Different Faces of Dystopia in Nineteen Eighty-Four, Ready Player One, Lord of the Flies, and Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?

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Different Faces of Dystopia in *Nineteen Eighty-Four, Ready Player One, Lord of the Flies,* and *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*

(Smjer engleska književnost i kultura)

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Abstract and Key Words

1. Introduction

This thesis will deal with specific dystopian themes as manifested in: *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) by George Orwell, *Lord of the Flies* (1954) by William Golding, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968) by Phillip K. Dick, and *Ready Player One* (2011) by Ernest Cline. The dystopian themes in question are despotism, social strata and slavery, religion, and reality as simulacrum. The four novels have been selected for analysis in this thesis because, while all four are clear examples of dystopian fiction, each of them takes a different approach to the themes listed above. The main argument of the thesis will be that although the four novels are different in their methodological approach to constructing a dystopian narrative, the dystopian world in any of the given novels, even though it appears to be rooted in a stable and sustainable system, reveals its inherent deformation of humanity.

In order to be able to discuss these works as dystopian fiction, the historical context of utopian literature will be discussed before diving into literary analysis. Chapter 2 includes the origin of the neologism utopia, its definitions as produced by utopian scholars, the characteristics of utopia as a literary genre, the advent of science fiction and its relationship with utopian fiction, dystopia as a natural product of utopia, and the themes characteristic to utopian and dystopian works.

Chapter 3 contains a detailed analysis of the ways in which each selected theme manifests itself in the novels, with special attention given to similarities between the novels, as well as their key differences. The theoretical underpinnings will rely on the works by Chad Walsh, M. Keith Booker, Gregory Claeys, David Spitz, Francesca Ferrando, Andrew Monteith, Lena Boroditsky, Viktor Shklovskij, and Jean Baudrillard.

The Conclusion will sum the key issues raised in the thesis.

2. The History of Utopia

2.1. Naming Utopia

As outlined in the previous chapter, this thesis will discuss the four novels in the context of dystopian fiction. The necessary beginning to delving deeper into any genre of fiction would be to first understand its history. In this case, the origin of the term *utopia* needs to be investigated.

In 1492, Christopher Columbus discovered land on the far side of the Atlantic Ocean, thus setting in motion an era of curiosity and exploration of new lands, peoples, and cultures, i.e. the Age of Exploration. The peoples of Europe were, at the time, mostly unaware that their world was in fact significantly larger than they had thought, despite the fact that this was not the first European expedition to the American continents. As sailors began bringing home stories of their journeys, travel narratives started to become increasingly popular. Correspondingly, these accounts were followed by travel narratives based on imaginary journeys. Such narratives would provide European thinkers, most notably Thomas More, with the means to indirectly criticize their society by describing in detail an imaginary, newly discovered society which is better organized than their own. As Fatima Vieira states: "More used the emerging awareness of otherness to legitimize the invention of other spaces, with other people and different forms of organization" (Vieira 4).

In 1516, More wrote a book based on an island discovered by a Portuguese sailor named Raphael Hythloday. More assigned both his book and the discovered island the same name – *Utopia*. This decision influenced the first semantical split of the term which occurred with the theory around utopian fiction in the late 19th century, for not only did utopia refer to a narrative

device of a better organised society, but it would also, with time, come to refer to a brand new literary genre, a novelty which, according to Vieira, certainly justified the need of a neologism:

> In fact, though the word utopia came into being to allude to imaginary paradisiacal places, it has also been used to refer to a particular kind of narrative, which became known as utopian literature (Vieira 4).

It is important to note that, even though More invented the term utopia in 1516, he did not invent that which the concept reflected, or in other words, "what Ernst Bloch considered to be the principal energy of utopia: hope" (Vieira 6-7). Vieira further states that, in Bloch's terms, "[u]topia is then to be seen as a matter of attitude, as a kind of reaction to an undesirable present and an aspiration to overcome all difficulties by the imagination of possible alternatives" (Vieira 7). A similar remark is found in the writings of Lyman Tower Sargent who argues that, when writing about utopianism, such terms as "the human condition" or "human nature" do not need to be defined, since

> the overwhelming majority of people – probably it is even possible to say all – are, at some time dissatisfied and consider how their lives might be improved. If we are hungry, we dream of a full stomach. If we are sexually frustrated, we dream of sexual fulfilment. If we are frustrated by something in our society, we dream of a society in which it is corrected. Often we dream even though we, personally, are well fed and sexually fulfilled. […] At its root, then, utopianism is the result of the human propensity to dream while both asleep and awake ("The Three Faces" 4).

Sargent's main argument about utopianism is that it should not be observed one-dimensionally, but rather "in three different forms, each with many variants – utopian literature, […] communitarianism; and utopian social theory" ("The Three Faces" 4) He divides all

utopian literature into "body utopias or utopias of sensual gratification and city utopias or utopias of human contrivance" ("The Three Faces" 4). Body utopias, as Sargent elaborates, "are achieved without human effort. They are a gift of nature or the gods. […] They are social dreaming at its simplest. Every culture has some such stories", and Sargent believes that "they are the foundation of utopianism" ("The Three Faces" 10). On the other hand, city utopias represent societies achieved through human effort. Here the inhabitants of the utopia are the ones responsible for bringing about the state of society ("The Three Faces" 10-11).

According to Sargent, c*ommunitarianism* refers to an economic system based on public property ("The Three Faces" 13). Sargent's third face of utopianism, utopian social theory, is closely connected with the division into body and city utopias. He argues that utopia is "not necessarily a deficiency response", but that utopias motivated by deficiency still exist, and are found in myth and oral tradition ("The Three Faces" 10). Utopian social theory is what brings forth one or another idea of what constitutes a better society. As Peter Fitting states, "Sargent sets [utopian social theory] within the history of the idea of progress ("Short History" 126).

More's *Utopia* was the crucial utopian text that started the utopian tradition of the Christian West, but it was certainly not the first utopia ever written. As Vieira maintains, "although he invented the word utopia, More did not invent utopianism" (Vieira 6). In fact, the oldest known utopian text is considered to be Plato's *Republic*. It could be said that utopia as a tendency to make life better existed as long as civilization did, and the concept of utopia as a philosophical, social, and political effort was born in 1516.

In fact, More originally had a different name in mind. Before he came up with utopia, he was going to name the island *Nusquama* after the Latin word *nusquam*, meaning *nowhere/in no place*. However, as Vieira puts it, More wanted to create something that would mirror the new currents of thought arising in Europe (4). The idea of utopia was a product of the

Renaissance and of humanist logic. On the one hand, the Renaissance was marked by reverence for the ancient civilizations of Greece and Rome. On the other, humanist logic provided the belief that reason should be used in order to move towards a better future. The ensuing philosophy of advancement driven by reason combined with the orientation towards the classical civilizations resulted in "a confidence in the human being's capacity […] to arrange society differently in order to ensure peace" (Vieira 4). This kind of attitude would undoubtedly imply a paradisiacal, perfect future. However, since this new philosophy developed under a Christian worldview, the idea of the Fall did not allow for a belief in human perfection, although an ability for societal improvement was still possible. Because of this, More was not satisfied with the one-dimensional name *Nusquama*, and instead decided on a different name, coined by joining two Greek words: *ouk*, meaning *not*, and *topos*, meaning place. Those two words, together with the suffix *ia*, implying a place, formed the word utopia. The semantical ambiguity of utopia, which is at the same time a place, and a place which does not exist, perfectly conveyed the aforementioned currents of thought, and thus a new literary, social, and political movement was born.

From the onset, utopia was a concept with an embedded paradox. The term utopia refers to a place that does not exist and the term eutopia refers to a good place. Since utopia and eutopia are homonyms, utopia is in effect a good place that does not exist. This ambiguity would be the base on which the concept of utopia would continue to grow both as a literary genre and as a philosophical, sociological, and political thought.

2.2. Defining Utopia

Given the amount of utopian works, studies, and discussions that arose since the beginning of utopia in 1516, and the numerous neologisms which were derived from the word *utopia*, a plethora of its definitions also appeared. A concept with too many definitions will struggle to be the topic of any deep investigation, simply because the scholars are then deprived of a common language. As Sargent puts it, "utopian scholarship is in the state of most sciences in the Nineteenth Century when better description was the basis of building toward more effective understanding of the phenomena being studied" ("The Three Faces" 3). Sargent also points at the heart of any intellectual discussion, arguing that the most important point is not that the established definitions are agreed upon, but that "we define our terms and use those terms consistently" ("The Three Faces" 4).

Sargent also reflects on Ruth Levitas' definition of utopia as being rooted in human desire. Sargent refers to the similarity between Levitas' definition of *utopia* and his own definition of *utopianism*. The most notorious misuse of neologisms derived from *utopia*, as Sargent points out, has to do with the neologisms *dystopia* and *anti-utopia*. Anti-utopia is often used as a synonym for dystopia, and inaccurately so. In order to set a foundation for future discourse, Sargent compiles the following list of definitions encompassing the most commonly used utopia-derived neologisms:

Utopianism – social dreaming.

Utopia – a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space.

Eutopia or positive utopia – a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space that the author intended a

contemporaneous reader to view as considerably better than the society in which the reader lived.

Dystopia or negative utopia – a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as considerably worse than the society in which that reader lived.

Utopian satire – a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as a criticism of that contemporary society.

Anti-utopia – a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as a criticism of utopianism or of some particular eutopia.

Critical utopia – a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as better than contemporary society but with difficult problems that the described society may or may not be able to solve and which takes a critical view of the utopian genre ("The Three Faces" 9, bold in the original).

While providing arguments for the boundaries of definition, Sargent also provides some examples of utopias which do not fit his definitions. For example, he points out that most Robinsonade do not have a society to be perceived as better or worse, and that most Gulliveriana have non-humans as central protagonists ("The Three Faces" 13). Furthermore,

Nicole Pohl points out that Gulliveriana are narratives in which “the first-person narrator travels through imaginary geographies and encounters very different societies and people,” (66) whereas Robinsonades are a different “strand of geographical utopias” (67) in that they are “individualistic utopias […] that pre-empted the critical voyage utopias in their celebration of the self-imposed exile or involuntary retreat from the world as the only place where true happiness, contentment and self-fulfilment can be ensured” (67-68). Sargent’s argument is that even if boundaries are permeable, without them, definitions and taxonomy are useless (“The Three Faces” 12).

Among the many definitions of *utopia*, Sargent points out Darko Suvin’s definition and his own as “the most useful” (“The Three Faces” 6). Suvin proposes the following definition of utopia:

> Utopia is the verbal construction of a particular quasi-human community where sociopolitical institutions, norms, and individual relationships are organized according to a more perfect principle than in the author’s community, this construction being based on estrangement arising out of an alternative historical hypothesis. (“Defining the Literary Genre”)

While Sargent does not define *utopia* to be perceived either as better or worse than the society in which the reader lives, it appears that what Suvin’s definition of utopia overlaps with Sargent’s eutopia, i.e. positive utopia. Both agree on an imaginary society which is described as better than the reader’s society, while Suvin’s definition adds the aspect of an “alternative historical hypothesis” so that the society is not only imaginary, but it also includes the imagination of an alternative path of development. It is important to note that for Suvin, the aspect of the imaginary is the most important in his conceptualisation of utopia. In this way,

utopia is seen purely as a literary genre, a construct actualised through words and separated from reality.

