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## Relationship Between Utopia And Dystopia In 'brave New World'

It would be impossible to refer to all the utopian examples of work, but utopia began with the myth of Eden and the first thought refers back to Plato whose Republic is considered one of the first utopian works (Russell 2005). The idea of a utopian world has existed ever has it? I would say it existed earlier!! since Sir Thomas Moore coined the term utopia introduced us to the ideology in his work Utopia in 1516. Ever since then the relationship between what we present as a utopia has shared a fine and blurred line with the chaotic and dystopian world. 'If 'utopia' denotes an ideal or dream society, 'dystopia' is the word used to refer to an imagined nightmare world – normally the world of the future.' (Oxford English Dictionary, 2018). Thus utopia encourages everybody to experience ideal systems investigating the norms of organised society where human lives can be improved and made better. However, defining dystopia under one umbrella terms is challenging, so for this study, dystopia is a critical genre or work that helps us investigate human manipulation through advances in technology in the twentieth century. Is it possible for dystopian and utopian worlds to coexist? In this essay I will explore the ideological worlds created by Aldous Huxley in A Brave New World and the writings of T.S Elliot in The Wasteland. In both cases the authors are writing out of a post war Britain, with another war threatening, in response to a time of devastation and rapid cultural decline. Aldous Huxley presents us with a world in which everyone is always happy, they are highly reproductive, wealthy and stable and this appears to be the perfect utopia. In contrast, T.S Elliot presents to us a world full of despair. He uses literary forms such as? What literary forms? to highlight a tattered and broken society, in essence a dystopia. Both authors present us with the same idea; a futuristic world in which the individual is sacrificed for the state, but each has a different outcome. Margaret Atwood assesses or asses? this relationship quite simply by arguing that 'within every dystopia, there's a little utopia.' (Atwood, 2017) directly contrasting with Scholes and Robkin (1977) 'the utopian impulse was largely replaced by dystopian projections of disastrous current trends' (p. 174) and Chad Walsh (1962) who argues that utopia is replaced with dystopia in From Utopia to Nightmare:

'I submit that the shift from utopian to dystopian fiction is important. Quite possibly, it foreshadows one of those really massive psychological shifts that sometimes occur over a whole culture.' (p. 117)

Brave New World, seen as one of 'The great defining texts of the genre of dystopian fiction, both in [the] vividness of their engagement with real-world social and political issues, and in the scope of their critique of the societies on which they focus.' (pp. 20-21) M. Keith Booker (1994), depicts a world in which humans have become mechanical with the aid of biotechnological and pharmaceutical techniques showing the conflict between science and humanities- a reaction to capitalism and bourgeois society. The uses and discussions of SOMA in Brave New World can be read in two different ways. The first shows the controlling and dangerous aspects of pharmacology and the other the potentially enhancing effects it can have for society as a whole. 'A gramme (sic) is better than a damn' (Huxley, 2007, 54). This phrase highlights the emphasis on being happy in Huxley's imagined world. The best thing for the entire society is to repress and minimise any negative emotions. It removes everyone's individualities, the whole society become repressed and controlled, but in return they are all happy giving the sense of utopia.

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Brave New World can be viewed as either a dystopian or utopian novel depending on whether you perceive this as a negative or a positive. 'One believes things because one has been conditioned to believe them' (Huxley, 2007, 29-30) Are these characters living within a utopian world because they are always happy or are we actually viewing a dystopian world where everyone is repressed and ruled by a governing state? Ultimately, the only differences between the two worlds is our concept of them. Are Utopia and dystopia representing societies where people live either in a perfect environment or in a society ruled by a repressive state? Rena Nyman claims that the differences between these two ideals is just that: 'In contrast to a utopia(Utopian thought is rooted in Paradise, a term that has its origin in 'pairidaeza', that in Old Persian means an enclosure; and in Old Testament Hebrew, it is seen as 'parades', that simply means a garden enclosure, and in Greek as 'paradeisos', which is a luxurious park), an imagined perfect world, a dystopia (from Greek root dus, bad, and topos, place) is defined as an imagined world in which everything is bad. Common themes include government surveillance, poor living standards, totalitarian regimes, brainwashing, concealing of information, class dichotomies (particularly with a clear distinction and repression of the mass by the elite), police brutality, and status crimes.' (Nyman, 2016) Huxley shows how everyone has bought into the totalitarian regime. 'Sleep teaching was actually prohibited in England. There was something called liberalism. Parliament, if you know what that was, passed a law against it. The records survive. Speeches about liberty of the subject. Liberty to be inefficient and miserable. Freedom to be a round peg in a square hole.' (Huxley, 2007, 138) Here Mustapha ridicules the idea of freedom and liberty, 'freedom to be a round peg in a square hole', proclaiming why would anyone should it be anyone would? choose to be inefficient and miserable. But this is exactly what John later claims, a freedom to be happy. It again asks the question, can a utopia really exist without choice. Utopia and dystopia both allow us to view critically the world that surrounds us. They remind us to be careful and vigilant but not to be pessimistic, to avoid fighting amongst each other and that a better world is always possible. On the other hand Huxley warns- warns? us of worshipping the utopian ideal, showing that? he shows that concrete utopias cannot exist.

