

I, UTOPIA: THE BURGEONING INDIVIDUAL IN  
TRANSGRESSIVE HETEROTOPIAN FICTION

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## Abstract

Through the close examination of five novels that are popularly thought of as examples of ‘dystopian’ science-fiction, this thesis sets out to reconfigure Foucault’s notion of the heterotopia, and in doing so revitalise the increasingly marginalised concept of the utopia and the utopian literary tradition. Having theorised a version of the heterotopia that differs somewhat from that postulated originally by Foucault in that it is dynamic and transgressive, I locate and examine what I consider to be prototypically heterotopian spaces in what are generally portrayed as archetypically dystopian texts – Evgenii Zamiatin’s *We* (1924) and George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949). Having identified key features of these spaces – they are inherently ambiguous, in that they encompass and display both utopian and dystopian features, and are as much of a threat to the individual as they are a refuge for them – I then move on to an examination of the narratively constituted individual and the ways in which it is enabled – and undermined – by what I believe to be the predominantly heterotopian spaces of Neal Stephenson’s *Snow Crash* (1992), Nick Harkaway’s *The Gone-Away World* (2008) and Michael Marshall Smith’s *Only Forward* (1994). Throughout the course of my analysis of these texts, I argue that the heterotopia offers the means by which the progressively redundant utopia / dystopia binary and concomitant dualisms can be dismantled, and new spaces that make allowances for the oft-conflicting needs, desires and narratives of the individual, and reflect more accurately the hybrid nature of the society in which they are located can be considered.

## Introduction: Utopia, Dystopia, and Heterotopia

*It was the best of times, it was the worst of times; it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way.*

*A Tale of Two Cities* – Charles Dickens.

In any discussion of utopia it seems that banal truism about one person's utopia being another's dystopia is bound to be aired. And if we consider the history of the utopia and of utopianism, this appears to be sound reasoning. Discussions of what utopia should and shouldn't be, what it ought to be, what it actually is, and what it's attempting to achieve abound not only in literary and cultural theory, but in every-day modern society. Is not the 'global war on terror' ultimately a war over whose version – or vision – of utopia is the right one? That the subject – let alone composition – of utopia (and dystopia) is polarising is demonstrated in both the literature that reflects the attitudes of the context in which it is written, and in attempts to enact supposedly utopian visions in 'the real world.' This conflict is enshrined in a literary tradition that can be traced back to Plato and Aristotle and continues unabated today, not only in literature, but also, I would suggest, in the increasingly popular representation of dystopia in mainstream cinema. In asserting the heritage of the literary utopia (and dystopia), I refute J. C. Davis' assertion that "utopian writing is *not* a tradition of thought" (4, emphasis in original); as Frederic Jameson notes in his *Archaeologies*, "what uniquely characterizes this genre is its explicit intertextuality: few other literary forms have so brazenly affirmed themselves as argument and counterargument. Few others have so openly required cross reference and debate within each new variant" (2). This statement is borne out by a cursory examination of the literature. Sir Thomas More wrote the 'original' *Utopia* as a considered and self-conscious response to, amongst other things, Plato's *Republic* and Lucien's *True History*; similarly, it is possible to discern traces of *Utopia* in Sir Francis Bacon's *The New Atlantis* (1627), and the influence of both More and Bacon in Jonathan Swift's 1726 satire, *Gulliver's Travels*. Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (1888) was written in dialogue both with previous utopian fictional writers, and near-contemporaneous utopian theorists, such as August Bebel and Robert Owen. In turn, Bellamy's vision spawned "a host of imitators, 'sequels,' and responses" (Wegner, 63); in particular, it was "indignantly repudiated" (Kumar, 47) by William Morris' *News From Nowhere* (1890). And so on, and so forth. A similarly self-referential vein can be found in the dystopian and anti-utopian strains of this genre, as illustrated in miniature by the

relationship between H. G. Well's *A Modern Utopia* (1905), Evgeny Zamyatin's *We* (1921), Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), and George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949). The influence of these texts can still be felt today; one of the more recent (and readable) examples is Hugh Howey's *Silo* series (2011-2013).

The utopian tradition and the ongoing deliberation on the social sphere that it offers through both conventional and new mediums reveals an ever-increasing suspicion of spaces that are labelled 'utopian.' In a global, postmodern age where one can view images of war and famine from the peace and safety of a dinner table replete with food, it is increasingly difficult to accept let alone comprehend the idea of a place that is wholly good and idyllic. If we return to our truism, what this suspicion exposes is the basic assumption that utopia and dystopia are two entirely different things – that they form a binary where one is 'the good place' and the other is, to borrow an Orwellian phrase, the 'doubleplusungood place.' By virtue of this dualistic interpretation, utopia and dystopia can be thought of as the Jekyll and Hyde of the literary – and real – world; they can inhabit the same place, but never at the same time. Although this binary continues to hold true in the majority of texts, both cinematic and literary, that depict utopian or – more frequently – dystopian spaces, there are a few critics of utopian theory who are, however grudgingly, beginning to recognise that this apparently ineluctable binary is not as clear-cut as once assumed. This thesis proposes to first build upon the work of these critics, and to then interrogate (literary) texts that I believe begin to dismantle the utopia / dystopia binary, offering instead an alternative lens – which takes into account the diverse nature of the modern world – through which to view them.

In her 2005 *Worlds Apart? Dualism and Transgression in Contemporary Female Dystopias*, Dunja Mohr notes the emergence of what she chooses to call a "new subgenre: that of feminist 'transgressive utopian dystopias'" (3) within the utopian literary tradition. Seeking to challenge established conventions that read texts such as the first two novels of Suzy McKee Charnas's *Holdfast* series and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* as traditionally dystopian narratives, Mohr identifies these texts instead as dystopias with "a utopian undercurrent...[that] criticize, undermine, and transgress the established binary logic of dystopia" (3). Mohr's theory, which she builds on with the article 'Transgressive Utopian Dystopias: The Postmodern Reappearance of Utopia in the Disguise of Dystopia' (2007), provides an intriguing synthesis of the work of Tom Moylan (1986, 2000) and Lucy Sargisson (1996, 2000) on, respectively, the critical utopia and transgression. It also, I believe, goes a long way towards answering Lyman Tower Sargent's call for an examination of "the possibilit[ies] of a 'critical dystopia'" (1994, 9), and reinforces our understanding of the dystopia as an integral part of

the broader utopian literary tradition.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, I would suggest that the term that Mohr employs – ‘transgressive utopian dystopias’ – does not in fact dismantle the utopia-dystopia binary but rather emphasises it. By virtue of that label, the texts she discusses may contain traces of utopia but they are still, to all extents and purposes, dystopias. I propose instead to utilize the label ‘heterotopia’ when identifying and discussing textual spaces that are inherently transgressive, containing the essence of *both* utopia *and* dystopia. Before I expand upon heterotopia as a concept, however, it is important that I clarify a few terms, and address, if only briefly, the utopian literary tradition from which it both springs and perhaps seeks to transcend.

Although it might entail falling into the category of “sinners” (2) that Lyman Tower Sargent so deplors, it is not my intention here to obsessively classify and define utopia, dystopia, or any of the sub-categories and literary variations of the utopian tradition. I am interested in these insofar as they are useful as umbrella terms; as generalisations that are indicative of a broadly wholesale approach to the depiction and understanding of purely ‘good’ or wholly ‘bad’ societies that facilitates and enforces stasis and homogeneity, leaving no room for the possibilities and potential of difference. Even umbrella terms, however, require clarification; it is not enough to merely assert that we know what utopia is when we see it, or when we perceive its lack. Although Filio Diamanti has noted quite correctly that there is no general agreement amongst scholars as to the *exact* definition of the term (116), Krishan Kumar (1991), Lucy Sargisson (1996), Michael Foucault (2009) and Sargent (1994) all seem to agree that ‘utopia,’ as coined by Thomas More, means – etymologically, at least – a good place that is no place.<sup>2</sup> Sargisson goes on to add that utopias “stem always from discontent with the now and gesture always towards a better life” (2009, 26). As the opposite of utopia, dystopia is simply, as Walter Russell Mead so artfully described it, “a place where everything is bad” (13). It is important when considering these definitions not to confuse dystopia with anti-utopia, although I acknowledge that there can be a certain amount of coalescence between the two. The former merely represents the inverse of the utopian impulse, in that it still details an imagined ‘other’ place – however unpleasant it might be – the latter, as Ulhenbuch notes, “refers to works that critique the utopian impulse, utopias and their writers” (128). That is, the dystopia represents a continued engagement with the utopian tradition whilst the anti-utopia represents a rejection of that impulse entirely. It is also important to note that I am quite deliberately steering away from any use of the word ‘perfect’

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<sup>1</sup> See also Darko Suvin’s ‘Theses on Dystopia 2001’ (2003) and M. Keith Booker’s *The Dystopian Impulse in Modern Literature* (1994).

<sup>2</sup> It is not even completely certain whether More actually intended this term to be as ambiguous as it is. A close examination of More’s correspondence shows that he himself tended to use ‘no-place’ as his interpretation of the term; Elisabeth Hansot points this out in passing in the introduction to her *Perfection and Progress: Two Modes of Utopian Thought* (1974).

in respect to my definition of utopia, despite its prevalence in many dictionary and critical definitions. Whilst not agreeing with all his reasons for rejecting the conflation of 'utopia' and 'perfection,' I think that Sargent is right to do so, although I also believe that he does not give full consideration as to *why* perfection came to be equated with utopia, or why that association is once again being rejected (by literary critics and utopian scholars in any case).<sup>3</sup> These definitions are – especially if we return once again to the aforementioned truism, and the inherently subjective nature of a 'good' or 'bad' place – of necessity particularly and infuriatingly vague. I will give fuller consideration to these definitions, and to the status of perfection in conjunction with utopia – and dystopia – when I return to elaborate on the concept of heterotopia; for now, suffice it to say that although utopia is a good place, it is in no way meant to be a perfect place.

The representation of utopia (and dystopia) in the utopian literary tradition as a whole is just one aspect of what Sargent calls the "broader phenomenon" (1994, 3) of utopianism. Sargent goes on to identify what he calls the "three different forms" (4) of utopian expression (literature, communitarianism, and social theory), but I am unconvinced by his declaration that that is necessary to keep them completely separate; it is hard to escape the observation that, particularly in the case of utopian literature and utopian social theory, one frequently informs, reflects, and meditates upon the other.<sup>4</sup> 'Utopianism' is, however, a far more complex phenomenon than mere social dreaming; leaving it at that enables, if not actively encourages the (admittedly somewhat justified) criticisms of utopianism which became particularly fashionable in the mid to late-twentieth century. Tacitly acknowledging this, Krishan Kumar notes that utopianism is "never simple dreaming. It always has one foot in reality" (1991, 2). Thus, it is also necessary to incorporate into any understanding of 'utopianism' Ruth Levitas' notion that it is "the expression of the desire for a better way of being" (1990, 8).<sup>5</sup> How this is expressed is not as important as the act of expression itself yet here, naturally, I will be more concerned with utopianism as it manifests in fictional literature.<sup>6</sup> 'Utopianism,' then, is (social) dreaming that articulates the yearning for a better way of being in the world. This definition is, again, of necessity vague; although Bloch sought to move away from the perception of utopianism

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<sup>3</sup> I find Sargent's reliance on authorial intention, and his assertion that the intentions of authors of utopian fiction "are in principle knowable" ('Three Faces,' 6) to be deeply problematic. In all fairness, he is not the only scholar to base his utopian scholarship on the notion of authorial intent; Peter Stillman ('Utopia as Practical Political Philosophy') is another who appears to agree with this (perhaps outdated) view.

<sup>4</sup> Following the precedent set by Ernst Bloch, Ruth Levitas and Fredric Jameson in particular comment upon the heuristic potential of utopian literature.

<sup>5</sup> Levitas also returns to this definition of utopianism in her chapter 'Utopian Function' (27), in Barbara Goodwin's (ed) *The Philosophy of Utopia* (2001).

<sup>6</sup> If one is to believe the stance occupied by Ruth Levitas, Judith Shklar, and Laurence Davis (amongst others), the act of utopian expression (what Davis calls the "vivid exercise of ethical imagination" (57)) and its heuristic function is of the utmost importance.

as “unregulated...wishful images” (1986, 13), he was also aware that not all utopianism was driven by perspicacity or the desire to better the lives of others (33-34).

More importantly, however, this definition begins to emphasise both the ‘purpose’ of utopia and the utopian tradition (insofar as any fictional construct can be said to have a purpose), and some of the foundational – and perhaps necessary – tensions inherent in utopianism, and, indeed, in any expression of utopian desire. Frederic Jameson writes of the “fundamental dynamic of any Utopian politics” (xii) as resting in the “degree to which such a politics aims at imagining, and sometimes even at realizing, a system radically different from this one” (xii). Writing almost a century earlier, H. G. Wells – rather more lyrically – captures both the flavour of that ‘fundamental dynamic’ and simultaneously reveals the necessary tension at work in it in the early pages of his ground-breaking 1905 novel *A Modern Utopia*:

Our business here is to be Utopian, to make vivid and credible, if we can, first this facet and then that, of an imaginary whole and happy world. Our deliberate intention is to be not, indeed, impossible, but most distinctly impracticable, by every scale that reaches only between to-day and to-morrow. We are to turn our backs for a space upon the insistent examination of the thing that is, and face towards the freer air, the ampler spaces of the thing that perhaps might be, to the projection of a State or city ‘worth while,’ [sic] to designing upon the sheet of our imaginations the picture of a life conceivably possible, and yet better worth living than our own.

(6)

What Wells and Jameson both identify is the uneasy relationship between the expression of utopian possibilities – the social dreaming aspect – and the expediency of those possibilities. And, particularly in light of some of the more horrific elements of twentieth-century history, it became – and to a certain extent still is – popular to dismiss, as Karl Popper did, any form of utopianism or utopian theory – he describes “Utopian engineering” (1966, 157) – as a “dangerous and pernicious” (1986, 5) theory and one that inevitably and invariably “leads to violence” (5) and “a strong centralized rule of a few” (1966, 159). Popper is not alone in his condemnation of utopianism; Leszek Kolakowski and Isaiah Berlin are but two of the more famous names who, in different ways and from different critical positions, echo his unstinting denunciation of all forms of utopianism. But is their ire justified? As Laurence Davis somewhat dryly remarks, “these champions of the open society are apparently rather immoderate in their unqualified equation of utopianism and totalitarianism” (56). If their vehemence is not justified, it is at least understandable; all three men – Popper and Berlin especially – suffered in one way or

another at the hands of the “totalitarian tyranny” (Kumar, 1987, 381) of the regimes of Adolf Hitler and Josef Stalin.<sup>7</sup> Their negative experiences aside, however, Popper, Berlin and Kolakowski’s condemnations of utopia and utopianism are ultimately based on a basic misapprehension of the nature of utopia(nism) – that it is the desire to engineer the *perfect*, unchanging society.<sup>8</sup> In his remarkably gentle and thoughtful dismantling of Berlin’s arguments against the utopianism of William Morris, Davis observes that even though Morris’ utopianism *is*, in fact problematic, “the defining feature of utopian thought is not the quest for ethical perfection, but the vivid exercise of ethical imagination” (57).

Although many of the arguments made by the likes of Popper and Berlin may have been discredited or moderated, their anti-utopian rhetoric remains persuasive – as Judith Shklar notes, “*utopia* and *utopian* have mostly come to designate projects that are not just fantasies but also ones that will end in ruin” (1994, 41, emphasis in original). Shklar is not alone in this observation; Levitas comments that “there is a tendency to think of utopia as being one of two things: either a totalitarian political project, or a literary genre of fictions about perfect societies” (2001, 27). More recently John Gray has identified a highly negative strain of Right Wing utopianism in the policies of Margaret Thatcher in the late eighties and early nineties, and of Tony Blair and his American counterpart, George W. Bush, at the turn of the century and in the years following the 9/11 attacks (74-106). Although Russell Jacoby launches an unexpectedly spirited defence of utopianism in the conclusion to his depressingly-titled *The End of Utopia: Politics and Culture in an Age of Apathy*, arguing compellingly that neither Hitler nor Stalin (and their respective regimes) were utopians, and that “the bloodbaths of the twentieth century can be as much attributed to anti-utopians – to bureaucrats, technicians, nationalists and religious sectarians with a narrow vision of the future” (166), he acknowledges nonetheless that the idea of utopia as a positive force is in trouble: “the traditional criticism that utopias lack any pertinence has not abated. If anything, it has intensified...The notion, first advanced by conservatives, has nowadays been accepted by virtually everyone: armed with blueprints and floor plans, utopians would wreak havoc to establish their private vision – and they have” (166).

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<sup>7</sup> Ruth Levitas offers an interesting, if regrettably brief marginal commentary on the (erroneous) ways in which the biographies and regimes of these two dictators have been retrospectively intertwined by twentieth and twenty-first century historians and biographers (‘Utopian Function’).

<sup>8</sup> When he finally gets to around to accusing Plato of totalitarian leanings, Popper tends to skirt around the use of the word ‘perfect’ in conjunction with utopianism and “Utopian systems...of social engineering” (1966, 24), preferring to use the synonym ‘ideal’ instead; however, he draws the link between perfection, stasis and utopia very early in his book when he addresses Plato’s “aim to escape the Heraclitean flux, manifested in social revolution and historical decay...[which] can be done by establishing a state which is so perfect that it does not participate in the general trend of historical development” (24-25).

Is there a way to rehabilitate how depictions of utopia are received? And, the more important question might be, should we try? Although scholars such as Laurence Davis (2001) and Elisabeth Hansot (1974) have sought to distinguish ‘modern’ utopias – typified by dynamism and a plurality of ethics – from their ‘classical’ antecedents, which are characterised by what Davis terms “value monism” (76), many of the early-to-mid modern utopias still display a tendency towards a static dualism; the dominant ideology – the utopian blueprint, as Popper would probably call it – is good, and anything different – if difference is even remotely countenanced – is invariably bad. This is noticeable even in the text that Hansot and Davis see as beginning the modern utopian tradition; Thomas More’s *Utopia*.<sup>9</sup> For example, whilst Jameson has claimed that More’s *Utopia* displays what he terms a “processual dynamism” (22), the *society* that is portrayed shows no inclination – or institutional ability – to accept or consider the possibilities of change. Individuals may be able to choose what trade they desire to practise – and can seek “permission to learn another” (More, 56) – and may, in the silences of their souls, hold alternate religious beliefs (98-102) but these are freedoms of perception rather than reality, since the possibilities open to Utopians are still tightly controlled and circumscribed; they are subject to what Jacoby aptly described as “monolithic discipline” (169). Their recognition and acceptance of Christianity is similarly open to criticism, given that, as Hythloday himself says, “Christianity seemed so very like their own principle religion” (More, 99). In reality, there is little room in even this seemingly most utopian of spaces for that which does not fit perfectly with the tightly constrained ‘good’ place. In light of this, and in the attempt to preserve the recognition of the utopian spirit – if not the name – I would propose another kind of space, a space that does not replace or provide an alternative to the utopia and/or dystopia so much as it encompasses and at least partially reconciles them. This space is the heterotopia.

Postulated almost as an afterthought by Michel Foucault in 1967, the heterotopia, with its enactment in “real spaces” (2009, 63) seems like an ideal auxiliary to the “fundamentally unreal” (62) utopia.<sup>10</sup> Foucault saw the heterotopia as “a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate

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<sup>9</sup> It is important to note that although More’s depiction of the first Utopian nation depends on stasis and the binary of the good place (itself) versus the bad place (everywhere that doesn’t subscribe to its ideology) to maintain itself, it is not as static as many of its successors.

<sup>10</sup> In her 1997 article ‘On the Need for Ethical Aesthetics: Or, Where I Stand between Neo-Luddites and Cyberians,’ Deborah J. Haynes mistakenly attributes the inception of the term ‘heterotopia’ to Gianni Vattimo in *The Transparent Society* (p77). Although Vattimo has – as I shall explore – undoubtedly contributed to the growth of this concept, and, crucially, helped associate it with postmodernity, Foucault – who wrote ‘Other Spaces’ some thirty years before Vattimo published *The Transparent Society*, and first mentioned the term heterotopia almost twenty years before ‘Other Spaces’ was published – is undoubtedly its creator in the literary sense.

their location in reality” (63). It should be noted here that the heterotopia I am theorizing here diverges at times from that envisaged by Foucault, who posited them as *either* sites of crisis, *or* as sites of deviance (63-65), but always as sites of division, exclusion and stratification. I would contend, instead, that they are both and neither; and can instead be conceived of as constituting very real sites of *accepted* difference, whose potency and resilience stems directly from their nature as unsettled and ambiguous – that is, neither completely utopian or dystopian, but inclusive of both – and thus inherently transgressive when we consider the customary divide between *either* utopia *or* dystopia, and the role that these spaces have played in reinforcing the socially subjective dualisms that they perpetuate, particularly the arbitrary demarcation between what is ‘good’ or ‘right’ and what is ‘bad’ or ‘wrong.’ As Marco Cenzatti has noted, the role of the heterotopia in creating ambiguity and in questioning arbitrary binaries is implicit in its origins as a medical term that indicates a condition whereby normal and healthy tissue grows in unexpected places and ways (76).

This reading of the nature of heterotopia problematizes the definition that Fátima Vieira offers: “within the context of dystopian literature, heterotopias represent a kind of haven for the protagonists, [one which is] very often to be found in their memories, in their dreams or in places which, for some reason, are out of the reach of the invigilation system which normally prevails in those societies” (18). This definition, as Raj Shah points out, likens heterotopias to utopias, and fails to acknowledge that heterotopias are, first and foremost, real spaces (702); it reinforces, in the first instance, the dualistic nature of utopia and dystopia when, I believe, the heterotopia challenges that binary. It cannot be stressed enough that the heterotopia is *not* a utopian space; as I will demonstrate when I analyse my texts, the heterotopia is a perilous, almost capricious site, and one that can represent and exude a sense of menace as readily as it does sanctuary. Kevin Hetherington (1997) notes that the heterotopia, which he conceives of as a marginal space (after Marin) can be a space of control, or freedom, or both (42); that is, that the heterotopia can be conceived of as a space which is *as dystopic as it is utopic*, and thus is always a site of ambiguity and tension. That Foucault considers that “the heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible” (2009, 65) merely adds to its ability to transgress and question and at the same time facilitate and reconcile, not only spaces and people, but *ideas* about how people and spaces can utilise themselves and each other. It would also suggest, contrary to the impression that Foucault gives, that the heterotopian space is one that is in a constant state of flux. The heterotopia that Foucault imagines is one that is, much like the utopia, by and large locked in stasis. He writes that heterotopias have a “precise and determined function” (64), and whilst an argument might be made for his heterotopian sites of crisis to be ones of change and animation, he also believes that they are “disappearing” (64). His use of an average, every-day mirror to demonstrate what he means by the

term heterotopia shows this. Although a mirror may invert and reflect an image, it in no way alters or challenges that image; it merely reveals what is already there. This is not to be confused with the concept of carnivalesque mirrors, those distorting or ‘funhouse’ mirrors most frequently found at carnivals or fairs which are, on many levels, the opposite of their every-day counterparts. And although Foucault’s closing vision, with his depiction of the ship as “the heterotopia *par excellence*” (68, emphasis in original) might suggest that his heterotopia is dynamic with fluid boundaries – it is both enclosed upon itself, and open to whatever port or far-away land it might encounter – I would suggest that although this is true to a point, it, along with his telling use of the term “colonies” (68), merely reinforces the inflexibility of his heterotopia; the ship, after all, is the site and enabler of that most cataclysmic and controversial of utopian projects – colonisation.

In his *Archaeologies of the Future*, Fredric Jameson, analysing Samuel Delany’s *Trouble on Triton*, refers to the heterotopia as a “Foucauldian alternative of Utopian spaces and *enclaves*” (144, my emphasis). This is a particularly suggestive word and one I wish to seize upon, not only for its evocation of the concepts of multiplicity and difference, but for the ways in which it calls to mind images of collectives of like-minded or ethnically similar individuals who have banded together to pursue a common purpose. This aspect of heterotopianism will become particularly pertinent when I begin to examine my second ‘cluster’ of texts – the more modern SF visions of Michael Marshall Smith, Nick Harkaway, and Neal Stephenson. Although she does not engage with this concept, Lisa Swanstrom’s model of encapsulation, rupture and penetration – and the tensions between these – in Stephenson’s *Snow Crash*, with its (networked) clusters of seemingly encapsulated and isolated enclaves (54-55) comes remarkably close to the depiction of heterotopia that I posit. It also begins to address, however inadvertently, some of the more problematic characteristics of the heterotopia that are suggested by my focus on the word ‘enclaves’ in conjunction with heterotopias in society; in particular, it addresses the isolation and fragmentation that the term implies.<sup>11</sup> Building on Lieven de Cauter’s brief – and perhaps overly simplistic – work in ‘The Capsule and the Network: Notes Toward a General Theory’ (2004), Swanstrom posits that the ostensibly isolationist – or, to use de Cauter’s terminology, ‘encapsulated’ – society depicted in *Snow Crash*, which is characterised by a series of inwardly focused and selectively populated enclaves – known as ‘Burbclaves (a neologism presumably arrived at by combining the words ‘suburb’ and ‘enclaves’) and “FOQNEs, Franchise-Owned Quasi-National Entities” (Stephenson, 14) – is in fact one in which the penetration of peripheries occurs constantly, creating an effect of rupture and flow that transgresses and overcomes the rules of fragmentation and arbitrary boundaries (Swanstrom, 58-60):

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<sup>11</sup> It also provides a key building block for the relationship and effect/affect that heterotopia and the individual can have on one another, but I will address this aspect of Swanstrom’s article in the third chapter of this thesis.

The gate flies open as if by magic as the security system senses that this is a CosaNostra Pizza vehicle, just making a delivery sir. And as he goes through, the Kourier – that tick on his ass – waves to the border police...like he comes in here all the time!

He probably does come in here all the time. Picking up important shit for important TMAWH people, delivering it to other FOQNES...that's what Kouriers do. Still.<sup>12</sup>

(Stephenson, 14)

Although there are gates, borders and border police within the city (which presumably is Los Angeles), these can be, and are, traversed. And even in these opening scenes of the novel, both the delivery driver – the playfully named Hiro Protagonist – and the Kourier have the ability to move through the borders of Stephenson's fragmented society with ease, and do so continuously; as Swanstrom notes, the two initially meet in a 'Burbclave which neither of them are a member of (58). This flow between what de Caüter terms the "real capsules" (95) of every day or 'real life' existence – 'Burbclaves and FOQNES, bimbo boxes – is mirrored in (and by) the "virtual capsules" (de Caüter, 95) that also populate the novel, particularly the Metaverse.<sup>13</sup> It is important to note, however, that the 'Burbclaves depicted in *SC* are *not* necessarily idyllic or all-welcoming; although The Mews at Windsor Heights acts as an "innocuous [safeguard] of middle-class values" (Swanstrom, 57), other 'Burbclaves are more ambiguous. Fleeing from a gang of taxi cab drivers after breaking Y.T. (the aforementioned Kourier) out of the Clink, Y.T. and Hiro's refuge options are limited: "Hiro is black, or at least part black. Can't take him into New South Africa. And because Y.T. is a Cauc, they can't go to Metazania" (Stephenson, 77). New South Africa is, much like the White Columns 'Burbclave, an exclusively white and highly racist neighbourhood. This rupture of the flow between borders creates a (necessary) tension and incertitude; whilst the heterotopia, as I posit it, is characterised by borders which are at least semi-permeable, this is not ubiquitous and thus continues to encourage differences to flourish, however problematic and morally ambiguous some of those differences may appear to be.

This (altered) vision of heterotopia, then, becomes one of dynamism and multiplicity, and owes its conception, in this regard at least, as much to Swanstrom and to Gianni Vattimo's work in *The Transparent Society* as it does to Michel Foucault. Although Vattimo is primarily concerned with the transition from modernity to postmodernity and the effect that transition then has on art and aesthetic experience, his work is directly relevant to the ongoing development of what I identify as

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<sup>12</sup> TMAWH – The Mews at Windsor Heights – is one of the many 'Burbclaves in *SC*.

<sup>13</sup> Bimbo boxes are "family [minivans]" (Stephenson, 8) in *SC*.

heterotopian fiction. Central to that relevance is his acknowledgement of the “proliferation...of world views” (5), and his insistence on the “multiplicity” (69) of modern life, which rejects out of hand the “totality” (80) that traditional utopian concepts remain inextricably bound up with: “the term utopia concerns the realization of *an* optimal reality by way of rational design, whether it be oriented metaphysically...or technologically” (79, my emphasis). The crux of Vattimo’s point here lies in his use of the singular; in traditional utopian literature, the depicted utopia *is* utopia: there is no room – or need – for other versions. But as Jameson reminds us, any utopia is only ever one model amongst many (143). Synthesising the thought of Foucault, Vattimo, and Swanstrom, the heterotopia as I postulate it offers not just *an* alternative, but a “multiplicity of models” (Vattimo, 70) that provides the potential for endless *alternatives* to the utopian blueprint that Popper disparaged. In this regard at least, it is the direct successor to the utopia that Lucy Sargisson imagines in her discourse with Ruth Levitas, one that “[changes] the ways in which we think: about thinking our way around alienation, duality, polarizations, competition, separation, and oppositional thinking...this is (perhaps) achievable through a utopianism that takes Utopia as a place in which to explore alternatives” (2003, 17). The difference is that the heterotopia can represent multiple spaces and multiple points of view in which alternatives to the status quo and the subjectivity that it imposes can be explored concurrently, rather than singly. In utopian fiction, then, the heterotopia stands in opposition to, and transgresses the expectations of what Philip Wegner has termed the “cognitive maps” (185) of utopian desire. Whilst Vattimo chooses to call them instead “rational design[s]” (79) – which are almost invariably large-scale and scientific in nature, if not application – these ‘cognitive maps’ are the means by which the singular, universal utopia (whichever version you care to imagine) can be, and will be realised. The Party in *Nineteen Eighty Four*, the OneState of Zamiatin’s *We* (along with their literary predecessors in the guise of Jack London’s *Iron Heel*); even the Jorgmund Company of *The Gone-Away World* and the monopolist L. Bob Rife in *Snow Crash* exhibit this kind of grand-scale thinking, which I prefer to label ‘cognitive blueprints’ both for the technical and scientific connotations, and, more importantly, for the implicit association with the late nineteenth and early-to-mid-twentieth century, when many of these grand designs were being hypothesized.

Throughout the course of this thesis, I will examine my chosen texts in conjunction with this reconstructed version of the heterotopia. The first chapter, in which I will explore two traditionally ‘dystopian’ texts – Evgenii Zamiatin’s *We* and George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four (NEF)* – will seek to locate the heterotopia within the broader utopian literary tradition. I will contend that whilst both of these texts are still largely dystopian in both structure and outlook, they also contain spaces within them that display what I identify as prototypically heterotopian tendencies. Beginning – somewhat

fittingly, given its ascribed role as the god-father of modern dystopian fiction – with Zamiatin’s *We*, I will situate the novel within both a broader and specifically Russian (utopian) literary tradition before moving on to an exploration of those themes that I see as distinctly heterotopian in outlook. These themes, along with the dualisms that they begin to dismantle, will be examined in the context of the main character, D-503 and the evolution of his experiences in and relationship with the building known as the Ancient House. Fundamentally heterotopian and ambiguous, the Ancient House and what it signifies will feature prominently throughout not only the first chapter, but the body of the thesis. My analysis of *NEF* will build upon my analysis of *We*, and through the examination of spaces that fulfil a similar function to that of the Ancient House and the interaction of Winston Smith with these spaces, will contend that despite the apparently dystopian closure exhibited by the novel, this is also a text that displays heterotopian tendencies.

The second chapter of this thesis will begin by introducing the concept of an individual that is narratively constituted. I will provide a brief overview of the theory that informs my conception of the individual, subjectivity and self, before moving onto a consideration of the ways in which heterotopian spaces both enable and undermine the narratives by which the individuals that inhabit and comprise them constitute their selves. This will form the basis of my exploration of Neal Stephenson’s *Snow Crash (SC)*, which, I will contend, is more pervasively heterotopian in outlook and composition than either of the worlds depicted in *We* and *NEF*. I will examine the figure and narratives of Hiro Protagonist in conjunction with two complementary heterotopian spaces – Reality and the Metaverse. As my analysis will reveal, however, the heterotopian potentials of *SC* are limited and – somewhat ironically – undermined by the dualisms that the narrative arc of this novel, in the end, clings to.

In my third and final chapter, I will examine two texts that I see as being fundamentally and perhaps even definitively heterotopian, not only in their composition but also in the ways that the heterotopian spaces within them begin to dismantle the dualisms associated with the utopia / dystopia binary. In Nick Harkaway’s *The Gone-Away World (TGAW)*, this is achieved by the heterotopian spaces of the novel, particularly the substance known as Stuff, that foster the exploration of multiple narratives of self and in doing so begin to destabilise arbitrary – and binary-derived – assumptions about what is ‘right’ and what is ‘wrong’; about what is ‘human’ and what is ‘not.’ My analysis of Michael Marshall Smith’s *Only Forward (OF)* builds upon the conclusions that I draw from *TGAW*, and is centred upon the figure of Stark – who, I contend, is representative of the burgeoning individual that heterotopia makes possible where utopia and / or dystopia does not – and his association with the heterotopian spaces of this text. The first of these spaces, known as Stable, demonstrates the varied nature of the transgressive heterotopian space. The second, known as Jeamland, completely dismantles the same dualisms that Stuff began to destabilise. These spaces

demonstrate conclusively not only the ambiguous and hybrid nature of the heterotopia and the individual that it enables, but also its suitability as a lens through which to view a world that is progressively inimical to what Wegner calls the “abstracting, universalizing forces” (185) that utopia and dystopia have become irreparably associated with.

## Chapter One: 'Dystopian' Antecedents of the Heterotopian Impulse – We and Nineteen Eighty-Four

*Not progress denied but progress realized, is the nightmare haunting the anti-utopian novel.*

'The Fiction of Antiutopia' – Irving Howe.

*Much of what Wells has imagined and worked for is physically there in Nazi Germany. The order, the planning, the State encouragement of science, the steel, the concrete, the aeroplanes, are all there, but all in the service of ideas appropriate to the Stone Age. Science is fighting on the side of superstition.*

'Wells, Hitler, and the World State' – George Orwell

In both the critical and popular imagination, the ever-increasing dependence on and veneration of science and technology – those 'forces of progress and modernisation' that Wegner identifies – in the early twentieth century, alongside the growing disillusionment with the potentialities of utopia and utopian visions, oversaw and facilitated the rise of utopia's Other: the dystopia.<sup>14</sup> Although there is a well-established critical tendency – thanks largely, I believe, to Sargent's almost reductive insistence on the endless sub-categorisation of utopian literature in general – to distinguish between dystopia and anti-utopia in particular, I am, as I have already stated, largely uninterested in such distinctions. Whilst they can be a useful tool for coming to grips in the first instance with what is, after all, a vast and unwieldy genre, I am unsure of whether they are, in the end, necessary. Raffaella Baccolini and Tom Moylan in particular are an example of the aforementioned tendency – and, indeed, owe much of their delineation between the two forms to Sargent. In their introduction to *Dark Horizons*, they defend and reiterate Sargent's definitions, stating that "dystopia is distinct from its nemesis, the anti-utopia, and its generic sibling, the literary eutopia" (4). They gloss very quickly over the constitution of anti-utopia noting only, in accordance with Sargent, that as a term it "should be reserved for that large class of works...which are directed *against* Utopia and utopian thought" (5, my emphasis), whilst dystopia is to be understood as the nightmare aspect of utopian social dreaming (5). Many of the differences that they observe between anti-utopia and dystopia are structural in nature; in particular, they note in dystopian fiction the frequent use of strategies such as textual estrangement, and narrative and counter-narrative. What Baccolini and Moylan – and Sargent – overlook, however, is what the dystopia and anti-utopia have in common, and

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<sup>14</sup> Margaret Atwood comes to a similar conclusion in her introduction to *Brave New World* when she declares that "the First World War marked the end of the romantic-idealistic utopian dream in literature" (x).

what they both exhibit: a fundamental dissatisfaction with and suspicion of the wholly good, perfect place and those who would believe in it; that is, the utopian, and utopianism more generally. This scepticism and disappointment manifests itself in the philosophy of liberal pluralists and democrats such as Isaiah Berlin and Karl Popper; it is also expressed, naturally enough, in popular fiction and literature.<sup>15</sup> Two of the more popular and enduring examples of what I choose to recognise as the dystopic strain of the utopian impulse in the early-mid twentieth century – George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and Evgenii Zamiatin’s *We* – will be examined in this chapter. It has been argued elsewhere that both of these novels are anti-utopian, rather than dystopian although it is, perhaps, telling – and even somewhat ironic – that Baccolini and Moylan identify both texts as representative of the “classical, or canonical, form of dystopia” (1). Adrian Wanner (1997), Robert Russell (2000), Gary Kern (1988), Jameson (2005) and Kumar (1987) are all examples of the critical predisposition to read these texts as anti-utopian, whilst those who prefer to identify *NEF* and / or *We* as dystopian include Tomo Sava (2012) Gormon Beauchamp (1973), Goodwin and Taylor (2009), Claeys and Sargent (1999), M. Keith Booker (1994) and, tentatively perhaps, Suvin (1979). Tony Burns (2008) understands *We* as neither. However, it is Phillip Wegner’s discussion of *We* as a new form of (critical) utopia that I find most interesting, and which lays some of the groundwork for my contention that, far from being straightforwardly dystopian – or, if you must, anti-utopian – *We* and *Ninety Eighty-Four* instead display precursory heterotopian functions and tendencies; in particular, although to differing degrees, they take up the mantle of H. G. Wells and set the scene for the emergence of the heterotopia by posing a series of challenges to the homogenous depiction of static, totalising utopias whilst focusing anew on individuals as discrete units and the role(s) they might have to play in their society.<sup>16</sup>

Prior to any discussion of my chosen texts it will be useful to briefly engage with dystopian theory in general (insofar as it relevant to this thesis), and, more specifically, my claim that the dystopia is one of the main progenitors of the heterotopia. As I have already noted, the demarcation between dystopia and anti-utopia is not always clear; this is not only because they both display dissatisfaction with and suspicion towards (attempted) depictions of the wholly good place, but also because the dystopia is (perhaps by virtue of those aforementioned structural strategies) an “impure genre, with permeable borders which allow contamination from other genres, *that represents*

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<sup>15</sup> In his preface to *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* Darko Suvin notes the long-standing estrangement of literary critics and scholars from “90 percent or more” of fiction on the grounds that it is not ‘good’ or “aesthetically significant” literature (vii). He comments on the distinction made between “literature” and what he terms “Para-literature,” and makes a convincing argument for a critical engagement with the latter (vii).

<sup>16</sup> I find it intriguing that Wegner identifies *NEF*, but not *We*, as anti-utopian, despite noting the links and similarities between the two. His is an argument I find compelling, despite my own preference for thinking of *NEF* as a misanthropic dystopia, rather than anti-utopian. However, as will become clear, I do not agree with his view of *We* as utopian, either.

*resistance to a hegemonic ideology that reduces everything to global monoculture*" (Baccolini and Moylan, 8, my emphasis). That is, far more so than its Other, the utopia, the dystopia is a genre that borrows from the forms and conventions of others; by virtue of that borrowing, the dystopia encourages hybridity and dynamism. As I have already noted, hybridity and resistance to uniformity is also a hallmark of the heterotopia. Whilst Moylan, Baccolini and Mohr see these features as belonging exclusively to later dystopian writing (what they, and Lyman Tower Sargent before them see as the 'critical (feminist) dystopias' of the 1980s and 1990s), I believe they can also be found in two examples of what are popularly thought of as the progenitors of the dystopian genre: *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *We*. What these texts accomplish, almost by accident, is to lay the foundations for the depiction and our understanding of the role of (later) heterotopian fictions and their place in the greater utopian tradition.