2.3. Utopia as a Literary Genre

As mentioned earlier, the origin of utopia as a literary genre took place in the Christian West. Sargent points out that "utopias as a genre of literature that has certain formal characteristics are most common in the Christian West, almost certainly because that genre is identified with Thomas More, a person from the Christian West" ("The Three Faces" 2). Even though utopianism, being one of the defining aspects of the human condition, is a global phenomenon, it is important to note that utopia as a literary genre as discussed here belongs to a specific tradition, and is not necessarily the only utopian literary tradition in the world. Some examples of non-Western utopian traditions, according to Sargent, are China, India, and Southeast Asia ("The Three Faces" 20).

Fitting writes about different ways in which utopia has been acknowledged as a literary genre. He claims that the most straightforward place to look would be "in introductions and prefaces to works that we now consider utopias" ("Short History" 122). Fitting provides a striking example: Denis Veiras's introduction to his own 1681 utopia *Histoire des Sevarambes* (*History of the Sevarambes*):

> Those who have read Plato's *Republic* or the *Utopia* of Thomas More or Chancellor Bacon's *New Atlantis*, which are in fact nothing more than the ingenious inventions ["imaginations"] of these authors, may think perhaps that this account of newly discovered countries, with all their marvels, is of a similar type (qtd. in Fitting, "Short History" 122).

Veiras does not attempt to place his work among his predecessors. In fact, he means to set his work apart by characterizing the previous works as "ingenious inventions", not only implying, but also going further to argue that his work is based on reality. As Fitting points out, such claims of veracity were typical of the period, but more importantly, the fact that Veiras chose to juxtapose his work with those of Plato, More, and Bacon shows an "awareness of the similarities of what will come to be known as utopias" ("Short History" 122).

The second acknowledgement of utopia as a literary genre, according to Fitting, is the existence of studies of utopian writing. An example he provides is Lucian Hölscher's account of the writings of Louis Reybaud, as well as a series of articles written by James T. Presley. Hölscher claims that in France, "Louis Reybaud was one of the first to point out [the] intellectual relationship of [the socialist movements in France and Germany] to the political novels of Plato, More and others…" (qtd. in Fitting, "Short History" 122). In the 1870s, Presley attempted to compile a list of works "similar to More's *Utopia*", as well as an "elementary classification system" that Fitting quotes in full ("Short History" 123):

1. Utopias proper; works which describe an ideal state of society, according to the notions which the author may entertain of what political and social conditions it is probable or desirable that the human race should hereafter attain to.
2. Those which satirize, under feigned names, the manners, customs, pursuits, and follies of the age or nation in which the writer lives.
3. Those which pretend to give a somewhat reasonable account of the possible or probable future state of society or course of historical events, either near at hand or in remote ages.
4. Those which, merely for the sake of amusement, or sometimes for the purpose of travestying the wonderful adventures related by actual travelers

> in remote regions, profess to recount travels or adventures in imaginary countries or inaccessible worlds, in which generally the most extravagant fancy runs riot (qtd. in Fitting, "Short History" 123).

Fitting also lists the third way of affirming the emergence of utopia as a literary genre – "the gradual establishment of a utopian canon" ("Short History" 124). Aside from Presley's compilation of works, Fitting mentions *The Quest of Utopia: An Anthology of Imaginary Societies* by Glenn Negley and J. Max Patrick, published in 1952, as the first English utopian anthology. The anthology is divided into the sections: "Modern Utopias: 1850-1950", "Classical Utopias: 900 B.C.-200 B.C.", and "Utopias from 1500-1850" (Fitting, "Short History" 124). The ability to dissect it into different periods serves as further proof that utopia is indeed an established literary genre.

From being recognized in introductions and prefaces to classical utopian works and now numerous studies of utopian writing as well as anthologies solely devoted to utopian works, the existence of utopia as a literary genre can hardly be disputed. The only issue that may arise is that of whether utopia is actually a sub-genre of science fiction, as Darko Suvin argues, as will be discussed anon.

2.4. Utopia, Science, and Science Fiction

The advent of the Industrial Revolution has changed the world beyond recognition. The rapidly increasing pace of scientific advancement reshaped society and, by extension, utopian thinking in terms of utopianism as well as utopia as a literary genre. Concerning the literary genre, a new kind of utopia was born. As Beauchamp puts it, "Only when the technological innovations of the 17th century gave birth to the Idea of Progress does the possibility of a

progressive (or, in Wells' term, kinetic) utopia begin to emerge" (59). The claim that the classical utopias had no technology needs no defending. Without technology and the idea of progress upon which the superior society can be developed, classical utopias were fated for stagnation.

Once the idea of progress did make its way into literature, a new genre was born: science fiction. The theory around science fiction provided different perspectives on whether science fiction belongs to the late 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, or whether it existed since the Antiquity. Additionally, the interaction between science fiction and dystopia of the 20th century brought up another debate between the scholars: the question of whether dystopia is a sub-genre of science fiction or vice-versa, whether science fiction is a sub-genre of dystopia. Suvin, for example, argues that utopia is a genre of estrangement, and as such belongs to science fiction which he defines as "the literature of cognitive estrangement" ("Metamorphoses" 4). Contrarily, an argument was raised that the use of the term *estrangement* is problematic since whether something is perceived as estrangement or not is subjective in nature (Fitting, "Short History" 136). Fitting also argues that "[w]hile the utopian form – particularly as prose narrative – stretches back at least to More's 1516 *Utopia*, what today's readers recognize as science fiction with its familiar icons of the alien and the spaceship […] is a phenomenon which is at best 200 years old" ("Short History" 137).

In the quote above, Fitting focuses on one of the three possible histories of science fiction proposed by Adam Roberts. Roberts points out that "the point of origin of SF is as fiercely contested a business as defining the form. Different critics have their own jumping-off points" (37). There are two main approaches to the issue of the origin and nature of SF. One focuses on SF as a genre of "a specific artistic response to a very particular set of historical and cultural phenomena" (Roberts 37). The historical and cultural phenomena Roberts refers to are one and the same mentioned above in conjunction with the SF which Fitting contrasts with

utopia: the Industrial Revolution and Darwin's theory of evolution (derived from his book *On the Origins of the Species*) which ultimately brought forth the idea of progress.

The other approach Roberts writes about sets the origin of SF significantly further back in history, all the way to the Antiquity. Instead of being based on specific historical and cultural phenomena, this approach offers a different view of the nature of SF. In Roberts' words, those that argue for the antiquity of SF see it as:

> a common factor across a wide range of different histories and cultures, that it speaks to something more durable, perhaps something fundamental in the human make-up, some human desire to imagine worlds other than the one we actually inhabit (Roberts 37-38).

The idea of the antiquity of SF, along with Suvin's definition of science fiction as cognitive estrangement, is the reason why some scholars claim that utopia is a sub-genre of science fiction. Suvin's view and the views of other scholars of the interrelation of utopia and SF is a product of this approach. The two differing streams of thought Roberts writes about are the source of disagreement among the scholars on the nature of either utopia or science fiction as literary genres, but the one idea on which both scholarly camps seem to agree is that the border between the two genres is impossible to clearly define.

2.5. Dystopia

In approaching a concept such as dystopia, one should not make the mistake of defining it as the opposite of utopia in the sense that one excludes the other. The neologism is derived from the thus far central term of utopia, and is coined from two Greek words: *dus* and *topos*,

meaning a "diseased, bad, faulty, or unfavourable place" (Claeys, *Dystopia* 4). Sargent's definitions of utopia and dystopia, if taken at face value, do imply a contrast of opposites, but when utopianism is taken into account along with all of its political and philosophical debates, one can begin to see that the key principle is the reader's own subjective view of what constitutes a better or worse society.

> […] a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space that the author intended a contemporaneous reader *to view* as considerably better than the society in which the reader lived ("The Three Faces" 9, emphasis mine).

If the perception of a specific state, be it fictional or real, depends on the observer's political, moral, and social values, then the claim that any state is purely a utopia or a dystopia falls apart.

Gregory Claeys points out some dystopian parallels that run close to the origins of utopia. In 1516, when More's *Utopia* was published, the first "ghetto" for Jews was created in Venice (*Dystopia* 5). The exploration of the New World, which inspired many utopian works, was soon replaced by colonization, which implies the "remaking one part of humanity while enslaving another" (Claeys, *Dystopia* 6). In the same way, a utopia of "opulence and consumption might be understood as generating a dystopia of scarcity and environmental degradation" (Claeys, *Dystopia* 6).

Oftentimes a dystopian work bases its dystopian worldview on a protagonist who goes through a radical shift in their own worldview, bringing them to the conclusion that they have found themselves in hell. Winston Smith in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) and Guy Montag in Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* (1953) are prime examples of this principle, as will be argued.

When it comes to the differences between narrative structures of utopia and dystopia, aside from the mental shift the protagonist undergoes in order to bring dystopia to the reader's attention, there are other key narrative differences. Tom Moylan and Raffaella Baccolini point out the difference in how a narrative begins for both utopia and dystopia. Unlike the classic utopian narrative in which the protagonist, who either arrives as an explorer or due to getting lost or stranded, is guided through the utopian society and its workings, all the while contrasting it with the author's society, the dystopian counter-narrative begins *in medias res*. (5) This immediacy, in the words of Moylan and Baccolini, forestalls the cognitive estrangement until the aforementioned shift in the protagonist's worldview (5).

The control of language is the final counter-narrative theme pointed out by Moylan and Baccolini. The approach of taking control over the means to express oneself, share ideas and thoughts, and preserve them through history is present in many dystopian works, some examples include Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) as well as *Animal Farm* (1945), Zamyatin's *We* (1924), Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* (1953), and Butler's *Parable of the Sower* (1993) (Moylan and Baccolini, 6).

Sargent's distinction between utopia as a literary genre and utopianism as social dreaming has been widely accepted. If one were to observe dystopia in the same manner, a similar parallel can be drawn in order to coin the term dystopianism, which would imply "negative social dreaming", or "criticism of social dreaming". Claeys points out that the term is not used since "we recognize no dystopian ideologies as such" (*Dystopia* 5). However, much like the capacity to imagine better situations, the capacity to imagine worse ones is as old as the capacity for imagination. Gregory Claeys provides some examples of ancient as well as modern dystopian visions:

> We recall ancient myths of the Flood, that universal inundation induced by Divine wrath, and of the Apocalypse of Judgement Day. We see landscapes defined by ruin, death, destruction. […] Useless banknotes flutter in the wind. Our symbols of species power stand starkly useless: decay is universal. Or: we see miles of barbed wire broken by guard towers topped with machine guns and searchlights; […] Or: a proliferation of mushroom clouds indicates humanity's end through nuclear war (*Dystopia* 3-4).

