

# LITERARY GEOGRAPHIES

## Space, Power and Happiness in the Utopian and Anti-Utopian Imaginations

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### Abstract:

This article discusses how utopian and anti-utopian literatures offer alternate visions to find connecting links between the control of space, power and happiness. The focus is on three classics of utopian and dystopian literatures: Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), and George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949). Through the analysis of these works it is pondered how utopian and anti-utopian societies offer freedom or restrict inhabitants moving and acting in their worlds, and how this is portrayed as a means to measure the quality of life. The article contributes to socially critical literary geography by envisioning various options to imagine the relationship of space and power. The starting presumption in the article is that both utopian and anti-utopian imaginations suggest that freedom to use space is a key factor when defining human happiness.

**Keywords:** Utopia; anti-utopia; space; power; happiness; Thomas More; Aldous Huxley; George Orwell.

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### Introduction

Ever-increasing worry about the future is highly characteristic of contemporary discussion – in the media, in daily conversations over coffee, in teaching, all the way from kindergartens to universities. The fear of climate change, for example, dominates the public

debate, implying that ‘being afraid’, both as an emotion and a discourse, is a key feature defining who we are. The dystopian imagination is a social norm, or as Kolson Schlosser (2015) formulates it, ‘spatial imaginaries of the apocalypse are as commonplace as ever’ (307). Being afraid of the future has a long history and one of the key characteristics is the feeling that our freedom to use space according to our own will is threatened. The starting presumption in this article is that both utopian and anti-utopian imaginations suggest that freedom to use space is a key factor when defining human happiness.

‘Utopian literature’ commonly refers to a literary genre in which the narrative settings are apparently imaginary, places in fictional societies, typically in the future, reaching beyond the scope of our known world and known history.<sup>1</sup> The concept ‘utopia’ was introduced by the socio-political satire *Utopia* (1516), written by English Renaissance humanist Thomas More (1478–1535), a story depicting the lives and societal circumstances on an imaginary/fictional island Utopia. Depending on how the word is pronounced, ‘utopia’ means either a fictional place (*outopos*), a place that is non-existent, or an imaginary happy place (*eutopos*) (Levitas 2010: 2-4; Sargent 2010: 2-3). On the basis of the history of utopian literature, L. T. Sargent (1994) has defined utopianism as ‘social dreaming—the dreams and nightmares that concern the ways in which groups of people arrange their lives and which usually envision a radically different society than the one in which the dreamers live’ (3).

Correspondingly, dystopian stories happen in the near or distant future, in a time-space in which frightening threats have already materialized (Sargent 2010: 26-9). These stories typically function as warnings of imminent dangers (27-8). The concepts of ‘utopia’ and ‘dystopia’ are commonly used in contrast to each other, marking an antagonism between a good (or perfect) place and a bad place. On the other hand, the concept of ‘utopia’ can also be contrasted against the concept of ‘anti-utopia’, which is not a synonym for ‘dystopia’, as emphasized by several scholars (see for example Sargent 1994: 8, Jameson 2005; Balasopoulos 2006: 60). Both concepts, ‘dystopia’ and ‘anti-utopia’, criticize the idealism of utopian imaginations, but the main difference between them lies in the tone of critique and expectations for the future, anti-utopian literature typically being less strict with the categorical dichotomy between ‘good places’ and ‘bad places’ compared to dystopian literature. It has also been emphasized that anti-utopian literature uses parody in order to illustrate the inaccessibility of utopian society (Baccolini and Moylan 2003: 4-5; Jameson 2005: 23).

This article focuses on three classics of utopian and anti-utopian literature: Thomas More’s *Utopia* (1516), Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1932), and George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949). Whereas More’s work initiated the genre of utopian writing, *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* are classics of anti-utopian literature, models for several later works depicting anti-utopian societies and “guidebooks” that have inspired the modern way of being afraid of the future. This discussion of three classic utopian/anti-utopian works delves into how utopian and anti-utopian spaces, power structures and varying degrees of human happiness become created as an amalgam of their interconnections. Our interest is to ponder how utopian and anti-utopian societies offer freedom or restrict inhabitants moving and acting in their worlds, and how this is portrayed as a means to measure the quality of life. The article makes a contribution to socially critical

literary geography by scrutinizing how the classics of utopian and anti-utopian literature outline the ways in which happy places (eutopos) and unhappy places (anti-eutopos) have been imagined through the representations of space, power and control.

### **Social criticism in literary geography and anti-/utopian imaginations**

In order to reflect on the socio-spatial impact of utopian and anti-utopian literature, we first discuss the historical background of social criticism in literary geography. During the 1980s there rose a general critique of humanistic approaches for their failure to acknowledge the importance of social issues. This led to an attempt to bring a more social aspect into literary geography, taking up the argument that literature has a social function in terms of envisioning reality as it ought to be (Cook 1981; Olwig 1981). New critical, or radical, perspectives were more influenced by work in political and even economic geography and the stance was completely different when compared to humanistic approaches. Silk (1984), for instance, perceived the relationship between literature and geography through the mechanics of capitalist commodity chains, while Thrift (1983) argued that the literary meanings of places are embedded in the cultural and political world of cultural production, and could be examined through the concepts of 'hegemony' and 'the structure of feeling'.

