**Reading the Dystopian Short Story**

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Abstract

This thesis presents the first cognitive-poetic account of the dystopian short story and investigates the experience of dystopian reading. In doing so, it takes a mixed-methods approach that draws upon various types of experimental and naturalistic reader response data in support of my own rigorous stylistic analysis. The study focuses upon four contemporary short stories published within the last ten years: George Saunders’ ([2012] 2014g) ‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’; Paolo Bacigalupi’s ([2008] 2010a) ‘Pump Six’; Genevieve Valentine’s ([2009] 2012) ‘Is this your day to join the Revolution?’; and Adam Marek’s ([2009] 2012b) ‘Dead Fish’. These texts were selected for their focus upon socially relevant thematic concerns, their cultural resonance and their inherent didacticism – attributes which I argue determine the dystopian reading experience.

In moving beyond the periodic demarcations imposed on dystopian narrative by traditional literary criticism, this study argues for a reader-led discussion of genre that takes into account reader subjectivity and personal conceptualisations of prototypicality. My research therefore offers a new contribution to the area of dystopian literary criticism, as well as advancing research in cognitive poetics and empirical stylistics more broadly. Framed within Text World Theory (Gavins, 2007; Werth, 1999), my thesis builds upon existing research and advances text-world-theoretical discussions of world-building, characterisation and reading experience. In particular, I argue for a more nuanced discussion of paratextual text-worlds and propose a systematic account of social cognition that can be applied in Text-World-Theory terms.

As an original piece of stylistic analysis, this thesis challenges traditional conceptions of genre and aims to extend existing discussions of the emotional experience of literary reading. As a result, several contributions are also made to the field of empirical stylistics, as I test multiple reader response methods and combine key findings from each case study to present a multifaceted account of dystopian reading.

‘Not real can tell us about real’.

Margaret Atwood

([2003] 2004: 118)

For my Mum,

Margaret Norledge.

For everything.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1. **Aims and Preliminaries**

This thesis proposes the first cognitive-poetic account of the dystopian short story, which, framed within Text World Theory (Gavins, 2007; Werth, 1999), offers an original contribution to the fields of stylistics and literary criticism. The study comprises three key aims: 1) to investigate the particular readerly experience of engaging with dystopian narratives; 2) to advance current Text-World-Theory practice by applying the framework to dystopian literature; and 3) to provide a critical account of dystopian literature that, in drawing upon insights from cognitive linguistics, narratology, psychology and cognitive science, moves beyond existing literary theoretical studies of the genre.

Analytical focus is placed upon the study of the dystopian short story – a medium that has been significantly overlooked in dystopian literary criticism to date – and on four dystopian short stories in particular: George Saunders’ ([2012] 2014g) ‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’; Paolo Bacigalupi’s ([2008] 2010a) ‘Pump Six’; Genevieve Valentine’s ([2009] 2012) ‘Is this your day to join the Revolution?’; and Adam Marek’s ([2009] 2012b) ‘Dead Fish’. Each of these texts, which have received little to no critical attention before, are united on two key fronts. Firstly, they each present refracted yet remote possible worlds, that is worlds which are fundamentally similar to the actual-world, but which through processes of exaggeration and defamiliarisation come to subvert real-world expectations (see Ryan, 1980). Secondly, as contemporary publications, each of the texts are culturally specific and like classic dystopias before them identify with a particular real-world historical moment. As a result of this ontological relationship, each of the four texts reflect upon actual-world concerns, a process which in turn invites readerly critique and promotes real-world reflection. I argue that it is the actual-world to fictional-world relationship set up by these two motivations which defines the experience of reading dystopian fiction, a relationship which Text World Theory can most effectivly bring to light.

Text World Theory (Gavins, 2007; Werth, 1999), as a unified and multidimensional model of discourse processing, allows for a combined micro- and macro-level analysis which takes into account both the particular texture of dystopian writing and the human experience of reading dystopian texts. Through the application of a Text-World-Theory perspective, I therefore purpose to draw out the distinctive and defining characteristics of the dystopian short story, as specified by the language of dystopia itself and as further delineated by dystopian readers. Text World Theory is an apposite framework for addressing these two concerns, as being a systematic and unified model, it ‘aims to show how real-world contexts influence the production of discourse and how that discourse is perceived and conceptualised in everyday situations’ (Gavins, 2014: 7). As such, the application of Text World Theory to my chosen sample of dystopian short stories enables the exploration of the emotional, often estranging experience of reading dystopian texts; the ethical or affected responses of dystopian readers; the social, cultural and political contexts of dystopian writing; the potential motivations of dystopian authors; and the intricacies of the language of dystopia itself. Given the scope of this project, such explorations act as a foundation for future applications with the resultant analyses acting further to test and augment existing applications of Text World Theory, offering the first extended analyses of both dystopian world-building and of the experience of dystopian reading more broadly.

So as to examine multiple aspects of the dystopian reading experience, a mixed-methods approach is taken that incorporates rigorous stylistic analysis of introspective reading alongside data from both naturalistic and experimental empirical studies. I focus initially on my own introspective reading, offering a systematic Text-World-Theory analysis of ‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’. I establish my investigation of dystopian text-worlds and begin to highlight the emotional and ethical significance of dystopian world-building to the overall experience of dystopian reading. I then go on to test different reader response methods, gauging their usefulness to my investigation and highlighting the types of reading experience they illuminate. As this is the first extended study of the dystopian short story, such a mixed-methods approach is particularly useful as it enables me to examine a broad range of reader responses and take into account different stages of reading and multiple reading contexts, all of which impact upon experiential reading practice. By drawing each of these methods together alongside my own Text-World-Theory analysis, I aim to present a multifaceted and complete perspective of the experience of reading the dystopian short story.

**1.1 Thesis Outline**

The thesis comprises nine chapters. The current chapter provides a brief introduction to the aims and motivations of this research, highlighting my analytical focus and mapping the parameters of my study.

Chapter 2 provides a review of existing literary criticism surrounding the development of dystopian narratives from their inception in the nineteenth century through to the present day. I map the literary-historical development of dystopian writing and highlight the limitations of period-specific sub-genre labelling. The chapter also addresses the evolving hybridity of the dystopia and details the surge in peripheral dystopian mediums, such as digital narratives, videogames and films. At the close of the chapter, I review existing work on the short story, as the key medium addressed in this thesis, and introduce the four dystopian short stories on which I place analytical focus. The texts examined are George Saunders’ ([2012] 2014g) ‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’, Paolo Bacigalupi’s ([2008] 2010a) ‘Pump Six’, Genevieve Valentine’s ([2009] 2012) ‘Is this your day to join the Revolution?’ and Adam Marek’s ([2009] 2012b) ‘Dead Fish’. Following this introduction, I outline the limitations of existing literary-critical approaches to dystopian fiction and propose the need for a systematic and cognitive approach to dystopia that takes into account the poetic craft of dystopian narratives themselves and the particular experience of dystopian reading.

In Chapter 3, I offer a critical introduction to the fields of stylistics and cognitive poetics, which provide the overarching framework for this research. Following a brief review of each of these disciplines and the key works undertaken in these areas, I narrow my focus to address stylistic and cognitive-poetic approaches to fictional consciousness in Section 3.3. The study of fictional minds is particularly neglected in literary criticism of the dystopian genre and is consequently of key focus within my own research. Throughout the thesis, I aim to draw a link between the construal of dystopian minds and emotional readerly responses to dystopian texts, a connection, I argue comes to light through world-building. After mapping the parameters of existing approaches to fictional minds, I then move on to introduce the primary analytical model applied within this thesis – Text World Theory. I provide a detailed outline of Werth’s (1999) original model, including a review of its early influences and critical development. Section 3.4 maps out the structure of the text-world model and offers an overview of contemporary practice.

Chapter 4 concerns the empirical-stylistic methods drawn upon in support of my own introspective analysis throughout this thesis. The chapter opens with a brief overview of research into the ‘reader’ in stylistics and details my own use of the term ‘reader’ throughout my work. The remainder of the chapter provides an introduction to each of my forthcoming case studies and the methods they incorporate. Section 4.2, details existing research into the use of online reader response data and maps the parameters of my own use of online reader reviews in support of my analysis of ‘Pump Six’ in Chapter 6. Section 4.3 reviews experimental reader response methods and the ‘think-aloud’ method in particular. I examine the benefits of introspective protocol analysis and summarise the written think-aloud study conducted in support of my own analysis of ‘Is this your day to join the Revolution?’. Finally, 4.4 discusses the study of reading group discourse from a stylistic perspective and introduces the small reading group study that provides support for my analysis of ‘Dead Fish’. Within the boundaries of this chapter, I also argue for the benefits of taking a mixed-methods approach to this research and the rigorous, multifaceted insights such methods can provide into the experience of dystopian reading.

The following four chapters present individual case studies that address the experience of reading the dystopian short story. Each of these analysis chapters is framed within Text World Theory and, in employing cognitive-poetic tools and theoretical research from within narratology, cognitive linguistics and cognitive science, they provide rigorous, text-driven insights into reading dystopian short stories.

Chapter 5 takes for its focus George Saunders’ ([2012] 2014g) ‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’. I examine the experience of reading dystopian epistolary narrative and the relationship between the epistolary narrator, the implied reader and the narratee. I discuss the satirical nature of Saunders’ discourse and detail the estranging experience of world-building promoted by the text. I argue that the reader’s conceptualisation of the Semplica girls determines an ethical and emotional reading of the story. In expanding upon Palmer’s (2004) work into fictional minds, I suggest that multiple continuing-consciousness frames may be created for a particular character and go on to propose a more nuanced model of social cognition in terms of Text World Theory. By approaching social minds from a Text-World-Theory perspective I aim to bring added clarity to Palmer’s notion of intermental thought and ameliorate the more contentious aspects of his original model. In particular, I argue that the term ‘intermental framing’ be integrated into the text-world model at the modal-world level, as a replacement term for ‘intermental mind’ so as to better distinguish those ontological structures which are dependant upon group or collective thought; collective thought in itself being a distinctive feature of dystopian characterisation.

Paolo Bacigalupi’s ([2008] 2010a) ‘Pump Six’ is the subject of Chapter 6, as I move on to look at the creation of ecodystopian text-worlds. In this chapter, I expand upon my discussion of ethical reader responses to dystopian narratives, applying theoretical insights from psychology and Stockwell’s (2013) work on encoded preferred responses. I argue that the apparent authenticity and believability of Bacigalupi’s text-worlds encourages the reader to make cross-world mappings between their real-world present and the possible future worlds of the narrative, a dynamic which is effectively brought to light in the discussion of discourse-world to text-world relationships. This argument is supported with online reader response data which is incorporated into my analysis. In expanding upon my discussion of dystopian minds, I also pay attention to the attribution of consciousness to the posthuman in this particular narrative, which in itself further advances my examination of ethics and dystopian reading.

In Chapter 7, I address the ambiguous text-worlds of Genevieve Valentine’s ([2009] 2012) ‘Is this your day to join the Revolution?’. The analysis in this chapter centres on the readerly processes of world-building and cognitive estrangement. I advance discussions of world-building to consider the emotional experience of conceptualising a particular world, placing emphasis upon the use of personal discourse-world knowledge, schema awareness and narrative interrelation (Mason, 2016). The multidimensional nature of Text World Theory offers a unified framework under which to explore each of these concepts, enabling me to address the importance of those experiential factors associated with reading alongside the linguistic make-up of the narrative itself. In support of my discussion, I draw upon data collected as part of a written think-aloud study to investigate the developmental stages of interpretation that occur during, rather than after reading. The analysis centres upon my participants’ understanding of the text-worlds of ‘Is this your day to join the Revolution?’ and their identification and empathy with the narrative’s primary protagonist.

Chapter 8 explores Adam Marek’s ([2009] 2012b) ‘Dead Fish’ which, in its presentation of an ecodystopian narrative, reflects the recent hybridity in the dystopian genre. I place particular focus on the categorisation of the story as an ‘unnatural narrative’ (Alber and Heinze, 2011; Alber et al., 2010) and the experience of conceptualising unnatural minds. As will be discussed in 8.2, ‘Dead Fish’ is narrated by an unidentified, first-person narrator whose ontological status is ambiguous and whose vital status is unknown. I draw upon reading-group interpretations during my investigation of the narrator so as to gain broader insights into how such minds are commonly perceived. I draw upon the reading-group data in support of my own introspective analysis of the worlds of Marek’s text and the experience of becoming immersed in or disassociated from an unnatural narrative.

Finally, in Chapter 9, I offer a closing discussion of the key analyses and findings presented throughout this study. I evaluate the main contributions made by this thesis to the areas of literary criticism, stylistics and cognitive poetics and propose several future directions this research might take. A final review of this thesis that takes into account its original intentions, motivations and theoretical significance is then offered in 9.3.

Chapter 2: A Poetics of Dystopia

1. **Overview**

In this chapter, I present a general overview of existing literary critical work on the dystopian genre, with particular focus upon the genre’s literary historical development and the stylistic characteristics attributed to the form. I map the key developments of the dystopian genre and situate the focal texts for this thesis within their broader literary and historical contexts. In sections 2.1 and 2.2, I introduce the definitions and literary heritage of dystopian literature. I map the dystopian impulse, from the early representations of H. G. Wells and Samuel Butler through to the rise of the critical dystopia in the 1980s. In 2.4, I move on to discuss the twenty-first century dystopia, as represented in evolving forms of literary discourse, film and videogame narratives. I pay particular attention to the burgeoning sub-genre of Young Adult (YA) dystopian fiction and discuss the collective impact these narratives have had on the development and reception of present-day dystopian worlds. In 2.5, I examine the focal medium of this study, the dystopian short story, which has become increasingly prevalent in recent years, and introduce the four dystopian short stories discussed in this thesis: George Saunders’ ([2012] 2014g) ‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’; Paolo Bacigalupi’s ([2008] 2010a) ‘Pump Six’; Genevieve Valentine’s ([2009] 2012) ‘Is this your day to join the Revolution?’; and Adam Marek’s ([2009] 2012b) ‘Dead Fish’. I conclude this chapter by discussing the critical limitations of existing dystopian theory resulting from the rigid parameters of its periodic structure, and its particular disregard for the human experience of reading dystopian fiction. I look towards a cognitive poetics of dystopia, which will be further developed in Chapter 3, which moves beyond such limitations and proposes a more systematic method for investigating dystopian texts.

**2.1 Dystopia: Introducing the Genre**

The term ‘dystopia’ is derived from the word ‘utopia’, which was originally coined in 1516 for the title of Thomas More’s seminal novel of the same name, *Utopia* (More, [1516] 2012). The word ‘utopia’ itself is taken from the Greek ‘*où*’ (*ou-*), meaning ‘not’ and ‘*τόπος*’ (*topos*),meaning ‘place’, translating into English as ‘no-place’ or ‘nowhere’ – the original title of More’s work being ‘Nusquama’ (translated from Latin as ‘Nowhereland’) (Wilde, 2016: 11; see also Baker-Smith, 2011). More’s *Utopia*, which takes for its focus a metafictional interaction between the fictional character, Thomas More, and Raphael Hythloday, concerns the ‘social evils of the sixteenth century’ and the contrasting social, political and religious structures of the commonwealth of ‘Utopia’ (Bruce, [1999] 2008: xx). The fictional city, ‘Utopia’, in its presentation of ‘communist equality’, stood in opposition to the apparent injustice and disorder of sixteenth-century England, and by doing so *Utopia* gave More a platform from which to philosophise on the characteristics of the perfect state (see Bruce, [1999] 2008: xxi). As a result, the title *Utopia* is often viewed as a pun on the Greek word ‘eutopia’, or ‘good place’: ‘*εὐ*’(*eu-*)meaning ‘good’ and ‘*τόπος*’(topos) meaning ‘place’ (OED Online, 2016a; ‘eutopia, *n*’). It is this second meaning which has become most generally associated with both the novel itself and the term’s broader denotations. For example, by the seventeenth century, the word had developed in relation to the ‘eutopian’ etymological root to characterise a hypothetical place or social structure in which everything is perfect (see OED Online, 2016d: ‘utopia, *n*’), and by the eighteenth century was used to define real-world idylls.

‘Dystopia’, which was reportedly coined by J. S. Mill during a speech in Hansard Commons in 1868, is generally viewed as the antonymic form of ‘eutopia’, essentially meaning ‘bad place’ given the denotations of the ‘dys’ prefix (see OED Online, 2016b: ‘dystopia, *n*’). However, as argued by Stockwell (2000b: 211), ‘dystopia is not the opposite of utopia. The contrary of utopia (no place) is our reality (this place); dystopia is a dis-placement of our reality.’ Stockwell (2000b: 211) draws upon the etymological roots of the original ‘utopian’ (rather than ‘eutopian’) form to categorise dystopian fictions as ‘extensions of our base-reality, closely related to it or caricatures of it, rather than being disjunctive alternatives’.

Despite there being many early examples of dystopian writings, such as Samuel Butler’s ([1872] 2006) *Erehwon* or Wells’ (1895) *The Time Machine*, it was not until the early 1950s that the term ‘dystopia’ was used to describe a world, future, or system that was in itself ‘dystopian’, that is, of dystopian quality or pertaining to dystopian characteristics (see OED Online, 2016b: ‘dystopia, *n*’; also Gottleib, 2001: 4). Dystopian literature as a genre is therefore perceived as a twentieth-century phenomenon, as a response not only to the unrealised utopian visions of past centuries (such as those of Thomas More’s *Utopia* ([1516] 2012)*,* Francis Bacon’s *New Atlantis* ([1627] 2008)or Henry Neville’s *The Isle of Pines* ([1668] 2008)),but to the terrors of the current generation (see Moylan, 2000: xi). Fuelled by a ‘hundred years of exploitation, repression, state violence, war; genocide, disease, famine, ecocide, depression [and] debt’ (Moylan, 2000: xi), dystopian accounts enacted a critical response to the ‘inadequacies’ (Booker, 1994: 20) and instability of contemporary society post-World-War-I. Works such as Orwell’s ([1949] 2000) *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Huxley’s (1932) *Brave New World* and Zamyatin’s *We* ([1924] 1993) responded critically to such contemporary insecurity, taking distanced perspectives on real-world anxieties (Bowering, 1968; Calder, 1976; Kern, 1988; Woodcock, 1972). These twentieth-century narratives came to be seen as ‘classic’ forms of dystopian writing and to this day dominate the generalised view of the dystopian genre. They continue to influence new and evolving dystopian narratives, ranging from Suzanne Collins’ (2008) *The Hunger Games* to Margaret Atwood’s (2015) *The Heart Goes Last*, which at their cores depict undesirable future worlds that stand as antonymic forms of stereotypical utopian ideals.

To date, dystopian narratives have reflected on a range of social, cultural and political concerns as inspired by their authors’ world-views. They have represented societal fears of technological development (see Bradbury, [1953] 2010; Forster, [1909] 2011); scientific advancement (for example, Atwood, [2003] 2004; Huxley, 1932); theocracy (see Butler, 1993; Jordan, 2012; Morrow, 2012); infertility (for instance Atwood, 1996; James, 1992; Rogers, 2011); democracy (see Collins, 2008; Lu, 2011; Orwell, [1949] 2013); concerns for the ecosystem (as seen in Atwood, 2009, 2013; Bacigalupi, 2009, 2010c, 2015b; Ballard, [1962] 2006; Bertagna, 2002; Cline, [2011] 2012); population growth (see Ballard, [2011] 2012; Malley, [2008] 2012); urban decline (for example, DuPrau, 2003, 2004; Howey, 2013); disease (see Brookes, [2006] 2012; Dashner, 2009; Ryan, 2009); and the growing power of the internet (Eggers, 2013; Pynchon, [2013] 2014). Each of these subjects highlights a salient political, cultural, ideological or social warning about contemporary ‘trends that need to be averted’ (Stockwell, 2000b: 211). Dystopian worlds are therefore purposefully refracted, presenting recognisable yet transformed imaginary worlds that can be in some way connected to a specific ‘real-world’ spatio-temporal present.

**2.2 Mapping the Dystopian Impulse**

In mapping the dystopian impulse, it is first necessary to outline the relationship between dystopian and utopian writing, given ‘the push and pull between utopian and dystopian perspectives’ (Gottleib, 2001: 131) present in many dystopian texts. The rise and fall of each form is often linked by literary critics to particular historical events and the ideological, political and social attitudes of a particular time. In this section, I offer a brief chronology of the literary historical development of dystopian fiction moving away from the ‘new maps of hell’ (Amis, 1960), which developed after the Second World War, to the resurgence of utopian thought in the 1960s and ’70s, and the rise of the critical dystopia in the late 1980s. It should be noted that such a history is based primarily on western dystopian thinking and Anglo-American dystopian literature in particular; a broader literary theoretical discussion of the genre, such as that offered by Gottleib (2001), is beyond the scope of this thesis.

**2.2.1 The Critical Utopia**

Following the classic dystopias or ‘anti-utopias’ (see Kumar, 1987; Moylan, 2000; Sargent, 1975) of the early twentieth century, utopian fiction returned to favour in the 1960s with the writings of Russ (see for example, *The Female Man* (1975)), Le Guin (for example *The Dispossessed* ([1974] 2002)), Piercy (for example, *Woman On the Edge of Time* ([1976] 2016)) and Delany (see *Trouble on Triton* (1976)), amongst others, reclaiming utopianism under a new literary theoretical heading – ‘critical utopia’ (see Baccolini and Moylan, 2003: 2; Ferns, [1931] 1999: 202-237; Moylan, 1986: 10). Moylan offers the most complete definition of this hybrid utopian form noting 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 blueprint while preserving it as dream. Furthermore the novels dwell on the conflict between the originary world and the utopian society opposed to it so that the process of social change is more directly articulated. Finally, the novels focus on the continuing presence of difference and imperfection within utopian society itself and thus render more recognizable and dynamic alternatives. (Moylan, 1986:10-11)

Moylan (1986: 10) discusses the critical utopia here, both as the ‘destruction’ of and the ‘transformation’ of the original utopian form into a more ‘subversive’ and ‘radical’ genre, that reflected more accurately on the surrounding historical-social environment of the time. In this respect, the critical utopia was driven by the ‘politics of autonomy, democratic socialism, ecology, and especially feminism’ (Moylan, 1986: 11) that shaped the 1960s and ’70s. For Prettyman (2011: 339), the increased social relevance of the critical utopia was achieved through experimentation with ‘increased realism’ and a ‘decreased distance between real life and the utopian society’, supporting Moylan’s (1986) assertions that the form more directly addressed the processes of social and political change within the real-world present of its authors. The ability of the anti-utopians to portray utopian visions that were critical of the real-world present, yet able to map potential futures built on ‘principles of autonomy, mutual aid, and equality’, was the strength of the genre – refracting the social systems of the present-day to advocate ‘other ways of living in the world’ (Moylan, 1986: 26-27).

Despite the success of the form, by the 1980s, dystopia was once again popular and the utopianism of the past two decades inspired yet another shift in the fictional representation of possible future worlds, triggering what came to be known as the ‘dystopian turn’, and the rise of the ‘critical dystopia’.

**2.2.2 The Rise of the Critical Dystopia**

The critical dystopia stood both in opposition to the dystopian visions of the early twentieth century, which were unreservedly nightmarish by design, and the earlier utopian ideals from which ‘its politically enabling stance derives’ (Jameson, 2005:198). The term was first coined by Sargent (1994) in relation to texts such as Piercy’s ([1991] 2016) *He, She and It,* which he argued presented both utopian and dystopian tendencies (see Moylan, 2000: 187-88). As a merged form of utopia and dystopia, critical dystopias maintained a sense of utopian hope within their presentation of negatively refracted futures, both as regards a hopeful ending for the texts’ protagonists and also for the reader in relation to their own real-world futures. As argued by Baccolini and Moylan (2003: 7), ‘the new critical dystopias allow both readers and protagonists to hope by resisting closure: the ambiguous, open endings of these novels maintain the utopian impulse *within* the work’ (emphasis in original). They argue that by resisting the subjugation of the protagonist and leaving the characters to contend with their own roles and choices (Baccolini, 2004: 521), the critical dystopia ‘opens a space of contestation and opposition for those “ex-centric” subjects whose class, gender, race, sexuality, and other positions are not empowered by hegemonic rule’ (Baccolini and Moylan, 2003: 7).

Within this body of work, there are several sub-strands which exemplify the social and political contestations Baccolini and Moylan mention, such as feminist dystopia (see Baccolini, 2000; Cavalcanti, 1999) and ecodystopia (Otto, 2012). Given the applicability of the ecodystopian label to the texts I examine in this thesis, and the clear ecocritical interests of Bacigalupi and Marek in particular, I will briefly detail the characteristics of the ecodystopia, both in terms of its literary historical roots and as a useful bridge to the dystopias of the twenty-first century.

**2.2.3 Ecodystopia**

Ernest Callenbach coined the term ‘Ecotopia’ for the title of his 1975 novel *Ecotopia: The Notebooks and Reports of William Weston,* which is argued to be one of the first examples of an ecological utopia and which gave its name to the genre as a result (Mathiesen, 2001). In recent years, the term has been applied to texts that focus primarily on environmental and ecological concerns that are presented in terms of utopian ideals or conversely that are refracted within dystopian worlds as ecodystopias. According to Barnhill (2011: 126), ecotopias may therefore take up topics such as ‘sufficiency, high quality of life, egalitarianism, communitarianism, libertarianism, radical democracy, decentralization, appropriate technology, an affirmation that the natural world has intrinsic value, a sense of identification with nature, and a critique of the degradation of ecological systems’. Such texts aim to challenge current environmental and environmental-social concerns within the reader’s real world and invite critical responses to the reader’s real-world present, articulating ‘the desire for a better way of being’ (Levitas, 1990: 221; see also Sargisson, 2007). Under this view, ecotopianism, in Dunlap’s (2013: 2) terms, acts as a ‘vehicle for positive social change’.

Otto (2012) defines ecodystopian worlds as negative refractions of present and future worlds that critically engage with such thematic concerns. He argues that ecodystopian science fiction posits a series of

frightening worlds not disengaged from the now but instead very much extrapolated out of some current and real, anti-ecological trend – whether that trend is social, scientific, economic, religious, or a combination of these and others rehearsed daily in the contemporary order of things. (Otto, 2012: 50)

For Otto, the ecodystopia is able to contend with such themes and issue warnings about real-world ecological trends in a way that the ecotopia cannot, so as to present ‘extended reflections on the issues that give rise to deep ecological sentiments, including over population, species extinction and air and water pollution’ (Otto, 2012: 50). In examining Brunner’s ([1972] 2016) *The Sheep Look Up* and *Stand on Zanzibar* ([1968] 2013) in particular, Otto (2012) aligns the ecodystopia with critical dystopianism (despite these texts’ publication pre-1980). He goes on to claim, however, that such texts (as evidenced by Brunner’s narratives) reflect more on ‘ecotopian (im)possibility’ rather than utopian hope, ‘stimulating new, more ecologically and socially conscious ways of thinking and being in the world’ (Otto, 2012: 50). Indeed, as argued by Schulzke (2014: 324), some of the most affective critical dystopias are those which resist the possibility of hope.

The ecodystopian form has been significantly developed in recent years with the publication of texts such as *Oryx and Crake* (Atwood, [2003] 2004), *The Year of the Flood* (Atwood, 2009) and *MaddAddam* (Atwood, 2013); *The Maze Runner* (Dashner, 2009), *The Scorch Trials* (Dashner, [2010] 2011) and *The Death Cure* (Dashner, [2011] 2012); Mike Carey’s *The Girl with all the Gifts* (2014); *The City of Ember* (Du Prau, 2004a); *New York 2140* (Robinson, 2017); *The Sunlight Pilgrims* (Fagan, 2016); ‘The End of the Whole Mess’ (King, 2007); and *Ready Player One* (Cline, [2011] 2012). Such texts take up a range of ecotopian concerns and present them within the boundaries of dystopian worlds. The ‘degradation of ecological systems’ (Barnhill, 2011: 126), for example, is a prominent theme within all of the latter texts, which take up such anxieties as climate change, pollution and biological warfare. As argued by Buell (2003: 246), ‘today, attempts to imagine the future realistically forces one to take environmental and environmental-social crisis seriously’, and this view is certainly reflected within such ecodystopian fictions, particularly those of the twenty-first century which I go on to examine in Section 2.4.

**2.3 Dystopia: Influences and Characteristics**

Throughout the last three sections, focus has been placed upon the chronological evolution of dystopian texts. I have mapped the key historical shifts between utopian, dystopian, critical utopian and critical dystopian writing that have determined contemporary understanding of the dystopian genre. Before moving on to look at current manifestations of dystopia, however, I will first examine the style of dystopian texts and the influence of both science fictional and satirical discourse upon the stylistic development of the genre.

**2.3.1 Dystopia, Science Fiction and Satire**

Science fiction, in Butor’s (1971: 162) terms, is ‘a form which is not only capable of revealing profoundly new themes, but capable of integrating all the themes of old literature’ and can be traced from numerous literary sources, including but not restricted to, ‘the amazing voyages of the early modern period, the utopian narratives of the sixteenth century, the scientific romances of the nineteenth century, the science fictional novels of imperial Britain, or the pulp stories and paperbacks of the neo-imperial United States’ (Moylan, 2000: 4). However, as argued by critics such as Merril (1972), Cansler (1972) and Stockwell (2000b), science fiction, like dystopian fiction, is in essence a twentieth-century phenomenon, with the 1940s and ’50s being particularly recognised as its ‘Golden Age’ (see Stockwell, 2000b: 9; Hrotic, 2014). Concerned primarily with the developments of science and technology, science fiction ‘evolved in parallel to these developments’ (Hrotic, 2014: 997-998) to address a broad range of topics, including space and time travel, future worlds, alternate species, robotics, genetics and artificial intelligence, to name but a few. Central to all such speculative visions, however, is the representation of a world and/or world-view that is in some way distinct from that of the author (see Aldiss and Wingrove, 1986; James, 1994; Hrotic, 2014 for detailed histories of the genre).

Stockwell (2000b: 203) argues that all science fiction has an aspect of ‘alternativity’ that differentiates its worlds from the world of the reader and ‘possesses a fundamentally powerful capacity for altering readers’ perceptions and habits of interpretation’. Such a relationship between the world of the text and the world of the reader is, for Stockwell (2000b: 204), a fundamental aspect of science fiction’s poetics and a defining feature of what he terms a science fictional ‘architext’ (see also Genette, [1979] 1992; [1997] 1982). Stockwell notes that:

though all science fiction has the capacity as an essential part of its generic make-up to alter readers’ paradigms, only those which explicitly make use of this feature can be considered as architexts. An architext is any science fictional narrative which configures a fully worked-out, rich world, and also provides stylistic cues that encourage a mapping of the *whole* textual universe with the reader’s reality. (Stockwell, 2000b: 204) (emphasis in original)

Dystopian texts are one of the four key text types that Stockwell (2000b: 204) categorises as a ‘main architextual template in science fiction’, alongside utopias, post-apocalyptic fictions and ergodic literature. By presenting believable future worlds that offer refracted visions of the author’s environment, dystopian architexts work to alter readers’ perceptions of the real world through the often satirical refraction of recognisable present-day referents, in terms of specific objects, characters and broader thematic concerns. According to Booker (1994: 19), although dystopias present distinct future worlds, ‘it is usually clear that the real referents of dystopian fictions are generally quite concrete and near-at-hand’ in relation to the situation of the author. For Baccolini (2003: 115), dystopian fictions are therefore necessarily and ‘immediately rooted in history’. She argues that by critiquing the society of the writer and the history that shapes its development, dystopian fictions show ‘how our present may negatively evolve’ (Baccolini, 2003: 115; see also Pfaelzer, 1980: 62) through the depiction of future ‘deficiencies’ (Ross, 1991: 143).

In responding to a particular historical moment, dystopian fictions often draw upon satirical discursive practices to attack or reflect upon a particular real-world referent. According to Simpson (2003: 1), ‘satirical texts are understood as utterances which are inextricably bound up with context of situation, with participants in discourse and with frameworks of knowledge’. Given the context-sensitive nature of dystopian literature and its ‘didactic intent to address the Ideal Reader’s moral sense and reason’ (Gottlieb, 2001: 15), the genre certainly ties in with Simpson’s definition. Simpson notes that as a discourse practice:

satire requires a *genus*, which is a derivation in a particular culture, in a system of institutions and in the frameworks of belief and knowledge which envelop and embrace these institutions. It also requires an *impetus*, which emanates from a perceived disapprobation, by the satirist, of some aspect of a potential satirical target. (Simpson, 2003: 8) (emphasis in original)

In terms of dystopian fiction, the *genus* would, in the main, derive from the beliefs and attitudes of a particular culture, society or ‘community of practice’. The term community of practice is here taken from sociolinguistics to refer to ‘an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in some common endeavor’ (Eckert and McConnell-Ginnett, 1992a: 8; also Eckert, 2000; Eckert and McConnell-Ginnett, 1992b). The impetuses of dystopian fictions are notably far-ranging, with dystopian writers taking up various social, political and cultural issues as base satirical targets. In this respect, the targets of most dystopian satires are what Simpson (2003: 71) refers to as ‘experiential’ targets: targets aimed at ‘more stable aspects of the human condition and experience as opposed to specific episodes and events’.

Dystopian satire focuses primarily on society, satirizing ‘both society as it exists, and the utopian aspiration to transform it’ (Ferns, [1931] 1999: 109; Gottleib 2001: 15). As such, experiential targets are often imbued with broader socio-political messages. It is by recognising the relationship between a reader’s environment and a particular dystopian world – the relationship between satiree and the satirsed target – that dystopian authors can ‘alter readers’ real-world paradigms’ (Stockwell, 2000b: 204) and project unrealised visions of possible future events. As will be outlined in the following section, these cross-world mappings are made as a result of ‘defamiliarisation’ and ‘cognitive estrangement’, both of which work to further emphasise the target of a particular dystopian world and cement the relationship between the author’s real-world present and the fictional extrapolations posed by a particular text.

**2.3.2 Cognitive Estrangement and Dystopian Worlds**

Science fiction is defined by Suvin (1979: 4) as the ‘literature of cognitive estrangement’, as a ‘literary genre whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition, […] whose main formal device is an imaginative framework alternative to the author’s empirical environment’ (Suvin, 1979: 7-8). Suvin’suse of the term ‘estrangement’ is rooted in two key theoretical traditions. The notion of an estranging discourse is rooted in Russian Formalism and comes from Shklovsky’s ([1917] 1965) use of the term *ostrenenie*  (later developed by Ernst Bloch ([1962] 1972)). *Ostrenenie* is translated by Lemon and Reis (1965) to mean ‘defamiliarisation’ and describes the process of ‘making strange’ (see Suvin, 1979: 6-7; Bogdanov, 2005). The experience of estrangement is then echoed in the Brechtian ([1973] 2014) theory of *verfremdung* (alienation), which reflects the process of making the known seem unfamiliar. For Suvin (1979), this process separates science fiction from the mimetic and realist fictions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by presenting the reader with a recognisable yet transformed imaginary world. Through these refractions, science-fiction texts invite readerly critiques of a particular author’s world-view, which is often identifiable and/or satirised in the fictional text. The world presented, although alternative to the world from which it stems, maintains a level of believability and is developed with ‘totalizing (“scientific”) rigour’ (Suvin, 1979: 6). It is the ‘factual reporting of fictions’ (Suvin, 1979: 6) which produces cognitive estrangement and creates fictional spaces that are both hypothetical and unrealised, yet which pertain to ‘cognitive logic’ (see Suvin, 1979: 63). It is the combination of estrangement and cognition that differentiates science fiction from surrounding mainstream genres such as fantasy, fairytale and myth and grounds Suvin’s (1979: 4) arguments for a ‘coherent poetics of SF’.

The specific estranging factor of a particular science fiction is referred to as the ‘novum’– the new object or concept foregrounded in a particular storyworld that prompts defamiliarisation and distinguishes the narrative from the norms of ‘“naturalistic” or empiricist fiction’ (Suvin, 1979: 3). Suvin (2010: 68) argues that as a ‘totalizing phenomenon or relationship deviating from the author’s and implied reader’s norm of reality’, the novum, although difficult to specify, can range from individual inventions or objects, spatio-temporal locations, agents and/or relationships (see Suvin, 1979: 64). The novum, according to Parrinder (2000: 41), is therefore ‘the crucial element generating the estranged formal framework or world of the SF text’ and should identify a particular world as being distinct from, albeit connected to, a reader’s own world. Dystopian nova, reflect the key social, ideological or political concerns of their presented worlds, simultaneously identifying them as distinct from those of their authors and implied readers. Notable examples include the hive-like, social media machine in E. M. Forster’s ([1909] 2011) *The Machine Stops*; the alphabetised clones in Huxley’s (1932) *Brave New World*;the fertile concubines in Atwood’s (1996) *The Handmaid’s Tale*;and the erasure of colour and memory from the world of Lowry’s (1993) *The Giver*. Each novum denotes the estranging features of its respective world, namely the hazardous development of technology and progressive science, the commodification of the human race, and the loss of the individual, respectively. The presence of a narrative novum that is ‘new and unknown in the author’s environment’ (Suvin, 2010: 68) is therefore key to many dystopian texts.

Suvin (1979) refers to the readerly experience of moving between the fictional future worlds of the text and their real-world present as a ‘feedback oscillation’. This is a transitional process which moves ‘from the author’s and implied reader’s norm of reality to the narratively actualized novum in order to understand the plot-events, and now back from those novelties to the author’s reality, in order to see it afresh from the new perspective gained’ (Suvin, 1979: 71). For Suvin then, science fiction and associated dystopias are characterised by the ‘essential tension’ of reader–fictional world relationships. As argued by Moylan (2000: 24), in ‘stepping away from a known world and yet always in creative connection with it, the sf reader must take seriously the alternative world of the text before her or his eyes’. The necessity for readers to respond seriously to dystopian texts is therefore an imperative aspect of dystopian reading, for in presenting worlds, which are ‘close, clear and unambiguous’ (Stockwell, 2000b: 211), dystopias are at once a reflection of our own society and decidedly displaced worlds, offering disturbing hypothetical conclusions to real-world anxieties.

Having outlined the stylistic parameters of dystopian texts, I now move on to discuss these real-world anxieties in more detail as I map the literary development of the dystopian impulse in the twenty-first century.

**2.4 Dystopia in the 21st Century**

Regardless of the time period in which they were written, dystopian narratives have continued to reflect upon ‘the cultural zeitgeist and fears of the era they were created’ (Tulloch, 2009: 13), projecting challenging literary responses to a socio-historical ‘moment’. It is significant, therefore, that works which were published in the twentieth century, in response to contemporary concerns, have maintained much of their initial impetus and emotional resonance with modern readers. Indeed, as Booker (1994: 17) argues, such ‘negative’ texts have ‘been far more prominent in modern literature than the “positive” utopias of earlier centuries’. The surge in Young Adult (YA) dystopian fiction, dystopian videogames and films (discussed later in this section) supports Booker’s assertion, as dystopias have become increasingly present in all forms of popular culture following the turn of the century. Indeed, as argued by Sicher and Skradol:

seen from after 9/11, the twentieth century marks the twilight of utopia. Dystopia has finally arrived because, on the one hand, the reconstitution of society seems impossible, while, on the other, technology threatens basic concepts of individual freedom and of human life. (Sicher and Skradol, 2006: 166)

Sicher and Skradol here note the decline in utopian narratives towards the end of the twentieth century, claiming that such visions were no longer relevant or necessary because dystopia has since arrived and is already synonymous with the present-day. In relation to the fears of earlier dystopian writers, Sicher and Skradol (2006) certainly have a point, as modern developments in science and technology have resulted in many dystopian predictions being realised. Consider, for example, the similarities between the communication devices in *The Machine Stops* (Forster, [1909] 2011) with contemporary social media platforms and video messaging services, the Apple Watch with Bradbury’s ‘wrist radios’ (see ‘The Murderer’ (Bradbury, [1953] 2010)), and recent bids from scientists in the US to grow human organs inside pigs (as in *Oryx and Crake* (Atwood, [2003] 2004)) to name but a few. As Sicher and Skradol (2006) argue, technology in contemporary society is particularly omnipresent, as are the ecological concerns of earlier ecodystopias and the representation of urban collapse. It is perhaps the closeness of dystopia in contemporary society that has resulted in the resurgence of dystopian writing post-9/11, the adaptation of dystopian narrative across modern media platforms, and the ubiquity of YA dystopian fiction.

**2.4.1** **YA Dystopias**

In recent years there has been a new wave of dystopian narratives, specifically within the sub-genre of Young Adult (YA) fiction, dominating the popular media, literary best-seller lists and the Hollywood box-office. Such fictions share the characteristic features of traditional adult dystopian fiction, including the illustration of destructive socio-political landscapes, disillusioned populations, the catastrophic after-effects of war, dictatorship, ecological decline, nuclear catastrophe and unmeasured scientific and technological development. Such fictions are characteristically centered upon the experiences of a specific, often resilient or ‘divergent’ member of a given society, much akin to the traditional dystopian ‘maverick’ (see Stockwell, 2000b). These protagonists are frequently selected against their will to become immersed in enforced social practices, as with Katniss Everdeen in Collins’ (2008) *The Hunger Games*, Surplus Anna in Malley’s ([2007] 2012) *The Declaration*, and Cassia Reyes in Condie’s (2010) *Matched*, and go on to reveal – and rebel against – hidden levels of socio-political decay.

As outlined by Nikolajeva (2014: 103), ‘the young adult novel emerged in the late 1960s early 1970s as a hyperrealistic form, focused on everyday problems and issues that adolescents struggle with, including sexuality, drugs, violence, parental revolt, and social pressure’. These issues are equally present within YA dystopian narratives, becoming heightened in relation to surrounding storyworld social limitations and enforced controls. In particular, the ‘coming-of-age’ plot-lines associated with mainstream YA fictions such as Stephanie Meyer’s *Twilight Saga* (2006-2008) or John Green’s (2005) *Looking for Alaska*, which place particular focus on unrequited or unlawful relationships, are particularly ubiquitous. As noted by Basu et al. (2013: 8), ‘it is hard to imagine a YA dystopian novel without the particular insecurities and excitement of budding love’. Such relationships, they argue, ‘can play a key role in shaping the dystopian narrative and the possibilities for social change enacted in the novel’ (Basu et al., 2013: 8) as protagonists are introduced to broader world-views by a boyfriend or girlfriend and work for a brighter future for each other. YA dystopian concerns are therefore often filtered through relationship-based plot lines and characterisation, providing ‘young people with an entry point into real-world problems, encouraging them to think about social and political issues in new ways, or even for the first time’ (Basu et al., 2013: 4-5).

However, the media fixation with such modern dystopian texts, their ubiquitous presence in popular advertising, and subsequent commodification, has raised significant concerns for the development of the dystopian genre on a broader scale. As outlined by Walter:

Dystopian visions used to present dire warnings of futures to come, now they seem more like pale reflections of reality. Today dystopia is just another category of light entertainment; a marketing niche for eBooks which even has its own channel on Netflix. (Walter, 2013: n.p.)

Indeed, as argued by Nikolajeva (2014: 93), in recent years, dystopia has become ‘a highly exploited genre in contemporary YA adult fiction [sic]’, representing the ‘latest publishing phenomenon in a post-Potter, post*-Twilight* market’ (Basu et al., 2013: 1). As a result of the popularity of YA dystopia (across mediums), the genre has oft been side-lined as a cultish phenomenon: yet another on-trend fad that is soon to be replaced. In addition to the popularity of YA texts, YA science fiction in itself is often labelled as ‘the poor relation both of adult fiction and children’s fantasy’ (Yates, 1996: 311; see also Walsh, 2003), suggesting not only concerns for its being ‘light entertainment’ but also for its sophistication and status as a literary form.

Yet such fictions reflect an evolution in the genre, drawing connections with marginal genres such as fantasy and post-apocalyptic fiction, horror and romance, adding hybridity to the strict parameters of the dystopian form. Not only do YA dystopias continue to reflect on the traditional themes of ‘classic’ or ‘canonical’ dystopian literature, but they also mirror contemporary concerns for environmental decline (exemplified by texts such as *Ship Breaker* (Bacigalupi: 2009), *The Carbon Diaries* (Lloyd, 2008), *Exodus* (Bretagna, [2002] 2008), and *Wool* (Howey, 2013)); reproduction (as in *Matched* (Condie, 2010), *Bumped* (McCafferty, 2011), *Wither* (DeStephano, [2011] 2012) and *The Testament of Jessie Lamb* (Rogers, 2011)); and dystopian apocalypse (see for example, *The Forest of Hands and Teeth* (Ryan, 2009), *The Scorch Trials* (Dashner, [2010] 2011), *Divergent* (Roth, 2013) and *How I Live Now* (Rossof, 2005)). As the subgenre has developed, additional themes have been woven with traditional dystopian forms, expanding the boundaries of the genre itself. Baccolini and Moylan (2003: 7) argue that in ‘self-reflexively borrowing specific conventions from other genres, critical dystopias more often blur the received boundaries of the dystopian form and thereby expand its creative potential for critical expression’. Much the same can be said of the YA bracket, which has taken a predominantly fantasy-fiction turn within critical dystopian parameters.

Many texts, published in the last five years in particular, depict societies, which, as a result of dystopian events, have developed supernatural capabilities, or mutations that are harboured or oppressed by stereotypical dystopian hierarchies. The range and purpose of these powers is notably far-reaching and has various consequences affecting the logic of dystopian worlds. For example, in Ewing’s (2014) *The Jewel*, unique young women are sold as surrogates in a world suffering from infertility. To a point, the narrative is reflective of adult dystopias such as *The Handmaid’s Tale* (Atwood, 1996), which presents a very similar concept. Moving away from Atwood’s narrative, however, the surrogates in Ewing’s text have the ability to manipulate the shape, colour and growth of the world around them and subsequently the children they carry. In being able to enhance the physical and mental qualities of their progeny, the surrogates can influence height, hair, eye and skin colour as well as personality and intellect, perhaps refracting and exaggerating modern-day concerns for the ‘designer baby’. Alexandra Bracken’s (2013) *The Darkest Minds*, Tehereh Mafi’s (2011) *Shatter Me* and Veronica Rossi’s (2012) *Under the Never Sky* offer similar dystopian fantasy visions that revolve around the development of teleological posthuman evolution within a dystopian context.

There are many narratives included in YA dystopian fiction listings on reading forums such as *Goodreads* and *LibraryThing* that further challenge the traditional categorisations of dystopian literature. Victoria Aveyard’s (2015) *Red Queen* is a notable example. Although the text takes influence from dystopian themes such as oligarchic rule, class-based hierarchies and revolution against a state, neither the characters nor the world can be seen as a plausible refraction of contemporary society. These characters also boast supernatural powers and are separated based on blood-colour, suggesting a form of post- or non-human species. Although grounded in concrete dystopian ideals, such fictions do not present believable reflections of a modern reader’s potential future. Such works contradict the key premise of dystopian fiction of presenting a recognisable yet transformed imaginary world, and specifically blur the categorisations of critics such as Suvin (1979) who distinguish dystopian science fiction from fantasy and myth. This raises some interesting questions regarding the readerly experience of dystopian fiction, suggesting that perhaps modern-day readers hold a much broader definition of what constitutes a dystopian world.

The evolution of the YA dystopian genre therefore necessitates a broader conceptualisation of the parameters of the dystopian form more broadly, particularly in terms of the emotional engagement and experience of a particular audience. It begs the question – are such YA narratives dystopian at all, or simply presented from a dystopian perspective? In terms of the traditional parameters of the dystopian genre, arguably they are not. However, I would argue that the experience of ‘real’ readers must be taken into account alongside more prescriptive literary theoretical practice. As Stockwell (2000b) notes of science fiction, those who read more science fiction texts have a broader view of what constitutes a science fictional narrative – I argue much the same can be said of dystopia. Indeed, even within adult fictions, dystopian characteristics are being increasingly merged with outlining fantasy features, as with *The Passage* (Cronin, 2010)*, I am Legend* (Matheson, [1954] 2010), *The Girl with all the Gifts* (Carey, 2014) and *The Last of Us* (Naughty Dog, 2013), which merge dystopian tropes and settings with vampirism or zombie narratives in their representation of posthuman species and biological warfare. Such transformations are particularly popular within dystopian films and videogame discourses, which constitute yet another development in the dystopian tradition.

**2.4.2 Evolving Platforms: Videogame and Filmic Worlds**

As well as evolving in terms of plot content, the medium for dystopian narratives has also developed to accommodate the technological and media-centric outlook of the twenty-first century. Dystopian narratives have found their way into the mediums of film (for example, *AI. Artificial Intelligence* (Spielberg, 2001), *The Matrix* (Wachowski and Wachowski, 1999) and *Pacific Rim* (del Toro, 2013)); videogames (including, *Bioshock* (2K Boston, 2007), *Mad Max* (Avalanche Studios, 2015) and *Zero Escape: Virtues Last Reward* (Chunsoft, 2012)); ballet (see Northern Ballet’s *1984*, Watkins, 2015); music (see David Bowie’s (1974) album *Diamond Dogs*); and opera (see the English National Opera’s adaptation of *The Handmaid’s Tale*, Atwood, 2003). In his examination of the last of these adaptations, Mourby (2003: 16) asserts that ‘by the time an idea reaches the world of opera it’s [sic] pretty safe to say it has permeated all levels of human consciousness’ and in the current market, dystopian narratives are certainly ubiquitous by their nature.

The adaptation of dystopian fiction into filmic representations dates back to the mid-1960s, with movies such as *Logan’s Run* (Anderson, 1967), *Fahrenheit 451* (Truffaut, 1966), *Soylent Green* (Fleischer, 1973) and *Blade Runner* (Scott, 1982), all presenting versions of classic dystopian texts (*Logan’s Run* (Nolan and Clayton, [1967] 2015), *Fahrenheit 451* (Bradbury, 1999), *Make Room! Make Room!* (Harrison, [1966] 2009) and *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (Dick, [1968] 2002), respectively). Such adaptations have continued to flourish in recent years, with adaptations of *Children of Men* (Cuarón, 2006), *V for Vendetta* (McTeigue, 2006), *I, Robot* (Proyas, 2004), *Ender’s Game* (Hood, 2013), *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014) and *The Girl with all the Gifts* (McCarthy, 2016) hitting the Hollywood screen. As argued by Mourby (2003: 17), ‘movies have made the dystopic sexy’ and are highly popular and lucrative in the current climate.