Social dreaming undoubtedly also brings about its critique. If one group proposes a utopian idea, especially if they claim that a perfect utopia can be achieved, it is more than likely that another group will find its failings and declare it a predecessor to dystopia. One of the most famous examples from modern history is that of socialism which began as a utopian idea until it transformed into communism in the Soviet Union, which showed the world the horror of socialism-induced totalitarianism, further fuelling dystopian reactions. From this perspective it is hard to call history anything but a laboratory of utopian social dreaming, reminiscent of Plato's model of the five regimes discussed in *The Republic*, which follow one after another in a process of societal degradation: aristocracy, timocracy, oligarchy, democracy, and tyranny.

2.6. Utopian and Dystopian Themes

The topic of the death, or disappearance, of the genre of utopia has been present since the 1950s. The most common reason for this, according to Fatima Vieira, has to do with utopia as a literary genre. Vieira argues that what has been mistaken by many scholars for the death of utopia is in fact the transformative nature of the genre (19). If one is focused solely on the solutions that a particular utopia is proposing, then "[w]e can no doubt accept the idea of the

death of the utopias of the Renaissance, of the utopias of the Enlightenment or of socialist utopias" However, the form (the literary genre) must not be confused with the content (the message) (Vieira 19).

If utopianism is taken into account, then the socio-political context of a certain period dictates the perception of the contemporaneous observer of what must be done to improve their situation. In other words, as time passes and society changes, it naturally follows that the focus of utopianism changes, and the themes of utopian literature change accordingly.

Lyman Tower Sargent studied utopian writing written between 1516 and 1975 in order to examine varying utopian themes. He decides to finish his analysis of utopian themes with the late 19th-century works by H. G. Wells, because the extent to which Wells' work impacted the genre was still undetermined. Furthermore, since, as he maintains, the number of utopian works written in the twentieth century was so high, generalization became significantly difficult, as writing was affected by global events which brought about major shifts in the twentieth century, namely World War 1 and World War 2, the Great Depression, the Cold War, and the Vietnam War ("Themes" 275).

The first utopian theme which Sargent discusses is one of authority and religion. In the 16th century, "[t]he basic attitude is that people are weak and must be constantly supervised and must know their place in order to behave as the author thinks they should. […] a good society will result if each person knows and keeps his or her place. And punishment is right and sure for those who violate the rules" ("Themes" 276). On the other hand, in the 17th century, "there is slightly less emphasis on punishment as the major means of social control and somewhat more concern with education as a means of avoiding the necessity of punishment" ("Themes" 276). Also, due to the fact that in the 17th century, "the belief in women's inferiority continued unabated" ("Themes" 276), another theme became common: sex-role reversal

utopias. The last utopian theme of the 17th century provides the "first positive statements about democracy" ("Themes" 277), albeit not without also expressing doubt through certain limitations, such as "a property qualification for voting, no one suing or being sued by someone else may either vote or be elected, and there are fines for nonattendance in Parliament" ("Themes" 277).

Other than a continuation of traditions of religious utopias, the 18th century with the appearance of what could be termed the middle class, saw the introduction of a new theme: the distrust of lawyers and the legal system. A society in which men continuously improve their lives using reason was another theme commonly found in the 18th century, as well as in the 19th century.

Sargent divided the 19th century into pre- and post-Bellamy in order to simplify the process of categorization, since Bellamy's 1888 utopia *Looking Backward* caused a major increase in utopian writing ("Themes" 277-278). Patrick Parrinder states that "*Looking Backward* was an immensely influential novel in its time, probably the most significant vision of socialism ever produced in the United States, but as a utopian romance with a love story at its centre it is largely inept" (166).

The pre-Bellamy period is characterized by three themes: the question of what constitutes an equitable economic system, the communitarian movement, and as Sargent puts it, "the woman question" ("Themes" 278). Concerning the economy discussion, the period in question gave birth to three economic approaches. The first approach proposes "complete public control of publicly owned property" ("Themes" 278). The second approach proposes "private ownership with or without public regulation" ("Themes" 278). The third option includes various types of cooperation between private property owners which makes it possible for them to join into a larger corporation capable of competing on the free market. The pre-

Bellamy period was also marked by the accompanying themes of religion, reason, science, and technology. The first anti-utopias were also written during this period ("Themes" 279).

The final period scrutinized by Sargent is the post-Bellamy period, which Sargent determined to end with the utopian writings of H. G. Wells. The number of utopian texts was roughly the same as in the pre-Bellamy period, but even so, the themes were mostly a continuation of the same themes, predominantly concerning the question of the most efficient economic system. A major change is the significant increase in the number of anti-utopian works criticising Bellamy ("Themes" 279).

Considering utopian works after Wells, Sargent claims that the utopia of the 20th century is the least studied of all. ("Themes" 279). This comes as no surprise since the 20th century not only gave birth to dystopian fiction, but also saw it effectively replace utopia. Sargent points out that at least the period prior to World War II can be compared to the post-Bellamy period in the sense that "the utopian novel in the twentieth century was as much a response to the dominating position of Wells as it was to Bellamy after 1888" ("Themes" 279).

Dystopian literature has shown that utopias and dystopias often share common themes. Very often, a dystopian protagonist finds themselves struggling against some form of authoritarian oppression. For example, there are many post-war dystopian novels focused on the political aspect. Be it criticism of totalitarianism, fascism, or Nazism, the then recent history heavily inspired dystopian authors to look back on the horrors produced by the martial era of the 20th century. Totalitarianism in particular received special attention from various authors, most notably by George Orwell in his most successful novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), influenced by arguably the most important dystopian novel, Jevgenij Zamyatin's *We* (1924). According to Claeys, what differentiates totalitarianism from the previous forms of authoritarian states, such as monarchical absolutism and military states, is "the desire for

complete control over the hearts and bodies, minds and souls, of the citizens of the nation" ("The Origins" 119). The totalitarianism in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), as well as fascism in *Lord of the Flies* (1954)*,* their capitalist counterpart in *Ready Player One* (2011), and the subjugation of androids in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* (1968) will be discussed in more detail later.

As all societies have some form of a social hierarchy, so do utopian and dystopian societies. Claeys, as previously mentioned, states that colonialism, in essence, encompassed enslaving a people in order to improve the lives of a different people (*Dystopia* 6). Most dystopias, if not all, are concerned with a lack of freedom. Different kinds of freedoms can be the topic of different dystopias, and to varying degrees, but in essence, as Maria Varsam puts it, "[t]hough many different themes are developed in classic and neo-slave narratives, one common thread unites them: a conspicuous preoccupation with obtaining freedom" (204). In order to create order in a society, some freedoms must be denied by the governing group. The stricter a society is in its organizational makeup, the more freedoms are encroached upon by the rulers. The second part of this thesis will discuss in more detail specific freedoms which are violated in the novels in question with regard to social strata, as well as slavery.

Religion is another theme which can have varying influences on an imagined society. As one of humanities oldest endeavours for regulating the behaviour of the masses, it is no surprise that religion finds itself rooted in utopian social dreaming, and also in dystopian imaginings. When it comes to the four novels in question, Chapter 3.3 will discuss the different approaches to the concept of religion, be they direct, as is the case with *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968), indirect, as is the case with *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), or as an allegory, as is the case in *Ready Player One* (2011) and *Lord of the Flies* (1954).

The advent of postmodernism brought up simulacrum as a common theme in both philosophy and literature. Even though the term has a long history dating back to Plato, simulacrum becomes ubiquitous for the study of literature and culture following the writings of Jean Baudrillard, specifically his essay *Simulacra and Simulations* (1981). Discussing simulacra and simulation, Baudrillard maintains that

> [i]t is no longer a question of imitation, nor of reduplication, nor even of parody. It is rather a question of substituting signs of the real for the real itself; that is, an operation to deter every real process by its operational double, a metastable, programmatic, perfect descriptive machine which provides all the signs of the real and short-circuits all its vicissitudes (167).

In order to set apart simulacrum from representation, Baudrillard argues that "[r]epresentation starts from the principle that the sign and the real are equivalent (even if this equivalence is Utopian, it is a fundamental axiom). Conversely, simulation starts from the Utopia of this principle of equivalence, *from the radical negation of the sign as value*, from the sign as reversion and death sentence of every reference" (170).

Before diving into analysis of the novels, a short synopsis will be provided for each. George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) depicts a totalitarian state which has succeeded in exerting absolute control over its population. The narrative unfolds with Winston Smith as the novel's focalizer. Winston is a middle-class government official who sees the Party's control as a perversion of humanity, and it is his perspective that depicts his state as a dystopian one.

William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954) tells the story of a group of British schoolboys who end up stranded on a deserted island during wartime. Without the supervision

of adults, the boys are left to their own devices, and even though they at first attempt to preserve the civilization that was taught to them, they eventually decline into the image of a savage tribe.

Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* (1968) is set on a postapocalyptic Earth. The narrative unfolds through its two focalizers: bounty hunter Rick Deckard and special J. R. Isidore. As a bounty hunter, Deckard is tasked with hunting down and "retiring" androids that escape their colonies on Mars. His private thoughts and eventually his moral struggle with himself brings about the conundrum of distinguishing between the human and the other (android). Isidore, a human classed as special (human of inferior intelligence), ends up harbouring the very androids Deckard is hunting. His interactions with the androids add to the ethical conundrum provided by Deckard's experience.

Ernest Cline's *Ready Player One* (2011) is centred around Wade Watts and his Arthurian cyberspace quest for Easter Eggs. The creator of OASIS, the cyberspace in which the entire world hides from their harsh reality, has willed that the one who finds his Easter Eggs will inherit his vast fortune. Even though at first glance the novel is all about Wade's quest filled with the 1980s and 90s nostalgia, as the worldbuilding of Cline's novel unfolds, the dystopian setting becomes increasingly striking.

3. Common Dystopian Themes in the Four Novels

3.1. Despotism

Utopia is distinguished for its imaginations of better societies, and this includes the imaginings of the workings of a better government. Similarly, a dystopia often contains within its narrative a government which creates worse living standards for its subjects than the reader's government, or outright aims at subjugating its people. In the words of Chad Walsh: "If utopia

is social planning that produces good results, dystopia is most often social planning that backfires and slides into nightmare" (137). The four novels analysed in this thesis all include their own depictions of a dystopian government or, in the case of *Lord of the Flies* (1954), allude to political tendencies which are perceived to be dystopian.

Aside from being the oldest of the four novels discussed in this thesis, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) is without a doubt the most popular and most influential dystopian novel of the four. In the words of M. Keith Booker, "Phrases and slogans from *1984* like 'Thought Police,' 'doublethink,' and 'Big Brother Is Watching You' are well known even to those who have never read the book" ("Introduction", 76).

At some point in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), Winston receives a book, also called "Goldstein's book" and officially titled "The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism". It provides the reader with an insight into the government of Oceania, most notably the division of people into three types: the High, the Middle, and the Low. (Orwell 210) This division can be applied to all four novels, and since it belongs to the narrative of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), the government of Oceania will be analysed first.

When Orwell's protagonist, Winston Smith, comes into the possession of Goldstein's book, he begins to learn about the true history and purpose of the Party. It is revealed that, through learning history, the Party has observed its patterns, specifically the struggle between the High and the Middle and the interchange between them:

> Thus throughout history a struggle which is the same in its main outlines recurs over and over again. For long periods the High seem to be securely in power, […] Then they are overthrown by the Middle, who enlist the Low on their side by pretending to them that they are fighting for liberty and justice. As soon as

> they have reached their objective, the Middle thrust the Low back into their old position of servitude, and themselves become the High (Orwell 228).

