that exist and of why South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission was as successful as it was.

Nor is academia exempt from power and the 'spiral of oppression'. Russell Jacoby's *The End of Utopia* is one example of academics wishing to alienate themselves from the 'possibility' of a functional utopia. This explains Orientalism being constructed by the West in order to dominate the East, especially since 9/11. Science fiction writings like *The Years of Rice and Salt* use the novum of rewriting history to challenge the systems of dominance set out in Orientalism. *M. Butterfly* by David Henry Hwang is another example of a work that directly challenges the theories of the East as being 'exotic' and yet subverts this by reinstating the performative nature of the East as opposed to the ignorance and imperialist arrogance of the West.

The utopian thinker sometimes forgets that society plays a fundamental role in dehumanizing people, creating systems of oppression and reducing life in the world to an ongoing power struggle that neglects human life. Alas, it is not only the oligarchy in control of power systems that are to blame for the cycle of oppressions, but every member of society that refuses to acknowledge their role in the continuing cycles of oppression.

Instead of asking whether the twenty-first century will be remembered for its atrocities, it would be more effective to address the issues of oppression that have caused the atrocities to have as much power as they have. Utopian and science fiction writing offer other realities to highlight oppression. Seen in these situations, oppression is not acceptable. There is no denying that oppression continues today. Yet, like the dystopian writer imagining a bleak landscape without hope, the utopian writer imagines a future where there is hope, the hope in this case lies with minorities and the way in which they will negotiate their identity.

This work has tried to address the issues of human atrocities as created by the actions of the 'universal minority' and the 'universal majority'. They exist as a result of the language of oppression. This language of oppression has resulted in an ongoing cycle that can and will only be broken through society's ability to acknowledge oppression and feel alienated from it. Science fiction offers the means by which the alienation can be realised, for in science fiction anything is possible, but responsibility has to be taken by all members of society for any significant change to happen. Bellamy's quote at the beginning of this conclusion posits a dawning of "the golden age." As in the case of utopian writers, they wish to see it in their lifetimes, as Bellamy did, yet, for this to happen with the current generation is only possible if systems of negotiation

are researched and viable solutions to negotiate are found. In the case of the dystopian writer, rewriting and redefining utopia will not bring about any significant change; in this case, the minority will continue to be oppressed by the majority, which will result in their ultimate destruction. Yet if a more optimistic analysis is applied to utopian and science fiction writing, then the minority will redefine the nature of minority, rewrite the ways in which negotiation will take place and ultimately create a space that exemplifies a perfect existence.

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