Along with this new epistemological turn, some fresh constructive methods and methodologies, e.g. discourse analysis, were launched and literature was now considered as an agent which was actively reflecting and constructing social imaginations (see Daniels 1992). Perceiving literature as an agent in the process of constructing society also forced literary geographers to look at questions related to social power (Jackson 1998). The focus was directed at social problems and injustice, leading to the argument that fiction can incorporate spatial relationships and characteristics relating to real-life social issues, such as crime, violence, unemployment, environmental degradation, housing shortages, racial and gender discrimination, and the loneliness that people face (Howell 1994; Schmid 1995; Kadanoga 1998). In the discussion concerning the social embeddedness of literature and its relation to power and social injustice, it has generally been emphasized that literature reflects and constructs the discourses of otherness. On the other hand, there have also been arguments pointing out that literature may function as a tool in the processes of social emancipation, and in the "fight" against normative values (Cresswell 1993). The question over social imaginations has naturally been a relevant topic when discussing the relationships between fiction, stereotypes, power and social processes of othering, which has been further discussed in relation to the 'postcolonial imagination' (Noxolo and Preziuso 2013) and 'imaginative geography' (Ridanpää 2007; 2017).

An early 1980s humanistic geographer, Kenneth Olwig, requested that the societal impact of literature should get more attention. Olwig argued that 'when literature does achieve a faithful depiction of reality in this wider sense of what it ought to be and become, then it may indeed have some impact upon what reality becomes, although it cannot, of itself, change reality' (Olwig 1981: 53).<sup>2</sup> Although an attempt to achieve 'a faithful depiction of reality' does not resonate with the contemporary understandings concerning the connection of space and literature, Olwig's argument that 'reality is both what things are

and what they can be, and our experience of that reality is determined both by its actuality and what we believe it can come' (63), implies interestingly that geographers should approach reality through utopian imaginations, diverting the focus toward what the world could be, what it should be, both good and bad.

The societal circumstances and power-relations of utopian and anti-utopian literature have been discussed extensively across the disciplinary boundaries, but remembering Olwig's appeal, literary geographers could probably have paid more attention to the genre of anti-/utopian literature. One interesting geographical study of dystopian spaces was conducted by James A. Tyner (2004), who by drawing on the theoretical insights of Michel Foucault, analysed how a reading of Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* can help towards an understanding of the spaces of resistance and discipline. His main argument, that 'the production of knowledge through the act of writing may forge spaces of resistance within disciplined spaces' (Tyner 2004: 129), is a fruitful starting point for the discussion of the nature and function of utopian and anti-utopian imaginations. In fact, Foucault's (e.g. 1979) theoretical framework for approaching social order through the perspectives of disciplinary power and spaces of surveillance fits perfectly for the analysis of anti-utopian literature.

In a similar vein, Kolson Schlosser (2015) has adapted Antonio Gramsci's theoretical insights to analyse the apocalyptic imaginary of "the last man on Earth" as encapsulated in Matheson's novel *I Am Legend*, arguing that 'dystopic futures can help reframe what sort of politics we consider possible' (309). Whereas Tyner (2004) points out the way in which utopian literature influences 'our outlook on both politics in general and state control in particular' (145), according to Schlosser 'apocalyptic imaginaries are potentially sites in which the politically possible is constituted in the first place' (Schlosser 2015: 309). As Richard Phillips (2002) points out in his analysis of the form and function of dystopian accounts of Sierra Leone, in critical literary geography dystopian imaginations have been closely associated with colonial discourses and processes. According to Phillips, 'by examining the specific forms of colonial dystopias, and investigating the significance of dystopias for colonialism, it may therefore be possible to understand something of the power of dystopian imaginations more generally' (189). Thus, the discourses of politics and power have played a key role when utopian and dystopian literature have been scrutinized from the geographical point of view.

The imaginary societies of utopian fiction reflect the author's moral attitudes and judgements, which often relate to personal and culture-dependent conceptions concerning good life and happiness. Typically, utopian, or eutopian, happiness is socio-politically charged, determined by very specific details concerning social relationships, social order and law enforcement. It is essential to underscore the colloquial and inter-dependent relationship between happiness and unhappiness. The good places of utopian literature consist of shared conceptions about human happiness, which simultaneously contain/require the criteria for unhappiness. In utopian literature, social circumstances are described in a highly detailed manner, in order to enable readers to make comparisons between the imaginary utopian world and the "real" world in which the reader lives (and reads) (Claeys and Sargent 1999: 1-2; Kumar 2003: 70).

As mentioned, there is a tendency to use the concepts ‘dystopia’ and ‘anti-utopia’ inaccurately as synonyms and in fact, there is no clear agreement on how these imaginations differ from each other (see Kumar 1987: 224; Sargent 1994; Moylan 2000). The concept ‘anti-utopia’ emerged before ‘dystopia’ as a description of any literary work criticizing literary utopias after Thomas More’s classic. The concept of ‘dystopia’ appeared later in the 20<sup>th</sup> century from the anti-utopian genre to speculate disastrous scenarios awaiting in the future, basing on terrifying events such as the two world wars. Thus, all dystopias are anti-utopias, but not all anti-utopias are dystopias (Sisk 1997: 2-7; Claeys 2017: 282-83). In dystopian literature future visions are described in sharp detail as frighteningly depressing and hopeless while in anti-utopian literature there is still some degree of hope in society (see Sisk 1997: 3-6; Moylan 2000; Claeys 2017: 283). Anti-utopias are also often more parodic and less exaggerated (Baccollini and Moylan 2003: 4-5; Jameson 2005: 23). In some studies ‘anti-utopia’ and ‘dystopia’ are not only separated from each other, but also given several sub-categories such as ‘satiric anti-utopias’, ‘dogmatic fictional anti-utopias’, ‘dystopias of tragic failure’ and ‘dystopias of authoritarian repression’ (see Balasopoulos 2006: 61-66).