### We

Whether one chooses to approach it as anti-utopian or dystopian – and there are valid reasons for approaching it as either, and, indeed, both – there can be little doubt that Evgenii Zamiatin's *We* was a watershed moment in the greater utopian tradition. That it is so amenable to widely varying interpretations is, I suspect, at least partly the source of its continuing academic charm, but it also remains a singularly compelling novel because of its seemingly timeless relevance. In his introduction to a collection of critical essays on Zamiatin and *We*, Gary Kern describes it as "the ultimate anti-utopia" (9), noting that "its basic plot...has been repeated by Aldous Huxley...George Orwell...and dozens of writers and film-makers...in the fifties, sixties and seventies; yet its artistry, prophetic power and underlying philosophy remains unsurpassed. Although it makes a statement against the permanence of any human achievement, *We* has established itself as the most significant anti-utopian novel of the century" (9). Although I respectfully disagree with the designation of *We* as solely anti-utopian, Kern here distils the essence of its continuing popularity. Whilst *We* is a novel that responds to issues of its own time, it also – more importantly – anticipates many of the concerns of modern Western society: the issue of balancing freedom against happiness; of the balance, or the lack thereof, between the individual and society (or to put it another way, between the private and the public); and, most crucially, the contest between energy and entropy. Stated thus, particularly when there is an emphasis on an overtly contextual reading, these issues seem hopelessly universal and simplistic, and yet Zamiatin's treatment of them is anything but. These issues are a hallmark of the dystopian or anti-utopian novel – indeed, *We* functions as one or the other, and sometimes both – but I will contend

instead that *We* displays instances of a prototypically heterotopian blend of dystopian prognostication and utopian hope.

As Kern notes, *We* has the dubious distinction of being the first novel banned by the Glavlit (9); this fact, alongside Zamiatin's self-imposed exile and the reviews and literary criticism of *We* that came out of Russia in the 1920s, and again in the 1980s and 1990s, has helped generate the assumption that Zamiatin's novel is first and foremost a scathing indictment of the Soviet Union in general, and of Stalinism in particular.<sup>17</sup> An early and enduringly influential example of the political, contextual critical interpretation of *We* is Aleksandr Voronskii's 1922 essay 'Evgeny Zamyatin,' in which he describes everything in the novel as "untrue" (44), a "lampoon" (45) and "saturated with a genuine fear of socialism" (43); it is perhaps worthwhile to note here the irony of Voronskii's own arrest and expulsion from the Party in the late 1920s (Stacy, 198). Voronskii was the first of many to take this stance against the novel; Robert Russell notes that "in the second half of the 1920s, Voronskii's opinion that *We* represented nothing more than a lampoon on communism became the only one to be heard in the Soviet press" (Robert Russell, 6). This 'critical' focus on the novel endured, with O. Mikhailov's entry on Zamiatin in *The Short Literary Encyclopedia* describing it as a "vicious pamphlet against the [Soviet] State" (56). This insistence on reading *We* in light of Stalinism and post-Revolutionary Russia is not limited to Soviet writers and critics; M. Keith Booker (1994), with his chapter entitled 'Zamyatin's *We*: Anticipating Stalin' is but one example of the continuation of that tradition in 'Western' critical circles, whilst Barbara Goodwin and Keith Taylor's treatment of the novel in *The Politics of Utopia* (2009) is another. Although Zamiatin's own non-fiction writing indicates a certain preoccupation with *some* of the cultural and political implications of the Russian Revolution and its aftermath, I believe it is a mistake to focus too exhaustively on them; in particular, it is an oversight to attribute such a narrow focus to the novel as a mere prediction of Stalinism. George Orwell comes to a similar conclusion; reviewing the novel in January 1946, he observes that

It may well be...that Zamyatin did not intend the Soviet regime to be the special target of his satire. Writing at about the time of Lenin's death, he cannot have had the Stalin dictatorship in mind, and conditions in Russia in 1923 were not such that anyone would revolt against them on the ground that life was becoming too safe and comfortable. What Zamyatin seems to be aiming at is not any particular country but the implied aims of industrial civilisation.

para. 8

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<sup>17</sup> Glavlit is the Soviet censorship organisation, more formally known as the Main Administration for Literary and Publishing Affairs. Instituted in 1922, it replaced the old Gosizdat, and aimed, amongst other things, to "prevent publication and distribution of works which...contained propaganda against the Soviet regime" (Ermolaev, *Censorship*, 3).

In other words, *We* concerns itself with broadly general issues, *as well as* those that were specific to the emerging Soviet Union. (Those general issues, or ‘implied aims’ were also cause for disquiet for Orwell himself, although his approach to and treatment of them would be slightly different). It must also be noted that Zamiatin was explicitly engaging with not only the utopian literary tradition in general – especially H. G. Wells and Jack London – but also within a specifically Russian literary context.<sup>18</sup> In particular, *We* engages in a dialogue with such works as Alexander Bogdanov’s *Red Star* (1908), Nikolai Chernyshevskii’s *What Is To Be Done?* (1863), and Fiodor Dostoevskii’s *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880) and *Notes From Underground* (1864); the latter itself being a reaction against *What Is To Be Done?* (Robert Russell, 28-36; 53-54; Edwards, 45-46).<sup>19</sup>

So whilst it is both tempting and easy to read *We* as a reflection of a single set of circumstances and monolithic purpose, to do so not only diminishes the myriad other achievements of the novel but also risks missing the point. Phillip Wegner is similarly cautious, stating that in doing so “we run an additional risk, one that is especially pressing in the case of *We*, of reducing the complex heterogeneity of the narrative into a univocal, positive or negative, representation” (149). Much of the heterogeneity that Wegner mentions is created by the multifaceted and, I would suggest, interactive approach Zamiatin takes to these issues that I will now discuss. It should be noted that whilst I approach these three sets of antinomies as separate entities, I believe that they are all interconnected with each forming one part of an ongoing overall dialogue within the novel, which argues for the abandonment of the dualistic mode of thought that sees these themes as mutually incompatible, rather than fundamentally and practically related. Exemplified, embodied, and enabled by the marginal figure of the Ancient House, the three themes that I believe to be central to a reading of *We* as a dystopia – or anti-utopia – that displays distinctly heterotopian characteristics can be summarised thus; as the never-ending search for the middle ground between the dualisms of individual and society, happiness and freedom, and revolution (energy) and perceived perfection (entropy).

In his 1923 essay ‘On Literature, Revolution, Entropy, and Other Matters,’ Zamiatin writes that:

Revolution is everywhere, in everything. It is infinite. There is no final revolution, no final number. The social revolution is only one of an infinite number of numbers: the law of

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<sup>18</sup> See Christopher Collins (1973), E. J. Brown (1976), Robert Russell (2000), and Alex M. Shane (1968). Additionally, in 1927 a contemporary critic of *We*, Victor Shklovskii, notes that *We* “recalls a certain parody of utopia by Jerome [K.] Jerome” (‘Evgeny Zamyatin’s Ceiling,’ reprinted in Kern (1998), p49).

<sup>19</sup> T. R. N. Edwards’ *Three Russian Writers and the Irrational* (1982) is a particularly useful study for understanding Zamiatin in a specifically Russian literary context. Although it is somewhat older, D. Richards’ ‘Four Utopias’ (1961) also explores some of the links between Zamiatin and Dostoevskii (and Orwell).

revolution is not a social law, but an immeasurably greater one. It is a cosmic, universal law—like the laws of the conservation of energy and of the dissipation of energy (entropy)... The law of revolution is red, fiery, deadly: but this death means the birth of new life, a new star. And the law of entropy is cold...The flame turns from red to an even, warm pink, no longer deadly, but comfortable...Heretics are the only (bitter) remedy against the entropy of human thought. Where the flaming, seething sphere (in science, religion, social life, art) cools, the fiery magma becomes coated with dogma—a rigid, ossified, motionless crust. Dogmatization in science, religion, social life, or art is the entropy of thought. What has become dogma no longer burns: it only gives off warmth—it is tepid, it is cool.

(107)

That the epigraph he chose for this essay was taken from *We* is neither a surprise nor a coincidence; both pieces of writing are intimately concerned with the effects of stasis, and the harmful emphasis on the quest for (static) perfection that is implicit in the pursuit of (scientific) ‘progress’ which can lead as easily to entropy as it can to energy and evolution. And whilst this might seem to lend itself to an interpretation of the novel as primarily an anti-utopia, rather than a dystopia, I believe the opposite is true. Wegner has noted that the dystopia “presents a critique of the limitations of a specific form of imagining place, [whilst the anti-utopia presents] a rejection of this cognitive act altogether” (152-153). As a whole, Zamiatin’s novel does *not* reject the possibilities and potential of utopia, as it would if it were simply an anti-utopian satire; what it rejects instead are, as the above quote from his essay hints at, the dystopian tendencies inherent in the dogmatization and stagnation of thought and the goals of utopian dreaming, which can only be countered by the actions of those revolutionaries who were willing to speak out against the dominant ideology – those he calls heretics.<sup>20</sup> This is borne out in the novel through his exploration and complication of those issues that I have already identified as characteristic not only of the dystopia, but also of the heterotopia. The first of these can be described as the entropy of thought (and action). The ostensible goal of the OneState is perfection, and when he is his lucid, reasonable “number” self D-503 (Zamiatin, 56), the narrator of the novel, celebrates that goal, which is to “unbend the wild curve, to straighten it tangentially, asymptotically, to flatten it to an undeviating line. Because the line of OneState is a straight line. The great, divine, precise, wise straight line – the wisest of all lines” (4). That desire for order, in the imagery of the straight line, also

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<sup>20</sup> This is the role which Zamiatin perceived himself as occupying, as the title of Mirra Ginsburg’s excellent collection of Zamiatin’s writings, *A Soviet Heretic: Essays by Yevgeny Zamyatin* (1970) indicates.

manifests itself in the Taylorism of the OneState, whereby its members are reduced quite literally to mere numbers, and metaphorically to small cogs in a great machine:<sup>21</sup>

Every morning, with six-wheeled precision, at the very same hour and the very same minute, we get up, millions of us, as though we were one. At the very same hour, millions of us, as though we were one, we start work. At the very same hour, millions as one, we stop. And then, like one body with a million hands, at one and the same second according to the Table, we lift the spoon to our lips. And at one and the same second we leave for a stroll and go to the auditorium, to the hall for the Taylor exercises, and then to bed.

(13)

The price of perfection, the price of “mathematically infallible happiness” (3) and a stable society, it would seem, is freedom and a sense of oneself as an individual. And although this vision of the perfect OneState as a single organism is revisited several times by a D-503 increasingly frantic to regain his place “on the hand” (100) or in the machine, he is also forced to acknowledge, however grudgingly, that the OneState is not yet completely perfect: “Twice a day – from 16:00 to 17:00 and again from 21:00 to 22:00 – the single mighty organism breaks down into its individual cells. These are the Personal Hours” (13). As D-503’s ‘ode’ to the OneState continues, however, it becomes rapidly obvious that its shortcomings extend far beyond the horror of two hours of time only nebulously accounted for. The OneState is in fact riddled with imperfections. The “Green Wall” (12), which is designed to encapsulate and isolate the OneState from the outside world cannot keep out pollen from the forest beyond it, nor can it contain its citizens – the Mephi (led, presumably, by I-330) regularly rupture the boundary represented by the Wall to converse with the ‘creatures’ that survived the war waged upon them by the city. The encapsulation of the OneState – and its eugenics program – is further undermined by the “women...from the city, who have come to love those others over [the Wall]” (157), and who breed with them, injecting into the genetic stream of the OneState “a drop or two of that sunny forest blood” (157) which is likely to be the cause of the hairy hands that D-503 so despises, and the “gorilla” like agility of R-13 (139). That there is a need for the Guardians (the spies and secret

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<sup>21</sup> After Frederic Winslow Taylor, who pioneered the concept of ‘scientific management’ during the Industrial Revolution, which emphasised standardisation of (best) practise and work-place efficiency. Although less obviously mocked than the Fordism (which displayed similar characteristics to Taylorism) of Huxley’s *Brave New World*, it is still clearly a satirical target. See Michael Berman’s ‘Deception of the Self in Zamyatin’s *We*’ (2009); Gormon Beauchamp’s ‘Man as Robot: The Taylor System in *We*’ (1983a) and ‘Technology in the Dystopian Novel’ (1986); and Julia Vaingart’s ‘Human Machines and the Pains of Penmanship in Yevgeny Zamyatin’s *We*’ (2012). Robert Russell also offers a succinct summation of Taylorism in *We* in *Zamiatin’s We* (2000) on pages 39-42.

police of the OneState) suggests that life behind the Wall is not as perfect as D-503 would prefer to believe.

One of the most significant imperfections of the OneState is the Ancient House. Introduced in 'Record 6,' the Ancient House has been retained as a kind of a museum: a reminder of the "chaos" (27) of the past. The "entire strange, rickety, godforsaken structure is clad all about in a glass shell" (26), yet it remains opaque and impenetrable, unlike the glass buildings of the OneState. This would seem to mean, as Robert Russell notes, that it is "the only area in the One State free from prying eyes" (Zamiatin, 60). This is not quite true, of course, and in the company of I-330 in one of the bedrooms of the house D-503 comes to the realisation that "the way the human body is built, it's just as stupid as [these] 'apartments' – human heads are opaque and there's no way to see inside except through those tiny little windows, the eyes" (28). The association that D-503 here creates between I-330 and the house is crucial, and not just for the fact that they both represent in their own ways "a secret and illicit world of sexual passion" (Robert Russell, 60), with I-330 as the object and instigator, and the house as the facilitator of that passion. This association is emphasized continually throughout the novel by D-503's repeated references to the ways in which I-330 can, like the house, shutter her eyes – her windows – and so herself, against him.

This connection helps establish the Ancient House as an ostensibly utopian space within what I see as a profoundly dystopian world, a space in which 'natural' human urges and desires can express themselves. It is, however, an ambiguous kind of utopian space; it allows D-503 to have illicit sex with I-330, and enables the escape of O-90 and her unauthorised child from the OneState, but it also causes D-503 existential pain, unhappiness, and significant anxiety. I would suggest instead, and at least partially by virtue of that ambiguity, that the Ancient House is one of the fundamentally heterotopian spaces in the novel, one that performs both transgressive and liminal functions. Although it is not the *only* heterotopian site – the closet it contains, which in turn opens into the tunnels that lead beyond the Wall and thus enable the rupture of the boundaries of the OneState, is another, as are the aforementioned tunnels – it is certainly the most pivotal. The Ancient House is a site of *both* deviance and crisis, as it encompasses and enables secret passions and a 'freedom' of sorts that is at odds with the accepted norms of the OneState, and is also the bridging point between several different capsules or spaces. As a site of deviance, and by virtue of the tunnels that it provides access to (and concealment for), it allows movement between the Mephi, the OneState and the forest beyond it both physically and genetically, thus allowing challenges to the encapsulation, homogeneity and entropy of the OneState to arise on several different levels.

The most important of these is the concept of revolution, both personal and societal. In a broadly general sense, this is embodied by I-330 (Wegner, 155) and, in a more specifically social sense,

is indicated by the revolution of the Mephi, which may or may not be successful. The success or failure of the rebellion is, in many ways, irrelevant in the greater context of the novel; it is the *act* of revolution and the desire and ability to rebel that is considered to be important, not the attainment of any specific goals; at no point does I-330 reveal to D-503 any tangible objectives – what we might in more relevant parlance call a manifesto – beyond the act of rebellion itself.<sup>22</sup> This neutrality and seeming disinterest towards both the (social) circumstances within the novel, and other members of her society (could she not at least overtly fight to free her fellow numbers?) conflicts with much of the rest of the utopian literary tradition, which invariably demands that its characters (and readers) embrace and defend very specific and unambiguously detailed sets of values and palpable goals, whether they do so in obedience or in resistance to the status quo. Think here of Winston Smith in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and the ways in which O'Brien demands both absolute obedience and adherence to certain goals and beliefs, first for the (ostensibly righteous) cause of Goldstein and the Brotherhood:

'You are prepared to commit murder?'

'Yes.'

...'You are prepared to cheat, to forge, to blackmail, to corrupt the minds of children, to distribute habit-forming drugs, to encourage prostitution, to disseminate venereal diseases – to do anything which is likely to cause demoralisation and weaken the power of the Party?'

'Yes.'

(Orwell, 199)

And then again during the course of his torture and (re)education of Winston in the beliefs of the Party and Big Brother:

'How many fingers, Winston?'

'Four. I suppose there are four. I would see five if I could. I am trying to see five.'

'Which do you wish: to persuade me that you see five, or really to see them?'

'Really to see them.'

'Again,' said O'Brien.

...Winston could only intermittently remember why the pain was happening. Behind his screwed-up eyelids, a forest of fingers seemed to be moving in a sort of dance...He was trying

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<sup>22</sup> In this instance, we can perhaps see I-330 as an anti-utopian figure (as per Wegner's aforementioned definition); I would suggest however that this is qualified by that fact that she is not so anti-utopian, per se, but that she fights against the tendency towards perceived perfection that many (mistakenly) conflate with the utopian impulse.

to count them, he could not remember why. He knew only that it was impossible to count them, and that this was somehow due to the mysterious identity between four and five.

...‘How many fingers am I holding up, Winston?’

‘I don’t know. I don’t know...Four, five, six – in all honesty I don’t know.’

‘Better,’ said O’Brien.

(288)

Although in both of these instances the goals and ideals articulated and dictated by O’Brien are rather dystopian in nature – particularly those Winston is told to pursue in the name of Goldstein and the Brotherhood, which are supposed to be two of the beacons of utopian hope in *NEF* – they are still specifically articulated, and have a set of values – positive or negative – ascribed to them. This stands in stark contrast to I-330’s pursuit of revolution for its own sake – that it has been undertaken, even if only briefly, is a victory of sorts – and serves as another indicator of the underlying heterotopian nuances of Zamiatin’s novel, particularly if we begin to consider revolution, or, more accurately perhaps, action undertaken against the status quo, as a kind of heterotopian space in its own right.

Fittingly, the revolutionary energy in *We* – both personal and social – is only made possible by the concealment and separation from the OneState and its millions of watchful eyes that the Ancient House offers; where else could the members and recruits of the Mephi congregate unobserved in a literally transparent society? Without the Ancient House, there could be no revolution, or even an attempt at revolution. It is appropriate then that it is I-330, who is inextricably linked to the Ancient House with her eyes like “lowered blinds” (Zamiatin, 52), and who in many ways can be considered its agent in the novel, who leads D-503 along the path to the “disease” (124) of self-consciousness, who is one of the “thousand hands [that] shoot up – ‘opposed’” (138) to the continued rule of the Benefactor in the farcical ‘elections’ of the OneState, and who, most importantly, raises the battle cry of the revolution, of all revolutions (part of which, interestingly enough, comprised the aforementioned epigraph to Zamiatin’s essay):

And how can there be a final revolution? There is no final one. The number of revolutions is infinite. The last one – that’s for children. Infinity frightens children, but it’s essential that children get a good night’s sleep...Their mistake was the mistake of Galileo. He was right that the earth revolves around the sun, but he didn’t know that the entire solar system revolves around yet another center; he didn’t know that the real orbit of the earth, as opposed to the relative orbit, is by no means some naïve circle...

(168-169)

The implication of this statement is that the search for perfection – if indeed perfection can even exist – must be ongoing, that it can never end. Nowhere in the novel is there a stronger statement for the energy of continual revolution, as opposed to the entropy (born of perceived perfection and the resultant stasis) that is worshipped by the OneState “as [their Christian ancestors] worshipped God” (159). I-330’s expression of desire for vitality, for multiplicity and dynamism, is, then, in many ways an expression of desire for a heterotopia, rather than the static and unchanging utopia – or dystopia, depending upon your point of view – of the OneState. This profession of the need for dynamism and continual change is not typically a feature of either the dystopia or anti-utopia – or, indeed, the utopia.<sup>23</sup> For all that the Ancient House (if not I-330) is in many and varied ways a marginal ‘character’ in the novel, its (understated) centrality to much of the action and development that takes place is just one more indication of the heterotopian undercurrents in this influential novel that can be considered both anti-utopian *and* dystopian.<sup>24</sup>

As well as sheltering the rebellion of both I-330 and the Mephi, and other transgressive behaviours, the Ancient House is also, profoundly, a site of personal crisis, as it facilitates what we might choose to call D-503’s awakening: “I became glass. I saw into myself, inside. There were two me’s [sic]. One me was the old one, D-503. Number D-503, and the other...The other used to just stick his hairy paws out of his shell, but now all of him came out, the shell burst open, and the pieces were just about to fly in all directions...and then what?” (56). This is the beginning of the individuation of D-503, the birth of his conscious and, conversely, irrational self. Before he reaches this breaking point, he begins to dream – after, it should be noted, his first visit to the Ancient House with I-330 in Record 6 – and notice what he calls “some kind of foreign body” (33) in his brain, likening it to “having a very thin little eyelash in your eye. You feel generally okay, but that eye with the lash in it – you can’t get it off your mind for a second” (33). He returns time and again to this imagery, this metaphor of the inflamed eye with the eyelash in it, and in doing so provides not only an effective link to the window-like quality of the eyes of I-330 (and so, by association, the Ancient House), but one of the great sources of amusement value and irony in the novel. The metaphorical ‘eye’ that is bothering D-503 is, of course, the ‘I’ that OneState tries to suppress, the notion of a self that is distinct from the ‘we’ of its society. It is fitting, too, that D-503 conceives of his burgeoning identity in terms of an eye; in both

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<sup>23</sup> It could be argued that Ursula Le Guin’s *The Dispossessed* (1974) takes up and explores this particular issue (amongst others) at length, although I believe her depiction of the supposedly anarchic-utopia Anarres is problematic, at best. Other authors who (attempt to, with varying degrees of success) explore this notion of a dynamic utopia include Kim Stanley Robinson, and Samuel R. Delany. See also Tom Moylan’s discussion of dystopia in *Scraps of the Untainted Sky* (2000).

<sup>24</sup> That it defies attempts to assign a definition to it is also, I think, an indicator of its heterotopian nature.

his role as obedient, unconscious number, and as a conscious and distinct individual, he is preoccupied with the notion of seeing, and of the role and power of surveillance and the gaze in the OneState.

Much has been made of the Panopticon-like quality of “the glass walls” (35) of the OneState that leave its citizens “always on view” (19) – as well as its successor, the ubiquitous telescreens of *NEF* – with the exception of those (sex) nights where numbers have permission to modestly lower the blinds around their bedrooms.<sup>25</sup> In the beginning, the dutiful number D-503 lauds this, saying “we have nothing to hide from one another. Besides, this makes it easier for the Guardians to carry out their burdensome, noble task. No telling what might go on otherwise. Maybe it was the strange opaque dwellings of the ancients that gave rise to their pitiful cellular psychology” (19). It is telling, I think, that the main object of a literally transparent society, whether D-503 realises this or not, is to deter potentially criminal activity; this is a strange consideration in a society that is supposed to have “the most perfect form of life” (11-12).<sup>26</sup> For all the apparent transparency in the OneState, however, it is questionable whether D-503 – or any truly dutiful number – really *sees* much of anything; his separation from the society of OneState and his awakening as an individual is entwined with the emergence of his ability to *see*. Following his meeting with I-330, and his encounter with his ‘other’ self, D-503 finds himself standing in front of a mirror:

For the first time in my life, I get a clear, distinct, *conscious* look at myself; I see myself and I’m astonished, like I’m looking at some ‘him.’ There I am – or rather, there he is: He’s got straight black eyebrows, drawn with a ruler, and between them, like a scar, is a vertical crease (I don’t know if it was there before). Gray, steel eyes...and behind that steel – it turns out I never knew what was there. And from that ‘there’ (a ‘there’ that is here and at the same time infinitely far away) – I am looking at myself, at him, and I am absolutely certain that he...is a stranger, somebody else, I just met him for the first time in my life. And I’m the real one. I AM NOT HIM.

(59)

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<sup>25</sup> See Michel Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish*, pp195-228 in the first instance; see also Michael D. Amey’s ‘Living Under the Bell Jar: Surveillance and Resistance in Evgeny Zamyatin’s *We*,’ (2005), James Tyner’s ‘Self and Space, Resistance and Discipline: a Foucauldian Reading of George Orwell’s 1984’ (2007), or Theo Finigan’s ‘Into the Memory Hole’: Totalitarianism and Mal d’Archive in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *The Handmaid’s Tale*’ (2004). Although Booker does not use the term ‘Panopticon,’ he does explicitly link the use of glass in the OneState to the desire to keep citizens under “constant surveillance” (1994, 28).

<sup>26</sup> Part of this tendency towards surveillance and the gaze is expressed in the use of ceremonial public executions in the OneState; presumably, OneState considers that it has the Numbers under sufficient control that the condemned does not become the object of pity (see Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* (1995), especially pp 8-31).

It is telling that D-503 uses the word 'conscious' when describing the way in which he is viewing himself; the act of seeing requires conscious direction, something that he has only just acquired. It is equally important to note the fact that it is behind his eyes that he discovers something – or rather, someone – new; the 'I' that is his self, that he tries to disassociate himself from. Having now seen himself – however much he tries to disassociate from that self – he begins to fear and avoid the gaze of others. Back at his workplace, fantasizing about rejoining the ranks of the other, unconscious numbers, he encounters a concerned associate who enquires after his health. D-503 panics, as he “[cannot] lie to those eyes” (81). As he flees, it is not his physical self he considers or seeks to hide, but his eyes: “I was dazzled by the flashing glass steps beneath my feet, and each step made me feel more hopeless: I had no business being here, a criminal...my fate was to burn forever, to rush hither and yon, searching for some corner to hide my eyes” (82). On the surface, it would seem that D-503 is wrestling with his 'crime,' trying to hide both his newfound stature as 'I' and the means by which he fears it will be revealed. Having seen himself through his eyes, D-503 fears others might do the same; he describes the eyes of the Guardian (and Mephi agent) S as “two steel-gray drills...boring into me” (85). However, if we recall Zamiatin's description of the infinite revolution, and the “fiery” (1970, 1) nature of rebellion and revolution, this feeling that D-503 has, that it is his “fate to burn forever” (Zamiatin, 82) takes on added significance. By recognising himself as 'I,' rather than 'We,' D-503 has taken on the role – however unwittingly – of the revolutionary by virtue of discovering that individuality in a society that tries to suppress it.<sup>27</sup> At first, D-503, obedient to his conditioning and the governing ideology of the OneState, is both afraid of and loathes the individual – the sense of self – that he fears those eye 'drills' might penetrate, but he gradually becomes reconciled to it, and to himself. Although he is never exactly happy with this new-found sense of himself as 'I,' he begins to value it; faced with a search of his premises and nowhere to hide the incriminating pages of the journal that has recorded (and probably facilitated) his journey to conscious individuality, he comes to the realisation that he “no longer [has] the strength to destroy this painful piece of [himself], which might turn out to be the piece [he] value[s] most” (160).<sup>28</sup> Similarly, when the Guardians introduce the Operation – the fantasectomy, if you will – that will 'cure' his illness, he muses to himself that “I was all alone. I could see it clearly: All were saved, but there was no saving me, not any longer. *I did not want to be saved...*” (179, emphasis in original). Although he vacillates from this position once more – he would not be D-503 if he did not – this acceptance of himself as a solitary 'I' makes the final record

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<sup>27</sup> Zamiatin, as you will recall, wrote that it took 'heretics' to counter the entropy of human thought.

<sup>28</sup> Patrick Parrinder writes that “superficially D-503 develops a soul as a result of falling in love with the fascinating I-330, but really it is constituted by the act of writing” (para 15). I am of the view that both actions are equally important for the development of D-503's individuality.

of *We*, written by the newly-rational and socially-oriented D-503 after the Operation has been imposed upon him, all the more poignant and grim.

Whilst the awakening or (re)education of an individual is a prevalent theme in the utopian tradition the use of glass and, especially, mirrors to facilitate this process is not; it is, however, if we refer back to Michel Foucault and what we might call the 'classical' or original heterotopia, yet another indicator of the underlying heterotopian elements of *We*.<sup>29</sup> Although I contended in the introduction that Foucault's belief in the every-day mirror as a fundamentally heterotopian device signified the basically static nature of *his* concept of the heterotopia, it works in the case of *We* if we consider that the mirror that D-503 gazes into reveals an "incurable soul" (95) that has always been there, waiting to be awakened so that it may reveal itself; the challenge to established norms and transgression that is an essential part of the heterotopia that I advance is supplied by the inherently heretical nature of an individual consciousness and subjectivity in the society of the OneState. *We* is not, however, a simplistic denunciation of the evils of a collective society and the virtues of the individual as, for instance, Ayn Rand's *Anthem* is, and this is demonstrated by the role of the Mephi in the novel. The organisation that is behind I-330 and her revolution, the Mephi are those numbers who periodically rupture the boundaries of the OneState and retreat beyond the Green Wall to commune with nature and the people and animals that survived the war with the city. For all that they encourage a certain level of heterogeneity, and promise "the possibility of individual self-realization unavailable within the (en)closure of the One State" (Wegner, 156), the Mephi is still merely a society within a society. It may be dedicated to challenging the static society of the OneState, and the long-neglected cultivation of the individual within the dominant society, but it is still a society itself. And although critics have long been predisposed to view it as the agreeably utopian alternative to the OneState, there are hints in the novel that it may in fact merely be the other side of the same coin.<sup>30</sup> When I-330 takes him to visit with the Mephi on the other side of the Wall, their reception of him bears a remarkable similarity to the words of D-503 in his first journal entry; "Long live OneState! Long live the Numbers! Long live the Benefactor!" (Zamiatin, 4) is merely substituted for "Down with the INTEGRAL!...Long live the Builder!" (151), the Builder being D-503. Likewise, while the world beyond the wall may, in the beginning, seem a little more appealing than the overly-regulated OneState, it is, as Wegner notes, merely the

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<sup>29</sup> Think of Hythloday's 'awakening' after encountering the 'original' Utopians in *Utopia*, Gulliver's rather comic adoption of the anti-human stance and trotting gait of his horse-like masters in *Gulliver's Travels*, or of Avis Everhard's wholehearted embrace of Ernest Everhard's particular brand of socialism in *The Iron Heel*.

<sup>30</sup> See Alexandra Aldridge's 'Myths of Origin and Destiny in Utopian Literature: Zamiatin's *We*' (1977) and 'Origins of Dystopia: *When the Sleeper Awakes* and *We*' (1983) especially, as well as Gormon Beauchamp's 'Zamiatin's *We*' (1977) and John Hoyles' *The Literary Underground: Writers and the Totalitarian Experience 1900-1950* (1991).

“dialectical negation” of it (162). The City-based ‘utopia’ that is the OneState has long since been revealed as a dystopia; it takes but a small leap of the imagination to follow the Country-based ‘utopia’ of the Mephi to a similarly desolate end-point – think here of the “horrors” of Malpais (Huxley, 96), the squalid and disease-ridden (but all-natural) Reservation that produces (the defiantly unhappy) John the Savage in Huxley’s *Brave New World*. That I-330 rejects D-503’s plea that they should “go together, over there, beyond the Wall” (Zamiatin, 157) suggests that although the presence of the natural (pastorally idyllic) world is both desirable and necessary, it should no more be the (utopian) end goal than the mechanized city state. The implication is that the ideal society combines and accepts both the urban and the bucolic realms, and so, by extension, the people they represent (the Numbers, and the Mephi and the people who survive beyond the Wall). In one of his few truly insightful moments, D-503 seems to grasp at least the edges of this idea: “Are [the Mephi] the half we’ve lost – the H<sub>2</sub> to our O, that have to be joined as H<sub>2</sub>O to make streams, seas, waterfalls, waves, storms?” (157). What he is articulating here is the possibility that the Mephi, the forest people, their natural world, and their emphasis on the individual are as necessary as the Numbers and their collectively-focused OneState: that the two are halves of a whole. This is in stark contrast to Winston Smith’s belief that “if there is hope...it lies in the proles” (Orwell, 80, emphasis in original) and the Arcadian past that they represent, which Orwell offers as the only acceptable alternative to the “dinginess [and]...listlessness” (85) of modern life in Oceania. If we consider the ways in which heterotopian spaces are able to not only juxtapose, but reconcile multiple and diverse spaces within themselves, this rejection of the simplistic dualism of the wholly natural and individualistic (the Mephi) and the wholly mechanized and collective (OneState), in conjunction with the idea of the infinite revolution, is yet another example of the distinctly heterotopian undertows in *We*.

With this dismissal of utopian and individual / collective dualism in mind, it is also important to note that neither the OneState nor the ‘natural’ world of the Mephi enable D-503 to be happy as a conscious individual. As much as he comes to value his individuality, D-503 cannot rid himself of his distaste for his “hairy, shaggy...throwback” (Zamiatin, 7) – and implicitly forest – self; in esteeming that individuality – “Everything used to revolve around the sun; now I knew it all revolved around me” (72) – he cannot be happy as a mere Number in the OneState. Crucially, whilst the OneState affords the unconscious Number D-503 (a kind of) happiness, it cannot offer him freedom; the Mephi can offer the conscious D-503 the freedom he comes to crave, but it cannot afford him the happiness he had as just another Number. This conundrum, and the deliberation on the relative merits of happiness and freedom and the need for a balance between them is a prominent theme throughout the novel, and one that D-503 frequently returns to, especially once he has begun to awaken. Here Zamiatin is

engaging with the discussions on the subject that had been raised by the likes of Dostoevskii and Chernevskii (as I have already noted). It is also possible to view the conflict between freedom and happiness in the light of Soviet rhetoric around happiness that began emerging in the early 1920s.<sup>31</sup> More generally, however, Zamiatin is engaging with a topic that is fundamental to the utopian tradition, and in such a way that many who followed him would try to emulate.<sup>32</sup> As Marina Balina and Evgeny Dobrenko note in the introduction to *Petrified Utopia* (2009), “the yearning for happiness is one of mankind’s fundamental needs, and its fulfilment is the basis for a person’s creative activity” (xv), whilst the “social Utopia is always aimed towards the pursuit of happiness; but contrary to individualistic bourgeois ideals, socialist Utopia (much like a nationalist or religious Utopia) is rooted in the impossibility of achieving individual happiness without first embracing collective happiness” (xvi). This is true of even the earliest ‘socialist’ utopias; consider the collective emphasis on happiness in More’s *Utopia*, for instance. It became (and remained) a compelling theme of the dystopia and anti-utopia; as I will cover shortly, Orwell – writing in Zamiatin’s wake – took a largely negative view of the drive for collective happiness over individual freedom, as did Huxley before him. Who can forget John the Savage, “claiming the right to be unhappy” (Huxley, 212)?<sup>33</sup> Conversely, there is also a great deal of fear around the individual that pays no heed to society (and its other members); consider the critique of Urras in Le Guin’s *The Dispossessed*, and the wilful recklessness and violence of Alex in Anthony Burgess’ *A Clockwork Orange*. The question of whether we emphasise freedom or happiness is a question that is linked indelibly to the utopian / dystopian binary. What we begin to see in *We*, however, and what Orwell, for instance, either overlooks or chooses to interpret in a particularly pessimistic light is the simple but inherently transgressive acknowledgement that in order to achieve one, you must *also* have the other.

In the opening pages of Zamiatin’s novel, freedom is likened to a “primitive state” (Zamiatin, 3), and is “indissolubly linked” with “criminality” and unhappiness (36); this inversion of the concept of freedom that Zamiatin here depicts is undoubtedly what Orwell had in mind when he created *doublethink* and the second of the three slogans of the Party – “Freedom is slavery” (Orwell, 6). During the extended period of Winston’s stay in the Ministry of Love, O’Brien asks him if it has “ever occurred to [him] that [the slogan] is reversible? Slavery is freedom” (303). The utter negation of individual identity, the surrender to the social whole that O’Brien poses as the ultimate freedom (and immortality) of man is, in a sense, exactly what the OneState demands of its Numbers, the price they

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<sup>31</sup> See Balina and Dobrenko (2009); more specifically, see Helena Gosciolo’s chapter entitled ‘Luxuriating in Lack’ (pp53-78), and Maria Balina’s “It’s Grand to Be an Orphan!” (pp99-114).

<sup>32</sup> See Ernest Bloch’s *Natural Law and Human Dignity* (1986), especially pp 204-208. See also my discussion on the (Russian ‘utopian’) antecedents of *We* on page 5 of this chapter.

<sup>33</sup> Admittedly John takes his stand for the rights of the (unhappy) individual to the antithetical pole of the collective ‘happiness’ depicted in *BNW*, but at least he has a choice.

pay for their 'happiness.' The simple formulation of happiness over freedom is stated explicitly in the speech given by R-13, the male number with whom D-503 shares O-19:

The old legend about Paradise – that was about us, about right now. Yes! Just think about it. Those two in Paradise, they were offered a choice: happiness without freedom, or freedom without happiness, nothing else. Those idiots chose freedom. And then what? Then for centuries they were homesick for the chains. That's why the world was so miserable, see? They missed the chains.... And we were the first to hit on the way to get back to happiness.... Paradise was back. And we're simple and innocent again, like Adam and Eve. None of those complications about good and evil: Everything is very simple, childishly simple – Paradise! The Benefactor, the Machine, the Cube, the Gas Bell, the Guardians: All those things represent good.... Because that is what protects our nonfreedom, which is to say, our happiness.

(Zamiatin, 61)

Freedom and happiness are here presented as a mutually exclusive binary that Wegner, after Jameson, describes as one of the antinomies that “lies at the very foundation of human civilization” (158). In R-13's view – the view promulgated and endorsed by the OneState, and, initially at least, subscribed to by D-503 – there is no compatibility between the two; the choice is between *either* freedom *or* happiness. The citizens of OneState have chosen – or, rather, have had chosen for them – a “mathematically infallible happiness” (3) that removes the need and even the desire for freedom; this state of 'happiness' is also intrinsically interwoven with their embrace of the collective, and rejection of themselves as individuals. But as D-503 begins to emerge as a conscious individual, his perceptions on the relative merits of freedom and happiness similarly start to shift. In the wake of being 'diagnosed' with a soul, D-503 takes a long and solitary stroll. His path takes him along a road that “runs along the base of the Green Wall” (90) and it is there that he first encounters one of the people that live in the “boundless green ocean” (90) that is the forest beyond the borders of the OneState:

Through the glass, dim and foggy, the blunt muzzle of some beast looked at me, its yellow eyes insistently repeating one and the same thought, incomprehensible to me. *We looked each other in the eye for a long time* – through those shafts connecting the surface world to that other beneath the surface. And then a little thought wormed its way into my head: 'And what if yellow-eyes, in his stupid, dirty pile of leaves, in his uncalculated life, is happier than us?'

This is an important moment for both D-503 and for the action of the novel; it is where he first realises – once again through the acts of seeing (through glass) and looking (into another’s eyes) – that not only is there happiness of a kind other than that imposed by the OneState, but that these other kinds of happiness might, in fact, be superior. And although D-503, as is his wont, immediately brushes off his insight and consoles himself with the idea that he is merely “sick” (91), the implication is that the “creature” beyond the Wall is happier because s/he has a far greater degree of freedom than D-503 has. This is underscored by the different paths they take after their encounter; the creature vanishes into the foliage – presumably to follow what path it will – whilst D-503 rushes along his prescribed path to the Ancient House, his misery, and his dual – and conflicting – servitudes (to the OneState, and I-330).