As argued by Aldred and Greenspan (2011: 480), the dystopian turn is also evident within gamespace with newer titles in particular ‘foregrounding their dystopic storyworlds as a major selling feature’. Videogames present both popular and profitable platforms for dystopian narratives with productions such as *Half-Life 2* (Valve Corporation, 2004), *Deus Ex* (Ion Storm, 2000), *Fallout 4* (Betheseda Game Studios, 2015), *Mad Max* (Avalanche Studios, 2015) and *BioShock* (2K Boston, 2007) developing key dystopian themes of human oppression, biological warfare, nuclear war, objectivism and post-apocalyptic decline, respectively (see Williams, 2003: 523). As argued by Schulzke (2014: 331), these themes are dynamically illustrated in the ‘enormous’ worlds of dystopian videogames that ‘show dystopias as dynamic places that change over time, and they often force players to become participants in the causal processes responsible for producing dystopia’. Such worlds are highly interactive, often offer world-views from a first-person, behind-camera perspective, and encourage agency, freedom of movement and immersive, affective gaming experiences (see Schmeink, 2009; Tavinor, 2009: 100-102). The landscapes of modern dystopian videogames are widely navigable and player decisions frequently affect narrative events, which ‘in turn [heighten] games’ capacities for critical reflection of the institutions, ideologies, and values we experience in the real world’ (Schulzke, 2014: 326), an experience ‘only a self-reflexive interactive form can offer’ (Tulloch 2009: 4).

Videogame dystopias also present a certain degree of hybridity, drawing upon post-apocalyptic narratives in particular, as with *The Last of Us* (Naughty Dog, 2013) and *Mad Max* (Avalanche Studios, 2015), or unnatural narrative perspectives, as with *HK Project* (Koola and Viv, forthcoming), in which the player experiences dystopia in the guise of a cat. The immersive nature of the gaming experience in itself marks an evolving form of dystopian experience and the interactivity of the medium allows the player to feel a part of the causes and resolutions of in-game societal, environmental and ideological concerns. In the next section, I move on to look at another peripheral form, the dystopian short story, which, subordinate to the dystopian novel, has received minimal critical attention.

**2.5 The Dystopian Short Story**

In moving away from the analysis of full-length dystopian novels, this study extends the critical discussion of dystopian narratives to better include the short story. As argued by Stockwell (2000b: 139), ‘the short story can […] be regarded as the prototypical format for science fiction, and much of the best of the genre can be found in this form’. Indeed, short stories such as ‘The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas’ (Le Guin, [1973] 1989), ‘Flowers for Algernon’ (Keyes, 1959), ‘The Sound of Thunder’ (Bradbury, [1952] 2010), ‘Harrison Bergeron’ (Vonnegut, [1961] 1994a), ‘2BR02B’ (Vonnegut, [1962] 2000) and ‘The Lottery’ (Jackson, [1948] 2009), to name but a few examples, continue to rank highly amongst reviewers (as evidenced on reading forums such as *LibraryThing* and *Goodreads*) and frequently appear on ‘best short fiction’ lists (‘Twenty Great American Short Stories’, n.d; Varner, 2011). Several of these titles (‘The Lottery’, ‘Harrison Bergeron’, ‘2BR0RB’) are dystopian as well as science fictional short stories and are arguably some of the most well-known dystopian fictions, alongside narratives such as ‘Welcome to the Monkey House’ (Vonnegut, [1968] 1994b) and ‘The Minority Report’ (Dick, [1956] 2012). However, there are many contemporary dystopian short stories, which have been overlooked by literary critics, despite offering insightful and innovative additions to the broader dystopian genre.

In part this may be a result of the medium itself, which has not always been viewed favourably as a narrative form, with short stories being in Ballard’s (2001: iv) terms ‘the loose change in the treasury of fiction’. March-Russell (2009: 43) observes that this in part is due to the economic marginality of the form, which, in the United States at least, survives as a result of the periodical market through publications such as *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Esquire*, *Harper’s*, *The Kenyon Review* and *The New Yorker*. As March-Russell (2009: 43) continues, the role of the short story in English literature further ‘offers an acute illustration of the form’s cultural and economic marginality’ with primary critical focus being given to the development of the novel. Drawing upon statistical analysis of the British short story gathered by Book Marketing Limited and Jenny Brown Associates, March-Russell (2009: 49-52) further observes that short story writers are ‘likely to receive smaller advances, less publicity and less high street distribution’ than authors of longer fiction, with many best-selling short collections in themselves being offshoots from established novelists. Despite the efforts of initiatives such as the Save Our Short Story campaign, the Small Wonder short story festival and the establishment of the National Short Story Prize in 2005, the short story remains a neglected form in the UK and a marginal one, at best, in the USA (see March-Russell, 2009: 49-52).

Isabelle Allende (1996: 23) goes one step further to reflect negatively, not only upon the medium’s cultural significance, but also upon the effectiveness of the short story as narrative, posing the question: ‘have you ever noticed how few short stories are really memorable?’. In discussing characterisation in the short story, in particular, Allende identifies the precision required to ‘bring [characters] to life’ as ‘in short stories there is no time to develop characters’ (Allende, 1996: 25) in the way expected of the novel. She argues that the ability to do this over a short time, as well as project memorable, affective narratives is a difficult and skilled process. Wharton (1997: 37) supports Allende’s assertion, arguing that although character ‘may be set forth in a few strokes […] the progression, the unfolding of personality…this slow but continuous growth requires space, and therefore belongs by definition to a larger, a symphonic plan’. To an extent March-Russell (2009: 121) also analyses this apparent limitation, noting that ‘without the presence of chronological time, the heroes of short stories cannot age and develop in relation to historical change but are suspended at a single point in their lives’. There is some truth to these claims with many short stories focusing more on the dramatisation of a singular, specific event (as with the stoning of Mrs Hutchinson in ‘The Lottery’ (Jackson, [1948] 2009)) rather than overt character development. However, I would argue this is a narrative choice rather than a characteristic of the short story proper. March-Russell’s claim that the short story tends to zone-in on a particular moment in the life of a protagonist is perhaps more widely applicable, although again not without exception (see for example, Coover’s (2011) ‘Going for a Beer’, which maps the protagonist’s life from middle-age to death in the space of one thousand words).

The four short stories I analyse in this thesis, namely ‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’, ‘Pump Six’, ‘Is this your day to join the Revolution?’ and ‘Dead Fish’, abide by March-Russell’s (2009) definition, illustrating a particular moment or event in the lives of their respective protagonists: ‘The Semplica Girls Diaries’, which is the longest of the four narratives, depicts the actions of an unnamed epistolary narrator across the span of one month during an unspecified year; ‘Pump Six’ presents the events of two days in the life of Travis Alverez, a sewage worker in a twenty-second century New York; ‘Is this your day to join the Revolution?’ focuses on a particular interaction between Liz and the revolutionary John Doe, narrated across the space of two days; and ‘Dead Fish’, the shortest of the narratives, depicts several snap-shots of future life in parallel with a single crime chase. However, despite their short temporal focuses, each of the texts offers unique visions of possible future worlds that are presented from the perspective of richly characterised narrators and protagonists, standing as clear challenges to the opinions of Allende (1996) and Wharton (1997).

It is these richly characterised focal enactors that partially determines my choice of texts as, given my intention to examine the relationship between dystopian character construal and dystopian reading, it is important to examine as broad a range of narrator types and character perspectives as the boundaries of this thesis allows. For this reason, I have purposefully selected texts that present interesting narrative points of view, which are additionally contrastive in some way to each other. ‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’, for instance, is told from the point of view of an epistolary narrator, whereas ‘Pump Six’ is narrated from a prototypical first-person perspective. ‘Is this your day to join the Revolution?’ takes on heterodiegetic, third-person narration with clear character focalisation and ‘Dead Fish’ is presented from an unnatural first-person perspective. Each of these texts therefore offers a unique perspective of a dystopian world and can therefore reasonably be expected to evoke differing reader responses, towards both the characters and/or narrators of the texts and the possible futures they depict.

Each of the worlds presented within the texts offers a critical vision of a possible future refracted from present-day society post-2008. Published in the last ten years, each of the narratives reflect on prominent cultural, political and particularly environmental concerns, addressing contentious topics such as capitalism, immigration, pollution, climate change, nuclear and biological warfare, and the growing power of the media. They continue the didactic intent of dystopian fictions, discussed earlier in this chapter, and examine the key societal anxieties of the millennial world. In this respect, all four of the short stories are culturally relevant and cement the critical role of dystopian fiction in the twenty-first century despite the cynicism evoked by the popularity of cross-platform dystopian adaptations.

Each of the texts also pushes the boundaries of the dystopian form and highlights the contemporary evolution and cross-genre hybridity of twenty-first century dystopian fiction. Out of the four, ‘Is this your day?’ is arguably the most typical example of a ‘classic’ dystopian text given its thematic focus on dystopian politics and social oppression although the ambiguous nature of the storyworld is notably unique. Both ‘Pump Six’ and ‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’ draw links with science fiction texts in their depiction of the posthuman and technological advancement and ‘Dead Fish’ draws heavily upon fantasy or horror fiction in its characterisation. In the examination of each of these narratives (none of which have been at the centre of critical analysis before) I aim to build upon literary critical debate surrounding the development of the dystopian genre and provide a new contribution to the study of dystopian texts. My analyses therefore expand upon or initiate investigations into the work of each contemporary author, offering the first extended analysis of each chosen story, and enlivening literary critical discussions of what constitutes a dystopian text.

**2.6 Dystopia: Re-evaluating the Genre**

Throughout this chapter, I have mapped the development of the dystopian genre from the early twentieth century to the present day, accounting for the influences of utopianism and the genre’s roots in science fiction. I have made frequent reference to the evolution of the dystopian narrative across media platforms and the critical limitations of surrounding theoretical debate. In this section, I return to examine these theoretical inconsistencies in further detail and propose the need for a rigorous and systematic analysis of dystopian texts. I challenge the rigid periodic parameters instilled by traditional theory and highlight the particular disregard within literary criticism for the readerly experience of dystopian fiction.

Firstly, there is a problematic crossover in the categorisation of many fictional texts as utopian, critical utopian, anti-utopian, dystopian, and critical dystopian, dystopian apocalyptic, apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic fictions, all of which indicate the polysemous nature of the genre ‘dystopia’ itself. Indeed, the online ‘tagging’ of the term ‘dystopia’ on *LibraryThing*, for example, evidences 62,121 tags (as of October 2016), that are divided into even more idiosyncratic sub-genres than within traditional theory, such as ‘future dystopia’, ‘apocalyptic dystopia’, ‘feminist dystopia’, ‘YA dystopia’, ‘desirable dystopia’, ‘agricultural dystopia’ and even ‘Glasgow dystopia’ (see *LibraryThing*, 2016a: n.p.). Such individual categorisations offer an initial indication of how readers discuss and categorise the experience of dystopian reading beyond historical context, in terms of emotion (desirable dystopia), proximity (Glasgow dystopia) and audience (YA dystopia). These judgements, which are made publically available by websites such as *LibraryThing,* offer new insights into what ‘real’ readers consider as dystopian and the multifarious kinds of dystopian narratives they perceive to exist.

Within these categories, which are designed by members of the website, texts are ranked based on how many times they have been ‘shelved’ or ‘tagged’ under a particular heading. For example, the top five most often tagged dystopias on *LibraryThing* are: Orwell’s ([1949] 2013) *Nineteen Eighty-Four* – 2,952 tags; Huxley’s (1932) *Brave New World* – 2,179 tags; Collins’ (2008) *The Hunger Games* – 1,906 tags; Atwood’s (1966) *The Handmaid’s Tale* – 1,833 tags; and Bradbury’s ([1976] 2008) *Fahrenheit 451* – 1,680 tags. Each of these texts (for the readers who tagged them at least) exemplifies a good example of a dystopian narrative or in Rosch’s (1975, 1978) terms a ‘prototypical member’ of the ‘dystopia’ category (see also Lakoff, 1987: 12-58). These tags are therefore reflective of readers’ prototypicality judgements of dystopia, which in themselves are dependent upon social, cultural and idiosyncratic perceptions and beliefs (Rosch, 1975; see also Gavins, 2013: 10-15).

Categorisations on a broader scale are made in response to an individual’s perceptions of the commonality features of a particular item or concept and are ‘chained through the notion of radiality’ (Stockwell, 2002: 29). For example, to return to the tagging of *LibraryThing* readers, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Orwell, [1949] 2013) shares numerous thematic attributes with each of the remaining four top choices such as the presentation of totalitarian oligarchy, social oppression and sexually repressed citizens. Each of these central examples are then also chained to peripheral texts, such as Moore’s (2008) *V for Vendetta* – 362 tags, or Ryan’s (2009) *The Forest of Hands and Teeth* – 161 tags, which receive fewer mentions, suggesting that they are less good examples of dystopian narratives in the minds of readers. *V for Vendetta* (Moore, 2008), as a graphic novel, is perhaps a less good example because of its visual medium and *The Forest of Hands and Teeth* (Ryan, 2009) is perhaps more akin to post-apocalyptic or horror fictions – evidenced by its 450 reader tags under the ‘zombies’ category (*LibraryThing*, 2016b: n.p.).

The tagging practices of online readers, although indicative of a relatively small portion of ‘real’ readers, supports the observation of Gavins (2013: 14) that readers hold ‘individual notions’ of a particular genre, based on their individual understanding and experience of a specific literary ‘category’. In his development of a cognitive-psychological model of genre, Steen (2011) also builds upon Rosch’s (1975) theory of prototypes to posit a systematic and cognitive account of genre categorisation. Steen argues:

A particular genre event can be a central or marginal case for that category it exemplifies in that it can display better or worse characteristics of the genre it belongs to. Any historical novel, for instance, is (a) a novel but (b) less typical since it is not completely fictive. This perspective therefore allows for the inclusion of a particular genre event within the class of a genre as more or less typical, or even as a hybrid between two genres, without undermining the complete system. This is in fact how many language users operate with genres that are in a stage of transition or that have ended up on the border between two well-defined but mutually exclusive categories. (Steen, 2011: 30)

Steen’s argument here, particularly around the categorisation of hybrid or transitional texts, is significantly useful to my examination of the dystopian genre. It accounts for the terminological inconsistencies of traditional literary theory, highlighting that texts may exhibit features of more than one genre category. For example, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* can be perceived as (a) a dystopian narrative, given its presentation of a totalitarian future nightmare and its surrounding historical context and (b) an anti-utopia, because of its lack of utopian hope. Such a framework also accounts for the idiosyncratic responses of readers who distinguish genre categorisations based on individual conceptualisations, and ideological perceptions of what constitutes a dystopia. In taking a cognitive-poetic approach, I draw further on Steen’s (2011) model of genre, using it as a reference frame throughout my thesis as I offer a systematic and cognitive account of the experience of dystopian reading.

**2.7 Review**

In this chapter, I have introduced the genre of dystopian fiction, outlining its definitions and critical parameters from a literary-theoretical perspective. I have mapped the literary development of the dystopian narrative from the early twentieth-century writings of Orwell, Huxley and Zamyatin through to the millennial representations of contemporary authors, discussing contemporary dystopia in both literature and the broader arts. I have drawn connections between Suvin’s (1979) work on cognitive estrangement and the defamiliarising features of dystopian narrative, proposing that his framework can be aptly transferred to dystopian reading, and I have identified the key formal and contextual features associated with the genre as a whole. I discussed the focal medium for this thesis, the dystopian short story and briefly introduced the four short stories which take analytical focus in this study: George Saunders’ ([2012] 2014g) ‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’; Paolo Bacigalupi’s ([2008] 2010) ‘Pump Six’; Genevieve Valentine’s ([2009] 2012) ‘Is this your day to join the Revolution?’; and Adam Marek’s ([2009] 2012b) ‘Dead Fish’.

Although the literary theoretical history of dystopian writing is rich, I have argued that existing literary criticism surrounding the genre is often restrictive and contradictory. I have highlighted some of the limitations of dystopian theory, particularly in relation to the categorisation of dystopian narratives in terms of periodic context, which is significantly inconsistent across critical debate. I have argued that the readerly experience of dystopian fiction should therefore be taken into account as modern-day conceptions of what constitutes a dystopian text have greatly evolved since the genre’s inception in the late nineteenth century. In Chapter 3, I present the foundations for a cognitive poetics of dystopia, which I argue can account for not only the rich historical context of the genre but also the complete readerly experience of dystopian narratives.

Chapter 3: Towards a Cognitive Poetics of Dystopia

**3.0 Overview**

In this chapter I propose a cognitive-poetic approach to the dystopian short story. In 3.1 and 3.2 I introduce the disciplines of stylistics and cognitive poetics, which serve as the overarching theoretical frameworks for this study. In particular, I focus upon stylistic and cognitive approaches to fictional consciousness in 3.3, given the analytical focus I place on the construal of dystopian character throughout this thesis. I outline traditional stylistic approaches as a foundation first, with a review of Fowler’s ([1986] 1996) models of point of view and ‘mindstyle’, and Simpson’s (1993) ‘modal grammar of point of view’. I then move on to discuss Palmer’s (2004) work on fictional and social minds, and the cognitive approaches of Theory of Mind (Baron-Cohen et al., 1985; Premack and Woodruff’s, 1978) and ‘mind-modelling’ (Stockwell, 2009). Section 3.4 introduces the analytical framework for my analysis – Text World Theory (Gavins, 2007; Werth 1999). I map the critical development of Werth’s (1999) original model, marking its influences, its theoretical context, its formal structure, and the advances of contemporary practice. In particular, I discuss the recent applications of Text World Theory to analyses of fictional minds, readerly immersion and reading experience – all of which are central to my own analysis of dystopian reading.

**3.1 Stylistics**

Stylistics concerns itself with the study of ‘style’, a ‘perceived distinctive manner of expression’ in spoken and written discourse (Wales, 2011: 397). Originally proposed by Spitzer (1948), Wellek and Warren (1949), and Ullman (1964), stylistics developed throughout the 1960s, taking influence from European structuralism (see Barthes, (1967); Jakobson, [1960] 1987); Todorov, [1971] 1977)), Anglo-American literary criticism (Leavis, 1932; Richards, 1929), and the emerging field of linguistics (see for example Bloomfield, 1933; Chomsky, 1957; Halliday 1973, [1985] 2013; also Stockwell and Carter, 2008: 292-295 for a detailed history). Stylistics has been ‘supercharged’ since the 1990s as a result of an acceleration in research in these fields and the effects of the ‘cognitive turn’ in the arts and humanities (Stockwell and Whiteley, 2014: 2). In practice, modern stylistics should be replicable, rigorous and retrievable (Simpson, [2004] 2014: 4) and stands, in Stockwell and Whiteley’s (2014: 1) terms, as ‘the proper study of literature’.

Stylistics continues to develop new and evolving models for linguistic analysis as influenced by narratology, discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, psychology, philosophy, computer science and cognitive science. Advances in corpus stylistics (for example, Culpeper, 2009; Mahlberg, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2016; Mahlberg and McIntyre, 2011; Semino and Short, 2004; Stockwell and Mahlberg, 2015; Toolan, 2009; Walker, 2010), critical stylistics (Jeffries, 2010, 2014, 2016), empirical stylistics (Auracher and van Peer, 2008; Bortolussi and Dixon, 2003; Hakemulder and van Peer, 2016; van Peer et al., 2012), feminist stylistics (Mills, 1995, 1998; Montoro, 2014; Page, 2007; Walsh, 2016), pedagogical stylistics (Burke, 2010; Burke et al. 2012; Hall, 2005, 2014; Zyngier, 1994; Zyngier and Fialho, 2016) and cognitive stylistics (Emmott, 1997; Freeman, 2014; Gavins and Steen, 2003; Semino, 1997; Semino and Culpeper, 2002; Stockwell, 2002; West, 2016) exemplify several of the evolving theoretical approaches and research methods that come together under the broader stylistics umbrella to create an interrelated set of analytical frameworks for committed linguistic research (see also Wales, 2014).

In drawing from cognitive theoretical models in particular, cognitive stylistics, known more broadly now as cognitive poetics, emerged out of stylistics to offer new ways of analysing ‘readerly knowledge and experience, feelings and emotions, imagined worlds, metaphors, allegories, and the valuations of social significance and personal affect’ (Stockwell and Whiteley, 2014: 3). It is this branch of stylistics which forms the basis of my approach to dystopian reading.

**3.2 Cognitive Poetics and Dystopian Reading**

Cognitive poetics as a term was first used in the 1970s to define the pioneering work of Reuven Tsur, one of the first academics to bridge the gap between cognitive science and literary studies (see Gavins and Steen, 2003; Harrison and Stockwell, 2013; Stockwell, 2010a). Tsur’s approach (Tsur, 1987, 1992, 2002, 2003, 2006, 2008) draws upon cognitive psychology and neuroscience to examine the effects of literary works (see Stockwell, 2010a; Harrison and Stockwell, 2013; Whiteley, 2010 for broader overviews). Cognitive poetics, in the stylistic tradition, focuses on the experience of reading, both in terms of the ‘mental processes involved in reading’ and the poetic ‘craft of literature’ itself (Stockwell, 2002: 1). It is focused upon text and texture; texture being the felt experience of textuality by the reader (Stockwell, 2009). Textuality is used here in Stockwell’s (2009: 1) terms to define the ‘outcome of the workings of shared cognitive mechanics, evident in texts and readings’, such as the linguistic features and patterns inherent in a particular discourse. Moving beyond traditional stylistics, cognitive poetics examines ‘the interaction between readers and literary works, the definition of texture and its actual set of usages in the world’ (Stockwell, 2016a: 459; also Gavins and Stockwell, 2012; Stockwell 2009, 2010b).

Cognitive poetics draws heavily upon cognitive psychology as well as developments within cognitive science, cognitive linguistics, pragmatics and artificial intelligence (Wales, 2014) to develop progressive and systematic methods of textual analysis. Alongside such theoretical developments, which continue to improve cognitive poetics’ ‘toolkit’, there is also a strong empirical tradition within the discipline that seeks to verify and support introspective cognitive-poetic hypotheses (Stockwell, 2010a: 4). Such empirical approaches can be either qualitative, through the collection of reading group data, interviews or reading protocols, or quantitative, through eye-tracking or the measurement of other observable physical behaviour (Stockwell, 2010a: 4; also Steen, 1991). The combination of systematic linguistic analysis with natural or objective empirical data adds a further level of detail to the study of literary discourse. This argument will be developed further in Chapter 4, where I go on to outline several of these techniques in more detail and set up my own mixed-methods approach.

Cognitive poetics has to date been applied effectively to various areas of stylistic and narratological concern, including but in no way restricted to discussions of deixis (see Green, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2016; Fleischman, 1982; Semino, 1997, 2011a; Stockwell, 2000b) figure and ground (see Haber and Hershenson, 1980; Stockwell, 2002, 2003; Ungerer and Schmid, 1996), literary prototypes (for instance Gavins, 2013; Stockwell, 2009) and schemas (such as Semino, 2002) in addition to advancing the applications of cognitively informed models such as Cognitive Grammar (for example Harrison et al., 2014; Hamilton, 2003; Langacker, 2008, 2009), Text World Theory (see, Gavins, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2005a, 2005b, 2007, 2010, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2016a, 2016b; Giovanelli, 2013, 2016; Hidalgo-Downing, 2000b, 2000a; Lahey, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2014, 2016; Werth, 1994, 1995a, 1995b, 1997a, 1997b, 1999; Whiteley, 2010, 2011, 2014, 2016a, 2016b), Conceptual Metaphor Theory (for instance works by Browse, 2013, 2014; Crisp, 2003; Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Steen, 1999) and Conceptual Integration Theory (see, Dancygier, 2006; Fauconnier and Turner, 2008; Freeman, 2006; Semino, 2006; Turner, 2010).

The examination of fictional minds has been framed effectively by many of the above perspectives, evidenced for example by Semino’s (2006) research into blending and mind-style, Gavins’ (2013) analysis of absurdist minds from a Text-World-Theory perspective, Stockwell’s (2009) application of mind-modelling and Text World Theory to poetic analysis, and Nuttall’s (2015a) analysis of Cognitive Grammar and mind-style in speculative fiction. Through the examination of existing accounts of fictional minds from a cognitive-poetic perspective, this study will therefore build upon such research, taking up debates from stylistics, narratology and psychology to develop a holistic model of dystopian minds in the short story that can systematically account for both text and reader.

**3.3 Dystopian Minds**

There is a strong tradition of consciousness analysis within both traditional stylistics and cognitive poetics that work to address the representation of a character’s and/or narrator’s thoughts and perceptions within a fictional text, both as filtered through a heterodiegetic narrator and across homodiegetic narratives (see Genette, [1972] 1980). To date, much critical focus has been placed on the analysis of divergent or deviant consciousnesses, particularly on the attribution of non-normative minds. However, the presentation of consciousness is arguably crucial to the analysis of all literary texts, as the defining features of a particular world, including its inherent ideological or social structures, are commonly filtered through the perspective of a particular character or characters. In terms of dystopian texts, this is a particularly prevalent narrative feature, as dystopian narratives characteristically zone-in on the perceptions and actions of a specific character in relation to the dystopian structures that surround them (see Baccolini and Moylan, 2003; Moylan, 2000). Such characters are either positioned as internal character-narrators who recount aspects of their daily experience from a homodiegetic narrative perspective, or are the focalisers of heterodiegetic narratives. ‘Focaliser’ is used here in terms of Genette’s ([1972] 1980) work on perspective to determine the point of view through which events are relayed – what Rimmon-Kenan (1983) refers to as a narrative’s ‘angle of vision’.

A focaliser can be either a narrator or a particular character within the storyworld from whose perspective narrative events are filtered, as indicated by specific linguistic choices in the text that demarcate a particular world-view (see Short, 1996; Wales, 2011). Such narrative features will be discussed in further detail in the following section, in which I discuss two key approaches to ‘point of view’ within the stylistic tradition: Fowler’s ([1986] 1996) model, which distinguishes between four planes of point of view and Simpson’s (1993) modal grammar of point of view in fiction. It should be noted here that there are several alternative approaches to point of view such as those of Chatman (1978, 1986, 1990); Banfield (1982); Genette ([1972] 1980) and Halliday, (1970, 1971, [1985] 2013), which offer equally insightful frameworks for analysing perspective in literary discourse. However, a thorough review of each of these models is beyond the spatial limitations of this thesis. Fowler’s ([1986] 1996) approach to point of view and Simpson’s (1993) modal grammar, which in itself is developed from Fowler, actively inform my own analysis and therefore receive particular attention. Fowler’s ([1986] 1996) model of point of view will therefore serve as my starting point as I map the development of stylistic and cognitive approaches to fictional consciousness and their applicability and/or usefulness to my discussion of dystopian minds.

**3.3.1 Point of View in Fiction**

Point of view is a widely discussed phenomenon in fiction that defines ‘the relationship, expressed through discourse structure, between the implied author or some other addresser, and the fiction’ (Leech and Short, [1981] 2007: 218). It refers to the perspective through which events are filtered and marks the distinction between who speaks and who sees in narrative fiction. As argued by Simpson (1993: 5), ‘narrative point of view is arguably the very essence of a story’s style, what gives it its “feel” and “colour”’. Certainly this is evident within dystopian fictions in which the negativity and nightmarish texture of a particular world are often defined by the point of view of a particular focaliser.

Fowler ([1986] 1996) builds upon Uspensky (1973) to distinguish four planes of point of view that combine to project a particular narrative perspective, namely spatial and temporal point of view, ideological point of view and psychological point of view. Spatial point of view refers broadly to the ‘viewing position’ of a particular focal enactor and the spatial relationships between the focaliser and what is being perceived (see Fowler, [1986] 1996: 162-165). These relationships are predominantly determined by spatial deictic elements such as demonstratives (‘this’, ‘that’), and proximal (‘here’) or distal (‘there’) deixis, which indicate proximity to or remoteness from the deictic centre of the focaliser. The deictic centre is the ‘zero point reference’ or ‘origo’ of the narrator or a particular character from whose ‘here and now’ perspective events are presented (see Bühler, 1982, Green, 1995a). Temporal point of view is also indicated by deictic features (such deictic adverbs – ‘here’, ‘then’), which signal how time is presented in relation to, and by, a particular focaliser.

Ideological point of view concerns the ‘set of values, or belief system, communicated by the language of the text’ (Fowler, [1986] 1996: 165). Indications of such a perspective are embedded within specific linguistic choices, including the use of relational deixis, particular value-laden expressions, and manifestations of attitudes and beliefs. Forms of modal expression in particular are explicit indicators of ideological point of view and in Fowler’s ([1986] 1996: 167) categorisation include: modal auxiliaries (e.g. ‘may’, ‘might’), modal adverbs (e.g. ‘certainly’, ‘probably’), evaluative adjectives and adverbs (e.g. ‘luckily’, ‘regrettably’), verbs of knowledge, prediction and evaluation (e.g. ‘seem’, ‘believe’) and generic sentences, which express universal truths. Fowler ([1986] 1996: 168) also distinguishes less direct indications of ideological point of view (such as particular uses of deictic words or transitivity) that may characterise a particular character’s ideology in such a way that they are ‘*symptomatic* of world-view’ (emphasis in original).

Lastly, Fowler differentiates between different types of ‘psychological point of view’ which classify the ‘observer’ of events, whether that is the narrator of a text or a participating character. In line with earlier structuralist models, Fowler draws upon the categories of internal and external points of view to differentiate between perspectives that exist within and beyond the storyworld of a particular discourse. The first category, ‘Internal type A’ narration refers to a specific type of internal perspective, that is, a perspective from the point of view of a storyworld character. Such narratives are communicated in first-person and provide clear insight into the private consciousness of the perceiving character. These insights are exemplified by frequent uses of modality, evaluative expressions, generic sentences, and what Fowler terms *verba sentiendi*: lexical choices which are often emotionally coloured and denote the thoughts and feelings of the character-narrator. ‘Internal type B’ narration presents a contrasting form of internal narration that operates slightly differently. In this instance, the narrative is presented in third-person, by an omniscient narrator but maintains an internal character perspective. The narrator is able to access the thoughts and feelings of a particular storyworld character and as a result there are still instances of *verba sentiendi* and modal features although such expressions are not usually attributable to the narrator.

Fowler also distinguishes two forms of external narrative points of view, ‘External type C’ and ‘External type D’ narration. Type C defines a typically neutral perspective that is existent outside of the storyworld and is notably disconnected from the thoughts and perceptions of internal characters. Such narration is impersonal, characteristically objective and refrains from linguistic indications of character perspective including instances of *verba sentiendi*, evaluation or modality. The final type of point of view, Type D narration, is also representative of a perspective outside of the storyworld that, akin to Type C, presents no privileged access to the minds of internal characters. Unlike Type C, however, Type D does reflect on the character’s thoughts and actions within the story but does so from a remote perspective. The form is evaluative, interpretative and defamiliarising. It contains high levels of modality and what Uspensky (1973) originally termed ‘words of estrangement’, these being inclusive of speculative lexical choices such as ‘apparently’, ‘perhaps’ or ‘seemed’, metaphors and comparisons (see Fowler, [1986] 1996: 178). Such narrative features create the impression that the perceiver has no access to the true thoughts or feelings of a particular character whilst they hold active control over the telling of the narrative.

Drawing from Fowler ([1986] 1996), Simpson (1993) goes on to propose a modal grammar of point of view, which modifies these original categorisations to better incorporate interpersonal expressions of attitudes made using modality. Simpson’s initial distinction is between ‘Category A’ and ‘Category B’ narratives. Category A narratives are discernable as first-person fictions that are presented from the perspective of a participating character in the storyworld. Category B narratives, on the other hand, are presented from third-person narrative perspectives that are communicated by ‘invisible, “disembodied”, nonparticipating’ narrators (Simpson, 1993: 55). In situations in which the ‘voice’ of the narrative is attributable only to the narrator and the point of view is discernable as external to any storyworld character the narrative can be classified as ‘Category B in Narratorial mode’. If the third-person narrator moves into the mind of particular character, giving access to a character’s thoughts and feelings, the narration can be defined as ‘Category B in Reflector mode’. In such cases it is the character not the narrator who is the ‘Reflector’ of the fiction (Simpson, 1993: 55).

Simpson’s model then goes one step further to posit a series of subcategories that distinguish between ‘positive’, ‘negative’ and ‘neutral’ modalities. According to Simpson (1993: 47) modality‘refers broadly to a speaker’s attitude towards, or opinion about, the truth of a proposition expressed by a sentence. It also extends to their attitude towards the situation or event described by a sentence’. Simpson distinguishes between four modal systems of English: ‘boulomaic modality’, ‘deontic modality’, ‘epistemic modality’ and ‘perception modality’ which in turn inform his categorisation of nine point-of-view polarities (Simpson, 1993: 55).

The first of these polarities, ‘Category A positive (A + ve)’, holds several similarities with Fowler’s Internal Type A narration such as the presence of *verba sentiendi*, generic sentences and evaluative expressions. Simpson furthers this description to include the prevalence of ‘deontic’ and ‘boulomaic’ modality, that is, expressions of obligation and desire, respectively. The foregrounding of such modal systems result in what Simpson terms ‘positive shading’, hence the positive categorisation of the form. There is also an absence of ‘words of estrangement’ and epistemic and/or perception modality, that is, expressions of certainty or opinion. In contrast, negative ‘Category A narration (A – ve)’ foregrounds epistemic and perception modal systems resulting in ‘negative shading’. A-ve narratives also contain instances of comparative perceptual expressions (e.g. ‘it seemed to be…’) and words of estrangement. The final Category A type, ‘Category A neutral’, defines those first-person narratives that are devoid of modal commitments – ‘rather than presenting qualified opinions and judgements on events and other characters, the narrator withholds subjective evaluations and tells the story through categorical assertions alone’ (Simpson, 1993: 60). Given their complete lack of emotional involvement such texts are notably rare.

Category B narrations, follow similar positive, negative and neutral typologies but are further divisible dependant on whether the point of view presented is filtered through the consciousness of an internal character. Category B narratives can occur in Narratorial or Reflector mode depending on the position of the mediating consciousness. The first of these categories, ‘B (N) + ve’ narration, indicates a third-person point of view that is external to the storyworld. It is presented through a non-participating consciousness and has prominent boulomaic and deontic modality features. ‘B (N) – ve’ narratives are typified by their ‘lack of detail concerning the thoughts of characters’ (Simpson, 1993: 65), the foregrounding of epistemic and perception modality and the frequent use of words of estrangement. Such narratives are again presented from the perspective of an external third-person narrator and often evoke feelings of bewilderment or estrangement in the reader. The final narratorial form, B (N) neutral is similar to A neutral in its presentation of an impersonal, objective and external narrative perspective, differing only as a result of the third-person form. Each of the B (R) categories primarily mirror B (N) narrative patterns yet are distinguishable by the mediation of point of view through the consciousness of a ‘Reflector’, that being a character internal to the storyworld. It should be noted, at this point, that such categories are not always applicable to a whole text and the specific presentation of point of view is not fixed within any given narrative.

The additional level of detail provided by Simpson’s model will prove particularly useful to my discussion of dystopian minds and will be taken up throughout my analyses as opposed to Fowler’s ([1986] 1996) initial categorisations. However, before I move on to look at cognitive approaches to fictional consciousness, it is interesting to note Fowler’s (1977; [1986] 1996) recategorisation of point of view on the plane of ideology as ‘mindstyle’ – a concept which has been the subject of much subsequent research in stylistics. In the next section, I offer a brief review of Fowler’s ([1986] 1996) conception of mind-style and its usefulness to discussions of fictional minds.

**3.3.2 Mind-Style**

Fowler originally coined the term ‘mind-style’ in the late 1970s (1977: 103) ‘to refer to any distinctive linguistic presentation of an individual mental self’. Such linguistic phenomena, he argues, build a distinctive representation of a particular character or narrator’s world-view, characterised by specific adoptions of vocabulary, including idioms and metaphor, patterns in grammatical or syntactic constructions and the use of peculiar orthography, typography and illustration, common in postmodern and multimodal texts. Fowler maps out the parameters of such a world-view in the following way:

a mind-style may analyse a character’s mental life more or less radically; may be concerned with relatively superficial or relatively fundamental aspects of the mind, may seek to dramatize the order and structure of conscious thoughts, or just present the topics on which a character reflects, or display preoccupations, prejudices, perspectives and values which strongly bias a character’s world-view but of which s/he may be quite unaware. (Fowler, 1977: 103)

The above definition is notably broad and encompasses a range of features that determine a particular ‘mind-style’ such as representations of a character’s values and beliefs. Fowler also determines mind-style as contingent upon the formal order and structures of conscious thoughts which he later goes on to argue convey the ‘implicit structure and quality’ of a particular ‘outlook on the world’ (Fowler, 1977: 104).

Tied up in Fowler’s categorisation is his earlier conception of ideological point of view – mindstyle itself being ‘constituted by the ideational structure of the text’ (Fowler, [1986] 1996: 214). Indeed, in *Linguistic Criticism*, Fowler ([1986] 1996: 214) states a preference for the term ‘mindstyle’ over ‘point of view on the ideological plane’, which he refers to as ‘cumbersome’, proposing a sense of synonymy between the two types of point of view. The amalgamation of ideological point of view and mindstyle in this way, however, poses a certain lack of precision in the distinction of characteristic features that form a particular world-view. As observed by Semino (2002: 96), Fowler’s definition in itself presents a slightly different slant dependant upon his analytical focus, shifting between the distinction of a particular ‘mental self’ (Fowler, 1977: 103) and the ‘set of values, or belief system, communicated by the language of the text’ (Fowler, [1986] 1996: 165).

Semino (2002: 97) proposes a useful distinction between what she generalises as ‘world-view’, that is, the ‘the overall view of “reality” […] conveyed by the language of a text’; ‘ideological point of view’, which she reserves for aspects of a given world-view that are ‘social, cultural, religious or political in origin’ and ‘mind-style’ which refers to aspects that are ‘personal or cognitive in origin, and are peculiar to a particular individual, or common to people who have the same cognitive characteristics’ (see also Semino and Swindlehurst, 1996). Despite offering a more precise definition than Fowler, Semino’s categorisations are notably difficult to apply and can be ‘easily misinterpreted as an attempt to impose artificial boundaries between what is “cognitive” and what is “ideological” in world-views’ (Semino, 2007: 169; see also McIntyre, 2016; Nuttall, 2013, 2014, 2015a, forthcoming; Weber, 2004 for discussion).

Despite such terminological debate, discussions of mind-style have produced insightful analysis into the workings of character consciousness, particularly in relation to characters with unusual or non-normative mind-styles such as Benjy in William Faulkner’s ([1929] 1995) *The Sound and the Fury* (see Bockting, 1994 for analysis) or Lok in William Golding’s ([1955] 2011) *The Inheritors* (see Black, 1993; Fowler, [1986] 1996). More recently, the attribution of minds to distinct fictional characters has been extended to encompass the literary representation of autistic or mentally ill characters such as Christopher in Haddon’s (2003) *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time* (see for analysis, Semino, 2011a, 2014) or Henry in Cockburn’s (2012) *Henry’s Demons* (as analysed by Demjen and Semino, 2014), in addition to child minds (for example, Semino, 2014), senile minds (Lugea, 2016), and non-human minds (see Nuttall, 2015b).

In Margolin’s (2003: 287) terms such studies reflect ‘a preference of much literature for nonstandard forms of cognitive functioning, be they rare or marginal, deviant, or involving a failure, breakdown, or lack of standard patterns’ and a consequent preference amongst literary critics for addressing such literature. Such a view is exaggerated however, and I would contend that most literature does not display such a preference. It is more likely that analysts are more interested in those texts which present atypical cognitive functioning given the challenges they pose to traditional typologies of fictional consciousness and indeed to the readerly experience of conceptualising character minds. Leech and Short ([1981] 2007: 151) for example, propose a cline ‘from mind styles which can easily strike a reader as natural and uncontrived […] to those which clearly impose an unorthodox conception of the fictional world’ acknowledging that the study of normative mind-styles can pose equally relevant insights into the study of fictional mind and indeed are of like interest to the analyst. This study will investigate mind-styles that can be positioned at either end of Leech and Short’s proposed spectrum so as to offer a thorough account of minds in dystopia.

**3.3.3 Fictional and Social Minds**

On introducing his book *Fictional Minds* in 2004, Palmer (2004: 2) asks the following question: ‘Why don’t other people ask themselves what aspect of literary theory could be more important than fictional minds?’. This is a provocative question to pose, as in highlighting the importance of his own research topic, Palmer (2004) arguably undermines invaluable existing research on alternative subjects. However, his question does raise the need for further discussion of fictional minds not only as a stylistic feature but also as a field of interest in its own right. Palmer (2004) argues that earlier critical accounts certainly contend with representations of fictional consciousness, but are primarily concerned with the categorisation of narrative techniques, such as ‘represented speech and thought’ (Banfield, 1982; Fludernik, 2001; McHale, 1983; Voloshinov, 1973), ‘interior monologue’ (see for example Cohn, 1966, 1978) ‘the dual voice’ (Pascal, 1977) and ‘free indirect discourse’ (Aczel, 1998; Bray, 2003, 2007a, 2007b, 2010; Fludernik, 1993; Leech and Short, [1981] 2007; Pascal, 1977; Sotirova, 2010, 2013). Palmer’s model, in keeping with contemporary thinking and following the cognitive turn, proposes an overarching approach to the study of fictional mind as an embodied and unified whole that takes in to account the whole of minds in action.

Palmer argues that ‘minds are minds, whether real or fiction’ (Stockwell, 2011b: 290) and that narrative is ‘in essence, the presentation of fictional mental functioning’ (Palmer, 2004: 5). Palmer (2004) outlines the necessity for consciousness studies to consider the whole minds of characters, including dispositions and states of mind. Palmer’s primary aim in his discussion of literary minds is therefore to move the analysis of fictional consciousness beyond the scope of what he terms ‘the speech category approach’ (Palmer, 2004: 1; 2002). He argues that although such approaches have a valuable role in the study of fictional minds they are not adequate on their own to address the literary representation of the mind as a whole. Instead Palmer (2003: 324) proposes a ‘functional and teleological perspective which considers the purposive nature of characters’ thought in terms of their motives, intentions, and resulting behaviour and action’. The discussion of mental functioning within the novel on both a personal and collective level therefore offers a more complete examination of fictional consciousness in that it highlights multiple aspects of a character’s mind, including their goals, memories, expectations of future events, emotions and dispositions, which have been neglected in past studies. For Palmer, this includes the examination of the social, external aspects of fictional minds, under the heading of ‘social minds’ (Palmer, 2005, 2009, 2010, 2011a, 2011b).

Following the work of cognitive psychologists and anthropologists such as Geertz (1993), who outline the social nature of real thought, Palmer argues that similar significance should be attributed to the social, external and collective nature of minds in fiction. For Geertz (1993: 360), ‘thought is consummately social: social in its origins, social in its functions, social in its forms, social in its applications’ and in Palmer’s argument this is also true of representations of characters’ thoughts in narrative texts. As such, he draws attention to ‘intermental’ thought – thought which is ‘joint, group, shared, or collective’ – as opposed to ‘intramental, or individual or private thought’ (Palmer, 2010: 41). In doing so he maps out several types of ‘intermental unit’ which he claims are ‘often so integral to the plot of the novel that it would not be possible for a reader to follow that plot without an understanding of them’ (Palmer, 2010: 35).

Intermental units vary in size and connectedness from base ‘intermental encounters’; which reflect the shared relationship between at least two participants that is necessary to form an effective discourse, up to ‘small’ ‘medium’ and ‘large intermental units’; representative of villages or societies that ideologically think in a similar way (Palmer, 2010). The largest construction of social minds in fiction are defined as being ‘intermental minds’ which are representative of ‘intermental units, large, medium, or small, that are so well defined and long-lasting, and where so much successful intermental thought takes place that they can plausibly be considered as group minds’ (Palmer, 2010: 48). According to Palmer (2011a: 213) ‘a large amount of the subject matter of novels is the formation, development, maintenance, modification and breakdown of these intermental systems’ and, as such, they arguably impact upon a reader’s processes of world construction. It is the presence of these ‘intermental minds’ which I believe are so important to the construction of fictional consciousness within dystopian fiction, particularly within texts that are defined by social hierarchy or some form of imposed social/political system such as the society of the ‘World State’ in Aldous Huxley’s (1932) *Brave New World*.

Palmer’s work on social minds has proven particularly contentious amongst researchers within cognitive linguistics (see Bancroft and Rabinowitz, 2011; Bortolussi, 2011; Carrol, 2011; Easterlin, 2011; Fernyhough, 2011; Herman, 2011; Knapp, 2011; Oatley, 2011; Phelan, 2011; Page, 2011; Porter, 2011; Porter Abbott, 2011; Rimmon-Kenan, 2011), who draw attention to concerns such as the ‘fuzziness in the boundaries’ between intermental units (Semino, 2011b: 299) and to the location of the social mind, in terms of embodied cognition. For instance, Stockwell observes:

Palmer insists persuasively that social minds exist, and can be presented with characteristic patterns of their mind-style. If this is so, then the social mind must also be embodied, like all minds are. But what exactly is the body in which a social mind is embodied? I can anticipate an answer that draws metaphorically on social bodies and civic bodies, or the body politic, but the point about the cognitive linguistic body is that it is a real, literal body, with personal experience and motivations. (Stockwell, 2011b: 290-291)

Similarly, Colm Hogan (2011: 244) also poses such a challenge, arguing that ‘if we follow the standard neuro-cognitive view that the mind is a function of the brain, then there has to be a brain for there to be a thought’. Palmer’s rejoinder to such critiques, I find unsatisfactory. Palmer (2011b: 396) argues that minds are ‘situated’ – that is, ‘individual minds are situated by being embodied and social minds are situated by being distributed’. Palmer uses the term ‘distributed’, here, to refer to the shared presence of a social mind amongst the individual, embodied minds of which it is a part. Such an interpretation arguably undermines the notion of a social mind as a ‘unit’ suggesting instead features of a shared or collective point of view through which a particular perspective is mediated. This in itself poses interesting questions about social cognition and point of view, which I investigate further in Chapter 5.

The next section sets out the final models of character consciousness that inform the analyses in this thesis, namely Theory of Mind (Baron-Cohen et al., 1985; Premack and Woodruff’s, 1978) and ‘mind-modelling’ (see Stockwell, 2009). I briefly mark out the theoretical parameters of each of these approaches and outline the preference within much cognitive poetic research for the application and development of ‘mind-modelling’ in particular.

**3.3.4 Theory of Mind and Mind-modelling**

The principle of ‘Theory of Mind’ was developed within the field of psychology following Premack and Woodruff’s (1978) article ‘Does the Chimpanzee have a Theory of Mind?’ and Baron-Cohen et al.’s (1985) ‘Does the Autistic Child have a Theory of Mind?’ (see Belmonte, 2008: 192 for discussion) to describe processes of social cognition that evidence the attribution of minds and mental states to others. The theory has since been adapted to address not only the attribution of real minds but of fictional minds in the study of literary texts. Zunshine (2006: 20), for example, argues that ‘our Theory of Mind allows us to make sense of fictional characters by investing them with an inexhaustible repertoire of states of mind’ and in doing so we utilise our ability to understand minds in the real world to read fictional ones (see also, Zunshine, 2011). In particular, much of the research combining Theory of Mind with literary analyses, such as Semino’s (2014) analysis of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time* (Haddon, 2003), has concentrated upon representations of autistic minds in fiction following Baron-Cohen et al.’s (1985) combined work on what Baron-Cohen (1995) terms ‘mindblindness’. The use of Theory of Mind within literary studies has since been applied on a much wider scale to nineteenth century and Modernist texts to further the discussion of consciousness and mind in the novel (see applications by Palmer, 2004; Vermule, 2010; Zunshine, 2003, 2006).

Such literary applications however have proven controversial amongst literary critics, cognitive scientists and cognitive psychologists alike due to the differences in use of terminology and what Theory of Mind is used to describe. The argument surrounding the theory is most fully addressed in an essay by Belmonte (2008) entitled ‘Does the Experimental Scientist have a Theory of Mind?’ in which he outlines the differences in linguistic and psychological applications as such:

For the psychologist, ToM has been a vehicle for understanding evolutionary differences between human and non-human social cognition, clinical differences between normal human cognition and abnormal states such as autism or schizophrenia, and developmental differences between different stages of cognitive maturation. For the literary critic, ToM has been a vehicle for understanding the relations between characters in a text and readers, and between narrator and reader. (Belmonte, 2008: 192)

The use of the term itself therefore poses some problems, being driven in multiple directions depending on its psychological or literary use. Critics such as Stockwell (2009) argue that the use of Theory of Mind within cognitive poetics is therefore problematic and, alongside Belmonte, calls instead for a discussion of ‘mind-modelling’ (see Stockwell, 2009: 140-141). For Stockwell (2009: 140), the potential problem with using the term Theory of Mind within cognitive poetics is that ‘“Theory of Mind” is not a “theory” about minds but is a descriptive term aimed at accounting for human psychological distinctiveness’. Mind-modelling therefore presents a more suitable term for discussing fictional minds, and the readerly projection of character, for as Stockwell (2009: 140) continues ‘accounting for mind-modelling by readers and characters preserves the literary critical need for a systematic account of knowledge, beliefs and feelings of fictional entities’ yet ‘does not bring with it the contentious baggage of ToM debates’.

The notion of mind-modelling allows the analyst to account for the attribution of minds to literary characters, both those with distinctive mind-styles and otherwise, taking into account the ‘beliefs, desires and emotions of that textual entity, often over the course of an entire text’ (Gavins, 2013: 69). The modelling of character minds in this way recognises an individual process of characterisation that is dependent upon mental representation in the mind of the reader. According to Gavins (2007), the mental representations with which we understand minds in the real world ‘are based not just on the language we use, but on our wider surroundings, our personal knowledge and our previous experiences’ (Gavins, 2007: 6). Following Palmer’s (2004) assertions that we process fictional minds as real minds, the readerly representation of character must be based upon similar cognitive and pragmatic notions of individual experience. For this reason the case studies presented here will take a Text World Theory perspective (Werth 1999); Text World Theory in itself being a cognitive discourse model capable of accounting for the human experience of language processing.