In utopian and anti-utopian literature the prevailing happiness of living environments almost always goes back to social order. For example, whether the place is a good or a bad one is determined by a categorical distinction between the fair use of power and the misuse of power. These are the basic principles of how the practices of social justice have been defined. For example fairness, one of the five UNDP principles of good governance (see Graham, Amos and Plumptre 2003: 3), means that ‘all men and women have opportunities to improve or maintain their well-being’ and that ‘legal frameworks should be fair and enforced impartially, particularly the laws on human rights’. The categorical distinction between whether people are allowed to use their living environment freely or not also defines whether people are happy or not. It is essential to underscore that social order and social justice are culturally dependent conceptualizations and that as a result the good and bad places of utopian and dystopian literature have relied on the Western sense of justice. Tom Moylan (2000) argues that literary texts must be understood both formally and within the terms of the sociopolitical positions they represent. Moylan calls utopia an ‘impulse or historical force’ that can be distinguished ‘from its various expressions (as texts, communal societies, or social theories)’ (155).

However, the relationship between order and freedom is often more complex than implied in utopian and anti-utopian literature. The addition of human rights, including freedom, does not automatically lead to a better society, and it is not apparent whether freedoms can even be obtained without the maintenance of order. In addition, as Foucauldian readings of anti-utopian or dystopian literature rely on the theory of power use, other dystopian imaginations of social circumstances, for example caused by environmental or pandemic crises, are bypassed. The main challenge for utopian visions is that the conception of ‘good’ or ‘better’ is always based on individual opinion and not socially shared (Kumar 2013: 100). What means more freedom for one means limitations and restrictions for another, compatible with (the practices of) order. In his three volume work *The Principle of Hope*, published in 1954, 1955, and 1959, the Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch (1986) makes a distinction between two different forms of utopian visions, the one

based on freedom and the other on ‘order priority’. *The Republic* of Plato is a classic literary work of utopian vision based on order, in which the responsibility to follow law and order is presented as a precondition for a just society, whereas contesting the prevailing order is a key characteristic or a definition of freedom utopias. *The Republic* represents a hierarchical class society that restricts the free interaction of classes in fear of the collapse of its social fabric. Plato still supported small communities such as the ancient city-states, whose inhabitants interacted with each other, but at the same time emphasized the need for limiting the interaction between classes (Sargent 2010: 18-20).

Herbert Marcuse (1955; 1968), together with Ernst Bloch, has been a leading philosopher in pondering the fundamental causes of what leads people to dream of a better world. According to Marcuse, human satisfaction originates from experiences of deprivation (see Levitas 2010: 156-66), a point of view shared by Bloch (1986). According to Marcuse, people believe that satisfying their needs will make them happier, but the road to satisfaction is a process during which pain needs to be endured. The pleasure principle is thus a contradictory one. Correspondingly, according to Bloch the desire to satisfy needs is a central human trait that stimulates utopianism, while on the other hand, Bloch emphasizes that a person cannot ever be certain whether the satisfaction will ultimately lead to happiness or not (46). William Leiss (1976) has analysed Marcuse’s theory and raised the problem that, in principle, a person can have an infinite variety of preferences and needs. Indeed, Marcuse discussed how in addition to “true” needs, humans have also been enslaved to “false” or “artificial” needs created and then fulfilled by modern technology (see Levitas 2010: 164-68; Schatzberg 2018: 224).

Describing a place as either a good or a bad one is naturally an act of taking a stand, an argumentation. While the proponents of a utopian society imagine a better world, anti-utopian imaginations refer to an ‘outright rejection of both Utopia and the historical changes it informs and helps to produce’ (Moynlan 2000: 134). According to Darko Suvin (1973: 5-6) it is characteristic of utopian and anti-utopian literature that readers are intentionally left without the option to decide for themselves whether the story is situated in a good or a bad place. However, this is not indisputable. Defining a literary place as an eutopos or an anti-eutopos requires making a comparison with the society within which the author has lived and worked (Claeys and Sargent 1999: 1-2), leading into a general presumption that the function or purpose of literary utopias is always to criticize the prevailing social circumstances (e.g. Levitas 1990; Sargent 2010: 8-9). Although it is debatable whether the author’s aim is always to improve society, in utopian and anti-utopian literature statements pointing out social injustice are often made. However, in this article utopian and anti-utopian literary classics are considered as beacons that guide towards a particular manner of imagining the future, a line of thinking in which the varieties of happiness are perceived as having an indivisible connection to social order and spatial control.

### ***Utopia, Brave New World and Nineteen Eighty-Four: Imagining the future***

What characterizes and combines the three classics studied in this article – Thomas More’s *Utopia* (1516), Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1932), and George Orwell’s *Nineteen*

*Eighty-Four* (1949) – is their exceptionally strong criticism of prevailing social circumstances. As briefly discussed above, in utopian, anti-utopian and dystopian literature the focus is aimed at prevailing and imminent societal flaws and crises in different ways. Utopian literature imagines how the world could be a better place in which to live, anti-utopian literature points out how the opposite scenario is more likely, and dystopian literature offer strict warnings about the unavoidability of a miserable future. It has often been argued that utopian, anti-utopian and dystopian literature includes a socio-political agenda, an explicit or implicit aim to change the world. No matter how intentional or unintentional the social criticism of More, Huxley and Orwell was, they have all in fact functioned as models that have had a major influence on later utopianism and social criticism.

Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) is 'a little, true book, both beneficial and enjoyable, about how things should be in the new island Utopia', as a translation from the Latin subtitle of book goes ('Libellus vere aureus, nec minus salutaris quam festivus, de optimo rei publicae statu deque nova insula Utopia'). *Utopia* consists of two separate parts, the first depicting Thomas More's dialogues with several real-life government officials, and the second a description of a fictional island and its social circumstances. According to Kneale (2010), 'More's *Utopia* is in fact two books, a satire on sixteenth-century England and a description of a better place, hence the double meaning of More's neologism, ou- and eu-topos, no place and better place, critical satire and perfect world' (299). The original edition contained a woodcut map of the island of Utopia and ever since different cartographic visualizations of the enclave island have been included (Figure 1).