For all that he tries to brush it off, the encounter with the creature sparks something in D-503. Having reached the Ancient House, which once again acts as the enabler of transgressive behaviours and experiences, he is faced with a moment in which he realises that “I, the sun, the old woman, the wormwood, the yellow eyes – we all blended into one, were all bound forever by veins through which flowed one common, stormy, magnificent blood” (92). If we return momentarily to a consideration of the (related) argument for the balancing of the needs of the individual and society, this may seem at first glance as though D-503 is merely substituting one collective for another; the collective of the Mephi in place of the OneState, for example.<sup>34</sup> If we recall I-330’s rejection of the Mephi’s as the only way of life, however, this embryonic realisation of D-503 can be read as yet another heterotopian moment in the text, one which hints at the necessity of balancing freedom and happiness, as well as the individual and society, rather than treating them as mutually incompatible. Ernst Bloch came to a similar conclusion, although he used the term “human dignity” (1986, 207) rather than ‘freedom,’ writing that “there can be no human dignity without the end of misery and need, but also *no human happiness without the end of old and new forms of servitude*” (208, my emphasis). The last is particularly relevant to D-503’s situation; he has in many ways, as I have already noted, merely exchanged one kind of servitude for another, and goes so far as to acknowledge that he is in fact “a slave” to I-330 (Zamiatin, 71), much as he was to the OneState. And although he comes to recognise the need for freedom, D-503, in fact, completes a full circle in his servitude, returning in the end to the OneState via the fantasectomy.

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<sup>34</sup> It is no accident, I think, that D-503 uses blood as the substance that binds them *all* – himself (as a representative of the Numbers), the old woman, the natural world and the creatures beyond the Wall; it prefigures I-330’s revelation of his probable “sunny forest blood” (157), and also calls to mind the quote from Zamiatin’s essay that I quoted earlier in this chapter.

Once again, it is I-330 who embodies the synthesis of freedom and happiness in the novel, the formulation of which starts with the opposition to the OneState that she is a part of on the Day of Unanimity: “And tomorrow...what? Nobody knows. You understand? Neither I nor anyone else knows. It’s unknown. *You understand it’s come to an end, everything that was known? Now it’ll be new, never before seen, or imagined*” (141, my emphasis). I-330 here echoes the sentiments of Bloch, whilst the freedom that she desires, the freedom that will bring a more honest kind of happiness – for who can know true happiness without first having experienced unhappiness? – is linked to the concept of the infinite revolution, and the rejection of the static, perfect ‘happiness’ that OneState forces upon its members. The protest on the Day of Unanimity may also have the effect of enabling the individual, as D-503 notes when he writes at the end of the day “what will happen tomorrow? What will I turn into tomorrow?” (142). The most powerful statement about freedom and happiness, however, comes when I-330 is telling D-503 the history of the Mephi, and of the people beyond the Wall: “You had it worse. You grew numbers all over your body.... You all have to be stripped naked and driven into the forest. *You should learn to tremble with fear, with joy, insane rage, cold – you should learn to pray to the fire*” (158, my emphasis). It is important to note that, once again, I-330 does not present freedom as the opposite of the blissfully ignorant ‘happiness’ of the OneState, just as she rejects the wholly natural as a utopian alternative to the OneState; instead, she acknowledges that with freedom comes as much negative as positive. It is not a perfect world that I-330 advocates, but a heterotopian one that is peculiarly human; a world that encompasses contradictions and multitudes, and boundless possibilities for good *and* for bad.

### *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

Written at least partially in response to *We*, George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is considerably less hopeful about the enduring presence of the good.<sup>35</sup> There are many similarities between the two and, indeed, the novels deal with similar themes: whether we should choose freedom or happiness, the individual against society, and progress in opposition to stasis. But whilst Zamiatin’s novel implies that in the end there may be, if not a middle way, then at least some way to reconcile these supposedly contradictory needs and goals, Orwell’s vision is grim and despairing. As

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<sup>35</sup> Gormon Beauchamp calls the influence of *We* on *NEF* “pronounced and pervasive” (*‘Of Man’s Last Disobedience,’* 293) and cites the review of *We* that Orwell published in 1946 that I have already touched upon; he also provides a useful, if slightly dated, list of comparative essays on Orwell and Zamiatin (n20, p300). To his list I would also add E. J. Brown’s *An Essay on Anti-Utopia* (1976), and Patrick Parrinder’s *‘Imagining the Future’* (1973). Isaac Deutscher’s 1955 essay *‘1984 – The Mysticism of Cruelty’* was one of the earliest critical pieces to note the connection between the two. James Connors (1975) is one of the few dissenting voices to this interpretation, arguing that “Orwell’s vision of the totalitarian state was fully worked out before he read Zamiatin’s *We*” (*‘The Genesis of 1984,’* 124).

Wegner notes, “every road ‘forward’ in Orwell’s texts seems to end in [a] final point of closure. The play of utopian Possible Worlds elaborated in Zamyatin’s narrative is reduced in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* to a single, homogeneous, monolithic enclosure, the ‘World’ of Oceania” (188, emphasis in original). Although I have already posited that the ‘Possible Worlds’ in *We* are heterotopian in nature, rather than utopian, Wegner’s observation is pertinent; the differences between the two texts are stark. Although Oceania is, ostensibly, not as heavily regulated as the OneState – Winston notes that technically “nothing [is] illegal, since there [are] no longer any laws” (Orwell, 9) – the members of the Party are subject to all manner of (unwritten) rules and to the pervasive surveillance of the telescreens, which are located in all spheres, public and private. Thus, they have even less freedom and privacy than the Numbers of the OneState:

The instrument (the telescreen, it was called) could be dimmed, but there was no way of shutting it off completely...The telescreen received and transmitted simultaneously. Any sound that Winston made, above the level of a very low whisper, would be picked up by it; moreover, so long as he remained within the field of vision which the metal plaque commanded, he could be seen as well as heard. There was of course no way of knowing whether you were being watched at any given moment...You had to live – did live, from habit that became instinct – in the assumption that every sound you made was overheard, and, except in darkness, every movement scrutinised.

(4-5)

There are no personal hours in Oceania, no time in which blinds can be modestly lowered and the surveilling gaze averted. Party members in Oceania are forever on display – “always the eyes watching you” (31) – or, at least, have to assume that they are, and act accordingly; Raj Shah aptly describes it as the “internalization of the subjugating gaze” (702).<sup>36</sup> Additionally, there are no hours in Oceania that are not accounted for. Party members have no spare time in principle, whilst the Newspeak term “*Ownlife*” (Orwell, 94, emphasis in original) is synonymous with “individualism and eccentricity” (94). In these ways, you might say, the niggling imperfections that so vexed D-503 have been solved. Even though Winston, much like D-503 before him goes on to muse that “nothing [is] your own except the few cubic centimetres inside your skull” (32), later events prove him wrong; O’Brien’s ‘re-education’ of Winston shows that Big Brother and the Party can, in fact, get inside a person’s head. In his diary, Winston writes that “freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two make four. If that is granted, all

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<sup>36</sup> See also Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish*, 175-177, and 195-228.

else follows" (93). By the time O'Brien is through with him, however, Winston does not even have that small freedom; he writes (and believes) that "two and two make five" (318).

Unlike D-503, the reduction of his freedom has not lead to a corresponding increase in Winston's happiness. Rather, he is left to

[meditate] resentfully on the physical texture of life. Had it always been like this? Had food always tasted like this?... Always in your stomach and in your skin there was a sort of protest, a feeling that you had been cheated of something that you had a right to...was it not a sign that this was *not* the natural order of things, if one's heart sickened at the discomfort and dirt and scarcity, the interminable winters...Why should one feel it to be intolerable unless one had some kind of ancestral memory that things had once been different?

(68-69, emphasis in original)

What he has been cheated of is the chance to be free or happy. And Winston, unlike D-503, does not have even the freedom to choose to be unhappy. That unhappiness is not accidental; during Winston's sojourn in the Ministry of Love, O'Brien tells him that the world that the Party intends to create is one of "fear and treachery and torment, a world of trampling and being trampled upon, a world which will grow not less but *more* merciless as it refines itself.... [Our world] is founded upon hatred. In our world there will be no emotions except fear, rage, triumph and self-abasement" (306, emphasis in original). Winston's unhappiness, which is manufactured by the same people who curtail his freedom, is both spiritual – almost primeval in nature – and physical; he feels his unhappiness in his bones, in his stomach and in his skin, and it manifests itself in his persistent varicose ulcer – which, tellingly, recedes during the 'idyllic' period of his clandestine affair with Julia. He is, moreover, depicted as a fairly miserable-looking creature, a "smallish, frail figure" (4) with a "meagreness" (4) to his body. With his "naturally sanguine" (4) face and fair hair, however, he is also portrayed as (physically) significantly different to the "small, dark and ill-favoured...beetle-like" (69) people who appear to make up the "majority" (69) of the population; even Julia is first described as the "dark-haired girl" (18). Ironically enough, given his deviation from Party orthodoxy, it would seem that Winston, more than most, resembles the Party's "ideal" (69).

What his palpable unhappiness and physical difference from those around him cements is a sense of Winston as an individual in a society that not only has no place for the individual, but also seems to offer little (positive) incentive to "make the act of submission which is the price of sanity" in that society (285). That surrendering is the complete sublimation of the individual to the needs of the Party, as O'Brien outlines to Winston whilst he is being tortured into capitulation:

The first thing you must realise is that power is collective. The individual only has power in so far [sic] as he ceases to be an individual...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.

(303)

This is a powerful statement about the privileging of the collective over the individual in the novel, as well as an appeal to the human instinct to survive at any cost. The logic is both twisted and persuasive; become one with the Party, and you will live forever as a part of the Party. It is doubtful whether D-503 and his fellow numbers are required to so completely surrender their sense of their selves. At the end of the novel, when the news of the “greatest victory in human history” (341) coincides with Winston’s complete submission, his “final, indispensable, healing change” (342), there is a sense that he is not so much happy as he is gin-soaked and vanquished.

Even more so than in *We*, the coupled concerns of freedom and happiness, and society and the individual, are intertwined and interdependent, whilst the struggle between the stasis of (perceived) perfection and energy seems to have already been decided. The Party, by way of the “continual alteration of the past” and the (enforced) practise of doublethink – “the power to hold two contradictory beliefs...simultaneously” – has managed to arrest the progress of history amongst its members (242, 244). This stasis is a central tenet of the Party’s ideology: “Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past” (284). The records of the Party are continually updated to reflect the present ‘truth.’ Because of this control, time is both frozen and irrelevant in the world of the novel – Winston cannot even say “with any certainty that [it is] 1984” (9). Similarly, he is unable to refute anything O’Brien says during the course of his torture and ‘re-education,’ losing every kind of freedom and trace of individuality in the process; O’Brien even hints that he has been playing with Winston for “seven years” (307), that he has always been under observation and so had no chance at ever succeeding in his rebellion, such as it was. *NEF* closes with Winston’s impromptu profession of love for Big Brother, and so seems to bear out Wegner’s suggestion, as noted earlier, that there is no way forward in Orwell’s novel.

*NEF* seems to be a novel at the extremes of both anti-utopia and dystopia. O’Brien, in one of the more darkly humorous moments in the novel, rejects on behalf of the Party the “stupid hedonistic Utopias that the old reformers imagined” (306). Nonetheless, I would suggest that there are a few

spaces in the novel that can be seen as heterotopian and thus, perhaps, offer a glimmer of relief. The most obvious of these – and arguably another indication of Orwell’s literary debt to Zamiatin – is the “shabby little room above Mr. Charrington’s shop” (158). Raj Shah also notes the heterotopian potentials of this space, although he uses the term in a more traditionally Foucauldian sense. Unlike Shah, I also distinguish between the antique shop and the apartment above it (716-717). The apartment, much like the Ancient House, is representative of a previous era, and “still arranged as though [it] were meant to be lived in” (Orwell, 110), whilst the antiques store is merely a “rubbish-heap” (105) of worthless and largely irrelevant items, run by what Winston takes to be a harmlessly nostalgic member of the proletarian masses (‘Charrington’ is, in fact, an agent of the Thought Police). Awakening in him a “sort of ancestral memory” (111), and rented by Winston for the purposes of conducting his criminal “love affair” (159) with Julia, the apartment above Charrington’s “frowzy little junk-shop” (8) is, whilst still being nestled in the heart of Oceania’s city, a space apart. This is most palpably demonstrated by the “absurd” (167) and “old fashioned clock with the twelve-hour face” (158) on the mantelpiece. Oceania runs on twenty-four hour time; there is no “seven-twenty” (158) in the evening, only “nineteen-twenty” (158), just as the “clocks [strike] thirteen” (3) instead of one in the afternoon. The apartment, quite literally, runs to a time that is different to the rest of Oceania. This further estranges the apartment from the rest of the city – it is already different by virtue of its old-fashioned furniture and (supposed) lack of a telescreen – and helps create an atmosphere of perceived “comfort and safety” (214). For all that it is a space of what modern readers – or even readers in the early 1950s – might recognise as normalcy, for Winston and Julia it is a transgressive capsule which facilitates their love affair (in much the same way the Ancient House facilitates the illicit aspects of D-503 and I-330’s relationship) and their taste for “*ownlife*” (93, emphasis in original) and privacy. It is also a “paradise” (173), one in which they can wander naked, make love – or not, as they desire – and consume their equivalent of forbidden fruit: “real sugar...proper white bread...a little pot of jam...a tin of milk” and “real coffee...[and] real tea” (162-163). The apartment becomes a refuge of the utmost importance to Winston, who regards it as a “secure hiding-place, almost a home” and has consequently “grown fatter” and “dropped his habit of drinking gin at all hours”, having “lost the need for it” (173). For all that they value it – and perhaps this is one of the reasons *why* they value it so much – Winston and Julia can only spend snatches of time in the apartment; however, for Winston at least, this matters less than the fact that “the room over the junk-shop should exist. To know that it was there, inviolate, was almost the same as being in it. The room was a world, a pocket of the past” (173). The apartment, quite simply, represents both happiness and a kind of freedom for them both.

It is not, however, a utopian space, but rather a deeply ambiguous, heterotopian one: “Far from providing stability and security... [the] alternative temporality...proves to be dangerous” (Shah, 716). Although he is talking about Charrington’s shop, rather than the apartment above it, Shah’s observation is nonetheless pertinent. The apartment is *not* a stable and secure place, which is perhaps foreshadowed by the presence of a rat (what Winston fears more than anything) during his and Julia’s first liaison there. In its role as heterotopian space, the apartment is not only the site of Winston and Julia’s arrest by the Thought Police, but actively endangers them and in all likelihood hastens their downfall, a fact that Winston is plainly aware of long before his arrest:

Folly, folly, his heart kept saying: *conscious, gratuitous, suicidal* folly. Of all the crimes that a Party member could commit, this one was the least possible to conceal.... Folly, folly, folly! he thought again. It was inconceivable that they could frequent this place for more than a few weeks without being caught. But the temptation of having a hiding-place that was truly their own, indoors and near at hand, had been too much for both of them.

(Orwell, 157-159, my emphasis)

Winston is well aware of the danger represented by the apartment – it is a conscious and fully intentional folly that he and Julia are engaged in. Yet continue to engage in it they do, unable to resist the allure of the semblance of privacy, freedom and happiness. It is possible that because he believes he understands the nature of the danger represented by the apartment, Winston imagines that he can circumvent it, that he can negate the ambiguous nature of their refuge. This is demonstrated by the nature of his and Julia’s feeling that “so long as they were actually in [the] room...no harm could come to them. Getting there was difficult and dangerous, but the room itself was sanctuary” (174). Given that it is the site of his and Julia’s eventual arrest, this is grimly ironic, and a misplaced trust at best. The true danger is in fact represented by the room itself, and “the illusion not only of safety but of permanence” that it creates (174). The revelation that a telescreen has always been in place “behind the picture” (253) on the wall brings that illusion crashing down; the apartment where they believed themselves safe, unseen and unheard, is as much the instrument of their downfall as it is their happiness. It is also, presumably, the means (via the hidden telescreen) that O’Brien learns that what Winston fears above all else are rats; it is this information which is used to break him, to finally persuade him to betray Julia.

The apartment may be a space apart from Oceania and the eyes of the Party, but it is simultaneously enclosed within and an extension of them.<sup>37</sup> The apartment also has the effect of confusing time for Winston; during his arrest, he is unable to say with any certainty what time – or day – it actually is: “He noticed that the clock on the mantelpiece said nine, meaning twenty-one. But the light seemed too strong. Would not the light be fading at twenty-one hours on an August evening? He wondered whether he and Julia had mistaken the time – had slept the clock round and thought it was twenty-thirty when really it was nought eight-thirty on the following morning” (255). Consequently, Winston is estranged (even further) from both the apartment and from Oceania in general, an effect which is compounded when he is taken to the cells under the Ministry of Love and incarcerated and tortured for an indeterminate (and indeterminable) amount of time; in a process that begins in the apartment he is firmly removed from any recognisable time. The heterotopian nature of the apartment, and the ways in which it contains seemingly irreconcilable spaces within itself – spaces of freedom and safety, and of danger and control – are cemented when it is revealed that “*the book*” (230, emphasis in original) that Winston reads in the (imagined) “bliss... [and] eternity” (214) of the apartment, which sets forth the aims and values of both the Party and the resistance to it was, in fact, authored by O’Brien and other Party members. Entitled “*The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism*” (213, emphasis in original), the book is, in some respects, a heterotopian space in its own right. Ostensibly authored by Emmanuel Goldstein, the official enemy of the Party and of Big Brother, it offers a brief history of the rise of the Party to power in Oceania, and insight into its means and motives, thus appearing to transgress the Party’s domination of information. Reading it as part of his ‘initiation’ into “the Brotherhood” (203), Winston finds that “the book fascinated him, or more exactly it reassured him. In a sense it told him nothing that was new, but that was part of the attraction” (229). When Winston finishes reading he believes that although “he understood *how*; he did not understand *why*. Chapter I, like Chapter III, had not actually told him anything that he did not know” (247). In fact, the book offers plenty of information that Winston fails to realise the importance of. Foremost amongst this is the answer to the question ‘why?’ which he puts later to O’Brien, who tells him that “the Party seeks power entirely for its own sake” (301). This answer, in fact, has already been implied at several points in the pages that Winston has read. In a manner similar to the way in which he underestimates and misrepresents the danger of the apartment, Winston, however mistakenly, feels that he has understood the book in its entirety, and thus takes a certain amount of comfort from it. That comfort, as I have indicated, is an illusion: O’Brien and other Inner Party members are revealed to have authored the book. That being said, it must be noted that O’Brien

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<sup>37</sup> In the context of Panopticism, Shah makes a similar statement when he notes that the heterotopia of the apartment is not in opposition to the Panopticism of the Party but is, in fact an extension of it (717).

could, in fact, be simply lying; the Party has already been shown to claim various inventions for itself, such as the helicopter and aeroplane (177). This possibility amplifies the ambiguity of the book. It is impossible to determine whether it tells Winston the truth, or whether it is another example of the Party's control over information.

The book, then, is heartening and offers, as O'Brien admits, a certain amount of truth in its description of the history, goals and methods of the Party. But it also contains not only the seeds of Winston's downfall, but what O'Brien declaims as "nonsense" (300); specifically, "the programme it sets forth...the secret accumulation of knowledge – a gradual spread of enlightenment – ultimately a proletarian rebellion – the overthrow of the Party" (300). This is the articulation of the utopian hope that Winston has harboured for the entirety of the novel; he writes early on in his diary that "if there [is] hope, it *must* lie in the proles" (80, emphasis in original). It is a faint hope, as Winston himself acknowledges – "until [the proles] become conscious they will never rebel, and until after they have rebelled they cannot become conscious" (81) – but one he entertains nonetheless, and which is reinforced by its presence in Goldstein's book. That hope is rejected by O'Brien as 'nonsense,' and, by implication, so is the image of an idealised, natural, utopian past that is linked (in Winston's mind, at least) to the proles, and the countryside where Winston and Julia first have sex. When watching the singing prole woman from the apartment moments before their arrest, Winston realises that "the mystical reverence that he felt for her was somehow mixed up with the aspect of the pale, cloudless sky" (251). The future, as Winston imagines it, belongs to the proles and a more natural, Mephi-like world, one that is firmly anchored in an (imagined) agrarian past and is the opposite of the grimly mechanised city-states of Oceania. O'Brien's mockery, and Winston's own inability to comprehend important details further undermines the viability of this utopian possibility, which appears to be a tenuous and impossible dream.<sup>38</sup>

Despite the presence of heterotopian spaces in *NEF*, the potential for dynamism and change that was an important undercurrent in *We*, due largely to I-330's revolution for its own sake, is seemingly nowhere to be found in *NEF* thanks to the ambiguous nature of heterotopia itself, the pervasive technologies employed by the Party and the image of the downtrodden society that O'Brien offers (307). Equally to blame are Winston's own failures; he continually underestimates the heterotopian spaces he could perhaps make use of (Shah, 718), and invests his hopes and energies in utopian dreams of a proletarian revolution and a rural utopia that will never be achieved. The novel ends with his opposition to Big Brother turned into adoration, his affair with Julia a distant (and horrible) memory, and Winston himself a gin-soaked, "bloated" parody of his former self (336). That

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<sup>38</sup> See Wegner pp192ff for a more precise and detailed explanation of the ways in which Orwell uses *NEF* to attempt to locate a more conservative utopian project in the past.

being said, the novel does perhaps offer, if not hope, then a breathing space and the barest possibility for change with the final potentially heterotopian element that I will now address. The appendix – and single footnote on page six of the text that refers to it – in *NEF* that outlines “The Principles of Newspeak” (343) is easy to overlook, but it bears a remarkable similarity in tone and purpose to the foreword and footnotes that the historian, Anthony Meredith, inserts into the “Everhard Manuscript” (London, 5) – that is, Jack London’s *The Iron Heel*; Wegner notes that in some ways Winston Smith is “a kind of heir to London’s Ernest Everhard” (203).<sup>39</sup> *TIH* itself is, as Wegner mentions, a largely (critical) utopian text, but even though that utopia is relegated, literally, to “the margins of the text” (100) in the form of Meredith’s footnotes, his commentary also opens up a nascent heterotopian space in the text. In some places it reaffirms or elaborates on Avis Everhard’s account, whilst in others it ridicules and undermines it in a gently patronising way:

Looking back across the seven centuries that have lapsed since Avis Everhard completed her manuscript, events, and the bearings of events, that were confused and veiled to her, are clear to us. She lacked perspective. She was too close to the events she writes about. Nay, she was merged in the events she has described. Nevertheless, as a personal document, the Everhard Manuscript is of inestimable value. But here again enter error of perspective, and vitiation due to the bias of love.

(London, 5)

What the above quotation reveals, apart from Meredith’s somewhat condescending attitude, is the fact that he is living and writing some seven hundred years after the events that are described in the novel take place. In another footnote, he divulges that the Oligarchy and its rule endured for “three centuries” (157) before being overthrown and replaced by “the Brotherhood of Man” (157). This directly contradicts the hopes of the Everhards and their fellow revolutionaries, who do not attribute any permanence to the Oligarchy but expect it to be overthrown in a “few short years” (7). Meredith’s annotations thus undermine whatever optimism runs through Avis Everhard’s account – which

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<sup>39</sup> Orwell, whilst not necessarily enjoying London’s writings, was certainly influenced by them; although he writes in 1940 that *The Iron Heel* was “clumsily written...shows no grasp of scientific possibilities, and the hero is the kind of human gramophone who is now disappearing even from Socialist tracts” (‘Prophecies of Fascism’), he also acknowledges in 1941 that “A crude book like *The Iron Heel*, written nearly thirty years ago, is a truer prophecy of the future than either *Brave New World* or *The Shape of Things to Come*” (‘Wells, Hitler and the World State’). That influence manifests itself in *NEF* as well; if Winston is Everhard’s literary heir, then O’Brien, with his declaration of the maintenance of power for its own sake, is the heir of Mr. Wickson, one of the founding Oligarchs of the Iron Heel, who states that “we are in power. Nobody will deny it. By virtue of that power we shall remain in power” (London, *TIH*, 72). See also William Steinhoff’s *George Orwell and the Origins of 1984* (1975), especially chapter I (‘Utopias and Other Fiction’) pp 3-29.

comprises the majority of the novel – whilst simultaneously offering a different kind of hope. Thus there are at least two separate and seemingly irreconcilable times contained within the novel: the early years of the twentieth century, and what is referred to as the year “419 B.O.M.” (8) – the year 2618 A.D., or thereabouts, which is the time Meredith writes from. There are also two vastly different societies. One is profoundly dystopian, crushed beneath “the iron heel of a despotism as relentless and terrible as any despotism that has blackened the pages of the history of man” (112) and the other is, as far as any reader can discern, a utopia of global peace and harmony.

It is overly optimistic to suggest, as Howard Fink and Richard. K. Voorhees have, that the appendix which refers to the Party and Newspeak in the past tense holds out any certain hope of a gloriously peaceful and happy future. Conversely, Harold Bloom’s suggestion that the appendix indicates “the impassive continuance of the Party and its ability to survive any resistance” (41) seems unduly pessimistic. I am inclined instead to believe that the appendix functions in a manner similar to Meredith’s footnotes and foreword. It questions the completeness of the closure that Wegner sees in the novel, opening up alternate spaces and possibilities within (and beyond) the novel, and emboldens us as readers to question certain assumptions that the novel itself seems to encourage – such as the permanence of the Party’s rule – without ever offering any assurances as to its own veracity. If we succumb for a moment to the temptation of a meta (and troublingly postmodern) interpretive approach to the novel, it is even possible to consider the possibility that *Nineteen Eighty Four* and the appendix both function for readers as Goldstein – or O’Brien’s – book does for Winston – they both grant and crush hope. Without ever approaching the term ‘heterotopia,’ Richard K. Sanderson quite neatly sums up at least part of the heterotopian function of the appendix (and the footnote which references it):

The footnote's implied promise of verification is hollow, and the reader's attempts to determine the "objective truth" about Oceania – its social and political structure, its language, its fate – are frustrated. By trying to reconcile the novel and the Appendix, we experience for ourselves what it might be like to inhabit a world in which the authenticity (never mind the accuracy or objectivity) of all documents is in doubt, in which documents are almost dreamlike, unfixed in time, infused with self-contradiction, at once recognizable and cryptic.

(593-594)

As the above quotation implies, whilst Meredith’s commentary is recognisably from the perspective of a future far removed from the “terrible times” (London, 5) described by Avis Everhard, it is far more difficult to ascertain whether or not the “second narrator” (Sanderson, 587) in *NEF*, the supposed

author of the appendix, is a representative of a time when the Party has fallen from power. As a heterotopian space, the appendix both tantalises with the promise of unexpected hope and augments the feeling of hopelessness that the rest of the novel creates about Oceania. The effect of these competing potentials resonates even today conjuring images of a culture dominated by telescreens, the centralisation of the Party, and the terrors of Thought Police that our civilisation seems to be marching inexorably towards.

## Chapter Two: Towards Heterotopia – *Snow Crash*

*The contemporary transformation of the city displays a profound redrawing of the contours of public and private space, bringing to the fore an equally treacherous and fertile ground of conditions that are not merely hybrid, but rather defy an easy description in these terms.*

‘Heterotopia in a postcivil society’ – Michiel Dehaene and Lieven De Caeter

As Judith Shklar notes, one of the main reasons for the enduring popularity of *Nineteen Eighty Four* is because the novel is “a prophecy to which everyone could attach any fear whether that be technology, government surveillance, mind-control, consumerism, perpetual war, totalitarianism or the decline of English, to name only the most common” (5-6). That is, despite the “urgent contemporaneity, the flaunted topicality” (Rai, 5) of Orwell’s novel, it retains its appeal because many of the themes with which it engages and the fears that it invokes are as equally applicable to the early twenty-first century as they were to the mid-twentieth. The same, I believe, is true of Zamiatin’s *We*; the spectre of a totalitarian government that lies to, spies on and disregards the individual desires and subjectivity of its citizens is a theme that haunts many recent novels (and mediocre film adaptations). Whilst many of these recent texts that can be seen as fitting into the broader utopian tradition explore these issues through the reactive and, I would argue, increasingly redundant binary of utopia and dystopia, there are a growing number of novels that follow the heterotopian precedents set by *We* and *NEF*, and whose treatment of these themes reflect the equivocations, tensions and contradictions that are progressively dominant traits of our global, post-modern society. Rather than simply disavowing dystopias and utopias alike and thus perpetuating the binary, these ‘new’ texts instead incorporate aspects of both, creating unsettled spaces with fluid boundaries and definitions – heterotopias – that allow room for the subject within these spaces to explore their subjectivity and sense of self, both in conjunction with and in opposition to the society in which it resides. It could be said that we have already witnessed the latter in *We* and *NEF*; both Winston and D-503 explored their subjectivity in direct opposition to the dictates of the society in which they lived. The difference might be, however, that Winston in particular did so knowing his efforts – and self – were doomed to discovery and destruction. The sense of futility and resignation that thus pervades his attempts at self-definition and awareness is not present in the experiences and narratives of the characters who live in societies that are, if not fully accepting of all difference, then at least accustomed to the presence of it. This is true of the three texts I will examine shortly; Neal Stephenson’s *Snow Crash* (1992), Michael Marshall Smith’s *Only Forward* (1994) and Nick Harkaway’s *The Gone-Away World* (2008).

Once again, before I begin to analyse my texts, it may prove useful to discuss the concept of the individual, the self and subjectivity as it is relevant to this thesis, and the ways in which my model of the heterotopia constitutes – and, in turn, is constituted by – these individuals. Theoretical coverage of the self and the nature of subjectivity is, much like utopian studies itself, a vast and fascinating field and my coverage of it will be of necessity brief; it would be all too easy to devolve into a minute discussion of the politics and competing theories of the individual, subjectivity and self. While it may not be strictly accurate according to current dictionary, theoretical and literary definitions, I will use the terms ‘subject,’ ‘self’ and ‘individual’ somewhat interchangeably – although ‘self’ will denote the ways in which a character might view themselves, and ‘subject’ will tend towards indicating how a character is perceived by others, whilst ‘individual’ can be read as indicating a character as a single, discreet and distinct unit with a sense of its self and subjectivity, that may or may not be a part of (or apart from) the society that it resides in. When using the terms ‘subject’ and ‘subjectivity,’ I take my cue from Nick Mansfield, who states that:

[s]ubjectivity refers...to an abstract or general principle that defies our separation into distinct selves and that encourages us to imagine that, or simply helps us to understand why, our interior lives inevitably seem to involve other people, either as objects of need, desire and interest or as necessary sharers of common experience. In this way, the subject is always linked to something outside of it – an idea or principle or the society of other subjects...One is always subject *to* or *of* something. The word subject, therefore, proposes that the self is not a separate and isolated entity, but one that operates at the intersection of general truths and shared principles.

(3, emphasis in original)

This definition of the subject and subjectivity moves away from certain elements of Enlightenment and Modernist discourse that theorised a (predominantly white / straight / male) wholly self-contained and self-constituted subject that was postulated by the likes of Jean-Jacques Rousseau in his *Confessions* (1782). What is particularly important about the definition of the subject that is offered here by Mansfield is the emphasis it places on the growth of the subject at the intersection of the various cultures, truths, and principles in which it is immersed. What it lacks, however, is an acknowledgement that one of the key ways in which the subject itself tries to make sense of and incorporate these experiences and principles is through the narrative(s) it constructs and (re)tells about itself and its experience(s); that is, it is a definition that fails to take into account the importance and centrality of a self that is continually being (self) rendered and (re)constituted. In the opening

pages of her *Situating the Self*, Seyla Benhabib depicts as standard a model in which the subject, self and individual are points on a (lineal) continuum of development. Whilst I agree wholeheartedly with her recognition of the subject as “embodied and fragile” (5), I would move away from the idea that it is finite (and, by extension, wholly knowable), and suggest instead that a human infant, by way of socialisation, develops into an individual whose subjectivity and sense of self continually develops and evolves in response to changing circumstances, perceptions and exposure to different cultures, environments and social groups, and, most importantly, in response to the *narratives* – and counter narratives – that individuals construct and (re)tell about themselves, and the competing or complementary narratives that are told about and to them. This is not to say that I am placing an emphasis on “an arbitrary and ad-hoc formation of a pastiche identity” (Yancy and Hadley, 10); nor am I suggesting that subjectivity is entirely self-constituted. I am postulating instead a middle ground, a subjectivity in which a multiplicity of mini-narratives of our selves “provides the ongoing context in which the figures of discourse are embedded and achieve their determinations of sense and reference” (Schrag, 19). This acknowledges on the one hand the constructed nature of the self – the subject – as it emerges “in a world in which language is always already established” (Mansfield, 39), but also the influences of the societal “mechanisms” by which not only are “human beings...made subject” (Foucault, 1982, 779, 777), but are encouraged (rightly or wrongly) to recognise themselves as knowable and wholly (whole) individual(s).<sup>40</sup>

As a basis for my exploration of a narratively-based subjectivity and the ways in which it interacts with and is enabled by heterotopia, I will focus – briefly – here on the work of two somewhat disparate theorists; Paul John Eakin and Lisa Swanstrom. My coverage of their work will be by no means comprehensive; it is meant instead to be read alongside and in conjunction with my discussion of heterotopia. From Eakin I will draw the starting point for a theoretical examination of narrative identity, whilst I will use Swanstrom to illustrate the ways in which a heterotopian society can work in conjunction with the construction of a narrative-based subjectivity. Following the example set by psychologist John Shotter, Eakin has located one of the primary sources of our narrative-based identity as being “other people, usually parents and caregivers” (Eakin, 2001, 115); that is, the people who first narrate our lives and who in turn are the first to encourage us to tell our own stories about our selves. Although he never goes so far as to unequivocally equate the two, Eakin has drawn parallels between the theory and practices of written autobiography and a narrative-based identity, stating that “the rules for identity narrative function simultaneously as rules for identity, and the key to this hypothesis is the concept of narrative identity, which assumes that narrative is not merely a literary form but a

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<sup>40</sup> Nick Mansfield provides an excellent summation of some of the more important competing (and, in some cases, complementary) theories of subjectivity and the self in his *Subjectivity* (2000).

mode of phenomenological and cognitive self-experience” (114-115). Or, to put it another way, narrative is the means by which we not only relate our experiences (orally or via the printed text), but the means by which we make sense of those events and the ways in which they influence us and the way we view – and then depict – ourselves. Eakin identifies and explores what he believes to be the “primary transgressions for which self-narrators have been called to account” (113). These are, respectively: misrepresentations of ‘truths,’ both biographical and historical; privacy violations; and failures of normative representation (113-114). I believe that the first and third of these ‘transgressions’ are particularly pertinent when it comes to a consideration of the individual in heterotopia, particularly when we consider the ways in which the heterotopia undermines attempts to establish and enforce “normative models of personhood” (114) whilst simultaneously enabling and encouraging the belief that there are always only what we might call ‘degrees of truth,’ whether those truths be historical or, more pertinently, biographical.

I have already made brief reference to the ways in which the largely dystopian societies of *We* and *NEF* seek to suppress, and even eradicate Winston and D-503’s conception of themselves as individual, independent selves, and the ways in which the heterotopian elements of those societies act as counter sites, allowing them an ostensibly safe space in which to explore their burgeoning subjectivities. What I have only alluded to briefly, however, are the ways in which both Winston and D-503 begin the (re)constitution of their selves by means of narrative. As I noted in the previous chapter, Patrick Parrinder believes that D-503’s soul is “constituted by the act of writing” (para. 15) in his journal; although it begins as an ostensibly sanctioned ode to the OneState, the transgressive possibilities of D-503’s diary, and the ways in which it is central to the awakening of his self are apparent from the very beginning:<sup>41</sup>

I feel my cheeks burning as I write this. This is probably like what a woman feels when she first senses in her the pulse of a new little person, still tiny and blind. *It’s me, and at the same time it’s not me.* And for long months to come she will have to nourish it with her own juice, her own blood, and then – tear it painfully out of herself and lay it at the feet of OneState. But I am ready. Like all of us, or nearly all of us. I am ready.

(Zamiatin, 4, my emphasis)

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<sup>41</sup> I have already explored at length the ways in which D-503’s sexual attraction to I-330 and their liaison also plays a central role in his awakening; my examination here of the role of his burgeoning narrative of self is not meant to detract from the importance of that, but instead to complement it.

I would suggest that D-503's cheeks burn here not so much from his passion for the OneState and the INTEGRAL, as he would have his readers – and himself – believe, but rather from his sense of nurturing and giving birth to a being unauthorised by the OneState: his self. It is, as yet, embryonic; he senses the pulse of his self, but – to continue the metaphor that D-503 begins – he will not be (re)born until after he meets I-330. The simple act of choosing to begin a daily record, to begin what amounts to the narrative of his self instead of “a poem in accordance with the approved public literary genres” (Parrinder, para. 15) of the OneState signals that D-503 is indeed ‘ready’ to begin an exploration of himself as an individual, rather than as just another cog in the giant machine that is the OneState. The opening of his diary takes on a similar significance for Winston Smith; although he has long been aware of his status as an individual in a society that demands conformity, the act of setting down his narrative “[is] the decisive act” that overtly signals his attempts to reclaim his subjectivity (Orwell, 9).

By attempting to reclaim and relate the stories of their selves, both Winston and D-503 are guilty of the third of Eakin's three transgressions: they fail to display what are, in the dystopian societies of Oceania and the OneState, normative models of personhood. In D-503's case “the normal state of a normal person” (Zamiatin, 224) is forced back onto him by means of the fantasectomy, and once this is carried out he is no longer perceived as a threat to himself or to the OneState; Winston is forced to undergo a similar – although far more painful and lengthy – journey at the hands of O'Brien in the Ministry of Love. However, it is not enough for either of these men to be ‘proven’ to be ‘abnormal.’ Instead, the foundations of their fledgling selfhood are also challenged on the grounds of biographical and historical truth. There is no way around this binary in the dystopic societies of the OneState and Oceania; one is either telling the truth that has been pre-determined by the ruling powers, or one is simply peddling lies. In the fortieth and final Record, a newly dispassionate D-503 questions the veracity of his journal: “Could it be that I, D-503, actually wrote these 225 pages? Could it be that I ever actually felt this – *or imagined that I did?* It's my handwriting. And it goes on, in the same hand, but fortunately only the handwriting is the same. No delirium, no ridiculous metaphors, no feelings. *Just the facts*” (224, my emphasis). In just a few lines, whatever truth and sense of self that the newly soulful and imaginative D-503 felt he had (re)discovered, is dismissed as idle fancies, the work of his “former illness (soul)” (224). The attacks on the individual narrative on the grounds of a pre-determined truth are even more pronounced in *Nineteen Eighty Four*. In the dreaded Room 101, O'Brien tells Winston that he is “mentally deranged” (Orwell, 282) that he suffers from a “defective memory” (282), and that the individual “truth[s]” (282) that Winston clings to are merely hallucinations and delusions:

Only the disciplined mind can see reality, Winston.... When you delude yourself into thinking that you see something, you assume that everyone else sees the same thing as you. But I tell you, Winston, that reality is not external. Reality exists in the human mind, and nowhere else. Not in the individual mind, which can make mistakes, and in any case soon perishes: only in the mind of the Party, which is collective and immortal. Whatever the Party holds to be truth, *is* truth. It is impossible to see reality except by looking through the eyes of the Party. That is the fact that you have got to re-learn, Winston.