**3.4. Text World Theory: Introducing the Model**

Text World Theory was originally introduced through a series of papers by Werth (1994, 1995a, 1995b 1999) throughout the late 1980s and 1990s, and an extended monograph edited and published posthumously in 1999. Across these publications Werth outlined a cognitive model for discourse processing that claimed to account systematically for the semantic, syntactic, experiential and contextual aspects of all language events so as to ‘[unify] text and context under one analytical apparatus’ (Gavins, 2013: 7). In setting up a discourse-as-world metaphor (see, Lakoff and Johnson, 1980) Werth proposed that all discourse could be conceptualised as comprising several, ontologically distinct world levels, termed the ‘discourse-world’, ‘text-worlds’ and ‘sub-worlds’. Moving away from the generativist linguistic tradition, which placed analytical focus on language in terms of decontextualised sentences rather than as naturally occurring discursive phenomena, Werth claimed that the division of discourse into such worlds would allow for the examination of the entire discourse event. In highlighting the ‘objectivist stance’ (Lahey, 2014: 285) of the generativist linguistic tradition, particularly ‘its attendant neglect of the subjective and experiential aspects of language use’ (Lahey, 2014: 285; Werth 1999: 20), Werth aimed to draw an indissoluble link between semantics, pragmatics and cognitive experience. He argued that ‘uses of language presuppose occurrence in a context of situation, and that on top of this they also presuppose the existence of a conceptual domain of understanding, jointly construed by the producer and recipient(s)’ (Werth, 1999: 17).

Text World Theory builds upon several alternate accounts of mental representation from within cognitive psychology, and cognitive linguistics that conceive of discourse processing as being dependant upon the conceptualisation of ‘mental models’ (see Johnson-Laird, 1983, 1988), ‘schema’ (Schank and Abelson, 1977) ‘frames’ (see Fillmore, 1982, 1985), ‘idealised cognitive models’ (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, 1999) or ‘mental spaces’ (see Fauconnier, [1985] 1994, 1997; Fauconnier and Sweetser, 1996). Each of these approaches concerns the way in which discourse and broader perceptions of the world are conceptualised in the mind of a discourse participant, with each model defining a particular type of mental representation. ‘Mental models’ for example, concern the representation of ‘objects, states of affairs, sequences of events, the way the world is, and the social and psychological actions of daily life’ (Johnson-Laird, 1983: 397) that underpin our understanding of the human experience. Similarly, ‘mental spaces’ are used to define the ‘domains that we set up as we talk or listen […] that we structure with elements, roles, strategies and relations’ (Fauconnier, [1985] 1994: 1) and ‘schema’ encompass our individual conceptual knowledge that we use to understand and perceive the world (Wales, 2011). As argued by Lahey (2014: 287), although each of the above models has been applied effectively to discussions of discourse-processing, in combining the central tenants and insights of each, Text World Theory has greater ‘explanatory power for the discourse stylistician’ allowing on the whole for the examination of much richer and textured mental representations.

Text World Theory is one of several world models that have developed within stylistics, cognitive linguistics, and philosophy such as those of ‘narrative worlds’ (Gerrig, 1993), ‘storyworlds’ (Herman, 2002) and ‘possible world theories’ (see work by Bell, 2007, 2010, 2016; Bradley and Swartz, 1979; Doležel, 1998; Pavel, 1975, 1986; Ryan, 1991, 1998; Semino, 2003). Possible Worlds Theory, in particular, was notably influential to the formation of Werth’s own model. Developed from the work of Leibniz ([1710] 2009) during the seventeenth century, the concept of possible worlds and the development of possible worlds theories of modal logic act to ascertain the truth value of particular statements and propositions (see Kripke, 1963, 1972; Lewis, 1973, 1983a, 1983b, 1986 and Rescher, 1975, 1979). Lahey (2014: 286) observes that from a linguistics perspective, possible worlds theories ‘have served as a corrective to certain limitations with truth-conditional models of semantics, such as that proposed by Davidson (1984)’ by allowing for the conceptualisation of ‘unactualised possible world[s]’ that present alternative states of affairs (see also, Bell, 2010: 20; Lewis, 1986: 1-3). Although Werth acknowledges that his conception of text-worlds indirectly refers to the theory of possible worlds, both in the use of the term ‘world’ and in his discussion of world components (see Lewis, 1972, 1973), he observes several limitations with the possible worlds model itself. Werth (1999: 70) argues that possible worlds are ‘both over-specific and underspecified. They are over-specific because they are “tailormade” to a single proposition; they are under-specified because as worlds go, they are minimalistic containing none of the complexity of anything speakers would recognise as a world’. In comparison, text-worlds, represent rich, textured worlds that take into account ‘all the possible textual and contextual variables which impinge upon […] construction’ (Lahey, 2014: 286) rather than accounting for the bare minimum necessary to conceive of a particular statement. In the next section I move on to examine the constituent parts that form these rich text-worlds and review the use of Text World Theory in contemporary practice.

**3.4.1 Text World Theory: Structure and Practice**

Werth posits that language events occur within a specific and situated context, which he terms the ‘discourse-world’ (Werth 1999: 17). The discourse-world is a pragmatic space, representative of the immediate temporal and spatial situation surrounding a discourse, which involves at least two discourse participants. It includes any elements mutually perceivable in the physical environment of these participants plus each participant’s linguistic, experiential, cultural, linguistic and perceptual knowledge (see Gavins, 2007: 21-24). Participants draw upon these knowledge stores during a particular discourse to comprehend and enrich their experience of language. This process, in Text-World-Theory terms is determined by ‘the principle of text-driveness’ which specifies that it is the text that indicates which aspects of a participant’s knowledge are needed to process a particular discourse (Werth 1999: 149-153). Gavins (2016: 446) argues that ‘for this reason, Text World Theory views discourse as a dynamic process of negotiation between the discourse participants, located in a material and pragmatic context that is highly culturally determined’.

Participants engaging in a given discourse create mental representations that are mutually constructed from experiential factors in addition to specific linguistic cues. Werth terms these mental representations text-worlds. Text-worlds are textured ‘deictic space[s] defined initially by the discourse itself’ (Werth, 1999: 20) and populated with detailed ‘world-building elements’ (Werth, 1999: 180-90). World-builders encompass the perceptual and spatial elements that situate a particular text-world, indicated by deictic markers such as spatial adverbs (‘here’, ‘there’) and locatives (‘Oceania’, ‘The One State’), as well as objects and characters (see Gavins, 2007: 36-37 for further discussion). Alongside world-building elements, text-worlds also encode a series of action processes categorised in Text-Word-Theory terms as ‘function-advancing propositions’ (Gavins, 2007: 53-72; Werth, 1999: 57). Function-advancers act to propel a discourse forward and ‘encode entity action and processes’, indicated by material, mental, behavioural and verbalisation processes, or ‘entity attributes, relationships and descriptions’ (Lahey, 2003: 75), exemplified by relational and existential processes (see Halliday, [1985] 2013 for discussion of transitivity). Function-advancing propositions can therefore pertain to various aspects of world development, being ‘plot advancing’, ‘scene advancing’, ‘person advancing’, ‘argument advancing’ and so on (see Gavins, 2003: 131; Werth, 1999: 191).

Once a text-world is constructed, developments within the discourse may trigger shifts in space, time and attitudinal distance cued by linguistic features forming ‘sub-worlds’ (Werth, 1999: 185). According to Werth (1999: 185) sub-worlds ‘define situations which, from the view-point of the characters in the text world, are more or less unreal (*more* unreal: futurate, hypothetical, remote; *less* unreal: another time, another place)’ (emphasis in original). These world levels reflect states of ‘probability’ and are cued by deictic, attitudinal or epistemic shifts in the text. They are formed, either by discourse participants (creating ‘participant accessible worlds’) or text-world characters (creating ‘character accessible worlds’). Gavins (2007: 52) argues that Werth’s (1999) categorisation of such worlds as ‘sub-worlds’ is misleading as ‘it suggests that newly created worlds […] are always and necessarily subordinate in some way to the first text-world’. As such, she re-categorises Werth’s sub-worlds (see Gavins, 2001, 2005 for initial applications) proposing that such mental representations create either ‘world-switches’ or ‘modal-worlds’ (Gavins, 2007: 48). World-switches, (following Emmott’s terminology – see ‘frame-switching’ in Emmott, 1997: 52), are triggered by deictic cues that signal spatial and/or temporal transitions in a discourse such as flashbacks, flashforwards and direct speech and thought. Such linguistic markers cue the creation of new text-worlds. These worlds are formed on the same ontological level as the originating text-world yet maintain distinct spatio-temporal parameters.

Gavins (2007: 91-108) also categorises a series of ‘modal-worlds’, following Simpson’s (1993) terminology, which identify shifts in attitudinal distance. Such worlds, which are cued by linguistic markers of boulomaic, deontic, epistemic and perception modality, present worlds that are ontologically remote from the originating text-world. Like world-switches they construct their own spatio-temporal parameters and project equally detailed mental representations (see Gavins, 2007: 91-108 for further discussion). Boulomaic modal-worlds are cued by expressed wishes and desires as indicated by boulomaic lexical verbs (such as ‘want’, ‘wish’, ‘hope’ and ‘desire’), modal adverbs (e.g. ‘hopefully’), and adjectival and participle constructions that form a ‘BE + participle + THAT’ or ‘BE + participle + TO’ structure (e.g. ‘it is hoped that…’) (Gavins, 2007: 94). Deontic modal-worlds follow a similar pattern but detail expressions of obligation or duty, exemplified by the positioning of particular modal auxiliaries before a verb (e.g. ‘I must…’), deontic lexical verbs (e.g. ‘permit’, ‘require’, ‘forbid’) and certain ‘BE + adjective + THAT’ or ‘BE + participle + TO’ constructions (e.g. ‘It is forbidden to…’) (Gavins, 2007: 98-99).

Epistemic modal-worlds, which are triggered by expressions of knowledge and belief, can be cued by modal lexical verbs (e.g. ‘think’, ‘suppose’), certain modal auxiliaries (e.g. ‘could’, ‘may’) and BE + adjective + TO or BE + adjective + THAT constructions (e.g. ‘it’s doubtful that…’ or ‘they’re unlikely to…’) (Gavins, 2007: 110). Perception modality, which is embedded within the epistemic modal system, also cues epistemic modal-worlds as triggered by modal adverbs (e.g. ‘evidently’, ‘clearly’, ‘obviously), and further adjectival constructions (e.g. ‘it is clear that…’). Epistemic modal-worlds also handle the creation of remote discourse situations such as hypotheticals and conditionals, which are formed without the presence of such lexical or grammatical features. Similarly instances of indirect or free indirect speech and thought are also epistemic modal-world forming, as are focalised narratives, given the unverifiable nature of a mediating point of view (Gavins, 2003: 132). Taken together, each of the text-world layers reflect the varied and multiple shifts possible within any given discourse, which need to be processed differently by participants, including those worlds triggered by negation (see Gavins, 2007: 102; also Hidalgo-Downing, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c, 2002, 2003) and metaphor (see Gavins, 2007: 149). I follow Gavins’ categorisation for modal-worlds and world-switches throughout the remainder of this research.

Werth (1999: 17) proposed that the subject matter of his monograph ‘was no less than “all the furniture of the earth and heavens”’, a claim slightly undermined by his limited textual focus. Across his applications of Text World Theory to literature Werth primarily concentrated on examples of nineteenth- and twentieth-century realist fiction. Much Text-World-Theory research since this point has worked to test Werth’s original model and apply it to various forms of literary and non-fictional discourse practices. To date, Text World Theory has been effectively applied to discussions of poetry (see Gavins, 2007, 2010, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016a; Gavins and Stockwell, 2012; Giovanelli, 2013; Harbus, 2012, 2016; Lahey, 2003, 2006, 2010; McLoughlin, 2013, 2014, 2016a, 2016b; Nahajec, 2009; Semino, 1995; Stockwell, 2005, 2009, 2011a, 2011c, 2013, 2014, 2016), novels of varying genre and period (Bridgeman, 1998, 2001, Gavins, 2013; Nuttall, 2014; Whiteley, 2011, 2014, 2016a, 2016b) and various non-fictional discourses (for example, Browse, 2013, 2016; Gavins and Simpson, 2015, Marley, 2008; van der Bom, 2015, 2016) as well as multimodal and experimental texts (Gibbons, 2011, 2012), drama (Gibbons, 2016; Lahey and Cruickshank, 2010; Lugea, 2016), film (Lugea, 2013; Marszalek, 2016), creative writing (Scott, 2016) and pedagogical practice (Giovanelli, 2010, 2016; Giovanelli and Mason, 2015). As a result of such mixed-media applications and the innovative merger of Text World Theory with empirical, sociolinguistic, and cognitive approaches, Werth’s model has become ‘one of the most dynamic areas of research in contemporary stylistics’ (Gavins, 2016: 444).

The following section looks specifically at contemporary applications of Text World Theory that examine fictional consciousness. I provide a brief overview of research being undertaken in this area and then narrow my focus to detail Whiteley’s (2010, 2011, 2016) work on Text World Theory, fictional minds and reading experience.

**3.4.2 Text World Theory and Dystopian Minds**

In mapping the world levels of a given discourse, Text World Theory offers a dynamic and definite examination of mental representation that can account for both text and context. This dual perspective has proven particularly useful in literary practice, as shown by the multiple applications of Text World Theory to fictional texts. However, it is only in recent years that the study of fictional minds has been addressed by text-world theorists (see Gavins, 2013; Lugea, 2016; Nuttall, 2013; Stockwell, 2009; Whiteley, 2011, 2014a, 2014b). For example, Gavins (2013) applies Text World Theory to character minds in texts of the literary absurd to examine character emotion and point of view (see Gavins, 2013: 58-97); Nuttall (2013) draws upon Text World Theory and aspects of Cognitive Grammar to examine mind-style in *The Handmaid’s Tale* (Atwood, 1996); Lugea (2016) also takes a mixed mind-style and text-worlds-approach in the examination of senile minds in the play *You and Me* (Shanahan, 2013); and Whiteley (2011, 2014a; 2014b, 2016) combines text-worlds and character analysis with reader response data to examine real-world responses to Ishiguro’s ([1989] 2009) *The Remains of the Day* and *Never Let Me Go* (2005).

Within this thesis, I expand upon the above research to examine the presentation of dystopian minds in the short story. I investigate the represented minds of key focalisers in each of my four narratives and the impact their projected perceptions have on world-building and readerly engagement with text. For this reason, I draw particularly upon both Simpson’s categorisations of point of view in my examination of particular dystopian world-views, and upon the cognitive theory of mind-modelling. The two models fit particularly well with Text-World-Theory analysis. Simpson’s (1993) modal grammar, being already foundational to the development of modal-worlds, adds richness to the conceptualisation of fictional characters, both as world-building elements and as perceptual frames through which the text-world is presented. In terms of mind-modelling, Text World Theory can account for both the linguistic cues within a text that delineate characterisation and the cultural and ideological knowledge of the reader that impact upon the conceptualisation of character minds. As observed by Stockwell:

a text world account also allows mind-modelling to be extended to non-belief domains such as the imagined desires, wishes, physical needs (hunger, lust, thirst, sleepiness and so on) of others. It can also include a consideration of the respective feelings of characters towards each other, filtered through narration or authorial voice, and in relation to the reader (as Miall 2005 advocates). (Stockwell, 2009: 140)

In the analyses that follow, I systematically address each of these features in my examination of dystopian minds to present a rigorous analysis of the authorial characterisation of dystopian character in terms of linguistic indicators of point of view and the readerly construal of dystopian consciousness.

Whiteley (2011: 27) argues that ‘in a Text World Theory context, the mind-reading inferences which readers generate arise from processes of psychological projection and are examined as a part of text-world construction’. These processes are dependent upon the spatial relationships formed between the reader in the discourse-world and a particular focaliser in the text-world, as when modelling the minds of characters readers are believed to shift their ‘origo’ or ‘deictic centre’ to align with the perspective of an alternate, remote consciousness within the text-world. A reader is therefore thought to map features of themselves onto a text-world entity, to ‘take a cognitive stance within the world of the narrative and interpret the text from that perspective’ (Segal, 1995: 15; Whiteley, 2011: 26). As observed by Whiteley (2011: 26), overlapping terminology is used by text-world theorists to refer to this process; she notes for example that in their respective accounts ‘Lahey (2005) discusses “self-implication” (following Kuiken et al., 2004); Stockwell (2009) prefers the terms “projection” and “identification”; and Gavins (2007) uses all of these terms’. In building upon existing analyses, Whiteley (2012, 2013) proposes a more nuanced model for examining the processes of projection, implication and identification undertaken by discourse participants dependent upon varying degrees of metaphorical mapping.

Whiteley (2014) observes that in conceptualising and comprehending a remote spatio-temporal location, as represented by a given text-world, readers can firstly project their sense of space into a text so as to align with the deictic centre of a particular character and perceive the world from a specific focalised perspective. Such spatial projection can trigger feelings of immersion in a particular narrative (Whiteley, 2014: 400). In addition to taking up the spatio-temporal positioning of a particular text-world character or narrator, Whiteley (2011, 2014) argues that readers may also reconstruct aspects of a character’s world-view, including their beliefs, attitudes and hopes so as to further ‘flesh out their representation’ (Whiteley, 2014: 401). She terms this process ‘perspective-taking projection’ (Whiteley, 2014: 400). Finally, Whiteley (2014: 401) posits that processes of identification reflect a further degree of psychological projection as readers ‘recognise aspects of their own experience, emotions or world view in characters’. In terms of Text World Theory, such projection is achieved as a result of ‘cross-world metaphorical mapping between discourse-world participant and text-world enactor’ as the reader maps features of their own identities onto a character in the text-world (Whiteley, 2011: 6). As a result of making such connections between themselves and a particular character, readers may experience feelings of sympathy or empathy with a fictional entity, or conversely experience feelings of ‘disassociation’ when such mappings provoke resistance (see Whiteley, 2014).

Throughout the analyses that follow, particularly within Chapter 8, I examine the invitation to project into particular character roles and the ethical and emotional effects of such mappings. My discussion of ethical responses corresponds with Phelan’s (1996, 2001, 2005) work on ethics from a narratological perspective in which he explores the relationship between stories, storytelling and moral values (see Phelan, 2014: n.p.). I discuss both my own alignment with particular dystopian characters, and the experiences of ‘real’ readers in Chapter 7 and Chapter 8 who draw links between their reading, mind-modelling of and association with particular characters and their overall interpretations and emotional experiences of reading a particular dystopian short story.

**3.5 Reading Dystopian Short Stories**

This thesis investigates the experience of dystopian reading as a unified discourse event, taking into account the rich literary-historical background of the genre, the cultural and social context of dystopian writing, the linguistic make-up of the dystopian texts themselves and the engagement and emotional experiences of dystopian readers. Alongside the analysis of dystopian minds, I pay particular attention to world-building, arguing that a reader’s processes of world-construction, and their engagement and comprehension of particular world-building elements can be equally accountable for their emotional responses to dystopian reading. Stockwell (2009: 162) argues that some narratives have a ‘prototypically ethical reading’, that is they invite a particular ethical response from the reader. To date, such responses have been primarily linked to a reader’s alignment with character, as outlined in the previous section, with reader positioning guiding ethical and emotional response (Whiteley, 2014: 401; also, Phelan 1996, 2001, 2005: 23; Rabinowitz 1998). Throughout this thesis, I argue that in conceptualising refracted, estranging future worlds that encourage discourse-text-world mappings, readers may make equally emotional links, during world-building, between text-world elements and their real-world counterparts. In this way, I examine how a reader’s processes of world-building and engagement with the text-world may have an ethical and didactic impact upon their perception of their own discourse-worlds.

**3.6 Review**

In this chapter I have proposed the need for a cognitive poetics of the dystopian short story that can account for the full experience of dystopian reading. To this end, I have introduced the overarching disciplines of stylistics and cognitive poetics which underpin the approach I take within this research, given their commitment to systematic and rigorous literary linguistic analysis. I have mapped the development of stylistic and cognitive accounts of minds in literature that inform my discussion of dystopian character, both in terms of the conceptualisation of dystopian minds and the impact of character construal upon dystopian world-building. I have discussed the benefits and limitations of several key approaches to fictional consciousness including Fowler’s ([1986] 1996) model of point of view, Simpson’s (1993) modal grammar, applications of ‘mind-style’ (Fowler, [1986] 1996), Palmer’s (2004) conception of fictional and social minds, Theory of Mind (Baron-Cohen et al., 1985; Premack and Woodruff, 1978) and mind-modelling (Stockwell, 2009). I also introduced the analytical model – Text World Theory – that frames the analyses within this thesis. I provided a detailed summary of the theoretical influences and contextual background of Werth’s (1999) original text-world model as well as mapping out the parameters of contemporary Text-World-Theory research.

This thesis presents an original contribution to such research by presenting the first application of Text World Theory to the dystopian short story. The genre itself has received little attention both from a Text-World-Theory perspective (work by Hasan (2014a, 2014b, 2016) and Nuttall (2015a) being notable exceptions) and from within cognitive poetics more broadly. As outlined in my discussion of Text World Theory and dystopian minds, I aim to add to such research, extending the investigation of dystopian minds, both in terms of world-building and in relation to the readerly experiences of projection. In Section 3.4.2, I therefore outlined Whiteley’s gradation of psychological projection, self-implication and identification, which frame my own discussion of reader-character mappings in the analyses that follow. These notions promote a more rigorous investigation of the idiosyncratic, felt experience of dystopian reading and enhance my discussion of how readers engage with and conceptualise dystopian worlds.

I also outlined my focus on world-building and the emotional often estranging responses evoked by such processes as readers conceptualise dystopian worlds that are in some way refracted from their own discourse-world situations. Throughout this study, I examine the readerly conceptualisation of four dystopian future worlds, as illustrated in ‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’ (Saunders, [2012] 2014g), ‘Pump Six’ (Bacigalupi, (2008) 2010), ‘Is this your day to join the Revolution?’ (Valentine, 2012) and ‘Dead Fish’ (Marek, [2009] 2012b), and the impact of world-construction on reading experience. In taking a mixed-methodological approach, I offer a Text-World-Theory analysis of my own readings of these short stories, as well as drawing upon various types of reader data in support of my own introspection. I set out the parameters of this mixed-methodological approach in the following chapter.

Chapter 4: Reading the Dystopian Short Story

**4.0 Overview**

In this chapter, I outline the mixed-methodological approach taken in this thesis, detailing my arguments for such an approach and the empirical stylistic methods on which I draw. In 4.1, I examine existing discussions of the ‘reader’ in stylistics, whether ‘real’, ‘ideal’ or ‘implied’, and highlight how I will be discussing the ‘reader’ throughout my analysis. I review the application of empirical methods to the examination of ‘the reader’ in stylistics – a practice traceable to the work of Richards (1929) in the 1920s and since developed by Culler (1975), Fish (1980) and Iser (1974), for example. I move on to outline some of the key methodological approaches to gathering reader response data, each of which have been applied fruitfully to analyses of fictional texts. Section 4.2 concerns the use of online reader response data and my analysis of online reader reviews in relation to Bacigalupi’s (2010) ‘Pump Six’. Section 4.3 details the use of ‘think-aloud’ protocols within stylistic analysis and maps the parameters of the written ‘think-aloud’ study that informs my discussion of Valentine’s ([2009] 2012) ‘Is this your day to join the Revolution?’. I then move on to look at reading group talk in 4.4 and outline the reading group study that supports my analysis of Marek’s ([2009] 2012b) ‘Dead Fish’. I then bring each of these methods together to highlight the advantages and limitations of taking a mixed-methods approach, as well as detailing how such data enhances my overall discussion of dystopian reading. I argue that in moving from pure stylistic introspection in my opening case study on ‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’ (Saunders, [2012] 2014g), through to the incorporation of ‘experimental’ and ‘naturalistic’ (Swann and Allington, 2009) reader response data in Chapters 7 and 8, this thesis provides a systematic insight into the experience of reading dystopian short stories.

**4.1 Investigating ‘Real’ Reader Responses to Dystopia**

Stylistics and cognitive poetics are both reader-centric disciplines, exemplified by stylistics’ ‘commitment to studying the effect of texts on readers’ (Peplow and Carter, 2014: 440) and cognitive poetics’ focus on context and the readerly experience of literary reading. For this reason, it is important to outline the role of the reader in stylistics and my particular use of the term ‘reader’ throughout this analysis, for as observed by Iser (1989: 4), ‘a text can only come to life when it is read, and if it is to be examined, it must therefore be studied through the eyes of the reader’. To date, much stylistic work on the reader has referred primarily to a theoretical construct – ‘the reader’ – whose role and identity ‘has been at the heart of 20th-century criticism’ (Allington and Swann, 2009: 219). For example, in his *Structuralist Poetics*, Culler (1975: 144) applies the term ‘ideal reader’ to identify a theoretically constructed reader who has implicit knowledge of how to acceptably read and interpret texts. The ‘ideal reader’ is also developed in the work of Prince (1973), who distinguishes between ‘the real reader’ (who inhabits the discourse-world and engages with the book as object), ‘the virtual reader’ (who exemplifies the author’s inferred audience – ‘whom he endows with certain qualities, capacities, and tastes’ (Tompkins, [1980] 1992: xii)), and the ‘ideal reader’ who, in line with Culler’s categorisations, possesses full understanding and appreciation of the text at hand.

Iser (1974) moves beyond such definitions to examine the ‘implied reader’ (see also Booth, 1961), who is defined as a co-producer of meaning and who is actively involved in the processes of reading and interpretation. The role of the ‘implied reader’ is to ‘uncover the unformulated part’ of a text; that which is only implied by the narrative itself (Iser, 1974: 287). Iser (1974: 280) therefore reflects somewhat on the individuality of the reader, who ‘will fill in the [narrative] gaps in his own way’. However, as Iser (1974) goes on to argue, such readerly decisions are very much ingrained in the text’s ‘inexhaustibility’ – for as he observes, ‘the potential text is infinitely richer than any of its individual realizations’ (Iser, 1974: 280). Although Iser recognises the individuality and engagement of the reader, then, he ‘does not grant the reader autonomy or even a partial independence from textual constraints’ (Tompkins, [1980] 1992: xv).

Fish (1970) goes one step further than Iser in his discussion of the ‘informed reader’ (a reader who possesses literary competence) to distinguish text from reading. He regards literature not as ‘a fixed object but as a sequence of events that unfold within the reader’s mind’ (Tompkins, [1980] 1992: xvi-xvii). Fish therefore shifts critical attention on to the experience of reading and the personal interpretative processes of the reader. However, his conception of the ‘informed reader’ remains theoretical and leads to yet another form of hypothetical construct or ‘character-type’ (see Stockwell, 2013: 267). Fish ([1970] 1980: 87) contends that the informed reader is ‘neither an abstraction, nor an actual living reader but a hybrid […] who does everything within his power to make himself informed’. He observes that this reader corresponds with an enactor of himself, who consciously attempts to be informed and to suppress any form of idiosyncrasy in his responses to text. Although Fish argues that all readers can become informed readers, if they are suitably ‘self-conscious’ and ‘sufficiently responsible’ his model therefore actively rejects any insight into the personal experiences of a real reader.

In recent years, an increased level of autonomy has been attributed to the reader as an ‘actualised reader’ who boasts individual perceptions and experiences that affect his or her engagement with a text in a personalised way. As observed by Miall (1990: 338), ‘readers do differ, and do so in ways which are internally consistent (directed by the intrinsic structure of the text), and – more importantly – in ways that are often of profound personal significance to the individual reader’. In the examination of ‘real’ readers and reading as a subjective practice, the inclusion of ‘extra-textual research’ (Swann and Allington, 2009: 247) has become increasingly prevalent in contemporary stylistic analysis (see also Peplow et al. 2016: 4-6). For instance, Bray (2007a) uses questionnaires to investigate readers’ perceptions of ‘point of view’ and ‘the dual voice’ in *Pride and Prejudice* (Austen, [1813] 1996) and *Marchmont* (Smith, [1796] 1989); Hasan (2016) uses interview data to support her discussions of hope in dystopian fiction; Pihlaja (2016) examines the use of scripture in *YouTube* arguments; and Whiteley (2011) draws upon reading group data in her discussion of emotional responses to Ishiguro’s ([1989] 2009) *The Remains of the Day*.

Each of these studies reflects upon aspects of reading and reading experience from the perspective of the ‘actual reader’, garnered during either ‘experimental’ or ‘naturalistic’ reader response practices (Swann and Allington, 2009). Swann and Allington (2009: 248) draw this distinction to reflect the ‘paradigmatic differences’ between reader response studies, as reflected by research motivations and design. They observe that experimental studies, such as those of Bray (2007a), Fialho (2007), Hakemulder (2007), Miall (1990), Miall and Kuiken (2002) and Oatley (1999), for example, ‘seek to isolate specific types of interpretation, or interpretational activity that are pre-specified as of interest to the researcher’ (Swann and Allington, 2009: 248). In contrast, Swann and Allington (2009: 248) apply the term ‘naturalistic studies’ to those investigations which place analytical focus on ‘interpretations that emerge in habitual processes of reading […] rather than on pre-specified and isolated interpretational activity’. Examples of naturalistic reader response studies include those of Peplow (2011); Pihlaja (2016); Swann and Allington (2009) and Whiteley (2011, 2013, 2014).

Across this thesis, I draw on both experimental and naturalistic forms of reader response collection in order to fully support my own introspective readings and zone-in on several aspects of the dystopian reading experience. In the sections that follow, I outline each of these methods, my particular study designs, and the surrounding theoretical contexts in which each empirical stylistic approach is situated. I begin with a discussion of online reading practices and their incorporation in stylistic analyses.

**4.2 Online Reader Response Data**

The use of online reader response data is becoming increasingly prevalent in contemporary stylistic practice, with research drawing upon such mediums as digital on-text marginalia (Rowberry, 2016); online reading group talk (Peplow et al., 2016; Thomas and Round, 2016); *Amazon* reviews (Allington, 2016; Gutjahr, 2002; Steiner, 2008); blogs (Myers, 2010; Peplow et al., 2016); and online reading fora (Gavins, 2013; Nuttall, 2015a; Stockwell, 2009). In their introduction to a special issue on ‘Reading in the age of the Internet’, Allington and Pihlaja (2016) draw particular attention to the importance of such online data sources and the evolving practices of reading – and talking about reading – through digital media. Drawing on Lang (2010), they observe that in terms of modern stylistic practice, it is imperative ‘to keep in view, and to theorise, the new modes of communal sense-making among interpretive communities of global reach that [digital communications] technologies are beginning to make visible’ (Lang, 2010: 379; see also Allington and Pihlaja, 2016: 205). In this thesis, I place particular focus on those communities of readers who share online book reviews. Before moving on to outline how I engage with such practices in relation to Bacigalupi’s ([2008] 2010) ‘Pump Six’, I first situate my study within broader research practices being undertaken in this area.

Firstly, it is important to differentiate between the types of book reviews that are uploaded to commercial, retail websites such as *Amazon* and those of book recommendation websites such as *Goodreads* or *LibraryThing*. In the case of *Amazon* listings, members of the public, who have already purchased a particular item, publish reviews for the benefit of other *Amazon* customers. These reviews are extended to all merchandise advertised on the website and typically reflect on the quality and suitability of an item, as well as the speed of delivery and the accuracy of marketing information. In terms of book reviews, however, these characteristics are often peripheral to a more evaluative review of narrative content (although comments concerning book jackets and book length are also common). Reviews can be of any length, include a star rating (from 1 to 5) and tend to be addressed to a future customer. As a result, many reviews feature direct recommendations that are typically conditional in form (e.g. ‘if you enjoyed *The Hunger Games*, you will love this story’) and are supported by statements that evidence a reviewer’s expertise (e.g. ‘having read all of her previous books I can guarantee that the new Veronica Rossi novel will not disappoint’). Allington (2016: 258) therefore refers to online reviews as representing a ‘form of non-elite reception’ that sets itself against the professional critical reviews published in newspapers and journals. Steiner (2008: n.p.) shares this viewpoint in her categorisation of online reviews as ‘private criticism in the public sphere’ as does Hill (2006: n.p.) who applies the term ‘free criticism’.

Allington (2016: 257) draws a further distinction between professional reviews and those uploaded by online readers to *Amazon’s* website, in that by ‘being paid to write a review for a newspaper or magazine, one acts as a supplier to a manufacturer; in posting a review on the Amazon website, one acts as a customer of a retailer’. Indeed, *Amazon* reviews are arguably designed for the benefit of a particular ‘computer-literate’ and ‘credit-able clientele’ (Gutjahr, 2002: 219). For these reasons, Steiner (2008: n.p.) draws attention to the unverifiable authenticity of *Amazon’s* online reviewers (in terms of both their identity and creditable opinions), as the anonymity afforded to reviewers by the website has sparked controversy in the past, given the accusations of publishing houses, marketing teams and even authors writing false reviews under aliases. *Amazon* reviews therefore present rather complex writing agendas, and although they offer clear insights into reading experience, the underlying commercialism and promotional intentions of the website do not align with the type of reading experience addressed in this research.

In contrast with *Amazon*, websites such as *Goodreads* and *LibraryThing* represent non-profit organisations that serve to bring readers together for the purposes of sharing book recommendations, forming book groups and creating personalised reading lists (although the possibility still exists that these sites are being manipulated for profit indirectly). Readers may also provide ratings, organise texts onto personalised library ‘shelves’, tag books as to genre or key topics, join reading challenges and vote on ‘best of’ listings – all of which exemplify unique aspects of reading as a social and interpersonal experience. Both websites are open access and all content can be viewed without having a member account, although registration is required to participate in discussions or create personal content. Members may choose to create private libraries on both websites if they wish their book selections and reviews to be inaccessible to anyone other than themselves. All members also have the choice to write and participate under a screen-name or avatar, which offers readers complete anonymity when posting reviews and opinions. Such websites therefore give readers the freedom to be emotive and to respond to literature in a more open, unbiased way than they might feel comfortable doing during face-to-face interactions (see Katz and Rice, 2002). As observed by Peplow et al. (2016: 152), ‘the asynchronicity of online discourse also means that readers have time to think about their responses to books and to other readers’, removing the social pressures of responding in real-time.

There are two primary methods for engaging with other readers on the *Goodreads* and *LibraryThing* websites, either through the posting of personalised book reviews, which can then be commented on and/or ‘liked’ by other members, or through joining one of the various book groups that operate across the sites. To date, there has been a greater research focus on the latter form of online reader response data, exemplified by the works of Fister (2005), Long (2003) and Rehberg Sedo (2003, 2011), who investigate the dynamics and practices of online groups. As noted by Rehberg Sedo (2011: 106), online reading groups ‘emerge more from like interests than from […] friendships, workplaces, neighbourhoods and life stages as is usually the case in ftf [face-to-face] book clubs’ (see also Peplow et. al, 2016: 150), exemplified by the various genre-based or author-based reading groups on *Goodreads*. For instance, readers of dystopian fiction may be attracted to join ‘The Dystopian Society’ (613 members), ‘The YA Dystopian Book Club’ (3,207 members), ‘@World’s End’ (233 members), ‘Dystopia Land’ (2,189 members) or ‘Future Survivors, the Apocalypse Group’ (3,891 members), members of which project themselves as lovers of dystopian fiction. Unlike face-to-face reading groups, which will be discussed in 4.4, online readers are only virtually present and although they engage in shared reading practices, are not in effect ‘“reading together”’ (Peplow et al., 2016: 152).

Readers communicate instead using individual posts that follow a turn-taking pattern and form successive discourse. Peplow et al. (2016: 152) observe that this ‘composition of responses suggests that online, like face-to-face, reading group discourse is responsive not only to literary texts but also to prior posts/turns and other texts, with these latter sometimes incorporated into the performance of online literary reading’ – a process Peplow et al. (2016: 152) term ‘interpretative bricolage’. As readers respond and post additional utterances at different times and from different spatial locations around the world, they inhabit – in Text-World-Theory terms – a split discourse-world. Online reading therefore represents a different form of social interaction, as ‘readers’ interpretative activity is an entirely textual process’ (Peplow et al., 2016: 152). As such, online readers tend not to engage in the same pre-reading group ‘chat’ associated with non-virtual groups and typical features of spoken interaction such as interruptions, overlaps and paralinguistic features are not present. Although online reading group data does offer an increased textual focus compared with that of face-to-face interactions (a characteristic that has been viewed as useful to the stylistician (see Peplow et al., 2016)), I have chosen to focus on the posting of individual reviews that occur outside of reading group discourse. These reviews present a similar degree of focus and freedom of expression, but are formatted as complete, enclosed responses that are representative of an individual’s unbiased opinion. I therefore reserve my discussion of collective interpretation and social reading for Chapter 8, where I examine offline reading group responses to ‘Dead Fish’.

The final form of online reviews are particularly interesting in terms of stylistic analysis, as the medium presents ‘low-control methods’ (Steen, 1991) and naturalistic, unguided responses to literary texts. The analyst has no control over the content or format of the reviews, no set structure is provided, and reviews can be as brief or complex as the reviewer chooses. However, it is important to recognise the social and performative aspects of writing and posting reviews online. Reviewers are aware that their comments are available for perusal by users of their particular website and the wider public, both through the website itself and external search engines. There is therefore a certain ‘observer’s paradox’ to the reviews, in that they are purposefully created, edited and in many cases highly structured and thought-through. Many members avidly review the books they shelve in order to construct a notable online presence, as frequent or ‘starred’ reviewers, and may therefore write to maintain a particular persona or perform a certain desired identity (Peplow et al., 2016: 150-151; also see Herring et al., 2005; Warschauer, 2003, for discussion of online identity). Such reviews are often more representative of objective theoretical discourse, drawing upon the language and format of professional literary criticism, rather than expressing informal or emotionally subjective responses to text.

In addition to posing certain motivational concerns, online reviews are also relatively ubiquitous, particularly for best-selling or canonical texts, which raises questions of how to best approach data collection and analysis. For example, larger amounts of review data may prove more accessible when analysed with the aid of tagging software (see Hasan, 2016; Stewart-Shaw, 2016) or corpus linguistic methods, which are better suited to quantitative data collection. Alternatively, longer or more detailed reviews may be selected as example responses for qualitative analyses (see Gavins, 2013), or smaller data sets may be tagged manually, as is the case with this study. As will be outlined in the following section, large-scale data collection and analysis were beyond the scope and aims of this thesis, and as such data were handled manually with reference to a small, self-contained response set. A larger-scale quantitative investigation of online dystopian reviews would, however, provide further insights into the experience of dystopian reading and, as such, represents a possible future direction that this research could take.

**4.2.1 Online Response Data and ‘Pump Six’**

Paolo Bacigalupi’s ‘Pump Six’ was originally published in 2008 as the title text for Bacigalupi’s debut short story collection *Pump Six and Other Stories*. The collection has been widely rated across the various online platforms discussed in the previous section, receiving a score of 4.03/5 on *Goodreads*, 4.65/5 on *Amazon* and 4.01/5 on *LibraryThing,* as well as being included in listings such as ‘Best Outside-the-box Speculative Fiction’, ‘Best Dystopian and Post-Apocalyptic Fiction’ and ‘Best Intelligent Sci-Fi’ (*Goodreads*, 2016). In support of my analysis of ‘Pump Six’, I draw upon online reader response data gathered from the internet reading forum, *LibraryThing*. For the purposes of this study, *LibraryThing* offered the most concise, accessible data-set, presenting thirty-four individual reader reviews, as opposed to the seven hundred reader reviews uploaded to *Goodreads* or the thirteen available on *Amazon*. Two of the *LibraryThing* reviews were posted in French and were therefore discounted so as to avoid the added variable of whether readers were engaging with texts in translation.

All of the remaining thirty-two reviews were read and tagged for shared reading patterns and similarities in response. It should be noted here that these responses were primarily reflective of the short story collection, *Pump Six and Other Stories*, as a whole, as short stories are rarely uploaded individually. References to ‘Pump Six’ as a separate story were therefore tagged first and were divisible into those reviews which summarised plot content, or simply mentioned the story’s inclusion in the collection, and those which reflected evaluatively on the experience of reading ‘Pump Six’ itself. Within the latter set of reviews, two types of readerly responses were particularly noticeable: those that concerned the believability of the text-world and text-world events and/or those that discussed the evocation of physical and emotional responses in the reader. Similar patterns were also found in the broader set of responses that discussed the short story collection as a whole. These collective reviews focused on the believability of Bacigalupi’s fictions, but also provided useful insights into the broader experience of reading ecodystopian fiction. I therefore incorporated both the direct reader reviews of ‘Pump Six’ and those responses to the collection as a whole within my analysis.

**4.3 Think-Aloud Studies**

The second form of reader response data drawn upon within this thesis is taken from a written ‘think-aloud’ study. Think-aloud studies are designed to monitor a reader’s responses to a given text during, as opposed to after, reading. Readers are encouraged to respond spontaneously to a text, one passage or sentence at a time, forming impressions of a narrative without the benefits of retrospection or having a fully formed conceptualisation of a particular text-world. As argued by Steen (1991: 570), ‘even though thinking-out-loud tasks may be focused, cued, or structured, it still is the reader’s activity of verbalisation which defines the clarity, aptness, variety, and extent of the response’. Similar to reading group studies, think-alouds are considered to have ‘low control methods’, as the researcher has minimal influence or hold over a particular reader’s responses. Think-alouds can be either spoken or written studies and allow a reader to trace their initial reading and experience of a text as naturally as possible.

Think-aloud studies are encompassed within the broader practice of collecting written and/or spoken reading protocols, studies that have taken various forms in surrounding linguistic research. For example, in terms of spoken introspection, Andringa (1990) draws upon verbal think-aloud protocols in her discussion of literary understanding and reception, Davey (1983) proposes the use of spoken think-alouds in pedagogical practice and Short and Alderson (1989) draw upon verbal think-aloud data to examine how the reader applies meaning to texts. Each of these studies requires participants to verbalise their on-line thoughts as they read, providing insights into the way readers interpret, understand and process texts, so as to ‘capture the “flow” of reading’ (Alderson and Short, 1989: 75). Other research designs also incorporate spoken introspection, for example, Miall and Kuiken (2002) follow Larsen and Seilman’s (1988) model of ‘self-probed retrospection’ (in which readers mark a text during reading for passages they find salient and expand verbally on these passages post-reading) to investigate emotional experiences of reading a Sean O’Faoláin short story (see also Kuiken et al., 2004; Oatley, 1999); and Fialho (2007) employs ‘the pause protocol technique’ (Cavalcanti, 1987) (in which readers are requested to verbalise their thought processes immediately whenever they pause during reading) to investigate processes of foregrounding and refamiliarisation .

In contrast to spoken think-aloud practices, written protocols may also be drawn upon in support of linguistic analysis. These follow a similar ‘think-aloud’ structure, in which participants respond to a text as they read, but their responses are written rather than recorded. Short and van Peer (1989: 26) observe that whereas audio recorded spoken protocols (as in Alderson and Short, 1989) are typically ‘realized in a “full-grammatical” way’, written protocols are recorded in ‘a more “telegram style” manner’, which they argue is ‘closer to what happens in people’s heads’. A further benefit of written over spoken protocols is that with verbalised data there is ‘some sacrifice of accuracy and explicitness’ (Alderson and Short, 1989: 74) as participants communicate their thoughts, whereas with written data there is a higher level of focus and attention to detail. As with spoken think-alouds, written introspection ‘helps to prevent forgetfulness and *post-hoc* rationalization’ (Short and van Peer, 1989: 25) on the part of the reader and ‘captures as well as we can the sequence of thoughts that […] readers [produce]’ (Short and van Peer, 1989: 25).

Although Allington and Swann (2009: 224) categorise think-aloud protocols as an experimental method of reader response (in line with interviews and questionnaires), I would argue that such studies are more or less naturalistic depending upon the design of the study itself. In practice, reading section by section does result in interrupted reading and participants must pause to formulate and record their responses in a way that is atypical of natural reading practice. Additionally, the texts used in think-aloud studies are typically manipulated (see Allington and Swann, 2009), being divided into smaller sections or decontextualised passages (this is often the case with longer texts). However, in my particular study (following Short and van Peer, 1989), the chosen short story was presented in full and included the usual amount of contextual information provided with a narrative (i.e., author name, title, date of publication). Readers were also able to engage with the study at home or wherever they chose, as opposed to the ‘exam-like environments’ Allington and Swann (2009: 224) attribute to experimental studies. Furthermore, my participants were not required to mark or look for specific textual features whilst reading, as in the studies of Miall (1990) or Miall and Kuiken (2002), but were free to respond naturally, as thoughts occurred, to whatever was salient for them.

Such spontaneous, unprovoked responses are more often associated with those gathered during naturalistic rather than experimental reader investigations and evidence that think-alouds ‘can yield a store of rich and natural data’ (Steen, 1991: 570). Indeed, Short and van Peer (1989: 71) observe that the setting of written introspection is ‘rather naturalistic and holistic, bearing a reasonably close correspondence to the reading process as it normally occurs’, which contradicts Allington and Swann’s (2009) categorisations. However, as will be seen in the following section, the think-aloud study conducted for this research also provoked some criticism from participants regarding the manipulation of discourse and the unnaturalness of reading compartmentally, which aligns more with Swann and Allington’s (2009: 248) definitions of experimental data. In order to address this distinction more fully, I now move on to outline my own research design in further detail.

**4.3.1 Think-Aloud Data and ‘Is This Your Day?’**

In order to support my introspective analysis of Valentine’s ([2009] 2012) ‘Is this your day to join the Revolution?’, in Chapter 7 I draw on reader responses to the story collected as part of a written think-aloud study. This study was modelled upon that of Short and van Peer (1989), in which they examine and compare their own written protocols in response to Gerard Manley Hopkins’ poem ‘Inversnaid’ (selected and edited by W. H. Gardner (1953)). Following Short and van Peer (1989), I separated my chosen text into self-contained sections which, wherever possible, aligned with natural breaks in the text (such as paragraph or page breaks), so as to ensure cohesion across the narrative. The study was conducted online using a Google doc. form, which for the purposes of this study was detailed yet simple to manage and distribute. The data drawn from this study can be found in Appendix A. The narrative sections were numbered from 1-23, inclusive of the title, which formed Section 1, and were each accompanied by a comment box. Participants were instructed to record their responses to each passage in the corresponding box before moving on the next section. They were not required to respond in full or grammatical sentences. A space for any concluding or retrospective responses to the text was also provided on the final slide.

I invited four participants to partake in the study, all of whom were PhD students within the School of English at the University of Sheffield. Although based within the same department and sharing a similar degree of professional training, the participants specialised in a variety of literary and linguistic topics. Although none of the participants were familiar with Valentine as an author or had read ‘Is this your day to join the Revolution?’ before, it should therefore be acknowledged that their prior academic training may have impacted upon their responses. At the very least, all four participants were familiar with analysing texts and, as will be seen in the data analysis in Chapter 7, participants did draw on subject-specific lexis and knowledge in their interpretations of the story. However, the use of discourse-world knowledge is a natural part of discourse processing and, as I was not testing a particular hypothesis or studying the responses of a particular audience, the variable of prior analytical training was left uncontrolled. For empirical studies that comparatively examine the reading experiences of professional and non-professional readers (in terms of literary training and expertise), see Bortolussi and Dixon (1996), Dorfman (1996) and Graves and Frederiksen (1991).

As mentioned in the previous section, participants were free to respond naturally to the text and no specific responses were requested or tested for. Rather than designing the study to examine a particular narrative feature, I hoped to gather idiosyncratic, unprompted responses that were indicative of more natural thought processes. For example, I was interested to learn how these particular readers would handle new or estranging world-building information, interpret text-world events, and develop their understanding of the text-world as new information became available. Such responses would highlight how other readers engaged with the ambiguous worlds of ‘Is this your day to join the Revolution?’, which presents numerous unexplained world-building elements and an inconclusive coda. There are also a limited amount of critical approaches to the text, both in terms of professional reviews and online reader reviews, as well as a complete absence of literary theoretical response. The incorporation of think-aloud data into my discussion of ‘Is this your day to join the Revolution?’ therefore enhances and complements my discussions of world-building and the interpretative processes involved in reading dystopian fiction.

In addition to providing detailed insights into the reader’s online thought processes during reading, the think-aloud data also revealed several limitations of collecting unguided, ‘real-time’ protocols, both in terms of the content of responses themselves and the experiences of those readers who engaged in the study. For example, of the four participants, only one responded to the first section, which was inclusive of the story’s title, and two intentionally skipped several comment boxes throughout when their responses were few. Participant 4, for example, stopped responding at Section 16 and did not reengage with the commentary boxes until the concluding comment section of the think-aloud. When asked if this was a purposeful decision (I requested confirmation for fear of a technological malfunction), Participant 4 explained that she had nothing pressing to say in response to those sections and so skipped through them until her thoughts were clearer. Although Participant 4’s lack of response aligned with her natural thought processes during reading, it is impossible to confirm whether such a response was the result of confusion, indifference or a lack of readerly enjoyment without further follow-up with the reader. As a result, such an interesting decision cannot be addressed with more than speculation within my analysis.

Participants also reported mixed-responses to the process of completing the Google form and commented on the unnaturalness of reading isolated, decontextualised extracts. For example, Participant 3 found the inability to read ahead or reread prior sections particularly disconcerting for, as she noted, both practices were a natural part of her usual method of reading. As a result, she often reported that passages were difficult to understand, particularly with regards to the comprehension of extended dialogue. Participant 2, in contrast, offered positive feedback throughout his responses, noting his enjoyment of the study in the concluding comment box and exclaiming ‘this is fun!’ in sole response to Section 16. Additionally, although think-aloud studies represent a reader’s personal, unbiased responses to a text, as opposed to the collective interpretations of book groups or the socially aware responses of online readers, participants were clearly mindful throughout the think-aloud that they were writing for a particular reader – me. On occasion, participants addressed aspects of their discourse to an implied version of myself, as the researcher, justifying their interpretations or qualifying their responses. For example, on correctly guessing a particular narrative outcome, Participant 1 exclaimed: ‘I swear I’m not reading ahead’. In this sense, the think-aloud data also provided some insight into the readerly modelling of discourse participants, a practice commonly associated with reading group discourse.