During the time when More wrote *Utopia*, the era of early colonialism, the authority of the Roman Catholic Church was unquestionable, tensions between social classes prominent and the tempo of living slower (Luoto and Karhu 2018: 73). In the 16<sup>th</sup> century sluggish mobility due to rudimentary transport technology also hindered social interaction. While it has often been argued that Thomas More wrote *Utopia* as a criticism of 16<sup>th</sup>-century Catholicism, it has also been claimed that *Utopia* was a description of a welfare state with no warfare, thus not leading into such common social plagues as famine, crime and injustice between classes (see Kautsky 1927; Itkonen-Kaila 1998: 10-15). The island of Utopia is populated by virtuous and diligent inhabitants who live under a form of governance in which power is decentralized, as opposed to the prevailing social order as perceived by the author (see Itkonen-Kaila 1998). The island of Utopia is a socially shared, limited space with rules for everything and everyone (Mårtensson 1991: 481), and has often been considered as a prototype of socialism and communism (see Vorlander 1924). Thomas More established 'the communistic utopia, with the abolishment of private property and the vision of a social life perfectly planned to enforce altruism, neutralize competition, and reward conformity rather than critical discussion, hard social control, loss of integrity, and indeed liberty being the prices to be paid for the solution to the social problems and for the ensured stability of the perfect society' (Mårtensson 1991: 482).

Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, published in 1932, is an anti-utopian novel set in London in a distant future, at a time when all nations have merged into one world state as a result of the great cultural revolution. The novel was written during The Great Depression, a worldwide economic depression during the 1930s which had major impacts

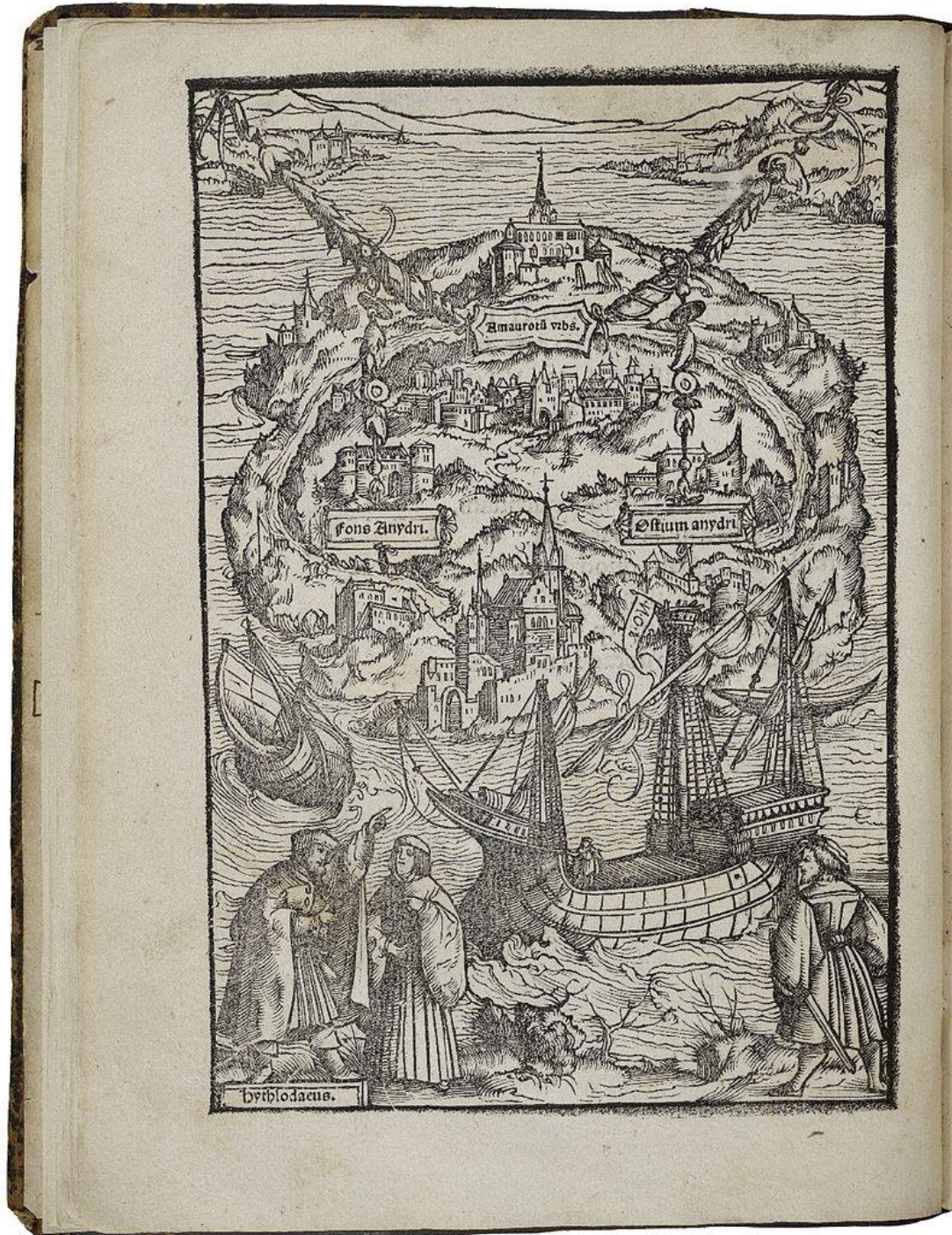


Figure 1. A woodcut map of the Island of Utopia, contributed by Ambrosius Holbein to Froben's edition, published in Basel in 1518.

on cut personal income and profits. The dominant anti-utopian element in Huxley's story is the use of genetic modifying to assimilate citizens into five hierarchical social classes to serve the needs of a consumerist and entertainment-centric society. The happiness of citizens is maintained with a drug called soma. The novel has been characterized as falling into the category of satirical anti-utopian literature (Balasopoulos 2006: 61). The novel ridicules the idea that a good society is an outcome of prevailing political ideologies and



actions to implement them, as represented in earlier utopian literature such as in Thomas More's classic. There has also been some question of whether Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) is really a dystopia or an anti-utopia (Panagopoulos 2016), as the novel describes many features of positive utopia, such as getting rid of diseases and wars. The novel has also been interpreted as a critical utopia situated somewhere between a good place and a bad place (e.g. Moylan 2014; Panagopoulos 2016). Huxley (1958), however, has stated that he was pessimistic about the future, fearing the application of genetic engineering technologies, and that the novel was written as a warning about future threats.

Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, published in 1949, is a depressing depiction of the near future conceived as a protest against totalitarian state systems. The novel was written during the early years of the Cold War, when fear and critique of emerging communist ideologies were prevailing in Western political debate. As was the case with Huxley's novel, during the period when *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was written it was typical that states were attempting to inculcate their citizens with the shared nationalistic ideologies.

The events of the novel take place in London, within a state named Oceania, one of the world's three super-states. The state is ruled by the 'Party', which worships the acclaimed mysterious leader Big Brother. With the help of the Thought Police and monitoring techniques, the Party conducts rigorous, all-reaching civil control, at the same time manipulating the transmission of information and the writing of history. The three antagonistic slogans of the Party are: 'War is Peace, Freedom is Slavery, Ignorance is Strength'. The story is centred on the trials of anti-party journalist Winston Smith. The key terms of the novel, such as 'Big Brother' and 'Thought Police', have had a major impact on how contemporary people think about their social circumstances. These terms, to quote Tyner (2004), 'permeate our conversations, and the overall content of the novel continues to influence our outlook on both politics in general and state control in particular' (145). In his youth, Orwell was known as an avid political activist and a proponent of radical socialism. Later, he became disappointed with authoritarian-led state socialism after seeing its downsides in the Soviet Union, becoming an opponent of totalitarian state ideologies (Rai 1990: 157-59; Ehland 2009: 178).

### **Utopian and anti-utopian imaginations: How to control Utopia, the World State and Oceania?**

What combines utopian and anti-utopian literary worlds, eutopian places and anti-eutopian places, is that the use of space is constantly under control. As all forms of human co-existence require the following of shared rules and the control of obedience (cf. Gramsci 1971), in utopian and anti-utopian literature spatial control is manifested in the common rules of law and the penalties for violating them. All three works discussed in this article contain detailed descriptions of how human action and mobility are regulated by particular rules and licenses:

If any man has a mind to visit his friends that live in some other town, or desires to travel and see the rest of the country, he obtains leave very easily from the Syphogrant and Tranibors, when there is no particular occasion for him at home.

Such as travel carry with them a passport from the Prince, which both certifies the license that is granted for travelling, and limits the time of their return. (More 1516/2007: 44)

“A permit for you to initial, Director,” he said as airily as possible, and laid the paper on the writing-table. The Director glanced at him sourly. But the stamp of the World Controller’s Office was at the head of the paper and the signature of Mustapha Mond, bold and black, across the bottom. Everything was perfectly in order. The director had no choice. (Huxley 1932/2006: 95)

For distances of less than 100 kilometers, it was not necessary to get your passport endorsed, but sometimes patrols hanging on the railway stations examined the papers. (Orwell 1949/2008: 123)

‘A passport from the Prince’, ‘the signature of Mustapha Mond’, ‘passport endorsed’ – in utopian and anti-utopian societies the freedom of mobility is a matter of being licenced by the higher officers. Although in both utopian and anti-utopian literature people are obliged to serve their duties according to particular rules and limitations, one central difference is that in anti-utopian societies order is maintained with the help of control techniques, whereas in utopian societies people follow the rules automatically because they understand that they are for their own good. The technology entails power, is absolute and goes beyond human reach, as the inhabitants of Oceania are constantly under the eye of surveillance cameras. In addition, in Orwell’s Oceania the inhabitants are controlled through ‘the endless purges, arrests, tortures, imprisonments, and vaporizations’ (Orwell 1949/2008: 266). Correspondingly, inhabitants in the World State have been genetically manipulated to feel happiness under surveillance. This resonates with Foucault’s (2012) classic *The Birth of the Clinic*, originally published in 1963, in which Foucault dissects the historical emergence of ‘medical gaze’, arguing that the development of modern medicine has been inseparably linked with various power interests and the processes of dehumanization. While for Foucault the history of medical inventions equals the power/knowledge over healthiness and normality, in Huxley’s World State free will and the ability to question one’s own happiness are medically removed, which can be considered as the most nightmarish control technique imaginable.

The societies of Huxley and Orwell are designed to maintain social structures that serve the position of persons at the top of the social hierarchy. As a result, anti-utopian societies remain stagnant spaces, vehemently opposing all possible changes threatening the maintenance of their basic structures. David Harvey, in his classic work *Social Justice and The City* (1973), underscores how spatial order is rarely, if ever, a result of natural human behavior, but is always a construction of people in power, conducted for the service of their own needs (173-74). The order of individual buildings, for example, is often a material manifestation of social power relations (see Tuan 1977: 108-13), which in utopian and anti-utopian literature is constantly underscored in an exaggerated manner. The effort to keep everything intact has been specifically declared both by the Oceanian Party Elite as well as the Alpha elite of the World State. The island of Utopia is also characterized by a certain

degree of structural stagnancy, but compared to Oceania and the World State, stagnancy in the island of Utopia serves social and environmental well-being:

But among the Utopians all things are so regulated that men very seldom build upon a new piece of ground, and are not only very quick in repairing their houses, but show their foresight in preventing their decay, so that their buildings are preserved very long with but very little labour, and thus the builders, to whom that care belongs, are often without employment, except the hewing of timber and the squaring of stones, that the materials may be in readiness for raising a building very suddenly when there is any occasion for it. (More 1516/2007: 40)