The most terrifying aspect of the government of Oceania is not its overwhelming surveillance system, its systematic manipulation of the past and present narratives, its deconstruction of all boundaries between the individual and the state, or even the way in which it almost effortlessly brainwashes future generations. The underlying terror lies in the stagnation of the power dynamic of the state. By observing history, the Party came up with a plan to break the wheel of history and remain in the position of the High:

> But the purpose of [Ingsoc and its counterparts in Eurasia and Eastasia] was to arrest progress and freeze history at a chosen moment. The familiar pendulum swing was to happen once more, and then stop. As usual, the High were to be turned out by the Middle, who would then become the High; but this time, by conscious strategy, the High would be able to maintain their position permanently (Orwell, 230).

Booker states that "*Nineteen Eighty-Four* refers most directly to the oppressive Stalinist regime then in power in Russia, but it echoes Hitler's German Nazi regime in numerous ways as well" ("Introduction", 213). Arguably the most significant distinction between the despotism in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) and the one in the other three novels is totalitarianism, which in Orwell's novel (as well as his *Animal Farm* [1945]) constitutes the main focal point of criticism. Gregory Claeys lists seven key features of totalitarianism, all of which are embodied in Orwell's Oceania:

> (1) A one-party state with hegemony over the secret police, and a monopoly over economic, cultural and informational sources; […]

(2) A technological basis to centralized power, e.g., especially through the use of the media and surveillance techniques;

(3) The willingness to destroy large numbers of domestic "enemies" in the name of the goals of the regime; […]

(4) The use of "total terror" […] to intimidate the population and ensure complete loyalty;

(5) The willingness of the regime to annihilate all boundaries between the individual and the party/state, by destroying most intermediary organizations and politicizing any which remain, such as youth organizations;

(6) A "totalist" philosophy or ideology which demands absolute loyalty and sacrifice, and the absolute submission of the citizen to the party/state, leaving no part of private life unpoliticized; […]

(7) A cult of leadership (119-120)

If Orwell's Oceania, with its heavy criticism of the Soviet Union under Stalin, is to be viewed as socialism taken to the dystopian extreme, then the world of Cline's *Ready Player One* (2011) could be argued to be a view of capitalism taken to the dystopian extreme. Although the telecommunications conglomerate IOI (Innovative Online Industries, a possible reference to Orwell's room 1O 1 in the Ministry of Truth) is merely on the path to become a dystopian body wielding the power which could arguably be on par with that of Orwell's Party, the worldbuilding of *Ready Player One* (2011) gives the reader a clear idea of what might become of the world should the antagonist have their way.

While on the one hand, the world of *Nineteen Eighty*-Four (1949) sets the atmosphere of a well-oiled machine, with its inhabitants fulfilling their roles in the fashion of calibrated

clogs in said machine, the narrative of *Ready Player One* (2011) is set in a world which is steadily falling apart:

> The ongoing energy crisis. Catastrophic climate change. Widespread famine, poverty, and disease. Half a dozen wars. […] Normally, the newsfeeds didn't interrupt everyone's interactive sitcoms and soap operas unless something really major had happened. Like the outbreak of some new killer virus, or another major city vanishing in a mushroom cloud (Cline, 1)

In contrast to *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), where spaces such as the Golden Country and the Prole quarter located in the imaginary town are places of peace and reprieve from the Party's constant surveillance, the setting of *Ready Player One* (2011) is that of a post-apocalyptic world in which large cities are the only remaining bastions of organised society. When Wade Watts, the protagonist, relocates to another city, he takes a bus ride which the protagonist describes in a way which clearly delineates the safety of urban areas and the mayhem prevalent elsewhere:

> It was a double-decker, with armor plating, bulletproof windows, and solar panels on the roof. I had a window seat, two rows behind the driver, who was encased in a bulletproof Plexiglas box. A team of six heavily armed guards rode on the bus's upper deck, to protect the vehicle and its passengers in the event of a hijacking by road agents or scavengers – a distinct possibility once we ventured out into the lawless Badlands that now existed outside of the safety of large cities (Cline 163)

The seemingly ubiquitous downward spiral of society is what makes people want to escape reality, and they do it via the OASIS. The OASIS (Ontologically Anthropocentric Sensory Immersive Simulation) is "a massively multiplayer online game that had gradually

evolved into the globally networked virtual reality most of humanity now used on a daily basis" (Cline 1) Even though it starts as a game, it becomes a "place" where people could work, go to school, socialize, and seek entertainment. The prospect of IOI becoming the effective owner of the OASIS is terrifying for the very reason that IOI would then have tremendous power over the users of the OASIS, who would have nowhere to go since their lives are already inextricably connected to the virtual world in question. Sorrento, the antagonist, reveals to Wade some of the "improvements" that IOI would introduce into the OASIS, among which are censorship, property control, and a mandatory fee. Although Wade does not say it directly, his euphemisms and almost Orwellian newspeak tell a different story:

> Sure, we'll have to start charging everyone a monthly user fee. And increase the sim's advertising revenue. But we also plan to make a lot of improvements. Avatar content filters. Stricter construction guidelines. We're going to make the OASIS a better place (Cline 139).

The above quote reveals a similarity of the future IOI imagines to Orwell's Party in what it calls "avatar content filters", or in other words, censorship. However, the mention of a "monthly user fee" implies a sort of socioeconomic divide between the High, the Middle, and the Low which would be characteristic of a dystopia rooted in capitalism, as opposed to the socialist dystopia found in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), where the distinction is made with the effectiveness of the Party as the top priority:

> Between the two branches of the Party there is a certain amount of interchange, but only so much as will ensure that weaklings are excluded from the Inner Party and that ambitious members of the Outer Party are made harmless by allowing them to rise. Proletarians, in practice, are not allowed to graduate into the Party (Orwell 236).

Another example that depicts IOI as a dystopian entity will be provided later in the thesis in order to discuss the ways in which IOI circumvents laws and morality in order to enforce slavery for its own gains.

Compared to *Ready Player One* (2011), the setting in Phillip K. Dick's novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* (1968) is also a post-apocalyptic world. However, the destruction of war is so severe that most of humanity has emigrated from planet Earth:

> The dust which had contaminated most of the planet's surface had originated in no country […] First, strangely, the owls had died. […] After the owls, of course, the other birds followed, but by then the mystery had been grasped and understood. A meager colonization program had been underway before the war, but now that the sun had ceased to shine on Earth, the colonization entered an entirely new phase (Dick 15-16).

As Booker points out, the central theme of Dick's novel is "the searching examination of another favorite Dick theme: the definition of the 'human' in a world increasingly dominated by the inanimate products of human technology" ("Philip K. Dick" 120). From the perspective of the androids, they have been created in order to be slaves to humans. The android condition, which is rooted in the fact that they are machines made by humans, gives the society in Dick's novel the moral excuse that exploitation, murder, and general disregard of androids is acceptable due to the fact that androids are not "alive".

While the despotic rule of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), as well as the prospective despot of *Ready Player One* (2011) takes the form of an oppressive system which has a firm grasp of its subjects, the despotism of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968) takes on the form of an SF apartheid. One of the androids, Garland, describes the social position of androids in the following way: "It's a chance anyway, breaking free and coming here to Earth,

where we're not even considered animals. Where every worm and wood louse is considered more desirable than all of us put together" (Dick 113). Even though very advanced, androids are considered machines with the sole purpose of serving humans. In other words, in viewing them as sub-human, humanity has effectively denied androids the basic rights which humans themselves have, and has created an entire species of slaves. Although putting this type of narrative in a new genre by setting the timeframe in the postapocalyptic future and by giving the subjugated group an SF identity was new when Dick's novel came out, the basic narrative of a group being subjugated for being considered subhuman was not. As is the case with *Ready Player One* (2011), capitalism takes the dystopian spotlight in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, with rich corporations racing to create the next state of the art android type, thus perpetuating the persecution of the androids.

At first glance, Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954) may appear as neither to befit the three novels that have been discussed thus far, nor to befit the theme of dystopian despotism. However, the novel, which depicts the efforts and struggles of a group of British schoolboys to survive on a deserted island, offers a microcosm of political interplay between democracy on the one hand, and fascism and totalitarianism on the other. As David Spitz states:

> [the boys] were the carefully chosen products of an already established middle-class society. They were socialized in, and were a partial microcosm of, twentieth century English (or Western) civilization; and they had brought that civilization, or what fragments of it they could remember, with them. Hence the values they possessed, the attitudes they displayed, the arrangements they established, and the practices in which they engaged, were all in some degree or another a reflection of the world into which they had been born and within which they had been educated and fashioned (29-30).

Two important groups of boys are formed on the island. At first, there is Ralph's group, the group whose structure is rooted in democracy. The boys begin by electing a leader (Ralph) and by setting the necessary rules and tasks that will allow them to retain a sense of civilization, and to eventually be rescued from the island. Spitz writes that

> Ralph is a democratic man, the symbol of consent. […] He was "set apart" not by virtue or intelligence or other sign of personal superiority […] but by the fact that it was he who had blown and possessed the conch, who had exercised the symbol of legitimacy. Chosen chief by an election, he sought always to maintain parliamentary procedures, to respect freedom of speech, to rule through persuasion, with the consent of the governed (26).

On the other hand, there is Jack's group, the authoritarian group. The description of their first appearance makes it clear that they are already indoctrinated into an authoritarian tradition, and it thus foreshadows them later seizing authority through force:

> Shorts, shirts, and different garments they carried in their hands: but each boy wore a square black cap with a silver badge in it. Their bodies, from throat to ankle, were hidden by black cloaks which bore a long silver cross on the left breast and each neck was finished off with a hambone frill. […] The boy who controlled them was dressed in the same way though his cap badge was golden (Golding, 15).

Booker points out that, even though Jack's group gains the upper hand through violence: "Ralph and his group gradually turn toward violence as well, suggesting that both democratic (Ralph) and totalitarian (Jack) societies eventually experience similar consequences" ("Dystopian literature" 162).

While *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), *Ready Player One* (2011), and *Do Androids* (1968) find the roots of dystopia in totalitarianism, capitalism, and a form of transhumanist apartheid respectively, *Lord of the Flies* (1954) takes a different approach. Instead of focusing on a socio-political system, Golding locates the root of dystopia within man himself. In a letter to his American publishers, Golding explained the theme of *Lord of the Flies* to be:

> An attempt to trace the defects of society back to the defects of human nature. The moral is that the shape of a society must depend on the ethical nature of the individual and not on any political system however apparently logical or respectable (Golding qtd. in Spitz 22).

In the end, when a naval officer appears on the island and finds Ralph, bringing with him the long-awaited promise of the safety of civilisation, Ralph "wept for the end of innocence, the darkness of man's heart" (Golding 225). It is because, even though the boys are going back home, the civilisation that awaits them harbours the same "darkness of man's heart" that the boys experienced on the island. After all, the navy ship on which the officer arrived is engaged in the same kind of activity as that of Jack and his group of hunters: to hunt and kill. In other words, the war in which the children are engaged prior to the adults' arrival is revealed not to be contained to the deserted island. The war is waging everywhere else as well. Ralph weeps because, having witnessed humanity's dark nature, he now understands that the presence of war is determined neither by limitations of space, nor by absence of civilisation, but by the mere existence of humanity.