(285, emphasis in original)

There is no room in this recursive way of being that O'Brien articulates for individual narratives and truths, and even less room for any exploration of an individual subjectivity that might arise from those narratives and truths. It is their determination to nonetheless render their selves, to celebrate and explore their subjectivity and their identities as individuals that brings both D-503 and Winston into direct conflict with the societies in which they reside, and ultimately leads to their destruction. The rebellions of Winston and D-503 are fostered by heterotopian spaces, such as the apartment over Charrington's shop and the Ancient House. These spaces, however, are isolated capsules in a hostile environment; this, along with the fact that both men – especially Winston – misapprehend the nature of the heterotopian spaces that they encounter, and because of the ultimately ambiguous nature of those spaces, means that there are limits as to far their rebellions can be taken once removed from the spaces that enabled them.

But what if heterotopian spaces, with all their ambiguities and transgressional properties were, if not the norm, then at least far more open and accepted? What if they were, rather than being isolated as they are in both Oceania and the OneState, part of a network? And what if individuals residing in these networked heterotopian spaces were not only free to represent and narrate their selves, but to do so in any way that they saw fit? This is the case in the next 'cluster' of texts I will examine. Although it would be quite easy to read each of these texts, like *Nineteen Eighty Four* and *We* before them as (futuristic) dystopias, I would suggest that the dynamic and unpredictable nature of the societies that they portray, and the relative freedom of action (if not always thought) and opportunities for self-determination that is granted to the individuals who dwell within and alongside them challenges that reading. The heterotopian elements of *Only Forward*, *Snow Crash* and *The Gone-Away World* are, however, far more developed and pervasive than they were in *NEF* and *We*, by virtue of the multitude of different perspectives and beliefs that are accepted, encouraged and cultivated within the portrayed societies. The dominant (and domineering) world views of the Party and the

OneState have been replaced – quite literally, in the case of *Only Forward* and *Snow Crash* – by loosely connected enclaves of (conscious) difference. By the same token, however, it should be noted that these texts do not simply portray hedonistic utopias; the spaces and the societies within them are ambiguous, treacherous, and as much of a threat to the individual as they are a refuge. And as we shall see, although individuals in these three texts are free to constitute their subjectivities narratively, both in conjunction with and in opposition to the societies in which they reside, they are still subject to – although in new and different ways – some of the rules of autobiography.

Lisa Swanstrom writes about the “persistent tensions between encapsulation and penetration in the network systems of *Snow Crash*,” (‘Circulating Subjectivity,’ 55) and the ways in which these “contribute to a networked sense of self” (55). Although Swanstrom’s reading of *SC* as it pertains to subjectivity privileges the near-Archetypal figure of ‘The Hacker,’ the sense of self that she sees as arising from the tensions that result from the (permeability of) boundaries in *SC* provides a useful way of thinking about the subject and subjectivity – and the ways in which these concepts relate to the society that shapes it, but can also be shaped *by* it:

Neither completely tied to the Cartesian model (which describes identity as an indivisible soul or mind encapsulated within a physical body), nor an excessively open model that treats subjectivity as a mass of societal affiliations with no roots or grounding of any kind, a subject in circulation is instead a complex, distributed network of embodied systems that exists in a flux of encapsulations, enclosures, ruptures, and flows.

(55)

‘Networked’ is a key term here, and builds upon the key element that I identified as lacking in the earlier definition of the subject and subjectivity that Mansfield offers; although Swanstrom (and de Caüter before her) use it in a strictly technological sense, I would *also* like to consider the expression in terms of a set or series of connections that may utilise and be facilitated by technology, but are not wholly dependent on them. Thus, in terms of narrative identity and the construction of subjectivity, we can consider the matrix of stories that we tell about ourselves and that are told concurrently about us as contributing to what we might label a networked sense of self. While technology can play a definitive role in this – consider the ways in which the ‘storytelling’ mechanisms of social media facilitate the construction of identities and subjectivities that are strikingly different from those maintained in ‘real life’ – it is not the only means by which (narrative) identities and subjectivities are

constructed.

### *Snow Crash*

This is not necessarily immediately obvious in Neal Stephenson's *Snow Crash* (1992). First described by David Porush in 1994 as a "second-generation cyberpunk novel" ("Hacking the Brainstem, 540), there is a critical tendency to view *Snow Crash* as a technologically-oriented novel with a bleak prognosis for society and humanity. Wade Roush, writing a little over a decade after Porush, categorises it as "a classic of the dystopian 'cyberpunk' genre" (41), whilst N. Katherine Hayles states that the novel presents "a nightmare vision" (247). That *SC* is frequently associated with and viewed as a successor to William Gibson's *Sprawl* Trilogy – particularly *Neuromancer* (1984) – merely helps to cement the idea that it is an entirely dystopian depiction of a society that has become fragmented and lawless.<sup>42</sup> Despite the seeming bleakness of Stephenson's vision, however, I would contend that the society portrayed in *Snow Crash* is not a dystopian one; it is most certainly not, despite the presence of the ostensibly benign Metaverse, a utopian one either. Rather, it is a heterotopian and wholly ambiguous one that contains both utopian and dystopian elements and demonstrates the tension at work between encapsulation, rupture and penetration that I have identified as central to my model of the heterotopia. This is equally true of *both* of the 'worlds' depicted in *Snow Crash* – Reality and the virtual reality that is the Metaverse. Whilst Reality, which is seemingly characterised by fragmentation and isolation, appears highly dystopic, the Metaverse appears to be an idyllic haven; as one of the central characters notes, "[the Metaverse] beats the shit out of the U-Stor-It" unit that he lives in (Stephenson, 22). As I have already suggested, however, this appearance is deceptive; both of these spaces contain utopian and dystopian elements, and are heterotopian in nature and in composition. Moreover, both of these spaces – the virtual and the real – are equally important when considering the impact of heterotopian spaces upon the individuals that inhabit them.

However, much of the critical focus on *SC*, particularly when it comes to issues of subjectivity and identity, tends to focus on the Metaverse.<sup>43</sup> This is perhaps understandable; Stephenson's Metaverse is a compelling shared virtual space that, as Shane Shukis notes, "very closely predicted the actual expansion of the Internet as a space for virtual identity and interaction" (57) and continues to be used as the basis for discussions and visions of "the Metaverse that's really on the way" (Roush,

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<sup>42</sup> See Tim Jordan's *Cyberpower: The Culture and Politics of Cyberspace and the Internet* (1999) and, to a lesser extent, Daniel Grassian's 'Discovering the Machine in You' (2001) for examples of this tendency to associate the writing of Gibson and Stephenson.

<sup>43</sup> See Michelle Kendrick (2002), Swanstrom (2004), Porush (1994) and Grassian (2001).

41). Michelle Kendrick describes it as “[the] one coherent space” found in the novel, and, in a break from Gibsonian representations of cyberspace, as “a simulacrum of the real world, not the representation of a data-driven imaginary space of capital” (62). But whilst it is designed to be similar in many ways to, and replicates many of the more problematic hierarchical aspects – particularly those related to wealth and ease of access – of the ‘real world,’ the Metaverse is not merely a facsimile of Reality. Different people are able to move between virtual boundaries; as I will demonstrate in my examination of *SC*, the rules of rupture and flow in the Metaverse are different to those in Reality and privilege the figure of the Hacker, embodied and exemplified by Hiro Protagonist. In the course of my analysis of these issues in relation to the Metaverse – hierarchy and access, encapsulation and the flow between different capsules – I will focus on the exclusive virtual club, The Black Sun. I will suggest that The Black Sun also performs as a continuation – with necessary differences, due to the prevalence of heterotopian spaces – of the position and function of the Ancient House in *We*. I will also demonstrate that The Black Sun and the Metaverse are dynamic heterotopian spaces which, through the medium of “avatars” (*SC*, 33), allow its users to construct and explore subjectivities and identities that are different to those that they maintain – or are forced to maintain – in Reality. In conjunction with my exploration of the roles of avatars, I will examine the construction of subjectivity and narrative in Reality, and the ways in which these might in fact be more fluid than those explored online. As I will demonstrate when I analyse the figure of the gargoyle, however, the heterotopianism at work in *SC* is not all-pervasive.

Unlike many of its literary predecessors, such as the almost aggressively-bodiless cyberspace depicted by William Gibson, or the colourful data highways of Dan Simmon’s datumplane (*Hyperion*, 1989), Stephenson’s Metaverse is in many ways designed to be a replica of Reality, with definitive rules and boundaries, and identifiable structures. One of the most absolute rules of the Metaverse, and the one that most ensures that it resembles Reality, is that people are unable to “just materialize anywhere...like Captain Kirk beaming down from on high.... It would break the metaphor” (34). You materialize in the House that you own in the Metaverse; if you are “some peon” who doesn’t own virtual real estate, you materialize in a Port (34). As an extension of this logic of sameness, to move about through the Metaverse, people – or, rather, their avatars – must walk or drive, or take the monorail, which is a “free piece of public utility software that enables users to change their location on the Street rapidly and smoothly” (25). The monorail is the virtual equivalent of the (franchised) mega-highways in Reality and fulfils the same function; it connects and aids movement between the different areas – capsules – of the Metaverse, just as the highways of Reality connect the ‘Burbclaves, FOQNEs and unaffiliated slum-lie areas of the rest of the city. And both the monorail and the highways

extend far beyond the easily accessible capsules in the Metaverse and in Reality; Hiro drives a motorbike from L.A. to Port Sherman, whilst Y.T. catches the train to a “black cube” (198) which is situated some “twenty thousand miles” (198) from the Street. Because they demonstrate the same rules of encapsulation, the similarities between the two spaces can be exploited by their users; Y.T., – “it stands for Yours Truly” (SC, 46) – whilst admitting that she’s “not that good at the Metaverse” (205), nevertheless understands that due to the many similarities between the two, “finding an address in the Metaverse shouldn’t be any more difficult than doing it in Reality, at least if you’re not a totally retarded ped” (205).<sup>44</sup> Like the real world, the borders in the Metaverse are only semi-permeable; whilst there are universally accessible spaces there are also private spaces, and spaces where only some people can go.

The Metaverse, however, privileges different people; those who can move with ease in Reality cannot necessarily do so in the virtual world. Whilst in Reality and carrying out her role as a Kourier, Y.T. has almost unlimited access to the different capsules of the fragmented city, and breaks the rules of encapsulation at will: “[she] has a visa to everywhere. It’s right there on her chest, a little bar code” (30). Crucially, Y.T. also understands the rules that govern encapsulation in Reality, and thus can undermine and transgress those rules; she can also predict the immediate consequences of those transgressions and use these to her advantage. This is illustrated early on in the novel, when, in the course of delivering a pizza on behalf of Hiro, she poons a bimbo box driven by a person whom she dubs “young Studley” (28).<sup>45</sup> Studley, like Hiro before him, views the Kourier pooned onto his vehicle as an unwanted parasite, and attempts to get rid of her:

This fucking Kourier is about to die, knotted around one of those fire hydrants. Studley the Testosterone Boy will see to it...

Y.T. does not know any of this for a fact, but she suspects it.... It is her reconstruction of the psychological environment inside of that bimbo box. She sees the hydrant coming a mile away, sees Studley reaching down to rest one hand on the parking brake. It is all so obvious. She feels sorry for Studley and his ilk. She reels out, gives herself lots of slack.... The minivan goes sideways...and doesn’t quite snap her around the way he wanted; she has to help it. As its ass is rotating around, she reels in hard, converting that gift of angular momentum into forward velocity, and ends up shooting right past the van going well over a mile a minute.

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<sup>44</sup> Ped = pedestrian. As a skateboard-toting Kourier, Y.T. appears to have almost as much contempt for those who travel on foot as she does for those who travel in bimbo boxes.

<sup>45</sup> A “MagnaPoon” (27), shortened to ‘poon’ throughout the novel, is the means by which Kouriers latch onto passing vehicles and are thus able to travel rapidly from one place to another. As the name implies, it is, to all extents and purposes, an electromagnetic harpoon.

Although Lisa Swanstrom notes that in the course of Y.T.'s role as a "skateboarding Kourier" she routinely breaches the perimeter of other capsules when she poons them (60-61), she does not explore what I think the above passage reveals: that Y.T. demonstrates not only an innate understanding of what can and will happen when she transgresses the rules of encapsulation in Reality, but also the ability to make that knowledge work to her advantage – abilities and knowledge that are comparable to Hiro's abilities within the Metaverse. This ability is also demonstrated in the opening sequences of the novel when Y.T. poons Hiro during the course of his last, frantic pizza delivery:

[Hiro] passes a slower car in the middle lane, then cuts right in front of him. The Kourier will have to unpoon or else be slammed sideways into the slower vehicle.

Done. The Kourier isn't ten feet behind him anymore – he is right there, peering in the rear window. Anticipating the maneuver [sic], the Kourier reeled in his cord, which is attached to a handle with a power reel in it, and is now right on top of the pizza mobile, the front wheel of his skateboard actually underneath the Deliverator's rear bumper.

(Stephenson, 13-14)

Hiro may be a master of the online world, but when it comes to the rules of rupture and flow in regards to Reality, he is outstripped and humbled by Y.T. the Kourier. By virtue of her understanding of the rules of movement between capsules and her ability to use that knowledge to transgress and penetrate boundaries, Y.T. has almost unlimited access in Reality; she can move between different 'Burbclaves and FOQNEs and can "easily [penetrate] airport security" at LAX (437). However, this almost universal access in Reality does not translate into access in the Metaverse: Y.T. is able to find her way around in the most basic of ways, and is granted access to some private property in the Metaverse by virtue of her association with Uncle Enzo, the head of Nova Sicilia (this franchise owns the pizza delivery company that Hiro works for at the beginning of the novel), yet she is still just "some skater come in done up in grainy black-and-white" (207) who is bound by the rules.<sup>46</sup> Contrasted against Y.T. is Hiro Protagonist, who has limited abilities to move between capsules in Reality once his time as a pizza delivery man ends, but who, as a hacker, has almost unlimited access to the virtual capsules of the Metaverse, and is able to break the rules of encapsulation in this space at will. In stark

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<sup>46</sup> The meaning of the phrase "black-and-white" will be made clear shortly, when I discuss hierarchy in the Metaverse.

contrast to Reality, where he shares a “spacious 20-by-30” (18) storage unit with his roommate, Hiro owns a “nice big house” (24) in what appears to be an exclusive (online) neighbourhood populated by hackers; he is thus automatically distinguished from and placed above those ‘peons’ who must materialise in a Port. He also, by virtue of his status as one of the first computer programmers – hackers – to develop the Metaverse, has access to one of the most exclusive and impenetrable spaces within the Metaverse: The Black Sun.

Like the Ancient House of *We* before it, The Black Sun is an architectural oddity that stands in stark contrast to its surroundings, a “large, low-slung black building... [that] is extraordinarily somber [sic] for the Street, like a parcel that someone forgot to develop...Above the door is a matte black hemisphere about a meter [sic] in diameter, set into the front wall of the building. It is the closest thing the place has to decoration” (37). I would suggest that this space, this capsule which “only a couple of thousand people” (38) in the world have access to, is in many ways a heterotopian successor to the Ancient House although it is, somewhat ironically, less accessible; whilst the Ancient House may have had few visitors, it was in theory open to all. Like the Ancient House, The Black Sun also functions as a site of personal crisis. It is in this space that Hiro re-encounters his former lover and fellow hacker, Juanita; this meeting and his desire to “figure out what’s on [her] mind” (215) precipitates his involvement in the quest to prevent L. Bob Rife – fittingly described as the “last of the nineteenth-century monopolists” (105) – from infecting users of the Metaverse (especially the programmers and hackers) with the Snow Crash virus that would “burn their minds” and subject them to his (mind) control (410). Whilst The Black Sun might allow only a select few through its doors and is in its own way as “opaque” (Zamiatin, 28) as the Ancient House, it also has the effect of briefly making visible those who were previously unseen (and unseeable):

When things get this jammed together, the computer simplifies things by drawing all of the avatars ghostly and translucent so you can see where you’re going. Hiro appears solid to himself, but everyone else looks like a ghost. He walks through the crowd as if it’s a fogbank, clearly seeing The Black Sun in front of him. He steps over the property line, and he’s in the doorway. And in that instant he becomes solid and visible to all the avatars milling outside.... Now that he’s all by himself in the entryway...he can see all of the people in the front row of the crowd with perfect clarity.

(Stephenson, 37-38)

In the moments before Hiro disappears into the inaccessible space that is The Black Sun, he becomes visible to everyone “milling” (38) in front of it just as they become more visible to him; it is a moment

of individuation, a moment where Hiro becomes distinct from the crowd that has previously hidden him. The liminal zone that Hiro here occupies, between the property line and the interior of The Black Sun, is, I would suggest, both the first 'sub-capsule' of the larger capsule that is The Black Sun and one of the first virtual heterotopian spaces of the novel. It is a marginal zone, standing as it does between two distinctly different spaces – the Street and The Black Sun – and one that upholds the rigid hierarchy at work in the Metaverse; only a special few, such as Hiro, can occupy it. Those who wish to join the exclusive clientele of The Black Sun mingle at the fringes of this zone with “run-of-the-mill psycho fans, devoted to the fantasy of stabbing some particular actress to death” (38). The existence of this zone, the dividing line between the privileged few of the Metaverse and other users allows Hiro to feel secure and anonymous. Because this is a heterotopian space, however, this sense of safety and anonymity is soon undermined and questioned:

Hiro realizes that the guy has noticed him and is staring back, looking him up and down...  
A grin spreads across the black-and-white guy's face. It is a satisfied grin. A grin of recognition. The grin of a man who knows something that Hiro doesn't.... He steps as close as he can and leans forward...  
'Hey, Hiro,' the black-and-white guy says, 'you want to try some Snow Crash?'"  
...Oddity the first: The guy knows Hiro's name.

(39)

Hiro, as is shown in the above passage, is not completely anonymous; neither is he completely invulnerable. The black-and-white avatar, later identified as Raven, may be unable to physically enter the capsule between The Black Sun and the Street that Hiro occupies and believes himself safe in, but he is still able to offer Hiro a “hypercard” (40) that contains the drug Snow Crash.<sup>47</sup> Although Hiro does not take the hypercard from Raven he is, for a small amount of time and unbeknownst to him, in a considerable amount of danger; Da5id, Hiro's friend and the founder of The Black Sun, has already accepted the “free sample” (40) that Raven also offers to him. This space between the Street and The Black Sun, which is supposed to represent the beginning of safety and segregation, is instead revealed to have deceptively penetrable boundaries.

This ambiguity does not stop at the doors of The Black Sun. Although Hiro might believe himself to be safe within this highly exclusive capsule it, like the buffer zone that precedes it, is still subject to the effects of rupture. This is not immediately obvious; at first glance The Black Sun appears

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<sup>47</sup> A hypercard is an online version of a business card, and represents a “chunk of data” (40) that can be passed from one user to another, and represents yet another layer of encapsulation within the Metaverse; it is a piece of data within a piece of data that contains yet more data.

highly encapsulated and self-contained. Inaccessible to the majority of Metaverse users, it also places further restrictions on those who *can* access it – “only so many people can be [in The Black Sun] at once” (51). Those who patronise The Black Sun are subdivided further, and inhabit one of the four areas; the “Nipponese Quadrant”, the “Rock Star Quadrant”, the “Movie Star Quadrant” and, of course, the “Hacker Quadrant” where Hiro belongs (52); within these quadrants there are also a series of closed off “private rooms” that avatars can meet in (185). There are also pieces of software in the club – known as daemons – that act as bouncers, removing “undesirables” from the bar (51); these might be users who are being disruptive or intrusive, or they might be “contagious” – someone whose personal computer is infected with viruses (51). That there is a need for security against virus-spreading avatars suggests, in the first instance, that the boundaries of The Black Sun are not as impenetrable as they initially appear. This is confirmed when Da5id, Hiro’s friend, “supreme hacker overlord, founding father of the Metaverse protocol, creator and proprietor of the world-famous Black Sun” is exposed to and succumbs to the Snow Crash virus within this sanctum, and is summarily ejected by his own daemons, despite the presence of apparently overwhelming quantities of “antiviral medicine” in his operating system (71, 67). Or, to put it another way, the ease with which supposedly impermeable boundaries can be penetrated in the Metaverse in general, and in The Black Sun specifically, is evinced by the way in which Snow Crash penetrates the boundaries of multiple capsules: it moves from the Street into the liminal zone that divides The Black Sun from the rest of the Metaverse, and from there moves into The Black Sun proper, and into Da5id’s operating system. The ‘secure’ boundaries of The Black Sun are ruptured again later in the novel, when an anonymous “Clint” gains access to the club and attempts to expose Hiro to the Snow Crash virus (189). That his attempt to do so is unsuccessful – thanks largely to Hiro’s finely-tuned sword-fighting reflexes – is beside the point; the fact that ‘he’ somehow gained access to what is supposed to be an exclusive zone – created and protected by hackers, no less – definitively demonstrates that the boundaries of The Black Sun are vulnerable to rupture and penetration. This final example of rupture in The Black Sun also, fittingly enough, begins to unfold some of the dynamic possibilities of The Black Sun – and, by extension, the Metaverse – by revealing the full (and hitherto undisclosed) potential and implications of the “tunnel system” that runs beneath The Black Sun, and, more importantly, Hiro’s relationship to those spaces (96).

Ostensibly “accessible only to the Graveyard Daemons” (96), it appears at first that this system of tunnels serves a vastly different purpose to those “endless corridors” that run beneath the Ancient House and out beyond the Green Wall (Zamiatin, 147); rather than allowing movement between (forbidden) spaces, it seems that they exist primarily to allow the aforementioned daemons to carry out their designated role – the removal and destruction of the “inert, dismembered avatars” that

result from combat in *The Black Sun* (Stephenson, 95). Although it is hinted that Hiro can access these tunnels, the implications of this are not explored until much later in the novel. In the aftermath of the unsuccessful attack on Hiro in *The Black Sun* by the Clint, however, it is revealed that not only did Hiro create the Graveyard Daemons, but that he is in fact “the one who coded those tunnels into *The Black Sun* to begin with” (190), and that he is the *only* person who can access them. Furthermore, it is revealed that the tunnels that the Graveyard Daemons inhabit extend beyond *The Black Sun*, and in fact allow movement beneath the surface of the Street, out into the hacker neighbourhood where Hiro’s virtual house is located, and up into the “basement – the room where Hiro does his hacking” (191). These tunnels, then, begin to display some of the same characteristics and perform similar functions to those found beneath the Ancient House; they allow for movement between different and seemingly unconnected capsules. And, as in *We*, the movement between *The Black Sun* and Hiro’s basement that the tunnels facilitates is transgressive; in *We*, the tunnels facilitate movement between acceptable and forbidden spaces – and, indirectly, for movement between the respective genetic pools of the members of *The OneState* and those who live beyond the Green Wall – whereas in *SC*, the tunnels allow Hiro – and only Hiro – to move in secrecy between two virtual spaces without traversing the Street. What these tunnels also do, however, is reveal Hiro’s role and function as a hacker in the Metaverse: he not only takes advantage of the tunnels and the movement between different capsules that they afford him, but actually *creates* and alters these spaces as he requires them. They, and the daemons that inhabit them, enable him to safely obtain a copy of the online version of *Snow Crash*, which in turn allows him to hack into it and create an ‘antidote’ to it. This is a crucial difference between Hiro, D-503 and Winston, and also between *The Black Sun*, the Metaverse and their prototypically heterotopian predecessors in *We* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The nature of the relationship between D-503 and the Ancient House, and between Winston and Charrington’s apartment is essentially one-sided; the heterotopian spaces that they come into contact with effect change, crisis and deviation in D-503 and Winston, but remain unchanged – and perhaps unchangeable – themselves. This is not the case in *Snow Crash*; as *The Black Sun* and the tunnels beneath it reveals, the relationship between space and user is much more dynamic and reciprocal, if no less ambiguous. As I have already noted, it is *The Black Sun*’s role as meeting point that brings Hiro back into contact with Juanita; this encounter, in combination with the infection of Da5id with *Snow Crash*, sends Hiro on the quest that, whilst propelling much of the action in the novel, also – and far more importantly – changes Hiro’s view of himself and the spaces around him at a fundamental level. In the case of Hiro, however, his occupation as a hacker means that he is able to alter these spaces and the rules that govern them and thus – unlike D-503 and Winston – is not completely at the mercy of them.

This is demonstrated initially by Hiro's use of Bigboard to subvert the rules of encapsulation at work within *The Black Sun*, but is cemented by the depiction of the swordfight that occurs in the club between Hiro and a Nipponese businessman.<sup>48</sup> Immediately after Da5id succumbs to Snow Crash and is ejected by his daemons from his own bar, Hiro is confronted by (the avatar of) a "neo-traditional" (Stephenson, 79) Nipponese businessman who is, like Hiro's avatar, depicted as wearing a kimono and "two swords – the long katana on his left hip and the one-handed wakizashi stuck diagonally in his waistband" (70). This businessman takes exception to a man of Hiro's appearance and apparent ethnicity – Hiro's mother is Korean, and his father was African-American – carrying "ancient" Nipponese swords (79), and challenges him to single combat:

The businessman turns out to have a lot of *zanshin*. Translating this concept into English is like translating "fuckface" into Nipponese, but it might translate into "emotional intensity" in football lingo.... "Emotional intensity" doesn't convey the half of it, of course.... The word "zanshin" is larded down with a lot of other folderol that you have to be Nipponese to understand.

...Hiro doesn't have any *zanshin* at all. He just wants this over with. The next time the businessman sets up his ear-splitting screech and shuffles toward Hiro, cutting and snapping his blade, Hiro parries the attack, turns around, and cuts both of his legs off just above the knees...

"Well, land sakes!" Hiro says. "Lookee here!" He whips his blade sideways, cutting off both of the businessman's forearms, causing the sword to clatter onto the floor. He whips his blade sideways, cutting off both of the businessman's forearms, causing the sword to clatter onto the floor.

"Better fire up the ol' barbeque, Jemima!" Hiro continues, whipping the sword around sideways, cutting the businessman's body in half just above the navel. Then he leans down so he's looking right into the businessman's face. "Didn't anyone tell you," he says, losing the dialect, "that I was a hacker?"

Then he hacks the guy's head off.

(80-82, emphasis in original)

That there are a great many undercurrents at play in, and multiple ways of interpreting this passage seems patently obvious. For now, however, I wish to examine this passage in terms of Hiro 'hacking'

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<sup>48</sup> Nippon (or more usually, Nihon), is the formal (Japanese) name for Japan, and is used instead of the more familiar term throughout the novel.

into the Nipponese businessman. At the conclusion of their duel, Hiro literally hacks the head of the businessman off, having first removed the arms and legs from his avatar. This 'hacking' means that the businessman is "disconnected" (82) from the Metaverse; his avatar has been killed, and he will not be able to return to the Metaverse or The Black Sun until his forcibly disassembled avatar has been collected and destroyed by the Graveyard Daemons. As has already been revealed, Hiro is the one who created the Graveyard Daemons, raising the possibility that he could stop the destruction of the businessman's avatar, and thus prevent him from ever regaining access to the Metaverse. Hiro's power over who can and cannot access the Metaverse, only hinted at with the 'death' of the Nipponese businessman, is made explicit during the final showdown with Raven. All Hiro has to do is "take his head off" because if he kills Raven, "[Raven] gets kicked out of the system. And he can't sign back on until the Graveyard Daemons dispose of his avatar" – Hiro is the one who "[controls] the Graveyard Daemons" (411). Thus, if Hiro kills Raven's avatar, he can prevent him from ever logging back into the Metaverse.

Hiro's ability to control access to the Metaverse is also demonstrated by the two final ways in which he 'hacks' the businessman. One of these has implications for the (heterotopian) treatment of subjectivity and identity in the novel, and will be examined shortly; this is Hiro's understanding the concept of *zanshin* and the ways in which he turns it against the Nipponese businessman. The other is perhaps the most important in terms of Hiro's ability to influence the spaces around him. Hiro wins his fight against the Nipponese businessman – and, quite probably, most of the other online duels he engages in – less because he is "the greatest sword fighter in the world" (97) and more because he "wrote the software" (97); that is, Hiro is in fact the person who originally wrote the code that allows avatars to engage in sword-fights in the Metaverse. This means that he not only has an understanding of virtual sword-fighting on a fundamental level, but that he will know of any – and perhaps have written in – coding 'loopholes' that allow him to get the better of an opponent in a virtual sword-fight; this is all but confirmed somewhat later in the novel when it is revealed that his avatar's katana has been coded in such a way as to make it "all-penetrating" (407). To put it another way, it is Hiro's ability to hack into and (re) programme the spaces that surround him online that grants him the proficiency to physically hack into the avatars of those who challenge him. As the sword-fight in The Black Sun reveals, "it takes a lot of practise to make your avatar move through the Metaverse like a real person" (82). And although Hiro demonstrates some sword-wielding abilities in Reality, he is clearly not a master swordsman as he acknowledges in the wake of his first encounter with Raven: "He knows he was totally unprepared. The spear [that Raven threw] just came at him. He slapped at it with the blade.

He happened to slap it at the right time, and it missed him” (172).<sup>49</sup> Hiro may be good with a blade, but he’s probably not good enough to be ranked “Number One” out of “890 people who have ever participated in a sword fight in The Black Sun” (83). In short, Hiro, in his capacity as programmer and hacker, quite literally hacks the Nipponese businessman and their online sword-fight.

Hiro’s abilities and occupation as a hacker mean that he occupies a pole position not only within the ranks of virtual sword-fighters, but also within the Metaverse itself. Those few who have the ability to access it in the first instance – it has not, Daniel Grassian’s statement to the contrary, “all but” (253) replaced Reality as the most utilised and highly populated space in the novel – are then sorted into a rigid hierarchy which is dependent on the appearance of their avatars. Much like The Black Sun, which replicates its structures in miniature, the Metaverse is not even remotely a utopian space. Although it seems to be in many ways an idyllic retreat from the grim fragmentation, it is, as Grassian notes, still as “polarised by wealth and power” as Reality is (253), and as such is a highly ambiguous and exclusive capsule that is accessible only to a privileged few:

In the real world – planet Earth, Reality – there are somewhere between six and ten billion people. At any given time, most of them are making mud bricks of field-stripping their AK-47s. Perhaps a billion of them have enough money to own a computer; these people have more money than all of the others put together. Of these billion potential computer owners, maybe a quarter of them actually bother to own computers, and a quarter of these have machines that are powerful enough to handle the Street protocol. That makes for about sixty million people who can be on the Street at any given time. Add in another sixty million or so who can’t really afford it but go there anyway, by using public machines, or machines owned by their school or their employer, and at any given time the Street is occupied by twice the population of New York City.

That’s why the damn place is so overdeveloped. Put in a sign or a building on the Street and the hundred million richest, hippest, best-connected people will see it every day of their lives.

(Stephenson, 24-25)

In other words, approximately one point five percent of people have access to the Street. Whilst the differentiation between the Street, the areas that surround the Street (such as the online neighbourhoods where the houses of the likes of Hiro and Ng can be found), “Downtown” (24) and the Metaverse in general is not always clear, if we calculate Metaverse access in general based on the

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<sup>49</sup> This is in fact Hiro’s second encounter with Raven, but the first in Reality; their first ‘meeting’ takes place outside The Black Sun.

numbers that are provided in the above passage, it is still only around three percent of people living within the world of the novel who have access to this online space. This encapsulation and exclusivity undermines the idea that the Metaverse is a utopian space; Hiro views it as such – at least throughout the early stages of the novel – because he has access to it. Despite the fact that he actually falls into the category of those people who “can’t really afford the computer” (20) that he uses to access the Metaverse, Hiro bypasses this by virtue of being a part of the “little neighbourhood of hackers” (24). Hiro is, in effect, a part of what we might call the ‘old aristocracy’ – elsewhere they are referred to as the “technological priesthood” (380) – of the Metaverse; even though he has no wealth in Reality to speak of, he is able to take advantage of his connections and his occupation and not only penetrate the boundaries that keep most people out of the Metaverse, but continue to associate and be associated with the highest echelons of its society.

Hiro’s position at the top of the Metaverse’s hierarchy is revealed not only by his access to such exclusive spaces such as The Black Sun, but by the avatar that he uses to represent himself when he is online and the ways in which this avatar sets him apart from – and above – other users. Although it is not immediately apparent, a hierarchy that is intimately connected with wealth and / or power and is enacted by the appearance of avatars underpins much of the interaction within the Metaverse. Whilst online, users can conceivably present themselves in any way that they see fit: “If you’re ugly, you can make your avatar beautiful.... You can look like a gorilla or a dragon or a giant talking penis.... Spend five minutes walking down the Street and you will see all of these” (33-34). The idea that there are boundless possibilities for the (re)presentation of users via the appearance of their avatar is, of course, a fundamentally utopian one, and has positive connotations for the exploration of alternate subjectivities and identities. As I will illustrate, whilst the Metaverse *does* allow its users a certain freedom from the constraints of their real life identities and subjectivity, it *also* imposes a new hierarchy and thus creates new restraints on its users based on those very same avatars that seemingly allow them freedom of expression and exploration. Users can indeed look like walking phalluses or dragons if they so desire, but this ability to represent themselves is dependent on the limitations of either their equipment – *if* they have the knowledge that allows them to code their own avatar – or their buying power. In this way avatars function in a way that is reminiscent of branded clothing, high fashion and ‘normal’ clothing in Reality (in a way that will likely be instantly recognisable to many readers); just as certain assumptions are made about a person because of the way in which they dress and the ‘labels’ that they wear, so too are assumptions made about a person because of the appearance of their avatar. This connection between clothing and avatars is made explicit and demonstrated by the different experiences of Y.T. and Hiro:

As soon as [Y.T.] steps out into the Street, people start giving her these looks. The same kind of looks that people give her when she walks through the worsted-wool desolation of the Westlake Corporate Park in her dynamic blue-and-orange Kourier gear. She knows that the people in the Street are giving her dirty looks because she's just coming in from a shitty public terminal. She's a trashy black-and-white-person.

(205-206)

Y.T.'s Kourier uniform, which is viewed with hostility and scorn by those wearing worsted-wool suits (which are traditionally tailor-made) in Reality, is unequivocally equated here with the "jerky, grainy black and white" (38) avatar which occupies the lowest rung on the Metaverse hierarchy; just as Y.T.'s Kourier gear indicates that she is a "parasite" (13), a messenger and quite probably a "thrasher" (13), her black-and-white avatar indicates that she is unable to afford her own equipment or avatar.<sup>50</sup> If it were to be put into clothing terms, the black-and-white avatar is the equivalent of something purchased from Walmart – it is cheap, low-quality, and usually associated with people of 'lower class.' The description and experience of Hiro and his avatar is considerably different to that of Y.T.:

Hiro's avatar just looks like Hiro, with the difference that no matter what Hiro is wearing in Reality, his avatar always wears a black leather kimono. Most hacker types don't go in for garish avatars, because they know that it takes a lot more sophistication to render a realistic human face than a talking penis. Kind of the way people who really know clothing can appreciate the fine details that separate a cheap gray wool suit from an expensive hand-tailored gray wool suit.

(34)

Quite clearly, Hiro's avatar is the equivalent of an expensive hand-tailored wool suit. As this second passage shows, a categorical connection is drawn between tailor-made (whether it be woollen suits or avatars) and a high position in the hierarchy of the Metaverse. It is of interest to note that whilst Hiro could easily create a wide range of avatars for himself, he chooses – or, perhaps more accurately, is forced by expectation – to merely depict himself online; he is a hacker, and thus is required to appear sophisticated, realistic – and quite likely slightly boring – whilst online.

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<sup>50</sup> In the novel, as in current parlance, a thrasher is a term that usually indicates either a skateboarder or a fan of metal; in the context of *Snow Crash*, it tends to indicate both. Kouriers, by and large, utilise skateboards to make their deliveries. The *Thrasher* magazine referenced by Y.T. (pp25-26) is an actual magazine written by and for skateboarders.

A further, finer and more subtle distinction is drawn between those who can code their own avatars, and those who have the money to pay for one to be made for them. I have previously likened Hiro to a member of an old aristocracy, but it might be more fitting for him to be likened to online royalty which is comprised of hackers and programmers. As two prominent figures in the community of hackers, it is no mistake, I think, that Hiro is described as a “warrior prince” in the Metaverse (58), and Da5id as an “overlord” (71). If the royalty of the virtual world are those who can create their own avatars, then the aristocracy of the Metaverse consists of those who can afford to have an avatar custom-made for them, but lack the ability to create or code on for themselves; these are people like the Nipponese rapper Sushi-K, who has access to The Black Sun but employs Hiro to create his avatar for him. The online hierarchy of the Metaverse is further enforced by the descriptions of what we might think of as the virtual ‘middle classes’ or, in the terminology of the novel, “peons” (34). These are the users who “can’t afford to have custom avatars made and don’t know how to write their own” (34) and who have to buy an avatar off the shelf – or, if we’re still thinking in terms of clothing, off the rack. These users can purchase an “Avatar Construction Set™” (35) and put a semi-customised avatar together out of miscellaneous parts (this of course takes extra money), or they can purchase a “Brandy” if they wish to appear female, or a “Clint” if they wish to appear male (35). Highly stereotypical in appearance – Brandys have “three breast sizes: improbable, impossible, and ludicrous” whilst Clints are “craggy and handsome” (35), and both have a narrow range of facial expressions – these avatars appear to make up a large proportion of Metaverse users; Hiro notes idly that “there are enough Clints and Brandys to found a new ethnic group” (35). There are also degrees of Brandy (and presumably Clint); there is a clear difference in quality – and therefore status – between a “standard” Brandy and “the cheap Taiwanese Brandy knockoffs” (67). The lowest class of avatar is, of course, the aforementioned “black-and-white” (38), who are regarded almost universally with disdain.

The hierarchy that becomes evident through an examination of the avatars used to represent users of the Metaverse, then, undermines some of the more utopian potentials of the Metaverse; whilst it is theoretically possible for users to represent themselves in any way they desire, the reality is that most cannot. The space that appears to promise freedom of representation and the ability to explore different identities is instead highly ambiguous and heterotopian in nature; the majority of Metaverse users who are unable to buy or code avatars that are “like *Playboy* pinups turned three-dimensional...[or] tornadoes of gyrating light” (38, emphasis in original) are instead forced to assume one of a few arbitrary online identities – they can either be a Clint or a Brandy, or they can be a black-and-white. And whilst there may be an element of freedom in being either anonymous as just another Clint, Brandy or black-and-white, or by appearing as male when you are in fact female or vice versa,

all of these kinds of avatar come with pre-determined narratives and subjectivities attached to them. In particular, Clint and Brandy, forming as they do their own 'new' ethnic group – that is to say an ethnic group that is highly stereotypical in appearance and most likely, given the people that they are by and large marketed to, white – do not challenge or undermine issues of identity and (self) representation. Rather, they merely allow for the transposition and replication of elements of the hierarchical elements of the real world in the Metaverse. They – and by extension their users – participate in what Lisa Nakamura labels “cybertyping” (5); that is, they help to produce “stable images” (6) of (white) self and identity that can act as a counter to the (potential) fluidity of self that the Metaverse could – or should – enable. The cybertyping of the Metaverse is not just limited to the masses of Brandys, Clints and black-and-whites; there are also the stereotypically performed Nipponese businessmen, who are “exquisitely rendered by their fancy equipment, but utterly reserved and boring in their suits” (Stephenson, 38). And it is not just the middle and lower classes of the Metaverse who are forced, by the appearance of their avatars, into specific narratives whilst they are online. There is no indication given to the contrary that Da5id’s avatar is anything other than a straightforward portrayal of how he appears in Reality. As I have already mentioned, as another of the established hacker elite Hiro is also bound by the unwritten rules of hierarchy that govern self-representation in the Metaverse; the avatar that he customarily uses is a refined and deceptively simplistic depiction of his image in Reality.