**4.4 Reading Group Discourse**

The final type of reader response data that is drawn upon in this thesis is that of reading group discourse. Reading groups, which tend to operate as a recurrent form of social activity, provide the opportunity for like-minded individuals, friends and/or colleagues to read collectively and share their experiences of a particular text. As with online reading groups, these texts are usually jointly agreed upon in advance and readers meet with the expectation that all members have engaged with that particular narrative. In recent years, the formation of reading groups and book clubs has notably increased with an estimated 50,000 UK readers being involved in a particular group as of 2001 (Peplow, 2011: 296; see also Hartley, 2001). Such activities are encouraged by the inclusion of ‘reading group questions’ in popular novels and the commercialised book groups of celebrities such as Richard and Judy in the UK or Oprah Winfrey in the USA (see Peplow, 2011: 296). Such public attention has resulted in an increased interest in reading group discourse as a subject of stylistic research and as an avenue for investigating the felt experience of literary reading. This is exemplified, for example, by the work of Peplow (2011), who addresses the negotiation of literary interpretation in reading group discourse; Whiteley (2016) who investigates emotional readerly responses to Ishiguro’s ([1995] 2013) *The Unconsoled*; as well as larger-scale studies such as Peplow et al.’s (2016) *The Discourse of Reading Groups* (see also: Benwell, 2009; Hartley, 2001; Peplow, 2011, 2016; Whiteley, 2011b, 2014, 2015, 2016).

As outlined by Swann and Allington (2009: 247), one of the primary motivations for investigating reading group discourse ‘is that reading groups provide an example of how “ordinary readers” – i.e. readers other than academic critics and professional reviewers – interpret and evaluate literary texts’. In analysing the discourse of ‘ordinary’ readers (also termed ‘real’ readers (see Whiteley, 2011)), reading group discourse moves away from the sole study of student readers, who are often recruited to partake in experimental studies for course credit or as part of seminar activities (Swann and Allington, 2009: 247). Instead, reading group studies focus on reading that occurs outside of ‘artificial’ experimental contexts and typically include a broad range of discourse participants. It should be noted, however, that reading group members are often academics and students too and present equally valid accounts of reading experience. As a naturalistic method of reader response, reading group discourse is also participant-led, with conversation developing a natural flow in line with habitual discourse practices, rather than their being structured or imposed upon by the researcher. In this way, the particular ‘preoccupations’ of readers are emphasised and discussion focuses more on interpretations of ‘meaning’ and ‘value’ than on purposefully primed narrative features, such as foregrounding, for example (Swann and Allington, 2009: 248-249; also see Fialho, 2007; Hakemulder, 2007, Sopčák, 2007 and van Peer et al., 2007 for experimental approaches to foregrounding).

Much of the work on reading group discourse concerns reading as a social practice, as new readings and interpretations are ‘collaboratively developed’ during group conversation ‘rather than being the property of individual speakers’ (Swann and Allington, 2009: 262; also see for example, Fuller, 2008; Peplow, 2011; Peplow et al., 2016; Whiteley, 2011b)). In a reading group context, reading becomes a group practice, ‘a joint, collaborative activity, in which people share interpretations and create new ones within their interaction’ (Peplow et al., 2016: 1). Reading group data is particularly interesting as a result of this joint collaboration, as it stands in clear opposition to the generalised view of reading ‘in the abstract’ (Allington, 2011: 319), or reading as a silent, private and individual experience. It also raises interesting questions, not only in terms of what readers talk about in relation to a particular text, but also how they recount and express such responses, altering their opinions and adopting new points of view as they talk. As such, a reader’s engagement with ‘particular “text-worlds” is, in various ways, embedded in the here and now of their particular context’ (Peplow et al., 2016: 1), for as they converse, participants form new, mutually negotiated mental representations. Such collective interpretations will be addressed within my analysis of ‘Dead Fish’, although it should be noted that focus is placed on the content of such interpretations rather than the process of collaborative interpretation itself (for a Text-World-Theory analysis of reading group conversation see Whiteley, 2011)).

**4.4.1 Reading Group Talk and ‘Dead Fish’**

For the purposes of this thesis, I invited four fellow PhD students in the School of English at the University of Sheffield to participate in a one-off reading group study that focused upon Adam Marek’s short story, ‘Dead Fish’. As with the think-aloud study, participants presented varied research specialisms and were at different stages of thesis completion. Although none of the readers had experience of reading Marek’s fiction or had read ‘Dead Fish’ before, it is again important to recognise the potential influence their academic training had on their engagement with the study. At the least, all three participants were familiar with analysing texts, were comfortable with expressing their ideas, and often dipped into theoretical and philosophical debate regarding the text’s thematic concerns and indeed their own research interests. Following Whiteley (2011), I used low-control methods to prioritise ‘natural validity’ (Whiteley, 2011: 33; see also Steen, 1991) and maintain my readers’ relaxed approach to the study. This allowed for a natural reading of the text, as participants could engage in the narrative in a manner and environment comfortable for them and conversation followed the social style of discourse often attributed to book groups (see Fuller, 2008; Whiteley, 2011: 33). I was not physically present for the study, with the reading group being hosted by a volunteering member of the group itself.

Each member of the group was supplied with a complimentary copy of *The Stone Thower* and asked to read the second story in the collection, ‘Dead Fish’. The story, which is only four pages in length, is a relatively short read and the group were given sufficient time to engage with the text in a manner natural and convenient for them. Participants were free to read the surrounding stories included in the collection (although to my knowledge none of the participants did so) and only passing responses were made to the state of the collection as a whole. The discussion lasted for approximately one hour, although conversation shifted between on-topic and off-topic talk throughout this time. The discussion was digitally recorded and transcribed following the reading group – contextualised extracts from this transcript are included in Appendix B.

‘Dead Fish’ was a particularly choice text to analyse alongside reading group discourse given the contention which exists amongst professional reviewers regarding textual interpretation. As will be discussed in Chapter 8, ‘Dead Fish’ is presented from the perspective of an ‘unnatural’ narrator (see Alber et al., 2010) who remains unidentified throughout the narrative. There is significant contrast amongst reviewers as to who or what the narrator is, and the identity of this character and those of the equally ambiguous ‘we’ of which he is part was a particularly salient aspect of my own reading of this text. Given my interest in dystopian character and the specific impact mind-modelling might have on the construction of dystopian worlds, I was eager to acquire additional reader perspectives on this particular entity. Additionally, as with Valentine’s ‘Is this your day?’ there was no existing literary critical analysis within stylistics or broader theoretical disciplines of Marek’s fiction, both on this story or indeed on *The Stone Thrower* as a whole. Gathering alternate readerly perspectives therefore enhanced my understanding of the experience of reading this story and the processes of world-building and mind-modelling necessary to conceptualise its text-worlds.

**4.5 Review**

Throughout this chapter I have outlined the advantages and limitations of several types of reader response methods that have been adopted in recent years to investigate the reading experiences and practices of ‘real’ readers. As discussed in each section, all of these methods pose problems for the stylistician, with the use of experimental methods (such as the think-aloud study) presenting artificial reading experiences that disrupt natural reading processes; naturalistic approaches (such as the use of online materials or reading group data) being both unpredictable in terms of what data may be collected and linguistically imprecise in terms of on-text analysis (see Peplow and Carter, 2014: 449- 450). There is also the added consideration with all of the above methods that what they are trying to investigate – the experience of real reading – is inherently subconscious. As observed by Stockwell (2013: 264), ‘it is of course possible to move quickly, to toggle between direct reading and the higher-level activity of thinking about reading, but it is not possible for a human consciousness to do both simultaneously’. In this respect, it is almost impossible to differentiate between what readers report they experience during reading and what they actually do. By taking a mixed-methods approach to reading, however, this project aims to alienate the problems of each of the above approaches and provide a well-informed and multifaceted account of the dystopian reading experience.

In this chapter I have outlined the mixed-methodological approach taken throughout this thesis. I have introduced the reader in stylistics both as a theoretical construct and as a ‘real’ discourse-world reader, outlining my use of the term ‘reader’ throughout this analysis: I frame myself as ‘the reader’ in regards to my own experience of reading; consider ‘the implied reader’ of each of the four stories; and investigate the experiences of my ‘real’ readers who engaged in each of the reader response studies. Following my discussion of types of reader, I introduced each of the primary empirical methods of reader response collection incorporated in this thesis, including the use of online response materials, think-aloud protocols and reading group data. I have situated each of my reader studies within their broader theoretical contexts and detailed the parameters of the studies themselves.

Throughout the chapter, I have outlined the benefits and limitations of combining empirical research methods with stylistic analysis and outlined my reasoning for taking, in effect, a mixed-mixed-methodological approach to the experience of reading the dystopian short story. As such, my study goes one step further than typical mixed-methods approaches, as not only does this research combine introspection with empirical stylistics, but it also draws upon several types of reader response methods, both naturalistic and experimental, so as to fully investigate the dystopian reading experience.

In the following chapter, I begin my analyses with a Text-World-Theory analysis of George Saunders’ ‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’, based on my own introspective reading of the text.

Chapter 5: ‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’

**5.0 Overview**

The analyses in this chapter focus upon George Saunders’ ([2012] 2014g) dystopian short story ‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’. Section 5.1 introduces the text and maps the critical responses to the story following its original publication in 2012. In 5.2, I provide a Text-World-Theory analysis of my own reading of ‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’, placing particular focus on the text’s opening passages and the epistolary form of the narrative itself. I argue that the experience of reading ‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’ is particularly estranging as a result of the epistolary form, as the narrative, which is communicated across several diary entries, is addressed to a future reader. As a result, the narrator provides limited explanations as to surrounding world-building elements, given the historical schematic knowledge he attributes to his audience. I move on to discuss the text in terms of dystopian satire in 5.3, focusing upon the exaggerated illustration of the American Dream. In mapping the inherent materialism mocked by the text, I focus on the representation of the Semplica girls in 5.4, detailing their characterisation as purchasable decorations and analysing their inferred states of mind in terms of attributed consciousness. In 5.4.1, I extend this discussion to analyse the ideological point of view of the narrator in relation to his broader society. In doing so, I draw upon Palmer’s (2004, 2010, 2011) work on social cognition and the social mind, proposing a more nuanced model of intermental thought that can be conceived of in terms of Text World Theory.

**5.1 ‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’**

‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’, was originally published in 2012 for *The New Yorker* and shortly afterwards, reproduced in George Saunders’ (2014f) fourth short story collection *Tenth of December*, which was first released the following year (all in-text citations are to this edition; ‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’ is reproduced in Appendix C). The collection, which is not dystopian by design, ‘cuts to the core of the contemporary experience’ (“Tenth of December”, 2016: n.p.), taking up themes such as class, love, death and war and ‘delving into the questions of what makes us good and what makes us human’ (“Tenth of December”, 2016: n.p.). As with several of his earlier collections, (e.g. *Pastoralia* (2001), *In Persuasion Nation* (2006)) *Tenth of December* presents a series of ‘riotously imaginative’ social satires (Cox, 2013: n.p.). Each of the ten stories reflects upon the trials of human relationships, examining the tensions between parents and their children (as in ‘Victory Lap’ ([2013] 2014h), ‘Sticks’ ([2013] 2014e) and ‘Puppy’ ([2013] 2014d), between strangers (as in ‘Escape from Spiderhead’ ([2013] 2014b) and ‘Al Roosten’ ([2013] 2014a)), and between employers and employees (as in ‘Exhortation’ (2013) and ‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’ ([2012] 2014g)). The protagonists of each story are typically presented as relative underdogs, reflecting Saunders’ propensity to ‘[people] his stories with the losers of American history – the dispossessed, the oppressed, or […] those whom history’s winners have walked all over on their paths to glory, fame or terrific wealth’ (Rando, 2012: 437). Such characters are depicted in each of the ten stories, evidenced by the troubled families in ‘Puppy’, the convicted criminals in ‘Escape from Spiderhead’, the unsuccessful antiques dealer in ‘Al Roosten’, and the indigent father of this chapter’s title text, ‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’.

As the seventh and longest piece in the collection, ‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’ takes for its focus the everyday existence of an unnamed male protagonist, a father of lower-middle-class roots, who decides to keep a journal documenting his reportedly mundane daily experiences. On initial engagement with the narrative there is little to indicate a dystopian future; the diary is dated but only by day and month, and it is not until the introduction of unfamiliar world-building elements in the third entry that the text-world is identifiable as a refracted future vision of our own discourse-world present. As the entries progress and additional details of the text-world are provided, the world described becomes notably dystopian, presenting an exaggerated future vision of a materialistic and covetous American society.

The story opens as the narrator begins his diary-writing experience and outlines his resolution to record the events of his daily life, every day, for a year. At the beginning of the narrative, these events are relatively familiar as the narrator ponders what his future may hold, records concerns for the wellbeing and happiness of his family and recounts ordinary activities, such as picking up his children from school and cleaning the garage. He tells of the woes of his three children, Lilly, Thomas and Eva, who are separated from the wealthy lifestyles of their peers and of his wife, Pam, who envies the outward facing riches of her neighbours. These neighbourhood riches provide the first indications of both the world’s futuristic context and the satirical dystopian nature of the narrative itself, when, having attended the birthday party of Lilly’s friend, Leslie Torrini, the narrator excessively lists her family’s many unusual possessions, which include historical artefacts (e.g. ‘hoofmark from some dynasty’, ‘red oriental bridge’, ‘dress Greta Garbo once wore’), rare collectibles (‘Disney autograph’, ‘Picasso autograph’) and a ‘historical merry-go-round they are restoring as a family’ (Appendix C: 99-110). These items, each of which has a real-world counterpart, are clearly exaggerated and serve to underline Saunders’ satirical impetus – materialism.

Following the party, the narrator records his feelings of social insignificance and material inferiority, highlighting his feelings of dread and despair at the impending birthday celebrations of his eldest daughter, Lilly. However, by the eighth diary entry the tone of the woeful narrator switches to one of excitement and pride as he details a recent win on a lottery scratch-card. Having procured a $10,000 sum he decides to showcase his newly found wealth by landscaping his garden with all the features of civilised society, both as a demonstration to his peers and as a birthday present for Lilly. As part of the garden arrangement the narrator purchases three ‘SGs’ – living female humans, called ‘Semplica girls’, who are contracted from underprivileged, third-world families to serve as lawn ornaments for the affluent American middle-class. The women are dressed in white smocks and hung by specialist microlines (inserted through their heads) above attractive landscaping and other ornamentations. They maintain consciousness and cognitive ability, are free to interact with one another and, as frequently confirmed by the narrator and his peers, are seemingly grateful and happy to be employed for such a purpose.

The family are thrilled with the newly designed garden and are, for a short time, held in high regard by their friends and employers. The narrator enters into what he defines as a ‘happy period’ (Appendix C: 724), purchasing clothes and other gifts for himself and his family, enjoying material frivolity and social achievement. He exclaims, it is ‘nice to win, be a winner, be known as a winner’ (Appendix C: 759). However, the narrator’s youngest daughter, Eva, is troubled by the arrangement and the narrator reports several displays of distressed behaviour on her part. Eva empathises with the Semplica girls and despite her father’s attempts to educate her about the benefits of the Semplica system, Eva releases them, resulting in her family’s disgrace and financial collapse. The Semplica girls cannot be replaced and the family have to pay for the loss of the women and cover the remainder of their contracted payments to the SG Company. After failing to convince his father-in-law to lend him the funds, the narrator falls into a deeper state of financial and societal ruin than at the beginning of the story. The narrator cannot comprehend the unethical nature of the SG system, the impulsive actions of his daughter or the SGs’ decision to leave his home and closes the narrative with his distress only for the repossession of his house, his now unattractive garden, and the reparative payments to be made to the SG company.

**5.2 Epistolary Modes and Dystopian Text Worlds**

‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’ comprises thirty-five separate journal entries dated between September 3rd and October 6th of an unknown year. The narrative is written in first person, Category A narration, from the perspective of a homodiegetic internal narrator who has taken on the role of diarist within the text-world. The narrative comprises multiple typographical features that identify the text as a piece of mimetic diary writing, such as the use of opening dates (‘September 3’), for which the formal ordinal indicators have been ellipted, parenthetical exclamation marks (‘all are welcome (!)’), reverse obliques (‘one page/day’) and ampersands (‘kids & grandkids’) that are typical of informal written discourse. The grammatical structure of the narrative also adds to this particular register given the presence of ellipted personal pronouns (‘will have written 365 pages’), ellipted articles (‘embark on grand project’), contractions (‘college grad’) and the use of question marks following indirect questions, formed in the declarative rather than the interrogative mood (‘How clothes smelled and carriages sounded?’) all of which create an informal structure, register and tone (Appendix C: 1-19).

The use of diary entries as a narrative medium is a relatively common practice across the dystopian genre, with texts such as *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Orwell, 1949] 2000) or *The Declaration* (Malley, [2007] 2012)switching between journal writing and their respectively prominent narrative categories or texts such as *The Testament of Jessie Lamb* (Rogers, 2011) or *Super Sad True Love Story* (Shteyngart, 2011) fully imitating the diary form. Each of these texts contains epistolary elements – ‘epistolary’ being a term which is typically applied to narratives that are formed entirely of letters, such as *Ella Minnow Pea* (Dunn, 2003) or *In the Country of Last Things* (Auster, 2005), but which is often applied to texts made up of other documents, such as diary entries, blog posts or emails, for example (see Kauffman, 1992 for discussion of contemporary epistolary modes).

Elphick (2014: 177) observes that the practice of incorporating journal entries or letters into dystopian fiction is a practice ‘highly beneficial to the reader, for the entries often provide concrete dates and locations that assist with contextualisation’. This is only marginally true of ‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’, as a full date is never specified and the reader must infer a spatio-temporal setting based upon the story’s futuristic world-building elements. Elphick (2014: 177) continues in his definition, to stipulate that ‘beyond such surface level features, the epistolary text also creates a window into a character’s psyche’, has the ability to ‘establish urgency in the text and create a direct emotional connection between the character and the reader’. Given the Category A narration of ‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’, which shifts between positive and negative shading in accordance with the narrator’s expressions of thoughts, uncertainties, beliefs and desires, Elphick’s conception of a ‘psychological window’ is particularly apt: the diary presents a personal insight into the cognitive processes and emotions of the narrator throughout each stage of the story.

However, as observed by Bray (2003: 1), ‘the epistolary novel is often thought to present a relatively unsophisticated and transparent version of subjectivity, as its letter-writers apparently jot down whatever is passing through their heads at the moment of writing’. Such is certainly true of the current text’s narrator who frequently digresses off topic and records various spontaneous thoughts alongside his broader expositions. However, the presentation of the diarist’s shifting attention and the frequent interruptions and breaks in the narrative itself, arguably offer an accurate illustration of the complexity and multi-directional nature of naturally occurring thought. Indeed, although such subjectivity is perhaps less subtle or artistically rendered than expressions of free indirect thought (which give the impression of a ‘dual-voice’), epistolary fiction can offer an equally ‘truthful internal monologue that articulates the anxiety, paranoia, emotional instability, fear, hatred, and unabashed psychological violence that have instilled in the character’s head’ (Elphick, 2014: 177).

Chatman (1978: 171), however, distinguishes epistolary and diary narratives from internal monologue, which he defines as a ‘true story-contemporaneous [form]’, for in the case of epistolary narratives, ‘the act of writing is always distanced from the correspondent’s life’, even if only minimally. He argues that this is a result of the necessary ‘delay’ between the moment of actualised experience and the moment of writing, which marks epistolary writing as an ‘enactment’ rather than as an expression of concurrent living-writing practice. As a result of this distance, and the added mediation of a fixed focaliser, the text-world level of ‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’ (and of epistolary narratives more broadly) is notably redundant. The combined lack of world-building information and the immediate modalisation of the discourse itself results, in Text-World-Theory terms, in the creation of an ‘empty text-world’ (Lahey, 2004; Gavins, 2007).

Empty text-worlds are ‘normally text-initial but ultimately immaterial’ as the reader makes a conceptual leap from the discourse-world, beyond the text-world to the world of the act of narration (Gavins, 2007: 133). Lahey (2004: 26) argues that in such instances the text-world can be constructed later in the text either as a result of world-switching, which prompts the reader to move back to the text-world level or conversely through readerly inferences – inference she notes ‘allows us to simultaneously assume the existence of a textworld [sic]’. In the case of ‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’ (and it can be assumed in the case of other epistolary fiction as well), the reader is not only able, but also required to construct a text-world for the narrative as the narrative progresses. Such a requirement is determined by the worlds logic surrounding the act of writing itself, as the diary form logically dictates a diarist, who, it follows, must be embodied and must therefore occupy a specific spatio-temporal location – a text-world (see Lahey, 2004: 26).

The text-world is only ever presented through the written introspections of the diarist and, as a result, is always at least one step further removed from the discourse participants. For example, in the opening paragraphs of ‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’ (reproduced below) the specific time and location of the speaker (which typically demarcates the parameters of a particular text-world) is ambiguous, with ‘September 3’ acting as the only indicator of the narrator’s spatio-temporal context.

(September 3)

Having just turned 40 have resolved to embark on grand project of writing everyday in this new black book just got at OfficeMax. Exciting to think how in one year, at a rate of one page/day, will have written 365 pages, and what a picture of life and times then available for kids & grandkids, even greatgrandkids, whoever, all are welcome (!) to see how life really was/is now. Because what do we know of other times really? How clothes smelled and carriages sounded? Will future people know, for example, about sound of airplanes going over at night, since airplanes by that time passé? Will future people know sometimes cats fought in night? Because by that time some chemical invented to make cats not fight? Last night dreamed of two demons having sex and found it was only two cats fighting outside window. Will future people be aware of concept of “demons”? Will they find our belief in demons quaint? Will “windows” even exist? Interesting to future generations that even sophisticated college grad like me sometimes woke in cold sweat, thinking of demons, believing one possibly under bed? Anyway, what the heck, am not planning on writing encyclopedia, if any future person is reading this, if you want to know what a “demon” was, go look it up, in something called an encyclopedia, if you even still have those! (Appendix C: 1-24)

Within this opening paragraph the diarist does not specify from where he is writing, either in terms of a distinct spatial location (i.e. his bedroom) or more broadly in terms of a point in history. The world-building objects provided at this point are also minimal, consisting only of the diary itself, ‘OfficeMax’ and a ‘window’, which in themselves offer no defining insights into the relegated text-world. In fact, only the diary-as-object exists in the opening world – the world of the act of narration/ writing. For example, the ‘window’ is reflected upon in relation to a past dream (‘last night dreamed of two demons having sex and found it was only two cats fighting outside window’), which not only triggers a temporal world-switch to ‘last night’ but also cues a further epistemic modal-world as the dream is a figment of the narrator’s consciousness. Similarly, ‘OfficeMax’ exists at a moment before the narrator begins his account as the purchase of the ‘black book’ indicates a temporal point before the moment of writing/speaking.

All of the events recorded in the diary also pertain to a specific text-world – the world that is occupied by the diarist – and consequently serve to flesh out the text-world retrospectively throughout the narrative, as new world-building information is garnered from narrative flashbacks and instances of what I term ‘direct writing’. I use direct writing here to indicate those instances of the narrative in which the diarist speaks specifically to a future reader or to a future counterpart of himself (e.g. ‘just reread that last entry and should clarify am not tired of work. It is a privilege to work. I do not hate the rich. I aspire to be rich myself’). These expressions of direct writing are formed in present tense and represent direct expressions of thought that are seen to occur in real-time. Such expressions are the closest examples of story-contemporaneous discourse and exemplify Cohn’s (1978: 209) argument that ‘the diary […] lends itself most naturally to a focus on the *present* moment: since a diarist’s moment of narration progresses in time, he has to tell his inner and outer condition anew every time he picks up his pen for a new instalment’ (emphasis in original). Instances of direct writing, which reflect on this ‘present moment’ tend to occur at the beginning or end of an entry as either introductory commentary that precedes a flashback or as closing commentary that offers current insights into previously occurring events.

Interestingly, however, although narrative events are primarily recounted in retrospect, in simple past tense (e.g. ‘bumper fell off’ (Appendix C: 42), ‘found dead large mouse’ (Appendix C: 65)), on occasion the narrator slips into present tense once a flashback has been initiated, simulating immediate reportage. For example, entry three which is dated ‘September 6’ opens with the evaluative, ‘very depressing birthday party today at home of Lilly’s friend Leslie Torrini’ (Appendix C: 99-100) which provides the world-building elements (time: today, location: Leslie’s house) for the flashback that follows, in which the narrator recounts the events of the party itself. The account of the party is initially communicated in simple past tense (e.g. ‘Torrinis showed us Lafayette’s room’ (Appendix C: 99-100) then slips into present tense with the presentation of direct speech – ‘Lilly: Wow, this garden is like ten times bigger than our whole yard’ (Appendix C: 112-13). The use of direct speech (which in this instance is marked by a colon rather than speech marks) triggers a temporal world-switch to the moment of speech. Following a brief discussion between Leslie’s mother and the narrator’s children the narrator maintains present tense narration indicated by the use of present tense verbs, such as ‘stands’ and ‘shakes’ in the example, ‘Eva stands timidly against my leg, shakes head no’ (Appendix C: 132), and present-progressive tense that typically indicates continuing action (e.g. ‘holding’ in ‘just then father (Emmett) appears, holding freshly painted leg from merry-go-round horse’ (Appendix C: 133-134)).

The narrator maintains this present tense narration until later in the entry when he offers retrospective opinions on narrative events that are attributable to his writing self (e.g. the switch to the past tense of the verb ‘to be’ in ‘it was, in my opinion, the most heartfelt’ (Appendix C: 159-162)). These evaluations, which tend to reflect on text-world events, further enrich the text-world by highlighting the social and ideological views of the text-world society and frequently identify differences between the future text-world of the narrative and the experiential environment of the reader who may feel initially positioned as the narratee of this particular discourse.

**5.2.1 Diary Writing and the Narratee**

Chatman (1978: 172) posits that diary writing and epistolary fictions ‘strongly presuppose an audience’, which in the case of traditional epistolary writing is discernible as the correspondent; diary writing, however, is less straightforward in its prescription of the ‘narratee’ (Prince, 1971). For example, Chatman (1978: 172) observes that the narratee of a diary is usually the diarist himself, who is writing for his or her own posterity – recounting events for ‘his own edification and memory’ or to work through problems and personal thoughts. Perry (1980: 128) shares this viewpoint, arguing that diarist narrators ‘talk to themselves’, and through their writing, ‘think out loud – on paper’. Certainly, the narrator of ‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’ does attempt to explicate the more troubling instances of his daily life during his writing processes, exemplified by his use of indirect rhetorical questions and his imagining of future scenarios – these are marked by the creation of multiple embedded epistemic modal-worlds and often model the reactions of other characters (e.g. the use of ‘might’ and ‘think’ in the example, ‘could draw cheetah but might then think she was getting camel’ (Appendix C: 520-521)). The diarist narrator also issues frequent personal reminders or ‘must do lists’, intended for a future enactor of himself, who will re-engage with the diary a day or two later (e.g. ‘Note to self: Order cheetah’ (Appendix C: 421); ‘Note to self: Visit Dad’s grave’ (Appendix C: 485)) – a practice which further identifies the narrator (or at least a counterpart of the narrator) as being in equal measure the narratee.

Within the opening section, however, it is explicitly noted by the narrator that his diary is intended as ‘a picture of life and times’ (Appendix C: 5-6), recorded for the benefit of ‘future generations’ (Appendix C: 18); a statement which in itself presupposes an implied future reader who may or may not be a relation of the narrator – ‘whoever, all are welcome (!)’ (Appendix C: 7). At the beginning of the narrative this ‘you’ seems to initially involve the actual reader, ‘forcing the addressee to absolutely invoke self-identity’ by the means of a ‘generalized you’- ‘a pretense of gnomic truth applicable to the current reader’ (Fludernik, 1995: 106-7). For example, in the opening extract the narrator posits the following conditional statement: ‘if any future person is reading this, if you want to know what a “demon” was, go look it up, in something called an encyclopedia, if you even still have those!’ (Appendix C: 21-24). This cues a conditional epistemic modal-world that reflects upon the discourse-world knowledge of the implied reader. At this point, a 2016 reader may feel involved in the second person address as although ‘demons’ are still culturally present concepts, the possession and/or use of a physical encyclopaedia is becoming increasingly rare given the omnipresence of the internet. As the aside infers a reader who is existent at a point in the narrator’s future, it is arguably possible at this point to imagine the text-world of the narrator being in the reader’s subjective past. However, as observed by Fludernik (1995: 107), in all cases of second person address ‘the reader soon discovers specific features of the you-referent with which she cannot identify by any stretch of the imagination’. For example, by entry three (if not before) the real reader of ‘The Semplica Girls’ will have unequivocally concluded that such address is exclusive of themselves given the futuristic world-building elements included in the narrative.

Lahey (2004: 24) argues, however, that even if we were to take a ‘universal’ reading (Semino, 1992), in which the reader is conceived of as narratee, despite such ‘situated’ features in the narrative that prevent identification, the reader addressed cannot be the same reader who is engaging with the text in the discourse-world as in Text-World-Theory terms ‘no entity has upwards access’ (see also Werth, 1999: 215). It is therefore impossible for a text-world character or narrator to have access to the real reader in the discourse-world and the only way to account for such address is to ‘concede that this reader is a reader-counterpart, or an imaginary reader constructed by the discourse participants and perhaps loosely based on the notion of the actual reader’ (Lahey, 2004: 24). Indeed, Chatman (1978: 151) draws a similar distinction among narratees as ‘implied readers’ (developed from Booth’s (1961: 157) ‘postulated reader’) who he defines as ‘parties immanent to the narrative’ and ‘real readers’ who are ‘extrinsic and accidental to the narrative’. As Chatman (1978: 151) concludes, when entering a fictional world the reader must ‘add another self’ to become an ‘implied reader’, imaginatively enacting the perceived qualities and schemata attributed to that entity. However, it is important to note that the implied reader is only ever a counterpart or enactor of the reader; the two are never one and the same and projection into the role is by no means necessary in order to comprehend the discourse.

An understanding of the narrator’s perceived future reader does however, assist in processes of world-building, as by highlighting supposed differences between the reported text-world of the narrator and the inferred future world he imagines for his reader, it is possible to construct a partial spatio-temporal setting for the narrative. For example, there are several characteristics the diarist attributes to his perceived reader, such as their limited schematic understanding of credit cards, demons, aeroplanes or the arcade game ‘Whac-a-Mole’ and their being biologically advanced to such a degree that they ‘no longer even need to eat to live’ and ‘just levitate all day’ (Appendix C: 849). Each of these features enrich the diarist’s conceptualisation of a future world that is distinct from his own (fictionalised) discourse-world as it can be inferred that each of the world-building objects (credit cards, aeroplanes etc.) exists in the world of the diarist and his own society abide by the familiar real-world practices of eating food for survival and working for a living. In relation to such world-building information, it is possible to conceptualise the narrator’s world as similar to a 2016 discourse-world and in terms of my own reading this was certainly the case for a short time. However, alongside such familiar information the narrator also introduces various estranging world-building elements that indicate a spatio-temporal setting, futuristic to 2016. These world-building elements, which are primarily depicted through flashbacks and embedded modal-worlds further enrich the text-world level and underline the satirical impetus of ‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’ – materialism.

**5.3 Satirising the American Dream**

It is during the third entry, dated September 6th, that the dystopian future of the text-world becomes apparent and the satirical undertones of the narrative are foregrounded:

(Sept. 6)

Very depressing birthday party today at home of Lilly’s friend Leslie Torrini.

House is mansion where Lafayette once stayed. Torrinis showed us Lafayette’s room: now their “Fun Den”. Plasma TV, pinball game, foot massager. Thirty acres, six outbuildings (they call them outbuildings): one for Ferraris (three), one for porches (two, plus one he is rebuilding), one for historical merry-go-round they are restoring as family (!). Across trout-stocked stream, red Oriental bridge flown in from china. Showed us hoofmark from some dynasty. In front room, near Steinway, plaster cast of hoofmark from even earlier dynasty, in wood of different bridge. Picasso autograph, Disney autograph, dress Greta Garbo once wore, all displayed in massive mahogany cabinet. (Appendix C: 96-110)

The opening use of temporal deixis, ‘today’, triggers a spatio-temporal world-switch to a time earlier that day when the narrator and his family attended a birthday party at the home of one of Lilly’s friends. The world-switch, as cued by the deictic temporal marker ‘today’ and the switch from present- to past-tense narration, shifts the reader’s deictic centre away from the time and place of the act of narration to the time and place of the party, which creates a separate text-world. The description of the Torrinis’ home which follows serves to flesh out this text-world, introducing a string of estranging world-building objects that identify Leslie’s house as being somewhat atypical of an average suburban home. Firstly, the narrator deems the house to be a ‘mansion’, with the common noun connoting a level of affluence that in terms of my own discourse-world schema I would attribute to a privileged social elite. Previously occupied by the French aristocracy (‘Lafayette’ being a fictional counterpart of Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette who visited the United States in the 1820s), the mansion is situated on a 30-acre estate with landscaping features and amenities that are highly exaggerated and indicative of the family’s extensive wealth.

The list of material possessions that follow further enrich this illustration with objects such as the multiple Ferraris and Porsches in particular highlighting the Torrinis’ fortune. Several of the items, such as the celebrity autographs, are rare in my own discourse-world whilst others, such as the hoof-prints and the oriental bridge, align more with my schema knowledge of museum objects than household ornaments. Each of these world-building elements is therefore particularly estranging, as although the objects are familiar within my discourse-world they are out of place and exaggerated within the text-world to a humorous degree. This is exemplified further by the narrator’s report of the Torrinis’ dinner menu:

[PASSAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT. FOR FULL REFERENCE SEE SAUNDERS, (2012) 2014g: p.114, ll. 133-139]

The extract, although part of the previous flashback, is initially presented in present tense, ‘(Emmett) appears’. There then follows a switch to indirect speech, which summarises the verbal processes of Emmett, Leslie’s father. Within this verbal process, there is an embedded boulomaic modal-world cued by the boulomaic lexical verb ‘hopes’, which details Mr Torrini’s wishes that his guests enjoy their impending meal. The meal itself is then described in a register I would typically attribute to a (pretentious) *a la carte* menu, with a level of specificity (‘flown in fresh from Guatemala’, ‘rare spice found only in one tiny region of Burma’) and exaggeration (he had to design and build a special freshness-ensuring container) that clearly satirises the materialistic impulses of the Torrini family and, indeed, the broader society of which they are part.

Materialism is the driving satirical impetus of ‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’ exemplified by the exaggeration of real-world objects and the ironic cross-world-mappings of familiar societal discourse structures, such as wishes for financial relief or advancement (‘help us not fall behind peers’, ‘give us enough’ (Appendix C: 336-367)) as well as idiomatic expressions concerning financial security (‘stretched a bit thin these days’ (Appendix C: 443)). The narrative mocks the consumerist nature of our own discourse-world present and exaggerates the capitalism present in contemporary society to a humorous yet unsettling degree within the text-world. In this respect, modern-day consumer society (specifically the American consumer society) can be identified as the satirised target for this particular discourse, as mutually negotiated by the satirist (George Saunders) and the satiree (the implied reader). This discourse relationship is set out in the following two figures. Figure 5.1 reproduces the original triadic structure of satirical discursive practice as set out by Simpson (2003). Each of the subject placements (labelled A-C) represents a participant role that is ‘ratified’ or ‘non-ratified’ within the discourse, with the lines between each role denoting the relationship bonds between them (Simpson, 2003: 87; see also Goffman, 1979).

Simpson (2003: 86-87) observes that each of the subject placements is ‘malleable’ and ‘unstable’ and that the bonds between them can be ‘renegotiated and redefined’ throughout a discourse event. For example, as a discourse develops, the bonds between positions A and B move closer together, given ‘the social solidarity consequence of a successful humour event is that it consolidates the bond between speaker and addressee, or writer and reader’ (Simpson, 2003: 87). As a result of this convergence and the combined ‘aggressive function’ of satirical discourse the bond between the latter two positions and role C increases (Simpson, 2003: 87). As first introduced in Chapter 2, the driving force of a satirical text, its ‘impetus’, arises from a particular tension between placements A and C, ‘activated by disapprobation from A about a perceived facet of the disposition of C’ (Simpson, 2003: 86). Simpson (2003: 86) notes that such disapprobation can be conceived of not only as disapproval of a certain person’s behaviour but can also extend to broader aspects of discourse and discourse practice.

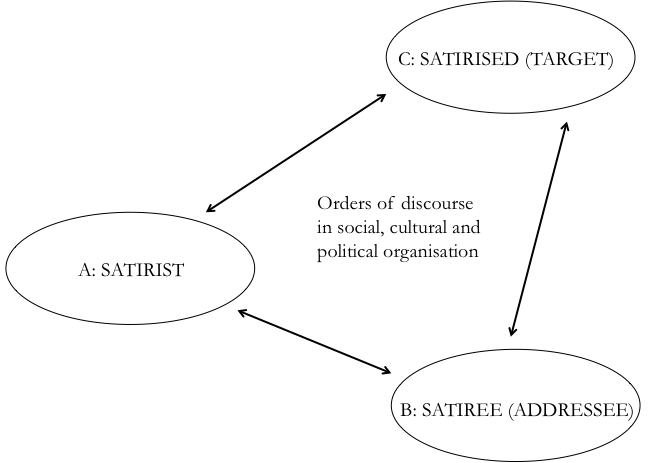


Figure 5.1 Triadic structure of satire as a discursive practice

Certainly this is the case with ‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’ whose overarching satirical target is the author’s contemporary society in the discourse-world, a society in which materialism (the discourse’s impetus) ‘is not only rampant and ascendant but is fast becoming the only game in town’ (Saunders, 2012: n.p.).

As mapped out in Figure 5.2, the broader conceptualistion of modern society occupies position C, George Saunders as the satirist occupies position A, and the implied reader, position B. In understanding and appreciating the didactic intent of ‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’ and recognising the satirical nature of the discourse, the bonds between the reader and the author decrease as the reader shares Saunders’ concerns for the ever-growing consumer culture of which they are both a part. The genus for this event derives in the main from a shared knowledge of such a consumer-led society and, I would argue, a certain degree of involvement in that community. Indeed, during an interview for the *New Yorker*, Saunders (2012b: n.p.) observed that the fears and desires of the narrator (in terms of his materialistic impulses) were roughly based on his own experience of raising his children in a culture where ‘you don’t want to come up short’. The potential for identification with the satirical target from both of the other two positions is therefore imperative to a successful reading of the story as, given the dystopian genre in which the text is situated, the world and the impulses of its inhabitants must be perceptible as refracted from the reader’s discourse-world present.

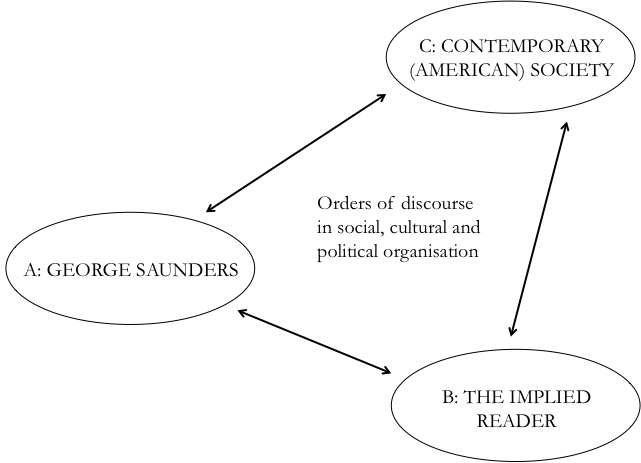


Figure 5.2 The satirical relationships underpinning ‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’

The emotional impact of the short story is according to Saunders (2012b: n.p.) dependant upon the relationship between the discourse participants and the satirical target, which finds its most poignant outlet in the representation of the Semplica girls themselves. The possession of the women is the epitome of the fictional world’s materialism and as the text’s primary novum, is also the key estranging feature of the discourse as a whole. The women are first introduced in line with the content descriptions of the Torrinis’ house and gardens, as a type of lawn ornament: ‘In front of house, on sweeping lawn, largest SG arrangement ever seen, all in white, white smocks blowing in breeze, and Lilly says: Can we go closer?’ (Appendix C: 121-123). Other than in the title, the latter acronymic reference is the first actual mention of the Semplica girls within the body of the narrative proper. On this initial introduction, the women are presented only in terms of the non-human specific noun ‘arrangement’ which exemplifies their objectified state and their role as contracted possessions. Only the apparel of the women – their white smocks – provides any indication at this point that the ‘arrangement’ is animate or human at all, and this in itself can only be inferred. Lilly’s direct speech, ‘can we go closer’ arguably jars with this human association, holding personal schematic connotations with prohibited or restricted exhibits at a museum or even a zoo, and was particularly defamiliarising in terms of my own conceptualisation of narrative events.

Saunders (2012b) observes that the power of the story emanates from a potential reader’s capacity to both empathise with the SGs and sympathise with the diarist. It is by recognising and appreciating the satirical attack on materialism (specifically its connection to real-world consumerism), and at the same time understanding the father’s need to excel that renders the text poignant. Saunders outlines this emotional dialectic as follows:

I knew that the women in the yard were symbols for, you know, “the oppressed,” and that the whole story, as I was imagining it at that moment, would be “about” the way that people of means use and abuse people without. So that was the danger—that the story might turn out to be (merely) about that. In which case, who needs it, you know? If the only thing the story did was say, “Hey, it’s really wrong to hang up living women in your backyards, you capitalist-pig oppressors,” that wasn’t going to be enough. We kind of know that already. It had to be about that *plus* something else. (Saunders 2012b: n.p.) (emphasis in original)

The ‘something else’ Saunders is referring to here is arguably two-fold – on the one hand it reflects readerly empathy with the narrator, as encouraged by the discourse, and on the other conflicting conceptualisations of the Semplica girls themselves, who to some degree, desire to be contracted yet choose to leave when the opportunity arises. By fully condemning the narrator and judging his society’s employment of the women ‘anyone who [is] “against” it (i.e., the reader, Eva) [is] sort of out of step with everyone else in the fictive world, including the SGs themselves’ (Saunders, 2012b: n.p.). Yet at the same time the narrative is designed to satirise and critique this particular world-view, resulting in the problematic emotional dialectic evoked by the narrative, a dialectic which makes the story ‘less reducible to a simple reading,’ (Saunders, 2012b: n.p.).

**5.4 Mind-modelling the Semplica Girls**

The conceptualisation of the Semplica girls is thus of central importance to the experience of reading the narrative, as the women represent not only the story’s central novum but also epitomise the exaggerated extent of materialism within the text-world, to which the reader is invited to critically respond. Throughout the text the Semplica girls are denied speech or thought, with consciousness being attributed to them either by the other characters in the narrative (namely the narrator and/or Eva) or through the recorded presentations of alternate multimodal discourses, such as Eva’s drawings, Lilly’s school projects, or the women’s official documents as issued by the SG company. Each of these character-led perspectives creates a different voice for the SGs and models the minds of the women to significantly different effects. The reader must conceptualise each perspective in order to garner a fuller insight into the minds of the SGs themselves, although, as such a perspective is always filtered through another consciousness (a consciousness with personal biases, beliefs and motivations) such insights are on the whole unreliable. I will begin by analysing the women’s state of mind as prescribed by the narrator.

Prior to the purchase of his own Semplica girls the narrator observes a group of neighbourhood SGs whilst admiring the material wealth of his peers. The event is reported in the entry dated September 8th with the narrator attributing speech to the women – their actual interaction and personal consciousnesses are inaccessible:

[PASSAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT. FOR FULL REFERENCE SEE SAUNDERS, (2012) 2014g: p. 121, ll. 328-331]

The opening function-advancing propositions within the passage, which take the form of two consecutive circumstantial processes, ‘wind stops’, ‘everything returns to vertical’ provide further details as to the conditions of the Semplica girls, who being suspended by the microlines are left to swing with the blowing of the wind. Evidently the women are not let down or brought inside during harsh weather. The prepositional phrase, ‘from across the lawn’, shifts attention onto the SGs, whose conversation is indirectly reported by the narrator. The narrator recounts the women’s behavioural process of ‘sighing’ and there then follows an example of represented speech acts (NRSA) as the diarist notes a ‘smattering of mumbled foreign phrases’. Specific discourse is not reported, however, and the women’s talk is subsequently interpreted by the narrator as either a report on the weather or a phatic expression of ‘goodnight’. Both of these fleeting epistemic modal-worlds, triggered by the epistemic lexical adverb ‘perhaps’ present idealised images of the SG lifestyle and indeed of the women themselves, given the quaint exclamations (‘gosh’) and demure evaluatives (‘that was some strong wind’) ascribed to them at this point.

The narrator’s idealistic mind-modelling of the SGs becomes more apparent following the purchase and assembly of his own Semplica arrangement. From the moment of their arrival, the narrator attributes thoughts, speech and feelings to the four women he has contracted (‘Tami (Laos), Gwen (Moldova), Lisa (Somalia), Betty (Philippines)’ (Appendix C: 636-368) based purely on his own speculations and it can be assumed the shared ideological beliefs of his surrounding community. The following extract, details the arrival of the newly acquired SGs to the house of the narrator – the entire event is narrated in present tense:

[PASSAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT. FOR FULL REFERENCE SEE SAUNDERS, (2012) 2014g: p.132, ll. 614-625]

The women are introduced under the acronym SGs and despite having both westernised and original proper names they are referred to collectively throughout much of the text. The first material action process attributed to them is also collective as they exit the truck together and stand together ‘shyly’ near the fence – ‘shyly’ being a prescribed behavioural characteristic inferred by the narrator. Following a detailed description of the high quality features of the infrastructural unit that will hold the women, the narrator goes on to interpret the behaviour and speech of the SGs. For example, the narrator attributes further qualities to the SGs based on their standing behaviour, reporting that the women were ‘polite’ and ‘nervous’. Such inferred politeness ties in with the narrator’s earlier modelling of the neighbouring SGs and adds to the reader’s developing understanding of the women as polite, gracious and respectful employees, advanced further by the one girl’s ‘timid wave’.

Palmer (2004: 175) terms such developing mind-modelling a ‘continuing-consciousness frame’, which he argues a reader must construct in order to follow the development of a given character throughout a literary work. Palmer (2004: 176) observes: ‘fictional beings are necessarily incomplete, frames, scripts and preference rules are required to supply the defaults that fill the gaps in the storyworld and provide the presuppositions that enable the reader to construct continually conscious minds from the text’. Information concerning fictional minds must therefore be continually accessible within the worlds of a narrative even when not figural to a particular scene. Drawing on Emmott (1997), Palmer (2004: 181-182) argues that this frame is made up of all references to a specific proper noun, that is a mental representation created by all the previous references to a particular character, including readerly inferences and contextual information in the narrative, subsequently constructing a character that retains consciousness even in the spaces between the active mentions of that character.

To return to the passage, then, the indirect speech, which follows the initial descriptions of the SG’s states of mind, cues an epistemic modal-world, as it is based on the interpretations of the narrator. The speech is not heard or presumably understood (given the previous indication that the SGs converse in multiple languages) and therefore cannot be recounted as direct speech. The imagined speech itself further advances the continuing-consciousness frame for the women, as the girl who waves is, it is inferred, being reprimanded for being disrespectful to her new employer, exemplified by the embedded deontic modal-world cued by the use of ‘supposed to’. Once again here the narrator perceives the women as all politeness and grace – as courteous employees who are grateful and happy to have been bought by a family who will allow them to wave.

The happiness of the SGs is further realised as the narrator details a school project undertaken by Lilly for “Favorite Things Day” – an indication in itself of the women’s position as material possessions given the indefinite and inanimate use of the pronoun ‘things’. The full description of Lilly’s schoolwork – a poster – is provided below.

[PASSAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT. FOR FULL REFERENCE SEE SAUNDERS, (2012) 2014g: p.116, ll. 1545-1556]

The information presented in the poster is character-advancing, providing contextual background for the women that is individually rather than collectively ascribed. The poster provides the closest insight into the private consciousnesses of the SGs, as although it is filtered through two other character perspectives the information was gathered during interviews with the women themselves and is therefore to some extent authentic. Although the information is dictated by the narrator, and rephrased from his own perspective as diarist, the narrator is interpreting Lilly’s artwork and Lilly in turn has modelled the minds of the SGs. The embedded voices within this extract are therefore particularly interesting as the perspective of Lilly, the diarist and the SGs appear to merge. At the beginning of the extract the focalisation is evidently that of the diarist, who outlines the graphological and content features of Lilly’s project (‘Poster = photo of each SG, plus map of home country, plus stories Lilly apparently got during interview (!)’). The parenthetical exclamation mark that closes this opening declarative is also attributable to the narrator, marking his surprise at Lilly’s having held interviews with the SGs. Throughout the extract there are additional parenthetical exclamations which I also align with the narrator’s perspective, noting his apparent astonishment at the personal histories of the women, of which up until this point he has been ignorant.

The switch in tense from the past progressive in the opening descriptions of the narrator to the past-tense in the account of the poster’s content adds Lilly’s perspective to the narration, as this information has been written and interpreted by her. For example, the evaluative use of the adjective ‘very tough’ to describe Gwen arguably identifies Lilly’s original interpretation rather than the secondary perspective of the narrator, given the narrator’s emotional detachment from the women throughout the earlier narrative. I also assume here that the quoted use of ‘“mini-lorry”’ marks Lilly’s attempts at translation. On the other hand, “mini-lorry” could also be ascribed to the SG named Lisa, who must equally translate her story into English in order to tell it to Lilly.