Eliot attempts to depict the fragile psychological state of the human psyche. He shows that in the twentieth century our humanity has been stripped away by the violence and horror of the war and the passing of old Victorian ideals. He challenges societal and cultural normalities of masculinity and masculine identity. He and other artists begin to question the romantic ideology held by writers. He does not pertain it to be the job of the artist to change and affect the world and instead sees it as his duty to capture and highlight the fractured and broken world in which we exist. The Burial of the dead begins with memories from a bygone era. Eliot presents us with childhood sledge rides and a hint of romance with a 'hyacinth girl' (Eliot, 1922, 1). The memories only stretch so far however as we soon find ourselves within a desolate land full of 'stony rubbish' (Eliot, 1922, 1) devoid of any new life or growth. Eliot uses dark and vivid imagery creating a melancholy and depressing tone. In these opening two stanzas Eliot establishes The Waste Land as he has come to picture it. The Waste Land is 'dead', 'dried' and 'frightened'. The river that was once a symbol of new life has diminished into a 'dull canal'. Eliot opens the poem with 'April is the cruellest month, breeding Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing Memory and desire, stirring Dull roots with spring rain.' (Eliot, 1922, 1) taking images that we would usually associate with the beauty of nature like the 'spring rain' or the 'breeding lilacs' and has instead surrounded them with 'dead land'. This could be a reflection on how Eliot feels after the horrors of the war just gone. He has found himself placed within a society that no longer has the youthful exuberance it once relished. 'when hope turns into anguish, utopia so much acclaimed becomes nightmare and dystopia becomes apparent as much as it had been utopia. Dystopia looks like self-criticism of utopia, presents the world of

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hell, marked with the same rationality and geometric rigour that characterized, in a positive sense, the utopian world.' (Lucia Bond, 2015) Eliot is reflecting upon the transition that society has now made from its previous seemingly utopian outlook into a now much darker dystopian world.

The psychological drug SOMA plays a huge part in creating Huxley's perfect world. It seemingly fits straight in to the utopian ideology of complete and unwavering happiness. It is comparable to alcohol, a drug that allows you to induce pleasant and warm feelings in small, slow doses, aiding with social contact and confidence. SOMA helps people to become relaxed and content turning them into 'shiny happy people' but it is not the harmless and innocent drug it appears to be, like the other ideologies in Brave New World 'its dystopian face shines right through the surface of utopian happiness.' (M. H. N. Schermer, 2007). The people of Brave New World take SOMA to escape from the hardships and unpleasantness of 'real life': but in actual fact it only produces superficial feelings of joy and wellbeing with no real fulfilment. The drug strips them of their morality and removes any chance of true emotional engagement with others. The drug is even used as a substitute for religious involvement and as a way to enforce social order. 'The world's stable now. People are happy; they get what they want, and they never want what they can't get. They're well off; they're safe; they're never ill; they're not afraid of death; they're blissfully ignorant of passion and old age; they're plagued with no mothers or fathers; they've got no wives, or children, or lovers they feel strongly about; they're so conditioned that they practically can't help behaving as they ought to behave.' (Huxley, 2007, 200) Essentially, SOMA promotes a kind of hedonism, separating people from an experience of 'real human life'. Thomas Moylan dates this by stating that "A central concern in the critical utopia is the awareness of the limitations of the utopian tradition, so that these texts reject utopia as a blueprint while preserving it as a dream. Furthermore, the novels dwell on the conflict between the ordinary world and the utopian society opposed to it so that the process of social change is more directly articulated. Finally, the novels focus on the continuing presence of difference and imperfection within the utopian society itself and thus render more recognizable and dynamic alternatives." (Moylan, 1986) Brave New World clearly offers a dystopian view upon the use of psychological drugs, it creates a platform for the discussion of dangerous uses that can occur through scientific development.