Correspondingly, in Oceania and the World State the environment is destroyed to serve the interests of power groups while protecting the monuments and buildings praising them:

London diminished beneath them. The huge table-topped buildings were no more, in a few seconds, than a bed of geometrical mushrooms sprouting from the green of park and garden. In the midst of them, thin-stalked, a taller, slenderer fungus, the Charing T Tower lifted towards the sky a disk of shining concrete. (Huxley 1932/2006: 61)

He tried to squeeze out some childhood memory that should tell him whether London had always been quite like this. Were there always these vistas of rotting nineteenth-century houses, their sides shored up with baulks of timber, their windows patched with cardboard and their roofs with corrugated iron, their crazy garden walls sagging in all directions? And the bombed sites where the plaster dust swirled in the air and the willow-herb straggled over the heaps of rubble; and the places where the bombs had cleared a larger patch and there had sprung up sordid colonies of wooden dwellings like chicken-houses? (Orwell 1949/2008: 5)

In More's Utopia, inhabitants are not subjected to continuous surveillance, while in anti-utopian literature it often is precisely the incessant continuity of control that makes the world an unhappy place to live. Dystopian space resembles a panopticon prison, a prison design developed by the social theorist Jeremy Bentham in the 18th century. A panopticon is a space of surveillance designed in such a way that the prisoner is never able to be sure whether he/she is under control or not, whether 'Big Brother' is watching or not (Figure 2). The prison guard of a panopticon is an 'all-seeing observer' who can simultaneously follow anyone and, if necessary, punish them for unlawful acts.

Foucault has used Bentham's Panopticon as a mechanism of (Western) social power, control and order in several works. In the island of Utopia, daily attendance at work is also actively monitored, but "the Big Brother of Utopia" is obliged to follow the same rules with all inhabitants, that is, power and control are not inextricably entangled, and this is one of the main differences between utopian society and contemporary society. In contrast, in the two anti-utopian societies discussed here, the conditions of living are not

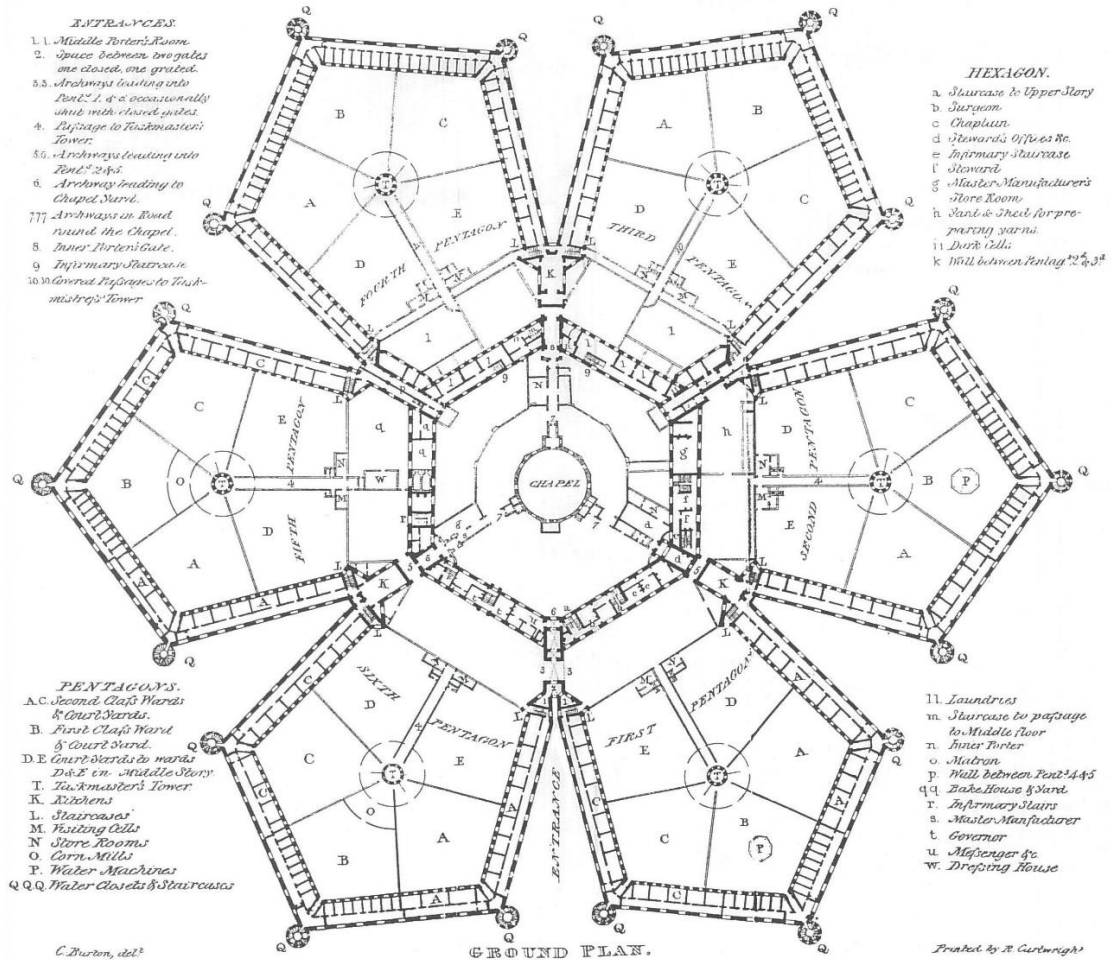


Figure 2. A ground plan of Millbank Prison in London, opened in 1816 and closed in 1890. Millbank Prison was one example of several implemented panopticon prisons, a control design developed by Jeremy Bentham.