The memories retold by the SGs and captured by Lilly are the closest representations of their own thoughts, albeit as represented by two additional perspectives. For example, on introducing Gwen, Lilly recorded the following: ‘Gwen (Moldova) = very tough, due to Moldovian youth: used bloody sheets found in trash + duct tape to make soccer ball, then, after much practice with bloody-sheet ball, nearly made Olympic team (!)’. Again, here Lilly’s writing is retold from the narrator’s point of view, retaining some colouring of her own perspective and arguably that of Gwen. The embedded flashback within the description shifts the reader’s deictic centre from the past of the interview itself to a moment even further past, during which time Gwen lived in Moldova. The switch to past tense following the colon creates a temporal world-switch, which marks an indefinite time during Gwen’s past when she trained for the Olympics. The location, beyond the overarching country – Moldova, is unspecific and focus is given instead to Gwen’s soccer training with a bloodied football. Gwen’s story in itself supports Lilly’s modelling of her character as ‘tough’ and, in terms of my own mind-modelling, attributes qualities of determination and resourcefulness to her character.

The minds of the SGs are also modelled from the perspective of the narrator’s youngest daughter, Eva. The child, unlike the rest of her family believes the purchase and display of the SGs to be unpleasant. Eva’s discomfort with the situation is presented in descriptions of her artwork, which are described as having ‘recently gone odd’ (Appendix C: 859). The drawings depict the SGs as perceived by the little girl – as sad, distressed women who are far from content with their newfound employment. Eva, like her father, projects emotions, speech and thought processes onto the SGs but these projections contrast significantly with the imagined discourse and beliefs attributed to them by the narrator. For instance, the following passage describes the first of Eva’s drawings, created following the family’s visit to the Torrinis’: ‘[…] in sketchpad: crayon pic of row of sad SGs. Could tell were meant to be sad due to frowns went down off faces like Fu Manchus and tears were dropping in arcs, flowers springing up were tears hit the ground’ (Appendix C: 274-277). Once again the narrator describes a multimodal form of narrative that has been initially created from the point of view of one of his children.

The drawing projects Eva’s mind-modelling of the SGs as unhappy, evidenced by the narrator’s description of the ‘Fu Manchu’ frowns that grace the faces of their crayoned counterparts. The metaphorical comparison between the SG’s facial expressions and the shape of a Fu Manchu moustache (beginning at the corners of the mouth and tapering down on either side past the jaw-line) emphasises the child’s perception of the SG’s unhappiness. As noted by the narrator, this exaggerated facial expression suggests that the women are depicted as sad recognising not only Eva’s modelling of the SGs but also the narrator’s mind-modelling of his daughter. This is evidenced by the creation of two embedded epistemic modal-worlds as cued by the phrase, ‘could tell were meant to be sad’. The first epistemic modal-world is triggered by the modal auxiliary ‘could’, which, combined with the main verb ‘tell’, indicates that narrator is describing his interpretation of Eva’s drawing. This is emphasised by the formation of a second embedded modal-world, created in response to the modal lexical verb ‘meant to be’ that again highlights the narrator’s personal interpretations.

Throughout the narrative Eva’s artwork continues to offer an oppositional mind-model for the SGs that adds contrasting qualities to the reader’s continuing-consciousness frame for the characters. For example, her second drawing (supposedly enclosed in the diary) ascribes additional negative emotions to the Semplica girls and, through the embedding of voices, gives their characters speech.

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The opening evaluative offered by the narrator, that Eva’s artwork has ‘recently gone odd’, draws attention to the atypicality of the girl’s illustrations, both compared to her normal drawing practices (exemplified by the temporal adverb ‘recently’) and in terms of the wider social values of her community. It is the oppositional nature of Eva’s mind-model for the SGs as ‘unhappy’ that causes familial concern, as it is out of place with the general view of the women as contented employees. The narrator proceeds to describe the drawing, creating two successive embedded epistemic modal-worlds once again triggered by the epistemic use of ‘can tell’ and ‘is meant to be’. Also, as in the first picture, the SGs are depicted as ‘frowning’, with tears rolling down their cheeks – images, which add consistency to Eva’s perception of the women’s unhappiness.

Eva’s mind-modelling of the women as distressed is then further enhanced through her representation of the SGs’ speech and thought. Each of the speech acts attributed to the SGs, which include expressives (‘OUCH! THIS SURE HERTS’, ‘THANKS LODES’) and directives (‘WHAT IF I AM YOUR DAUHTER?’) create embedded epistemic modal-worlds, as the voice they project is distinctly Eva’s. The represented speech, which is depicted in thought bubbles above the drawing-SGs’ heads is made to sound like the child’s voice through the orthographical inaccuracies of the discourse and the informal grammatical structure of the utterances. The embedded speech not only enhances Eva’s mind-model for the SGs as unhappy employees but also depicts them as sarcastic (‘THANKS LODES’), angry with the family (‘pointing long bony finger at house’) and misunderstood. This final quality is inferred from the embedded hypothetical modal-world in the speech bubble attributed to Lisa – ‘WHAT IF I AM YOUR DAUHTER?’. This forces the diarist (as implied fictionalised reader) and the implied actualised reader to imagine Eva or Lilly in a similar role and invites feelings of empathy with the women that thus far in the narrative have been lacking.

There are therefore two distinct mind-models being developed throughout the narrative that present opposing conceptualisations of the SGs’ consciousnesses and create a particular tension between Eva and the rest of her family. As a result of this tension the narrator decides to teach Eva more about the previous lifestyles of the women and inform her of their reasons for signing up for the Semplica programme. To achieve this the narrator introduces a fourth point-of-view in the form of the women’s official personal statements, as provided (and presumably edited) by the SG company. The narrator’s summary of the women’s personal statements is reproduced below:

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Once again here the narrator presents narrative events in present-tense despite recounting the scene from a retrospective position. Simple present-tense verbs (e.g. ‘go to kitchen’, ‘get idea’), present-progressive verbs (e.g. ‘Eva facing wall’) and expressions of direct thought (e.g. ‘Yikes’) add a sense of immediacy to the narrative. Following a comparative statement, which creates an embedded epistemic modal-world (‘worse than I thought’) the narrator goes on to detail the contents of the women’s personal statements. The personal backgrounds of the women are retold in past tense and once again present a series of embedded perspectives. The personal statements are presumably written or dictated by the women as part of their applications, indicated by the brief switch to Betty’s voice in the description ‘“ very skilled for computer”’ which is presented as a direct quotation in her application. As an example of direct discourse this quotation triggers a fleeting world-switch to the moment of Betty’s narration. However, the typographical features of the narrative, such as the use of parenthetical comments and parenthetical exclamation marks, the use of a plus sign in place of a connective, and grammatically ellipted sentence structures are characteristic of the narrator’s written discourse, reminding the reader that this information is still filtered through his point of view.

The actual contextual information, which details the past experiences of the SGs, is reported in past tense and, despite the evident summarisations of the narrator, provides the most reliable insight into the SGs’ minds. Although the information may have also been edited by the SG company before publication, the reasons for the women’s applications (e.g. ‘two sisters already in brothels’, ‘sex slave in Kuwait’, ‘little sister [died] of AIDs’) offer a more raw insight into the women’s histories than the personal details provided through Lilly’s interviews. The prepositional phrases ‘in brothels’, ‘in Kuwait’, act as as ‘minor processes’ (Halliday [1985] 2013: 329) triggering two spatio-temporal world-switches, as despite being moodless sequences the prepositions capture those material processes in which the women’s siblings engage in dangerous activities. The personal statements therefore support the narrator’s positive mind-modelling of the women who as Semplica Girls are able to provide for their families and occupy less threatening job roles than those of their relations.

The narrator therefore draws upon the women’s personal statements when attempting to convince Eva of the benefits of the SG system, reading aloud to her from Betty’s personal statement in support of his explanations: ‘Me: Does that help? Do you understand now? Can you kind of imagine her little brother, in a good school, because of her, because of us?’ (Appendix C: 703-705). The questions asked of Eva (which are communicated in direct speech) identify the narrator’s attempt to mind-model his daughter and gauge her responses at this point. The questions initiate a temporal world-switch, as the narrative shifts back to present tense and the reader’s deictic centre is moved to the time of speech. There then follows a series of embedded epistemic modal-worlds, as not only are questions in themselves epistemic modal-world forming, but also the narrator is questioning Eva’s own feelings of certainty and understanding. Eva continues to dislike the SG system, however, and as such maintains an opposing viewpoint to her broader society. It is this broader social mind that I will now move on to analyse.

**5.4.1 Social Minds in ‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’**

Throughout ‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’ behavioural and mental processes are attributed to the SGs by various characters within the text, which project differing accounts of the women’s consciousnesses. The reader is presented with a multifaceted continuing-consciousness frame for their characters as a result that contrastingly depicts the women as either gracious, contented employees or unhappy, accusative and oppressed. Such a conflict is epitomised in the confused and shocked responses of the narrator following the SGs’ escape, as his account takes on significant ‘negative shading’ (see Section 3.3.1; also Simpson, 1993) as he mind-models the women from a less confident or idealistic perspective:

[PASSAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT. FOR FULL REFERENCE SEE SAUNDERS, (2012) 2014g: p. 167, ll. 1578-1584]

The passage opens with two successive negated worlds ‘no money, no papers’ which each have a distinct conceptual texture and exist separately from the originating text-world. This results from the negated structure of the utterances that require a different form of cognitive processing. In line with other cognitive models of discourse, Text World Theory posits that negated discourse must be first positively conceptualised in the mind of the reader before it can be processed negatively (Gavins, 2007: 102). For example, in the negated text-world created from the negative construction ‘no papers’ a conceptualisation of the women as possessing the necessary documentation must be realised before its negated state can be understood. In this way, ‘the contents of this text-world are foregrounded in the reader’s mind, since they must first be brought into focus in the discourse in order then to be negated’ (Gavins, 2007: 102).

Following these opening negations there then follows a string of epistemic modal-worlds in which the narrator’s uncertainties regarding the SGs and their reasons for leaving are expressed. Interestingly, each of the questions, for the first time in the narrative, are posited in relation to the SGs as individual, albeit indefinite entities, exemplified by the use of the third person possessive pronoun ‘her’ as opposed to the more typical use of ‘they’. Several of these worlds pose questions for the women’s futures indicated by the use of the verb ‘will’ to express future tense (e.g. ‘Who will remove microline?’ ‘Who will give her a job?’, ‘When will she ever see her home + family again?’). These worlds, although not negated like the opening two, are arguably negatively coloured, as each of the questions is posed with the expectation of a negative response.

The diarist continues to reflect on the past choices of the SGs exemplified by the epistemic modal constructions, ‘Why would she do? Why would she ruin it all, leave our yard?’, which question the material action processes of each particular woman. In order to flesh out the epistemic modal-worlds, created from each of these rhetorical questions, the reader must draw upon their continuing-consciousness frames for the SGs, in this instance as populated by Eva’s mind-modelling of the women as unhappy and in pain. It is Eva’s perceptions of the women, therefore, that appear the more accurate at this point, as Eva is able to understand why the Semplica girls may choose to leave, where even at the end of the narrative the diarist cannot. Such an interpretation is epitomised by the final epistemic modal-worlds cued by the following epistemic constructions: ‘could have had nice run w/us. What in the world was she seeking? What could she want so much, that could make her pull such a desperate stunt?’

Saunders (2012b: n.p.) acknowledges the oblivious attitude of the narrator noting that ‘when something really bad is going on in a culture, the average guy doesn’t see it. He can’t. He’s average. And is surrounded by and immersed in the cant and discourse of the status quo’. Saunders here draws attention to the influence of the narrator’s ideological point of view (see Section 3.3.1) on his perception of the Semplica girls and their role in his society – a point of view that is determined by a particular embedded belief system that a group of people share. Saunders refers to this point of view in terms of the ‘cant and discourse of the status quo’, that is, the prominent cultural and social attitudes that define the narrator’s particular society. These shared values, beliefs, judgments and attitudes exemplify that members of the diarist’s future world form, in Palmer’s (2004, 2010) terms, an ‘intermental mind’.

As originally introduced in Chapter 3, an intermental mind is made up of an intermental unit – large, medium or small – that can be conceived of as ‘thinking’ in the same way. Palmer (2011b: 396) argues that such minds are ‘distributed’ amongst the individuals that make up a particular intermental unit – a conception that goes against much cognitive thinking on embodied consciousness. There is, however, great value to Palmer’s notion of social, shared and/or collective thought and several attempts have been made to ameliorate this more contentious aspect of his argument. For example, Stockwell (2011b: 290) argues that Palmer’s conception of social minds confirms his own ‘sense that narrative viewpoint can be best understood as a cline of stylistic features from the collective to the idiosyncratic’. By situating cognition on a cline, as more or less idiosyncratic, Stockwell (2011b) moves away from the conception of a tangible ‘social mind’ to reflect upon intermental thought as an extension of an individual consciousness that is influenced or marked by a collective viewpoint. In discussing intermental thought in *The Victim*, Gavins (2013: 71) argues that the thoughts and actions of the text’s protagonist, Levanthal, are ‘framed’ against key intermental units in the text. I find this term particularly useful, as by conceiving of a social mind as more of an ideological backdrop for individual cognition, intermental thought can be more broadly identified as a form of cognitive performance.

Taking this term beyond its use in Gavins’ (2013) analysis, I therefore propose that, by conceptualising the collective thoughts of an intermental unit as a ‘frame’ as opposed to a ‘mind’, it is possible to conceive of social consciousness as a filter that impacts upon an individual’s viewpoint. A member of a particular intermental unit, whilst enacting his own subjective cognitive processes, can be seen to perform intermental processes in line with a mutually negotiated and accepted set of shared values, beliefs and perceptions; their individual consciousness is effectively filtered through an ‘intermental frame’. In what remains of this chapter, I put forward an argument for the accommodation of ‘intermental frames’ within Text World Theory, detailing the potential advantages of perceiving of social cognition in this way and outlining the presence and effect of intermental framing within ‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’.

**5.4.2 Intermental Frames**

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the narrator possesses a deep need to be perceived of as equal to his peers and worthy of their friendship and esteem. For this reason, much of the narrator’s opinions and beliefs are aligned with those of his neighbours and friends and more broadly framed by the accepted social values of his community. The influence of the Torrini family, for example, who in themselves represent a small intermental unit, exemplifies the susceptibility of the narrator’s mind and the significant impact of surrounding intermental units (which are embedded within the large intermental unit of the narrator’s society) upon the narrator’s individual viewpoint. For example, during the narrator’s account of Leslie Torrini’s birthday party the narrator describes a sharp change in his opinion of his family’s gift once it is complimented by Mrs Torrini:

[PASSAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT. FOR FULL REFERENCE SEE SAUNDERS, (2012) 2014g: p. 115, ll.159-69]

On gifting Leslie a set of paper dolls, the narrator initially observes that the present was ‘not the very worst’, indicating that in his own subjective opinion it was at the least not one of the better presents. He focuses upon the thoughtfulness of his family’s gift, which he claims was ‘the most heartfelt’ despite it being the ‘least expensive’. Each of these comparatives – the superlative construction, in particular – exemplifies the narrator’s habit of measuring his perceived social worth against that of his peers.

The narrator’s opinion of the paper doll set then shifts at the close of passage as he adapts his perspective to align with the viewpoint of Leslie’s mother, who exclaimed that the present was ‘kitsch’. The direct speech creates a new text-world, as the narrative shifts to the speech time of Mrs Torrini (indicated by the switch to present tense) and recounts the mother’s approval or ‘love’ of the gift. Such an emphatic response caused the narrator to modify his earlier thoughts which are presented as a flashback to the time of purchase – ‘we did not view it as kitsch at the time we bought it’ – to mirror Mrs Torrini’s – ‘I thought: Yes, well, maybe it is kitsch, maybe we did intend’. There are several embedded epistemic modal-worlds within this particular statement that indicate this changing thought process. The indication of direct thought cues the initial embedded modal-world, which is followed by two further embedded modal-worlds triggered by the successive use of ‘maybe’. These modal-worlds represent a change in the subjective thoughts of the narrator, yet are based on his modelling of the beliefs and opinions of others. As such, I would contend that these modal-worlds are intermentally framed, depicting the individual embodied viewpoint of the narrator as influenced and coloured by the intermental unit of the Torrini family. The worlds created are representations of the individual mental constructions of the narrator only, they are not projected by a disembodied group mind, but do project a sense of double focalisation: the narrator’s thoughts are modified to suit a particular ideological point of view before they are then realised as his own.

On a broader scale, the narrator’s mind-modelling of the Semplica girls and his views as to the Semplica system are evidently framed not only against the small intermental units of his friends, but also the large intermental unit that encapsulates the society of his particular world. His thoughts about the women’s motivations for coming to the US, their desire to be an SG, and their reasons for escaping are all filtered through the shared values, beliefs and attitudes of this large intermental unit. For example, in the following extract the narrator questions the SGs’ decision to leave his home and details an imagined account of the Semplica application process:

SGs very much on mind tonight, future reader. Where are they now? Why did they go? Just do not get. Letter comes, family celebrates, girl sheds tears, stoically packs bags, thinks: must go, am family’s only hope. Puts on brave face, promises she will return as soon as contract complete. (Appendix C: 1565-1568)

The extract, which is mapped out in Figure 5.3, opens with an example of direct writing in which the narrator talks directly to his implied future reader. The thoughts expressed are produced at the time of writing and present the spontaneous musings of the diarist who reports that the SGs are figuratively ‘on his mind’. These thoughts cue the creation of three successive embedded epistemic modal-worlds (shown to the far left of the figure): the first two form as a result of the rhetorical questions ‘where are they now?’ and ‘why did they go’; and the third, which is also negated, is prompted by the colloquial use of ‘get’ in place of the epistemic lexical verb ‘understand’.

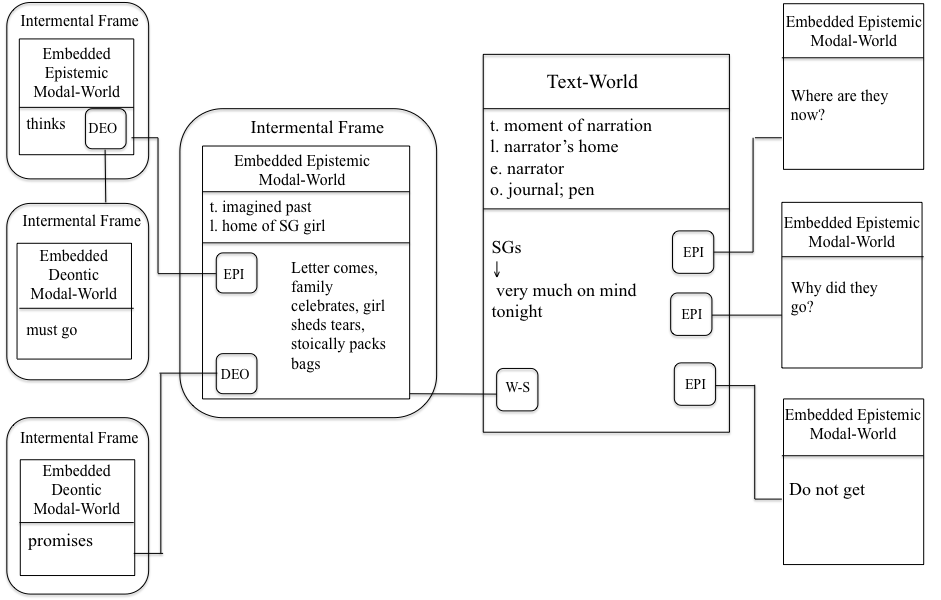


Figure 5.3 Intermental framing in an extract

from ‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’

There then follows a further embedded epistemic modal-world in which the narrator imagines the reactions of an imagined enactor of one of his three SGs when she received the news that she had been chosen by the Semplica company to join the programme. This is illustrated by the epistemic modal-world box to the right of the main Text-World in Figure 5.3. Although the modal-world takes on the spatial-temporal location of this particular woman, such world-building elements are both indefinite and also imagined by the narrator himself and are therefore not world-switch forming. From this imagined text-world, the narrator models the thoughts and wishes of the SG enactor cueing an additional epistemic modal-world that presents the mental processes of the woman on receiving her acceptance letter, which in turn triggers an embedded deontic modal-world in which the SG muses on her obligations to leave and provide for her family. These worlds are shown to the far left of the figure.

The imagined worlds constructed within this extract are again conceptualisations of the narrator’s own subjective thoughts and are embodied within his own individual consciousness. However, it is the large intermental unit of the narrator’s society which has constructed the idealised narrative that surrounds the Semplica girls and which continually echoes the shared beliefs that these women are happy to be chosen, that they consider themselves somewhat heroic by bravely helping their families, and that becoming a Semplica girl is something they truly wanted. Indeed, various characters throughout the narrative express these exact arguments, modelling the SGs’ wishes (e.g. Thomas - ‘they want to […] they like applied for it’ (Appendix C: 686)) and acknowledging the benefits of joining the programme (e.g. Pam – ‘where they’re from, the opportunities are not so good’ (Appendix C: 689)). Even the media projects positive endorsements of the Semplica programme for the narrator to consume – ‘very moving piece on NPR re. Bangladeshi SG sending money home: hence her parents able to build small shack’ (Appendix C: 281-282), adding further granularity to the intermental frame. Returning to the extract, each of the narrator’s imaginings are therefore coloured by the shared values and beliefs of his society and are enacted within the intermental frame of this broad intermental unit (as expressed by the secondary frame around each modal-world in Figure 5.3).

**5.6 Review**

In this chapter I have offered a systematic Text-World-Theory analysis of George Saunders’ ‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’ based upon my own subjective reading of the narrative. I examined the particular conceptualisation of narrator-narratee relationships in epistolary fiction, mapping the distinctions between the actualised reader, the implied reader, the implied reader of the text-world diary and the narratee within the text. I expanded upon my introductory discussion of dystopian satire to examine Saunders’ critique of materialism within the discourse-world, arguing that concerns for the consumerist nature of the author’s real-world society are refracted in the exaggerated avarice of the text-world enactors. I argued that by successfully running the satirical discourse, the actualised reader should be able to identify materialism as the satirical impetus of ‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’ and recognise the satirical target as the author’s contemporary society. In so doing, I observed that readers of this text are invited to draw refracted similarities between their own experiential environment and the text-world, in order to perceive real-world materialism from a more critical perspective.

I have placed particular focus upon the modelling of the Semplica Girls within the narrative and examined the conflicting attributions of consciousness to them by other characters in the story. In advancing this discussion of attributed consciousness I have considered the impact of intermental social structures upon the individual, idiosyncratic opinions of the narrator, identifying several intermental units within the narrative itself. So as to further develop the application of Palmer’s (2004, 2010) model of the social mind, I have proposed the term ‘intermental frame’ as a replacement term for ‘intermental mind’ or ‘social mind’ in order to alleviate the contentious notion of distributed or disembodied consciousness. In applying intermental frames to the discourse of the narrator, I have suggested a more nuanced model of social cognition that can be accounted for in terms of Text-World-Theory and that aligns more comfortably with existing notions of embodied consciousness and ideological point of view.

It is arguably the intermental framing of the narrator’s discourse that determines the peculiarity of his estranging perspective and of the text-world itself, as the social values he shares, and those that the society collectively project, are most likely distinct from the beliefs of the reader. It is the disparity between these two perspectives, and indeed between the text-internal perspectives of the society-wide intermental unit and Eva, which create the tensions within and outside of the narrative that determine the story’s poignancy and indeed mirror the ‘insider/outsider dynamics’ that are prototypical of dystopian narratives more broadly. As such in constructing the text-worlds of ‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’, the reader must contend with conflicting mind-models of the SGs and engage their own ethical discourse-world viewpoints. It is the ethical experiences of the dystopian reader that I move on to examine in more detail in the following chapter as I investigate the social significance of ecodystopian narratives and the experience of reading Paolo Bacigalupi’s ‘Pump Six’.

Chapter 6: ‘Pump Six’

**6.0 Overview**

The analyses in this chapter focus upon Paolo Bacigalupi’s short story ‘Pump Six’ (Bacigalupi, [2008] 2010a). Section 6.1 introduces the narrative and outlines the critical responses to the story following its original publication in 2008. I offer an in-depth Text-World-Theory analysis of my own reading of ‘Pump Six’ placing particular attention on the story’s opening paragraphs and the introduction of its key ecocritical themes. In 6.2, I examine the presentation of such themes in line with contemporary ecodystopian theory, reflecting on the real-world anxieties addressed by Bacigalupi’s refracted vision of a degenerate United States. The experience of reading ‘Pump Six’ is arguably particularly poignant as a result of such text-world-discourse-world mappings, as evidenced by ‘real’ readers’ responses to Bacigalupi’s devolved world. Section 6.3 provides a detailed insight into the idiosyncratic responses of online reviewers as drawn from the *LibraryThing* website (see Section 4.2 for full methodology). Across this section, I review three particular response trends: reviewers’ reported belief in the authenticity of Bacigalupi’s text-worlds, explicit discourse-world-text-world connections, and specific emotional responses to the texts. Following on from this discussion, I examine Bacigalupi’s characterisation of the ‘trog’ in 6.4, the devolved human species that exemplify the ecodystopian motivations in ‘Pump Six’. I analyse the attribution of consciousness to the creatures and investigate the relationship between these characters and their human counterparts, a relationship that underpins the logic and consequences of this particular world.

**6.1 Pump Six**

Paolo Bacigalupi’s ([2008] 2010a)) ‘Pump Six’ was originally published in 2008 for the dystopian short story collection *Pump Six and Other Stories* (all in-text citations are to this issue; ‘Pump Six’ is reproduced in Appendix D). As the title text of the collection, ‘Pump Six’ is the only narrative designed for the edition, with the nine other texts appearing in various sources, science-fictional and otherwise, including *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* (‘Pocketful of Dharma’ (1999), ‘The Fluted Girl’ (2003), ‘The People of Sand and Slag’ (2004b), ‘The Calorie Man’ (2005), ‘Pop Squad’ (2006a)); *Asimov’s Science Fiction* (‘The Pasho’ (2004a), ‘Yellow Card Man’ (2006c)), *High Country News* (‘The Tamarisk’, (2006b)) and *Good Words Make Good Stories* (‘Softer’ (2007)). The collection as a whole maps the evolution of Bacigalupi’s work, confirming his penchant for hard-hitting social criticism and his commitment to ecocritical concerns. As a distinguished environmentalist (see Nijhuis 2008; Selisker, 2015), Bacigalupi is known for his contributions to various political and environmental magazines and categorises himself as a writer of ‘extrapolations’ (Bacigalupi, 2015a: n.p.), concerned with what could happen should eco-social crises continue. It is unsurprising, then, that ecological and eco-social concerns are of prominent focus across his canon with *Pump Six and Other Stories* posing no exception*.* Comprising ten dystopian and post-apocalyptic short stories, the collection reflects upon a diverse range of social, political and environmental affairs including ‘the politics of food (“The Calorie Man” [2005]), water management (“The Tamarisk Hunter” [2006]), waste management (“Pump Six” [2008]), de-evolution (also “Pump Six”), and the manipulation of bodies […] (“The Fluted Girl” [2003], “Pop Squad” [2006], and “The People of the Sand and the Slag” [2004])’ (Tidwell, 2011: 94-95), in order to fully examine the contemporary ‘relationship between the environment and bioethics’ (Tidwell, 2011: 95).

On initial publication the collection as a whole was well received, winning the 2008 Locus Award for Best Collection and being deemed best book of the year by *Publisher’s Weekly*. Reviewed as a hybrid combination of ‘cautionary tale, social and political commentary and poignantly poetic, revelatory prose’ (*Publisher’s Weekly*, 2008), *Pump Six and Other Stories* invites readers to respond critically to contemporary discourse-world anxieties and challenge a future in which, as a result of our sociocultural ignorance, ‘we’re all going to shit’ (Bacigalupi, 2015a: n.p.). As reviewed by one *LibraryThing* reader, Bacigalupi’s dystopias ‘are premised not on any cataclysmic war or political revolt, but simply on the world choking on the waste of our technological “progress” [resulting in] the end of fossil fuels, the flooding of the environment with chemical by-products [and] the long-term effect on the human organism of the pharmaceutical revolution’ ([kvrfan](https://www.librarything.com/profile/kvrfan" \t "_top), 2015: n.p.). In presenting believable future worlds suffering from mass pollution and chemical poisoning, ‘Pump Six’ examines several of these issues, addressing the degeneration of the sewage works, the halt of all industrial manufacturing, and the de-evolution of the human species.

**6.1.1 The Text-Worlds of ‘Pump Six’**

‘Pump Six’ takes for its focus the life of Travis Alverez, an uneducated water treatment worker living in the state of New York. Set around the year 2120, the story follows Alverez across the space of approximately three days as he attempts to stabilise the only remaining sewage works across New York City. The pumps are one of the few technological structures that continue to service the States, albeit temperamentally, and are in a constant state of dysfunction and disrepair. As a result of such damages, the water across New York is undrinkable, and the environment is flooded with toxins and chemical by-products. As will be seen from the analysis which follows, water pollution is only one of a number of environmental assaults that plague Bacigalupi’s world, alongside intense heat, drought and concrete rain. These harsh changes in climate and pollution have adversely affected the city’s hedonistic population, causing various skin diseases, decreasing their chances of conception, and increasing the risk of miscarriage. More importantly, the pollutants in the water supply are causing genetic anomalies, resulting in an increasing number of ‘trog’ births (a de-evolved troglodytic human) and the cognitive regression of adult citizens. Only Alverez is aware of the true dangers of the failing sewage works and concludes his narrative with blinkered optimism for the future, and the hope of finding a mechanical solution.

The story opens on an unspecific day in an unknown year, zoning-in on a familiar domestic scene between Alverez and his partner, Maggie. During their interactions, the reader is introduced to an array of futuristic world-building elements that identify the world as being distinct from their own such as ‘NiftyFreeze Bacon’ (Appendix D: 21-22), a ‘trogwad’ (Appendix D: 22) and a ‘Tickle Monkey revival concert’ (Appendix D: 8-9). It is also during this opening scene that we are made aware of society’s failing industrial system and given the first indications of broader environmental crises. Following an unsuccessful attempt at making breakfast, Alverez makes his way to work at the sewage treatment plant only to be informed on his arrival that pump six is down. After several arguments with his co-workers and the revelation that only a select number of people have retained the capacity to read, Alverez fixes the pump and the day continues. At the end of his shift, Alverez and Maggie attend an exclusive nightclub called Wicky. On entering, the two inject a futuristic hallucinogenic drug called ‘Effy’ (Appendix D: 448) and the narrator accounts a rather surreal party experience whilst high. It is during the party scenes that Alverez is first characterised as a ‘hero’ and this sense of heroism is steadily built upon throughout the rest of the narrative, moulding his character into an atypical dystopian maverick. On their way home Alverez and Maggie have a brief interaction with a group of trogs, a posthuman species first seen on Alverez’s walk to work. The creatures are highly amicable but cognitively regressive, being seen to engage only in sexual practices throughout the narrative. Spurred on by this particular group’s orgy Alverez attempts to impregnate his wife, with the effects of the Effy counteracting his usual impotence.

The following morning, Alverez receives a call from the sewage plant that pump six has once again stopped running. After examining the inner mechanics of the pipe-works, Alverez concludes that the pumps are now beyond his skill to repair as he is unable to decipher the schematics designed 100 years before. He travels to Columbia University in the hope of consulting a faculty engineer, having downloaded the pump blueprints onto his phone. On arriving, the students he meets are as hedonistic and cognitively deficient as the trogs and all the departments are empty and barred. Alverez finds himself lost in the University library where he is nearly shot by an ‘old faculty wife’ (Appendix D: 1084). After hearing his plight the woman informs him that there is no one left except for the students, who she reveals are slowly regressing to the devolved ‘trog’ form (Appendix D: 231), as are the rest of the world, as a result of pollution and atmospheric change. On leaving the library with a selection of engineering textbooks, Alverez perceives his world anew focusing on the devastation and corruption that has been backgrounded in his narration thus far. The narrative closes as Alverez muses on the environmental-social state of his society, evaluating the efficiency of other industrial plants and the distant thrumming of the sewage works. He hopefully picks up a book and begins to read.

As an example of internal homodiegetic narration the story is focalised from the perspective of Alverez, narrated in first-person past tense. In Simpson’s (1993) terms, ‘Pump Six’ can be categorised as Category A narration in Reflector mode with predominantly negative shading throughout (given the frequent use of modality and *verba sentiendi* – see Section 3.3.1). It is unsurprising, then, that the changing world-view of Alverez invites emotional responses from the reader, as they are encouraged to mirror his development into a determined dystopian maverick, modelling his character as he begins to ‘[reconsider his] culture and society in response to a lived experience, demonstrating the malleability of mind-set even within determining contexts’ (Otto, 2014: 185). In engaging with Alverez’s consciousness both during his time as a ‘complicit participant’ in his corrupt society (Otto, 2014: 187) and at the close of the narrative as he attempts to repair pump six, the reader is encouraged to question: ‘what led the [protagonist] to think against the grain of the dominant culture?’ (Otto, 2014: 187) and, in turn, how they might follow his example within their discourse-worlds.

According to Otto (2014: 189), ‘Bacigalupi’s ecodystopian stories work – that is, instigate ecotopian transformation – by staging a productive tension between what is (im)possible for their protagonists and what is still possible for us’ producing a tension between the reader’s discourse-world and the text-worlds of the narrative. Several *LibraryThing* readers report such cross-world mappings in their reviews of *Pump Six and Other Stories*, drawing explicit connections between the fictionalised futures Bacigalupi illustrates and the real-world future they are invited to imagine. For example, three of the readers describe the narratives as ‘cautionary tales’ or ‘cautionary stories’ (see AltheaAnn, 2016: n.p.; kd9, 2008: n.p. and Dead\_Dreamer, 2010: n.p.) whilst others define them as ‘moralistic’ (jnwelch, 2012: n.p.) and ‘thought-provoking’ (see jnwelch, 2012: n.p.; Kat\_Hooper, 2014: n.p.; Tatiana\_G, 2011: n.p. and Valashain, 2013: n.p.). Each of these modifiers evidence the perceived didacticism of Bacigalupi’s work and the invitation for his readers to think, ‘“oh crap, that’s going to happen”’ (bongo\_x, 2013: n.p.).

Such critical reflection is encouraged by three primary narrative features: ‘(1) protagonists’ new ways of thinking about the world after their experiences of something that gets them to reflect on the dominant world-view, (2) their abilities to act on this thinking, and, importantly, (3) our abilities as readers to institute similar transformations’ (Otto, 2014: 183). Clearly such a paradigm can be mapped on to a reading of ‘Pump Six’, given Alverez’s new-found vision of his broken world following his interaction with the faculty wife, his open-ended narrative which leaves room for interpretative solutions to be mapped to and from the discourse-world, and the invitation to address real-world ecocritical concerns anew.

Otto’s (2014) third narrative outcome – the reader’s ability to institute personal transformations in line with a particular protagonist – highlights, in sociolinguistic terms, a *preferred response* (see Stockwell, 2013; also, Bilmes, 1988; Sacks, 1987, Rendel-Short, 2015). The discourse that generates preferred responses is ‘designed to understand the nature of turn-taking in conversation analysis’ (Stockwell, 2013: 268) and recognise the clear, desired response of a particular illocutionary act – a characteristic example being the acceptance of a dinner invitation. Stockwell (2013: 269) argues that ‘most literary works have an encoded, text-driven preferred response’ and dystopian fictions in particular tend to project clear didactic messages. Bacigalupi (2015a: n.p.) has often expressed his manipulation of such messages, explaining that through his fiction he can engage with people’s lives and give them ‘the opportunity to make different decisions and vote for different politicians’. Bacigalupi (2015a: n.p.) argues that his works present hypothetical versions of the future in order to promote environmental-social change for as he explains ‘climate change is a giant unforced error. We don’t have to be as dumb as we are’. The hope that readers will learn from his writing and incorporate such awareness into their everyday lives is suggestive of Bacigalupi’s own perception of his works’ encoded preferred responses. Readers may however, experience different reactions or form differing interpretations to the text’s encoded message although the ecodystopian impulses of the text are arguably convincing.

In Text-World-Theory terms, Stockwell (2013) argues that preferred responses encourage a sense of readerly positioning and posit an ethical dimension to the reading experience between the reader and the author. He notes that this ethical sense ‘is motivated by a world-switch, since in crude terms ethics is always the comparative distance between what is and an alternative world’ (Stockwell, 2013: 270) and can be either modalised (for example, what ought to be, what must be), time-displaced (what used to be or will be), reported (what people say is the case), metaphorised (what a world is or is like) or negated (what a world is not) (see Stockwell, 2013: 270).

In terms of ‘Pump Six’, the initial world-switch between the discourse-world and the text-world is both negated, in that it is unlike the reader’s environment, and time-distanced, showing a future vision of what will happen should current environmental neglect continue. Throughout the narrative this position shifts, as the reader is invited to imagine what ‘ought to be’ or what ‘must’ happen in order to avoid such a future, as garnered from the shift in Alverez’s perspective. After all, ‘a defining characteristic feature of the dystopian genre must be a warning to the reader that something must, and, by implication, can be done in the present to avoid the future’ (Sargent, 1994: 6; see also Evans, 1973: 33). Several *LibraryThing* readers acknowledge this kind of preferred response, as exemplified by the comments of devilwrites (2009: n.p.), who observes: ‘if the stories don’t make you really uncomfortable in some way, or if they don’t make you think SERIOUSLY about the issues he’s tackling and how they relate to the world we live in now, then you’re not paying attention’. Devilwrites further argues that the stories should cause an attentive reader to feel ‘uncomfortable’, a reaction which, I would infer, comes in response to making cross-world mappings between the discourse-world and text-worlds.

Before moving on to discuss the ethical and emotional responses of online readers more fully in Section 6.3, I will first situate ‘Pump Six within its broader ecodystopian context. The collection’s eco-focus is picked up on by multiple of the readers on *LibraryThing* who, in addition to tagging the collection under the genre category of dystopian literature, also label the collection as ‘ecofiction’, ‘green punk’ or ‘biopunk’ and tag the stories thematically under the headings of ‘climate change’, ‘environment’, ‘ecology’, ‘pollution’, ‘environmental disaster’ and ‘environmental advocacy’ (*LibraryThing*, 2016c: n.p.). Indeed, Valashain notes a clear connection between the ecological motivations of Bacigalupi’s writing, the fictionalised refraction of present-day environmental concerns and the invitation to respond emotionally as a reader:

[Bacigalupi] shows the effects of certain global developments on the level of an individual, taking complex environmental and social problems and presenting them in a way that makes the reader feel right in the middle of it. That is quite an achievement, given the fact that at present very few people seem to feel the need to take responsibility for the mess we’re making of our planet and take action to try and lessen the impact. (Valashain, 2013: n.p.)

In this example, Valashain highlights Bacigalupi’s ecological focus and argues that in illustrating the consequences of real-world environmental and social problems Bacigalupi ‘makes the reader feel right in the middle’ of the fictional worlds he presents. This invitation for readerly self-implication motivates social and environmental change, in that, for this reader, such visions encourage readers to ‘take responsibility for the mess we’re making of our planet’ and ‘take action’ in the discourse-world to avoid real-world ecodystopia. In the following section, I investigate the ecodystopian impulses of ‘Pump Six’ in further detail analysing the text’s estranging portrayal of environmental and urban decay.

**6.2 The Ecodystopian Impulse in ‘Pump Six’**

The vision of the city in environmental decline alongside the text’s subsequent focus on ecological concerns such as climate change, pollution control, and biological mutation has resulted in ‘Pump Six’ being categorised by certain literary critics as an ecodystopia or ecotopia (also known as ‘green utopias’ (Mathisen, 2001; de Geus, 1999); see Section 2.2.3 for discussion of ecodystopia). The fear of environmental crisis is certainly key to many of Bacigalupi’s narratives, including nine of the ten stories in *Pump Six and Other Stories* (‘Softer’ being the only exception) and his broader novels such as *The Wind-up Girl* (2009), *Ship-Breaker* (2010), *The Drowned Cities* (2012), and *The Water Knife* (2015b),inwhich he addresses the relationship between a futuristic human race and the environment in which they live (see Donnelly, 2014, Hageman, 2012, Pirzadeh, 2014, Selisker, 2015).

During a 2011 interview with James Long, Bacigalupi discusses the genre coding of his work claiming:

at one time, when I was asked, I thought I rather liked the term “Agripunk” […] because while bioengineering is central, the thing I care about is interaction between genetic engineering, food, intellectual property and big agricultural corporations. Ultimately, though, when I think about the kind of science fiction I write, I think of it more as fear fantasies, or “if this goes on” stories (Bacigalupi, 2011: n.p.).

Bacigalupi highlights his central literary concern with bioengineering and its relationship with genetic engineering, food, intellectual property and agriculture, each of which can be accounted for under the ecodystopian label. Indeed, as observed by Otto (2012: 181), ‘one of Bacigalupi’s fundamental ecotopian strategies is to imagine what the future could look like given the full realisation of current developments - in short, to prompt ecotopia through ecodystopian storytelling’. The representation of ‘current developments’ is present throughout his work, from the potential consequences of climate change, energy use and population control to the negative outcomes of progressive science, specifically the result of eugenics and nanotech. As argued by Otto (2012: 180), within ‘Pump Six’ in particular Bacigalupi ‘thinks about the long-term sociocultural consequences of the infrastructural efficiencies we often take for granted’, in this case the sewage works which no one in the story can remember how to repair. ‘Pump Six’ therefore supports Otto’s argument, since it depicts a world in which technology and science have regressed rather than developed. As will be seen in the following section, ‘Pump Six’ therefore acts to challenge the indifference of contemporary society to the everyday processes that determine the quality of modern life.

**6.2.1 Urban Degeneration and the Text-Worlds of ‘Pump Six’**

‘Pump Six’ opens as Alverez enters his kitchen to find his partner, Maggie, in the middle of preparing breakfast and fixing the stove. He reports his distress on finding her with her head in the oven, searching for a gas leak with a lit cigarette lighter:

The first thing I saw Thursday morning when I walked into the kitchen was Maggie’s ass sticking up in the air. Not a bad way to wake up, really. She’s got a good figure, keeps herself in shape, so a morning eyeful of her pretty bottom pressed against a black mesh nightie is generally a positive way to start the day.

Except that she had her head in the oven. And the whole kitchen smelled like gas. And she had a lighter with a blue flame six inches high that she was waving around inside the oven like it was a Tickle Monkey Revival concert. (Appendix D: 1-9)

The opening sentence contains all of the initial world-building information required to construct the primary text-world including aspects of spatio-temporal setting – ‘Thursday morning’, ‘the kitchen’ – and text-world enactors, namely the narrator Alverez, and Maggie. The register is conversational, given the use of constructions such as ‘not a bad way to wake up, really’, which, opening with litotes (not bad) and ending on an intensifier (really), mimics informal emphatic expressions. The following character-advancing propositions add detail to Alverez’s introduction to Maggie, in that ‘she has a good figure’, ‘keeps herself in shape’, has a ‘pretty bottom’ and wears a ‘black mesh nightie’. In terms of my own reading of ‘Pump Six’, several of these descriptors such as ‘good figure’, ‘keeps herself in shape’ and colloquial expressions such as ‘morning eyeful’ added to my conceptualisation of Alverez’s mind-style with the use of dead metaphors and idiomatic language being a key feature of his narration throughout the text. The additional world-switch to present tense further projects such world-builders as part of Alverez’s direct thoughts, another characteristic of his narrative voice.

There then follows a section of heated dialogue as the characters argue over Maggie’s attempts to search for a gas leak using a lighter, during which the reader is presented with fleeting world-building elements that collectively illustrate a world in a state of collapse and disrepair. In addition to learning that Alverez and Maggie are having difficulties conceiving, the reader is also introduced to a polluted vision of New York:

[PASSAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT. FOR FULL REFERENCE SEE, BACIGALUPI, [2008] 2010: p. 209, ll. 99-105]

In terms of my own reading, the disturbing vision of a refracted New York was evident from the first sentence, with the material action process ‘the city’s sky was turning from a yellow dawn smog to a gray-blue morning smog’ posing an unappealing comparison of the city’s skyline. The varying colours of ‘smog’, alongside the ‘black clouds of exhaust’ fumes and the summer ‘heat’ combine to indicate a sense of high pollution and intense weather conditions that present a negatively exaggerated image of New York. As the narrative progresses, additional world-building elements serve to further cement this estranging vision, such as the apparent lack of everyday products such as ‘batteries’ and ‘bacon’ and the temperamental utility supplies that imply a shift in the efficiency of the consumer market.

The exact time frame of the narrative is initially unclear (‘summer’ being the only date marker provided throughout the majority of the discourse), although the text-world is populated with world-builders that are non-existent in the discourse-world and are scientifically advanced beyond current levels of development. Although such world-building elements may seem familiar, and are, on occasion, close to actual world-products, they arguably combine with the text’s estranging setting to present a world that is evidently of the future. The majority of these world-builders are food related such as ‘NiftyFreeze’ produce (Appendix D: 21), products that are shaken to heat, packaging that dissolves when eaten, and fizzy drinks such as ‘Sweatshine’ or ‘Blue Vitality’ (Appendix D: 583). Such products help to identify the text-world as being temporally distinct from the world of the reader and add to the estranging quality of the narrative. In a wider discussion of representations of food in science fiction, particularly in post-apocalyptic films, Retzinger (2008: 370) argues that ‘familiar foods serve as an anchor in an altered world (evoking both nostalgia and parody), whereas unfamiliar food may become one of the clearest measures of how far we have journeyed from the present’ for as he continues ‘strange foods help emphasise the strangeness of the future’ (Retzinger, 2008: 377). Products within ‘Pump Six’ certainly distance the reader from the text-world and establish early on that the world depicted although familiar is not quite their own.

The spatial location of the narrative – New York – is specified in the passage below during Alverez’s walk to work. Idealistically viewed as the height of modern life, New York, it can be argued, would not be immediately associated with the scenes of urban and environmental decay outlined in the following description.

Summer in New York is one of my least favourite times. The heat sits down between the buildings, choking everything, and the air just… stops. You smell everything. Plastics melting into hot concrete, garbage burning, old urine that effervesces into air when someone throws water into the gutter; just the plain smell of so many people living all packed together. Like all the skyscrapers are sweating alcoholics after a binge, standing there exhausted and oozing with the evidence of everything they’ve been up to. It drives my asthma nuts. Some days, I take three hits off the inhaler just to get to work. (Appendix D: 206-214).

The image created is highly sensory evidenced by the olfactory cognitive perceptual process ‘you smell everything’. The process, which is addressed to a generalised ‘you’ indicative of all the other inhabitants of Alverez’s society, then modifies a variety of unpleasant smells, including melting plastics, hot concrete, garbage burning, old urine, and ‘the smell of so many people living packed together’. The extended personification of New York’s characteristic skyscrapers further adds to the estranging vision of the city and in terms of my own reading increased my feelings of disgust in relation to the decaying environment.

Distorted representations of ‘real-world’ cities are common in dystopian literature, film and other media, as seen in the decaying London of *The Girl with all the Gifts* (Carrie, 2014) and *The Drowned World* (Ballard, [1962] 2006), a war-ridden Sheffield in *Threads* (Jackson, 1984), Los Angeles in *Elysium* (Blomkamp, 2013) and *Blade Runner* (Scott, 1982), and the numerous global locations of *World War Z: an Oral History of the Zombie War* (Forster, 2006). As Suvin (1979) argues, science fiction and its offshoots should aim to make the familiar seem unfamiliar (as outlined in Chapter 2) and presenting refracted visions of recognisable spatial locations is clearly an established method for inviting an estranged response. When discussing the representation of dystopian cities on film, Milner (2004: 267) suggests that in examples of urban dystopia ‘the architecture of the dystopian cityscape functions as a wider synecdoche for the wider catastrophe that has overcome their respective populations […] the city *is* the dystopian novum, the shape of the prior catastrophe encoded deep within its social and architectural forms’ (emphasis in original). Although Milner (2004) is applying his statement to the representation of dystopian cities on film and within *Metropolis* (Lang, 1927), *Blade Runner* (Scott, 1982) and *Dark City* (Proyas, 1998) in particular, his argument can be applied here as well. New York is the primary novum of ‘Pump Six’ as the narrative hinges on the degeneration of the city and the effect of its decay on the human species. It is interesting to note therefore that what is striking about this dystopian world is not the new heights of progression seen in many texts within this genre but the fear of degeneration and the ensuing collapse when development stops. The vision of the future Bacigalupi creates is one of decline, both in terms of the physical city and conclusively in the mental states of the inhabitants of a contaminated New York.

**6.2.2 Technological Decline in ‘Pump Six’**

In addition to presenting scenes of urban decay, the text focuses on the breakdown of technology and mechanical infrastructure. The representation of future technology is a common trope in dystopian fiction ranging from imagined gadgets to machines and cyborgs. Techno-world-builders help to distance the reader from the text-world and add strangeness to the narrative. In most narratives, depictions of future technology project negative associations with disaster (e.g. *The Machine Stops* (Fowler, [1909] 2011), *The People of Sparks* (Du Prau, 2004), *The Diamond of Darkhold* (Du Prau, 2008)), societal control (see *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Orwell, [1949] 2013), *The Time Machine* (Wells, 1895), ‘Harrison Bergeron’ (Vonnegut, [1961] 1994a)) and a decreased sense of humanity and/or the posthuman (e.g. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* (Dick, [1968] 2002), *Never Let Me Go* (Ishiguro, 2005)). For Beauchamp (1986: 54), technology in dystopia represents the realisation of a societal fear within the discourse-world. Throughout his analysis he addresses the role of technology as being either ‘an instrument’ used by a totalitarian state to enforce a particular word-view or conversely as ‘an autonomous force’ that shapes and defines a particular world. The latter option is perhaps the most applicable to ‘Pump Six’, as the decline in the sewage works shapes the progression of the narrative and triggers the shift in Alverez’s perspective.

The role of technology is of primary concern within the text-world as Alverez attempts to correct malfunctions in the sewage works and the wider society struggles with the breakdown in manufacturing and distribution services. As the characters note throughout the text, factories seem to be closed, gas and electricity are temperamental and the sewage pipes are continually breaking down. The decline of technological power is a common trope amongst Bacigalupi’s collective works for as put forward by Hageman (2012: 287) ‘Bacigalupi’s narrative is nearly as devoid of computers and other digital mediating technologies as it is rife with the tangible despoliation of the biophysical world’.