The Metaverse, however, is not a dystopian space; it is a heterotopian space and Hiroaki Protagonist is first and foremost a hacker. As such he is able, even as he appears to cleave to them, to undermine the hierarchical rules of self-representation and portrayal that in their turn appear to challenge the ability of Metaverse users to depict and explore their selves as they see fit. Hiro is not alone in this undertaking – another hacker, Juanita, also challenges the rules of representation within the Metaverse. Although Juanita is the programmer who “was the one who figured out a way to make avatars show something close to real emotion” (59), creating the code that allows high-quality avatars to have realistic facial features, she herself eschews the unwritten rule that as a hacker she must have an avatar that is a faithful representation and appears in *The Black Sun* as a black-and-white “fax-of-life” (62) instead. The reactions to her grainy appearance in this most refined and exclusive of places are telling: “the movie stars give her drop-dead looks, and the hackers purse their lips and stare reverently” (65). Those with the deeper understanding of the rules of the Metaverse – the hackers – can appreciate not only the irony of Juanita’s appearance as a black-and-white, but also the enormity of her contravention of the unwritten rules. Juanita’s transgression of expectations surrounding avatars and self-representation is far more overt than Hiro’s, and, coupled with her general eschewal

of the Metaverse in general, constitutes an almost outright rebellion. In this way she is somewhat reminiscent of I-330, although the resistance that she leads against the homogenising forces of L. Bob Rife and the remnants of the United States (both of whom seek to make hackers and programmers into “assembly-line workers” [36]) has a definite agenda and timeline, unlike I-330’s revolution for revolution’s sake. The ways in which Hiro challenges the rules of representation online are far more subtle than Juanita’s, and are implicitly tied to his knowledge of himself as a Hacker. This is demonstrated by the form and compilation of *both* of his avatars; one is his standard avatar, and the other is his invisible avatar. Coded later in the novel in response to the possibilities of the “new and more dangerous Metaverse” (329-330), Hiro’s invisible avatar is “illegal” in many of the different capsules of the Metaverse, and is comprised of “bits and pieces” of various avatars that Hiro has written over the years (330); it is in no way meant to represent Hiro himself and as such appears to undermine the rules of representation that govern the use of avatars within the Metaverse. Perhaps more intriguingly, Hiro’s invisible avatar transgresses the expectations of show and spectacle that appear to govern appearance within the Metaverse; from Sushi K’s hair-do that radiates a “fan of orange beams...[that] keeps moving, turning around, shaking from side to side” (69) to the “stunningly beautiful” avatars of aspiring actresses (38), the majority of custom-made avatars within the Metaverse are designed to be *seen*. Hiro, who regards the virtual realm as a place of work as well as recreation, creates his invisible avatar so that he can continue his work as a hacker. At the same time as it transgresses the rules of realistic representation, however, the invisible avatar can actually be seen as upholding them; whilst it may not constitute a literal representation of Hiro, it is a composite and as such is – despite being invisible – perhaps an even more realistic representation of Hiro than his regular avatar is. No matter what Hiro is wearing whilst in Reality, his every day avatar “always wears a black leather kimono” (34) and the antique swords that he inherited from his father. Hiro is not Nipponese. He views their attitudes towards their programmers with barely disguised horror – they “have to wear white shirts and show up at eight in the morning and sit in cubicles and go to meetings” (36) – and his only tangible social connections with Nipponese culture are oppressive; his father was held as a POW in a Nipponese prison camp whilst “his mother was a Korean woman whose people had been mine slaves” there (57). Not only is Hiro not Nipponese, he *looks* distinctly non-Nipponese; despite the fact that his eyes “look Asian” courtesy of his mother, “the rest of him looks more like his father, who was African by way of Texas” with “cappuccino skin and spiky, truncated dreadlocks” (19-20). His (avatar’s) donning of a kimono, then, represents a challenge not only to the rules of realistic representation that govern the avatars of the elite, but also to – once again largely unwritten – rules of ethnic and racial (self)representation online. It is with this context in mind that I wish now to return to Hiro’s sword-fight with the Nipponese businessman in *The Black Sun*.

It is the appearance of Hiro's avatar – distinctly non-Nipponese but wearing a kimono and, more importantly, a set of samurai swords – and the challenge that it poses to the rigid rules of self-representation that leads to his fight in *The Black Sun* in the first instance. I have already briefly touched on the concept of cybertyping, and one of the ways in which it can be seen at work in the Metaverse, depicting Nipponese users as stereotypically 'Asian businessmen.' By having his avatar wear a kimono and samurai swords, Hiro, with his defiantly non-white *and* non-Nipponese appearance, poses a challenge to not one but two (competing) cultural norms:

'These –' the businessman says. 'Very nice.'

'Thank you, sir. Please feel free to converse in Nipponese if you prefer.'

'This is what your avatar wears. You do not carry such weapons in Reality,' the businessman says. In English.

'I'm sorry to be difficult, but in fact, I do carry such weapons in Reality,' Hiro says.

... 'These are ancient weapons, then,' the businessman says.

'Yes, I believe they are.'

'How did you come to be in possession of such important family heirlooms from Nippon?' the businessman says.

Hiro knows the subtext here: *What do you use those swords for, boy, slicing watermelon?*

(79, emphasis in original)

Not only does the businessman here challenge the truthfulness of Hiro's depiction of self by declaring that Hiro only wears his Nipponese swords for show in the Metaverse, but he rejects Hiro's offer to converse with him in his own language and goes on to question whether or not Hiro's father gained the swords honourably, suggesting that they were won "gambling" (79) rather than in single combat as is traditional. Or, to put it another way, the businessman challenges Hiro on the basis of what he perceives to be biographical and historical (un)truths behind Hiro's (narrative) representation of his self. As Swanstrom notes, the basis for the Nipponese businessman's challenge appears to be, in the first instance, "racially motivated" (64); this is supported by Hiro's own understanding of the subtext of the businessman's questioning of him – watermelons, of course, having a long and problematic history of association with African-Americans.<sup>51</sup> When viewed in this light, then, the sword-fight between Hiro and the Nipponese businessman can be construed as a fight over differing beliefs about

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<sup>51</sup> The title of Melvin van Peebles ground-breaking film *Watermelon Man* (1970) references this stereotype, as does Cheryl Dunye's *Watermelon Woman* (1996). In December 2014 *The Atlantic* published an article ('How Watermelons Became a Racist Trope') tracing the origins of the association; this article can be found online and is a useful introduction to this topic.

(self) representation and the limitations of cultural and ethnic boundaries. Hiro, as one who continually tests and penetrates such boundaries, takes up the challenge, 'hacking' the businessman not only with a sword and his programming abilities but also on a cultural level as he defends his representation of his online self. In the early stages of the sword-fight, Hiro, analysing the businessman's display of zanshin and sword-fighting techniques, recognises that "like most Nipponese sword fighters, all he knows is *kendo*. Kendo is to real samurai sword fighting what fencing is to real swashbuckling: an attempt to take a highly disorganized [sic], chaotic, violent, and brutal conflict and turn it into a cute game. As in fencing, you're only supposed to attack certain parts of the body" (Stephenson, 81, emphasis in original). By understanding the implications this has for the ways in which the fight is supposed to be carried out, Hiro is able to undermine and anticipate the businessman; he parries an attack and, knowing that the businessman will still be following the formulas of kendo, turns around and cuts off his legs. By the rules of the 'game' that the businessman is playing, Hiro cheats; I would suggest instead that he, having displayed an understanding of it, simply hacks the businessman's fighting style and culture. This in turn allows him to literally hack into his opponent's avatar. This is not the extent of his culture-hacking activities, however. Having disarmed – or perhaps more accurately de-legged – his opponent, Hiro then systematically hacks him to pieces. Swanstrom suggests that by doing this whilst wearing a kimono and a set of samurai swords, Hiro is not only performing a kind of "vengeance" (65) upon a culture he finds oppressive, but he is also moving "beyond his real-world ethnic identity and [becoming] something else entirely" (65). I disagree with this assertion. As he hacks the businessman to pieces, Hiro keeps up a stream of dialogue that he delivers in what we can imagine is a stereotypically Southern African-American "dialect" (Stephenson, 82). By parodying the kind of speech that the Nipponese businessman might have expected – given Hiro's appearance – to hear when he began the confrontation, Hiro is not moving beyond his real-world ethnic identity so much as he is instead reaffirming it by way of a performed stereotype; his father, after all, originally came from Texas. At the same time as he reaffirms the ethnic identity that he displays quite openly in the Metaverse, however, he *also* asserts the right of a half-Korean, half-African-American hacker to wear online the symbols of Nipponese culture and to carry the swords that his father won in single combat, according to the dictates of Nipponese culture. Thus Hiro, aided by the technologies and heterotopian spaces of the Metaverse begins to display a subjectivity that owes its origins to multiple ethnic and cultural sources; he displays, in other words, what we can begin to think of as a hybrid identity. This online confrontation, and the implications it has for Hiro's identity as multiple and evolving, is analogous to another altercation that takes place later in the novel, this time in Reality. Whilst in the "Towne Hall" (276) of a "Snooze 'n' Cruise" (282), Hiro is asked by a "New South African" with the words "RACIALLY INSENSITIVE" tattooed across his forehead to clarify whether

he is “a lazy shiftless watermelon-eating black-ass nigger, or a sneaky little v.d.-infected gook?” (281).<sup>52</sup> Having ascertained that the New South African and the “dozen or so other men” with him intend to – at the very least – “beat the shit out of” him (281-282), Hiro uses his katana to cut off the head of his assailant. The explicitly racist discourse aside – the racism that fuelled the Nipponese businessman’s confrontation was implicit, if still obvious – what is most striking about this conflict is that not only is Hiro’s appearance again the basis for it, but that the New South African’s question only allows for Hiro to be one or the other; it presupposes that his (ethnic) identity is dualistic, fixed and (pre)determined by biology. Like the Nipponese businessman before him, the New South African seems unable to comprehend that Hiro is both, and neither; I would suggest that Hiro’s deft decapitation of the “porky white man” (281) is as much a refutation of the binary state of being that he – the white man (who is in turn subjected to and reduced by the narrative to a stereotypically ‘white-trash’ appearance and outlook) – advocates as it is of the racist discourse that fuels it.

The multiplicity of Hiro’s subjectivity and the hybrid nature of his identity is not only aided and fostered by the online spaces of the Metaverse. Although his (online) identity as a hacker is of great importance to Hiro’s conception of himself and his place in the world, he also embodies and explores a multitude of differing – and sometimes complementary – narratives and subjectivities whilst inhabiting the different capsules of Reality. Like D-503 and Winston before him, Hiro is on a quest to figure out who he really is; unlike them, he has the ability – thanks to the preponderance of heterotopian spaces around him – to explore different narrative arcs of his self. At the beginning of the novel, he is “The Deliverator” (1); he is not actually introduced as ‘Hiro’ until seventeen pages into the novel and after the destruction of his “black chariot of pepperoni fire” (7) – the purpose-built pizza delivery car that functions as the central symbol of his Deliverator role. Dressed in a uniform that is as “black as activated charcoal” he belongs to “an elite order, a hallowed subcategory” (1). Or, rather, he is a pizza delivery driver for “CosaNostra Pizza, Incorporated” (4). CosaNostra Pizza is the pizza chain run and owned by Nova Sicilia, the franchised incarnation of the Mafia, which is one of the most powerful franchulates within the fragmented spaces of the novel. Headed by the “avuncular” Uncle Enzo (8), the Mafia represents itself as a family, and encourages its employees to buy into this particular narrative. As part of this ‘family’, Hiro takes great pride in his Deliverator identity, never delivering a pizza “in more than twenty-one minutes” (3) and building a narrative of power, speed and

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<sup>52</sup> The Snooze ‘n’ Cruise in question is a representative of a series of franchised road-side motor camps; the Towne Hall is another franchise, a large inflatable building located within the Snooze ‘n’ Cruise, which in turn houses “a few franchises-within franchises” (276) – pubs, convenience stores, laundromats etc. Both of these franchulates demonstrate the encapsulation at work within Reality to the nth degree. New South Africa is a franchised ‘Burbclave; as I have previously mentioned, its inhabitants are extremely racist and exclusively white.

mystery around it. After he crashes and destroys his pizza delivery car, however, he is no longer a part of the family; his tenure as the Deliverator comes to an end and he slides effortlessly back into his “auxiliary emergency backup job” as an information gatherer, or a “freelance stringer for the CIC, the Central Intelligence Corporation of Langley, Virginia” (20). It should be noted here that the role that Hiro assumes as a CIC stringer is also associated with another, rather undesirable subjectivity that he comes dangerously close to assuming during the course of the novel – that of a “gargoyle” (115). In addition to the identities and subjectivities that spring from his various jobs, Hiro is also subject to his peculiar cultural and ethnic background, which has already been referenced earlier in this chapter: “his father was a sergeant major, his mother was a Korean woman whose people had been mine slaves in Nippon, and Hiro didn’t know whether he was black or Asian or just plain Army, whether he was rich or poor, educated or ignorant, talented or lucky. He didn’t even have a part of the country to call home until he moved to California, which is about as specific as saying that you live in the Northern Hemisphere” (57). There are a welter of possible identities at play in Hiro’s background, and all of them are true in different ways, at different times. Living as he does in a U-Stor-It in the fragmented remnants of the inner city, Hiro is implicitly associated with the (supposed) detritus of society that gathers there, “street people” (179) and the immigrants who have been “thrown out like shrapnel” (179); that is, the poor. At the same time, however, that same U-Stor-It is described as “spacious” and as possessing marks of “distinction and luxury” (18) in comparison to its near neighbours, whilst the other inhabitants of the inner city are “the technomedia priesthood...young smart people like Da5id and Hiro, who take the risk of living in the city because they like stimulation and they know they can handle it” (179). Add into consideration Hiro’s wealth in the Metaverse – which begins to cross-over into Reality towards the end of the novel – and it starts to become apparent that Hiro is not rich *or* poor, talented *or* lucky; he is all of these things – and more – at once, depending upon which space he is inhabiting, and which narrative he is giving precedence to. The hybridity of Hiro’s subjectivity and identity is demonstrated and enabled initially by his Army background, which, by virtue of its semi-nomadic lifestyle, exposes him to a variety of different people and places whilst he is growing up, and compounded by his association with the Mafia, and his status as a citizen of Mr. Lee’s Greater Hong Kong.<sup>53</sup> The Mafia under Uncle Enzo is what Swanstrom terms “an ethnically diverse workforce” (Swanstrom, 62) that actively recruits from a variety of different backgrounds; one of the Mafia’s recruitment billboards depicts “Uncle Enzo holding up one hand to stop an Uzi-toting Hispanic scumbag; behind him stands a pan-ethnic phalanx of kids and grannies, resolutely gripping baseball bats and frying pans” (Stephenson, 136). Mr. Lee’s Greater Hong Kong is similarly heterogeneous,

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<sup>53</sup> By the time Hiro reaches an age to attend college, he is described as having lived in cities in New Jersey, Washington, North Carolina, Georgia, Texas, Kansas and New York, as well as in Germany and Korea.

advertising itself as a “quasi-national entity” (92) that believes in “the potentials of all ethnic races and anthropologies to merge” (92) under one banner. The military is in fact described as its own ethnic group with its own peculiarities: “Black kids didn’t talk like black kids. Asian kids didn’t bust their asses to excel in school. White kids, by and large, didn’t have any problem getting along with the black and Asian kids” (54). As is suggest here, the Army here can be seen as a kind of a melting-pot, a breeding-ground for multiplicity and cultural amalgamation; the swords that Hiro carries, which add another layer to his subjectivity and which seem to be incorporated into any narrative he enacts – he carries them as the Deliverator, uses them (and loses his job for using them) as a security guard, and always wears them whilst in the Metaverse – come to him by way of his (father’s) involvement with the Army. Hiro’s ethnic and cultural background, then, is not just Asian-African-American, it is Army-Korean-African-American, complemented by aspects of Nipponese culture that is represented in the first instance by the swords that he carries.

Hiro’s identities in both the Metaverse and Reality are multiple and shifting, and are enabled in the first instance by the space(s) that surround him; in the Metaverse he is able, through the appearance of his avatar, to express the multitude of different cultures that make up his world-view, whilst in Reality he is able to experiment with different roles and the narratives that accompany them. And whilst that grants him a level of freedom of self-expression that D-503 and Winston can only dream about, it also creates ambiguity and confusion for Hiro, who, despite the welter of different identities and different narratives available to him for exploration, nonetheless spends much of the novel trying to understand himself; just as we saw in *We* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, even as the heterotopian spaces of the novel enable Hiro’s exploration of his self they also subvert it, ultimately leaving him vulnerable to – if not the actual drug – then to the repercussions of Snow Crash and the implications it has for the destabilisation of identity and boundaries, and the nature of the heterotopian spaces within the novel. Although Hiro doesn’t sample Snow Crash, and thus is not subjected – literally – to or “brainwashed” (304) by it, he does begin to exhibit at least one behaviour that is similar to the drug during his exploration of different identities; that is, he begins to transcend, rather than simply rupture, the boundaries that are not meant to be breached. Snow Crash is able to penetrate and infect the brain, the body, *and* the computer of those who use it simultaneously. This, along with the fact that it enables the “hypnotization and control” (Grassian, 264) of those who are exposed to it, is what makes it so dangerous; it penetrates boundaries that are supposed to be impenetrable, creating flow between capsules that are meant to be discrete, and, crucially, enables humans and computers to be treated as one and the same thing. When he begins to take on the subjectivity of a “gargoyle” (Stephenson, 248), Hiro does something similar; he begins to occupy both Reality and the Metaverse simultaneously, and breaks down the barriers between himself and his

computer, displaying what we might think of as a cyborg-hybrid subjectivity. Although they are stringers – information gatherers and programmers – and thus *should* occupy a rank that is not that far below the hackers, because of the collapse of these boundaries that gargoyles represent they are instead viewed with a certain amount of derision, scorn and pity:

Gargoyles represent the embarrassing side of the Central Intelligence Corporation. Instead of using laptops, they wear their computers on their bodies, broken up into separate modules that hang on the waist, so the back, on the headset. They serve as human surveillance devices...nothing looks stupider; these getups are the modern-day equivalent of the slide-rule scabbard or the calculator pouch on the belt, marking the user as belonging to a class that is at once above and far below human society...The payoff for this self-imposed ostracism is that you can be in the Metaverse all the time, and gather intelligence all the time.

(115)

Here gargoyles are represented as not only embarrassing and stupid looking, but – more significantly – as belonging to a ‘class’ that is somewhat less than human and equated implicitly, by virtue of their association with the slide-ruler and calculator, with the figure of ‘the geek.’<sup>54</sup> Lagos, the first gargoyle that appears in the novel, is described as “rude” and “no fun to talk to” (116); he may be physically present in Reality, ostensibly making conversation with Hiro, but he is also “adrift in a laser-drawn world, scanning retinas in all directions...seeing everything in visual light, infrared, millimetre-wave [sic] radar, and ultrasound all at once” (116). Gargoyles are inseparable from their computers – and thus the Metaverse – and their subjectivity is unequivocally equated with and dependent upon the technology that they utilise, right down to the way they literally see the world around them.

Unlike the figure of the hacker, however, whose identity is *also* synonymous with the technology that it employs, and who is portrayed and viewed with positivity throughout the course of the novel, the attitude towards gargoyles is more ambivalent. Not only is Lagos, the only gargoyle (apart from Hiro) that the novel acknowledges, killed by Raven shortly after his initial appearance, but the gargoyle subjectivity that Hiro begins to explore is the only one that is met with outright disapproval and hostility, in this instance by Y.T.:

“How can you be goggled in if you’re walking down a street?” Then the terrible reality sinks in: “Oh, my God, you didn’t turn into a gargoyle, did you?”

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<sup>54</sup> In modern parlance, ‘geek’ is frequently used as a pejorative term to describe a person who is a (digital) technology enthusiast, and is often perceived to be eccentric and / or socially awkward.

“Well,” Hiro says. He is hesitant, embarrassed, like it hadn’t occurred to him yet that this was what he was doing. “It’s not exactly like being a gargoyle. Remember when you gave me shit about spending all my money on computer stuff?... I decided I wasn’t spending enough. So I got a backpack machine. Smallest ever made. I’m walking down the street with this thing strapped to my belly. It’s really cool.”

“You’re a gargoyle.”

“Yeah, but it’s not like having all this clunky shit strapped all over your body –”

“You’re a gargoyle.”

(248)

The language used in this passage is telling. Y.T. is facing the ‘terrible reality’ of her partner being a gargoyle, whilst Hiro is ‘embarrassed’ and ‘hesitant’ to accept that this is what he has become / is becoming. Interestingly, it appears that Hiro equates gargoyle identity with appearance, rather than action; because his portable computer is discreet he doesn’t look exactly like a gargoyle, and therefore he can’t really be one. For Y.T., the distinction is far clearer and of a moral, rather than aesthetic, nature. Hiro is walking down a street in Reality whilst he is goggled into the Metaverse (and possibly walking down the Street); he is, by definition, a gargoyle, inhabiting what are supposed to be two mutually exclusive spaces at once. This is, I would suggest, the main difference between the hacker and the gargoyle; although they both deal in (digital) information, the hacker only ever inhabits *either* Reality *or* the virtual world whilst the gargoyle, like Snow Crash, is almost always in both at once. This ability to occupy two worlds simultaneously is also, I believe, *why* the attitudes of the novel and the characters within it are so ambivalent towards gargoyles, and why Snow Crash – with its ability to create a single, (peaceful) mind that both Big Brother and the OneState would undoubtedly admire – is regarded with abhorrence; despite the largely heterotopian nature of the spaces within *Snow Crash*, and the ability of multiple characters to move with relative ease between different spaces, there is still an overall logic of dualistic encapsulation at work – on both a societal and individual level – within the novel that requires them to inhabit one space at a time. Transgression of this logic is encouraged only up to a point; as we have seen, those who demonstrate the capacity of Snow Crash to inhabit both the real and virtual worlds simultaneously are marginalised, dehumanised and – if they continue to transgress like Lagos – killed. Swanstrom points out that Juanita is an exception to this (74), becoming, by the novel’s end, a “neurolinguistic hacker” (Stephenson, 404). That is, thanks to her exposure to the Snow Crash virus, she can hack both computers and the language centres of the brain. I would suggest, however, that there are limits to Juanita’s transgression of this logic of encapsulation; her subjectivity (or one of them, at least) is that of a hacker, and never that of a gargoyle.

## Chapter Three: The Heterotopia Proper – *The Gone-Away World* and *Only Forward*

*The dreamers of the day are dangerous men, for they may act their dreams with open eyes, to make it possible.*

*Seven Pillars of Wisdom* – T. E. Lawrence.

*Do I contradict myself? / Very well then I contradict myself, / (I am large, I contain multitudes.)*

'Leaves of Grass' – Walt Whitman.

### *The Gone-Away World*

Although there is a largely heterotopian sensibility in *Snow Crash* that sees the proliferation of contrasting spaces that allow characters such as Hiro and Y.T. far greater freedom of self-expression and self-exploration than was ever available to D-503 or Winston, the binary logic of utopia / dystopia is still at times discernible, limiting the potential of the heterotopian spaces and figures within the novel. This is not the case with Nick Harkaway's *The Gone-Away World*, although it would be easy, by virtue of its having been categorised as a "post-apocalyptic" (Poole, para. 1) novel, to dismiss it as just another example of dystopian science fiction. Initially at least, *The Gone-Away World* certainly appears to retain the same dualisms of *Snow Crash*, and *We* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* before it; there is a Hiro-like protagonist – the un-named narrator and hero, who is able to penetrate the boundaries of a variety of capsules, particularly Jorgmund's, with ease – and a Big Brother-like nemesis, Humbert Pestle. Like Hiro before him, the unnamed narrator embarks upon a quest to discover – although rather more literally – himself, and to defeat the homogenising forces represented by Pestle. The company that Pestle heads, Jorgmund, is almost stereotypically similar to the OneState and the Party of Oceania with its inclination towards the mechanical and entropic, both in terms of its insistence upon and utilisation of technology in order to (re)establish a homogenous "unity" (Harkaway, 473, emphasis in original) in the wake of the chaos created by the event known as the "Go Away War" (22), and in the actions and mind-set of the individuals that constitute and perpetuate it, amusingly described throughout the novel as "pencilnecks" (17). As I shall demonstrate, however, the heterotopianism of *TGAW* is pervasive; despite its perceived status as bulwark of the utopia / dystopia binary, the rigid hierarchy and encapsulation of Jorgmund, as evinced by the strict ranking of employees is in fact undermined by the structure and hybrid nature of Jorgmund itself, which not only "evolved out of other companies from back before the Go Away War" (13) but *also* encompasses the

“Clockwork Hand Society” (469), a secret society comprised of ninja assassins that requires its members to “set aside one’s own desires and become the instrument of destiny” (472) in a (voluntary) abrogation of self that is reminiscent of that demanded of Winston Smith by O’Brien. Moreover, the final level of encapsulation, the boundary between heterotopian spaces and the body that was upheld in *SC* is ruptured in *TGAW* when our narrator is “reified” (269) and made ‘real’ when Gonzo Lubitsch – whose alter ego / imaginary friend he has been – is exposed to a large quantity of “Stuff” (261). The resilience of this final boundary, which becomes the focal point of Hiro’s quest in *SC*, is undermined not only when people come into contact with Stuff but – as the relationship between the unnamed narrator and Gonzo Lubitsch eventually reveals – from the moment that narratives about identity are constructed and enacted. And where the narrative arc in *SC* sees the eventual suppression of the boundary defying substance Snow Crash and the resultant reaffirmation of an arbitrary distinction between ‘good’ and ‘bad,’ the events of *TGAW* invert this; the distinction between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ is destabilised, and the heterotopian substance which challenges the encapsulation and homogeneity that Jorgmund attempts to perpetuate – Stuff – is instead released from its containment. Jorgmund’s eventual failure to suppress Stuff allows individual freedom and difference, as represented by the unnamed narrator and the members of “the Found Thousand” (27) – new beings created by exposure to Stuff – to flourish in ways which were eventually denied in *SC*. And whilst there are heterotopian spaces within the novel that fulfil similar functions to those I have identified in other texts, such as Cricklewood Cove, and the sandpit that it contains, Stuff also allows for the exploration of alternative spaces that are created in conjunction with the individuals who inhabit them, precipitating tangible changes in those individuals in unpredictable ways in direct response to the narratives that they tell about themselves. By virtue of its ability to effect change and prompt the rupture of boundaries on both an institutional and individual level, Stuff poses a direct challenge to and constantly undermines the static dualism characteristic of the utopia / dystopia binary that Jorgmund strives to perpetuate.

The Jorgmund Company, headed by the sinister Humbert Pestle and ostensibly central to the survival of the world inhabited by our nameless narrator and his best friend Gonzo Lubitsch, functions in many ways as a kind of operational relic; in a similar, although far less beneficial manner to the Ancient House in *We*, Jorgmund acts as a bastion of ‘the way things used to be’ before the Go Away War destroyed much of the world and Stuff made the remainder of it changeable and dangerous. As our narrator wryly notes, the purpose of the Jorgmund Company – or, perhaps more accurately, of Humbert Pestle in his role as the Master of the Clockwork Hand – is to “usher out the new and restore

the old” (473).<sup>55</sup> Unlike the Ancient House, however, Jorgmund does not offer a respite from or help to counter the “universalizing forces” (Wegner, 185) that seek to wipe out individual difference and change; rather, Jorgmund is the universalising force at work in *TGAW*. During the course of his analysis of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Phillip Wegner writes that “every effort to effect a total change of the present, to institute a utopia...invariably gives rise to total systems of domination, systems wherein, ultimately, even the potential for change might be eliminated” (191). Although he is here introducing what he perceives to be the total closure and the elimination of “every other possible utopian horizon” (191) in Orwell’s narrative, I believe that this is also – however inadvertently – a fitting introduction to the Jorgmund Company and the ways in which it attempts to eradicate “discordant” (Harkaway, 473) differences and possibilities, and uphold and re-establish the equilibrium and worldview perpetuated by the utopia / dystopia binary that Stuff undermines and challenges. Jorgmund’s control of the new world, which is based upon its production of FOX – “the magic potion” (9) that can counter the effects of Stuff – appears to be absolute; the “circle-snake logo [of Jorgmund]” (13) can be found everywhere. This logo is instantly recognisable as an *ouroboros*, the ancient Greek symbol of a snake consuming its own tail that Carl Jung, amongst others, associates with the “idea of a self-generating and self-devouring being” (Jung, 307), and that Susan Squier calls “a vital image of circularity” (131). The recursive nature and enclosure that is symbolised by the *ouroboros* of Jorgmund is indicative not only of the viewpoint espoused by Jorgmund but is also a reminder of the shadowy presence of the Clockwork Hand within Jorgmund. It is no mistake, I think, that both Jorgmund and the Clockwork Hand can be recognised by their association with representations of a closed circle, and that those images are ones that are indicative of their function; the image of a snake – a frequently venomous creature that many view with repulsion and fear – endlessly consuming itself to create a continuous loop is an appropriate metaphor for the ways in which the Jorgmund Company poisons and devours the individuals that it employs. The Clockwork Hand Society, is, by virtue of its name and its members belief in “the perfect progress of the universe as if steered by a mechanical armature” (Harkaway, 472), associated with the flawless circle of a clock and the endless repetitious movement of those mechanisms. The circle-snake logo of the former can also be viewed as a representative-in-miniature of the way in which the Pipe that Jorgmund builds to distribute FOX and create the “Liveable Zone” that makes “a sort of rough circle girdling the earth” (10). The Liveable Zone is just one of the capsules

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<sup>55</sup> It should be noted in passing that whilst Jorgmund and the Clockwork Hand are technically different organisations, there are significant areas of overlap. They are headed by the same person – Pestle – and it is fairly safe to assume that the mysterious “Core” (446) which is “the final authority” (446) in Jorgmund is comprised almost entirely of members of the Clockwork Hand. There are, however, structural and functional differences between the two organisations and, where necessary for the purposes of this thesis, I will explicitly elaborate upon these. Nonetheless, for the most part when I refer to Jorgmund, I am of necessity also referring – however indirectly – to the Clockwork Hand as well.

that Jorgmund creates and perpetuates; produced by proximity to the Pipe and the distribution of FOX into the surrounding atmosphere, the Liveable Zone is characterised by a series of isolated – and thus further contained – settlements of varying size and sophistication that are populated by those who believe that the Pipe is “the thing [they can’t] do without” (13). As the main distribution system for FOX and in its ensuing role as the “despised spine” (10) of the post-Reification world, the Pipe is a tangible illustration of the control that Jorgmund exerts, and of the ways in which it attempts to create an enclosed world with no options other than the ones they offer. By proffering a means by which Stuff and the different possibilities that it offers can be banished, the Pipe allows Jorgmund to restore the old at the expense of the new, endlessly replicating itself and the rigidly organised, highly encapsulated world(view) it deems acceptable.

Like the OneState and the Party of Oceania before it, Jorgmund (and the Clockwork Hand) attempts to perpetuate the system that first creates, and then sustains it by turning the people associated with it into anonymous, pre-programmed “gears” (302). Those employed by Jorgmund are described by our narrator as pencilnecks; this is a description which, whilst humorous, also lends itself to a somewhat troubling image of uniform, faceless and interchangeable people whose humanity and individuality is gradually being whittled away. Unlike the OneState, however, where all Numbers are considered equal, there are differing degrees of “pencilneckhood” (22):

Dick Washburn, known forevermore as Dickwash, is a type D pencilneck: a sassy wannabe paymaster with vestigial humanity. This makes him vastly less evil than a type B pencilneck (heartless bureaucratic machine, pro-class tennis) and somewhat less evil than a type C pencilneck (chortling lackey of the dehumanising system, ambient golf), but unquestionably more evil than pencilneck types M through E (real human screaming to escape a soul-devouring professional persona, varying degrees of desperation). No one I know has ever met the type A pencilneck, in much the same way that no one ever reports their own fatal accident; a type A pencilneck would be a person so entirely consumed by the mechanism in which he or she is employed that they had ceased to exist as a separate entity. They would be odourless, faceless and undetectable, without ambition or restraint, and would take decisions entirely unfettered by human concerns, make choices for the company, of the company.

(15-16)

The first of several such descriptions of the sliding scale of the (in)humanity of Jorgmund employees, there is a clear sense from the above passage that the closer a person gets to the top of the hierarchy the less human and more machine-like they become. The type A pencilneck described above sounds

like an ideal and obedient Number of the OneState or a member of the Party who has made the final “act of submission” that O’Brien demands of Winston (Orwell, 285). Indeed, the act of moving up the ranks of the pencilnecks, to becoming a type A is in fact a voluntary one:

The pencilneck smiled at Sally Culpepper...and his pencilneckhood rolled back as he found that part of himself which was indifferent, and he slipped gently into the warm water of not giving a damn.

Look at him again: this is not Dick Washburn you’re seeing, not exactly...This is Jorgmund itself, staring through Dick’s eyes and measuring things as numbers and profit margins. Of course Jorgmund is nothing more than a shared hallucination, a set of rules which make up Richard Washburn’s job, and every time he does this – slips away from a human situation and lets the pattern use his mind and his mouth because he’d rather not make the decision himself – he edges a little closer to being a type C pencilneck. He loses a bit of his soul. There’s a flicker of pain and anger in him as the animal he is feels the machine he is becoming take another bite, and snarls in its cage...But it’s really a very small animal, and not one of the fiercer ones.

(22-23)

In other words, by lending himself completely to the rules by which Jorgmund views and interacts with the world, Dick Washburn gives up his humanity voluntarily, one decision at a time. In many ways, he and the other pencilnecks become akin to the “Falabalas” (Stephenson, 301), the subjects of L. Bob Rife that are created by exposure to Snow Crash. Like the falabalas, the pencilnecks are part of a kind of overarching and highly encapsulated group mind that governs their behaviour and action. Each of these groups – falabalas and pencilnecks – have their own language by which they communicate with each other, replicate (and perpetuate) the systems that they are subject to, and which distinguishes them from those who have not been ‘initiated’; falabalas communicate with each other by speaking in tongues, or – as Y.T. so scathingly puts it – by “babbling” to each other (301), whilst pencilnecks speak a kind of “reasonable” yet chilling bureaucratese (Harkaway, 314). Unlike L. Bob Rife, however, Jorgmund requires no antennas to be grafted onto the skull of its employees to continuously broadcast instructions; the pencilnecks, in a manner similar to O’Brien and to the falabalas infected with the Snow Crash virus, carry the pattern of Jorgmund with them wherever they go. And whilst the language used in the above passages emphasise the ways in which Jorgmund is a dehumanising machine that enforces a set of rules and patterns that remakes and takes over people to fulfil its purpose, they also reveal the encapsulation and hierarchy that is at work not only in Jorgmund the company, but also the system that it presides over.

The hierarchy that is ascribed to and exhibited by the pencilnecks of Jorgmund is in many ways comparable to the hierarchy discernible amongst users of the Metaverse; it is primarily predicated upon the same principles of occupation and outward appearance – especially clothing – that I identified during my analysis of SC. Much like the Metaverse, Jorgmund and the system that it is both representative of and central to is itself a series of semi-exclusive capsules that are structured in such a way that a majority of people are unable to penetrate their boundaries. I have already touched upon the issue of hierarchy as it pertains to various strata of pencilnecks; depending upon their level of commitment to the Company and the level of self-negation that they have undertaken, a pencilneck will occupy a rank classified by our narrator as anything from ‘M’ (the lowest level of pencilneckhood) to ‘A.’ This is the most basic and overarching form of encapsulation demonstrated by the Jorgmund Company, encompassing all those who work for it. As a pencilneck advances up the ranks, however, they might begin to move into different and more exclusive capsules within the overall capsule that is the system that Jorgmund is both a part of and integral to. The structure of Jorgmund can be likened to a series of concentric circles spreading outwards – the importance of self-contained circles to the structure and attitudes of Jorgmund cannot be overstated. The Core, of which Humbert Pestle is a part, is the most exclusive capsule within Jorgmund – it is so exclusive that “no one knows who else is in it” (446) – and resides at both the metaphorical and literal centre of the Company. The capsule beyond that is comprised of the Senior Board which is slightly less exclusive, and is “composed of people who would very much like to be in the Core” (446). The Senior Board has oversight of a series of lesser capsules, such as the Planning Horizons Committee; this is the capsule that our narrator gains access to in the course of his infiltration of Jorgmund and uses as a means of further rupturing the boundaries and hierarchies by which Jorgmund contains and maintains itself.

The hierarchies of pencilnecks are not, however, only maintained by occupation. The importance of apparel as a means of identification and stratification is established early in the novel. When Dick Washburn is first described by our narrator, among the first of his “coiffured” features that are described are his “brogues” and “silk socks”, along with his “come-fuck-me cologne” and the “hand-tooled leather briefcase” that he carries (12-13). Washburn himself is not described; what *are* described are items by which he can be identified. The implication is that Dick Washburn the pencilneck *is* his clothing, and that what he wears is a more than sufficient means by which to identify him. The quality of Dick’s tailor-made attire is perhaps even more important when it comes to identifying who – and what – he is. When one considers that Dick Washburn is an on-the-rise pencilneck (with vestigial humanity) this begins to make sense; with Jorgmund as with avatars in the Metaverse, there is an explicit connection between those who wear bespoke items and those who occupy a high rank within the organisation. Thus, Dick Washburn wears “year’s-salary shoes” (22)

whilst Humbert Pestle wears “two-tone leather” (329) brogues by Daniel Prang with a unique, personalised crest on the heel. These links between clothing and rank are re-emphasised when the unnamed narrator attempts to infiltrate the Jorgmund Company by impersonating a “new executive” in Haviland City (438):<sup>56</sup>

‘The plain white,’ Libby Lloyd says definitively...

‘I like the stripes.’

‘The stripes are very popular among the senior executives.’ Subtext: surely you aren’t one.

‘Ideal,’ I tell her briskly. Subtext: then why on Earth are you showing me this other crap?

Libby Lloyd reassesses. She does not know me, so she has assumed that I am not important.

On the other hand, I’m in her insane little shop in Haviland Square buying unpleasantly tight sports gear. More, *I’m buying top of the line....* A new customer. A new executive.

(438, my emphasis)

Simply by virtue of the fact that our narrator is buying top of the line sportswear which is differentiated from other, (relatively) lower lines within Libby’s shop by its outward appearance – that is, the striped sportswear that is probably intended to be reminiscent of the pinstriped suits worn by the business elite the world over – he is assumed to be of high rank in the Jorgmund Company. Like Dick Washburn before him, our narrator becomes (or at least gives the appearance of being) what the clothing makes him out to be.