only prison-like, but also unjust, and the social control and monitoring do not affect all the inhabitants alike. The upper class of Oceania, for example, has the privilege of being able to evade surveillance. Although in Huxley's work, the comparable privileges of the elite are not explicitly mentioned, restrictions are not mentioned either. However, one must come from the ranks of Alphas to be capable of making any changes in the World State, such as negotiating the need of monitoring the behavior of the five classes. Members of the lower classes have no authority to decide such matters, nor even the ability to criticize them:

The prospect of flying West again, and for a whole week, was very inviting. Moreover, for at least three days of that week they would be in the Savage Reservation. Not more than half a dozen people in the whole Centre had ever been inside a Savage Reservation. As an Alpha-Plus psychologist, Bernard was one of the few men she knew entitled to a permit. (Huxley 1932/2006: 88)

The difference between utopian and anti-utopian societies is present in the extent to which inhabitants, depending on their social background, have the freedom to use space. In

literary representations, in general, mobility is used as a common theme to express counter-hegemonic resistance to established norms in culture and society (Cresswell 1993). Correspondingly, state control is typically represented as a restriction of the human freedom to use space, as Foucault has constantly underscored in his discourse theory. Although in the enclave island of Utopia all mobility in space requires a permit, in the two anti-utopian spaces discussed here movement is regulated according to social status. The social class system forces each class to stay only in areas designated as their place of residence and work. In the anti-utopian space, class-crossing interaction between inhabitants is blocked by walls of prejudice and by physical limitations:

It was only on very rare occasions that one saw inside the dwelling-places of the Inner Party, or even penetrated into the quarter of the town where they lived. The whole atmosphere of the huge block of flats, the richness and spaciousness of everything, the unfamiliar smells of good food and good tobacco, the silent and incredibly rapid lifts sliding up and down, the white-jacketed servants hurrying to and fro—everything was intimidating. (Orwell 1949/2008: 175)

In the island of Utopia, there are no such restrictions, but the islanders seek to break down barriers that prevent inhabitants from different social backgrounds from being together, for example by meeting each other during their daily lunch: ‘At the hours of dinner and supper the whole Syphogranty being called together by sound of trumpet, they meet and eat together, except only such as are in the hospitals or lie sick at home’ (More 1516/2007: 43). Control over space is not linked to social power, while in the anti-utopian societies, social structures and their spatial manifestations are preserved for the sake of the powerful. There are social power structures also in the island of Utopia, but they are not protected for the same reasons as in Oceania and the World State, and in fact, changes contesting prevailing power structures are allowed. The inhabitants can influence the administrative decisions and they are free to run for a position in which they could actively participate in decision making. In the anti-utopian societies, power is centralized, and people from certain social backgrounds have easier access to positions that control the use of space. In Oceania the ruling party restricts access to dominant positions from the people who are considered a threat:

“It’s an absurdity. An Alpha-decanted, Alpha-conditioned man would go mad if he had to do Epsilon Semi-Moron work--go mad, or start smashing things up. Alphas can be completely socialized--but only on condition that you make them do Alpha work. Only an Epsilon can be expected to make Epsilon sacrifices, for the good reason that for him they aren’t sacrifices; they’re the line of least resistance. His conditioning has laid down rails along which he’s got to run. He can’t help himself; he’s foredoomed. Even after decanting, he’s still inside a bottle--an invisible bottle of infantile and embryonic fixations. Each one of us, of course,” the Controller meditatively continued, “goes through life inside a bottle. But if we happen to be Alphas, our bottles are, relatively speaking, enormous. (Huxley 1932/2006: 222)

Describing life as being gone through ‘inside a bottle’ is an illustrative metaphoric reference to how in anti-utopian societies inequality is linked with the limitations to use and move in space and in that way demarcate the quality of life. Accordingly, utopian society is characterized by the liberation of space, with inhabitants permitted to use and move in space to meet their needs. Utopias are thus more open to openness and happiness, in a strong contrast to how space is typically used in anti-utopian literature. For example, in the World State and Oceania, commercial and cultural cooperation with regions outside is prohibited or significantly restricted:

... about sixty thousand Indians and half-breeds ... absolute savages ... our inspectors occasionally visit ... otherwise, no communication whatever with the civilized world ... still preserve their repulsive habits and customs ... (Huxley 1932/2006: 103)

The average citizen of Oceania never sets eyes on a citizen of either Eurasia or Eastasia, and he is forbidden the knowledge of foreign languages. If he were allowed contact with foreigners he would discover that they are creatures similar to himself and that most of what he has been told about them is lies. (Orwell 1949/2008: 248)

In contrast, utopians actively engage in trade and other forms of interaction with regions outside the island. Restrictions that regulate the actions are not absolute bans or rules, but instead are open to change with the support of the majority of inhabitants. The utopian island is a space comprised of an organized community with a cohesive culture, and as a restricted space, is organized to serve the basic needs of the inhabitants and the conditions of a good life, such as food production, mobility and working conditions; ‘fifty-four cities in the island, all large and well built, the manners, customs, and laws of which are the same, and they are all contrived as near in the same manner as the ground on which they stand will allow’ (More 1516/2007: 33). The island is an organized space developed to meet the needs of the inhabitants in such a balanced manner that no blatant disparities in living standards occur.