The presentation of water-borne disease, for example, is present from the opening of the narrative as Alverez muses on the skin condition of Maggie’s friend Nora who has unadvisedly been swimming in open water and caught an infectious rash and boils as a result:

[PASSAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT. FOR FULL REFERENCE SEE, BACIGALUPI, [2008] 2010: p. 221, ll. 483-489]

It is interesting to note the deictic markers at the start of this passage as they suggest a certain proximity between the reader and the text-world with the proximal deictic demonstrative ‘here’ alongside the generalised use of the second person which although specifically referring to the narrator implies a shared sense of understanding and schema between the narrator and narratee of the process of water cleaning. Alverez also makes subtle negative judgments about the superstitions and homeopathic remedies employed by his friends to prevent infection such as the use of ‘Kali-Mary pendants’ and ‘Super Clean smileys’. The use of the boulomaic modal verb ‘hope’, in ‘hope for the best’, is suggestive of Alverez’s cynicism regarding his friends’ cognitive mental processes especially when followed by the thorough material action processes describing Alverez’s own hygiene practices, as he states ‘I only drink bottled water’ and ‘shower with a filter head’. The added aside comment at the end, ‘No pus rashes, though’, acknowledges the success of such choices as the use of the negative suggests that the alternate ‘to have pus rashes’ would be true if such practices were replaced with alternate, ineffective solutions.

The detail with which Alverez goes on to describe the various pollutants within the water-supply was particularly salient in my own reading of the story and added a sense of authenticity and believability to Bacigalupi’s futuristic vision of my projected discourse-world in 2120, especially as many of the chemicals listed are familiar in my discourse-world environment. During an interaction at the sewage works regarding the reliability of gimmick solutions such as the Kali-Mary stickers discussed above Alverez enthusiastically warns his co-worker:

[PASSAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT. FOR FULL REFERENCE SEE, BACIGALUPI, [2008] 2010: p. 219, ll. 415-418]

Alverez’s speech opens with the imperative ‘believe me’ which is used epistemically to indicate to his friend the knowledge he is sharing with certainty. There then follows a comparative statement, ‘there’s a lot worse things than shit’, which acts as a prime for a list of toxic chemicals that can be found in the water that the pumps are supposed to clean. This list is undermined, however, with the epistemic use of ‘supposed to’, signalling that this is far from the case.

The list itself is particularly interesting as each chemical described is commonly used (or has recently been banned) from manufacturing and agricultural practice in my discourse-world. PCBs, for example, were commonly found in the air, water and soil post-1977 as a bi-product of manufacturing and can still enter the atmosphere today from poorly maintained waste sites or electrical spills (from transformer fluids for instance). Heptachlor was a common household and agricultural pesticide banned in 1988, which is still being found in the environment across the USA, and Bisphenol A is a chemical still widely used in the production of plastic and other resins. The recorded effects of the above chemicals are also clearly mapped onto ‘Pump Six’ with PCBs causing severe rashes, acne and irritation, as well as producing abnormalities during pregnancy; heptachlors links to cancer and decreased fertility and certain phalates (notably diethylhexyl pthalate (DEHP)) being directly linked to reproductive abnormalities in male newborns.

The scientific accuracy of Bacigalupi’s world, therefore, increased my sense of immersion in the narrative, making the future described appear particularly believable. This seems to be a shared response amongst *LibraryThing* readers who equally view Bacigalupi’s creations as being ‘too believable’ (Tatiana\_G, 2011: n.p.), ‘convincing’ (kvfan, 2015: n.p.), ‘plausible’ (MLBowers, 2013: n.p.) and ‘frighteningly real’ (apomonis, 2016: n.p.). In the section that follows, I examine these responses in further detail, investigating how readers express their emotional responses to Bacigalupi’s narratives and the plausible futures posed throughout *Pump Six and Other Stories*.

**6.3 Reading the Future: Online Readers and ‘Pump Six’**

Across the thirty-two online reader reviews, analysed in support of this chapter (see Section 4.2.1), there is a discernable trend in readers’ accounts of reading experience that concerns the believability of Bacigalupi’s future worlds. These responses usually draw some form of cross-world mapping between the discourse-world of a particular reader and the text-worlds presented across Bacigalupi’s collection, as exemplified by the reactions of the following reader:

Wow, this is a really compelling and disturbing collection of stories. Though the stories are not that long, some of these will never leave me. As with any good science fiction, they are based in some plausible future reality. Even though some of the scenes are very disturbing, one is still left feeling as though we are on some version of that path now. (MLBowers, 2013: n.p.)

The opening apostrophe, ‘wow’, provides the first insight into this reader’s emotional response to *Pump Six and Other Stories*. It is Bacigalupi’s convincing portrayal of future possibilities that prompts such a response in this reader, exemplified by his or her evaluation of the collection as being ‘really compelling’. Additionally, each of the worlds depicted across the book are perceived as representing a ‘plausible future reality’ that, in refracting present-day concerns, promotes a sense that ‘we are on some version of that path now’. This reader also notes an emotional connection with the collection, perhaps as a result of such cross-world mappings, commenting on the text’s emotional resonance (Stockwell, 2009) and memorability – ‘some of these will never leave me’ – and repeating that certain scenes and, indeed the collection as a whole, is ‘disturbing’.

Interestingly, the following *LibraryThing* reader makes similar text-word-discourse-world connections and posits an almost parallel conclusion to MLBowers that the stories in this collection are ‘disturbing’ – an evaluation that occurs seventeen times across the thirty-two reviews:

No matter which way you cut it, Paolo doesn’t have a very bright outlook for the future of mankind. However, these are in no way stereotypical dark-futures, as exemplified through other genres, like Cyber-Punk. These were much more gritty; much more real; much more exquisitely and disturbingly thought out. Any of these cautionary tales could easily become our future if we’re not careful. (Dead\_Dreamer, 2010: n.p.)

Dead\_Dreamer draws particular attention to the negativity of Bacigalupi’s stories, which, he or she infers, are reflective of his bleak ‘outlook for the future of mankind’. This reader contends that these worlds are atypical of those found in other genres, an argument supported by the string of comparative statements following their opening thesis. For instance, for this reviewer the worlds of *Pump Six and Other Stories* are ‘much more gritty’, ‘much more real’ and ‘much more exquisitely and disturbingly thought out’ than stories they have experienced elsewhere. The believability of Bacigalupi’s world is clearly referenced in ‘more real’ and can be equally inferred from the superlative use of ‘gritty’, which is used colloquially here, to refer to the uncompromising authenticity of these futures, as perceived by the reviewer. Like MLBowers, Dead\_Dreamer then ends with a generic sentence that, in shifting to the first person plural speaks for society as a whole, stipulating that ‘any of these cautionary tales could easily become our future if we’re not careful’. The conditional clause, which ends this statement, further supports my earlier discussion of preferred responses, as this reader draws a link between real-world developments and the possible consequences Bacigalupi imagines.

The experience of conceptualising such consequences and the future worlds in which they are realised also resulted in a range of physical responses being reported by multiple *LibraryThing* readers. For example, apomonis (2016: n.p.) comments that ‘some of the stories will leave you breathless due to their believable dystopian landscapes’ and Knicke (2011: n.p.) reports feeling ‘worn down and depressed by the array of possible horrible futures on display’. Each of these reviews expresses some form of bodily reaction to the narratives indicative of a heightened emotional response. Indeed, many readers comment that the narratives frightened them, with five readers tagging the collection as Horror fiction. The following two reviews present the most explicit emotional accounts of the experience of reading *Pump Six and Other Stories*:

It took me a loooong time to get through this book, and not because it wasn’t good, but because I was bloody scared of it. I would finish one story looking like this @.@ and then put the book aside for a while to get some courage to read another one. (Tatiana\_G, 2011: n.p.)

The subject matter was pretty dark. This is **not** a book you should read if you aren’t in the mood for a heavy dose of bleak and disturbing. However, this book is very inspiring: at the end of finishing various stories I was inspired to go hug my cat, to go look for some fresh fruit and vegetables in my fridge, and to run to the nearest sink, wash my hands, and take several gulps of good, clean water. (YouKneeK, 2015: n.p.) (emphasis in original)

In the first of these examples, Tatiana\_G illustrates her emotional response to the narrative through the use of the emoticon ‘@.@’, which signals shock or disbelief. She also expresses a difficulty in reading the collection from cover to cover, needing time to build up courage to engage with the next world. Notably, the readerly need to process the collection story by story or take some form of reading break is shared amongst reviewers, with knicke (2011: n.p.) commenting ‘I just can’t binge on his work without succumbing to deep and gnawing despair’ and Valashain (2013: n.p.) noting: ‘I don’t think I could swallow this slim volume, my edition weights in at 239 pages, in less than a week’. Such responses imply a strong emotional response from readers towards Bacigalupi’s narratives, emphasised by the following reader’s report of metaphorical pain: ‘These stories make my heart hurt’ (wealhtheowwylfing, 2016: n.p.).

The second example, taken from YouKneek (2015), goes one step further than these last reviews, detailing the actualised physical responses of this particular reader. He or she notes several material action processes they felt inspired to enact after completing various stories, such as hug a pet (presumably in response to ‘The People of the Sand and the Slag’ in which a dog is eaten alive); consume fresh fruits and vegetables (a possible response to the consequences of crop modification in ‘The Calorie Man’); and drink clean, accessible water (potentially triggered by ‘The Tamarisk Hunter’ and ‘Pump Six’). These actions reflect a felt emotional response and a reportedly affecting reading experience.

Interestingly, YouKneeK also issues a warning to other readers to not read the book if they ‘aren’t in the mood for a heavy dose of bleak and disturbing’. Yet the ‘darkness’ (fourteen instances) or ‘bleakness’ (five instances) of the collection are frequently presented as positive qualities as readers make links between the inherent negativity of Bacigalupi’s worlds and the ethical and emotional integrity of the collection. The responses of StephenBarkley support this assertion and return my analysis to the specific text-worlds of ‘Pump Six’:

The title story was perhaps the best of the lot. If you’re concerned at all about societal tendencies towards distraction and hedonism, “Pump Six” explores how far down that road we could go as a society, wrapped up in a compelling mystery story. Pump Six is a disturbing but important collection of stories that describe a world left to its selfish devices—apocalypticism without the hope (StephenBarkley, 2014: n.p.)

After acknowledging a personal preference for ‘Pump Six’ which, for this reader, was the ‘best’ story in the collection, StephenBarkley issues a recommendation for future readers, embedded within a conditional clause. As outlined in Chapter 4, conditional recommendations are typical of reader reviews and tend to typify the ‘kind’ of reader who will enjoy the text being discussed, as perceived by the reviewer. Such a reader is conceptualised as sharing particular interests, in this case an understanding of and anxiety for ‘social tendencies towards distraction and hedonism’. These qualities are flagged as key themes in ‘Pump Six’, qualities that are then mapped on to the discourse-world of the reader as the text is reported to ‘[explore] how far down that road we could go as a society’. StephenBarkley’s review therefore emphasises the ethical didacticism of these texts, which in presenting ‘apocalypticism without the hope’ invite the reader to readdress real-world concerns.

To return to the process of ethical positioning, then, (discussed in 6.2) it is the authenticity of such world-building elements which accentuate Bacigalupi’s ethical message and highlight the socio-cultural links between the text-world and the reader’s own experiential environment. As Stockwell (2009: 161) argues, the ethical message of a text, ‘must be recovered, in any reading that could be considered prototypical’. It would be unexpected (although possible) for a reader to conceptualise Bacigalupi’s world as a bright possible future in which they would happily live. Instead, the world invites more negative responses that given its didactic undertone encourages critical discourse-world action and social-change. Arguably, it is the presentation of the devolved ‘trog’ species in ‘Pump Six’ that prompts such negative responses and, as the second key dystopian nova for this text emphasises the possible consequences of environmental decay.

**6.4 Devolved Minds in ‘Pump Six’**

According to Clayton (2013: 319) ‘Science fiction is overwhelmingly positive about the possibility of transforming the human’. Clayton’s (2013) view here seems rather inaccurate given the wealth of dystopian texts that depict dangerous or immoral posthuman species, such as the human-robots in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* (Dick, [1968] 2002); the ‘unconsecrated’ in *The Forest of Hands and Teeth* (Ryan, 2009); the ‘pretties’ in Westerfeld’s (2006) *Uglies*; the ‘virals’ in *The Passage* (Cronin, 2010); the ‘cranks’ in *The Scorch Trials* (Dashner, [2010] 2011); or the ‘hungries’ in *The Girl with all the Gifts* (Carey, 2014), none of which are ‘overwhelmingly positive’. Within the dystopian strand of science fiction in particular, Clayton’s view is rather restricted as many texts within the genre challenge posthuman developments as a result of eugenics (*MaddAddam* (Atwood, 2013), *The Year of the Flood* (Atwood, 2009)), genetics (‘Ten with a Flag’ (Haines, 2012), *Under the Never Sky* (Rossi, 2012); *Flow My Tears the Policeman Said* (Dick, 1974)) and artificial intelligence (*I, Robot* (Assimov, 1950); *The Windup Girl* [2010c]).

Clayton (2013) does go on, however, to provide a detailed summary of the development of posthuman representations within science fiction. Focusing on Anglo-American science fiction of the 1940s and ’50s, Clayton (2013: 324) notes that many SF writers of the time ‘saw evolutionary change as teleological, [as] a progressive movement toward even higher stages of life’ through some form of species mutation, as evidenced by texts such as *Childhood’s End* (Clarke, 1953) or *Beyond this Horizon* (Heinlein, [1944] 2002). He argues that there is then a shift in the lead up to the millennium that highlights renewed interest in genetics, exemplified by texts such as Octavia Butler’s *Xenogenesis* trilogy (*Dawn* ([1987] 2014a), *Adulthood Rites* ([1988] 2014b) and *Imago* ([1989] 2014c)) (see Clayton, 2013: 324-5). Arguably, such interest has continued in recent years with texts such as *Allegiant* (Roth, 2013) and *The Dead-tossed Waves* (Ryan, 2010) alongside several of the texts cited above taking up themes of genetic superiority, modification and decline.

Many of Bacigalupi’s texts present visions of the posthuman as determined by genetics or artificial intelligence, as seen in *The Wind-up Girl* (2009), where ‘wind-ups’ are cybernetic beings exploited for human pleasures, and ‘The Fluted Girl’ (2003), in which a young female is hollowed out in order to play her own body as a wind instrument for erotic performances in the brothels of the future. According to Hageman (2012: 293), in narratives such as these Bacigalupi creates ‘a future populated by posthuman beings whose subjectivity undermines the ontological stability of “human beings” in the novel’. Hageman’s (2012) argument is certainly supported within ‘Pump Six’, where the ‘trog’ triggers a sense of ontological instability in contrasting the minds of human citizens with a seemingly ‘non-human’ form. Although the ‘trogs’ are born from human parents and are by definition of species also decidedly human, they are presented throughout the text as being ‘non-human’. They are denied stereotypical markers of ‘humanness’ such as language or heightened cognition and are defined only in terms of the narrator’s point of view. In presenting the ‘trogs’ as a problematic outcome of pollution and climate change, Bacigalupi invites readers to question the development of a future species and question current anxieties for the stability of the ‘human’ race.

**6.4.1 Mind-modelling the Trog**

Throughout the narrative, the ‘trogs’ are presented in opposition to the fully human characters within the text-world that include the narrator and his associates. Described as ‘hermaphrodite critter[s] with boobs and a big sausage’, who are ‘dumber than hamsters’, the trogs are presented as a societal concern and are primarily discussed by the other characters in animalistic terms:

[PASSAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT. FOR FULL REFERENCE SEE, BACIGALUPI, [2008] 2010: pp. 214-214, ll. 223-239]

In this passage the narrator describes both the physical aspects of the trogs and the typical material action processes that are evidently characteristic of their species. For example, the trogs are described physically as, ‘hairy’ and ‘mash-faced’, possessing ‘big pink tongues’, ‘bright yellow eyes’ and ‘not nearly enough fur to survive the winter’. Each of these attributes is non-prototypical of the ‘human’ species category and aligns more (in terms of my own schema knowledge, at least) with some form of animal. However, applying an animal categorisation is equally problematic, as not only are these creatures described under the collective nouns ‘people’ and ‘children’, which are human-specific, but they are also depicted as enacting typically human action processes such as ‘frolicking’, ‘lolling’ and ‘shambling’. Additionally, it is interpretatively difficult to specify which kind of animal these creatures are. In terms of my own animal schema, for example, the trogs align initially with some form of great ape, based both on my discourse-world knowledge of human species evolution and the narrator’s descriptive modification, ‘mash-faced monkey people’. Additional features however, such as their having ‘yellow eyes’ or not enough fur are uncharacteristic of my typical mental representation of apes. Turning instead to the etymological roots of the word ‘trog’ (which is presumably contracted from ‘troglodyte’ (OED Online, 2016c: ‘troglodyte, *n*’), I would argue that these creatures are more typical of some form of de-evolved hominids, akin to *homo erectus*. Such an interpretation is common across the responses of online readers who define the trogs as ‘subhuman’ (Disquiet, 2013: n.p.) and ‘devolved’ (jnwelch, 2012: n.p.).

As a result of their ambiguous (yet evidently non-human) ontological status, the trogs are of no social significance, being segregated from their human superiors, as ‘just part of the background’. The trogs are denied individual identities, being referred to singularly by the noun ‘trog’ and deictically as ‘they’ – ‘they’ is used here demonstratively and also to distinguish the creatures from a socially accepted ‘us’ which encompasses the narrator and his peers. The narrator also draws several comparisons between the trogs and unwanted creatures such as insects (‘the weather was bringing them out’, ‘every summer there’s more of them’) or vermin (‘a while back someone started a petition to get rid of them, or at least to get them spayed’). Unlike their human counterparts the ‘trogs’ are also lacking in advanced cognitive thought. They enact few mental processes and those that are described are behavioural rather than mental cognitive processes (e.g. ‘enjoying another day with nothing to do’). Alverez occasionally projects emotions onto the trogs however as he attempts to model their non-human minds. For example, whilst watching a group of trogs copulate Alverez observes ‘they look at us with yellow eyes and not a bit of shame’, reflecting upon the seemingly hedonistic nature of these creatures, who devoid of shame or intelligence are concerned only with the pursuit of pleasure and the continuation of their newly developed species.

Interestingly, in the second half of the narrative, when Alverez interacts with university students at Columbia – the world’s ‘best and brightest’ (Appendix D: 987) – his representation of their actions and indeed, their mental processes, are all too familiar. For example, on arriving at the University, Alverez observes ‘there were lots of kids out in the quad, all sprawled out and wearing basically nothing and looking like they were starting a trog colony of their own’ (Appendix D: 974-976). The comparison between the students and the trogs is made directly here given the partial nudity of the students, who like the trogs in the previous extract are ‘sprawled out’ enjoying having nothing to do. Asking the students for directions, Alverez notes they ‘gibbered […] like monkeys’ (Appendix D: 990); the comparative image of ‘monkeys’ linking back to his earlier description of the trogs as ‘monkey people’ (Appendix D: 236). The comparison is extended throughout Alverez’s time at Columbia as he draws several other direct and indirect comparisons between the two groups. For example, whilst searching the library Alverez catches the eye of a female student through one of the windows. Watching her ‘humping away, grinning and having a good time’ (Appendix D: 1102-1103), he observes: ‘all she needed were some big yellow eyes and she would have made a perfect trog’. The material action processes of the girl at this point mirror those of earlier trogs, as evidenced by these parallel interactions:

I kept passing trogs humping away and smiling. They waved at me to come over and play (Appendix D: 923-924)

She grinned at me watching, and motioned again for me to come out and play (Appendix D: 1107-1108)

In both observations, Alverez is ‘grinned’ or ‘smiled’ at by another character who is engaging in sexual activity. In both instances he is signalled to join them exemplified by the identical action process (excepting the preposition) ‘come out/over and play’.

The descriptive comparisons between the trogs and the students are further realised during an interaction between Alverez and an old faculty wife. The woman, who guards the library, informs Alverez that society is regressing to a trog-like form, a hypothesis proven by her late husband. During her explanation of her husband’s findings the woman confirms a link between the pollutants in the water and the devolution of the human species in what one online reader termed a ‘slow, chilling, inconspicuous reveal’ (Kat\_Hooper, 2014: n.p.). The conversation between Alverez and the woman is reproduced below:

[PASSAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT. FOR FULL REFERENCE SEE, BACIGALUPI, [2008] 2010: p. 237, ll. 1119-1132]

The information is communicated through direct speech, which cues a temporal world-switch to the speech-time of the interaction. As a result, the narrator and the reader seemingly experience the revelations of the old woman at the same time as the narration is focalised from Alverez’s perspective. The opening dialogue presents a string of negated epistemic modal-worlds that question the intelligence and reliability of the narrator, who up until this point has been presented as one of the few competent members of his surrounding society. The woman herself challenges Alverez’s perceptions – ‘you can’t say someone of your caliber never noticed?’ – and expresses her indignation at his ignorance – ‘you’re stupider than I guessed’ – both of which highlight a disjuncture between the woman’s (and arguably the reader’s) mind-modelling of Alverez and his true character.

The woman prompts Alverez to grasp her meaning, exemplified by a further string of questions – ‘“The trogs? The concrete rain? The reproductive disorders? You never wondered about any of it?”’ – each of which imply unrealised connections between specific world-building elements and the degeneration of the originating text-world. By conceptualising each epistemic-world that is created from these rhetorical questions, the reader must interpret what it is that the woman’s husband ‘tested’ the students for, and consequently what he found. Alverez shortly confirms what is likely to have been inferred from the world-building elements within the extract – that humans are ‘turning into trogs’. Despite having made the connection, however, the narrator remains disbelieving and opposes the old lady’s revelation. He exclaims, ‘“We can’t all be turning into trogs.” I held up my bottle of Sweatshine. “How could I buy this bottle, or my earbug, or bacon, or anything? Someone has to be making these things.”’ (Appendix D: 1133-1135). There is a lot of uncertainty within this short extract, evidenced by multiple words of estrangement (‘anyone’, ‘someone’) and the creation of two further epistemic modal-worlds. The first is triggered by the interrogative, ‘how could I buy this bottle […]?’ and the second by the epistemic use of ‘someone has to be making these things’, which although indicative of deontic obligation is somewhat speculative and unconvincing.

**6.5 Responding to Ecodystopian Text-Worlds**

Following his interaction with the faculty wife, Alverez perceives his world anew and the reader is presented with a complete and honest description of his particular city. As he leaves the library the buildings around him are in partial darkness, with only one side of the street having electricity, and as he turns for home Alverez’s attention is drawn to the degeneration of his surroundings:

A crash of concrete rain echoed from a couple blocks away. I couldn’t help shivering. Everything had turned creepy. It felt like the old lady was leaning over my shoulder and pointing out broken things everywhere. Empty autovendors. Cars that hadn’t moved in years. Cracks in the sidewalk. Piss in the gutters. (Appendix D: 1163-1167)

The ‘concrete rain’ in the first sentence draws immediate attention to the environmental collapse of Alverez’s world. The rain, which initially highlighted a severe consequence of climate change, is now additionally coloured by the old woman’s conversation as a contributing factor to the regression of humanity. The sound of the rain, which ‘echoed from a couple of blocks away’, is therefore equally ‘echoic’ of the woman’s revelations and causes Alverez to shiver involuntarily. He notes that following their meeting ‘everything had turned creepy’, with the use of past perfect tense signalling the shift in Alverez’s perspective. The creepiness is all consuming, it is reflected in ‘everything’ and is ‘everywhere’. The narrator imagines the woman pointing to all of the ‘broken things’ that surround him – several of which have been ironically present throughout the narrative such as the ‘empty autovendors’, ‘cracks in the sidewalk’ and ‘piss in the gutters’. These world-building elements, which are embedded within an epistemic modal-world, are therefore presented with added clarity as Alverez perceives them for what they truly are – indicators of social, economic and environmental collapse.

There is a notable increase in negative shading during these closing scenes as the narrator attempts to both understand his current situation and convince himself that ‘somewhere on the line’ there must be others like himself who are fighting against further ruin. The narrative, in line with traditional critical dystopian fictions (see Chapter 2) therefore ends hopefully as the narrator imagines the workings of other guys like him:

Somewhere on the line, they must have had a couple guys like me, people who could still read a schematic and remember how to show up for work and not throw toilet paper around the control rooms. I wondered who they were. And then I wondered if they ever noticed how hard it was to get anything done. (Appendix D: 1181-1185)

This passage (which is mapped out in Figure 6.1) opens with the indefinite prepositional phrase ‘somewhere on the line’ which identifies, from the beginning, the narrator’s lack of certainty regarding the existence of ‘guys like him’, emphasised by the modal auxillary, ‘must have’, which is working epistemically within this sentence (shown to the left of Text-World 2). Although the modality used here does imply a sense of obligation (i.e. that people must work continue to work the line), the modal is clearly aligned with the imaginings and beliefs of the narrator at this point. Such imaginings cue a string of embedded epistemic modal-worlds, as Alverez imagines other citizens who ‘could still read a schematic’ and ‘remember how to show up for work’ which evidence his modelling of these hypothetical characters. This is illustrated in the three embedded epistemic-world boxes to the far right of Figure 6.1.

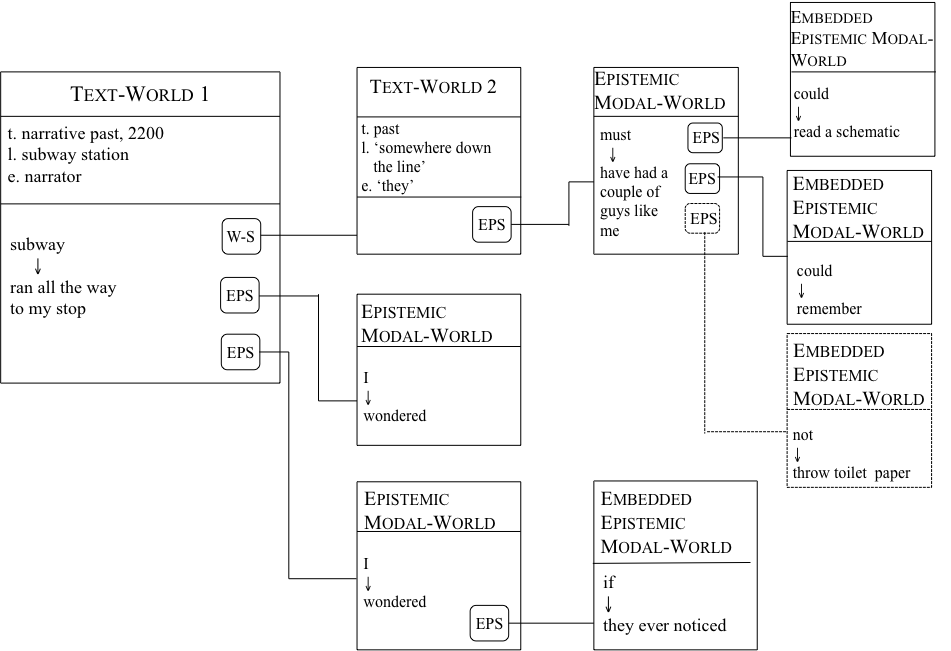


Figure 6.1 The epistemic processes

of the narrator at the close of ‘Pump Six’

Returning to the originating text-world – Text-World 1 in the diagram – Alverez then wonders who these men might be, triggering a further unrealised epistemic modal-world, and if ‘they ever noticed how hard it was to get anything done’. This second musing creates a conditional epistemic modal-world (seen to the bottom right of the figure) and concerns the perceptions of the hypothetical workers (indicated by the epistemic perception modal verb ‘notice’), who Alverez hopes share in his daily struggle to keep the world alive.

‘Pump Six’ closes with hope both for the narrator and for the reader who in engaging with the text is invited to interpret the narrative events as a cautionary warning as to their own possible futures and make more informed decisions as a result. Several online readers of the story made such connections between their own readings of the narrative and their discourse-world lives exemplified by the responses of Saretta.L (2013: n.p.) who reports on *LibraryThing* that ‘Pump Six’ depicts one of the situations she fears the most and of kd9 (2008: n.p.) who categorises the narrative as a ‘cautionary [future]’; each of these interpretations highlights the believability of the text-world, the effectiveness of the narrative and the transferable nature of the text’s underlying eco-social message.

**6.6 Review**

In this chapter I have provided a detailed Text-World-Theory analysis of Paolo Bacigalupi’s ‘Pump Six’ focusing on its representation of technological, urban and environmental decline. I have situated the short story within the broader category of ecodystopian science fiction and detailed the didactic intentions that drive such narratives. I have examined this didacticism in terms of ethics, preferred responses, and discourse-text-world mappings and argued that it is the transferable nature of Bacigalupi’s eco-social message that invites emotional readerly responses to the text. This argument was supported with online reader response data collected from the website *LibraryThing* in order to better understand the readerly experience of engaging with ‘Pump Six’ and further accentuate the ethical didacticism which characteristically underpins dystopian reading. I also placed particular focus on the modelling of non-human minds throughout the narrative, mapping the characterisation of the trogs and their subsequent relation to the devolving human species. In the following section I expand upon this discussion of emotional readerly responses in relation to the text-worlds of Genevieve Valentine’s ‘Is this your day to join the Revolution?’.

Chapter 7: ‘Is this your day to join the Revolution?’

**7.0 Overview**

The analyses in this chapter focus upon Genevieve Valentine’s ([2009] 2012) short story ‘Is this your day to join the Revolution?’. Section 7.1 introduces the text and outlines the critical responses to the story following its original publication in 2009. In 7.2, I offer a Text-World-Theory analysis of my own reading of ‘Is this your day?’ placing particular focus on the narrative’s ambiguous opening and the unreliable perspective of its primary protagonist, Liz. I argue that the experience of reading ‘Is this your day?’ is a particularly estranging one given the abstruse world-building elements which populate its text-worlds. I therefore examine this particular reading experience in terms of cognitive estrangement (as introduced in Chapter 2) reflecting on the feelings of defamiliarisation and confusion that I felt during reading. So as to further investigate the particularly estranging experience of reading Valentine’s text, I move on to examine key reader responses to the story gathered during a written think-aloud study in 7.3 (originally outlined in Section 4.3). In the analysis which follows, I examine three aspects of the group’s written responses: their individual plotting of central world-building information; their processes of world-repair; and their emotional responses to specific text-world enactors.

**7.1 ‘Is this your day to join the Revolution?’**

Genevieve Valentine’s ([2009] 2012) ‘Is this your day to join the Revolution?’ was originally published in 2009 for the website *Futurismic* and later collected in John Joseph Adams’ ([2011] 2012) dystopian short story collection, *Brave New Worlds* (all in-text citations are to this edition; ‘Is this your day?’ is reproduced in Appendix E). *Futurismic* is defined as a ‘website for people interested in the future and the effects of science and technology on the present’ (Raven, 2014: n.p.), which in addition to posting blogs and science fiction columns distributes ‘innovative, exciting new stories that use the tools of speculative fiction to examine contemporary issues and take a look at what’s just around the corner’ (Raven, 2014: n.p.). Adams’ ([2011] 2012) collected edition, *Brave New Worlds* also addresses contemporary concerns for the future, specifically focusing upon tales of ‘totalitarian menace’ (Adams, 2016: n.p.). Comprising thirty-six dystopian narratives (thirty-nine in the second edition), the collection posits the overarching question: ‘what happens when civilization invades and dictates every aspect of your life?’ (Adams, 2016: n.p.). ‘Is this your day to join the Revolution?’ offers a clear response to this question, presenting a future world in which society is controlled through means of surveillance and propaganda, by an unidentified totalitarian oligarchy.

For Valentine (2009a: n.p.), ‘Is this your day to join the revolution?’ aims to challenge ‘a future where 50s-style instructional films rule the populace’ and encourage the reader to ‘never underestimate the power of a soothing voice telling [them] what to do’. It is a story concerned with the power of propaganda, surveillance and marketing over the lives and choices of the everyman which, as reviewed by Bamberger Scott (2011: n.p.), results in ‘a sad little tale of the dangers of asking too many questions and the folly of trying to take a stand’. It reflects on the sincerity of contemporary media and examines ‘what happens when people start to question what’s presented as the truth’ (Valentine, 2010: n.p.).

**7.1.1 The Text-Worlds of ‘Is this your Day?’**

‘Is this your day to join the Revolution?’ reflects on the governmentally controlled life of Liz, an insignificant civil service worker at the Department of Information Affairs. The Department, which acts as a central facet of the world’s governmental structure, issues an array of public service announcements, videos and other propaganda, which range from instructions on how to report suspicious activity through to guidance on correct dating protocols. In particular, the videos concern themselves with the after-effects of a non-specific event termed ‘the Bang’ (Appendix E: 30), which despite its capitalisation, remains backgrounded throughout the narrative. By piecing together additional world-building elements which enrich the originating text-world, such as the threat of ‘pathogens’ (Appendix E: 69) and the characters’ requirement to take pills from ‘Disease Control workers’ (Appendix E: 1), it can be assumed that ‘the Bang’ constitutes a natural or nuclear disaster. I therefore read the text-world events as being situated within a post-apocalyptic world recovering from radiation poisoning and/or subsequent contagion, as inferred from my own discourse-world knowledge and real-world assumptions.

The story opens in Category B (N) neutral narration as Liz leaves her building to go to work, shown by the objective third person external narrator and the initial absence of *verba sentiendi* or modality. During Liz’s commute, the narrator provides ambiguous details about the society in which she lives, occasionally dipping into the mind of Liz in instances of free indirect style. As a result the narrative shifts into Category B (-ve) narration in Reflector mode as text-world events become focalised through Liz’s perspective (see Section 3.3.1; also Simpson, 1993). At the end of her shift, Liz meets her partner Greg for a date at the movies. During their small talk, additional obscure world-building elements are added to the text-world, such as Greg having ‘visible sperm’ which prevents him from acquiring any ‘Sector-C jobs’ (Appendix E: 30-31), and the couple’s relationship being determined by a society enforced matching system. Neither of these world-building elements is elucidated upon, with the matching system remaining particularly obscure throughout.

Whilst Liz and Greg are at the cinema ‘John Doe’ (Appendix E: 78), a non-specific, underground movement, interrupt the film screening with an announcement that the information provided by the government concerning the Bang and its after-effects is a lie. Government officials quickly interrupt John Doe’s message, disconnect the audio and storm the cinema. Liz feigns tears so that she and Greg can leave without being questioned. On the way to a government hotel the couple are stopped by a member of John Doe, who is also individually named John Doe. It is at this point that the narrative takes an unexpected turn as without significant justification the couple decide to help John, now affectionately referred to as Johnny, and offer him sanctuary at Greg’s apartment. It is implied that Greg, who in Liz’s mind is ‘as gay as a maypole’ (Appendix E: 35), is attracted to Johnny and the remainder of the text focuses upon Liz’s concerns for her and Greg’s subsequent relationship.

The following day Liz encounters Johnny again, disguised as a member of Disease Control. After an unsuccessful attempt to convince Liz to join the revolution, Johnny causes a scene and both characters are arrested. Liz is brought in front of her managing director, Mr. Randall, and despite her initial fear of impending danger she is instead informed that the events of the last two days were a test, aimed at collecting new statistics for a service video, which Liz has passed. Liz’s relief is short-lived, however, as she realises this interaction is based on false information and Mr Randall is also a liar. Liz is released and the story concludes rather ambiguously as she phones Greg to ask him to marry her and the voiceover of a service announcement echoes in the background with the state’s defining axiom ‘what do *you* know that *we* should know?’ (Appendix E: 261).

‘Is this your day to join the Revolution?’ (Valentine, [2009] 2011) is an interesting piece to consider, then, not only for its political dystopian focus (a popular dystopian theme unaddressed by my narrative choices thus far) but also given its satirically nostalgic links to science-fictional works of the 1960s and ’70s. In addition to presenting another tale of dystopian satire (as introduced in Chapter 2 and analysed in Chapter 5), the story goes one step further than the previous two narratives, not only critiquing the author’s experiential environment (in its exaggeration of present-day media controls, for example) but also satirising the science-fictional form itself. As reviewed on *Futurismic* the story presents a revitalised spoof (see Raven, 2009) of classic dystopian science fiction, being akin to narratives of the 1950s and 1960s. It is arguably the dated techno-world-building elements (see Section 6.2.2) in the narrative (the most advanced of which being ‘subway cars’) and the lack of any unusual or futuristic devices which give the narrative such a dated feel.

Indeed, Valentine (2010: n.p.) notes during an interview that it was the comedic nature of a series of re-released pubic service announcements (PSAs) from the 1960s which inspired the genesis of ‘Is this your day to join the Revolution?’, after Mystery Science Theatre 3000 made a collection of American videos publically available in 2007. Valentine (2010: n.p.) claims that despite their being ‘some of the greatest unintentional comedy ever’ the PSA’s original role as serious guidance propaganda was, from her contemporary perspective, ‘chilling’. Valentine (2010: n.p.) explains that it was a short path from her watching the re-released PSAs to writing about their hypothetical resurgence in the future, for as she concluded: ‘[she wouldn’t be surprised] if several news channels are on the verge of implementing them already’. The combination of the text’s almost regressive future and the pertinent critique of public propaganda invite critical responses to the effects of the media and advertising on a contemporary reader’s discourse-world environment. The resurgence of prolific and controlling PSAs, as imagined in the text-world of ‘Is this your day?’, presents an ‘all-too-plausible tomorrow’ (Raven, 2009: n.p.) – a future in which uncensored propaganda becomes a common and effective political tool.

In comparison with the short stories analysed so far, ‘Is this your day to join the Revolution?’ presents another refracted vision of contemporary discourse-world anxieties, including several characteristic concerns of dystopian fiction post-9/11, such as the threat of natural disaster and social regression. Similar to Bacigalupi’s ‘Pump Six’, ‘Is this your Day?’ presents a world destroyed by ecological disaster or nuclear war, both of which are culturally relevant given the impending threats of climate change and political upheaval in 2016. However, unlike in the worlds of ‘Pump Six’ and ‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’, ‘Is this your day?’ describes an obscure future world where the reasoning and consequences for such a future remain unexplained. ‘Is this your day?’ offers no flashbacks to a previous society or contextual insights into the cause and development of its stunted worlds. The information videos offer no relevant insight into the cause of the Bang or clarify why the information they portray (such as ‘“What You Can Do on a Date”’ (Appendix E: 6) is necessary for the functioning of this future society. As a result, the destructive nature of the videos and the implied totalitarian system from which they stem is significantly backgrounded throughout the narrative.

In my own reading of the narrative, however, the negative aspects of ‘Is this your day?’, exemplified by the governmental deceit within the text-world and the controlling nature of the PSAs, were foregrounded. This was a result of my engagement with the accompanying paratext included alongside ‘Is this your day?’ in the Adams’ collected edition. Each story collected in *Brave New Worlds* is presented with a complementary paratext, to use Genette’s (1997: 1) term for such ‘accompanying productions’, which provides an introduction to the story, key themes, and a short biographical note about each respective author. The editor’s note, which is external to the text, falls under the prefatorial situation of communication, ‘using the word *preface* to designate every type of introductory (preludial or postludial) text, authorial or allographic, consisting of a discourse produced on the subject of the text that precedes it.’ (Genette, 1997: 161). The editor’s note examined here is an example of an *authentic allographic* preface, in that it is written by a real person (authentic) who is a wholly different person to the author of the work (allographic) (see Norledge, forthcoming, for discussion of paratextual features in *Brave New Worlds* (Adams, [2011] 2012)). The note provides an array of additional material that enriches the originating text-world of the narrative proper, adding to the reader’s existing discourse-world knowledge, and priming specific information relevant to a text-driven reading of the story. If a reader of the Adams’ collection chooses to engage with the paratext (as I did), they therefore have access to a much richer originating text-world than a reader on *Futurismic* (for which no such addition is provided).

The note is, however, an optional extra and can be overlooked or even read following a first reading of the story, which would produce differing effects on text-world construction.

A reader of the Adams’ collection can either access the text-world directly, ignoring the additional information, or following the paratext as illustrated in Figure 7.1.

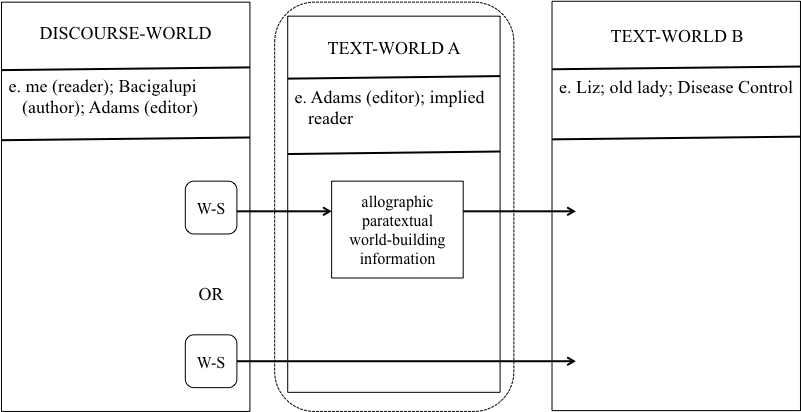


Figure 7.1 The text-worlds of ‘Is this your day to join the Revolution?’ as reproduced in *Brave New Worlds*

As can be seen in the above figure, the originating text-world (Text-World B) can be conceptualised directly following a world-switch from the discourse-world to the text-world (formed from the opening narrative – Text-World B). Alternatively, it can be conceptualised indirectly following two world-switches: from the discourse-world to the text-world of the paratext (Text-World A), then from the paratext to Text-World B. When taking the latter conceptual pathway, the originating text-world of the story is significantly richer as a result of pre-existing knowledge gained from the paratext. As the paratext played a role in my own reading of the narrative, I will briefly discuss the additional world-building details provided by the note before moving on discuss the main narrative. The editor’s note is reproduced below (without Valentine’s biographical details, which do not add much relevant detail to the construction of the text-world).

The Tupolev ANT-20, completed in 1934, was one of the largest fixed-winged aircrafts ever built. It featured remarkable engineering features that outshone any other airplane of the 1930s. Big and fast, it was loaded to the gills with wonders: an in-flight film projector, its own printing equipment, a darkroom, and most importantly, the radio broadcasting unit known as the “Voice from the Sky.” It was no ordinary airplane. The ANT-20 was the jewel of Stalin’s propaganda machine.

Propaganda doesn’t have to be evil. But it exists to convince people – and those who use it are often willing to skew the truth or obscure it entirely in order to create an influential product. In the past, propaganda was an important part of the war efforts of many countries, from Nazi Germany to the United States. But in the future, who knows how propaganda might be used?

Our next tale is the story of a new kind of propaganda, filled with a message so large it has changed the living fabric of a nation. But is the message true?

In this grim new world, there’s no way to know. And even if it’s not, who’s brave enough to ask?

(Adams, [2011] 2012: 267)

In engaging with the paratext the reader must first construct Text-World 1 (as illustrated in Figure 7.2) that details the text-world created by the editorial narrative. This world includes world-building information concerning the author of the accompanying story, in this case Genevieve Valentine, such as her previous writings and awards. There is then a shift in register and focus as the editor shifts topic to discuss the story at hand. This shift is initiated by a temporal world-switch to Text-World 2, moving from present- to past-tense verbs to describe the completion of a military aircraft, the Tupolev ANT-20, in 1934. The remainder of the paragraph adds detail to this world-building element through several intentional relational identifying processes that modify the aeroplane, such as: ‘the ANT-20 was the jewel of Stalin’s propaganda machine’ and ‘[the ANT-20] was one of the largest fixed-wing air-crafts ever built’. The purpose of this opening description is to foreground the statements concerning propaganda, which is the focal theme of Valentine’s narrative (the plane analogy is neither returned to nor transferable to an understanding of the story).

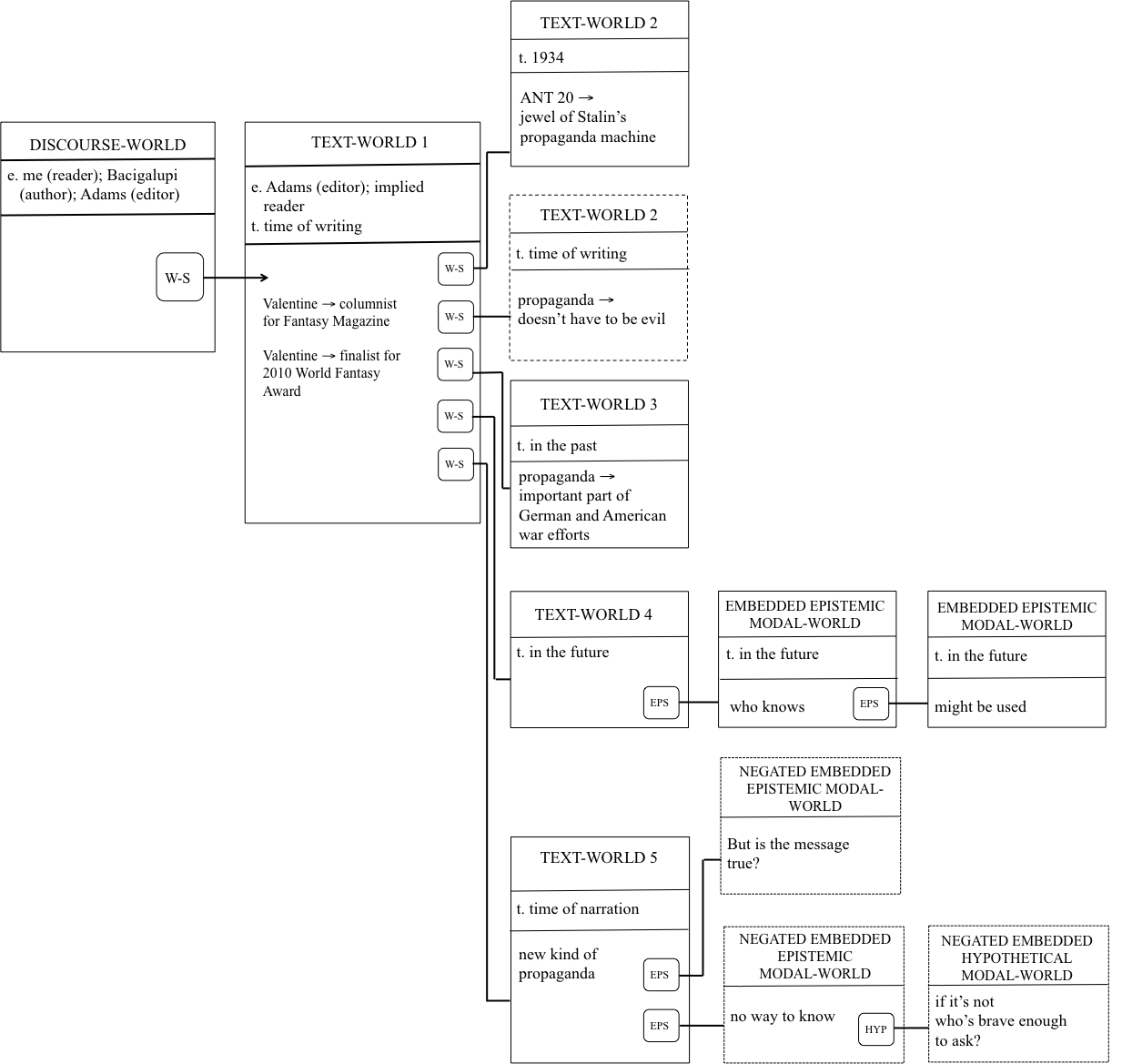


Figure 7.2 The paratextual worlds of ‘Is this your day to join the Revolution?’

Such information is unavailable to readers of the text encountering the story on the *Futurismic* website or indeed to readers who skip the editor’s note in the Adams’ edition. Readers who engage with the additional material therefore experience a much richer opening text-world than those entering the world without the information.

The second half of the paratext further supports this argument by clearly identifying key themes and questions addressed in ‘Is this your day to join the Revolution?’. The link to propaganda is made through a second temporal world-switch to Text-World 3, cued by the generalised negative declarative ‘propaganda doesn’t have to be evil’, which shifts to the implied editor’s time of writing, as indicated by the change from past to present tense following the first paragraph break. There is then an additional historical digression, which cues a world-switch to Text-World 4 and examines the use of propaganda ‘in the past’ followed by an epistemic flash-forward to imagine how such processes might be used ‘in the future’ (shown in Text-World 5). Such information is therefore thematically interlinked with key narrative concerns (albeit loosely) and provides both insights into the narrative’s focal topic – the power of propaganda – and a rich contextual frame through which to enter the worlds of the main text.

The use of factual, historical information within the allographic preface also stands in comparison to the reliability of the text itself, which is defined by the editor as ‘the story of a new kind of propaganda, filled with a message so large it has changed the fabric of a nation’. It can be inferred from the editor’s previous discussion of questionable uses of propaganda in history, which Adams’ terms ‘evil’, that the ‘new kind of propaganda’ may be equally dubious, particularly given its nation-wide influence. The rhetorical interrogative ‘but is the message true?’ directs the reader’s attention to the unreliability of the narrative before it actually starts cueing an unrealised epistemic modal-world (shown to the right of Text-World 6 in Figure 7.2). The reader cannot flesh out this modal-world until they have read the narrative itself, but the surrounding discourse context certainly coloured my own interpretations at this point – the answer is most likely ‘no’. Such an interpretation is formed from my expectations of prototypical dystopian social systems, which are characteristically immoral or corrupt, and in response to the images of corruption purposefully drawn upon by the editor. The final sentence cements this interpretation with the creation of an embedded conditional modal-world cued by the conditional interrogative: ‘if it’s not [true] then whose [sic] brave enough to ask?’ (shown to the bottom right of Figure 7.2). The subordinating clause, which forms the apodosis of the conditional – ‘whose [sic] brave enough to ask?’ – is suggestive of there being a maverick character within the text-world who will come to oppose this message, which in itself implies that the message is open to falsification. The unreliability of this message and the ambiguity surrounding text-world events is discussed further in the following section.