On the basis of his choice of clothing and the supposed status that this implies, our narrator is then propositioned by Libby Lloyd, who wishes to entering the hierarchy herself: “Libby Lloyd makes more money in a week than I have ever seen in one place. Money is not the issue. The issue is *access*. Running the most exclusive sports boutique in Haviland is still being a shopkeeper. It’s not being part of the System, and Libby Lloyd wants In. I know this because in Haviland everybody who isn’t In wants In, and everybody who is In wants to keep them Out. Pencilneck Heaven” (439, emphasis in original). In other words, Libby, believing him to be a member of a more exclusive capsule than she currently has access to, attempts to charm our narrator into helping her advance up the hierarchy. The irony of this is, of course, that “the bag from [her store] is a passport to greatness” (439) that he uses to great effect. The bag full of over-priced sports-gear is the means by which he begins to rupture the various capsules of Jorgmund: “with [the bag from Libby Lloyd’s] under my arm scruffy clothes are simply not an issue. I have already bought. I am spending. I have money. Respectable clothing is what I will come

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<sup>56</sup> The word-play at work in the name of Jorgmund’s ‘capital city’ is worthy of note; characterised by excessive consumption and conspicuous expenditure in a world with limited resources, it really is the land of the ‘haves,’ as opposed to the ‘have-nots.’

out of Royce Allen's with, not what I need going *in*" (439-440, emphasis in original). By establishing himself as a person of prominence – courtesy of his striped, rather than plain white sportswear – in Libby Lloyd's shop, our narrator is able to penetrate the first of the boundaries that Jorgmund maintains and progress deeper into system. His behaviour and choice of suits made of fabric "which empty banks and consume the wealth of nations" in the store of the tailor Royce Allen corroborates his status as a "powerful man" (441-442), and eventually facilitates his entry into the exclusive capsule that is "the Brandon Club" (442), where the fact that he is wearing clothing made by Royce Allen is "as much a passport as Libby Lloyd's whites" (443); the "murmur" (443) that his striped sportswear causes when revealed is indicative not only of the quality of the clothing, but also of the hierarchical standing that it implies. Having taken to heart the advice that, when it comes to navigating Jorgmund's system, "the more ludicrously you behave, the more they will assume you have the right to" (439), it is in the Brandon Club that our narrator truly demonstrates that he, like Hiro and Y.T. before him, understands the rules of encapsulation at work around him. This understanding, coupled with his detailed "taxonomy" (300) of pencilnecks enables him to calculate, in a manner reminiscent of the way in which Y.T. predicts the actions of young Studley once she poons his bimbo box, the probable actions and reactions of the pencilneck – Buddy Keene – that he meets at the Club. In turn, the advantage that this understanding offers allows him to undermine the rules of encapsulation and penetrate the hitherto intransigent boundaries of Jorgmund proper:

I wait. Sooner or later, they have to ask me to join the game. And they do...I give Buddy a bit of polite surprise. Oh no. No, I'm waiting for Someone. Buddy catches hold of the capital S. His eyes light up....

This is easy. No one here is telling the truth. Every single one of them is living for every other. They do things because they must be seen to do them. These are type D or even type E pencilnecks vying for an upgrade. They're here to lose a bit of identity, to become more the Right Kind of Guy. The rules they know are their own rules, and someone who breaks them without fear must be playing on the next level up.

...'So where's Richard going to be?'

And of course they tell me. Anything to help a fellow out. Particularly if you suspect he may be your next boss. Buddy Keene is looking at me, little wheels turning in his head. Think, Buddy. Take a risk. Grift.... I step out into the corridor, and I walk away. He might not come. He might not have anything to offer. And then, heavy footsteps...

'Hey,' says Buddy Keene. 'Wait up.'

Goodness me, whatever can it be?

...Buddy Keene smiles an ingratiating smile. 'There's a meeting of the Planning Horizons Committee in an hour. Would you like to sit in, unofficially?'

Yes, Buddy. That would be just ideal.

(444-445)

By understanding the rules of hierarchy that govern the lives and actions of pencilnecks, our narrator is able to give the appearance of eliding those rules completely, thus reinforcing the perception created initially by his clothing that he is "a bigwig from back along the Silver"<sup>57</sup> (446).<sup>57</sup> By playing upon the desire of pencilnecks to advance themselves in the hierarchy, by allowing Buddy Keene to believe that he too is breaking rules – and thus demonstrating that he is, in fact, the 'Right Kind of Guy,' – our narrator is able to enter the capsules that the hierarchy of Jorgmund is supposed to keep impermeable.

Given the rigid hierarchies and high levels of encapsulation at work in the Jorgmund Company, it seems almost redundant to draw attention to the fact that it appears to be a dystopic organisation that strives to perpetuate a binary-based world-view that is antediluvian at best. And yet, I would suggest that heterotopianism at work within *The Gone-Away World* is so pervasive that even the seemingly oppressive homogeneity of Jorgmund and its pencilnecks is continuously undermined, not only by our narrator and his ability to move between capsules, but by the very structure of the organisation itself. Brought into the offices of Jorgmund to attend a meeting of the Planning Horizons Committee – located, appropriately enough, on "one of the middle floors" (446) of the building – our narrator encounters Robert Crabtree, the man who "[moves] the paper" (448). Although he appears to be – and, in some ways is – just another "cog in the machine" (449), Robert Crabtree is *also* able to transcend rather than simply penetrate the boundaries of various capsules in place in Jorgmund:

I watch him walk the halls of Jorgmund with his cart...No one speaks to him. No one even really looks at him. He's just there, cog in the machine. Finally he walks into a big round room with an expensive table in it...

'Senior Board room,' says Mr Crabtree... Waiting for him is a smaller stack of yellow envelopes stamped 'Forward to Core.' He takes them, and moves off down the corridor again.... Know your enemy. Follow the paper. I follow. Mr Crabtree is my guide in a strange land...

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<sup>57</sup> The Silver is another term for the Jorgmund Pipe; although Haviland City is the centre of operations for Jorgmund, the head office itself remains along the Pipe at the original site of FOX manufacture.

We are coming to the edge of the building...Robert Crabtree pushes his cart into a small service lift and turns to face me. There is only room for him.

'Core,' says Robert Crabtree flatly. The doors close.

(449)

As the above passage begins to reveal, Robert Crabtree is perhaps the only person who can walk unremarked into any single capsule – or, to use the appropriate jargon, office, boardroom, or meeting place – within Jorgmund; even Humbert Pestle, as is demonstrated slightly later on in the novel when he finally comes face-to-face with our narrator at Dick's party, creates waves in his wake.<sup>58</sup> In this manner, he truly is the "secret master" (448) of Jorgmund. Additionally, while it seems that he is merely fulfilling his function, acting as a (vital) cog in the machine, Robert Crabtree also reveals the fragility of the boundaries with which Jorgmund insulates itself. Or, to put it another way, the man who makes the deliveries of paper on which every bureaucracy depends is also the one who provides proof that the capsules of Jorgmund are far more vulnerable to rupture and flow than they originally appear. Alerted to this possibility by the stray comment of a pencilneck our narrator attaches himself to Crabtree; it is only by doing this that he is able to move more or less effortlessly through Jorgmund's offices once the meeting and the (un)official reason for his presence has ended: "I stand at the end of the corridor...hoping no one sees me and thinks to ask why I am here.... [Robert Crabtree] takes my hand...and settles it painfully hard on the front of the trolley...we make his round. We deliver thirty executive decisions. We are messengers of God, invisible, inevitable, ignored" (449-450). Although our narrator – unlike Crabtree – is barred from entering the Core, it is only by traversing the corridors with him that he gains enough of an understanding (of the layout) of Jorgmund that he is able to return later, penetrate the final boundaries and reach the secrets at the Core of the company.

As I have already briefly noted, our narrator is alerted to the significance of Robert Crabtree and the possibilities he offers by the passing comments of one of the pencilnecks at the meeting of the Planning Horizons Committee. Although this comment – and the passage it is a part of – provides him with the information that he needs to rupture the boundaries of Jorgmund, it also alerts us as readers to the possibility that Jorgmund is less impenetrable than it initially appears. It also, however, begins to destabilise and subvert the taxonomy of pencilnecks that our narrator clings to, and by which he – and thus we – understand Jorgmund as a wholly homogenous and homogenising force. Mae Milton, the pencilneck in question, is by dint of her position on the Planning Horizons Committee, likely a type D (possibly, but unlikely to be a type E) pencilneck. According to the classification of pencilnecks, this means that she is akin to Dick Washburn and has only 'vestigial' humanity which she

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<sup>58</sup> See pp452-453.

is eager and willing to lose in service to the machine. And yet, the description of Mae and the interactions that we, through our narrator, are witness to questions this: “Clearly, [Mae’s] making with the funny...Mae Milton is moderately charming, and not even Robert Crabtree is immune. She offers him a broad, genuine smile. It occurs to me that Mae Milton will not last long as a pencilneck if this is how she carries on” (448). Mae here is exhibiting symptoms of a ‘genuine’ humanity that is supposed to be incongruous with her status as a mid-high ranked pencilneck; she is not only smiling genuinely – this is sharply contrasted against the leering “victory [grin]” (22) that Dick Washburn offers earlier in the novel – but she is also revealed to have a sense of humour. More importantly, however, this brief representation of Mae Milton overlooks the fact that she clearly already *has* demonstrated longevity as a pencilneck by virtue of her position and implied rank. The humanity that Milton displays, coupled with her position on the Planning Horizons Committee, suggests that the organisation of pencilnecks is not, perhaps, as rigid and homogenous as our narrator would have us believe.

Piper 90, the behemoth structure which is responsible for “laying the Pipe” (277) – and thus the groundwork for Jorgmund’s ascendancy – is another example of the ambiguities inherent in Jorgmund’s framework. This is particularly noticeable in the description of its construction and origins:

Piper 90 isn’t called that because it lays Pipe, by the way...The superstructure around which this thing was built is a series of retooled oil platforms, and the original Piper 90 is actually just the first of these...The people who built it were not worried about aesthetics; they were looking to make something survivable and strong. They took those oil platforms and they welded on huge, train-sized caterpillar tracks. They stuffed reactors from submarines in the basement to power the whole thing, and drive systems ripped out of aircraft carriers, and the synched the whole disaster together using matchbook maths, the gears from some defunct ultra large crude carriers and a lot of duct tape...There are bits of Piper 90 no one knows about because there simply wasn’t time to work out they’d be there. You could hide a city in the gaps, below the city that’s already bubbling away in the habitation section.

(279)

In service to a company that is supposedly insistent on uniformity, Piper 90 is – to steal a phrase from Foucault – a “heterotopia *par excellence*” (68, emphasis in original); that is, it appears to be anything but regular and consistent, and – by virtue of its inconsistency – undermines from the outset the homogeneity of Jorgmund. Assembled from a wide variety of pre-existing and seemingly incompatible apparatus (much like the company itself) that range from submarines to aircraft carriers, it contains

within itself a multitude of different spaces – or capsules – that have not yet been, and perhaps cannot be explored or accounted for in their entirety. Although Piper 90 is still subject to a certain amount of encapsulation – “the machine layer” (Harkaway, 279) is distinct from the various layers of the living quarters, which in their turn are divided into enclave-like sections; the “execs all have...rooms looking...back along the reassuring solidity” of the Pipe (281), whilst non-executives like our narrator have rooms that look out at the area still subject to Stuff and its chaos – the boundaries that divide the different capsules are easily penetrated; there is no restriction of movement. In stark contrast to the rigid hierarchies of Jorgmund proper, the original structure or hierarchy – such as it was – at work in Piper 90 is described by our narrator as “somewhere between a mad dictatorship and a sort of daffy anarcho-syndicate, a cooperative venture in self-salvation and heroism” (298). Fittingly, the staff and inhabitants of Piper 90 are quite diverse; there are “former soldiers, oily rag men” (299), Katiris, as well as what our narrator calls “the general population” (298).<sup>59</sup> Likewise, although there are “executives” in residence that are “actually useful” (280), the man who initially runs Piper 90 is “Huster...a grizzled old fart who had managed an oil platform and knew engineers and tolerances and red lines and tipping points, and who got on well with just about anyone” (298). Piper 90, then, despite that fact that – and, in fact, partially because – it is the means by which Jorgmund is able to establish its dominance and the homogeneity that it espouses is, in fact, a particularly ambiguous and heterotopian site.

When Huster and the “friendly quartermasterish [sic] execs” are replaced by “a skein of...pencilnecks” (300) led by Hellen Fust and Ricardo van Meents (our narrator tentatively identifies these two as type C’s) it appears that the heterotopian potentials of Piper 90 are to be extinguished and replaced by the bland Jorgmund uniformity. At first it appears that this is indeed the case, as predicted by Zaher Bey:<sup>60</sup>

‘It’s starting,’ he says. ‘I thought it would take longer.’

‘What’s starting?’

‘The...I don’t know what you would all it. Not rot, exactly. The not-right things are starting again.’ He shakes his head.

‘Because of Huster?’

‘No No, no...That’s a consequence. Huster is my canary.’

(301)

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<sup>59</sup> The Katiris in question are former inhabitants of Addeh Katir, the war-torn country where our narrator and Gonzo are located when the Go Away War begins.

<sup>60</sup> Zaher Bey, known initially to our narrator by his alias Freeman ibn Solomon and affectionately as ‘the Bey’ is the rebel leader of the Katiris.

Here likening Huster to the canaries used by miners to locate potentially fatal underground gas pockets, Zaher Bey is predicting that Huster's removal and the re-establishment of a hierarchy that is true to the Company is only the first of many probable actions that Jorgmund intends to take to re-establish the 'rot' of the old world. He is also perhaps the first to recognise the true purpose of the Pipe, and, by extension, Jorgmund; as an extension of his fears about what will come to pass now that Piper 90 is under the control of the pencilnecks, he goes on to explain to our narrator the machine nature of the company and its absolute commitment to what the Pipe truly represents – stagnation and entropy, the ability to control the population that is dependent upon it, and an absolute refusal to engage with or recognise the possibilities that Stuff offers:

'Even I miss the old days, and my old days were dreadful. And I don't believe we should miss them. I think we should...*strike out!*' He thumps the table. 'Make a new world! Not the old one all over again. But...people are scared.' He shrugs.

...'What is this thing, this Jorgmund? How did it begin? What is FOX? How is it made? Jorgmund knows, and no one else.... Jorgmund is a *machine for laying, maintaining and defending the Pipe*. That is its only task. Its only priority. In fact, that is the only thing it can see. It is blind to us. It does not even know that we exist, except in so far as we impinge upon that purpose...at what point along the way does the executive in charge of Piper 90 let it roll on over someone? ...How long before the Pipe is more important than a life? Or a home? Or a river which feeds a village? How long before the *convenience* of the Pipe is more important than these things?'

(302-303, emphasis in original)

The questions that Zaher Bey asks here of FOX, its origin and the secrecy that surrounds its production are of vital importance to not only the plot of the novel, but to the development of Piper 90's (and our narrator's) heterotopian potential. I would suggest that these are questions that could perhaps only be asked on Piper 90 because of its proximity to the Border, to Stuff, and, crucially, the people created by Stuff. The suspicion of and contempt for the narrow-mindedness that Jorgmund – and the people associated with it – displays, and his belief that it will prioritise the laying of the Pipe over and above individual lives and needs is clearly evident in the passage above. I believe that the desire he exhibits for revolutionary change, his conviction that people should embrace rather than run from the unknown possibilities that Stuff (and the new world that it has created) offers, and his rejection of the mechanistic, homogenising forces of Jorgmund is remarkably reminiscent of I-330's call for infinite revolution and her love for and admiration of the 'forest' people that exist beyond the Wall. That the

Bey eventually heeds his own call and disappears beyond the Border with the Found Thousand in an attempt to live with and in the new world compounds, rather than detracts from the similarities between the two and the heterotopian impulses that they are both subject to and working with; like I-330 before him, he eschews the easy path in order to stay true to his revolutionary principles and to create and exist in heterotopian sites of resistance. What is also in evidence in the passage above is the Bey's belief that Piper 90, already made ambiguous thanks to its purpose and now threatened by the influx of pencilnecks from Jorgmund proper, will be used merely to prop up the decaying remnants of the old world that only Jorgmund profits from. Or, to put it another way, Zaher Bey fears that Piper 90 is now merely the means by which Jorgmund banishes potential, by playing on people's fear of the unknown and the new.

In spite of the presence and leadership of pencilnecks, and the series of events which follow soon after this exchange between our narrator and the Bey and appear to substantiate the fears of the latter, I would suggest that Piper 90 retains its status as a heterotopian site of resistance. Several months after the departure of Huster, the reconnaissance team that includes our narrator and his pal Gonzo comes across a small fortified village that "is in a strategically and logistically important location" (309); that is, it is directly in the path of Piper 90. Sent by Hellen Fust to inform the inhabitants that they're going to be 'relocated' – the Bey puts it a little more honestly when he says "you mean we should just roll right on over their homes'" (310) – our narrator and his team discover that the villagers are all "new" (311): "Tobemory Trent turns his head to take in the whole thing.... His gaze takes in the men and women around us, and the children, and then it flicks over them to the others huddled in doorways and peering from around corners: the strange haunted eyes and the curious hands and all the other little thigs like scales and fur – these are dream people, fake people, people made real from someone's thoughts. Reification people. They are the *new*" (313, emphasis in original). These villagers are the Found Thousand (this is the name given to them by our narrator and his friends).<sup>61</sup> What is particularly telling about this passage is our narrator's initial classification of these people as 'fake'; born of the interaction of thought and Stuff, they're not really people. The irony of this is, of course, that our narrator is himself one of these people made real from another's thoughts (although at this point in the narrative he has not yet been separated from Gonzo), but I will return to the implications of this in due course. I would suggest that the attempts to label bifurcates as 'new' is an indicator of the ways in which (narrative) identity is, particularly during Jorgmund's ascendancy, still subject to socially constructed 'normative' models of personhood, which is demonstrated by the belief, voiced here by our narrator, that those who are made from Stuff are not actually human. This view is shared by the pencilnecks Fust and van Meents; the reasoning utilised by the former is

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<sup>61</sup> Technically speaking, there are in fact one thousand and eight of them.

'translated' by our narrator: "[The Found Thousand] are not people. They are un-people. Worse, they are pretend people. They will come for us, if once we trust them, and we will be destroyed" (315, emphasis in original).<sup>62</sup> On the basis of this reasoning, which emphasises the otherness of the villagers, the order is given for "the village...to be razed, and the inhabitants taken into custody for study" (315). At this very moment, when it appears that the worst of Zaher Bey's fears have become true, Piper 90's heterotopian nature comes to the fore. Led by our narrator, the inhabitants and workers go on strike and co-opt the Club Room as their headquarters, creating a capsule of revolution and resistance within Piper 90 at the same time as it is being used to enforce the homogeneity associated with Jorgmund's adherence to the utopia / dystopia binary. In this way it gains an ambiguous status similar to the Ancient House in *We*, and especially to the apartment over Charrington's shop that Winston and Julia frequent in *NEF*. Like Winston, our narrator believes that he understands the nature of Piper 90 and its purpose; until the discovery of the Found Thousand, our narrator believes – even if Zaher Bey does not – that the creation of the Pipe, the distribution of FOX and the creation of the Liveable Zone is "vital" (277), referring at various points in the novel to FOX as a "magic potion" (9), whilst the Pipe delivers "solidity and safety" (10) to the remnants of the world. As we have already seen, however, Piper 90's purpose is at least partially Jorgmund's purpose also, and it can be used for ill as well as for good. Like the apartment, the heterotopian nature of Piper 90 betrays our narrator even as it provides a kind of sanctuary for him and for those afraid of the changing world.

Like the Ancient House before it, Piper 90 becomes – and perhaps always has been by virtue of its location on the Border – a site of both deviation from the norm as dictated by Jorgmund, and crisis and especially of revolution. What is particularly striking about the Club Room capsule and its inhabitants is, as our narrator notes, that "almost everyone feels ambivalent about the Found Thousand" (318); they are rebelling on behalf of people that they are suspicious of and do not trust because of the belief, voiced by one Tommy Lapland, that you "don't go out and annihilate people just because you don't trust them. That's how you tell the bad guys from the good guys" (318). The implications of this belief are, I would suggest, key indicators of the heterotopian nature of Piper 90, and of *TGAW* more generally. With one simple statement, Tommy Lapland raises two crucial ideas: first, that irrespective of their origins, the Found Thousand – and thus, by extension, all 'new' people – are, in fact, people and deserve to be treated as such; and second, he makes ambiguous the divide between 'good' and 'bad.' The first of these ideas that quietly and without fanfare grants humanity to the 'new' people marks a significant deviation from the company line, but also throws into crisis

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<sup>62</sup> This is the kind of reasoning that can probably be found in one form or another in any (anti)utopian – or dystopian – text or social experiment one cares to imagine; the parallels with 'real world' incitement to genocide (think here particularly of (white) Western colonial attitudes, and events before, during and after World War II) are both disturbing and, in all likelihood, quite deliberate.

normative models of identity and representation. What is important to realise, however, is that the Found Thousand are not the first 'new' people that have challenged (pre)conceptions on Piper 90 about what and who is – and isn't – human. Pascal Timberly is rescued by our narrator and Gonzo, and takes up a position on Piper 90 in the horticultural department. Befriended by Larry Tusk and his dog, Dora, he is "obsessed with memory" (286) and recalling the people and places that no longer exist. He is also, as it turns out when he swallows Dora whole, "a thing which looked human and talked human and hugged human, but which could open up and envelop you like a snake" (287). Larry Tusk's reaction, upon finding Pascal Timberly with a distended stomach and Dora's yelps clearly audible, is to "up and hit [him] in the head with a fire extinguisher...until Pascal [is] basically a smear" (288). Our narrator's reaction to Pascal's death is noteworthy:

On the downside, it raised a question no one was prepared for about the Unreal People and what they were. Because we had *liked* Pascal Timberly, and if someone ordinary and mad had eaten Dora the dog, and Larry Tusk had beaten them to death with a fire extinguisher, that would have been murder, albeit provoked. And the thing is that for all that Pascal was a monster, he was clearly a thinking, feeling monster, and that made him at least most of the way to being a person.

(288, emphasis in original)

Once again laced with a certain irony, the language that our narrator uses is telling; Pascal is a thoroughly likeable chap who, it is important to note, *looks* a lot like a 'normal' human being. Particularly notable is his emphasis on the fact that Pascal was a 'thinking, feeling' being; this is sharply contrasted against his dealings with and impressions of pencilnecks who he believes are not "entirely human" (17) due to their ability to subordinate their thoughts and feelings to the Jorgmund machine. Pascal's death creates uncertainty around previously unassailable attitudes about what actually constitutes humanity and it is this, I would contend, that sets the groundwork for the strike that happens after Fust orders the wholesale internment (and probable death) of the Found Thousand. This is borne out by the speech that Larry Tusk gives at the meeting in the Club Room after Tommy Lapland speaks:

'You all know where I come from on this and what I did to Pascal Timberly.... I killed *my friend* because I was afraid and I was shocked and he was attacking something I loved. Well, that's one thing. But this here is another, and it's a whole *other* kind of a thing. What they're talking about is taking people – *people*, same as Pascal – and crushing their homes and handing them

over to some science fellas...because we're afraid. And I don't know about you,' says Larry Tusk, 'but I don't fancy being that person and I won't have it in my name. I won't be afraid half my life and ashamed the other half.'

(319, emphasis in original)

In this stirring speech – all the more effective because he, unlike many other inhabitants of Piper 90, has personal associations with the 'new' people – Larry reiterates the humanity that Tommy previously grants those created in conjunction with Stuff, and also acknowledges the positive aspects of the relationship he had with Pascal. The crucial part of Larry's speech, however, comes when he compares what he did to Pascal with what Fust and van Meents intend to do to the Found Thousand; he was personally reacting to an immediate threat, whereas Fust and van Meents are, after considerable calculation, asking others to complete this distasteful task for them. I do not believe that Larry's use of and emphasis on the word '*other*' is accidental, and would suggest that his use of this word implicitly questions the humanity of those who would destroy the homes of the Reified and hand the people themselves over for experimentation. By designating the actions and intentions of Fust and van Meents as '*other*' in conjunction with his acknowledgment of the humanity of the Reified, Larry Tusk contributes to the creation of a space that begins the process by which the binaries that Jorgmund strives to uphold – in this instance, good and bad, and human and non-human – are questioned and, I would contend, eventually dismantled altogether when the true nature of FOX is revealed.

These things can happen on Piper 90 because it exists in the space between spaces; in both a metaphorical and a literal sense, it *is* the Border between the Liveable Zone that it helps to create with the distribution of FOX and the 'unreal' zone where Stuff and its uncertainties and ambiguities reign supreme. Piper 90 is also, as I have noted previously, a heterotopia in its own right; containing within itself multiple and incompatible spaces and tasked with creating the apparatus that enables Jorgmund to uphold the status quo, it is also, as we have seen, a highly ambiguous space that facilitates the inversion of the concepts of 'good' and 'bad,' and begins the interrogation of beliefs around what exactly constitutes humanity. It is also, as I have already suggested, the first space in which questions can be asked about the origins and nature of FOX; the quest that our narrator sets out on – a quest which brings him to self-awareness and fosters the development of a narrative and identity that is separate from that which Gonzo initially creates for him – begins first with the doubts about Jorgmund and FOX that Zaher Bey plants, and with the inversion of 'good' and 'bad,' on Piper 90. I would suggest, however, that Piper 90 is merely one of the multitude of heterotopian spaces that can be found within

the domains of *The Gone Away World*. Many of these are of a nature similar to those I have identified in previous texts. Those that I will examine now are what I consider to be the most important of these 'traditionally' heterotopian spaces, and are both located within Cricklewood Cove; these are the Soames School that Gonzo and our narrator attend, the sandpit where our narrator's story begins, and the house of his *gong fu* master, Master Wu.<sup>63</sup> Cricklewood Cove is the birthplace of Gonzo Lubitsch, and of our narrator. A highly heterotopian space in its own right, it appears at first to be an idyllic space. A consequence, perhaps, of its status as a childhood home, this is reinforced by the recollections of our narrator of childhood fishing and Lubitsch family trips to Megg Lake in the winter.<sup>64</sup> The utopian seeming nature of Cricklewood Cove is, however, undermined by the variety of discordant capsules that it fosters and contains. One of the more interesting of these is the "Soames School for the Children of Townsfolk" (32). Run by Assumption Soames, who is known to students and staff alike as "the Evangelist" (32), it is an ostensibly conservative school, the syllabus of which appears to be tailored to satisfy the strictly religious mores of the headmistress. The "blazing determination" (34) of the Evangelist notwithstanding, her curriculum is continually subverted by her staff, memorably described by our narrator as "a flea-bitten and secular motley of brilliant minds culled from institutions too prissy to put up with their foibles" (33). Thus it is that "Mr Clisp the gambler teaches...not only mathematics but also materialistic ethics," (33), whilst "Ms Poynter...includes in her biology classes a smattering of first aid and natural history, and also sexual education of increasing sophistication as the years pass, so that by the age of ten we can recite a list of erogenous zones...and by the onset of puberty no one is in fear about the inevitable swellings and expulsions" (33-34). The subversive nature of the Soames School is compounded by the revelation that the Evangelist is not, in fact, "just a crazy Bible lady" (78):

'People don't want children to know what they *need* to know. They want their kids to know what they *ought to need to know*. If you're a teacher you're in a constant battle with mildly deluded adults who think the world will get better if you imagine it *is* better. You want to teach about sex? Fine, but only when they're old enough to do it. You want to talk politics? Sure, but nothing modern. Religion? So long as you don't actually think about it. Well, hell. In this town, the evil old lady who tells everyone what they can and can't read because it isn't

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<sup>63</sup> 'Gong fu' is another way of spelling / pronouncing what Western audiences typically know as 'kung fu.'

<sup>64</sup> Although the explicit examination of childhood in the context of utopian theory is relatively recent, there is a tradition of thought that goes back to at least Rousseau that depicts childhood as a kind of golden age in human development; there are parallels, I think, to be drawn between Rousseau's belief (neatly summed up here by Roger Neustadter), that "the child [lives] in a utopian state of nature...until the forces of civilization [corrupt] their naïve essence" (147), and Plato's model, as outlined by Karl Popper in his *Open Society*, of the perfect state that declines as it participates in history.

decent is *me*. So I can hire whoever I damn well like to subvert my iron rule and they can teach evolution and free speech and the cultural bias of history and all the rest. And I do this because you, you *are* going to leave the path, however much you want to stay on it.'

(79, emphasis in original)

In other words, Assumption Soames deliberately hires staff that she knows will subvert the iron-clad conservative agenda that she appears to espouse, and so makes certain that the pupils who attend her school are taught what she believes they actually need to know. In this speech Soames reveals that the school she presides over is in fact an environment that is carefully designed to enable students to 'leave the path' that institutions such as Jorgmund might prefer them to take.

In much the same way that I-330 acts as the embodiment and agent of the Ancient House and its heterotopian possibilities, so too is the Evangelist the agent and arbiter of the Soames School and the rebellion against socially-normative thinking that it encourages. Because of her intervention, the Soames School is, I would suggest, a space of what we might call counter-utopian engineering that stands in sharp contrast to the "crash course of management schools and loyalty card deals...pseudo-spaces, malls and water features" (15) that Jorgmund uses as a (cognitive) blueprint to create pencilnecks such as Dick Washburn; it is a heterotopian space that fosters subversion and the obstruction of social expectation, and one that is all the more effective as a site of disruption and resistance because it appears to be a compliant and regular institution that might churn out pencilnecks in the making. In her role as the agent of this heterotopian space, the Evangelist also makes apparent the competing narratives of identity at work in this novel, as is indicated by our narrator's comment that he has "totally bought into Assumption Soames's public persona. This, it now appears, was naïve" (75). His use of the phrase 'public persona' is, I believe, telling; it implies the enactment of a consciously constructed identity that is performed in conjunction and simultaneously with the expectations and competing (and complementary) narratives of its audience. This is indicated by the two different names that she bears; the Evangelist, and Assumption Soames. As the Evangelist, she upholds the conservative status quo, and is "utterly straightforward in the most devious possible way, a subtle bludgeon like those computers which play chess by going through every consequence of every move there is" (76). Her apparent fixation on all matters spiritual – part of the narrative of her public persona – lends itself in turn to the narrative that our narrator constructs for her, one in which she "sets an extra place at table every night for God...and eats only gravel and oatmeal in order to avoid inflaming the senses" (75). Assumption Soames, on the other hand, smokes the cigarettes "(cancerous, blasphemous, steeped in the blood of slaves and mired in the culture of sin and sensuality which pervades this modern world)" that the Evangelist excoriates to her students, and

works ceaselessly to give them the tools that they need to be able to leave “the shelter of the path” (75, 78). When these conflicting narratives collide, our narrator is left momentarily flummoxed; he has no idea of how to address or reconcile what he calls “this rather significant discrepancy” (75). These somewhat disparate narratives are not the only ones that inform the identity of Assumption Soames, however. She is also the widow of Evander John Soames of Cricklewood Cove, the “stupid sonuvabitch [who] came home and died of kuru in [her] house” (80). I would suggest that this particular narrative is evidence of the ambiguity at work in heterotopian spaces; the ability to take the path less travelled than the education the Soames School cultivates is perhaps to blame for Evander Soames’ foray into cannibalism in the Cricklewood Fens. In yet another of her identities, Assumption Soames is also the mother of Elisabeth Soames, “the slender, elegant child/woman with whom [our narrator has] been practising lethal and exacting modes of pugilism” (75).

The existence of multiple – and oft competing – narratives is not confined to the Soames School, nor to Assumption Soames herself. The ‘pugilism’ that our narrator mentions is the *gong fu* of the House of the Voiceless Dragon, taught in Cricklewood Cove by Master Wu Shenyang. Master Wu’s is both residence and dojo, and is another of the more ‘traditionally’ heterotopian spaces to be found within the novel. The living room of Master Wu’s house is described by our narrator as being “a treasure house of oddments and curiosities [with] a gold statue of a warlike pig in one corner, a pair of Foo Dogs on the mantle, standing lamps from various periods of design, weapons and china ducks on all the walls” (46). The somewhat pastiche nature of this room is reflected in the *gong fu* and lessons of Master Wu, who knows “a great many higgledy-piggledy things about a great many subjects... [and] almost all of them find their way into the lessons. Thus along with the Elvis Walk, we have Lorenz Palace Step (mathematical *gong fu*) and Vetruvian Fist (da Vinci *gong fu*), and – until Elisabeth intervenes – Fallopian Tube Arm (the name culled from a diagram in my biology textbook, chosen for the shape of the elbow in the final posture, but rather alarming” (50, emphasis in original). Rather than representing a helplessly postmodern sensibility that grasps at and replicates whatever it sees, however, I would contend that the patchwork nature of Master Wu’s home and teachings indicate instead a deep-rooted resistance to homogeneity. The above description of his living room is in stark contrast to the description of the Jorgmund-approved apartment that our narrator looks at, with its “default beige and lifestyled interior” (346) where everything matches, whilst the names of the different postures and movements implies a very un-Jorgmund-like willingness to take inspiration and meaning from a wide variety of people and places. The idea that Master Wu’s house and the teachings of the Voiceless Dragon are sites of resistance to uniformity is confirmed when he reveals to Elisabeth and our narrator that his family (and their *gong fu*) is the hereditary enemy of the Clockwork Hand Society, and that they have been hunted by ninjas for generations:

‘Some time, long time ago, someone paid [the ninjas] or ordered them to kill everyone in my family, and make my father’s father’s father’s *gong fu* disappear. They never quit. They just keep trying. It’s what they are. War – for ever...’ Master Wu sighs.

‘Lots of people were at war in China then. Chiang Kai-shek was chasing Mao all over the country...Our war just disappeared into theirs...

Their war,’ Master Wu goes on, ‘was about who was in control. Ours was about staying alive, of course, but it was also about *choice*. Very much the same thing. We teach *gong fu* so that you have a choice...Whoever paid the ninjas believed we are wrong. Power belongs in one place. Nothing should disturb the way things work. No alternatives. Or maybe it was just them: the Clockwork Hand Society, ninjas, call them what you like.’

(67-68, emphasis in original)

As Master Wu makes clear here, the ability to make choices is central to the philosophy of the Voiceless Dragon, and to their disagreement with the Clockwork Hand Society. This is key to understanding the Voiceless Dragon as a heterotopian movement (and space, insofar as Master Wu’s house is a reflection of the values and teachings of its owner). To offer choice is to allow and encourage the exploration of multiple points of view, ways of being and narratives of self. As Master Wu points out, this is anathema to the likes of the Clockwork Hand and the status quo based upon the utopia / dystopia binary that it, like the OneState, Oceania and L. Bob Rife before it, seeks to uphold.

As a heterotopian site of resistance, however, Master Wu’s house is an ambiguous space, one which can undermine and betray as readily as it aids and abets, whilst, like some of those that arise from the Soames School, the competing narratives that emerge from this space are ambivalent. From the story that is told by Master Wu of his birth and early years, it becomes apparent that his family, the last of the Voiceless Dragon, were at least semi-nomadic, always “running and hiding” (67). His house in Cricklewood Cove, whilst representing a kind of safe haven and stable site of resistance, also makes him vulnerable. He is, of course, aware of this; the “low-tech burglar alarm” system (65) created with strings of bells makes his awareness of his vulnerability evident. The alarm system, ingenious as it is however, is not enough to prevent his death. And it is from the competing narratives of Master Wu’s death, the “two truths” that confront Elisabeth and our narrator as they stand “in front of the smouldering char which was the House of the Voiceless Dragon” (100) that the ambiguous nature of the house, and the way in which it is simultaneously a site of resistance and of betrayal, is made evident. The first ‘truth’ that our narrator describes is “simple and bleakly comfortable” (100), and has Wu Shenyang dying in an accidental house fire. The second, which is more “fanciful” (100), describes

a ninja intrusion and a “fluid and magnificent” fight between Master Wu and “the foot soldiers of the Clockwork Hand Society” (103, 102). At some point during the fight, however, our narrator has Master Wu come to several realisations:

If he continues this battle much longer, the likelihood is that Yumei and Ophelia will come home, and even if they are not killed, they will be exposed. At the moment Master Wu could well be a bachelor. The ninjas have no knowledge of his family arrangements, because...they’ve only seen this room, and they’ve been kinda busy. Similarly, they do not have any idea who his students are. All that information is in the desk. Thus, he is the weak link in his enemies’ chain. Without him, they simply cannot find the Voiceless Dragon. It will be not only silent, but invisible.... And it is at this point that he makes a decision.

(104)

That decision is to set himself, and the house on fire, and to keep the ninjas at bay until the house, with its family photos (Yumei and Ophelia are, respectively, his daughter and granddaughter, and both practitioners of the Voiceless Dragon *gong fu*) and information about the members of the Voiceless Dragon, is beyond salvation. Laying the issues of biographical truth and lack of evidence for this particular narrative aside for a moment, what this passage makes abundantly clear are the vulnerabilities that the house represents, and the ways in which it undermines the sense of safety that it appears to exude. Whichever narrative you choose to believe, the house is the cause of Master Wu’s death. Even destroyed, however, the house of Wu Shenyang continues to perform some of its less ambiguous heterotopian functions. Its destruction, however conversely, assures the endurance of the School of the Voiceless Dragon, enabling it to continue as a site of resistance to the Clockwork Hand and to Jorgmund. The possibility of the second narrative that arises from its destruction is what fuels the quest of Elisabeth Soames, whereby she seeks out Humbert and knowledge of the Clockwork Hand Society. More importantly, however, what this second narrative also does is to throw into doubt any preconceived notions we as an audience might have about what is real and what is not, foreshadowing the birth of the competing and complementary narratives of our narrator and Gonzo Lubitsch in a sandpit.

The last of the heterotopian spaces within the novel that I will examine here, the sandpit in the playground in Cricklewood Cove is perhaps the most important. The space where Gonzo Lubitsch creates our narrator, it is also the site of the latter’s awakening, where he finally comes to full self-awareness in the wake of his Reification. There are, I would suggest, parallels between both the Reification of our narrator in the incident at Station 9 when Gonzo is caught in a “waterfall” (340) of

Stuff and his subsequent awakening in the sandpit, and the awakening of D-503 in the Ancient House. As I noted in chapter two, D-503 relates how he “became glass [and] saw into myself, inside. There were two me’s [sic]. One was the old one, D-503...the other used to just stick his hairy paws out of his shell, but now all of him came out” (Zamiatin, 56). Although D-503 is speaking here somewhat metaphorically, this is the moment when his individual, conscious self is birthed; the imagery that he creates is somewhat akin to the process by which a baby bird hatches itself beak first. Our narrator’s birth, whilst being a two-step event, is comparable. He is “spun out and separated” (Harkaway, 413) from Gonzo when they are “deluged together in the raw, unbalanced Stuff of the universe” (413); the ‘second me’ of Gonzo is “made flesh” (413). Gonzo’s fear and shame at the actualisation of the secret version of his self – which is akin to the fear and anger that D-503 exhibits in the aftermath of seeing this second version of himself – leads him to attempt to murder our narrator. It is this attempt on his life which eventually leads our narrator back to the sandpit in Cricklewood Cove where he, “across the sandpit and thirty years distance... [spies] the infant Gonzo” (408), and is able at last to understand that “this sandpit is not where [they] met. It is where [he] was born – or rather, made” (412); this is the moment that he recognises that he was Gonzo’s ‘second me,’ and his (re)birth and individuation, begun by exposure to Stuff, is completed. To complete the process of awakening and in realising that he is now (where he has not been before) a separate individual from Gonzo, our narrator must recognise and reconcile the two competing narratives of the origins of his and Gonzo’s partnership.

The heterotopian elements of the sandpit, which our narrator labels “the Sandpit of Truth” (420), not only allow him to come to full self-awareness, but also exposes the ways in which identity is an aggregate of the narratives that we construct about and for ourselves, and those complementary and competing narratives that are told about us. Consider the two competing descriptions our narrator offers of his first meeting with Gonzo:

One of my first memories, in all the world: Gonzo...staring into my face with a stranger’s concern. He has been playing a game of indescribable complexity, by himself, in the corner of the playground. He has walked from one end of the sandpit to the other and rendered it flat in a particular place, and *he has marked borders and bridges and areas of diffusion and lines of demarcation* and now he needs another player and cannot find one. And so he turns to look about him and sees a small, lost child: alone in a moment of unfathomable grief. With presence of mind he directs his mother’s attention to the crisis, and she trundles over and asks immediately what is the matter and am I hurt and where are my parents and where is my home? And to these questions I have no answer. All I know is that I am crying.