3.2. Social Strata and Slavery

All four of the novels discussed in this thesis depict a social hierarchy of some form. Even *Lord of the Flies* (1954), albeit representing one via a microcosm, provides an insight into the human propensity for dystopia, as discussed in the previous chapter.

Nineteen Eighty-Four (1949) provides a convenient scheme for the social order of Oceania via Goldstein's book. Namely, the division into the High, the Middle, and the Low matches the social strata of the Inner Party, the Outer Party, and the proles respectively:

> Below Big Brother comes the Inner Party, its numbers limited to six millions, or something less than two per cent of the population of Oceania. Below the Inner Party comes the Outer Party, which, if the Inner Party is described as the brain of the State, may be justly likened to the hands. Below that come the dumb masses whom we habitually refer to as 'the proles' […] In terms of our earlier classification, the proles are the Low (Orwell 235).

This categorization is another instance of Orwell borrowing from Plato's *Republic*, specifically Plato's division of the ideal state into three classes based on the tripartite structure of the soul. Although in theory, this classification seems perfectly logical, there are several instances where Winston wonders about the dichotomous position of the proles as contrasted to his own position as a member of the Outer Party. Throughout the novel, a question is raised as to whether the proles enjoy more freedom than members of the Outer Party. One reason for this position is Winston's belief that the proles are "people who had never learned to think but who were storing up in their hearts and bellies and muscles the power that would one day overturn the world. If there was hope, it lay in the proles! […] The future belonged to the proles" (Orwell 247). When describing the natural course of history, Goldstein's book does

point out that the Low, due to its overwhelming numbers, is the key that enables the change in the *status quo*. However, if the Party's claim of having broken the wheel of history is true, then the proles of Oceania are nothing more than a poor caste who do not pose a threat to the system, and vice-versa, neither does the system directly threaten them.

The fact that the proles are granted certain freedoms by the oppressive government is another reason why Winston observes them as free. The proles are considered not to be competent or aware enough to pose a threat to the regime.

> From the proletarians nothing is to be feared. […] What opinions the masses hold, or do not hold, is looked on as a matter of indifference. They can be granted intellectual liberty because they have no intellect. In a Party member, on the other hand, not even the smallest deviation of opinion on the most unimportant subject can be tolerated (Orwell, 237).

Even though, technically, the Outer Party members' position corresponds with the Middle, and the position of the proles corresponds with the Low, the extent of control each group has over their own lives does not match their social standing. The analogy of the Inner Party members as the brain and the Outer Party members as the hands of the Party makes it clear that Outer Party members, such as Winston, need to act as perfectly calibrated clogs in order for the machine (the Party) to be able to continue functioning. For this reason, when observing the society of Oceania, even though there is mention of slaves in the novel (prisoners of war in labour camps), and especially with Winston as the novel's focalizer, it can be argued that the Outer Party members are the Party's slaves.

The society of *Ready Player One* (2011), on the other hand, is economically stratified. On the one hand, there are people rich enough to forget that there is an economic crisis, such as Ogden Morrow, who at one point provides a private jet for each of the protagonists. On the

opposite end of the spectrum are "the stacks" – futuristic favellas in which the poor live. The imagery of the stacks gives the reader an image of a contemporaneous skyscraper skyline mixed with its polar opposite: a low class favella, a shantytown of sorts. The protagonist, Wade Watts, describes the stacks where he lives at the beginning of the novel:

> My aunt's trailer was the top unit in a "stack" twenty-two mobile homes high […] The trailers on the bottom level rested on the ground, or on their original concrete foundations, but the units stacked above them were suspended on a reinforced modular scaffold, a haphazard metal latticework that had been constructed piecemeal over the years (Cline 20-21).

The economic state of society in *Ready Player One* (2011) sets the stage for a different manifestation of slavery than the kind discussed in terms of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949). At some point in the novel, Wade infiltrates the IOI corporation under the guise of an indentured servant. To indenture a servant is, to put it simply, the act of arresting someone who owes money to a company in order to force them to work off their debt. Here is what an indenturement officer says to Wade when he comes to arrest him:

> I'm here because you failed to make the last three payments on your IOI Visa card, which has an outstanding balance in excess of twenty thousand dollars. Our records also show that you are currently unemployed and have therefore been classified as impecunious. Under current federal law, you are now eligible for mandatory indenturement. You will remain indentured until you have paid your debt to our company in full (Cline 270).

What can be intuited from the indenturement officer's quote is an established large-scale system that allows for a subtle way for companies to buy slaves. However, there is no slave market or anything of the sort, and there is no need for any either. The "Widespread famine,

poverty, and disease" (Cline 1) set a perfect stage for the High to simply wait until the Low are desperate enough to indebt themselves, at which point the High resort to their system of legalized slavery. What is more, the indentured servants may cling to the hope of working off their debt, but as Wade points out after doing his own calculations, paying one's own debt is impossible:

> Indents were never able to pay off their debt and earn their release. Once they got finished slapping you with pay deductions, late fees, and interest penalties, you wound up owing them more each month, instead of less. Once you made the mistake of getting yourself indentured, you would probably remain indentured for life (Cline, 278).

To further cement the argument that indentured servants are corporate slaves, the final point lies with the inhumane method which IOI uses to survey their indents, which is visible through Wade's focalisation:

> Finally, I reached the last station, where a machine fitted me with a security anklet – a padded metal band that locked around my ankle, just above the joint. […] If I tried to escape, remove the anklet, or cause trouble of any kind, the device was capable of delivering a paralyzing electrical shock. […] After the anklet was on, another machine clamped a small electronic device onto my right earlobe, piercing it in two locations. […] The eargear contained a tiny com-link that allowed the main IOI Human Resources computer to make announcements and issue commands directly into my ear. It also contained a tiny forward-looking camera that let IOI supervisors see whatever was directly in front of me (Cline 279-280).

With somewhat more advanced technology, IOI achieves a very similar amount of control over their indents that the Party has over Party members. Throughout *Nineteen Eighty*-Four, Winston is under the constant watchful eye of the Party's panopticon. The TV-screens are everywhere, and even though it is impossible to know which TV-screen is used to observe at which point in time, the potential threat is always present. The effect of the panopticon is also present for IOI's indentured servants, with the difference that they are forced to wear the means of their surveillance on their own body, and that their punishment can be delivered instantly, at the touch of a button, while an errant party member would have to wait for a team to reach their location.

In a similar way as it does with despotism, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968) also adds transhumanism[1] to the theme of social classes and slavery. In Francesca Ferrando's words, "Transhumanism opts for a radical transformation of the human condition by existing, emerging, and speculative technologies (as in the case of regenerative medicine, radical life extension, mind uploading, and cryonics)" (23). This radical transformation concerns firstly the social stratification in the worldbuilding of Dick's novel, because it excludes the upper classes, if not most of human society, from the narrative:

> The UN had made it easy to emigrate, difficult if not impossible to stay. Loitering on Earth potentially meant finding oneself abruptly classed as biologically unacceptable, a menace to the pristine heredity of the race. […] And yet persons here and there declined to migrate (Dick 16).

A small number of humans who stay on Earth are faced with the danger of succumbing to prolonged exposure to radioactive dust – a consequence of World War Terminus. These

[1] Since transhumanist movement is wide, it is worthwhile to include Ferrando's statement that "Transhumanism should not be seen as one homogenous movement, but formed by many different schools of thought, and this is why we can actually talk of Transhumanism(s). Distinctive currents coexist, such as Libertarian Transhumanism, Democratic Transhumanism, Extropianism, and Singularitarianism" (55).

people have impaired intellectual abilities, and are stripped of certain rights, an act which effectively creates an inferior class of humans: “Once pegged as special, a citizen, even if accepting sterilization, dropped out of history. He ceased, in effect, to be part of mankind” (Dick 16).

The distinction between humans and “specials” furthers the central discussion of the novel by adding an interesting question to the android conundrum: If society is capable of arbitrarily classifying a group of people as not-human (or sub-human in the slightest), who is to say that the distinction between humans and androids is not as arbitrary?

The development of the androids was motivated by the need for colonizing other planets: “That had been the ultimate incentive of emigration: the android servant as carrot, the radioactive fallout as stick” (Dick 16). After all, the androids were created with the sole purpose of aiding humans, much like an oven is made as a utensil for cooking:

> Under U.N. law each emigrant automatically received possession of an android subtype of his choice, and, by 2019, the variety of subtypes passed all understanding, in the manner of American automobiles of the 1960s (Dick 16).

The question remains: Is the fact that the androids were created by humans a reasonable basis for treating the androids as nothing more than hardware, or is it a convenient excuse to justify forcing the androids into slavery?

Unlike the other three novels, where social hierarchy is static throughout the novel, the society of *Lord of the Flies* (1954) undergoes a switch of the High and the Middle as the narrative unfolds, giving the reader a perspective on two different systems.

As Spitz states, “there were no classes, no divisions, no inequalities based on previous status; except for Jack, who initially appears as the head of the group of uniformed choirboys, a relationship and a dress that are quickly terminated, the only significant sign of difference is

that of age" (23). The age factor separates the group of boys into "biguns" and "littluns". The "biguns" consist of the two leaders, Ralph and Jack, as well as the other older boys who play the roles of close followers of either Ralph or Jack, and who contribute in the events that transpire on the island in some way or another, such as Piggy, Roger, the twins Sam and Eric, and Simon.

The "littluns" are nameless children who are younger, helpless, and impulsive. They represent the common people. If Ralph's democratic group is the High, and Jack's authoritarian group is the Middle (until they switch places in line with the theory presented in Goldstein's Book), then the "littluns" are the Low. While Ralph is chief, they attend the meetings, vote on decisions, and are initially willing to participate in plans which are agreed on. However, they soon quickly forget about any plans and return to their daily pleasures:

> Meetings, don't we love meetings? Every day. Twice a day. We talk. […] I bet if I blew this conch this minute, they'd come running. Then we'd be, you know, very solemn, and someone would say we ought to build a jet, or a submarine, or a TV set. When the meeting was over they'd work for five minutes, then wander off or go hunting (Golding 51).

The engagement of the "littluns" does not change with the change in status quo. During Ralph's democratic rule, they enjoy attending the meetings and then they promptly return to whatever activities amused them. It could be argued that their, and by extension, the common people's complacency and detachment from organized work is what leads to the final step down the ladder of Plato's five regimes, the one from democracy to tyranny. When that takes place, nothing significant changes for the littluns, providing another example for the principle laid out in Goldstein's Book that "Of the three groups, only the Low are never even temporarily

successful in achieving their aims. […] From the point of view of the Low, no historic change has ever meant much more than a change in the name of their masters" (Orwell 229).