**7.2 The Oligarchic Worlds of ‘Is this Your Day?’**

‘Is this your day to join the Revolution?’ opens *in media res*, as Liz leaves an unspecified building that, given the use of the possessive third person ‘her’, I would assume represents her home.

[PASSAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT. FOR FULL REFERENCE SEE, VALENTINE [2009] 2012: p. 268, ll. 1-5]

Within the opening sentence the reader is introduced to the first in a string of unexplained world-building elements, namely ‘Disease Control workers’ and ‘Lavender Fields Sterile-Milled Soap’, neither of which are existent in the discourse-world. These elements therefore form the basis of the text’s ‘iconic textual register’ (Moylan, 2000), identifying the world as distinct from the reader’s own. The scene illustrated is suggestive of a mundane daily occurrence, exemplified by the material action processes prescribed to the Disease Control workers, ‘standing’ and ‘handing out’, which given the use of past progressive tense imply continuous actions. The direct speech world-switch, triggered by the present tense – ‘do you need one?’ – further enriches these event processes with the mental cognition verb ‘need’, suggesting that the use of facemasks and pills is a societal requirement to prevent the spread of the Disease. The Disease, which is a defining world-building element and the text’s primary novum, remains ambiguous throughout and is eventually revealed by the Revolution to be a fabrication designed and endorsed by the world’s oligarchic state.

The estranging nature of Valentine’s world is further realised in the second paragraph as the first public information video, entitled ‘What You Can Do on a Date’, is shown in Liz’s ‘subway car’.

The TV in her subway car showed “What You Can Do on a Date.” The young man and woman went to the fair twice – once where he screwed everything up, and again where he helped her into the Ferris Wheel and handed her a paper mask before he put on his own. The movie closed with swelling music and a reminder in cursive: ARE YOU DUE FOR A DATE? CHECK WITH YOUR DOCTOR. (Appendix E: 6-11)

The title of the PSA, ‘What You Can Do on a Date’, creates a temporal world-switch, given its presentation as direct speech within the video; the video itself occupies a separate text-world with its own spatio-temporal parameters, representative of the moment of filming. For instance, there is a spatial shift from Liz’s deictic centre in the subway car to that of a fairground where a couple are on a date. The fairground is representative of the set of the PSA, and the action of the film, which Liz is viewing post-production, logically occurs at a temporal moment before her journey to work.

The embedded deontic modal-world triggered by the deontic use of the verb ‘can’ clearly highlights the instructive purpose of the PSAs whilst detailing the societal restrictions enforced within the text-world. The need for such a video in itself suggests that there are many activities in which the characters must not partake. The content of the video that follows presents two versions of the same event – a couple attending a fairground – only one of which is ‘correct’. The function-advancers within the video provide additional (albeit obscure) details about the environmental setting and social structures presented in the two fairground text-worlds. For instance, the material action process, ‘handed her a paper mask before he put on his own’, suggests that citizens must protect themselves from some form of air-pollution or bacteria, which in turn implies that ‘the Disease’ is airborne. The closing reminder issued by the interrogative ‘ARE YOU DUE FOR A DATE?’ triggers a fleeting world-switch in which citizens are required to monitor their dating habits medically and check-in with a doctor. The reason for such behaviour is never explained and the societal role of the doctors remains a particularly estranging detail throughout given the schematic disjuncture between my understanding of the text-world doctors in comparison to their discourse-world counterparts.

As can be seen from the above analysis, totalitarian control is achieved and maintained using the PSAs, which facilitate mass indoctrination. Citizens are encouraged to follow the instructions issued in the videos and report offenders to Liz’s department (evidenced by the video, ‘Is Your Neighbour a Traitor?’ (Appendix E: 171)) – propaganda therefore ‘instils belief, surveillance polices it’ (Yeo, 2010: 55). The PSAs mask society’s totalitarian impulses, spreading political propaganda through well-placed media outlets. The following example, which depicts the key video aired by the Department of Information Affairs, clearly supports this interpretation.

[PASSAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT. FOR FULL REFERENCE SEE, VALENTINE [2009] 2012: p. 268, ll. 17-24]

The PSA, which plays ‘on a loop’ above Liz’s desk, repeatedly depicts the processes for reporting suspicious activities. The video details two separate events, a woman overhearing information she does not know how to report and a mechanic meeting a department agent. The mental cognitive process ‘overhearing’, ascribed to the female actor, is suggestive of continuous action, given the use of present progressive tense. In my understanding of the video, the woman is therefore representative of the everyday citizen who should be continually alert to overhearing incriminating information.

The video aims to help the ‘everyman’ figure, exemplified by the fleeting negated epistemic modal-world triggered by the verb phrase ‘she didn’t know how to report’. In this world the citizen is unsure how to share the overheard data, a process the video goes on to clarify. The mechanic who signs in to the department represents the enlightened citizen who is received cordially by the ‘smiling agent’, with the modifier ‘smiling’ acting as a positive endorsement of the process. The following direct speech switches to the moment of filming as the PSA narrator poses the question ‘what do you know that we should know?’ – this being the axiomatic slogan of this oligarchic world. The information provided through the video is one of the only insights given into the workings of the narrative hierarchy, in that citizens ‘make claims’ against their neighbours, which are then followed up by Liz’s department, highlighting the level of surveillance employed by the state. In line with classic political dystopias such as Orwell’s ([1949] 2013) *Nineteen Eighty-Four* or Atwood’s (1985) *The Handmaid’s Tale*, totalitarian controls are thus achieved ‘by breaking down the private world of each inhabitant […] breaking down the very core of the individual mind and personality – what remains is the pliable, numb consciousness of massman’ (Gottlieb, 2001: 12), and it is to the desensitised citizens of this future world that the PSAs are presented.

It is this process of desensitisation and subsequent societal ignorance that concerns John Doe, the opposition movement within the narrative. The group are collectively and individually called ‘John Doe’ (a name I am aware pertains to an unidentified person in my discourse-world) and act to reveal the deception of the government and counteract the effects of their propaganda and indoctrination on their fellow citizens. The following extract details the group’s first political interception during a cinema screening as they actively negate the key world-building elements within the text-world – ‘the Disease’ and ‘Disease Control’:

The screen flared back to life, with the title: YOU ARE BEING LIED TO. “So, no refund?” asked Greg. The people near them laughed. The screen cards kept flashing. THERE ARE NO PATHOGENS. THERE IS NO DISEASE CONTROL. THERE IS NO DISEASE. Now no one was laughing. Someone got up and ran out of the theatre. Liz craned her neck, trying to see what was happening in the projection booth. The screen cut to a grainy shot of a computer screen; a shadowy figure sat beside it, typing and talking to the camera. “We are John Doe,” it said – its voice had been distorted, like film played at half-speed – “and we have tuned the network. We have proof the Disease is a lie.” (Appendix E: 67-79)

Once again here, new world-building information is presented using a PSA video, this time designed and implemented by the Revolution as opposed to the Department of Information Affairs. The temporal and spatial world-switch in the first sentence moves from the time of narration (past tense) to the time of the video recording (present tense) and mimics the direct speech of John Doe. The use of second person address in the title of the recording – YOU ARE BEING LIED TO – addresses each individual society member in the audience, including Liz, from whose perspective the text-world is focalised.

Following the switch to second-person address there are three negated parallel-constructions, each of which is capitalised for emphasis – THERE ARE NO PATHOGENS. THERE IS NO DISEASE CONTROL. THERE IS NO DISEASE. Each sentence cues a negated text-world in which the reader must first conceptualise the inverse, positive construction in order to understand the negative (see Chapter 3, Section 3.4): the reader must first conceptualise a world in which there are pathogens, Disease Control and the Disease. Negative text-worlds are often only fleeting, however in the case of this particular text, the negative worlds imagined align with the main text-world as it was initially conceived. In negating these statements the main text-world becomes unstable and the reader must undergo a series of world-repairs (see Chapter 3, Section 3.4; also Gavins, 2007) to understand the text-world as subject to governmental conspiracy rather than mass contagion as first believed.

The statement issued by the revolution adds further to the estranging nature of the text-world, offering new world-building information yet presenting such details from a negative perspective:

[PASSAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT. FOR FULL REFERENCE SEE, VALENTINE [2009] 2012: p. 270, ll. 86-92]

Firstly, this extract highlights some additional information about the main text-world. For example, it is now clear that the pathogens released from the Bang have caused the Disease, a pandemic which Disease Control monitor by responding to reports of growing infection. The report also indicates that the pathogens can actively attack particular locations and that such areas are normally ‘small’ and ‘always near the borders’. However, each of these world-building details is presented within an embedded, negated epistemic modal-world which stipulates that the Bang did not cause a pandemic, Disease Control are not acting to supress the spread of infection, and the pathogens cannot strike particular areas. Through the negation of such features, the reader undergoes a series of world-repairs to create a new representation of the world in which Disease Control are acting as part of a wider governmental conspiracy.

The deictic marker ‘near the borders’ is the first indication that the city described is enclosed or separated from outside areas, triggering my own discourse-world schema of other gated and patrolled communities in dystopian fictions (both those separated by hierarchical social markers as in *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008) and those whose perimeters mark unsafe or unprotected territory as in *Divergent* (Roth, 2011), *Delirium* (Oliver, 2011) or *The Giver* (Lowry, 1993)). The closing sentence, ‘We’ve made contact with-’, adds further to my conceptualisation of this gated city with the material action process ‘made contact’ suggesting that there is alternate life beyond the border. This event exemplifies a prototypical narrative stage in the structure of dystopian texts, which tend to conclude with either a) the suppression of the focal protagonist or b) the emancipation of the individual and/or the possibility of future liberty (see Steen, 2003, 2011). Freedom here can be understood as either literal freedom from the controls of an oppressive government, for example, or as a more abstract freedom from imposing natural, biological or environmental disaster. The reference to gated communities is therefore salient in my construction of this particular text-world and is enriched by my schematic understanding of dystopian outcomes and processes of ‘narrative interrelation’ (Mason, 2016). Mason (2016: 54) defines a narrative interrelation as ‘the cognitive act of making a link between a narrative and a least one other’. She argues that these links can be made spontaneously by the reader during reading or may be triggered by intertextual referencing (Mason, 2016: 54). In terms of my own reading for example, on interpreting the dialogue of the revolutionary, and imaginatively filling in the gap marked by the ellipsis, I construe the existence of an underground movement within this text-world, akin to ‘God’s Gardeners’ in *The Year of the Flood* (Atwood, 2009), ‘the right arm’ in *The Maze Runner* (Dashner, 2009) or ‘The Underground’ in the dystopian film *Equilibrium* (Wimmer, 2002). These narrative interrelations (Mason, 2016) to other dystopian texts support such a construal and add definition to my mental representation of the world at this point.

The imperative ‘don’t take the pills from Disease Control’ also triggers my discourse-world knowledge of other dystopian narratives, as the liberation of a dystopian protagonist (when it occurs) is frequently preceded by the removal of governmental controlled medications. Again such an association triggers multiple narrative interrelations with texts such as *Matched* (Condie, 2010), *Equilibrium* (Wimmer, 2002), *The Giver* (Lowry, 1993), or ‘Pop Squad’ (Bacigalupi, 2006a) in which protagonists come to fully realise the corruption of their respective worlds once medication has ceased. The instruction to stop medicating, issued by John Doe, is followed by a string of interrogative questions, each of which cues an unrealised epistemic modal-world. For example, the first interrogative ‘whose [sic] ever really gotten sick?’ triggers an epistemic modal-world in which the reader may infer that the answer is ‘no one’, constructing a fleeting version of the text-world in which the disease is not real. In fact, all of the modal-worlds triggered by the interrogatives imply the same verdict that the characters and the reader ‘are being lied to’ – no one has become sick, the pathogens have not been attacking the borderlands, and Disease Control have been responding to something more sinister than the Disease.

The voice of the Revolution must therefore be perceived as reliable unless the reader believes the new enactors to be the liars. If the reader chooses to believe the voice of John Doe (which is the most likely option given the genre of the narrative), then they must undertake a certain amount of world-repair, adapting their already confused version of textual events. For example, in my reading of the narrative it was necessary to reassess the setting of the text-world given that the Bang has not caused the city to be heavily polluted, and there is no Disease. There is also no need, (other than for societal control) for the characters to take the unspecific daily tablets or for them to be medically matched by the Department of Society. Society instead is functioning based on a series of extended lies endorsed by government propaganda.

The potential insincerity of the government is clearly highlighted at the close of the narrative when Liz is arrested and brought before Mr. Randall for interrogation. During this interaction, the managing director attempts to assure Liz that the announcements of John Doe and her consequent relationship with Johnny were arranged by the Department for training purposes.

[PASSAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT. FOR FULL REFERENCE SEE, VALENTINE [2009] 2012: p. 273, ll. 234-242]

The use of direct speech triggers a world-switch to the time of the interaction as the narrator recounts the discussion between Mr. Randall and Liz. The use of the first person plural in Mr. Randall’s speech – ‘we’d like to congratulate you’ – distinguishes his position as ‘speaker for the state’, suggesting that the information which follows will be indicative of a governmentally shared response to Liz’s behaviour. This is supported by the continued use of ‘we’ and ‘us’ throughout the director’s discourse – ‘part of a series of test runs we did around the city’, ‘working with us’ – suggesting that the director’s discourse is representative of the broader department. What follows is another potentially world-altering statement that acts to negate the previous allegations of the Revolution. Mr Randall argues that Johnny was part of a series of marketing test runs, in which Liz was purposefully engaged. The reader has seemingly been twice fooled. At this point in the narrative, I began to question which version of textual events was true, and as result, held two conceptualisations of the originating text-world in my mind, neither of which could be confirmed without further world-building information.

The following paragraph served this exact purpose, clarifying the Revolution’s allegations against the State and revealing the unreliability of Mr. Randall:

“Our field man did his damndest, but I told him – I said, that girl has her head on straight, you won’t get her to help you! He tried twice, the theatre and the street, but did Elizabeth fold?” He laughed. “I told him he’d have as much luck getting help from me as from you.” She thought about giving Johnny her keys to Greg’s place, telling him the fastest way to get there, taking Greg’s arm to go for an alibi date. No one had told Randall about that. This was no undercover job, then; Johnny Doe had died and taken that secret with him. (Appendix E: 243-250)

The passage opens with the direct speech of Mr. Randall, which cues a series of embedded temporal world-switches as he references the material actions of Johnny earlier that day: ‘our fieldman did his damnest’. This is followed by a switch to indirect speech, which shifts the narrative focus to a moment further in the past when Johnny and Mr. Randall discussed the marketing test. The indirect speech itself contains an additional embedded negated world-switch – ‘you won’t get her to help you’ – which is the first indication that Randall’s speech is unreliable. Liz did, in fact, help Johnny, as exemplified by the indirect thought, ‘she thought about giving Johnny her keys to Greg’s place, telling him the fastest way to get there, taking Greg’s arm to go for an alibi date.’ The following shift to free indirect thought in the closing sentences, evidenced by the shift in the proper nouns used to refer to the other characters – ‘Randall’ and ‘Johhny Doe’ – the use of proximal demonstratives – ‘this was no inside job then’ – and the conversational use of ‘then’, further clarifies Randall’s unreliability and evidences that Liz is fully aware of the department’s deceit. Once again, the reader must conceptualise a series of world-repairs (assuming they were misled by Mr. Randall in the first instance) to return to the second version of textual events as presented by the Revolution (discussed earlier in this section). As a result, the text-world is made increasingly unstable as the reader juggles several versions of events, as Liz’s point of view shifts to accommodate other character perspectives.

For me, the experience of reading Valentine’s ‘Is this your day to join the Revolution?’ was both estranging and often frustrating, particularly given the lack of a satisfying resolution. Following the above interaction with Mr. Randall, Liz returns home and proposes to Greg, no additional information is provided regarding the death of John Doe, the status of the Revolution, or Liz’s personal responses to the confirmed societal deceit. The open ending mirrors much of the main text, offering unreliable, undefined world-building information that further obscures rather than augments the text-worlds of the story. The process of reading the text requires additional cognitive effort on the part of the reader as he or she comes to terms with the story’s iconic textual register, imaginatively filling any gaps using their own discourse-world knowledge. Having engaged with such obscurities – defining the text’s primary novum for example (the Disease) – most are then negated by John Doe and again by Liz in the closing paragraphs. By the end of the story, it is therefore difficult to know what aspects of the text-world were reliable and which were purely propaganda. In the following section, I move on to look at how a group of postgraduate readers engaged with such vague world-building information and to what extent they shared in my estranged responses to the narrative.

**7.3 Reading ‘Is this your day to join the Revolution?’**

In support of my own introspective analysis of Valentine’s text, I presented ‘Is this your day?’ in a written ‘think-aloud’ study (Jeffries, 2002; Short and van Peer, 1989) to a group of four postgraduate students in the School of English at the University of Sheffield (the methodology and design of this study is fully outlined in Chapter 4). Participants were asked to engage with the narrative one section at a time, recording their responses to the story as they read. Each passage was logically self-contained and followed (wherever possible) original breaks in the text. Readers were free to respond to any aspects of the text that were salient to them and were not issued with any guiding questions or topics to think about whilst reading. As will be seen from the analysis which follows, the majority of responses focused on each individual’s conceptualisation of the primary text-world and their understanding of particular world-builders. The participants also showed specific interest in Liz’s responses to the world around her often reported empathy with her character. Throughout the remainder of this chapter, I therefore place particular focus upon the group’s individual plotting of central world-building information; their processes of world-repair following the allegations of the Revolution and in response to the story’s ending; and their emotional responses to specific text-world enactors.

**7.3.1 Estrangement and World-Building in ‘Is this Your Day?’**

To return to the opening paragraphs of ‘Is this your day?’, the think-aloud participants were as equally jarred as I was by the vast array of unexplained world-builders that form the text’s iconic textual register. They each analysed certain world-building elements, introduced in the first section (Section 2 of the think-aloud), and outlined their opening processes of interpretation. The participants’ responses to Section 2 are reproduced below alongside the accompanying passage of the text.

Section 2

[PASSAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT. FOR FULL REFERENCE SEE, VALENTINE [2009] 2012: p. 268, ll. 1-11]

Participant Responses to Section 2

P1. What’s with the masks? Presumably some sort of close-contact infection.

“The TV in her subway car” reads like an idea from a 1970s style sci-fi. If this was written in 2009, the idea of smartphones and personal media isn’t entirely futuristic. It feels like sentimental approach to sci-fi/dystopian world-building - but that’s no bad thing.

P2. This feels very 60s public information video - although I could never decide whether they were hilarious or terrifying

P3. lot of info here a bit hard to follow makes me think it is set in America ‘Screwed everything up’ ‘subway car’ etc also feels a bit dated in a weird way

P4. The brand name, Coke, sticks out to me in particular. It seems particularly jarring, almost sinister, alongside the idea of mass disease control potential contamination.

The estranging nature of this opening paragraph is clearly remarked upon by all four of my participants as they individually respond to the ambiguity of the opening world-builders. Participant 3, for example, notes that there is a ‘lot of info here’ and the narrative is consequently ‘a bit hard to follow’. She also notes that the register of the narrative caused her to think the story was set in America, cued by world-building elements such as ‘subway car’ and the phrase ‘screwed up’, which are recognisable features of American English. Participant 1 similarly commented on the unexplained world-builders within the opening sentences opening his commentary with the rhetorical question, ‘what’s with the masks?’ followed by a possible interpretation – ‘presumably some form of close contact infection’.

Much like texts such as Ishiguro’s (2005) *Never Let Me Go* or I. A. Weatherly’s (2016) *Broken Sky*, ‘Is this your day?’ (Valentine, [2009] 2012) addresses the future from an altered sense of temporality. However, whereas *Never Let Me Go* (Ishiguro, 2005) presents a future that existed in the 1990s (a date which pre-dates it original publication) and *Broken Sky* (Weatherly, 2016) takes for its setting a futuristic version of 1940s America (despite being published in 2015), ‘Is this your day?’ takes up the style of 1950s science fiction (including characteristic notions of future life and technology) to critique a future at some point in the distant future, relative to a reader in 2009.

Three of the participants discussed this unusual temporal frame in their responses. Participant 2 gives direct reference to the temporal setting of the text, ‘it feels very 60s information video’, drawing upon discourse-world knowledge of ’60s public service announcements to enrich the text-world itself (Participant 2 is here referring to videos such as ‘Keep it to Yourself’ (1968) or ‘Jobs for Young Girls’ (1969) popular throughout the ’60s and ’70s). Participant 3 concurs that the text ‘feels a bit dated in a weird way’ and Participant 1 shares this opinion, highlighting specific world-builders such as ‘the TV in her subway car’ to support his interpretation. In agreement with Participant 3, he argues that the text-world is dated and reads ‘like an idea from a 1970s style sci-fi’. By drawing such a comparison in relation to his discourse-world knowledge of earlier science fictions, Participant 1 suggests here, that the narrative presents an estranging setting for a presumably futuristic world, post-2009. Additionally, he also draws comparisons with real-world technology such as smart phones and social media, which are far more advanced in his current discourse-world than the technology described in the opening section. The techno-world-builders presented thus far in the narrative, for this reader, are therefore not suggestive of a distant and advanced future, which is generally the norm in narratives of this genre.

It is clear from the opening comments to ‘Is this your day?’ that the text, from the beginning, elicits confused responses from my participants as they grapple with unfamiliar world-builders and unfamiliar thematic references. Although their uncertainty is perhaps expected in response to Section 2, as it is the first paragraph of a new text, the group’s feelings of estrangement and uncertainty continue throughout their reports. For example, consider the group’s responses to Section 6 of the think-aloud in which Greg and Liz attend the cinema. The paragraph directly precedes the intervention of the Revolution discussed earlier in this chapter (see Section 7.2).

Section 6

[PASSAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT. FOR FULL REFERENCE SEE, VALENTINE [2009] 2012: p. 269, ll. 48-65]

Participant Responses to Section 6

P1. Is there going to be anything in this story that isn’t government

controlled? Where does the power to organise this much omniscience come from?

P2. ‘Liz liked the dancing. Greg liked Joe Murray’ - ha! Although on second thoughts this is really dark - so much sexual repression. Also the way it says ‘droned’ then talks about how all the guys have matching arms round their dates makes it all feel very robot-y

P3. All these names of brands/places etc are too much for me! Again really struggling to follow. Again this feels really retro, kind of 50’s America. Getting the sense that there might be some reproductive policing going on, maybe? Are people supposed to be conceiving? Again super conservative vibes (the tag line caused a scandal)

P4. The familiar being used in an uncanny way is starting to freak me out a bit. It’s like watching a film you’ve seen before but someones dubbed over the actors voices and you cant quite spot the difference but every now and then it just hits you

Within this particular section the reader is introduced to terms such as ‘The Shindig’, ‘the Three-Screen’, ‘the Department of Society’, ‘Society Council inspector’, ‘Society hotel’, ‘rematch’ and ‘meet-cute dance routine’. In order to understand these new concepts a reader of ‘Is this your day?’ must arguably draw upon their existing schema to interpret the words based on their surrounding textual context. For instance, to return briefly to my own reading of the narrative, I inferred that ‘The Shindig’ was the name of the film, given both the capitalisation of the noun and its pairing with the definite article. Additionally, ‘shindig’ is a colloquial term for a party and the characters in the film are presented as dancing a ‘meet-cute routine’ – ‘routine’ holding connotations of dance choreography. Participant 3 notes that the abundance of such new world-building information is particularly confusing as she reports: ‘all these names of brands/places etc are too much for me!’ acknowledging that the estranging world-builders cause her to struggle to follow the narrative. Participant 4, by comparison, reports that the familiar being presented as unknown was particularly estranging for her, comparing the experience to watching a dubbed movie, as she reported ‘the familiar being used in an uncanny way is starting to freak me out a bit’. I infer here that she is referring to the everyday activities of dating and attending the cinema, which are refracted through the narrative’s dystopian lens to present censored, health-conscious events.

In addition to reporting on ‘brands’ and ‘places’ introduced in Section 6 of the think-aloud, three of the participants comment upon the ‘matching system’ and the monitored dating protocols, analysed in 7.1. Participant 3 questions whether citizens are ‘supposed to be conceiving’ and infers a degree of ‘reproductive policing’. Participant 2 evaluates the passage as being ‘really dark’ as a result of society’s ‘sexual repression’, a similar evaluation to Participant 3, who notes the narrative’s ‘conservative vibes’. The ‘Society Hotel’ and the ‘matching system’ were similarly salient in my own reading of ‘Is this your Day?’ (Valentine [2009] 2012). The ‘reproductive policing’ discussed by Participant 3 was particularly resonant and triggered connections with my own discourse-world knowledge of dystopias such as *Matched* (Condie, 2010) and *The Giver* (Lowry, 1993), in which characters are statistically paired with future partners to avoid emotional conflict or genetic illness.

The matching system was also a particularly salient world-builder for Participant 4, who analysed the need for such processes in further detail in response to Section 12 (for context Section 12 is reproduced alongside Participant 4’s response):

Section 12

[PASSAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT. FOR FULL REFERENCE SEE, VALENTINE [2009] 2012: p. 271, ll. 135-144]

Participant 4’s response to Section 12

P4. Despite the ‘action’ in this scene I’m most drawn in by the ‘subsidized dates’. I want to know more about this matching system, and this government is sending people on dates – is it to maintain a false sense of normality? Why bother? Or, this actually a situation where there has been an incident of biological warfair and I’m assuming that there’s a shady dystopian government because that’s what I automatically expect?

As can be seen in Participant 4’s response, it is the concept of ‘subsidized dates’ – which ‘draws her in’, becoming focal in her attention because of its new and strange quality (see Stockwell, 2009: 24-25). The world-building element, ‘subsidized dates’, for Participant 4, is therefore a good ‘textual attractor’ (features that attract a reader’s ‘attention’) as the concept is ‘new’, both in relation to her existing discourse-world knowledge and in terms of text-world information (see Stockwell, 2009: 24-25). The ‘newness’ of the ‘subsidised dates’ is therefore more attractive than the action of the previous lines; Participant 4 focuses on the dates, ‘despite the “action” in this scene’. The concept of ‘subsidised dates’ also presents a certain level of ‘aesthetic distance from the norm’ (Stockwell, 2009: 25) as such practices are non-existent in the reader’s discourse-world and contrast with Participant 4’s ‘dating’ schema.

Participant 4 goes on to detail this lack of schematic knowledge, raising a series of rhetorical questions that evidence her desire to know more about ‘the subsidised dates’. The first of the two questions – ‘is it to maintain a false sense of normality?’ – indicates a personal interpretation of the world-builder ‘subsidized dates’ based on her discourse-world knowledge of other dystopian governments (as pointed out at the end of her commentary). However, this interpretation is immediately dismissed by the negative rhetorical, ‘why bother?’. The third rhetorical question offers an alternative to her own interpretation – ‘or is this actually an situation where there has been an incident of biological warfair?’. Many of the world-building aspects of ‘Is this your day?’ (Valentine, [2009] 2012) are therefore recognisable or often negotiable, allowing what is unfamiliar to appear known, which was either reported as being thrilling or frustrating by my four participants.

**7.4 Unreliable Minds in ‘Is this Your Day?’**

In addition to responding to specific world-building elements, the participants frequently reported concerns for individual character development and the reliability of particular character perspectives. The unexpected responses of Liz were often discussed (such as her decision to trust Johnny) with significant analytical focus being placed on her closing reactions to Mr. Randall, discussed in Section 7.2. Interestingly, other than Participant 4, who stopped responding to the narrative following Section 19 (see Section 4.4.1 for discussion), all of the participants actively acknowledged their disbelief in the narrative at this point. For ease of reference the passage in question is reproduced below alongside the group’s corresponding responses.

Section 19

[PASSAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT. FOR FULL REFERENCE SEE, VALENTINE [2009] 2012: p. 273, ll. 234-242]

Participant responses to Section 19

P1. Don’t believe a word at this stage

P2. I don’t think we are supposed to believe Randall

P3. What, surely not? Oh actually, never mind. He’s lying, obviously

P4. N/A

Rather than sharing in Liz’s relief following Randall’s revelation, each participant noted the unreliability of his character. This is evidenced by Participant 1’s negated epistemic construction ‘don’t believe a word at this stage’, which questions not only the reliability of Randall’s discourse but could also refer to text-world events on the whole. Participant 3 issues a similar comment – ‘I don’t think we are supposed to believe Randall’ – which she collectively prescribes to all readers with the use of first-person plural reference. Immediately following this statement, Participant 2 issues a world-repair with the apostrophic statement ‘oh actually, never mind’ which negates the preceding response. He then offers an additional evaluation – ‘he’s lying obviously’ – which corrects his earlier interpretation and expresses his certainty that Mr. Randall is an unreliable character.

It is interesting here that, despite participants not having any contact with each other during this process and responding individually to the text from separate spatio-temporal locations, there is clear evidence of a shared response. All three participants report disbelief in both the text-world events and Randall’s character at this point, suggesting a sense of intrinsic unreliability. This sense of a shared interpretation continues in the following section of the think-aloud as Randall reveals more of the Department’s deceit:

Section 20

[PASSAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT. FOR FULL REFERENCE SEE, VALENTINE [2009] 2012: p. 273, ll. 243-251]

Participant responses to Section 20

P1. I wonder if her compatibility for dates will save her from a sticky end? Well, if there is no disease, then she has no bargaining chip there, I suppose.

P2. Ah, so he IS lying. Knew it. I’m glad she does too

P3. Liz realises he is lying too. She assumed JD is dead but maybe he isnt?

P4. N/A

It is particularly interesting at this point that all three participants model the mind of Liz during their reported responses. For example, Participant 1 infers that Liz is in danger and imagines possible ‘bargaining chips’ she may use to allay any repercussions. Participants 2 and 3, in contrast, both suggest a shared viewpoint with Liz, that Mr. Randall is lying, exemplified by the collective use of the adverb ‘too’ (‘knew it. I’m glad she does too’, ‘Liz realises he is lying too’), which implies a shared sense of empathy and perception with her character. The participants therefore attribute cognitive processes to Liz, inferred from her free indirect thought at the end of the passage, in which she notes Randall’s ignorance of her full interaction with Johnny. In sharing Liz’s perspective, and modelling her responses, Participants 2 and 3 therefore conclude that Randall is an unreliable character.

**7.5 ‘Is this your day to join the Revolution?’: Resisting the Lie**

The group’s overall responses to ‘Is this your day?’ ([2009] 2012), its unreliable characters and indeterminate worlds are summarised in the ‘additional thoughts’ section of the think-aloud, which allowed participants to reflect retrospectively on their experiences of reading the short story. The group’s feelings of estrangement remain present in these final commentaries evidenced by the shared descriptions of lingering confusion, doubt or concerns for a lack of narrative texture. The full concluding responses are reproduced below:

Participant responses to Section 22 (closing comments)

P1. Ah, I thought this was a final closing paragraph! Now I feel like I don’t have closure! But then I guess I was making up my own 1984 style ending, based on the endless misinformation.

P2. That was terrific - had no idea what was going on initially but the lack of exposition is great. Ending was amazing although I’m livid she didn’t help him

P3. I wish I could have learned a bit more about the role of the doctors and what seemed like maybe a drive for the women to conceive? I didn’t really like the shortness of the story because everything felt rushed and I think maybe tended towards being a bit clichéd. Lots of the tropes were really familiar from other dystopian stories/films (the public service announcements in Blade Runner, for example). I didn’t have any emotional reaction to the story but I’m not sure that the author meant me to!

P4. I’ve re-read the ending a few times, and I’m still confused. I can’t tell if I’m reading into the text implications that I assume are there because of other dystopias I’ve read, or if that’s done on purpose to unsettle the reader knowing their potential familiarity with the genre. The lack of answers or any real conclusion in the ending will definitely stay with me for some time.

Firstly, Participant 1 misread the final paragraph of the text, demonstrating the story’s open and ambiguous ending, and was still awaiting an additional section. As he exclaims ‘I thought this was the final closing paragraph! Now I feel like I don’t have closure!’. Rather than acknowledging the ending of the narrative, Participant 1 awaited additional content to obtain a sense of ‘closure’. The lack of any further information left this reader unsatisfied, evidenced by the use of the negated mental cognition process ‘I feel like I don’t have closure’. He also adds that ‘making up’ his own ending to the narrative was already an aspect of his reading process given the ‘endless misinformation’ supplied throughout the text, which may have attributed to his misreading. Participant 4 also acknowledges that she was left feeling unsure about the overall content of the story and despite having reread the final paragraphs was ‘still confused’. In a similar way to Participant 1, Participant 4 sought further confirmation and validation from the ending too. Participant 2 expresses a similar lack of understanding during the reading process, as he notes, ‘I had no idea what was going on initially’. Participant 3 also comments on the lack of information provided throughout the narrative as inferred from her desire for additional information concerning the ‘doctors’ and the ‘matching system’. In fact, there are a multitude of epistemic expressions in Participant 3’s responses, which reflect her desire for further information and her lack of certainty regarding the text as a whole.

The participants also used this space to reflect upon their emotional responses to the narrative and provide closing evaluative comments on the experience of reading the text. These responses were notably varied and identified the participant’s preferences for plot structure, development and thematic concerns. Participant 2 concludes that the story was ‘terrific’ and that the ending in particular was ‘amazing’. In contrast to Participant 3, who felt the narrative was ‘rushed’ and did not like the ‘shortness’ of the story, Participant 2 felt the ‘lack of exposition was great’. Participant 3’s emotional responses veer more towards the negative, evidenced by additional evaluative adjectives such as ‘clichéd’ to describe the plot. She also directly reports having no emotional response to the narrative, which is interesting to note given her earlier empathic responses to Liz’s character. Although Participant 4 avoids any evaluative commentary concerning her enjoyment of the text, she does conclude that the narrative was memorable, noting: ‘the lack of answers or any real conclusion in the ending will definitely stay with me for some time’. In all four instances, the estranging nature of the narrative, particularly in terms of its unexplained world-building elements, produces some kind of emotional response in the reader and certainly affects their overall interpretations of the narrative.

**7.6 Review**

In this chapter, I have offered an in-depth Text-World-Theory analysis of Genevieve Valentine’s ‘Is this your day to join the Revolution?’, with particular emphasis on the estranging process of conceptualising its ambiguous text-worlds. I have examined the text-worlds of ‘Is this your day?’ in relation to online reviews, interviews and literary critical discussions of political dystopias, situating it within wider dystopian debate. I have drawn upon Suvin’s (1979) work on cognitive estrangement to discuss the estranging experience of reading the narrative specifically with regards to understanding the text’s iconic textual register.

The incorporation of think-aloud data to my overall discussion of dystopian reading developed this analysis further, as I examined the similarly estranging reading experiences of four postgraduate readers. By investigating their responses to the unexplained world-builders that populate the text-world and the lack of reliable content, I highlighted the emotional affects of estranging narrative techniques and the additional cognitive effort required of readers to engage with this particular narrative. I have also drawn upon the think-aloud data to reflect on the unreliable minds within the text and the particular unreliability of Liz’s clouded perspective.

In the next chapter, I will extend my discussion of cognitive estrangement and ambiguity in the examination of an unnatural dystopian narrative, Adam Marek’s ‘Dead Fish’ and further my discussion of real reader responses to dystopia through an in-depth analysis of social reading practices.

Chapter 8: ‘Dead Fish’

**8.0 Overview**

The analyses in this chapter focus on Adam Marek’s ([2009] 2012b) short story ‘Dead Fish’. Section 8.1 introduces the text and outlines the critical responses to the narrative following its re-publication in 2012. I offer a Text-World-Theory analysis of my own reading of ‘Dead Fish’, placing particular focus on the text’s opening passages and the four individual storylines that make up the narrative. In analysing each individual narrative strand, I concentrate on the representation of the text’s primary protagonist, Rupi, and the unusual narrative voice from whose perspective he is characterised. I argue that the experience of reading ‘Dead Fish’ is particularly estranging as a result of unnatural narration (Alber et al., 2013; Alber and Heinze, 2011) and the invitation to project into the role of an unnatural narratee. I therefore examine the relationship between the narrator and the reader in terms of unnatural narratology (Alber et al., 2010, Fludernik, 2012; McHale, 1983; Richardson, 2015) reflecting on my own conceptualisation of the narrator and the collective ‘we’ of which he is part. So as to further extend my own introspective analysis, I support my discussion in this chapter with reader response data gathered during a purpose-built reading group study (as outlined in Chapter 4). In the analyses that follow I investigate three aspects of the group’s responses: their construal of the narrative’s dystopian worlds; their immersion in the narrative; and their understanding of the narrative ‘we’ that oversees text-world events. In analysing the group’s interpretative processes, both in terms of narrative voice and the text-worlds of Marek’s future world, I go on to draw several links between the participants’ reports of their on-line cognitive plotting and their emotional experiences of reading ‘Dead Fish’.

**8.1 ‘Dead Fish’**

‘Dead Fish’ was originally published in 2009 for *Matter* magazine under the title ‘If Dead Fish Could Blink’ and later edited and reprinted as part of Adam Marek’s second short story collection *The Stone Thrower* (Marek, 2012g) (all text quotations are drawn from this edition; ‘Dead Fish’ is reproduced in Appendix F). The collection contains a variety of narratives that depict estranging visions of the present day alongside startling futuristic worlds, all of which address a range of strange and unusual topics including: a genetically enhanced child militia (‘Without a Shell’, [2009] 2012h); a world governed by a superhero dictator (‘The Captain’, [2012] 2012f); a village ceremony involving toothless sharks (‘Santa Carla Day’, 2012d); ‘Sterna’s Syndrome’ (‘Earthquakes’ 2012c); cross breeding human orang-utans (‘An Industrial Evolution’ [2012] 2012a); and a tamogotchi suffering from AIDS (‘Tamagotchi’, [2008] 2012e). Despite such varying emphases, the stories do share a common focus, that being the relationship between parents and their children. Marek discusses this focus in some detail during an interview for *The Short Review*. He explains that *The Stone Thrower* explores the experience of being a parent and ‘how having children takes the most tender, fragile inner part of yourself and puts it outside your body, outside of whatever armour you’ve built to protect yourself’ (Marek, 2013: n.p.). He states that the collection subsequently reflects upon ‘the struggle to protect a particularly vulnerable child, and how being a parent makes you vulnerable, too – all those feelings transformed into fantastical metaphors’ across his thirteen stories (Marek, 2013: n.p.).

‘Dead Fish’ zones-in on four interconnected events each of which presents the vulnerabilities of three such familial units as they struggle against the effects of environmental and social disaster. Each of the narrative events occurs at the same moment in time, on the same day of an unknown year. The events are spatially distinct and involve different sets of enactors, yet combine to present a unique vision of a cruel and dying future world. The key event which structures the narrative depicts a crime chase between a young boy and a group of police officers. Whilst following the crime chase, the reader is directed to observe three other interconnecting events, each of which present defamiliarising visions of future life: a mother trying to purchase the now stolen fish; a couple in the midst of an affair; and a poverty stricken family trying to stave off starvation on the edges of the city. It is only by moving through each of these text-worlds that the reader can conceptualise the world as a whole, which as a result of bombing and environmental decay is polluted and overrun by a carnivorous form of green algae, fungi and disease carrying spores.

Given such world-building elements and the environmental anxieties addressed by the narrative, namely the effects of nuclear warfare, pollution and agricultural decline, the text, like ‘Pump Six’, is representative of an ecodystopia (see Section 2.2.3). In a similar way to ‘Pump Six’, the narrative posits an array of possible future outcomes that are catalysed by ecological disaster and the neglect of environmental affairs in the ‘past’ of the current text-world. As Otto (2014: 181) astutely points out, the past of most typical dystopian narratives is representative of the reader’s real-world present, with ‘the story’s dystopian nova […] [cueing] us to think about this present as having a role in bringing about a certain kind of future.’ Like ‘Pump Six’, ‘Dead Fish’ posits an ethically encoded preferred response (see Section 6.2; also Stockwell, 2009), encouraging readers to reassess their own experiential discourse-worlds and inviting them to challenge the consequences of real-world environmental and political anxieties. In the analysis that follows, I argue that it is the combined experience of conceptualising the estranging text-worlds of ‘Dead Fish’ (in line with such discourse-text-world mappings), and the invitation to project into the text-world itself, that encourages the reader to engage with Marek’s eco-political message.

**8.1.1 The Text-Worlds of ‘Dead Fish’**

‘Dead Fish’ opens *in medias res*, in the middle of a crime chase between a young boy, Rupi, and a group of police officers.The boy has stolen a fish from a street market in an unspecified city on the border of a canal. The theft itself is the first indication that the world depicted is distinct from the reader’s discourse-world, given the inferred severity of the boy’s crime. The text-world fish, it is revealed, is particularly rare given the lack of edible meat protein or animal life within the text-world – a world in which ‘fisherman’s lines have hung dead for decades’ (Appendix F: 39-40), and all fish are resultantly ‘special’ (Appendix F: 37). The rarity of the fish is the first in several estranging world-building elements that, in Spiegel’s (2008) terms, prompt ‘deictic estrangement’ (see Chapter 5) as the fish, which is a common product in 2016 is an unfamiliar luxury for the text-world enactors. The fish is therefore an indirect part of the story’s iconic textual register (Moylan, 2000), and despite its not being a narrative novum (Suvin, 1979), prompts an estranged readerly response given the characters’ awed and untypical perception of it (see also, Otto, 2012: 9-10).

During the chase, the reader is directed towards the decaying backdrop of the unspecified city, with fleeting, albeit detailed references to the environmental trauma evident in this particular world, such as the various fungi and moss that cover the city’s crumbling infrastructure. The reader is also introduced to four other sets of enactors who inhabit four additional text-world locations: Alice; Morris and Danya; Rupi’s family; and his brothers. The first enactor, Alice, is shopping in the market from which Rupi is running, attempting to purchase the eponymous fish to cook for a dinner party later in the evening. Alice needs the fish to cook for her son’s future headmaster in order to secure both the master’s favour and a school place for her son at St. Nathan’s, five years in her relative future. The alternative is for her child to attend John Hopworth’s, an academy in which teachers have been ‘burned alive’ (Appendix F: 60) and are traditionally ‘balded’ (Appendix F: 62) by students on their first day. The fish is therefore given increased status during the ‘Alice strand’ of the story, as not only is the fish rare but also if purchased, could determine a safer future for Alice’s family.

The third narrative strand focuses on the actions of Morris and Danya, who occupy an indistinct apartment alongside the canal. The couple’s spatial location is implied by the use of the verb ‘linger’ – ‘indulge me for a second as we linger at an apartment window’ (Appendix F: 88-89) – which implies that the narrator has paused somewhere behind Rupi. The apartment is covered in moss and home to a multitude of fungal spores further evidencing the ubiquity of environmental decay within the text-worlds. The couple, who are depicted mid-coitus, appear to be suffering from a fungal-induced infection and highlight the societal fears of conceiving a child. The pair’s narrative therefore adds a further dimension to the decaying world of the text, highlighting themes such as the spread of contagion and concerns for population growth.

The fourth narrative strand zones-in on Rupi’s family, who occupy a small run-down property on the edges of the city, and depicts a landscape in an even greater state of environmental decline than the opening text-world. It is during these scenes that the reader is introduced to the contextual background of the narrative. It is revealed that that the city has been subject to a bombing, which has destroyed much of the city’s architecture, ‘brought underground rivers to the surface and made a misery factory of the suburbs’ (Appendix F: 115-6). Rupi’s family, who all share a ‘crumpled’ (Appendix F: 122) house, are struggling to find food in this environment, having access only to the ‘muddy crayfish’ (Appendix F: 40-1) that the rest of the city will not deign to eat. Between flashes of Rupi’s family home the reader is also introduced to Rupi’s brothers who are awaiting his arrival above the city’s canal. This is the fifth and final narrative strand. Upon reaching them, the boys ambush Rupi’s pursuers, ensnaring them in a net and drowning them in the canal. The story concludes as the boys drag the men out of the water and leave them unceremoniously on the canal-side.

**8.2 Unnatural Narration and the Worlds of ‘Dead Fish’**

Throughout the narrative each of the five strands moves into and out of focus in relation to the primary crime chase, presenting five distinct text-world locations which share the same temporal parameters. I am here counting the initial chase between Rupi and the policemen as the first strand and as being separate from the final strand in which the other boys join him. Despite each of the events being presented in a simple chronological order, the narrative is ‘de-naturalized’ by the first-person ‘simultaneous’ present-tense narration (see Richardson, 2002: 53; also Cohn, 1999: 96-108), which presents each textual event as it is occurring. ‘Dead Fish’ therefore constitutes an anti-mimetic narrative (see Richardson, 2006): not only is it presented in the ‘fictional present’ (Cohn, 1999: 106), but also the narrator is able recount, in detail, each spatially distinct event, even whilst occupying a completely disparate spatial location. As an example of homodiegetic, Category A narration (Simpson, 1993; also Chapter 3), such omniscience is notably unnatural, as the narrator is also an internal enactor within the text-world itself and should logically only have access to his own thoughts and spatio-temporal environment.

Richardson (2015: 202) examines the relationship between such anti-mimetic first-person perspectives when discussing the alternating first-person/ first-person plural narrator in Joseph Conrad’s ([1897] 2007) *The Nigger of the Narcissus,* who appears to be both an omniscient form of consciousness and also a character aboard the ‘Narcissus’ (a merchant marine vessel). He argues that ‘if the narrator is a character on the ship, he cannot enter the minds of others or report conversations he has not observed; if he is omniscient, he is not a participant in the text’s story world’ (Richardson, 2015: 202). This poses some interesting questions about the narrative voice in ‘Dead Fish’, as the narrator most certainly acts as an omniscient voice, with access to the minds of other enactors, yet firmly positions himself as being internal to the text-world thereby violating, in Heinze’s (2008) terms, the mimetic epistemology of first-person narration.

In addition to posing such contradictions in terms of the narration itself, the narrator is equally ambiguous as a text-world enactor. He remains unnamed throughout the narrative and my use of masculine pronouns is reflective only of my own interpretation; the narrator’s gender, or lack thereof, is equally unspecified throughout. In addition to his ambiguous identity, the narrator is also ontologically equivocal, both in terms of his species and his overall vital status – seeming at once to be both dead and alive. He has the ability to project the thoughts and indirect speech of each text-world enactor and can move between the individual text-worlds at great speed, so much so that the city around him ‘blurs’ (Appendix F: 108). He is of questionable size, being able to ‘slide’ (‘slide with me down the seam of Alice’s long jacket’ (Appendix F: 69)) and ‘skip’ (‘skip straight over her ankle to her blister-red shoes’ (Appendix F: 70-71) over a human body unnoticed, adding additional characteristics of weightlessness and invisibility to my own construal of his character. Finally, he also possesses heightened senses, being able to see through windows ‘too greened up for anyone else to see […] inside’ (Appendix F: 89-90) and ‘smell the stolen trout stuffed inside [Rupi’s] jacket’ (Appendix F: 9-10), both of which distinguish him from the overtly human characters in the text-world.

‘Dead Fish’ is clearly presented, then, by what Iversen (2013: 97) has termed an ‘unnatural mind’ (see also, Alber et al., 2010: 119-124). An unnatural mind, he argues, ‘is a presented consciousness that in its function or realizations violates the rules governing the possible world it is part of in a way that resists naturalization or conventionalization’ (Iversen, 2013: 97). As previously outlined, the narrator of the story presents several such functions that violate the rules of Marek’s possible world, enacting unnatural material and cognitive processes (e.g. can move at inhuman speed, can see through opaque objects), which cannot be naturalised by the surrounding text-world. Although the text presents a fictional world that is, at its core, science fictional, the world provides no other significant textual cues that suggest the narrator’s behaviour is normal, expected, or a consequence of previous text-world events.

The combination of such an unusual narrative voice alongside the narrative’s anti-mimetic timeline arguably identifies ‘Dead Fish’ as being an ‘unnatural narrative’. An unnatural narrative, in Richardson’s (2011: 34) terms, is a narrative that contains a number of anti-mimetic features, ‘that conspicuously violat[e] conventions of standard narrative forms’ (see also Alber et al., 2013: 143-144). Alber (2009: 80) further restricts the term to ‘[denote] physically impossible scenarios and events, that is, impossible by the known laws governing the physical world’. ‘Dead Fish’ clearly fits with such definitions, violating the mimetic conventions of ‘natural’ narrative (see Fludernik, 2002), both in terms of the narrator’s impossible omniscience and his ontological ambiguity. As Alber et al. (2010: 114) go on to argue, unnatural narratives ‘may radically deconstruct the anthropomorphic narrator, the traditional human character, and the minds associated with them’. All three of these characteristics are evident in ‘Dead Fish’, which is not only communicated by a non-traditional, non-human narrator, but goes on to present an equally unnatural set of minds that are similar to the narrative voice.

To add further to this sense of unnaturalness, the narrator distinguishes himself throughout the narrative as part of a homogenous group of entities referred to by the first-person plural pronouns ‘we’ and ‘us’. The ‘we’, in Richardson’s (2015: 201) terms, is ‘not universal but circumscribed’, denoting an inclusive set of beings that share a similar world-view and ontological status. According to Richardson (2006: 38), ‘virtually no first person plural narrative discloses its membership at the outset; there is always a bit of drama as the reader determines just who this “we” is’. This is certainly true of ‘Dead Fish’; the ‘we’ remain obscure throughout the narrative and are described in various stages of ‘empathic recognisability’ (Stockwell, 2009: 25), appearing at once to be abstractions (‘we are aberrations of light, symptoms of exhaustion’ (Appendix F: 189-90)), animal-like (‘perched upon the roofs’ (Appendix F: 142-143)), and human, in that they can talk and are fully sentient.