(29, my emphasis)

This is the narrative of their ‘first meeting’ that our narrator, all unknowingly, has inherited from Gonzo; as it continues, Gonzo buys his new friend an ice-cream and allows him to join in his “incomprehensible game” (30). I will examine this passage – particularly the parts I have emphasised – more thoroughly in conjunction with the second description of this first encounter:

Gonzo stares across the sandpit. It is a wasteland. He can see no one he wants to play with. If he cannot find a friend, he will start to cry again. His grief will catch up with him. It stalks him, jumps on him in idle moments. Gonzo already has puffy cheeks and raw, red eyes. Hurriedly, he takes his father’s advice.

*He makes a new friend.*

A boy (of course) his own age. Smaller. As alone as he is. Someone to share his burdens, racked – as children can be, for no discrete reason – with dreadful sadness...We settle down to play, and it emerges that I am not quite as good at this as he is but good enough to keep him on his toes. In fact, this is almost definitive of me: in all the areas where Gonzo wishes to excel, I am just close enough behind to push him harder. In those he chooses to ignore, I am often quite talented. I am his foil...Judicious, clever and sensible where he is headlong, intuitive and rash. Gonzo splits himself down the middle, and knows that he will never be alone again.

(411-412, emphasis in original)

The sandpit, then, is a site of crisis twice over. Out of Gonzo’s crisis – the searing absence of his brother – our narrator, Gonzo’s “invisible companion” (412), is created; when our narrator returns to the sandpit in the wake of his reification, it is to come to the realisation that he has only existed as a physical presence for a few short months, and that much of what he is, and has been, comes directly from Gonzo. What is important to remember is that *both* of these narratives are ‘true,’ insofar as such a concept exists. For Gonzo, the first passage is his narrative of how he and our narrator met; that it omits a few key details that the second passage – which is our narrator’s narrative – fills in does not mean that it lacks veracity, for Gonzo or, for that matter, for our narrator. As he begins to realise in the immediate aftermath of his awakening, “everything I remember is true – except for the very edges of Gonzo’s imagined history of me, like the house on Aggerdean Bluff and the parents I never had – and everything is false” (412).

As a heterotopian space, the Sandpit of Truth begins to dismantle binary-derived assumptions about truth and falsity as it pertains to autobiographical representation; both of these passages, both Gonzo and our narrator’s experiences are true, and both are not. The sandpit, and the multiple

narratives that arise from it also begins to demonstrate the ways in which (narrative) identity is networked, existing in constant circulation between the narratives that we create for ourselves, and those that are created for and about us. Somewhat more literal in the case of our narrator and Gonzo, it is still in evidence. The dreadful sadness, the unfathomable grief that our narrator feels in the first passage is, in fact, the grief that Gonzo experiences as a result of the death of his older (soldier) brother Marcus, but chooses to displace onto his creation; the loneliness of our narrator is Gonzo's, shifted onto the boy he creates from parts of himself. As an extension of this, I would suggest that the borders and bridges, and lines of demarcation and diffusion that are associated in the first passage with Gonzo's game are in fact directly applicable to the process that he goes through in creating our narrator as his foil; they are the boundaries he chooses to create between himself and his "weedy sidekick" (44), the ways in which they are similar and disparate. The narrative and identity that Gonzo constructs for our narrator is in many ways the mirror image of his own. As the second passage above shows, their abilities and interests are complementary in almost every way – one excels in an area where the other does not. What is crucial to remember is that even as Gonzo constructs a narrative for his sidekick, he is also constructing his own, in opposition to and correspondence with that of our narrator. I would suggest that our narrator is not passive in the construction of their dual (but by no means dualistic) narratives; as their time at Jarndice University and our narrator's (but not Gonzo's) brush with revolutionary activity implies, there are times when Gonzo and his narrative takes a back seat, and our narrator's is the dominant narrative at work. The mirroring operating in their relationship is reflected in the family history and home that Gonzo imagines for our narrator. The relationship between our narrator and his (equally imaginary) parents is distant; he "lived [his] own, sovereign life" (404), feeling that "they were gladder to see [him] go than to return, that they enjoyed their unencumbered time" and so received with "unconditional gratitude" (403) the distraction of Gonzo's company. By comparison, the Lubitsch household is one that is close-knit, all the more so perhaps because of the death of one child: "Lunch is Ma Lubitsch's small white witchery, her article of faith – if she can provide Gonzo with hearty nutrition and a solid, dependable centre, he will be well-fitted to the world. He will conquer, he will survive, he will feel no need to seek adventure. He will not leave her. For Ma Lubitsch, lunch defies death" (31). The key word, and the key difference between these two family units (however imaginary one of them may be) is 'centre' – Gonzo's family provides this where our narrator's does not. Peculiarly enough, however, in the end it is our narrator for whom the Lubitsch household is the most important; it is to there that he journeys after his awakening in the sandpit, and it is Gonzo's parents to whom he first consciously recounts his narrative:

Old Man Lubitsch sighs.

... 'What has my son done to you, that he is running so far and so fast?'

I cannot answer straightaway, but there is no need. There is no time in this room...This is the heart of the world, and I am safe. I draw my thoughts together, and I tell my tale. I do not try to separate my memory from Gonzo's or to make judgements about what *actually* happened in a given room. The past is memory, and no two person's memories are alike. I know my story, and I tell it as it was for me. I do not skimp when the moment of my genesis arrives. I do not prevaricate. I make the position clear. *I am Gonzo's shadow. I am his imaginary friend made real. I am new.*

(421-422, emphasis in original)

As he acknowledges here, the Lubitsch household is at the heart of our narrator's world. It provides a centre for him in a way that it does not for Gonzo (who does not, *cannot* tell his parents the truth of what has happened), indicating, I believe, the ways in which their narratives have intertwined and taken on facets of the other.<sup>65</sup> In making no attempt to differentiate between the narratives of himself and Gonzo, I would suggest that our narrator is, signalling his recognition of the fact that his and Gonzo's narratives are – up until this point, at least – inextricably interwoven and networked, acknowledging that one narrative is only ever one amongst many. At the same time, however, he is also asserts and privileges his own narrative in a way that he has not – could not – previously, when he existed only as an aspect of Gonzo. What is crucial here is that during the telling of his tale to Ma and Old Man Lubitsch, he adds an entirely new strand to his narrative, and acknowledges – and portrays – himself as one of the 'new.' In accepting the fact that he is a bifurcate, a 'monster,' our narrator completes the process of individuation that was begun and made possible – literally and metaphorically – by the exposure of himself and Gonzo to Stuff.

Stuff – also known to our narrator for a time as "Disney Dust or shadow" (272) – is, I would contend, the ultimate enabler of heterotopian spaces within *The Gone-Away World*. The unexpected and unintended fallout from what is known as the "Go Away Bomb" which is a weapon designed to "[suck] the organising principle, the *information*, out of *matter* and *energy*" (272), it breaks down boundaries and the binaries that are supposed to remain impervious, and undermines in new ways the encapsulation that Jorgmund strives to uphold, not only on an institutional but also on a personal level, by interacting with the "thoughts, and hopes, and fears" (272) of those it encounters. In particular, it penetrates the capsules that were ultimately safeguarded and upheld in *Snow Crash*; it

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<sup>65</sup> As an extension of this, it is possible to speculate that the feelings of estrangement from his parents that our narrator (believes he) experiences are, in fact, Gonzo's.

allows for flow between the body, and the mind, and then between the individual that these two make up, and the space(s) that it occupies. In some cases, this means that Stuff effects direct change on physical bodies in response to narratives that it perceives; in the case of our narrator and Gonzo – who are doused in a large quantity of raw Stuff – it detects the existence of our narrator and his separate narrative(s) within Gonzo, and make them (and him) tangible, undermining the encapsulation at work within Gonzo’s body and mind. Whilst Stuff may seem like “a blessing in disguise; how wonderful to have discovered a substance which responds to thought” (277), it is anything but a beacon of utopian potential, as is evidenced by the little girl that our narrator and his companions find, who “wished she was a horse, and was immersed while sleeping in a storm of Stuff, and wakened to find herself transformed, hopelessly muddled with horsey parts and unable to breathe” (272). But neither is it – as Jorgmund’s vigorous attempts to counter it with FOX might suggest – a particularly bad substance either. It is instead a deeply heterotopian, and profoundly ambiguous substance; it undermines Gonzo, leaving him feeling “so hollow inside” (413), whilst enabling the awakening and corporealisation of our narrator. Although the separation of these two men that occurs when Stuff disrupts the encapsulation of Gonzo is painful for them both – particularly for our narrator, who ends up “shot in the digestive tract” (383) – it allows them to create and enact their own separate narratives, independent, for the first time, from the constraints laid upon them by the complementary and competing narratives of the other. This change is reflected in the conversation between our narrator and Gonzo at the end of the novel:

‘That’s true,’ Gonzo says. ‘I never did [give our narrator a name]’ He ponders. ‘Are you...going to do more of that?’  
‘Of what?’  
‘Derring-do.’  
‘I don’t know.’  
‘I’m not,’ Gonzo says definitely. ‘I’m done. I want to be...I don’t know. But I want it. I need to be quiet for a while.’  
‘Oh.’  
‘So...if you want...you could be Gonzo Lubitsch.’  
I think about it.  
‘No. But thanks.’

(530, ellipses in original)

Up until the reification of our narrator, Gonzo Lubitsch had always been the one with the bravado, with our narrator as his trusty sidekick. What the conversation between the two reveals, and what our narrator – and Gonzo himself – may not have been / is not aware of, are the constraints that these set narratives place upon the both of them. With the binaries that bound them broken by their exposure to Stuff, Gonzo is finally free to be quiet for a time, whilst our narrator – who was bound to be the reflective one of the pair – is free to, if he so *chooses*, to explore his boldness and capacity for hero-like action. Fittingly, neither of them wish to be the Gonzo Lubitsch of old; as Zaher Bey notes when he is rescued by our narrator, “you are he and he is you and neither of you is who you were before” (515).

As well as exposing the possibility of multiplicity in narrative, via the medium of our narrator Stuff also completes the inversion of good and bad that began on Piper 90, dismantling this and other of the core binaries that Jorgmund trades upon. In particular, it makes irreparably ambiguous the divide between ‘man’ and ‘monster,’ a binary that the narrative of Pascal Timbery and Larry Tusk had already cast aspersions upon. Whilst Stuff does indeed create monsters from the dreams and fears and thoughts of men and animals alike – the ‘mermaids’ that feed on the spinal fluid of humans are a particularly good example – it also (re)creates people as well. When recounting his story to Old Man and Ma Lubitsch, our narrator takes pains to make his position as one of the ‘new’ clear:

Neither one of them seems terribly upset at the idea of having a bifurcate in the house.

‘I am a monster,’ I tell them, in case they haven’t understood.

‘Are you?’ Old Man Lubitsch wants to know.

‘Yes.’

‘What is the most monstrous thing you have done?’

Well, now that he mentions it, I can’t recall the last terrible crime I committed...I suggest that being a monster is a matter of fact, rather than action, and Old Man Lubitsch says ‘Bah.’

Since that seems to be all they have to say about it, I carry on with my story.

(422)

This conversation re-establishes and reaffirms two key points, both of which I have already touched upon. Even though he was reified by Stuff, our narrator is most definitely not a monster; as Old Man Lubitsch’s dismissal makes clear, monsters are made, rather than born. This tallies with the views demonstrated by the crew of Piper 90 during their strike against the policies of van Meents and Fust, who are, by virtue of their desire to eradicate the Found Thousand for no reason other than the fact that they are ‘new,’ more monstrous than the beings they denounce. As I have already alluded to,

however, the distinctions between human and monster is not as clear-cut as simply distinguishing between pencilnecks and everyone else; consider the case of Mae Milton, the pencilneck who appears to exhibit genuine warmth and humanity. Thus, the heterotopian rationality that aids our narrator and questions the humanity of pencilnecks whilst asserting that of the reified also undermines the dualisms that he (however unwittingly) also perpetuates. Closely associated with the man/monster binary is that of 'good' and 'bad.' Although our narrator is at first ambivalent about Jorgmund and the Pipe – he does not like the pencilnecks – he believes the “good, clean FOX” (9) that it controls and delivers is both benign and necessary, whilst viewing Stuff as nightmares incarnate. As he eventually discovers, however, the inverse is truer. Although Stuff can and does create horrors, that is not the extent of its possibilities, as the reification of our narrator and the Found Thousand (who appear to be fundamentally peaceful) reveal. Conversely, the way in which FOX is created, however 'safe' it might make the world, is more horrendous than anything that Stuff can call forth. Our narrator, upon discovering this secret in the Core of Jorgmund relates how the original FOX is created organically by a boy called Bobby Shank, who suffered horrific brain injuries in the “un-war” (160) in Addeh Katir that precedes and precipitates the Go Away War. The specific nature of his injuries means that any Stuff that comes within a few feet of him changes and becomes harmless. He is found by Humbert Pestle, who steals him away from his caregiver and begins building an empire around the substance that Bobby Shank creates; Jorgmund, and FOX. This works out just fine until Jorgmund begins expanding:

Humbert Pestle had to keep looking, but wherever he looked, he couldn't find another Bobby Shank. So he looked into his heart and listened to the music, and he knew what he had to do. He had to *make* people like Bobby Shank...

At first he used bandits.... He got fifteen like that. Some of them he just locked away until the EEG readings went like Bobby's. Others he did things to, sharp, messy things. They didn't last long, not like Bobby, but they worked. They produced. But not fast enough. The new towns were springing up faster than he could increase his production.

That's when he went to Heyerdahl Point with the whole of the Clockwork Hand, and turned it into Drowned Cross.... And when they were all used up, he took another town, and then another.... That's how Jorgmund saves the world. It uses people up. Feeds the princess to the dragon.

(506-507, emphasis in original)

In other words, Jorgmund and FOX consume and destroy the very people they're supposedly saving. The production of FOX is perhaps the quintessence of the utopian engineering that is demonstrated

by the Party and by the OneState and abhorred by Karl Popper; the sacrifice of a few thousand lives in service of the machine is measured against ‘the greater good’ for millions more, and found to be acceptable. The result of this revelation is that our narrator “can’t think about FOX any more without shuddering. Time was when it gave [him] a warm glow” (511); FOX, which saves people from the corporeal nightmares wrought by Stuff, is revealed to be the more nightmarish of the two – the capacity of Stuff to bring forth monsters as well as wo/men should not be overlooked.

### Only Forward

*The Gone-Away World* ends with our narrator defeating Humbert Pestle in single combat; by virtue of this, he becomes the owner of Jorgmund: “the ownership of Jorgmund is vested in the Clockwork Hand. The Clockwork Hand is controlled by the present master. That master is chosen by acclamation, or by combat” (528). I consider it important to note that although he considers trying to use Jorgmund “to do good” (528), he chooses instead to wind the company up, exposing the ‘truth’ about FOX and its origins; I would suggest that he recognises the futility of trying to ‘do good’ – whatever that might be. What he believes to be good and right might (and probably will be) at odds with what many other people conceive to be good and right; although one might not agree with his methods, Humbert Pestle believed he was doing right by the human race with the creation of FOX. In winding Jorgmund up, our narrator ensures that the production of FOX ceases, and that “people will have to choose how to live” (529) in conjunction with the unreal world. By offering *all* people that choice, by putting aside all conceptions of the ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ way to live, our narrator creates what I consider to be the first entirely heterotopian world; ambiguous and not without risk, both morally and physically – it is, after all, entirely likely that a great many people will die when the Stuff rolls back over them – it is a world in which established binaries have finally been dismantled, and where people are free to create their own narratives in conjunction with the spaces that surround them. This lack of enforced (and enforceable) ideas about normative behaviour is also at work in the final text I will examine here, Michael Marshall Smith’s *Only Forward*. Much like the other texts that I have analysed here, *OF* is often placed within a dystopian framework; although Matthew Hills notes the “generic instability” (77) of several of Smith’s novels, including *Only Forward* (a trait of heterotopian fiction that I have previously remarked upon), he nonetheless remarks upon the ways in which these novels are “clearly indebted to the cyberpunk subgenre” (77), reinforcing the perception that *OF* is another novel in the “dystopian ‘hard’ sf” (78) tradition, irrespective of how much it is also influenced by fantasy and detective fiction. Adding to the notion that *OF* is just another depiction of a fragmented dystopic society, there are striking resemblances between *Only Forward* and *Snow Crash*,

particularly in the depiction of a mega-city that has splintered into Neighbourhoods (akin to the 'Burbclaves in *SC*) that are "self-governing and regulating states, each free to do what the hell they [like]" (Smith, 27). Many of the Neighbourhoods of *OF* are as ambiguous as the 'Burbclaves of *SC*; Red Neighbourhood experiences continuous gang warfare, which frequently involves "arson and random napalming" and where a bar fight might involve "fists, guns or chemical weapons" (30). Additionally, like many of the heterotopian spaces that I have previously identified, Neighbourhoods are subject to varying degrees of encapsulation. Some Neighbourhoods, such as Stable, refuse all contact with the outside world – the wall which surrounds them is "unbreachable by anything short of a nuclear weapon" (76) – whilst others are more open; Stark lives in Colour, which is open to anyone who appreciates colour (unless they're prone to epileptic seizures).

However, although *OF* appears analogous to *The Gone-Away World* and to *Snow Crash* especially, I would suggest that the heterotopianism of *OF* is far more developed and more pervasive than the latter, and builds on those elements that I identified in the former. In particular, I would contend that the heterotopian elements of *OF* demonstrate a continuous and complete repudiation of the dualisms that were upheld in *SC*, and eventually denied in *TGAW*. I will begin my exploration of *OF* by analysing some of the minute but crucial differences between the Neighbourhoods and 'Burbclaves, focusing in particular on the Neighbourhood known as 'Stable,' and the ways in which the heterotopian nature of this space, which is reminiscent of the Ancient House, demonstrates elements of encapsulation and flow even as it undermines expectations around these notions. As the second half of my analysis will demonstrate, the individual known as Stark is central to the deconstruction of dualisms and the expectations that these concepts entail. The first-person narrator of *OF*, Stark acts throughout the novel as the agent of the space known as Jeamland and is the only person able to consciously enter this space. Unequivocally heterotopian, and representing a culmination of the features of the heterotopia that I have attempted to depict throughout the course of this thesis, Jeamland is at once a highly encapsulated and yet readily accessible space that is shaped by those who enter it even as it wreaks change – both good and bad – simultaneously upon them; this is demonstrated not only by Stark's association with Jeamland, but by the quest that he undertakes within this space with the Actioneer Fell Alkland.<sup>66</sup> Contributing heavily to its ability to destabilise and undermine binaries is the somewhat ironic position held by Jeamland; it is the land of dreams, which are, as Alkland and Stark's experiences in this space reveal, certainly not utopian. As my analysis of the experience of Stark – who, like Winston Smith before him, makes the mistake of believing that he understands the nature of the space that he inhabits – will show, Jeamland, like Stuff before it, has an

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<sup>66</sup> 'Actioneer' is the term used to indicate an inhabitant of the Action Centre.

almost boundless capacity to deceive and undermine the individual even as it allows them to explore new and pre-existing narratives.

Like *Snow Crash* before it, *Only Forward* depicts a city that has first grown monumentally large, and then splintered into a series of loosely connected enclaves, each of which is consciously and deliberately different from the others around it. I would contend, however, that there is a loose sense of coherency at work in *SC* that is not found anywhere in *OF*. The Burbclave that Hiro, in his final outing as the Deliverator, attempts to deliver pizza to – The Mews at Windsor Heights – is not unique, but rather just one of the many capsules known by the same name, that has exactly the same layout no matter where it's located geographically; as Hiro knows, "a Deliverator can go into a Mews at Windsor Heights anywhere from Fairbanks to Yaroslavl to the Shenzhen special economic zone and find his way around" (Stephenson, 12). The homogeneity that lingers in *SC*'s society is hinted at throughout the novel; the Mafia-owned pizza delivery vendor that Hiro is assigned to is known as "CosaNostra Pizza #3569" (6) – suggesting that the franchise is just one amongst several thousand – whilst the description of the living conditions of most "people of America" (178) is similarly telling:

They have fled from the true America, the America of atomic bombs, scalpings, hip-hop, chaos theory, cement overshoes, snake handlers, spree killers, space walks, buffalo jumps, drive-bys, cruise missiles, Sherman's March, gridlock, motorcycle gangs, and bungee jumping. They have parallel-parked their bimbo boxes in identical computer-designed Burbclave street patterns and secreted themselves in symmetrical sheetrock shitholes with vinyl floors and ill-fitting woodwork and no sidewalks, vast house farms out in the loglo wilderness, a culture medium for a medium culture.

(179)

The 'true America' that has been given up may have been one of pandemonium, but, from the description offered above, also appears to have contained and given voice to – if not reconciled – a multitude of different and conflicting spaces and attitudes. This unruliness has been replaced by large swathes of sameness, a series of intermediary spaces which are 'identical' and 'symmetrical.'<sup>67</sup> Similarly, the roles that Y.T. and Hiro occupy – pizza delivery driver and Kourier – demonstrates the lingering unity within *SC*, even as the tools of their job (travel visas, skateboards and cars) enable them to undermine the rules of encapsulation at work within the novel. Because there is still an underlying

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<sup>67</sup> This is not to say that the same level of homogeneity that exists within *We* and *NEF* is prevalent in *SC* – the heterotopian spaces of the latter are far more pervasive than those found in the former, and provide far greater agency and means of self-determination to the individuals that reside within them, as I have already demonstrated.

coherency within Hiro's Los Angeles, there is still a continuous need for those who can penetrate boundaries and move between the different capsules. In particular, Y.T.'s role as Kourier demonstrates that communication between the different capsules of LA is continuous, however incompatible the world-views that they propound may seem. She makes deliveries to the Mafia, to various Burbclaves, to Fedland, and to one of the branches of the franchulate known as "The Reverend Wayne's Pearly Gates" (180). Similarly, Hiro's hacking abilities afford him almost unlimited access to the various capsules located in the Metaverse.

The rules of encapsulation, rupture and flow at work in *OF* are more problematic than they were in *SC*, and the society – if it can even be called that – that it depicts is, I would suggest, more reminiscent of the world hinted at in the closing chapter of *TGAW*; one in which any sense of underlying cohesion has been dismissed and where there are instead endless possibilities, many of which are highly ambiguous:

Everything is compacting, accelerating, solidifying, *but not all of it in the same direction*. There's a loose collection of Neighbourhoods that are pretty much on the same planet, and if any country-wide decisions need to be made, they get together and have a crack at it. Everyone else? Well, who knows, basically. I've seen a lot of The City, I've been around. But there's a lot of places I haven't been, places where no one's been in a hundred years, no one except the people who live there. Some places you don't go because it's too dangerous, and some places don't let outsiders in.

(Smith, 28, my emphasis)

In other words, each Neighbourhood within The City is highly unique. Each has gone in a completely different direction from its neighbour, and any sense of real cohesion is gone; it's "a hell of a big place, split into hundreds of places that have no idea what's going on in all the other places" (43). Unlike Y.T., who – by virtue of her Kourier visa – can travel to almost any capsule within her city, even Stark, who "can look like a guy who belongs" (29) and so is able to rupture the boundaries that separate different Neighbourhoods with more ease than most, has not been and *cannot* travel to many of them. The lack of uniformity within The City is underlined by the complete absence of any sense of hierarchical organisation. The loose collection of like-minded Neighbourhoods that Stark mentions above is almost the antithesis of the intrusive governance of the OneState or the Party, and does not seem conducive to the domineering and homogenising mind-set of the likes of L. Bob Rife or Jorgmund. The only Neighbourhood that we encounter that demonstrates anything like the organisation and regularity demanded and enforced by the latter is the Action Centre. This Neighbourhood is rigidly hierarchical,

with “43 grades of monorail attendant alone” (15), whilst the upper echelons of management are known by alphabetical designations reminiscent of pencilneck taxonomy that also denote their rank, and demands absolute adherence to the endlessly detailed rules by which it governs its inhabitants – there are even “compulsory tanning regulations in the Centre” (20). However, despite the presence of a sub-plot in which it appears that the Centre is looking “to dominate the decision-making of [another] major Neighbourhood” (331), like the other Neighbourhoods in The City the Action Centre is inwardly focused; as Stark notes, “the emotional support for world domination” (331) does not exist in this time, and the sub-plot is eventually revealed to be, quite literally, a figment of his imagination. The heterogeneity of The City is further emphasised by descriptions of the different Neighbourhoods; although, as the above passage notes, there are some Neighbourhoods which have vaguely similar outlooks, in most cases each Neighbourhood is markedly different from the others. Thus, whilst there are spaces such as Brandfield – which is a “Neighbourhood for rich people... [where] every single adult is...either a doctor, lawyer, orthodontist or wife, and their beautifully poised daughters just float around, having parties, power shopping and waiting for their turn to be a doctor, lawyer or orthodontist’s wife” (149) – and Sound, where the inhabitants live in complete silence for twenty three hours of every day, there are also spaces such as Red. A space controlled by warring gang factions and so subject to the further, internal encapsulation that comes with the demarcation of various territories, Red encompasses a variety of unpleasant-seeming spaces such as Hu, a “small sub-section pretty much at the centre of red” (48). As Stark rather grimly notes, “Hu is the very end of the line. If you’re in Hu you’re either dead, about to be dead, or squatting in a dark abandoned building, chewing on the bodies” (48). What the above passage, and the various descriptions of the different Neighbourhoods scattered throughout Stark’s narrative also hint at is the near-complete fragmentation and encapsulation at work throughout The City; it appears that flow between the boundaries of the different capsules is almost non-existent:

A lot of people only visit three or four Neighbourhoods in their whole lives. I can’t understand that, but it’s true...I guess there’s not the same need to search any more: somewhere there’ll be a place that’s right for you, and so you go there, and you stay. The majority remain in the Neighbourhood where they were born, in fact. They’re so distinct now, so specialised, that if you grow up in one nowhere else ever feels comfortable. A few people still feel the need to roam, to travel for its own sake...but not many. If you’ve found the best, why try the rest?

(153)

Stark, along with those occasional nomadic types, appears to be an exception to this rule, moving between many of the different Neighbourhoods with relative ease. As he demonstrates on his initial mono ride into Red, Stark has the ability to look like he belongs anywhere: “It’s in the face. I don’t look like...I’m about to wet myself in fear. I don’t look like I’m disgusted with what I see. I look like the kind of guy who’d have a knife in your throat before you got halfway through giving him a hard time...like the kind of guy who pimps his sister not just for the money, but because he hates her” (29). Like Y.T., and without ever needing her all-access Kourier visa, Stark understands the rules of the capsules through which he moves. He understands that the rules of each Neighbourhood are different, and that in order to move about freely between different Neighbourhoods, he has to reflect those differences. So, whilst in Red, he looks dangerous and when he is in Stable he embraces the mind-set of a Stablent. Because of the ambiguous nature of the spaces of The City, however, his understanding of them is of necessity often limited – much like our narrator’s rigid and dehumanising taxonomy of pencilnecks, Stark’s insistence on and belief in the inviolability of many Neighbourhoods and the lack of movement between them is, on occasion, misleading. Throughout the novel, the reader encounters several characters who transgress and challenge Stark’s depiction of inertia operating in The City: Zenda, Stark’s contact in the Action Centre, grew up in Idyll, and travels on occasion between these places, Colour and Cat, whilst another character known as Spock Bellrip transfers from the Action Centre to Natsci. Similarly, his emergency transport is provided by an inhabitant of Brandfield Neighbourhood, Shelby – she owns a heliporter capable of flying over the roofs (and thus avoiding completely the boundaries) of Neighbourhoods.<sup>68</sup> The surprisingly high frequency of movement between the supposedly impenetrable capsules of The City is also demonstrated by Stark’s depiction of, and experiences in, the Neighbourhood known as Stable.

Known as one of the “forbidden Neighbourhoods” (61), Stable “maintains an absolute blockade on the outside world. Nobody is allowed in, and nobody is allowed out. All information on the outside world is blocked, and the inhabitants have no idea what exists outside their world” (55). Like the Ancient House before it, Stable is “like a time capsule, a living museum of life”; it is the only place in The City where “life is still lived the way it was” (89). It too is “clad all about” (*We*, 26) in a shell of a kind – the domed roof and thick walls that surround it ensure that Stable is a veritable (time) capsule, one that it is opaque and impenetrable to outside eyes. And, much like the Ancient House was a curiosity in the OneState, Stable is – for all its seeming normality – one of the more unusual spaces within The City: “This was all they knew. As far as they were concerned, this is how things were. They still had neighbourhoods with a small *n*” (*OF*, 89). In other words, Stable is a beacon of what Stark

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<sup>68</sup> I would contend that Stark’s abilities to befriend people from a variety of different Neighbourhoods is yet another indicator of his capacity to penetrate an assortment of capsules with ease.

(and the reader) recognises as ‘normality’ in a City teeming with – to use Stark’s terminology – “weird shit” (66). In this regard, Stable – much like the Ancient House – performs at first glance as a throwback to traditionally utopian spaces, inducing feelings of nostalgia in Stark who comes from a time when the kind of life that is lived in Stable would have been customary. Not quite so utopian, however, is the means by which the authorities in Stable deter intruders. Outsiders caught in Stable are subjected to “death by DNA expiration” (55) – their DNA is altered so that they die exactly a year later. Compounding the peculiar nature of Stable is the fact that its inhabitants are kept ignorant of the fact that the outside world exists at all by the authorities who run their Neighbourhood:

When The City reorganisation had started to take place, Stable had simply built a wall all around itself, shut out the sky, severed all connections with the outside world and pretended it didn’t exist. The first generation knew it did, of course, but they were forbidden to tell their children. They were happy not to: the first generation stayed in Stable because they liked it that way. They were all long dead now, and the sixth and seventh generations had no idea the outside world existed...The very last thing [the] authorities want is for anyone to make it in from the outside: it would blow the whole thing and trash hundreds of years of desired deception. Desired, because I’m not talking about repression here. *The Stablents aren’t kept in ignorance against their will. It’s all they know, and it’s all they want to know.*

(66-67, my emphasis)

This description of Stable and the circumstances of its creation is almost uncannily similar to the circumstances which bring about the dystopian society depicted in *We*. A society builds a wall around itself and induces belief in its inhabitants that they are the only surviving human beings and indeed, there have been several dystopian novels recently written along similar lines.<sup>69</sup> However, as Stark notes, the inhabitants of Stable appear to be quite happy and even complicit in their ignorance – they don’t want or need to know anything beyond their Neighbourhood.

Rather than being utopian or dystopian, I would suggest that, like the Ancient House before it, Stable functions as a discreetly heterotopian space. That it is heterotopian, rather than utopian or dystopian, is suggested not only by its demonstration of characteristics frequently associated with both utopia and dystopia, but also by its inherently and unexpectedly transgressive nature. Stable is determinedly ‘normal’ in a City that practically demands difference: “there were no alternatives here, no wildly different ways of being. Everything was just the way it was, and that was the only way it

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<sup>69</sup> See especially Hugh Howey’s *Silo* series, or Fleur Beale’s *Juno of Taris*. There are also echoes of this device in Suzanne Collin’s *Hunger Games* novels.

could be” (90). Stable is also recognisably heterotopian in the manner of Stuff, in that it neatly questions and makes problematic the binary of ‘normal’ and ‘different.’ Where Stuff made problematic the arbitrary divide between ‘human’ and ‘monster,’ contact with Stable exposes the highly subjective nature of what we perceive as typical; although the lifestyle of the inhabitants of Stable seems to be more or less ordinary to the reader (and also to Stark – although he is accustomed to The City and its oddities, he comes from a time not dissimilar to that preserved by Stable), it is wildly different to, and far more constrained than any other lifestyle to be found in The City. The narrative-based, temporary identity that Stark constructs for himself and endeavours to enact whilst in Stable in an attempt to blend in is reflective of this:

I paused for the briefest of moments, forgetting about the Centre, about Red, about Sound and Natsci, and just thinking Stable, Stable, Stable.

The world is very small, I thought, and I like it that way. I’m very lucky and content to be here, because outside the wall is a lethal wasteland. I know, because I’ve seen it, heard about it, learnt about it in school. We tried expansion, tried to go further than we should, and look what happened...No, I’m really very happy where I am.

(86)

In trying to appear as though he belongs Stark here both captures what passes for normal within – and only within – Stable and also demonstrates how inimical it is to life outside of that particular Neighbourhood; in The City, the ‘normal’ of Stable is the new ‘weird.’ What his Stablent persona also reveals is the arbitrary nature of the normative models and ‘truthfulness’ associated with narratives of identity. The identity of Stablents is based at least in part around the narrative of the destruction of the outside world; although this is only an illusion maintained by their government, this does not mean that it is any less true for the majority of Stablents.

The heterotopianism of Stable is compounded by the fact that the seemingly rigid encapsulation that it appears to maintain is – Stark’s protests to the contrary – undermined at surprisingly frequent intervals, and by people who do not always have Stark’s specialised skill set. Somewhat intriguingly for a Neighbourhood that not only shuns contact with the outside world but officially rejects its existence entirely, there are clearly several points at which the boundaries of Stable can and are supposed to be penetrated. The first and most obvious of these is revealed by the actions of Alkland, the Actioneer who hides in Stable, and whom Stark is contracted to find. As Alkland reveals, the authorities of Stable maintain lines of communication – this can also be considered a rupture of the encapsulation of Stable – with the Natsci Neighbourhood, from whom they periodically order

technology vital to the upkeep of their Neighbourhood. Alkland, who discovers this from a friend in Natsci and so is able, in his own small way, to undermine the divide between the Action Centre and Natsci in a manner that is vaguely reminiscent of Stark, exploits this small rupture in the boundaries of Stable and has himself smuggled into the Neighbourhood within the computer that is developed by Natsci for Stable. That Natsci Neighbourhood is able to deliver their computer to Stable indicates that the wall surrounding Stable is actually designed to be penetrated at specific sites for specific purposes, even if it is kept secret and is “guarded to the gills” (127). This is also true of the point at which Stark – and, before him, Snedd – ruptures Stable’s boundaries: an “external wastepipe” (75) built by Stable which, although long since replaced by a new outlet system, is still “used by Stable police to gain access to the outside of the wall for maintenance work, and...to eject intruders once they’d had their biological time-bomb set” (75).<sup>70</sup> Much like the tunnels underneath the Ancient House, this pipe facilitates movement between Stable and between the outside world that it officially denies the existence of, the difference perhaps being that unlike the Benefactor’s government, the authorities in Stable are not only aware of the presence of the wastepipe – it is protected by “a couple of cops” (84) – but occasionally utilise the access to the outside world that it offers. Both the wastepipe and the official door that Alkland enters through make problematic the notion that Stable is an entirely isolated space. Not only are there means of movement between it and the outside world, but these points of rupture are sanctioned and maintained by a government transgressing and undermining the rigidity of its own encapsulation even as it strives simultaneously to uphold it; once their presence in the Neighbourhood is discovered, Stark and Alkland are hunted mercilessly by the Stable police, who portray Alkland as a “loathsome thief, child molester, animal hurter and defiler of graves” (126) in their media (without ever mentioning the fact that he is an outsider). On the run from the Stable police with Alkland and unable to use either of the entry points that were used by the two men to penetrate Stable in the first instance, Stark demonstrates more comprehensively his ability to penetrate boundaries when he uses the water piping system of Stable to gain access to what essentially functions as the Neighbourhood’s attic. He then uses “square well” (141) that allows rain to flow into Stable to move himself and Alkland through the wall and onto the domed roof of Stable. From the roof, Stark and Alkland are rescued by the former’s Brandfield contact, Shelby, whose heliporter allows them to circumvent completely the boundaries surrounding the various capsules and return undetected to

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<sup>70</sup> Snedd is the brother of Ji, Stark’s friend and contact in Red who also happens to a “psychotic ganglord” (34) in charge of one of the largest territories in Red. Both Snedd and Ji are also more proof that the encapsulation at work between the different Neighbourhoods in The City is not as complete as it would seem. Born in Turn Again Neighbourhood – which, according to Stark, is the “second weirdest Neighbourhood” (30) he’s ever set foot in – they both end up living in Red, whilst Snedd also breaks into Stable some eight years before the action of the novel; interestingly, it is only by virtue of his information and prior penetration of Stable’s boundaries that Stark is able to gain entry.

Stark's home in Colour. Unlike the wastepipe and the (un)official door of Stable, where the authorities control the flow, the access hatch and the instance of rupture that it facilitates undermine completely the encapsulation of Stable and subverts the control that the Stable authorities exert over the boundaries they maintain between their Neighbourhood and the rest of The City.

As his incursion into Stable demonstrates, Stark is especially proficient at finding points at which he can rupture the boundaries of different capsules. This becomes particularly apparent in the events leading up to, and is vital to the plot development of the second half of the novel. Having rescued Alkland from Stable, and then from an incursion of the ACIA (the Action Centre Intelligence Agency) into Colour, Stark and Alkland take the "thru-mono" (202) to the Eastedge Neighbourhood. A derelict and largely abandoned sea-side Neighbourhood that looks exactly like the "ghost town" (205) it is, Eastedge is one of the points from which Stark is able to penetrate the capsule that he calls Jeamland, bringing Alkland with him. A definitively heterotopian space, Jeamland's position as heterotopia is both problematized and reinforced by the fact that it is the place "where everyone comes to dream" (242); it is a site that exists at once as a separate space and at the nexus of an unimaginable number of overlapping spaces and narratives. Much of his ability to rupture the boundaries of different capsules stems from the fact that Stark acts in many ways as the agent of Jeamland throughout the novel, in much the same way as I-330 is the agent of the Ancient House in *We*. Like I-330, Stark embodies many of the more notable characteristics of Jeamland and is himself a "very strong dreamer" (220), able to shape not only the spaces around him – particularly Jeamland – but also the perceptions of other individuals inhabiting those spaces. This is how he takes other people into Jeamland – by showing them a plain of grey mud where the ocean is supposed to be. That Stark is able to appear to belong in any given space, even ones as mutually exclusive as Red and Stable, is, I would suggest, a due to the hybrid and ever-changing (and yet constant) nature of Jeamland itself. As Stark explains to Alkland:

'Dreams are a reflection. But as you can see, they're also a reality. When you dream, you come here: this is where they happen.'

'Would this place still be here if nobody dreamed?'

'Yes. That's exactly the point,' I said, pleased. 'Jeamland persists. It's the way it is partly because of the dreams that take place here. But the dreams people have are shaped by the place too. They affect one another...Dreams aren't just in the mind,' I continued. 'They exist, and they're part of you. Like memories, they make up much of what you are, whether you remember them or not. Again, you affect each other.'