Huxley is described by his brother, Julian, as "a prophet" who uses his "malicious wit" (Julian Huxley 1965, 21, 23) and attempts to make individuals aware of their foolishness." Did he predict the future? Kass (2002) believes we are moving towards The Brave New World ..." all by ourselves – without even deliberately deciding to go."(p.6) The novel in this respect is mirroring our present day societal trends ..." not only in fiction but also in fact." (Kass 2002)

Eliot uses the wasteland to comment upon the lifelessness and futility of modern life. His poem explores the cynicism, failure and disappointment that he and others feel; he creates and experiences failure throughout the poem and each time in a different setting and context. He explores faith and how modern society has removed itself from its Christian values this is reflected when Huxley uses the SOMA to substitute for religious involvement (you stated this earlier when referencing Schermer). Eliot wants to see a solution to his problems outside of the modern condition 'In light of the desolation of the West, Eliot feels that another Renaissance is necessary; the preceding one more Western society from its root, the Christian religion.' (Hentea, date? 317-18). Eliot believes that he has a solution to the unfolding problems within society, his wasteland is an examination of 'human failure and of perennial quest for salvation' (Bhagawati date?, 337). He proclaims within his poem "He who was living is now dead, we who

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were living are now dying, with a little patience.” (Eliot date?, 3) as if the whole of society is merely waiting upon its own collapse.

Utopian and dystopian worlds should act as a point of conversation for contemporary society. We should not look to them as a guide with regard to our values and worldwide views, but rather as a means of discussion in aid of improving our own situation. Tom Moylan suggests that we should use criticisms of dystopia as ‘explorations of the oppositional spaces and possibilities from which the next round of political activism can derive imaginative sustenance and inspiration’ (Moylan, 1986). The question still remains, how do we approach these texts and how do we discover their true meaning? Harold Bloom (2011) sees how “massive industrialization, coupled with severe economic depression and the rise of fascism” formed “Huxley’s cautionary vision of the future” (p. 14). Bloom also observes that *Brave New World* “is still a vision of T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, of a world without authentic belief and spiritual values” (p. 8). Eliot was notoriously unhelpful in providing clarification to his poems. His notes to the waste land - added as an afterthought - confuse and mislead the reader as much as they assist. When Eliot tells us in his notes to view the poem through the eyes of Tiresias, who is a mass of contradiction, (A man with breasts and a blind seer) should we believe him? Or is he in fact trying to highlight the fragmented and uncoherent voices in this poem. Eliot stated that critic Edmund Wilson had ‘over understood’ the poem suggesting that we are looking too deeply into what he is saying. Similarly Huxley presents to us contradicting themes and no clear indication into whether *Brave new world* is a utopian or dystopian world. Ultimately, there is no clear cut and straightforward interpretations or understandings of their texts. Much like the tensions between dystopian and utopian worlds it is left to the observer to make his own conclusion. The line is blurred and we are forced to consume these worlds with our own bias and moral standings. Refer to this in your introduction to gain cohesion between the introduction and conclusion Moreover, unlike Bloom and Firchow who see *Brave New World* as Huxley’s warning to the future, for many critics *Brave New World* happens in the present era. Leon Kass (2000) declares: ‘Huxley’s novel is, of course, science fiction. But yesterday’s science fiction is rapidly becoming today’s fact. Prozac is not yet Huxley’s soma; cloning by nuclear transfer or splitting embryos is not exactly Bokanovski fiction; MTV and virtual-reality parlours are not quite the ‘feelies’; and our current safe and consequenceless sexual practices are not universally as loveless or as empty as in the novel. But the kinships are disquieting, all the more so since our technologies of bio-psycho-engineering are still in their infancy-and it is all too clear what they might look like in their full maturity.’ (pp. 51-52). One mans dystopia is another mans utopia, so both are unavoidable, you cannot have one without the other. As Veronica Roth (2018)date? once said, “If you actually succeed in creating a utopia, you’ve created a world without conflict, in which everything is perfect. And if there’s no conflict, there are no stories worth telling – or reading!” (Roth, 2018)

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