What connects the analysed works is that the state is firmly in control of people’s happiness. In the island of Utopia happiness relies on the ideals of shared property and belief in God. Although it has been argued that More, as a statesman, did not necessarily conceive of communism and communality as practical solutions for the preservation of peace and order (see Surtz 1949), in *Utopia*, however, the prohibited retention of private property is represented as a route to happiness. Whereas the power of the church was difficult to criticize in medieval times, belief in God represents a moral strength that leads inhabitants to take care of each other and which also occupies the use of space:

There is a party among them who place happiness in bare virtue; others think that our natures are conducted by virtue to happiness, as that which is the chief good of man. They define virtue thus—that it is a living according to Nature, and think that we are made by God for that end; they believe that a man then follows the dictates

of Nature when he pursues or avoids things according to the direction of reason.  
(More 1516/2007: 50)

In *Brave New World* the happiness of citizens is maintained with a drug called soma. Although there are no diseases and wars in the World State, and thus *Brave New World* has also been interpreted as a representation of Utopian society (Panagopoulos 2016), the descriptions of citizens being happy are loaded with critical sarcasm. In fact, it can be generalized that the anti-utopian imagination contains a belief that future can be better, but believing in naïve ideas about a dramatic improvement of human nature and the world, also called utopianism (Sargent 2010: 5, 102), is not a proper mindset for achieving it. Instead, naïve “utopia impulses” may ultimately lead into a quality of life that can be called “dystopian” (see Moylan 2000: 155), or ‘end up in violence and totalitarianism’ (Jameson 2005: 142). Huxley uses satire to show how appalling it would be to remain ignorantly happy, and how lacking the potential to develop as a frail, error-prone being defines unhappiness (Johnson 2011):

The world’s stable now. People are happy; they get what they want, and they never want what they can’t get. They’re well off; they’re safe; they’re never ill; they’re not afraid of death... they’re so conditioned that they practically can’t help behaving as they ought to behave. And if anything should go wrong, there’s soma. (Huxley 1932/2006: 220)

Yes, ‘Everybody’s happy nowadays.’ We begin giving the children that at five. But wouldn’t you like to be free to be happy in some other way, Lenina? In your own way, for example; not in everybody else’s way. (Huxley 1932/2006: 91)

In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the promise of a happy life is a propaganda phrase, promoted by the state in order to halt all development. Although human life before the Revolution was full of misery – ‘it was a dark, dirty, miserable place where hardly anybody had enough to eat and where hundreds and thousands of poor people had no boots on their feet and not even a roof to sleep under’ (93) – the contrast between the propaganda promises and the narrator’s view of reality is sharp. In fact, the anti-utopian atmosphere is created by the misleading and fallacious advertising of the state:

Day and night the telescreens bruised your ears with statistics proving that people today had more food, more clothes, better houses, better recreations—that they lived longer, worked shorter hours, were bigger, healthier, stronger, happier, more intelligent, better educated, than the people of fifty years ago. Not a word of it could ever be proved or disproved. (Orwell 1949/2008: 77)

What combines More, Huxley and Orwell and their utopian/anti-utopian works, is that they all share the view that certain prominent power groups are using their position to govern society and to stay in that position by imposing rules that restrict the free use of space, with the idea that they serve the interests of staying in power. Each of these three

authors criticizes both the desire for power in itself and its consequences for the members of society. The critique focuses on how a small ruling elite subjugates people and restricts their possibilities to have influence. For More, this elite consisted of medieval nobles, for Huxley, the upper Alpha class of society who controlled all the technological innovations, and for Orwell, the party elite of the totalitarian state. Although it is impossible to solve any practical, fundamental social problems through utopian or anti-utopian imaginings, they still offer alternate visions for readers enabling them to find connecting links between the control of space, power and happiness.

## Conclusions

Utopian and anti-utopian imaginations predict a society in which the freedom of the inhabitants to use space is controlled by shared, constitutional rules. Anti-utopian fiction differs from utopian fiction in terms of how much freedom in life, such as the free will to use space and other rights, is restricted, the effectiveness of enforcement and control, and how space is entangled with social power. In More's *Utopia*, virtues such as moral strength and the ideal of sharing are happiness generators, which at the same time make the necessity of control feel less miserable. In contrast, in the two anti-utopian imaginations discussed in this article, (apart from the influence of soma) happiness generators are absent and the necessity to control society prevails. Indeed, dystopias reflect a stagnant society where restrictions, prohibitions, and control consume so many resources that all progress is halted. In both anti-utopian classics discussed here, this stagnation leads to social inequality, the maintenance of distorted power structures, class divisions, differences in living standards between regions and all-reaching unhappiness.

On the other hand, in More's *Utopia* society is regulated by restrictions and practices that promote the coexistence of the inhabitants, without any connection to the preservation of power structures. In return, in utopian society the freedoms allowed enable inhabitants to influence the development of their living environment. The island of Utopia, as an eutopian space, is characterized by a balanced standard of living, without artificial social restrictions such as class divisions, and, despite its seemingly stable state, is open to change. Anti-utopian literature reflects the general concern with how far the control of a living environment with restrictions and prohibitions can be extended. Utopian literature, on the other hand, gives people hope that the restrictions and prohibitions we live with are not necessarily going to alter the (good) conditions of our lives.

The anti-utopian fear of over-restriction as well as hope for more freedoms are constantly present in our everyday lives. Utopias provide hope, for example in case of regional planning, for 'situations where it is necessary to encourage, inspire and empower people to act for the common good of a region' (Luoto and Karhu 2018: 113). People's habitats are always controlled by rules that are binding, in the name of peace and cooperation, but simultaneously various groups such as public authorities, businesses and citizens compete against the restrictions and rights that define society. Hence, utopian imaginations give hope by envisioning a future in which it is not possible to reach a political position in which the living conditions for others could be exclusively determined and the common good overridden. However, both utopian and anti-utopian envisioning is needed.



Today, 'being afraid' defines who we are, and the present challenges, such as coronavirus infections, climate change, waves of refugees and diminishing resources, unavoidably force people to live under tighter restrictions. This may also be a turning point when the values that concern human freedom and happiness need to be re-evaluated.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Kneale (2010) argues that depending on how you define 'utopia', counterfactual histories can also be conceived of as 'utopian'.

<sup>2</sup> As discussed in literary geographies, the question of how the abstractions of 'reality', 'fact' and 'fiction' interconnect with social discourses, is highly complicated and multidimensional (see Ridanpää 2010; 2018).

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