In other words, Jeamland is both a space in its own right, as well as being a composite space that is created as it is dreamed, a capsule that is accessible to everyone who sleeps and dreams – even if they do not realise that they enter it – but which most people will not and cannot enter consciously as Stark does; in its own way, it functions very much as a mirror, reflecting (aspects of) the personality of the dreamer who inhabits it, whilst always retaining its own identity and function. Jeamland is a highly dynamic space that is affected by the individual even as it affects the individual in turn; this is not just true of the spaces that dreamers inhabit and shape, but also of Jeamland itself, the Jeamland that would persist even if everyone ceased to dream. What we might think of as the core of Jeamland appears to be particularly responsive to those who enter it whilst awake – that is, Stark (along with, in the beginning at least, his friend Rafe). As Stark notes towards the end of his narrative, “Jeamland changed us as much as we changed it” (441) – he realises that his and Rafe’s presence in Jeamland changes it “right from the beginning, even before Rafe started to do it on purpose” (440). More crucially, however, Jeamland is – similar to the space that exists between the Street in the Metaverse and The Black Sun – a liminal zone, a space between spaces. It makes visible those who believe themselves to be unobserved – whilst in a forest, Alkland and Stark see a “glowing” figure who passes them on the path without ever seeing them; she is a dreamer, someone who is “lying in bed, or sprawled on a sofa, asleep” (242). Stark and Alkland are able to see her because they are not, in fact, asleep or dreaming. Instead, they too, like Jeamland, occupy a kind of middle ground. Stark tries, somewhat impatiently, to explain this to Alkland: “we are *not* dreaming. We are *awake*. That’s the whole fucking point...If I’d wanted us to dream I would just have let you fall asleep. But I couldn’t, could I? Because when you sleep, and when you dream, bad things happen to you” (245, emphasis in original). However, although Stark is at pains to point out to Alkland that they are, in fact, awake, not only does he wake up on his sofa in Colour when he inadvertently leaves Jeamland, but informs his audience that “if you happen to wake up, you can only rejoin the track you were on by falling asleep and dreaming” (300). As Stark’s location when he wakes up – Colour is across the other side of The City from Eastedge, which is where he and Alkland enter Jeamland – intimates, Jeamland is also a space between spaces somewhat more literally. It eventually transpires that Stark is originally from a time not unlike our own, when The City was still known as London, and neighbourhoods, like those in Stable, were neighbourhoods with a small *n*. In discovering first how to enter Jeamland, and then how to push through the boundaries of Jeamland into The City, Stark becomes an inadvertent time-traveller and is subsequently unable to return to his own world. As becomes apparent with the

eventual unravelling of Stark's tale, Jeamland exists as a space that is situated in and between all times and spaces simultaneously, a part of them, and apart from them.

Despite the fact that it is the place where dreams occur, however, Jeamland is definitely *not* a "Dreamland" (245), and neither is it a utopian space despite the long standing and generally incorrect conflation of dreams with utopia. There are certainly good places contained within Jeamland – Stark and Alkland come upon one at the beginning of their journey; a cottage with a "middle-aged woman, fat and jolly, rosy-cheeked and wholesome" where they are "welcomed and fed" ham sandwiches before moving on again (238, 244). Within Jeamland, however, horrible places exist alongside of – and sometimes in the same space – as the positive ones. An excellent example of this is the castle in Jeamland that Stark enters on two separate occasions. The first time he encounters the castle, he is in the company of Alkland. Welcomed into the hall of the King, they are invited to a feast and offered the services of the possibly euphemistic BufPuffs, "shower attendants...[who] shower with you to mute the sound of falling water and stop there being too much space in the cubicle" (292). Although Stark finds the "sword and sorcery things" (290) that the castle represents somewhat tedious and thinks of the King and his courtiers as "a bunch of drongos" (290), they nonetheless offer a pleasing respite from the horrors of the jungle they have just traversed. When Stark enters the castle a second time on his own, however, his experience is considerably different. The King and his courtiers take on aspects of his past, confronting him with old guilt and embarrassments, whilst he is also subjected to one particularly horrific scene in which a BufPuff systematically mutilates herself: "The BufPuff's other hand still raked at her leg, her fingers now bloody and covered with flecks of meat as her nails scraped audibly against naked bone. When she shoved her hand into the hole and pulled the head of her femur out of the hip joint with a wet popping noise, I fainted" (342). This is one of the more disturbing examples of the ways in which Jeamland can turn itself against any inhabitant, even Stark; a space which was a refuge an hour previously can quickly transform into the site of a (waking) nightmare. And yet, as Stark notes, in Jeamland it is possible to "remember what it was like to be stupidly happy, when happiness wasn't something you had to search for, when it knew where to find you by itself...You can remember how it felt to have your mother's arms around you when she was hugging you just because he loved you, and you weren't too old to be embarrassed" (326). The equation of childhood, dreams and utopian longing that Stark here seems to initially encourage is misleading, however:

Jeamland holds that window open, jams it wide, and lets the child escape. That's where it got its name. Imagine you were four years old, and trying to say the word 'Dreamland.'

But that isn't all you can remember there. Being a child was not all wonderful, not all light and sweetness...some of it was terrifying...Maybe everything you do, everything you feel, is touched by something terrible that you don't want to remember. Out of things said or not said, things that did or didn't happen, out of all those tiny fragments something coalesces for a Bad Thing to breathe dark life into. That's what monsters are, and why they can never really die: because they are the distinctive part of you, the shadows behind your eyes that make you different to other people.

(328)

In Jeamland, there are dangerous places and spectres of childhood trauma as well as idyllic farmhouses. Consider for a moment the sandpit in Cricklewood Cove through the lens of Jeamland; for Gonzo, as well as containing happy memories of time spent playing with his brother, it is also a site that undoubtedly provokes feelings of profound loneliness and unhappiness – this is, after all, what leads to the creation of our narrator. As for the latter, the sandpit is at first a site of happiness – it's where he 'meets' his best friend and 'finds' a new family – and then, later, of intense confusion (for him, and for the teenagers observing his anguish) and personal crisis. Like the sandpit, Jeamland and the dreams that it contains, are tangible, real spaces; because of this it is, as Stark notes, possible to get in amongst a person's dreams, and "stir them round, tangle them, pervert them, disease them" (257). This statement, which is Stark's explanation for Alkland's nightmares and illness (which is the reason why he brings Alkland into Jeamland in the first place), can also be considered a straightforward – if harsh – assessment of the flaws and dangers inherent in utopian engineering, and also a rejection of the conflation of dreams and utopia; as I have already noted in my discussion of *TGAW*, whilst the goals of Humbert Pestle may have originally been, if not benevolent then noble in intent, somewhere along the way those good intentions became, as Stark would have it, perverted.

The effect that the perversion of dream streams in Jeamland can have on people physically also demonstrates the ways in which Jeamland breaks down the encapsulation that is supposed to exist between the mind and the body of an individual, and between the individual and the space that it inhabits. When Stark first meets Alkland (who is asleep in his hotel room in Stable), he observes him having a nightmare: "As I watched him I felt the hairs on the back of my neck rise and my chest cooled as if ice water was dripping slowly through my lungs. I know about nightmares, you see. By that I don't just mean I have them myself: I mean I know about them...I knew that he was not having an ordinary bad dream" (110). Later, on the roof of the Neighbourhood whilst waiting to be rescued by Shelby and her heliporter, Alkland has another nightmare, and Stark observes that he looks "very ill...his skin was extremely pale beneath the vestiges of his compulsory tan, and the patches under his eyes were dark

and sallow” (147). His bad dreams are, in effect, ““written all over”” his skin (210). Although, at first, he only appears ill and exhausted whilst in the waking world, when in Jeamland the physical effect of his nightmares manifest somewhat – startlingly – differently: “large patches of his face had a variegated green tinge and in places it was a virulent shade of purple” (234), whilst in a couple of places the skin on his face feels “a little infirm.” As Alkland’s condition worsens, the skin on his face becomes “horribly stretched and degraded” (363); while the green mottling is no longer visible when Stark forcibly returns him to the waking world, his hands are “covered in liver spots that had not been there before” (364) and his cheek has an “open sore” on it (364). Although Stark reassures Alkland that ““the colour [in Jeamland] doesn’t mean anything in itself: it’s just a read-out, like an energy level indicator”” (253), what it, along with the deterioration of the skin *does* signify is the fact that once a person’s dreams become perverted and diseased by what Stark calls a Something, that person ““becomes ill, and they die”” (257).<sup>71</sup> In Jeamland, nightmares do not exist purely in the mind; they are able to rupture the boundaries that are supposed to exist between the mind and the body, causing the body to physically deteriorate. The link between corporeal nightmares and the direct effect that they can then have on the body of the individual they are tormenting is reinforced when Alkland encounters his monster, which is “thirty feet high” with a “dripping red shape on its back...that was the churning remains of everyone who hurt you when you were too young to remember” (270). Attempting to run from this manifestation of long-suppressed pain and fear with the aid of Stark (who is at this stage literally carrying him), Alkland begins to “[weigh] more and more with every step” whilst the “purple in his faces [spreads] visibly, cell by cell” (271-272). I would suggest that the physical effect that Jeamland and its Somethings can have on dreamers is comparable to the effect that Stuff has on the thoughts and dreams of those it touches; Jeamland reifies the “rotted and foul” memories of its inhabitants, turning them into nightmares that physically stalk them through its bounds (276). That rot is then reproduced in the body, causing the symptoms that Alkland exhibits. However, it is important to remember that Jeamland is not, for all the horror that it can and does contain, just a land of nightmares; it is a heterotopian space. Thus, even as it undermines the individuals who inhabit it by manifesting their fears, it also reifies positive memories and experiences which aid and sustain them. This is demonstrated by the cottage that Stark and Alkland come across at the beginning of their journey in Jeamland – it is, in fact, transplanted directly from books that Alkland loved as a child:

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<sup>71</sup> A “Something” (257) is Stark’s name for the monsters that he describes as “vicious little powerboats, stirring up the water and creating waves in Jeamland. You don’t see them so much as experience their effects” (344); they get in amongst the streams of dreamers and stir them up, creating the nightmares that cause them to become ill. They are personal monsters in that they take on forms that are unique to each dreamer, and torment them according to their fears. Thus, the Somethings that Stark encounters when on his own in Jeamland are significantly different to those that he confronts when assisting Alkland.

‘When I was young,’ he said, ‘I used to read books by a woman called Meg Finda. They were really old, belonged to my grandmother when she was a girl...These books...were all about these children who used to have adventures...Whenever there was a hiatus in the story they’d somehow come upon an aunt or something who’d taken them back to her cottage for high tea...And one of them I particularly remember. A farmer’s wife took them in and gave them ham sandwiches. Exactly like this one.’ He indicated the fast-disappearing remains of his. ‘Exactly like this.’

(242-243)

Fittingly representative of a brief hiatus in the events of *OF*, the respite offered by the cottage allows Alkland to regain his confidence and his composure, and allows Stark to explain to him where they are and what they are doing in Jeamland. The ability of Jeamland to actualise positive, as well as negative, spaces is also replicated in its direct effect on the physical bodies that inhabit it. The cottage has a healing effect on Alkland, “fading the colours in his face until they [are] barely noticeable” (240). Similarly, in the wake of turning and facing the monster that comes after him, Alkland’s face “actually [looks] slightly better” (277).

As has already been hinted at with the appearance of Alkland’s monster, Jeamland does not just actualise spaces; it, like Stuff, is able to make corporeal what I choose to think of here as hidden or suppressed narratives. Stark puts it rather more poetically: “out of things said or not said, things that did or didn’t happen, out of all those tiny fragments something coalesces for a Bad Thing to breathe dark life into” (328). Irrespective of whether they are ‘true’ or not, Jeamland has the capacity to reify narratives that the individual seeks to avoid or tries to repress. And as the agent of Jeamland, it is Stark’s responsibility, when this happens, to guide the individual into Jeamland and offer them the opportunity to reconcile themselves with aspects of their own selves that they have attempted to eschew. This is the case with Alkland, whose narrative is supplied for him early in the novel in the form of a CV cube given to Stark by the Action Centre:

The Actioneer was sixty-two years old, born and bred in the Centre. His father had been B at the Department of Hauling Ass for seven years, and then A for a record further thirteen. His mother had revolutionised the theory and practise of internal memoranda. Alkland’s career leapt off the CV like an arrow or some other very straight thing: he wasn’t just a man who was very good at doing things, but the perfect product of the Centre, a hundred per cent can-do person.

According to this (mini)societally-endorsed narrative, Alkland is the model Actioneer, a 'perfect product' of the Action Centre, where what an individual does during "office time" (33) is the sole definition of who they are. However, as Stark – who, as the agent of Jeamland is well aware of the power and existence of multiple and alternative narratives – notes, the CV cube tells you "everything you needed to know about Alkland unless you weren't an Actioneer" (33); the narrative of Alkland as Actioneer is only one aspect of his identity, rather than the sum of it. And as the events of *OF* progress, other – counter – narratives of Alkland surface, the most important of which he has been attempting to suppress for the majority of his life, and which Jeamland actualises in the form of his thirty-foot monster. Fell Alkland is a picture-perfect Actioneer, a senior and "much-valued member of the Central Planning Department, involved in ground-breaking work in the furtherment of Really Getting to the Heart of Things" (22). Alkland is also the older brother of Suzanna, who died violently when she was around three years old when someone took her "laughter and smashed it against a wall, smashed it until it bled, smashed it until there was nothing left in his filthy hand but silence, a silence that grew between Alkland and Suzanna because of all the things they couldn't say to anyone, because of all the ways they never felt again" (402). The parallel narrative to that of his dead sibling is the narrative of an older brother who couldn't prevent her death: "if you were that little girl's brother, and you couldn't protect her, and you couldn't heal her, and you couldn't make her smile, could you ever forgive yourself?" (403). This is the narrative that Jeamland reifies and that Alkland attempts to confront with the assistance of Stark. Although the narrative of Alkland's guilt and grief that Jeamland reifies undermines him and eventually results in his death, this is not the only possible outcome; as the example of Ji (who Stark successfully guides through Jeamland eight years prior to the events of the novel) shows, an individual is able to confront a suppressed narrative that has manifested in Jeamland and emerge not only unscathed, but whole and, perhaps, a little more reconciled to all of the narratives that constitute their identity, both 'good' and 'bad.'

This is true even – and particularly – of Stark himself, who, much like Gonzo Lubitsch, has long since divested himself of the narratives and aspects of his self that he prefers not to acknowledge. But where Gonzo befriends the half that contains the narratives he rejects for himself, Stark strives to divorce himself from them entirely: "It had been eight years since I'd had to face myself, eight years in which I'd been able to lead the occasional sufferer safely through Jeamland, secure in the knowledge that I was relatively safe, at risk only from other people's monsters. I wasn't any longer. I wasn't safe at all. The person I'd been for so long wasn't there any more [sic]. It was undercut, predated, its veils torn asunder. I was just me again, and I was afraid. I was out of practice at being me"

(343). Although Stark acts as the agent and gatekeeper of Jeamland, he is not immune from its ability to undermine and deceive; rather, because of the strength of his connection to it – and the strength of his ability to dream – I would contend that in some ways he is more vulnerable to its caprices than others even though he is, at the same time, better equipped to withstand them. This is demonstrated by the way in which the narratives that he attempts to disassociate himself from are reified by Jeamland; specifically, in the apparent resurrection and subsequent actions of his once-friend and eventual foe, Rafe. Although he is only referred to infrequently at first and usually as an aside, Rafe is in fact central not only to *OF*, but to the narrative of Stark’s self that he attempts to deny and that Jeamland eventually manifests. Just prior to their entry into Jeamland, Stark tells a story to Alkland about “this guy, on a plane...whose name was Krats” (217) and his lover who, “a long, long time ago, back when people still travelled between countries fairly regularly” (217) accidentally discover how to consciously enter Jeamland. This story, as Stark states towards the end, is a lie: “There were no lovers, just me and Rafe. The lovers version is for customers” (434).<sup>72</sup> Not only is Stark the agent of Jeamland, but he – along with Rafe – is in fact the one who discovers how to rupture the boundaries of Jeamland whilst still awake. The “designated bad guy” (409) of the story, Rafe is eventually killed by Stark, eight years prior to the events of the novel, before he can “tear down the veils” (409) between Jeamland and The City (416). But whilst Stark manages to kill Rafe’s physical body, he is unable to destroy the memories, dreams and emotions associated with him: “we were strong dreamers, Rafe and I, and so I didn’t kill him at all” (416).<sup>73</sup> Rafe is a representative of Stark’s past – in particular, he is a reminder of a friendship that is destroyed by circumstance, and also of the parents that Stark inadvertently abandons when he discovers the way into Jeamland; when Stark encounters Somethings in Jeamland, they play upon his guilt over his parents, and the fact that he just disappeared one day and never got to say goodbye to them. In much the same way as Alkland represses memories of his sister and her death whilst forever feeling guilt about it, Stark is revealed to have disconnected from and repressed not only the memories of his parents and the emotions related to them, but also the narrative of his self and Jeamland that Rafe is central to. It is a narrative that Stark finally faces – revealing it gradually to his audience – only under extreme duress. By avoiding that part of his narrative of self that Rafe is central to, by “hating him until the columns of [his] memory were so diseased that all they could support was a nothing” (452), and imbuing him with all the rage and “fury” that he himself feels without ever acknowledging his grief over the sundering of their friendship and the loss of his parents (403), Stark creates the circumstances that lead to him being forced to confront himself: “In the end

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<sup>72</sup> Observant readers may notice that ‘Krats’ is just ‘Stark’ spelt backwards.

<sup>73</sup> Technically, Rafe is actually killed by Ji, who pulls the trigger and “[spreads] Rafe’s face over three square yards of rotting concrete” (405), but as Stark acknowledges, this is a technicality: “I pulled it really, and I felt a savage rip of joy” (450).

I'd dreamed stronger than anyone, strongly enough to bring my monster to life again so I could finally face him" (451). And face him – or, more accurately, his self – he does, moving across the border from Jeamland into Memory, which is "not so different from Jeamland, really. [It's] simpler, more stark" (423), and reconciling himself with the "past [he can] do nothing about, [can] never go back and change" (452), the (narrative of the) past that is represented by Rafe and reified by Jeamland. I would contend that, even more so than our narrator, Stark is representative of the burgeoning (if slightly broken) individual that heterotopian spaces foster. By resurrecting Rafe and allowing him to wreak havoc on Alkland and within its own confines, Jeamland forces Stark to confront a narrative of his self that he has long avoided and is "out of practise" (343) at enacting, and so compels him to begin the process of reconciling with his self and *all* of the aspects of his narrative that comprise his identity; it sets him up "to remember things he would die to forget" (416). That he is eventually successful at reconciling the narratives that comprise his identity is indicated by the fact that the novel ends with Stark finally, for the first time in the novel, moving forward and talking about the future, rather than past events: "And Zenda? She still works in the Centre...But she got a dispensation from C, and she lives in Colour with me. It's been a year now, and it's working out very well. I think it will stay that way. I hope so. Everyone deserves a happy ending. Even me" (455). Fittingly, this is not, of course, an ending (although it does conclude one narrative arc), but rather representative of the beginning of a new aspect of Stark, one that incorporates and acknowledges the fact that he is a man out of his own time, and that his parents – and Rafe – are dead.

Without the interference of Jeamland, without it pushing him and forcing him to finally confront Rafe – and so, himself – it is possible that Stark would never have managed to move forward, bringing "the whole of [his self]" (452) with him. Because Jeamland is a heterotopian space, however, it does not just enable the growth of Stark as an individual; it is also responsible for the circumstances that lead to the dissolution of the relationship between himself and Rafe – a friendship which is central to Stark's narrative prior to his time in The City – and to his disassociation from elements of his self in the first instance: "Jeamland changed us as much as we changed it. Rafe changed it far more than I, and I think that's why he went insane, and I only became what I am today. I have no idea who got the better deal" (441). Even though his association with Jeamland grants Stark a kind of agency and abilities beyond those of other individuals, it also undermines him, aiding in the creation of a new narrative of self that he appears to be highly ambivalent about – being insane, it seems, might just be better than being Stark. The ambiguity of Jeamland is also encapsulated in and demonstrated by the

dynamics of the relationship that it fosters between the two men, who, prior to their discovery of Jeamland, are represented by Stark as sharing an incredibly close bond:<sup>74</sup>

I like to think that I saved Rafe from something...That's probably true...But what is also true is that Rafe saved me, too.

What I had was thought, and reflection, an interest in things that went beyond the here and now...I knew that there were worlds beyond the one we lived in...But I had no drive. I was an armchair romantic, someone who sat and thought and might have done so with increasing pointlessness until the end of his days. Rafe was the opposite: he was a maelstrom of activity, of will...What happened as we grew up was that we grew together, intermeshed until the two of us were really a one and a half. Rafe taught me to act, and I taught him to think. I was someone he could drag along with him, and he was someone I could bounce ideas off, and in time I learnt to do the dragging occasionally, and he sometimes had the ideas.

(424)

In a manner that is decidedly reminiscent of our narrator and Gonzo Lubitsch, the narratives of Rafe and Stark are intertwined and complementary; even though they occupy different bodies, their narratives and personalities complete each other. And, much like Gonzo and our narrator, certain aspects of one begin to effect the other; even as our narrator begins to demonstrate the “derring-do” (Harkaway, 530) that has previously been the preserve of Gonzo, Stark develops the ability to act as Rafe develops the capacity to think. And, at first, it appears that (the discovery of) Jeamland cements the bond between them: “Can you imagine what that felt like?...The world had tilted on its axis, and we were the only ones who knew” (Smith, 435). At the same time as it brings them even closer together, however, Jeamland also undercuts the relationship between the two. As Stark observes, the first few days that he and Rafe spend together in Jeamland “were the last days of summer, the last times we had when we were really friends, when we were together as one and a half” (440). In a manner that is at once similar to and vastly different from the experience of our narrator and Gonzo, the exposure of Rafe and Stark to the heterotopian space that is Jeamland sunders the connection that has previously held them together; as they begin to change – each in their own ways, according to the changes that they are each bringing about in Jeamland – their narratives, their selves and their

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<sup>74</sup> If we consider the version of the story that Stark reserves for customers, Rafe and Stark are, in many ways, as close as – and perhaps even closer than – lovers. And although he dismisses the lovers tale first as a lie, and then indicates that he wishes he had discovered Jeamland with his girlfriend, Rachel, I also think that this narrative is more truthful than Stark would have us believe – I believe that this story is his way of trying to represent the intensity of the bond between himself and Rafe in terms that other people might be able to understand.

interests diverge, becoming less complementary and more and more conflicting. The idea that Jeamland is responsible for severing the bond between the two is reinforced by Stark, who articulates the belief that “things between us wouldn’t have gone the way they did if we hadn’t discovered Jeamland” (441). Fittingly, it is Jeamland itself that is at the centre of the final disagreement between the two; completely “insane” after spending close to two years in Jeamland, Rafe decides “to try to bring the whole thing crashing down, to break down the wall between Jeamland and The City”, forcing Stark to finally confront and kill him (449).

Somewhat conversely, it is the opposition that it creates between Stark and Rafe that allows Jeamland, like Stuff before it, to blur the distinctions between what is ‘good’ and what is ‘bad,’ what is ‘right’ and what is ‘wrong.’ I would suggest that the arbitrary nature of these dualisms, and the ability of Jeamland to undermine and destabilise them, has already been revealed by the nature of the monsters that it reifies from suppressed fears and narratives. As I have already noted, although the monster that gives Alkland nightmares makes him ill, it also presents an opportunity for the Actioneer to heal his self, as per the example of Ji. Similarly, confronting the nightmare version of Rafe also provides Stark with the opportunity to reconcile the narratives of his self; that he does so successfully allows him to move forward, creating a new life in “the light” (452). What is crucial to realise, however, is that it is not actually Rafe, or a Something under his control, that terrorises Alkland or even Stark, who gradually comes to the realisation that “the twist of Jeamland that had pushed Alkland, the Something that had killed Bellrip in Rafe’s distinctive way, the shadowy figure that asked questions in Red and shot at me in Royle, the whole nightmare: that was me. I did it” (450). In other words, even as Stark is the hero of his narrative, he is also the villain; as I have already noted, he quite literally creates the circumstances – at the expense of others – that allow him to reconcile with the aspect(s) of his self that have come to be represented by the image of Rafe. Much like Gonzo divests himself of those aspects of himself that that he doesn’t want and gives them instead to our narrator, Stark (re)creates Rafe in the image of all that is ‘wrong:’

All I had to make me feel good in those days was what Rafe was doing, because he was the designated bad guy. With him around I could pretend to myself that I was on the right side, could magic up a white charger to ride on. Everybody needs to be a hero in their own life. Everybody needs to be the good guy, however many lies that takes. And the truth is you just do what you want to do, you protect yourself, and you kill the people who try to screw up what you want.

I never said that I was the good guy.

(409)

In accepting those narratives that include Rafe, Stark is not only reconciling himself with aspects of his self that he has tried to forget, but he is also acknowledging, however tacitly, that his role as the good guy is tempered by the fact that he is also the bad guy. Unlike our narrator, who attempts to do what he believes is the right thing by exposing FOX and Jorgmund, Stark is well aware of the arbitrariness that governs who – and what – is ‘right’ and doing ‘good’ things. In its capacity as a heterotopian space, Jeamland enables Stark as an individual to reconcile himself with all aspects of his self. But like Jeamland itself, and the many and varied heterotopian spaces that comprise The City, Stark is a (conscious) composite of events and experiences both positive and negative. He may, as he notes at the very end of his tale, deserve a happy ending, but so too did Alkland, whose life is first negatively impacted and then lost during the course of events that lead to Stark flourishing. As Stark notes, “there are no good guys” (409).

## Conclusion: I, Heterotopia

*The imperfect is our paradise. / Note that, in this bitterness, delight, / Since the imperfect is so hot in us, / Lies in flawed words and stubborn sounds.*

Wallace Stevens, 'The Poems of Our Climate'

Throughout the course of this thesis and through the analysis of my selected texts, my primary purpose has been to question and make problematic the arbitrary dualisms associated with the utopia / dystopia binary, and to underline the stagnation of thought that it encourages, promoting in place of this binary recognition of (a) space(s) that encompasses and encourages traits that are neither utopian *or* dystopian, but an inherently transgressive mixture of both. That the questioning of this binary needs to take place is, to my mind, confirmed by the rhetoric and the arguments that have emerged over the course and in the wake of the recent U.S. Presidential elections. The milieu against which much of this thesis has been researched and written, the current political situation in the United States provides, to my mind, a fascinating and pointed 'real-life' study-in-miniature of not only the problems inherent in any attempt at 'utopian' engineering, but also of the polarisation that can occur when attempts are made to define anything or anyone in terms of *either* utopia *or* dystopia.

One of Donald Trump's main campaign slogans was the particularly utopian (if somewhat vague) "Make America Great Again," and it is telling that many commentators cast both his presidential campaign and month-old presidency in terms of this binary; Matthew Ryan (somewhat ironically) compares Trump to Marx in his article 'Dystopian Donald: The Horror and Hope in Trump's Political Campaign,' whilst Dr. David Hitchcock explicitly casts Trump in the role of utopian engineer, musing that Trump was elected

because he promised a specific set of American voters a kind of Utopia; a 'no-place' that does not exist but which could. A return to the values, comforts and stereotypes and inequalities of an imagined past. This is what his slogan 'Make America Great Again' actually means. This place comes complete with walls to keep out foreigners, an aggressive foreign policy, the apparatus of a police state, and the strict reinforcement of community social values in a manner that valorises white, male, 'middle-class', Christian, and heterosexual norms.

(para. 3)

All the (negatively perceived) key concepts that have become associated with utopia and utopianism can be found in the above quotation. The land – 'complete with walls' – that Trump 'promises' does not exist; it is located in an imaginary past and is rigid in its outlook and in what it deems socially

acceptable. On the other side of the coin, reinforcing in the first instance my observation at the outset of this thesis that one wo/man's utopia is another's dystopia, and confirming its popular status as a dystopian novel to which anyone can "attach any fear" (Shklar, 5), Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* became the best-selling book on Amazon.com in the week following Trump's inauguration (Broich, para. 1); a month into Trump's presidency, it's still in the top twenty.<sup>75</sup> Additionally, aspects of his administration have been called "conspicuously Orwellian" (Willmetts, para. 2), whilst Jean Seaton deepens the comparison – and potential for panic – when she writes that "Drumpf is not O'Brien. He is more like a cut-price version of Big Brother himself. Instead of the elite of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, who keep Big Brother's identity a mystery while they keep total control, this Big Brother, with his direct Twitter relationship with his followers, is fully on show. And as Orwell foresaw, his slogan could be 'Ignorance is strength'" (para. 7).

What this rhetoric – the conflation of Trump and his fledgling presidency with utopia or dystopia – achieves is opposition and polarity; you are *either* in favour of Trump and the goals of his administration, *or* you are not. You *either* believe that he is bringing about an all-American utopia, *or* that he is going to be responsible for plunging the world into a (probable) post-apocalyptic dystopian nightmare. What I also see emerging from Trump's America, however, are multiple (counter) sites of resistance and accepted, deliberate difference – what we might think of as heterotopias similar to those I identify in my texts that are being enacted in the 'real world.' One example of this is the 'Calexit Movement' in California, which states on its website that this movement is, in part, an attempt to maintain the diversity that it believes to be central to its culture, and that it sees as threatened by Trump's policies.<sup>76</sup> The Woman's March on Washington movement, which orchestrated protests around the globe the day after Trump's inauguration is another, whilst the so-called 'Sanctuary Cities' – including metropolises such as New York, Chicago and Los Angeles – of the United States have been vocal in re-affirming their commitment to protecting illegal immigrants living within their confines in defiance of Trump's attempts to begin mass deportation and to curtail the entrance of immigrants into the United States. Much like the heterotopian spaces I identified in my chosen texts, the heterotopian spaces that I see as emerging in the U.S. in direct response to the election of Donald Trump are spaces of conscious difference and heterogeneity that grant new licence to the individuals that reside within and create them. And even though these spaces may appear ambiguous at best and are seemingly poised to send America spinning into a chaos not unlike that which reigns in the Los

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<sup>75</sup> As of 26 February, 2017: [https://www.amazon.com/gp/bestsellers/books/ref=sv\\_b\\_2/156-0188133-8147329](https://www.amazon.com/gp/bestsellers/books/ref=sv_b_2/156-0188133-8147329)

<sup>76</sup> Named after the 'Brexit' movement that saw the United Kingdom vote to leave the European Union in 2016, Calexit is the first step in the process which, should it be successful, will see Californians vote on whether or not the state should secede from the U.S. in 2019. <http://www.yescalifornia.org/>

Angeles of *Snow Crash* or *The City of Only Forward*, I would suggest that they *also* provide the hope that has always been the foundation of utopia.

As I have just discussed, however, the usage and even the definition of the term utopia is problematic, at best, and almost always contentious. This formed the main focus of my introduction, where I examined the composition and the critical (theoretical) history and reception of the utopian literary tradition. By focusing on the works of prominent and influential theorists of the literary utopia – including, but not limited to Lyman Tower Sargent, Darko Suvin, Lucy Sargisson and Ernst Bloch – I attempted to provide a working definition of the utopia (and its other, the dystopia) and of utopianism, one that recognises the heuristic potential and the positive social implications of the utopia even as it rejects the conflation of utopia with perfection; in particular, I recognised that literary utopias are almost always written in conjunction with or as a reflection of the social climes that influence and inform their authors. Arriving at a definition of utopianism as the articulation of a yearning for a better way of being in the world, I identified the tensions at work between the expression and enactment of utopia. Acknowledging both the concerns of theorists such as Karl Popper, who is unstinting in his denunciation of all forms of the utopian engineering that he holds directly responsible for some of the worst atrocities of the twentieth century, and the attempts of literary theorists to rehabilitate the (literary) utopia, I concluded that the utopia – if not the drive and desires that it encapsulates – is irreparably tarnished. In the second section of the first chapter, I began to examine Michel Foucault's heterotopia as a space that does not offer an alternative to the utopia /dystopia binary so much as it reconciles and encompasses both of these spaces, providing a more accurate representation of the grey-shaded postmodern age. The model of the heterotopia that I theorise differs at times quite significantly from that proposed by Foucault; whilst his heterotopia is, in the end, static and enclosed upon itself, I arrived at a model of the heterotopia that is characterised by semi-permeable boundaries, and which depicts these spaces as unsettled and ambiguous, and inherently transgressive in that they represent and facilitate both 'utopian' and 'dystopian' tendencies and traits.

In chapter one, I began to demonstrate the ways in which the heterotopia can be conceived of as representing counter-sites of resistance to the homogenising forces that are associated with the adherence to the strictures of the utopia / dystopia binary. Situating the heterotopia within the larger utopian literary tradition, I contended that it not only displays many of the features commonly associated with the dystopian novel, but that George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and Evgeny Zamyatin's *We*, two texts that are traditionally viewed as foundationally dystopian are, in fact, prototypically heterotopian, offering both the bleak vision of the dystopia *and* elements of the hope

more usually associated with the utopia. Beginning my examination of *We* and situating it within not only the broader utopian tradition, but within a specifically Russian literary tradition, I reaffirmed what Phillip Wegner quite accurately calls the “complex heterogeneity” (149) of the novel, and establish that the multiple concerns of the author feed into the heterotopianism that is at work within this text. This heterotopianism is exemplified by the way in which Zamiatin makes problematic and, I contended, eventually rejects three key dualisms; these are individual / society, happiness / freedom, and revolution (or energy) / perceived perfection (or entropy). I explored these themes in relation to the Ancient House and the character that I see as its agent within the novel, I-330, and the ways in which I-330 and the Ancient House facilitate and encourage the transgressive behaviours of D-503, the main character and narrator. The ambiguity inherent in heterotopian sites is made manifest by D-503’s continued anxiety and misery; even when he is exploring opposite viewpoints to those enforced by the OneState, he is unable to find happiness. I concluded my examination of *We* by observing that Zamiatin, through D-503 and I-330, advocates for a middle – heterotopian – ground, one that makes allowances for both the individual *and* society, and that allows both happiness *and* freedom.

Through my analysis of *NEF* – which is, as I acknowledged, considerably bleaker in outlook than *We* – I demonstrated that even in a society that is as subjugated and uniform as Oceania under the OneState, there are still heterotopian sites of resistance. Depicting it as a site similar to the Ancient House in *We*, I focused on the apartment that Winston Smith and Julia use for their liaisons, demonstrating the ways in which this space enables Winston in particular to find safety, freedom and happiness in a society that would deny him all of these. Once again, however, the treacherous and ambiguous nature of the heterotopian space comes to the fore; even as it provides a refuge for Winston and Julia, the apartment is also the instrument of their downfall, as their arrest in this space and subsequent revelations about it reveals. I concluded chapter two by noting the heterotopian potentiality of the appendix and footnotes in *NEF* and the ways in which it questions the closure that many critics see as the final indicator of the fundamentally dystopian nature of this text.

In the second chapter of my thesis, I began to consider more fully the notion of the individual – particularly the individual whose subjectivity is constituted by means of narrative – in conjunction with the heterotopia, focusing on the ways in which heterotopian spaces enable the individuals within them to explore and enact multiple narratives of self that, whilst still being networked, are less likely to be burdened by expectations around normative and truthful representation – dualistic notions that are usually arbitrary and socially determined. This was the basis for the beginning of my examination of *Snow Crash*, which I – contrary to critical consensus, which has long since deemed it a representative of dystopian and cyberpunk fiction – situated as largely heterotopian. I demonstrated that whilst there were similarities between the Metaverse and the sprawling and supposedly

fragmented cityscape that Stephenson depicts, each space privileges different users. Thus, the abilities of Hiro Protagonist – who, in his capacity as the “last of the freelance hackers” (Stephenson, 17) is able to move with ease throughout the different capsules of the online Metaverse – are exceeded in Reality by those of the Kourier, Y.T. As demonstrated during my analysis of these similar and yet contrasting spaces, both Reality – which appears, at first glance, to be highly dystopian – and the Metaverse – which is initially depicted as utopian – are distinctly heterotopian spaces that are comprised of both utopian and dystopian elements, and enable the individuals within them the freedom to explore alternative narratives of self. The heterotopianism at work within *SC* is more pervasive than that which I identified in *NEF* and *We*; as I established during my exploration of the online space known as The Black Sun, in *SC*, individuals are not just at the mercy of the caprices of the heterotopian spaces that they inhabit, but rather are also able to effect change in and to those spaces, creating a far more dynamic and reciprocal, if no less treacherous, relationship between individual and heterotopia. This is also demonstrated by the virus known as Snow Crash, which, by virtue of its ability to infect both the brain and the computer of the hackers exposed to it, begins to first break down the binary of mind / body, and then that of the body and the space that it inhabits. This is, however, where the heterotopianism of *SC* diminishes; as I revealed during my exploration of the figure of the gargoyle, Stephenson’s narrative, despite the preponderance of heterotopian spaces and the agency that these spaces grant to the individuals that inhabit them, fails to completely dismantle the dualisms that are still associated, in the end, with the utopia / dystopia binary.

In the final chapter of this thesis, I examined two distinctly heterotopian texts. Both *The Gone-Away World* and *Only Forward*, like *SC* before them, depict ostensibly dystopian worlds characterised by fragmentation and encapsulation. In *TGAW*, however, this is undermined not only by the preponderance of heterotopian spaces such as the Soames School and the home of Master Wu which not only transgress societal expectations but actively foster and encourage transgressive behaviour, but also by the remarkably heterogeneous structure of the supposedly uniform and ‘dystopian’ organisation known as Jorgmund. As I demonstrated, heterotopian spaces do not have to be ‘spaces’ *per se*, as the existence of the substance known as Stuff revealed. Stuff, which Jorgmund attempts to suppress, is particularly heterotopian in that it interacts directly with the individuals that it comes into contact with, literally (re)creating them and the various narratives of their selves. Decidedly ambiguous in nature – it can just as easily destroy life and narratives as create them – Stuff begins to break down the dualisms associated with the utopia / dystopia binary, destabilising previously concrete notions of what is human, and what is monstrous and, concomitantly, what is ‘good’ and what is ‘bad.’ The narrator of *TGAW* who is, in the end, literally constituted by the interaction of his narrative with Stuff, acts as a forerunner for Stark of *Only Forward*. The burgeoning individual in what

is possibly the definitively heterotopian novel, I contended that Stark, who is able to move through the various capsules that make up The City and acts as agent of the treacherous and heterogeneous space known as Jeamland, is in the end both fundamentally undermined and eventually reaffirmed by his association with this space; it wreaks havoc upon his life – and the lives of others – but eventually provides the means by which he is able to reconcile with all aspects of his self, and so finally move forward. Jeamland, by virtue of its role as the place “where everyone comes to dream” (Smith, 242), rejects once and for all the conflation of utopia with (a) dream-land; as our narrator noted of Stuff, Jeamland is “nothing if not truthful” (Harkaway, 277), and thus is capable of reflecting both the best and worst of those that inhabit and constitute it; it is, in short, heterotopian. And it is in this role as heterotopia that Jeamland breaks down once and for all the dualisms associated with the utopia / dystopia binary. It is neither a good place – although it has the capacity to be good – nor a bad place – even though it can and does produce nightmares. In turn, the individuals that are constituted by and simultaneously constitute Jeamland are similarly hybrid and ambiguous.

As I acknowledged at the outset of this thesis, the literary utopia has always been – and quite probably always will be – first and foremost a reflection of and commentary upon the context in which it is written. It is a rich and varied tradition and one that, I believe, has even more relevance now than it has at any time previously. What is problematic, however, is the way in which the utopia / dystopia binary has become polemical; as I attempted to demonstrate at the beginning of this section, it has become all too easy to use not only the language of utopia, but also literary works in this tradition to promote or denigrate a particular cause, movement, or even an entire way of life. In particular, the static dualisms that have – rightly or wrongly – become associated with utopia and utopianism are inimical to an increasingly globalised, mediated and ‘postmodern’ (whatever that actually means) society that not only enables individuals to create narratives of their selves that incorporate aspects of cultures far different to the ones in which they are raised, but which is also placing an ever-increasing emphasis on hybridity and multiplicity. What I have attempted to do throughout the course of this thesis, therefore, is to reconfigure the ways in which we think about utopian literature and the language that we use to describe it. The version of heterotopia that I postulate and identify in not only current ‘dystopian’ science fiction but in what are popularly thought of as representatives of more traditionally utopian / dystopian novels is meant, then, to function not as a rejection of utopia, but as a natural extension of it. There will – and should – always be a place for the literary utopia, but the term utopia is itself increasingly a reflection of a black-and-white world which only exists now in memory. The heterotopia as I conceive of it, and as it is demonstrated in the texts that I have analysed

here offers a way in which we can retain the purpose of the (literary) utopia, whilst leaving behind the stigma attached to it. As Stark says, “you never can go back, only forward” (452).

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