While a leader, be it Plato's demagogue, a tyrant, oligarch or aristocrat, has arbitrary power and the safety of the ruling class, it is the common people who have the potential power to change the status quo. However, in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) there is no critical mass of incorrupt middle-class members (Outer Party members) needed to set any kind of revolution into motion. That is why Winston reiterates several times that "If there is hope, […] it lies in the proles" (Orwell 80) They have the potential to "rise up and shake themselves like a horse shaking off flies" (Orwell 80), and this could only take place through collective effort. However, the masses in all four discussed novels are docile and obedient, attentive only to their immediate individual needs. This is why Golding, in his allegory, appropriately portrays the common people as the "littluns", children so small that, without the supervision of their parents, they must rely on their older siblings to take care of them.

3.3. Religion

Although there is no formal religion in the country of Oceania, this does not mean that Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) has no religious overtones. For example, in one of Winston's conversations with O'Brien, when O'Brien tries to make Winston understand and adopt doublethink, he tries to teach him that 2+2=5. O'Brien's point is that an individual should believe what the Party says without trying to question the logic behind it. In Booker's words, "the ideology of Orwell's Party is much more in line with the conventional religion than with modern science. […] many of the Party's objections to science echo those of the medieval Church" ("George Orwell" 209)

When Winston points out that the Earth is millions of years old and that mankind's history is insignificant when compared to the history of the planet, O'Brien claims that "The earth is as old as we are, no older […] Nothing exists except through human consciousness" (Orwell 300). When Winston argues that the existence of fossils proves there was life before humanity, O'Brien asks him "Have you ever seen these bones, Winston? Of course not. Nineteenth-century biologists invented them. Before man there was nothing" (Orwell 300). Ironically, O'Brien denies Winston's point of view by pointing out that Winston does not actually know these facts for himself, but rather relies on believing the word of biologists. The irony lies in the fact that believing someone's word without exploring the truth is precisely what the Party (and medieval Church) wants from its subjects. The most direct parallel between the Party and medieval Church is when O'Brien denounces the heliocentric system in his final example: "The earth is the centre of the universe. The sun and the stars go round it" (Orwell 300). Although "religious worship would have been permitted if the proles had shown any sign of needing or wanting it" (Orwell 83), it is strictly forbidden for Party members. Booker argues that

> the ban on religion comes about not because organized religion is so radically different from the Party, but because the two are all-too-similar and would therefore be competing for similar energies. […] The Party also furthers loyalty among its members through the use of numerous techniques borrowed from religion ("George Orwell" 209-210).

As an example of the similar energies that the Party would have to compete for, Booker provides the Two Minutes Hate. The Two Minutes Hate is a regular ritual which all Party members must attend where at first, the emotion of the mass is manipulated into hatred towards the common enemy, Emmanuel Goldstein, to then be supplanted by love for Big Brother. The mass hysteria induced by the ritual effectively takes control of hatred and love, arguably the

two most intense emotions, and allows for the Party to choose where to direct them. At the same time, an individual's sense of self is supplanted by a sense of unity, a feeling of belonging to something greater than oneself. This process is expressed in O'Brien's words to Winston:

> The first thing you must realize is that power is collective. The individual only has power in so far as he ceases to be an individual. You know the Party slogan: "Freedom is Slavery". Has it ever occurred to you that it is reversible? Slavery is freedom. Alone – free – the human being is always defeated. It must be so, because every human being is doomed to die, which is the greatest of all failures. But if he can make complete, utter submission, if he can escape from his identity, if he can merge himself in the Party so that he *is* the Party, then he is all-powerful and immortal (Orwell 299).

Winston, until the very end of the novel, has a sense of his own identity. For this reason, his environment, which is set up in such a way to propagate self-abnegation in favour to the Party, is a dystopia in Winston's eyes. At the same time, those around him who have, consciously or unconsciously, given up their identities, live in a utopia.

In *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* (1968), the humans indulge in a futuristic, transhumanist version of a religious activity. Ferrando argues that "According to Transhumanism(s), the main assets of reformulation of the human that can bring along human enhancement are science and technology (in their current and speculative frames)" (55). Mercerism, the ubiquitous religion of Dick's novel, relies on science and technology in order for its followers to participate in it.

Mercerism borrows many facets from Christianity. The image of Wilbur Mercer, the central figure of Mercerism, seems to be a mix of references to both Moses and Christ. For one, Mercerism gets its name from Wilbur Mercer, much like the term Christianity is derived from

the name Jesus Christ. The story of Mercer's origin is inspired by the Biblical story of Moses, who was found floating down the Nile in a woven basket: "They, his foster parents Frank and Cora Mercer, had found him floating on an inflated rubber air-rescue raft, off the coast of New England" (Dick 23). Wilbur Mercer was also said to be able to perform healing miracles: "he had loved all life, especially the animals, had in fact been able for a time to bring dead animals back as they had been" (Dick 23). Similarly to Christ, Mercer went through his own persecution by the authorities:

> Local law prohibited the time-reversal faculty by which the dead returned to life; they had spelled it out to him during his sixteenth year. He continued for another year to do it secretly, in the still remaining woods, but an old woman whom he had never seen or heard of had told. Without his parent's consent they – the killers – bombarded the unique nodule which had formed in his brain, had attacked it with radioactive cobalt, and this had plunged him into a different world, one whose existence he had never suspected (Dick 23).

In the Christian Bible, Christ suffers for the sins of humanity, but Dick's novel takes a different approach to this theme. When a person participates in Mercerism, instead of simply observing Mercer climb the mountain and get hit by rocks, they share in everything he feels. In this way, the allegory of Christ's suffering transcends the allegory to become literal suffering which is shared with Mercer's followers. In fact, the participants also share their emotional states with each other, creating a sort of hive mind, so that, instead of a Christ-figure suffering for humanity, humans suffer and rejoice for each other. Whether it is a feeling, an impression, or even a physical injury, the participants can "fuse with Mercer" and relieve their pain by sharing it, or share their joy with those who are suffering, as Rick Deckard's wife, Iran, points out to him:

> I had hold of the handles of the box today and it overcame my depression a little – just a little, not like this. But anyhow I got hit by a rock, here. […] I felt everyone else, all over the world, all who had fused at the same time. […] I want you to transmit the mood you're in now to everyone else; you owe it to them. It would be immoral to keep it to ourselves (Dick 159).

By adding the element of transhumanism to an existing religion, Dick allowed the humans of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* (1968) to themselves play the role of both the saviour and of those who need saving. The empathy which is supposed to be developed and employed according to the teachings of Christianity achieves its full potential when humans can directly transmit and receive their feelings through empathy boxes. This might be Dick's commentary that the only reason people are not kind to one another is because they forget that others feel as much as they do. In a way, via transhumanism, Dick moved religion closer to the people. Instead of religion consisting of stories from which the people should learn lessons (always guided by a priest who knows what the real lesson is), Mercer's followers feel the lessons on their own skin, and are therefore much more likely to learn the actual lessons.

To discuss the religious in *Ready Player One* (2011), one needs to dive more deeply, as the only explicit references to Christianity are contained in Wade Watts' open critique of Christianity:

> That story you heard? About how we were all created by a super-powerful dude named God who lives up in the sky? Total bullshit. The whole God thing is actually an ancient fairy tale that people have been telling one another for thousands of years. We made it all up. Like Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny. (Cline 16)

The other main characters, such as Samantha and H, either agree with Wade or simply do not show any religious inclinations. There is also no recurring religious symbolism in the narrative worth mentioning. As Andrew Monteith argues, "*Ready Player One* does not operate beneath the aegis of well-known religious categories like Christianity or Buddhism but it instead offers a vehicle for anti-religious audiences to manoeuvre through the same kind of 'special things'[2] terrains" (2). In more specific terms, Monteith maintains that the way in which the OASIS cyberspace works, along with the capabilities it gives its users, "resembles a kind of transhumanist technoshamanism" (1). Refering to Mary MacDonald's observation, Monteith asserts that:

> when taken as a cross-cultural religious category, shamanism tends to cover a variety of activities, many of which require altered/alternate states of consciousness. These are sometimes induced by meditation, psychedelic use, dream states, or other variations of consciousness. Such alternate states allow the shaman to travel back and forth between the world of spirits and the physical plane […]; to engage in healing practices using spiritual powers; to shuffle souls between the world of the living and the world of the dead; to interact with other entities in the spiritual worlds; and to take "mystical flights" where the soul departs the body and traverses either the physical world or other planes of existence (6)

In the world of *Ready Player One* (2011), one does not need to employ meditation or psychedelics in order to transcend the physical realm. All they need is a piece of hardware and a connection to the internet. There is no analogy for spiritual healing, but the other aspects of

[2] Monteith here refers to Ann Taves' concept of "special things" in order to avoid categorizing things as either sacred or profane in relation to religion. As she states: "We can use the idea of *specialness* to identify a set of things that includes much of what people have in mind when they refer to things as sacred, magical, mystical, superstitious, spiritual, and/or religious" (Taves 59).

shamanism mentioned in the above quote are all present in the novel. Hence, a person can "log in" to a cyber version of a spiritual realm, they can interact with other players or with NPCs (Non-Player Character), and at one point, Wade Watts even communes with the dead.[3]

Ultimately, Monteith points out that the analogy has its limits, since "Cline does not identify the OASIS as a shamanic realm, nor does it fit every aspect of shamanism." (5) One of the issues he recognizes is that most of the people on Earth can access the OASIS, whereas in shamanism, "spirituality is only considered authentic if it is hard" (Monteith 6). The ubiquity of the OASIS might render it "too ordinary, to count as something 'special', 'anomalous', or 'set apart' (Monteith 6). Still, he finds that the shamanism perspective is useful, since "structurally it utilizes very similar special things as *Ready Player One* and that the OASIS uses spatial concepts [i.e. the presence of different realms] that strongly resemble shamanism" (5-6).

With *Lord of the Flies* (1954), religion, or more specifically Christianity, is visible on the level of function of individual characters. While the symbolism of Ralph and Jack's efforts has already been discussed, there is another boy whose significance is important, especially when discussing religion in the novel. In *The Hot Gates and Other Occasional Pieces* Golding wrote:

> For reasons it is not necessary to specify, I included a Christ-figure in my fable. This is the little boy Simon, solitary, stammering, a lover of mankind, a visionary, who reaches commonsense attitudes not by reason but by intuition (Golding 87).

[3] The NPC version of James Halliday was, in the sequel *Ready Player Two* (2020), revealed to have been a highly developed AI built on the basis of an accurate scan of James Halliday's brain, which is, in essence, a copy of its late creator.

Simon is unlike other boys, and his distinctiveness reverberates the novel. As Spitz points out: “He was one of the original choirboys, like Peter a member of a group of believers (or apparent believers) and then a defector. He goes into the jungle to pray, to build a church” (25) Simon is the only boy who sees the dead pilot for what he is, and he is also the only one who speaks to the Lord of the Flies. Apart from Ralph, who realizes “the darkness of man’s heart” (Golding 225) at the very end of the novel, Simon is the only one who understands that “the beast is Man himself, the boys’ (and man’s) own natures” (Spitz 25).

The Lord of the Flies also warns Simon of the danger, and, although spoken by the pig’s head in Simon’s vision, this is expressed through the language of the boys, who eventually make the beast’s warning come true:

> I’m warning you. I’m going to get waxy. D’you see? You’re not wanted. Understand? We are going to have fun on this island. Understand? We are going to have fun on this island! So don’t try it on, my poor misguided boy, or else […] we shall do you? See? Jack and Roger and Maurice and Robert and Bill and Piggy and Ralph. Do you. See? (Golding 158-159)

Simon’s truth is doomed to be lost. Mistaken for a beast, he gets killed by the boys who turn savage in their fear of beasts and shadows, which fulfils the Beast’s warning to Simon and underscores the fact that the only Beast is that within the boys themselves. Hence, like Christ’s death, Simon’s death can be seen as a sacrifice for the sins of the other boys. Simon’s words are also never heard: “It was crying out against the abominable noise something about a body on the hill” (Golding 168-169). Simon dies with the truth of revelation on his lips, and when he is dead “the clouds opened and let down the rain like a waterfall” (Golding 169). Finally, the evidence he witnessed is also swept away:

> On the mountain-top the parachute filled and moved; the figure slid, rose to its feet, spun, swayed down through a vastness of wet air and trod with ungainly feet the tops of the high trees; […] The parachute took the figure forward, furrowing the lagoon, and bumped it over the reef and out to sea (Golding 169).

Aside from the paratrooper, Simon's body is also washed away by the sea. With that, Simon's truth is truly lost, and lost is also the hope that the boys (humankind) might perceive that the beast is a fundamental part of them which can only rule over them for as long as they are unaware of it. In the case of *Lord of the Flies* (1954), humanity's last hope is revelation, but in their vicious savagery, both the boys on the deserted island and humanity at large snuff out the light and go to war.

3.4. Reality as Simulacrum

When it comes to the theme of the relationship between reality and simulacrum, some of the novels in question, such as *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968) and *Ready Player One* (2011) take an ontological approach to the question of what is real, whether via discourse on the nature of a human or via a simulated virtual reality. Alternatively, in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1948) and *Lord of the Flies* (1954), the theme can be observed through the treatment of the truth by both the ruling and the ruled. In other words, the issue is whether that which is seen as reality is in fact simulacrum.

In *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1948), the dichotomy between the real and simulacrum is found in the treatment of the truth when it comes to the manipulation of the historical narrative. As previously mentioned, the concept of doublethink is employed by the Party in order to make the masses obedient, and not only in terms of following orders, but also in terms of believing

everything the Party claims without even a shadow of a doubt. This is why, in Oceania, “Ignorance is strength” (Orwell 6). The people of Oceania (those who have been successfully indoctrinated) have thoroughly plastic minds.

This transaction of meaning can be explained through Baudrillard’s four stages of simulacrum:

> 1 It is the reflection of a basic reality.
>
> 2 It masks and perverts a basic reality.
>
> 3 It masks the *absence* of a basic reality.
>
> 4 It bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum (170).

In other words, the Party has successfully removed records of history, a representation of reality, and has trained its subjects to observe the Party narrative (stage two simulacrum) as representation of reality (stage one simulacrum).

While Winston undergoes his forceful indoctrination at the hands of O’Brien, at one point he sees doublethink for what it conceptually represents:

> “It doesn’t really happen. We imagine it. It is hallucination.” He pushed the thought under instantly. The fallacy was obvious. It presupposed that somewhere or other, outside oneself, there was a “real” world where “real” things happened. But how could there be such a world? What knowledge have we of anything, save through our own minds? All happenings are in the mind. Whatever happens in all minds, truly happens. (Orwell 314)

Prior to this realization, Winston is bothered by the nature of his job. He is one of the employees at the Ministry of Truth, and his job is to alter various documented events which are not aligned with what the Party claims is true. In other words, when the Party decides to

change the narrative and induce a mass hallucination, Winston and everyone else at the Ministry of Truth are hard at work to remove any evidence of the switch in order to preserve the simulation. In this way, the mass hallucination is protected, and reality is effectively changed, at least in terms of what the collective consciousness of Oceania perceives to be the representation of facts instead of their simulation.

Doublethink aside, there is another facet of the Party's control over the masses which has to do with the perception of reality. It lies in one of the key features of totalitarianism, as detected by Gregory Claeys:

> The willingness of the regime to annihilate all boundaries between the individual and the party/state, by destroying most intermediary organizations and politicizing any which remain, such as youth organizations (119-120).

By determining a set of relationships which an individual may have, the Party has effectively created new social norms. For example, a blood bond no longer forms the most intimate type of relationship and as a result, one's family members become Party members first and children/siblings second. Winston's interior monologue reveals that the Party is targeting new generations:

> The family could not actually be abolished, and, indeed, people were encouraged to be fond of their children in almost the old-fashioned way. The children, on the other hand, were systematically turned against their parents and taught to spy on them and report their deviations. The family had become in effect an extension of the Thought Police. (152)

If the rewriting of history is seen as an outright lie in the face of the people of Oceania, then the subversion of family values could be described as a gentle albeit firm long-term

reshaping of society. In essence, the Party is simply replacing one set of simulacra for another. While the basic reality of a relationship such as parent/child, husband/wife, or brother/sister was at first expressed via simulacrum of the first order (a basic representation), the Party subverted this same basic reality and funnelled it into feelings such as love for Big Brother, thus masking the absence of basic reality (stage three simulacrum). This is one of the two ways in which the Party approaches the reshaping of its society, with the other one being language.

The appendix to *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) provides an insight into the principles of Newspeak. Newspeak is, in essence, a version of the English language which has been manipulated into its deteriorated, simplified version. There are very few ways in which a person can express their meaning, and there is no room left for alternate expression. In other words, the transition from English to Newspeak is a transition from connotative to denotative language. Most of the vocabulary has also been determined to be redundant and removed from the language altogether: "But the special function of certain Newspeak words, of which *oldthink* was one, was not to so much to express meanings as to destroy them" (Orwell 343).

The manipulation of language is a very significant move by the Party in its efforts to determine how people will be able to perceive their environment, communicate, and most importantly, think about the world around them. An individual's language shapes the way they think and it has an impact on the development of their cognitive abilities. Cognitive scientist Lena Boroditsky maintains that "one's mother tongue does indeed mold the way one thinks about many aspects of the world" (63). If the language one uses determines the way one thinks, then it must follow that controlling one's language provides the control of one's thoughts: "What was required in a Party member was an outlook similar to that of the ancient Hebrew who knew, without knowing much else, that all nations other than his own worshipped "false gods"" (Orwell 343). In this way, the Party can, by determining the language that will be used in the future, determine the building blocks of how an individual will be able to think and

perceive what is or is not real. Furthermore, if, from the perspective of Baudrillard's theory of simulacrum, language is seen as a means of constructing a simulation, then it is clear that the Party, by creating its own language and then using it to feed false information to the masses, effectively has control not only over which simulacra the people will be exposed to (and which ones are to be forgotten), but also over how the simulation will be constructed in the collective consciousness.

On the other hand, *Lord of the Flies* (1954) brings a different perspective to perceived reality or its simulation. While in Orwell's novel the authoritarian Party manipulates the way in which the common people see reality, in Golding's novel the children are left to their own devices. One could perhaps argue that Ralph and Jack, as figures of authority, have an influence over the other boys. However, in the end, they are as affected by their human nature as their companions.

The boys, even though physically separated from civilisation, are making do with what sense of their cultural identity they have managed to develop in their young age. Even though they are inexperienced in any aspect of life apart from playing games, they do demonstrate a sense of a collective identity, which can be seen in Jack's words: "After all, we're not savages. We're English, and the English are best at everything. So we've got to do the right things" (Golding 42). While the boys, due to their childhood innocence and lack of understanding, are unable to replicate their own society, they do have an idea of how a civilized society should work. It is via simulacra such as tea time, the conch, and Piggy's glasses that the boys attempt to build a British-resembling society of child-like innocence and peace, and it is their failure in doing so that underscores Golding's message that darkness lies not in social planning, but in the heart of man.

While the group is still a democratic one under Ralph's leadership, several facets of a democratic society are described via defamiliarization.[4] Viktor Shklovskij, defines defamiliarization as "not calling a thing or event by its name but describing it as if seen for the first time, as if happening for the first time" (163). For example, the conch that the boys use to start and end meetings, as well as to determine who has the right to speak represents both a symbol of democratic authority and the central piece of democratic discourse. Ralph decides that the person holding the conch has the right to speak and be heard: "I'll give the conch to the next person to speak. He can hold it while speaking" (Golding 32). Piggy's glasses, which play the central role in the boys' ability to light a signal fire, represent reason and reflect the technological progress humanity has made in its efforts to improve life. While Piggy has his glasses, he represents, as Spitz states, "Socrates, the voice of reason. […] When he wears his spectacles he can see; he is like Plato's philosopher who has emerged from the cave" (26). Just as Simon, Piggy remains alone in his revelation. He is not able to help the others see reason, and this is why chaos ensues on the island.

Preceding the shift in status quo, Jack's hunters shed their clothes and begin to paint their faces. While Golding does not go further in identifying their actions, it is clear that this is tribalism defamiliarized. They hunt boars with war chants in their throats: "Kill the pig. Cut her throat. Spill her blood" (Golding 79).

While these examples are evident instances of either civilization or tribalism in their defamiliarized form, and as such they do contribute to the boys' perception of their reality on the island, their perception of the Beast, while not an instance of defamiliarization, contributes both to their perception of reality and their sense of their own identity (where the lack of the

[4] There is discussion among the anglophonic academic circles when it comes to appropriate translation (defamiliarization or estrangement). Since the topic is not of much significance for this thesis, the term defamiliarization will be used purely in order to simplify the matter, rather than as a conscious choice between the two.

latter affects the former). Because of their unawareness of the darkness within them, they are convinced that there is a beast on the island. In other words, they naively identify the beast as the other, unaware that the beast reflects back to them, their own selves. This misconception causes their fear of the other and ultimately leads to violence towards themselves.

While Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) poses the problem of an authoritarian regime manipulating the masses' perception of reality in order to maintain control over them, Golding's novel brings up another problem: if humanity neglects reason and revelation in favour of fear, it will end up in a much darker simulation and fall to the tragedy of becoming monsters without realizing it because, as Baudrillard claims, when the sign has no relation to any reality, or when, in this case, it is not perceived or understood by the characters, the world becomes pure simulacrum. Moreover, by setting children as focalizers of his novel, Golding posits that even the innocence of children is not enough to construct a just world because the simulation is marked by darkness lying at the heart of humanity.

In *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968), perception of reality is shown through the prism of transhumanism, or in other words, through the perceived distinction of what is and is not human. As Ferrando argues:

> Both the notion of "human" and the historical occurrence of "humanism" have been sustained by reiterative formulations of symbolic "others," which have functioned as markers of the shifting borders of who and what would be considered "human": non-Europeans, non-whites, women, queers, freaks, animals, and automata, among others, have historically represented such oppositional terms (45).

Throughout his novel, Dick introduces several distinctive factors which distinguish the humans of *Do Androids Dreams of Electric Sheep?* (1968) from their Others. These

distinguishing factors allow the reader to understand which characters fall into the category of "human", and which into the category of "other", but they also polemicize the distinctions by laying bare the arbitrariness of their distinction. The key distinctions are those between "human" and "android", "human" and "special" (humans with deteriorated intellectual abilities), but also between "special" and "android", a distinction which raises the issue of the foundation upon which the distinction between "human" and "android" is built.

The Voigt-Kampff test which Rick Deckard uses to distinguish between humans and androids is based on recognizing empathy. In short, if empathy is detected, the subject is human. If not, the subject is an android. The most notable scene which displays this fundamental difference between an android and a human (albeit one dubbed as "special") is when the android Pris mutilates a spider out of pure curiosity, while Isidore is tortured by his empathy for the spider's suffering.

Even though the possibility of a human failing the Voigt-Kampff is acknowledged early in the novel by Deckard and his superior, Bryant, it is dismissed as unlikely, and the perceived fundamental difference between humans and androids is seemingly unthreatened.

However, Mercerism, "a sort of high-tech reinscription of Christianity" (Booker, "Philip K. Dick" 121) provides a new perspective on the question of empathy. Mercerism makes it possible for its followers to join in a technologically-induced shared experience. The participants are able to experience what every other participant is experiencing as a sort of temporary hive mind. In order to join in this ritual, an individual needs access to an "empathy box", a device which makes the connection possible. This raises another question: How can empathy be the distinction between human and android when it is not even clear if the empathy humans experience is real or fabricated? The future human condition which Dick imagines in his novel calls back to Orwell's words from *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937), where Orwell

writes that “the logical end of mechanical progress is to reduce the human being to something resembling a brain in a bottle” (164). From this perspective, it is not only the androids who are constantly advancing in their resemblance to humans, but it is also the humans who are transforming into something that resembles the androids. This calls forth Baudrillard ‘s second and third stage of simulacrum since the allegedly stable postulates of the world are first subverted and then erased.

Empathy is not the only questionable human experience in Dick’s novel. A wide range of emotion and mental states can be artificially induced via a “mood organ”. When the group of androids who are hunted by Rick Deckard are planning to use a “Penfield surge” against him which is emitted by a mood organ, a point is made that the Penfield surge does not affect androids. This concept serves to further the irony of artificial consciousness, and raises the question of whether there would be any detectable difference between humans and androids if there were no mood organs, empathy boxes, or Mercerism as an all-encompassing shared experience. If the so-called human experiences are only achieved through the intervention of machines, the line between human and android blurs into perfect translucence. In Baudrillard’s terms, the very thing which gives the humans their humanity is a blatant simulation of spirituality (Mercerism) and emotions (empathy box); the android condition, while its nature is not entirely clear, is decidedly marked by humans as a simulacrum of the human condition. Herein lies the hypocrisy of humanity in Dick’s novel. The simulation in which the humans live is one which best benefits their colonist nature, rather than the one which takes into regard morality and philosophical inquiry.

Apart from these arguably distinguishing factors between humans and their others (both androids and specials) in Dick’s novel, the interactions between androids and specials in the novel add to the problem of perceived reality because, most notably, Isidore, a special, turns out to be as set apart from Pris and the other androids as humans are.

Consequently, the existence of three distinct groups in the novel sets the stage for three differently perceived realities: the human reality is depicted via Rick Deckard as its focalizer, the reality of specials via Isidore, while the androids' reality does not have its own focalizer. Each of these focalizer must be taken as unreliable due to the fact that constructed mechanisms (Mercer's empathy and the mood boxes) which play a part in both of the focalizers' lives and are thus a part of the simulation in which they live. The unreliability of the narrators poses a question as to which focalizer provides a more accurate perspective on the world of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968). Furthermore, the fact that the focalizers are unreliable is in itself a commentary on their world as well as the substance of the simulation the focalizers' narratives construct.

While the conundrum of simulations is also present in *Ready Player One* (2011) and while transhumanism is once again the central theme around which the conundrum is built, Cline's novel takes a different approach from Dick's. While the distinction between the human and the other is the central element in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968), the transhumanism in *Ready Player One* (2011) manifests around cyberspace and the way in which cyberspace, both a literal simulation and a simulation in Baudrillard's terms, affects the human condition.

Throughout Cline's novel, the question is raised of whether the OASIS, and namely the interactions between human players, are real or not. The most notable example is the discussion that takes place between Wade and Samantha. Wade puts forward the argument that the anonymity of interactions within the OASIS allows users to be their true selves, unburdened by their physical bodies: "This is the OASIS. We exist as nothing but raw personality in here" (Cline 171). Samantha, on the other hand, points out that that same anonymity allows users to create deceitful personas which have nothing to do with reality: "Everything about our online personas is filtered through our avatars, which allows us to control how we look and sound to

others. The OASIS lets you be whoever you want to be. That's why everyone is addicted to it" (Cline 171). A striking example of Samantha's argument is the concealed identity of Helen Harris, Wade's online friend who presents herself to be a Caucasian male, concealing her actual persona, which is an African-American lesbian female. The concealment of her identity is motivated by Helen's mother, who "had used a white male avatar to conduct all of her online business, because of the marked difference it made in how she was treated and the opportunities she was given" (Cline 320).

Wade and Samantha's conversation shows two different takes on the OASIS. From Wade's perspective, the OASIS is an ontologically real space, and everything that happens inside of it is real because, even if it has been created by a human, the players who interact with the game and with each other are real. Samantha's perspective, on the other hand, depicts the OASIS as an illusion, a mask which not only allows its users to deceive each other, but to also deceive themselves by hiding from the harsh realities of the real world in "a pleasant place for the world to hide" (Cline 120).

In Baudrillard's terms, for Wade, the fact that the OASIS is indubitably a simulation which consists of nothing but pure simulacra does not diminish the realness of the players. Furthermore, Wade argues that the OASIS allows a player to express their minds without the burdens which their physical appearances bring. Similarly, Monteith argues that "[i]f one accepts the premise that the possibility for total sensory immersion into the OASIS makes it at least a type of reality, then the ability to shape avatars to fit one's self-understanding of who they really are offers hitherto unknown possibilities" (8). Samantha, on the other hand, is aware that the simulacra of the OASIS are simply masking the absence of a basic reality (stage three simulacrum). She does not trust the simulation because she is aware of it.

As an additional issue of determining what is ontologically real, Monteith puts forward the example of the NPCs which roam the OASIS. Even though there are many NPCs which, due to their simple programming, are not in any way similar to human players. The NPC which represents James Halliday is eerily well-programmed. He even holds a philosophical conversation with Wade and gives him some life-advice: "That was when I realised, as terrifying and painful as reality can be, it's also the only place where you can find true happiness. Because reality is *real*. Do you understand?" (Cline 364). His lifelike behaviour could be argued to be representative of him being well-programmed.[5] Such AI avatars are the next step down Baudrillard's classification of simulacrum: stage four wherein simulacrum bears no relation to reality. With that single aspect, Cline's novel takes a step towards the transhumanist issues of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968).

However, *Ready Player One* (2011) deals with transhumanism in a different way. Its distinguishing characteristic, as opposed to Dick's novel is the transhumanist focus manifested in matters of self-identification and presentation to others via a simulation. Because the players are fully immersed into the simulation, they no longer only consume simulacra, but they themselves become stage four simulacra.

4. Conclusion

The central focus of the thesis rests on the argument that despite each of the novels differ in the way in which they construct their respective dystopian narrative, the seemingly

[5] Cline wrote a sequel, *Ready Player Two* (2020), which reveals that James Halliday's NPC is in fact a highly developed AI which can (post *Ready Player One*) act and think on its own.

stable social organization of each novel ultimately reveals that the root of dystopia lies in the human condition.

The provided analysis of despotism, totalitarianism in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) and *Lord of the Flies* (1954) has shown that while the central focus of Orwell's novel is a totalitarian government and the extent to which its control over the people might potentially extend if left unchecked, Golding's novel depicts a microcosm of the interplay between democracy and totalitarianism/fascism. While Orwell posits that totalitarianism is the root of dystopia, the message of Golding's novel is that the root of dystopia is found not in political systems, but in our human nature.

Both *Ready Player One* (2011) and *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968) provide a contrast to the economic system of Orwell's Oceania. While Oceania is a socialist state, both Cline's and Dick's worlds are capitalist ones. Cline's novel portrays a country weakened in its arguably post-apocalyptic state, and a corporation doing anything in its power to seize any further power it can, potentially even reaching the extent of control which Orwell's Party extends over its citizens. Alternatively, Dick's novel is set in an indubitably post-apocalyptic world. Its dystopian facets of capitalism are depicted in the race to create the next best android, essentially mass-producing slaves who are to be either obedient to their overlord, or decommissioned.

When it comes to the theme of social strata and slavery, the marked difference between dystopian socialism in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) and dystopian capitalism in *Ready Player One* (2011) is the way in which society is stratified. While Orwell's Party divided the population in a way that makes the Party as efficient as possible, Cline's futuristic American society is stratified by the socioeconomic status of its citizens as the main criterion. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1969) also depicts a capitalist economic system, but the

stratification of society is based on the nature of one's existence (human/special/android). Finally, the society in *Lord of the Flies* (1954), or at least its allegory, is not only clearly stratified but it also undergoes a switch in the *status quo* during the novel, which allows for some discussion when it comes to political and social planning, but ultimately delivers the message that the underlying problem of any organized endeavour is the human factor.

The topic of religion is clearly visible in the three novels that contain direct references to Christianity, which is not surprising given the Western canon in which the novels were written. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968) and *Lord of the Flies* (1954) are the most obvious examples, both depicting a Christ-like figure and its effect on society, with Dick's novel providing a transhumanist approach to the theme, and Golding's novel providing an allegory of Christ, his attempted contribution, and eventual demise. When it comes to *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), the Party takes on the role of the Christian Church with its approach to controlling its subjects. *Ready Player One* (2011), on the other hand, is an example of transhumanist technoshamanism. The structure of the narrative reflects the transcending of planes which is characteristic of shamanism, and, similarly to Dick's novel, it does so through the prism of transhumanism.

Finally, theme of simulacrum in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) is visible through the regime which creates its own simulation, and over time shapes its population into one that believes without a doubt that what they hear is the truth, so that the simulation can be flexible in accordance to the Party's needs. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968) challenges the existing simulation by polemicizing the endeavour of determining what is human by contrasting it against its others. *Lord of the Flies* (1954) presents a defamiliarized simulation. *Ready Player One* (2011) explores a world in which the simulacrum is no longer only that which is meant for the individual to consume, but also the individual himself.

In conclusion, all four novels depict dystopian simulations, their simulacra ranging between stage two and four. While the simulations themselves are different in how the four themes analysed in this thesis are approached, the underlying message is that no amount of social planning or political organisation can create a society free from darkness which lies at the heart of humanity.

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Abstract and Key Words

Abstract:

This thesis will deal with dystopian themes as portrayed in the following four novels: George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954), Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968), and Ernest Cline's *Ready Player One* (2011). The dystopian themes in question are despotism, social strata and slavery, religion, and reality as simulacrum. The novels differ in the way they approach each of the themes, but they ultimately all deliver the message that the root of dystopia lies not in how a society is organised, but in the very nature of humanity.

Key Words: *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, *Lord of the Flies*, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, *Ready Player One*, utopia, dystopia, transhumanism, simulacrum