Stockwell (2009: 24-25) argues that human speakers and hearers (because of their familiarity and activeness) tend to be more figural during reading than animals, objects or abstractions. It is interesting, then, that the ‘we’, who move up and down Stockwell’s (2009) empathy scale, becoming more or less empathetically familiar as the narrative progresses, remained a salient textual attractor throughout my own reading of the narrative. Each additional character-advancing proposition used to describe the ‘we’ (e.g. ‘they are almost as invisible as we are’ (Appendix F: 136-137), ‘we are all so light we could not break the thinnest neck of the thinnest fungus’ (Appendix F: 143-145)) only increased my interest in who or what the beings were and added to the estranging experience of reading the narrative. The ‘we’ are also figured in the readings of several professional reviewers who vaguely describe the ‘we’ in terms of the paranormal, as a ‘bizarre group of seemingly supernatural entities’ (Morris, 2012: n.p.) who possess an ‘almost spiritual viewpoint’ (Balloch, 2012: n.p.). However, the use of words of estrangement within both these examples – ‘seemingly’ and ‘almost’ – exemplifies that such interpretations are speculative and cannot be confirmed within the linguistic parameters of the text. It is the ambiguity of the characters’ ontological status, rather than their being recognisable, that positions the ‘we’ as a strong textual attractor. In this instance, the characters’ ‘aesthetic distance from the norm’ (Stockwell, 2009: 25), in that they are both strange and alien referents, outweighs their lack of empathetic recognisability.

Such an argument is supported by the discussions of my reading group participants, who were consistently concerned with the identity of the ‘we’. Throughout their discourse the participants attributed a variety of impossible mind-styles to the characters, describing them in terms of supernatural beings (e.g. ‘ghosts’, ‘dead policemen’, ‘ghost spores’); animals (e.g. ‘birds’); non-human entities (e.g. ‘sentient fungus’, ‘spores’, ‘floating semen’, ‘a weird fungus hive mind’) and posthuman species (e.g. ‘spore people’). Each of these interpretations is suggestive of an unnatural form of consciousness that is ascribed to the ‘we’ on the basis of personal inferences. These inferences in turn are based upon each reader’s text-driven discourse-world knowledge, which is triggered by specific linguistic cues in the text. For example, the entities are described in line 142 as ‘perched’ (P8. ‘I wondered if they’re like birds’), in line 144 as ‘light’ (P8 ‘when I read that […] I’d written like ghosts or something similar to that’) and are seemingly non-corporeal (P6. ‘are we spores are we just like floating’) (see Appendix B for broader conversational context). The group’s discussions, like my own reading, produced no decisive interpretations and concluded with a similar sense of uncertainty – ‘are we a weird fungus hive mind?’, Participant 6 asks, ‘I just don’t know’.

**8.2.1 Reading Unnatural Minds in ‘Dead Fish’**

The reader is invited throughout the narrative to align their perspective with the ‘we’ by ‘imaginatively enacting’ the role of implied narratee (see Lahey, 2005: 286; also Whiteley, 2014: 404) – a process which should prove difficult given the apparent unnaturalness of the characters. However, as can be seen from the participant responses discussed in the previous section, my reading group participants shifted between discussing the ‘we’ in terms of an exclusive ‘they’ to discussing the ‘we’ as being inclusive of themselves – ‘are we spores are we just floating?’, ‘are we a weird fungus hive mind?’. The group’s reported inclusion in the narrative ‘we’, suggested by this relational pronoun change, implies that during reading the readers felt their individual perspectives to be aligned with that of the narrator and the narratee. Such an alignment is arguably encouraged as a result of second-person address, which at several points in the narrative shifts between generalised *you*, fictionalised horizontal address and doubly deictic *you* (Herman, 1994).

Herman (1994, 2002) proposes five modalities of textual *you*, each of which accommodate a different type of narrative address and pivot on a specific use of the second person. His model consists of five types of textual *you*: (1) generalised *you* which refers to a text’s narrator and/ or protagonist through a process of ‘deictic transfer’ (see Margolin, 1984, 1986); (2) fictional reference; (3) fictionalised (= horizontal) *you*, which denotes the address of fictional enactors within the text-world; (4) apostrophic (= vertical) *you*, which extends beyond the fictional ontological frame of a narrative to address the reader; and (5) doubly deictic *you*, which denotes an interactive form of address that transcends both the virtuality and the actuality of the reading experience, reaching both fictional enactors and the reader (see Herman, 1994: 380-381). Herman is using ‘virtuality’ and ‘actuality’ here to draw a distinction between the text-world (vituality) and the discourse-world (actuality), suggesting that the use of double deixis, by triggering what is technically a fleeting word-switch, appears to blur the boundary between these ontological levels. I would argue then, that the use of ‘you’ within the text shifts between generalised *you*, referring to the text’s narrator, fictionalised (horizontal) *you* in the address of the narratee and doubly deictic *you* ‘in which we get a superimposition of virtuality (the fictional protagonist) and actuality (the reader), versus the wholesale actualization of *you* achieved by way of apostrophe’ (Herman, 1994: 387) (emphasis in original).

According to Phelan (1994: 351), ‘when the second-person address to a narratee-protagonist both overlaps with and differentiates itself from an address to actual readers, those readers will simultaneously occupy the positions of addressee and observer’. When experiencing ‘doubly deictic you’ the reader is both positioned within the text-world, aligned with the perspective of the ‘you’, and simultaneously occupies the role of observer from their ontologically distinct discourse-world position. This positioning is realised as a result of psychological projection and processes of identification (Whiteley, 2014: 400; 2011). Projection (as outlined in Chapter 3) describes the ability of readers to shift their deictic centre, or zero reference point (that is their sense of the here and now, see Bühler, 1982, Green, 1995a), onto someone or something within the text-world, so as to understand the deictic parameters of the discourse itself (see Gavins, 2007: 40). In the case of ‘Dead Fish’ this ‘someone’ is likely to be the narratee as a result of the doubly deictic second-person address experienced throughout the narrative. Such address encourages the reader to position himself or herself alongside the narrator (the ‘I’ of the narrative whose perspective encodes the deictic parameters of the text-world itself (see Green, 1995a; Benveniste, 1971)) and imagine himself or herself as the co-participant of this particular interaction.

However, the experience of enacting the role of narratee and taking on the supposed ‘relevant schemata’ of that fictional entity (Lahey 2005: 286; Whiteley, 2014: 404) should prove particularly estranging for, as argued by Kacandes (1993: 141), ‘to *read* the address is to perform what one reads’ and the narratee in ‘Dead Fish’ is the actor of several material action processes (e.g. ‘slide with me down the seam of Alice’s long jacket’ (Appendix F: 69)) that are logically impossible within the reader’s discourse-world. Such actions, alongside the unnatural mind-styles of the ‘we’, could therefore reduce immersion in the text-world, and readers may feel alternatively ‘shifted’ at such unnatural moments, ‘from a position of direct address to one of observation at a greater emotional or ethical distance’ (Whiteley, 2014: 404). At these moments, the use of ‘you’ will be felt to align more with the perspective of an alternate fictional entity (i.e. fictionalised (= horizontal) address), creating an alienating rather than immersive effect (see Whiteley, 2014: 404).

The positioning of the reader therefore fluctuates throughout ‘Dead Fish’ and may be experienced differently by readers depending on whether they feel able to imaginatively enact the role of narratee. Such interpretative disparity was highlighted in the discourse of my reading group participants, who reported varying accounts of their own text-world projection. For example, Participant 6 drew specific attention to her initial feelings of immersion in the narrative, having aligned with the deictic centre of the ‘you’ addressed in the opening paragraph:

P6. in those first few lines erm I was like oh oh I’m in this I’m so in this book in this story erm and it did feel like I felt a bit weightless as I was reading it as if I was being sped around carried through the story

Participant 6 reports a feeling of being ‘inside’ the book, exemplified by the repeated prepositional statement ‘I’m in this’. The preposition highlights Participant 6’s feelings of transportation (see Gerrig, 1993) during reading, indicating her sense of deictic projection to a remote spatio-temporal position that was distinct from her own. As a result of such projection, she reports feeling ‘weightless’ during reading as if she was being ‘sped around’ or ‘carried through the story’. In addition to projecting her sense of space onto the text-world, Participant 6 also undertakes a level of perspective-taking projection (Whiteley, 2011; 2014) to reconstruct aspects of the narratee’s world-view. Like the narratee, she feels ‘sped around’ by the narrator and reports a similar sense of movement and lightness that is ascribed to the unnatural entities within the text-world.

In contrast, Participants 7 and 8 report feelings of alienation or distance from the unnatural entities in the text, highlighting that they did not feel included in the second-person address or a part of the first-person plural ‘us’ of which the narratee is seemingly part. This interpretative disparity is evidenced in the following extract in which participants retrospectively compare their online immersion in the text.

P7. I didn’t necessarily feel a part of whatever the narrator is you know how you were on about us being spores and things like that especially when he moves on to say (.) ‘if you look out the corner of your eyes you’ll see the rest of *us*’ (.) there’s just a distance an even bigger distance there between me and the guy narrating this story I just feel like he’s he’s sort of taken me with him because he can (.) or she can (.) it *it* can

[group laughs]

P7. and as like you’ve just said with it being like a tour guide (.) there’s a (.) like an aspect of power and control there where I’m just taken wherever this thing or this person wants to go when he wants to go

[group digression about how many weeks there are to Christmas]

P7. so anyway I don’t feel like I’m necessarily that I am the same as what’s narrating this story

P8. yeah we’re not part of the us

Within this extract, Participant 7 expresses her inability to align herself with the perspective of the narratee and/or the unnatural entities within the text-world, noting that she ‘did not feel part of whatever the narrator is’. She reflects upon the interpretations of her co-participants, who were able to position themselves in relation to the ‘we’, and seemed to identify with the unnatural perspectives of the ‘spores’ – an experience Participant 7 did not share. She argues that linguistic cues in the text, particularly those that define the collective ‘us’ of which the narrator is part, created a distancing effect and as a result she did not feel ‘the same as what’s narrating the story’. In this instance, Participant 7 reports that she was unable to recognise similarities between herself and the narrator, resulting in feelings of disassociation rather than self-implication or identification (see Whitely, 2014). Participant 8, who agrees, supports Participant 7’s responses confirming: ‘yeah we’re not part of the us’.

Interestingly, however, Participant 7 does acknowledge a level of deictic projection into the text-world when she explains that the narrator had simply ‘taken’ her with him – ‘he’s sort of taken me with him because he can’, ‘I’m just taken wherever this thing or this person wants to go when he wants to go’. In assigning the narrator such ‘power and control’ over her material actions, Participant 7 implies here that she did feel deictically positioned within the text-world during reading and aligned with the spatio-temporal perspective of the narrator; such material action processes can only be logically ascribed to an enactor of herself within the text-world. The ability of Participant 7 to project spatially into the text, yet resist perspective-taking projection, suggests that there are moments within the narrative, where it is easier to subscribe to the role of narratee. For example, it is perhaps easier to imagine oneself in an estranging setting, projecting one’s sense of time and place into a futuristic world, than to map one’s sense of self onto an unnatural mind.

Even Participant 6, who reported the highest level of immersion in the narrative, acknowledges an inconsistency in her ability to project into the role of narratee throughout the narrative, particularly in terms of her processes of perspective-taking projection. For example, Participant 6 draws attention to a moment towards the end of the narrative in which the reader is directly cued by the text to share a particular emotional response with the narrator and the unnatural entities. On Rupi’s arrival at the mouth of the underpass, the narrator states, ‘this is the moment I wanted you to see. I hope that you too have a taste for the unusual. For the brutal’. The boulomaic modal-worlds cued by the lexical boulomaic verbs ‘wanted’ and ‘hope’ highlight the narrator’s desire for the narratee to share in his emotions at this point by responding excitedly to the scenes of violence that are about to occur. Participant 6’s reaction to this particular scene is reported as follows:

P6: All the way through I’d really liked the way I’m being carried by the narrator and then I got to that bit and started resenting it and was like you don’t get to tell me how to feel […] it jarred at that point and I was like (.) not sure I like this as much.

Participant 6 here points out that, although she was fully content for her spatio-temporal perspective to be aligned with the narrator, she was unable to map aspects of her own attitude and emotions onto the beings. The request to share such an emotional response effectively ‘jarred’ her immersion in the text-world and triggered a more negative, distanced response to the unnatural minds in the text, exemplified by the participant’s resentment towards and dislike of the narrator at this point.

I would therefore argue that ‘Dead Fish’ encourages projection into the role of narratee at fluctuating points within the narrative, allowing the reader to experience the physical decay of the text-worlds Marek presents from a close, and intimate deictic perspective. Although such projection is not necessary for a successful reading of the text, projection into the role of narratee allows the reader to *feel* as if they are part of the decaying city and richly conceptualise the intricate, often backgrounded world-building elements that shape such a textured image of Marek’s future world.

**8.3 Toxic Landscapes as Dystopian Text-Worlds**

To return to the text-worlds of ‘Dead Fish’, I will now detail my own processes of world-building in relation to the narrative’s five primary text-worlds (outlined in Figure 8.1), all of which are set in an unidentified city existing at some point in the future. The first – Text-World 1 in the diagram – is that of the canal-side along which Rupi is running for his life exemplified by the opening five lines of the narrative.

Here come the pounding footfalls of a boy on the run. Alongside the canal. Where algae strangle a neglected bicycle, Rupi appears, skinny as wicker. If you could slow this moment down, you’d see in his shoes all the places where the leather has broken away from the sole, and these holes opening and closing every time his foot hits the pavement, showing us his pale toes cowered together (Appendix F: 1-7).

Spatially, the opening of the narrative suggests action that is close to the narrator, exemplified by the proximal deictic marker ‘here’ and the proximal verb ‘come’, which implies that the indefinite ‘boy’ later named as Rupi is running towards the narrative voice, alongside a specific, albeit unidentified ‘canal’. It would seem that the narratee is believed to be familiar with this location, evidenced by the use of the definite article in the noun phrase ‘the canal’ and the deictic centre implied by the adverb ‘here’. The proximal spatial markers work to involve the reader in the text-world, aligning his or her perspective with that of the narrator. This is further signalled by the use of doubly deictic *you* – ‘you’d see’ – and the use of the first-person plural pronoun ‘us’ in the final sentence, which arguably extends beyond the ontological boundary of the text-world to include the reader, whilst addressing the virtual implied narratee. The use of the present tense throughout the narrative adds to this sense of proximity as the story appears to be being told in ‘real-time’, at the moment of narration.

The fleeting world-building element of a ‘bicycle’ on line two provides the first indication of the environmental schema which runs throughout the narrative due to the intensive relational processes that modify the object in that it is ‘neglected’, and material intention processes in that it is ‘strangled’ by the anthropomorphised ‘algae’. This is the first mention of the algae-like fungus that is destroying Marek’s text-world and the first indication of the text’s ecodystopian undertones. Markers of such decay are subtly interwoven as background to the action of the narrative, most frequently as relational processes ascribed to familiar, everyday objects (e.g. ‘algae-slicked rail’ (Appendix F: 84)) or material action processes prescribed to the inanimate yet personified fungal substance (‘moss silences chimneys’ (Appendix F: 15-16)). In part, it is the ascription of such unusual attributes to familiar objects or the violent actions of the environment itself which triggers the estranging quality of the narrative and indicates a world spatially and temporally distinct to that of the my own discourse-world.

The passage also provides the first world-building information that enriches my conceptualisation of Rupi, in that he appears ‘skinny as wicker’, exemplifying his light weight and slim physique. The first use of doubly deictic *you* is embedded within a conditional clause – ‘if you could slow this moment down you’d see in his shoes all the places where the leather has broken away from the sole’– and cues a conditional epistemic modal-world in which we are given additional character-advancing details for Rupi. The details, which describe Rupi’s damaged shoes, are suggestive of his impoverished life-style, which in turn offers a potential justification for his theft of the fish. The attribution of a shared visual perception between the narrator and the ‘you’in this passage is further developed with the use of the first-person plural pronoun ‘us’ – ‘showing us his pale toes’ – which aligns the reader’s perspective with that of the narrator.

The shared perspective between the reader and the narrator is further accentuated through the imperative statement ‘come with me quickly to the place where this chase began’ (Appendix F: 24-25), which directs the reader to the second narrative strand, illustrated as Text-World 2 in Figure 8.1. The statement, which infers material action, shifts both the reader’s attention in the discourse-world and the deictic centre of the narratee in the text-world with the introduction of a small marketplace:

[PASSAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT. FOR FULL REFERENCE SEE, MAREK [2009] 2012: p. 10, ll. 26-37]

The description of the marketplace added further to my conceptualisation of environmental decay within the text-world, with the increasing images of ‘rot’ and the abundance of ‘tangled Grinch hair’. Drawing upon my own discourse-world knowledge, I conceptualised the plant as being a form of ‘Hair algae’ or ‘Byropsis’ (a fast-growing water plant), which suggested to me that Marek’s world was subject to widespread water pollution. This interpretation was then cemented with the presentation of the fish at the close of the passage, which are confirmed to be ‘special’.

The inhabitants of the inner city are also described during this passage as being smartly dressed and elegant, distinguishing them from Rupi, whose clothes were notably worn. In a similar way to his opening description of Rupi, the narrator guides the narratee’s attention to such details with the imperative ‘notice’, which goes on to cue a fleeting epistemic modal-world. The modal-world, which is arguably negatively shaded, further characterises the city dwellers in that they keep up pretence of elegance and class despite the evident degeneration of their surroundings. The metaphorical representation of the inhabitant’s coat pockets as ‘nurseries where the lint grows roots’ further enhances this interpretation, implying that behind such facades lies a hidden decay – which I read both in terms of literal fungal growth and more abstract societal corruption.

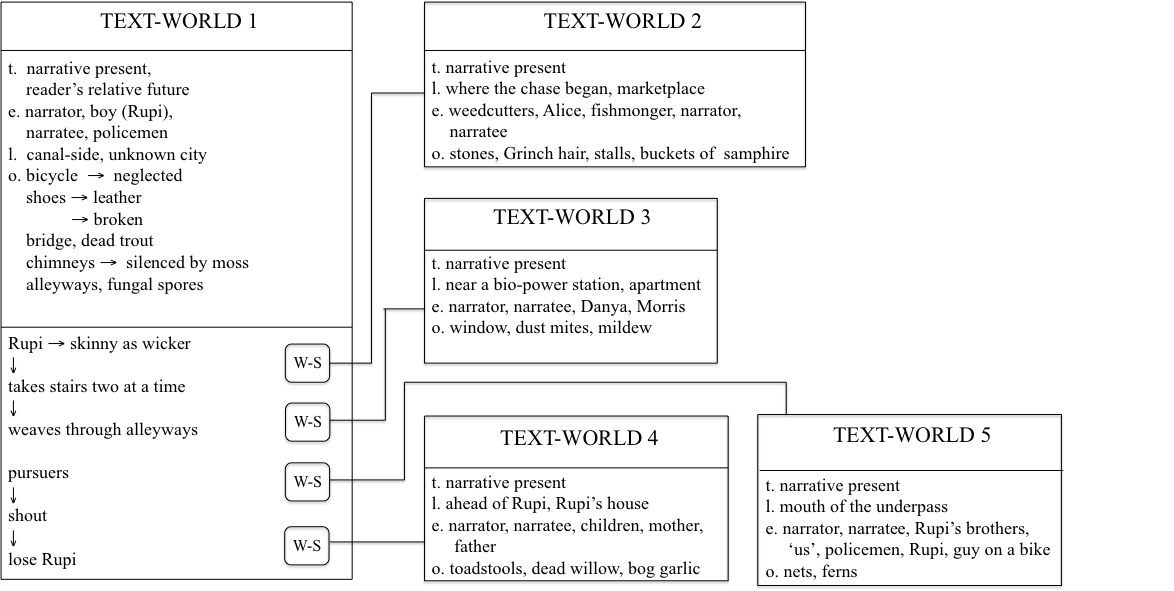
The reader is then moved ‘under the canopies where the soup steam gathers’ (Appendix F: 32-33) to focus upon a fishmonger’s stall – the same stall from which Rupi stole the fish. It is explained that the pursuit was so forceful due to the rarity and importance of the fish, which cannot be caught anywhere close to the city. This is outlined between lines 38 and 42 in which it is explained that ‘in all of the rivers and out at sea, fishermen’s lines have hung dead for decades […] These fish had to be brought from far away, and distances are so much further than they used to be’. The deixis in this latter sentence implies the relative spread of decay and environmental pollution. There is an implicit distance between Rupi’s city and the nearest healthy civilisation, identified by the use of distal deictic markers such ‘out at sea’, ‘brought from far away’ and the comparative declarative ‘distances are so much further than they use to be’, all of which suggest that the devastation of the text-world is further reaching than the parameters of this particular city.

The narratee is then introduced to Alice, a mother who is trying to secure a fish to cook for her child’s future headmaster. Alice is positioned as being directly next to the narrator, yet is seemingly unaware of his presence. The narrator, however, possesses an unnatural awareness of Alice, having access to her inner thoughts and memories, as exemplified in the following extract:

[PASSAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT. FOR FULL REFERENCE SEE, MAREK [2009] 2012: pp. 10-11, ll. 50-68]

The temporal world-switch in the opening sentence shifts briefly to a point later in the evening – ‘tonight’ – when Alice will play host to her son’s future headmaster. There then follows a boulomaic modal-world, cued by the modal verb ‘hoping’, which highlights Alice’s wishes for her son to attend a particular school – St. Nathan’s. The boulomaic modal-world also indicates a switch to free indirect style, as Alice’s perceptions appear to merge with the narrative voice. The term ‘free indirect style’ is here taken from Sotirova (2010: 132) to denote a form of consciousness presentation that ‘gives readers the illusion that they are reading the character’s minds, their innermost thoughts, feelings and sometimes unconscious perceptions’.

Figure 8.1 The Text-worlds of ‘Dead Fish’



Sotirova (2010) states a preference for the term ‘free indirect style’ (drawn from Banfield, 1982) over alternate terms for the form, such as ‘narrated monologue’ (Cohn, 1966), ‘free indirect discourse’ (Fludernik, 1993) or ‘free indirect speech and thought’ (Leech and Short, [1981] 2007), arguing that ‘style’ allows for the inclusion of a ‘broader range of phenomenon than speech and thought’ (Sotirova, 2010: 132), which are not always articulated by a given character. In this instance, specific lexical choices, such as ‘desperately hoping’ (Appendix F: 51), ‘unthinkable’ (Appendix F: 53), ‘source of worry’ (Appendix F: 55), ‘so ruined’ (Appendix F: 66) and ‘so much depends on it’ (Appendix F: 55), align, for me, with Alice’s perspective. The narrator, up until this point, has been notably indifferent to the suffering of the other text-world enactors, and such emotional phrases are distinctly out of character. Each indication of Alice’s thoughts triggers an epistemic modal-world, as with other expressions of consciousness, that further immerses the reader in the text-world (see Gavins, 2007: 128).

Alice’s narrative provides the first indication of moral decay as she recounts the indirect speech of her peers – ‘when people talk about John Hopworth’s they talk about the history teacher who was burned alive in a toilet cubicle’ (Appendix F: 59-61) – and her niece’s experiences at the school. Although Alice presents the thought of her son attending such a school as being ‘unthinkable’ (Appendix F: 53), the violence of the children is referenced in a relatively naturalised manner as something which is both expected and commonplace within the text-world. As one critic noted in the *The Short Review*, it is such indications of indifferent violence that further estrange the narrative, as assumedly distressing situations have been ‘normalized’ by the author (Lee-Houghton, 2013: n.p.). Lee-Houghton argues that across *The Stone Thrower* (Marek, 2012g):

there’s an ordinariness to each extraordinary story or observation. These characters are desensitised to violence, the deaths of animals, the loss of parents, the admirations of individuals known to be corrupt, the handling of dead bodies, the lies told to children to protect them from the awful truth. (Lee-Houghton, 2013: n.p.)

Alice’s response to the experiences of her niece supports this assertion, as she expresses concern not for her niece’s health or mental state following her time at John Hopworth’s, but only for her sister’s ‘ruin’ and the change in her appearance – ‘Alice’s sister was so ruined by her daughter’s experiences at John Hopworth’s that they no longer share a family resemblance’ (Appendix F: 66-68). This response was particularly unexpected in terms of my own reading of the narrative, particularly given the scenes of violence and murder attributed to the school, and added further to the estranging nature of the text-world.

The ‘ordinariness’ (Lee-Houghton, 2013: n.p.) of the text-worlds is arguably most evident in the following two narrative strands, both of which zone-in on relatively familiar domestic events. The first, which is shown in Text-World 3, details a sex scene between Morris and Danya, who are introduced as ‘their sweaty limbs slap together’ (Appendix F: 90) and Morris attempts to delay his orgasm. Although the action in this scene is restricted to this one particular interaction of which Morris and Danya are clearly the figures, the surrounding ground of the narrative (i.e. the apartment itself) further enriches the schema of environmental decay that defines Marek’s world. For example, the apartment window is ‘greened up’ (Appendix F: 89), the couple’s movements ‘[antagonize] the dust mites’ (Appendix F: 90-91) that cover the floor, and Morris is described as having ‘mildew in his lungs’ (Appendix F: 92). The scene also highlights the couple’s reluctance to conceive a child in such an environment, which is understandable given the familial concerns expressed in the Alice and Rupi strands of the narrative. According to Participant 5, ‘in the context of everything else that was happening the like (.) the sense of atmosphere […] was really strong’ in the Morris and Danya strand, an interpretation I would attribute to these world-building elements that emphasise the rot and degeneration of Marek’s world.

The second domestic scene, illustrated in the fourth narrative strand, concerns Rupi’s family who are struggling to survive, occupying a small house on the ‘revolting circumference of the city’ (Appendix F: 128-129). Text-World 4 is populated in the following extract in which the reader’s attention is shifted, by a spatial world-switch, to Rupi’s home:

[PASSAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT. FOR FULL REFERENCE SEE, MAREK [2009] 2012: p. 12, ll. 109-118]

The spatial world-switch in the opening sentence is triggered by the material action process ‘zip ahead’, which shifts the narratee’s deictic centre to ‘Rupi’s home’. Additional prepositional spatial markers such as ‘over the canal’, ‘past the guards at the gate’, ‘past the tall tenements’ and ‘further on, to the last of the city’ further define this spatial location, both situating the house within the suburbs – ‘the last of the city’ – and enriching the broader worlds of the text, with the addition of contextual world-building information. For example, it is indicated that the city is gated, its borders are clearly marked by an inner wall and controlled by guards who mark the gate. The image of the bordered city once again triggered discourse knowledge of other gated dystopian communities (as discussed in Section 7.4). Given the intense environmental decay and the possible illness that plagues Morris and Danya, I inferred that the wall may have been guarded to prevent freedom of movement, either to halt the spread of possible contagion or to protect the city against further infection from outsiders (as in texts such as *The Dark Hollow Places* (Ryan, 2011), *Allegiant* (Roth, 2013) or *The Girl with All the Gifts* (Carey, 2014)). As the city marketplace was also well stocked with soup, samphire and the eponymous fish, I also thought it possible that the wall was a safeguard against looting, an equally common trope across the genre (*The People of Sparks* (DuPrau, 2004), *The Road* (McCarthy, [2006] 2009)). Each of these inferences is based upon my knowledge of characteristic dystopian schema and narrative interrelation (Mason, 2016), both of which served to further flesh-out my conceptualisation of Marek’s world.

The final narrative strand depicts the final spatial location within ‘Dead Fish’, returning the narratee to the side of the canal, this time at the mouth of the underpass, with the deontic proposition ‘Let’s go to Rupi’s brothers now’ (Appendix F: 133). The proposition cues an embedded temporal world-switch, triggered by the proximal deictic marker ‘now’, which shifts the reader’s zero-reference point to the spatio-temporal position of Rupi’s brothers as detailed in Text-World 5 of Figure 8.1. The following passage introduces the boys and primes the reader for the narrative’s coda:

[PASSAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT. FOR FULL REFERENCE SEE, MAREK [2009] 2012: p. 13, ll. 134-140]

The relational use of the third-person plural pronoun ‘they’ shifts attention onto Rupi’s brothers as a distinct group of entities that are separate from the ‘we’ of the narrator’s companions. The pronoun is followed by a brief switch into free indirect style, which in itself triggers an epistemic modal-world. Markers such as the use of intensifiers (for example, ‘so long’, ‘so well’), evaluative expressions (‘so well’) and the sensory description of the ‘cool’ ferns are clearly attributable to the minds of the boys. The sentence ‘they are almost as invisible as we are’ quickly reverts back to the voice of the narrator, adding an additional character-advancing detail – invisibility – to my schema for the collective ‘we’. The following sentence – ‘now, this is what they’ve waited for’ – arguably merges the perspective of the boys with that of the narrator, for the spatial-temporal deictic elements ‘now’ and ‘this’ align with both of their deictic positions in relation to Rupi and the officers – their arrival being what the boys and the entities have been awaiting. The switch back to the first-person confirms the narrator’s shared apprehension for Rupi’s arrival, an experience he wishes to share with the ‘you’ evidenced by the creation of two embedded boulomaic modal-worlds, cued by the boulomaic lexical verbs ‘wanted’ and ‘hope’. These worlds detail the narrator’s hopes that the narratee is equally bloodthirsty and primes the reader for the violent ending about to befall Rupi’s pursuers.

**8.4. ‘Dead Fish’: Ending with Indifference**

Following the individual descriptions of each familial unit and the text-worlds they are part of, the narrator directs the narratee’s attention back to the opening crime chase with the parallel sentence ‘here comes the pounding footfalls of a boy on the run’, which was the first sentence of ‘Dead Fish’. By restating the opening sentence, the narrative becomes almost circular, at which point each of the narrative strands run into one, in a succession of parallel function-advancing positions. These function-advancers reflect individual actions within each of the five primary spatial locations, switching quickly between the text-worlds in apparent temporal succession – a process Participant 6 refers to as ‘sexy *MasterChef* editing’ (see Appendix B for conversational context). The interrelational reference (see Section 7.2; also Mason, 2016) to the popular television show *MasterChef* (“Masterchef”, 2016)is here drawn upon in order to detail Participant 6’s experience of reading the world-switches within this passage. Participant 6 is here referring to the suspenseful moments on the cooking programme during the final minutes of an assessed task. During these defining moments, a musical countdown is initiated that is interrupted (on a stressed beat) with the sounds of contestants cooking (e.g. ‘carrots being pushed into a pan’ (Participant 8)).

In ‘Dead Fish’, the narrator moves between the narrative strands at a similarly fast pace as the story reaches its conclusion. These fleeting world-switches (which were positively received by the group - ‘I liked the switching that was good’ (Participant 7)) are triggered in succession and give the impression of several events occurring at the same time:

Behind the mouth of the underpass, Rupi’s brothers clutch nets in their claws. At the same moment, in the market square, Alice’s heel breaks and she falls. Her bony bottom hits the cobbles hard. In the crumpled house of Rupi’s parents, Rupi’s dad hits the hilt of a kitchen knife with the heel of his hand and drives the blade tip through the crayfish’s helmet. And behind the window too green to see through, Danya tells Morris to hang on. (Appendix F: 150-158)

Each world-switch documents a climactic moment in each of the five text-worlds – Rupi’s brothers clutch their nets, Alice falls, Rupi’s father takes the head off a crayfish and Danya ‘tells Morris to hang on’. The build-up of these function-advancing propositions arguably increases the sense of ‘narrative urgency’ (Simpson, 2014) experienced by the reader at this point in the story. Attention is shifted away from the moment the reader is being primed to experience, with the boy’s immanent attack being delayed as the narrator recalls the simultaneous, comparatively mundane, material actions in each of the parallel text-worlds.

The normalisation of violence experienced first in the Alice narrative strand is evidenced in the closing scene, which follows, as Rupi’s brothers indifferently capture and drown the police officers. It is this final brutal action, which the narrator has been waiting for; the moment he has wanted the ‘you’ to see:

The police are in the underpass, and at the moment that their bootfalls bounce off the walls, Rupi’s brothers raise the net and the three pursuers spill into it, become tangled, their fingers and feet caught up within its holes. They are knotted as they hit the cobbles, and even while they fall, the brothers work fast applying a second net, wrapping it around.

Rupi drops to the ground, heaving in every breath. He is shaking. His blood is hot in his face. Maybe like this, he senses us for a second, all of us, but not fully. To him, we are aberrations of light, symptoms of exhaustion.

The policemen howl curses, threaten terrible punishments. Rupi’s brothers stuff big kicks into the nets, then drag the policemen to the edge of the canal and jump in with them, pulling them under. (Appendix F: 181-194)

Again, here, the narrative action within the passage is felt to occur quickly, evident by the temporal markers in the first section which seem to synchronise the boys’ movement with those of the men. For example, the boys raise their net at the same time the men reach the underpass, indicated by the temporal marker ‘at the moment’, and apply a second net ‘while [the men] fall’, each adverbial phrase indicating a simultaneous sense of material action. There follows a brief interlude in which the narrator attempts to model the mind of Rupi, attributing mental perception processes to his character and creating an epistemic modal-world in which the boy ‘senses’ the presence of the ‘us’. The negated world-switch triggered in the subordinating conjunction ‘but not fully’ further details Rupi’s perceptions, in that, to him, the beings are ‘aberrations of light, symptoms of exhaustion’. These attributes further define my conceptualisation of the narrative ‘we’ as, by this point in the narrative, it is evident that the beings are more likely to be some form of ghost or sentient abstraction than an animal or human enactor, both of which would be visible to Rupi.

There is then a fleeting shift to the narrator’s representation of speech acts as the policemen are said to ‘howl curses’ and ‘threaten terrible punishments’, which highlights their anger at this point without specifying the actual content of their utterances. The series of material action processes which follow indicate that these speech acts were ineffective, however, as the boys go on to kick, drag and pull the policemen into the canal, holding them under. These actions, which follow the knotting, tangling and wrapping of the policemen in the boys’ net, combine to create a graphic and detailed account of premeditated homicide. There are no evaluative adjectives in this scene which detail the boys’ emotional responses to the murder, supporting Lee-Houghtan’s (2013) earlier argument that violence in *The Stone Thrower* is disturbingly neutralised. Indeed, after dragging the men out of the water, the boys prop them against the canal wall and ‘laugh at the affectionate way two of the three heads [loll] together’ (Appendix F: 230-31). The additional observers, who have witnessed the murder, ‘are moving away, sniffing out more drama’ (Appendix F: 225) and only the fish in Rupi’s pocket is responsive to the violence with its mouth ironically ‘agape’ (Appendix F: 233). The narratee is simply directed to leave, before the boys pack up their nets. The narrator concludes – ‘we should not be alone with men on the canal-side’ (Appendix F: 235) – with the negated deontic modal-world, cued by the phrase ‘should not’, ending the narrative in a remote, unrealised world where the reader is left to imagine – why not?

**8.4.1 Comparing Emotional Reading Experiences to ‘Dead Fish’**

Interestingly, the reading group participants mirrored the boy’s indifferent attitude expressing, on the whole, unemotional and detached responses to the narrative’s violent coda. Participants 5, 7 and 8 all report feelings of ‘neutrality’ at this point, both in terms of the murder itself and their emotional responses to the ending as a whole. The participants actively compare these responses, marking out similarities in their reading experiences, as seen across the following extract:

P7. When I got to the end as well I didn’t feel I was like neutral completely neutral I didn’t feel sort of angry at the boys or sad for the policemen or the other way round I was just completely neutral and sort of like ‘oh’ do you see what I mean did anyone have any sort of

P6. //I was invested in it //

P7. //were you on either side// whose side were you on

P8. I was on on like Rupi’s side and his family

P7. were you

P8. I think maybe cos they’re identified and sort of gave them a name so you’re like yeah steal that fish I was really on the fish side of the argument

P6. so at the end were you like HA policemen got drowned (.) good

P8. yeah!

As can be seen here, Participant 7 reports an indifferent response to the murder scene that closes the narrative – ‘I was like neutral, completely neutral’. The repeated adjective ‘neutral’, which is paired with the intensifier ‘completely’ in the second instance, emphasises her lack of emotion during this scene. She then expands upon her initial response, highlighting a list of emotions that she did not experience – ‘I didn’t feel angry at the boys or feel sad for the policemen’. Each of these negative mental cognition processes acknowledges emotions that she felt she should have experienced or was invited to feel. The closing direct thought ‘I was just like “oh”’ clarifies the participant’s subdued response supporting her opening comment – ‘I didn’t feel’. Participant 8 however, discusses a sense of identification with Rupi and his family (as they are named within the discourse), which encouraged him to ‘take Rupi’s side’. He goes on to support this interpretation by presenting his direct thoughts whilst reading – ‘yeah steal that fish’ – which are in line with the emotional process of ‘taking a side’, indicating his encouragement of Rupi and his brothers at this point. Such support would suggest that the participant’s ability to identify with these particular characters, and align his perspective with theirs during the narrative, was sufficient enough to override a moral reading of the ending (Rapp and Gerrig, 2016). For example, his support of the boys seems to have resulted in a sense of approval and gladness that the policemen were drowned – positioning Participant 8 in relation to the unnatural entities which have eagerly awaited the boys’ attack.

Participant 5 offers a more mixed response to the narrative ending, expressing further support for Rupi and equal indifference towards the murder of the men.

P5. I was on Rupi’s side I was on Rupi’s side and I was glad when he made it but felt like nothing when his brothers drowned the policemen and walked away I was like oh right nothing […] and I was on Rupi’s side until then and I didn’t stop being on his side I was like oh well done Rupi you survived carry on.

Similar to Participant 8, Participant 5 notes a sense of identification with Rupi; she states: ‘I was on his side’, acknowledging a shared goal with this particular character. She emphasises that she was glad when Rupi ‘made it’ to his brothers and, again similar to Participant 8, felt inclined to offer direct encouragement to his character, evidenced by the direct thought ‘oh well done Rupi, you survived carry on’. In line with the responses of Participant 6, however, she also notes that she felt ‘nothing’ when the policemen drowned.

These reactions pose some interesting questions in terms of the participants’ ethical responses to the narrative, as all three of these readers were seemingly unaffected by the murder. In the case of Participants 5 and 8, the conclusion was cause for celebration, evidenced by their reported congratulatory thoughts, which indicate a shared sense of achievement with the boys. Such responses are particularly interesting, as, although the men are depicted as violent and aggressive throughout the narrative, they, not Rupi, were the victims in this narrative. This encourages two interpretations. The first, at a base level, is that the readers were simply unaffected by, perhaps even disappointed in the ending, expecting something different or more dramatic. The second is the possibility that these readers have successfully projected into the role of a passive observer in the text-world – a role that they’ve been invited to take throughout the text.

It is notable that, after additional consideration of this violent scene during the group’s discourse, Participant 8 chooses to reframe his initial indifferent response:

P8. yeah its weird I (.) saying that I was on Rupi’s side the whole policemen murder thing still erm I don’t think I came out of that thinking like yeah good eat it coppers

P6. no I didn’t not no

P8. It was like oooh oh oh they’ve //drowned them//

P6: //yeah it ends so abruptly//

P8. yeah when at first they’re caught in the net you’re like oh funny japes

P6. lol

[laughter]

P8. bit clever their just gonna leave them there to struggle on the floor while they run away what a lark and then are they (.) oh oh they’re drowning them (.) holding them under

In this transaction Participant 8 reports an increasingly moral response to the text, clarifying that although he was on Rupi’s side, he did not, in fact, feel glad that the policemen had died. Participant 6 evidently shared this response as seen in the repeated use of negative determiner ‘no’ – ‘no I didn’t not no’. Participant 8 argues instead, that although he was initially amused by the boys’ actions, expressing a shared attitude of jest and good humour, exemplified in the direct thoughts ‘oh funny japes’, ‘what a lark’, his responses shifted on the realisation that the boys were, in fact, drowning the men. Once again Participant 8 uses reported direct thought to support his responses – ‘oooh oh oh they’ve drowned then’ – with the repeated exclamatory ‘oh’ emphasising his shock at the boys’ actions.

Participant 8’s closing interpretations indicate one of the potential drawbacks of reading group discourse, in that I cannot verify which of his responses to the ending offers the most accurate representation of his feelings. As outlined in Chapter 4, there is a certain degree of performance as well as a need to build a shared interpretation during group discourse, and as a result responses are always one step removed from what actually occurs during reading (see Peplow et al. 2016). In this instance, for example, Participant 8’s first response could reflect his desire to provoke an amused response from his interlocutors or, on the other hand, his second response could recognise a need to present a more ethically acceptable response. However, both responses suggest a clear relationship between immersive reading experiences and emotional readerly responses. Taken together, these comparative readings evidence readerly feelings of enjoyment and satisfaction with the ending (akin to the response of the unnatural entities), a sense of relief and gladness in identification with Rupi, or disassociation from the text-world entities as a result of ethical and ontological distance between the reader and the text-world.

**8.5 Review**

In this chapter I have offered a systematic Text-World-Theory analysis of Adam Marek’s dystopian short story, ‘Dead Fish’. I have analysed the text’s engagement with key environmental and ecodystopian concerns and situated the story within its broader dystopian context. I have analysed in detail the unnatural minds within ‘Dead Fish’ and examined both the representation of time and consciousness in terms of Unnatural Narratology. In particular, I placed analytical focus on the varying forms of second-person address within the narrative and the effect of doubly deictic *you* on the positioning of and emotional responses of the reader. In support of this chapter, I have drawn upon reading group discourse so as to present a broader analysis of readerly experience of engaging with Marek’s text.

According to Marek (2014: n.p.), ‘one of the most important things you need to do in a story, ideally from the first line, is to create a need to know in your reader’. This ‘need to know’ was, in terms of my own reading, successfully evoked during my experience of engaging with this text. The combination of the environmentally decaying city, representative of the narrative’s primary nova, alongside the unnatural mind from which the world was presented combined to present a particularly estranging reading experience. The inclusive use of the first-person plural pronouns ‘we’ and ‘us’ were particularly salient in the readings of my reading group participants, who highlighted a clear ‘need to know’ in relation to what or who the unnatural entities in the text were. Fludernik (2012: 367) argues that the increased use of second-person address in contemporary fictional narratives ‘has tended to soften the oddity of the form’ and ‘the process of normalization or conventionalization seems to be well on the way’ as a result. As seen from the reader response analysis presented here however, ‘Dead Fish’ offers a potential exception to Fludernik’s (2012) argument, as the ability of the readers to project into the text was a significant subject of debate and had a notable impact on their overall interpretation of and engagement with the narrative.

It is equally notable that the unnatural minds in the text triggered such estranged responses from the readers as they attempted to understand the enactors’ identities and their role within the text-world. Given the genre of the narrative, it is interesting to observe that several of the readers equated the environmental decay of the text-world with the unnatural entities describing them as ‘spore people’ or ‘sentient fungus’. Such interpretations align the characters with the carnivorous fungal growth, which defines Marek’s refracted vision of future life. As the minds are never identified linguistically within the text-world however, their existence is never validated in terms of cognitive logic, which would characterise ‘Dead Fish’, in terms of Suvin’s (1979) definition at least, as more of a fantasy story. However, the worlds of the text in my own reading and that of the reading group participants were clearly read as dystopian or post-apocalyptic, further supporting my arguments for both the increasing hybridity of the dystopian form and the significance of the individual reading experience to the ascription of the term ‘dystopia’.

Chapter 9: Conclusions

**9.0 Overview**

In this chapter, I provide a closing discussion of the analyses undertaken across this thesis, highlighting my key findings, the main contributions my thesis makes to the fields within which it is situated and the possible directions this research could take in the future. In 9.1, I review the primary insights into the experience of dystopian reading offered within Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 and detail their critical impact upon four key areas: literary critical discussions of dystopia (in Section 9.1.1); reading dystopian minds (in Section 9.1.2); Text World Theory (in 9.1.3); and the use of empirical methods within stylistics and cognitive poetics (in 9.1.4). Section 9.2 moves on to suggest how this project could be advanced and expanded upon, detailing areas for further research within the study of dystopian works (in 9.2.1); within Text World Theory (in Section 9.2.2); within the application of empirical stylistic methods to discourse (in 9.2.3); and in the study of short fiction more broadly (in 9.2.4). A final review of this thesis, which takes into account its initial aims and motivations is offered in 9.3.

**9.1 Main Contributions**

This thesis has provided a detailed, systematic and stylistically rigorous account of the experience of reading dystopian short stories as framed within Text World Theory and cognitive poetics more broadly. In doing so, it has built upon existing literary critical debate surrounding the dystopian tradition and offered the first extended cognitive-poetic account of both the dystopian short story and the dystopian genre more broadly. In proposing a cognitive-poetic account of the dystopian genre that moves beyond traditional literary critical demarcations or periodic limitations, this study argues for a reader-led discussion of genre that takes into account reader subjectivity and personal conceptualisations of prototypicality. Such allowances make for a more detailed and nuanced analysis of dystopian texts that accounts for the conflicting categorisations of ‘critical dystopia’, ‘anti-utopia’ or ‘apocalyptic dystopia’, for example, and more recent hybridity in the evolution of the dystopian form.

In drawing the key findings from each of my case studies into a synthesis, I therefore propose the following five features as being the key distinctive, if not defining, characteristics of the dystopian short story and indeed of dystopian fiction:

1. Dystopian narratives construct possible worlds that are refracted from the ideal

reader’s real-world present. As a result, the worlds illustrated are neccesarily recognisable yet fundamentally different in one or more significant ways. These differences, which are typically realised as fantastical elements or features of the ‘non-real’, draw attention to those aspects of the narrative which signal the political, social or cultural concerns addressed by the text.

1. Dystopian narratives contend with an underlying political, social or cultural message that hinges on the reader’s negotiation of text-world to discourse-world relationships. This message is brought to light through processes of world-building and cross-world conceptual mapping. In making these connections, the distance between the author and the reader can be seen to converge, as the reader is encouraged to perceive of their experiential environment as a precursor to text-world events in line with the hypotheses of the author.
2. Dystopian narratives are as a result defamiliarising and invite ‘cognitive estrangement’ (Suvin, 1949). The ability of the reader to make connections between ontological levels, between the text-worlds of a dystopia and their discourse-world, relies on this sense of estrangement. In making the familiar seem strange or conversely the unfamiliar appear known, dystopian narratives challenge real-world expectations, direct readerly attention to potential text-world/discourse-world counterparts, encourage immersive reading experiences and provoke emotional reader responses.
3. Based on the delineations of ‘real readers’, the immersive and estranging experience of engaging with dystopian fictions is inextricably linked with the apparent believability or authenticity of a particular dystopian text-world. For a particular work to be considered dystopian rather than fantasy or science fiction, the text-worlds presented must be accepted as representative of a valid possible future or alternate world.
4. The categorisation of a text as dystopian, though determined in the main by the above four features, is therefore primarily and most importantly reader-led. In taking a holistic view of this research and drawing each of my four case studies together, it is evident that the experience of engaging with dystopian worlds is subjective and dependant not only upon commonly shared thematic features but equally upon a reader’s narrative preferences, processes of world-building, mind-modelling, and schematic knowledge.

These five features offer an accessible and discourse-sensitive approach to categorising dystopian literature as determined not just by socio-historical context but by the stylistics of dystopian writing and the individual experience of reading dystopian texts. As set out at the beginning of this study, these conclusions are based purely on the findings of the included analyses and are subject to further application. However, in proposing these stylistic distinctions, this thesis takes the first step in determining a more comprehensive and integrated account of dystopia in line with cognitive-psychological approaches to genre (Gavins, 2014; Steen, 2011).

In the remainder of section, I further outline the key findings generated from this research, placing particular emphasis on my original contributions to the fields of dystopian literary criticism and stylistics. I review the primary analytical outcomes of each of my four analysis chapters, both in relation to the particular dystopian reading experience on which they focus and the cognitive-poetic and stylistic arguments they serve to develop or advance.

**9.1.1 Reading the Dystopian Short Story**

For the purposes of this research, analytical focus was placed upon four dystopian short stories, namely: ‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’ (Saunders, [2012] 2014g), ‘Pump Six’ (Bacigalupi, [2008] 2010), ‘Is this your day to join the Revolution?’ (Valentine, [2009] 2012) and ‘Dead Fish’ (Marek, [2009] 2012b). Each of the four texts, which were published within the last ten years, were chosen for their focus on socially relevant thematic concerns and their inherent didacticism in terms of ethically encoded preferred responses. In the exploration of each of these narratives (none of which have been subjected to rigorous critical analysis before) I have built upon existing literary critical debate surrounding the dystopian genre and provided the foundations for a more nuanced, cognitive account of the dystopian reading experience.

In Chapter 5, I offered the first literary-critical analysis of George Saunders’ ‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’ (in terms of both traditional literary criticism and stylistic analysis), advancing the theoretical discussions of Saunders’ broader canon and his creation of dystopian future worlds, more specifically. My contribution to the literary criticism surrounding Saunders’ work expands upon existing discussions of his satirical representations of the ‘American dream’ and his characterisation of the dispossessed American citizen. In building upon this work, I drew upon Simpson’s (2003) model of satirical discourse and drew a link between the satirical undertones of the narrative and the didactic motivations underpinning the text. I argued that the satirical impetus of the text – materialism – and the relationships drawn between satirist (George Saunders), satiree (implied reader) and satirised target (modern society) encourage the reader to make cross-world mappings between their own empirical environment and the text-world, in order to learn from the future it presents.

Chapter 6 provided further insight into the ethical experience of reading dystopian fictions in its analysis of ecodystopian text-worlds in Paolo Bacigalupi’s ‘Pump Six’. This chapter aimed to investigate one of the primary emergent trends within dystopian fiction, that being the examination of ecological and environmental issues, including topics such as pollution, climate change, overpopulation, urban degeneration and biological or environmental warfare. The analysis therefore expanded upon emerging literary critical work on ecodystopian fiction and Paolo Bacigalupi’s ecodystopian impulses, in particular. In focusing on ‘Pump Six’, the chapter also offered the first expanded analysis of that particular narrative and added to literary critical discussions of Bacigalupi’s short fictions.

I also drew upon Stockwell’s (2013) work on ‘preferred responses’ to analyse the invitation for the reader to respond critically to ‘Pump Six’ and make connections between their own discourse-world actions and those of the characters within the narrative. I argued that the invitation to respond emotionally to the narrative and make such cross-world mappings was the result of the apparent authenticity and reliability of the text-worlds Bacigalupi presents. In support of this argument, I incorporated several online reader responses that attested to the believability and resonance of the worlds of the text as well as making cross-world connections between the chemical and scientific world-building elements of the narrative.

In Chapter 7, I moved on to look in further detail at the estranging nature of dystopian narratives and the readerly experience of conceptualising ambiguous text-worlds in Genevieve Valentine’s ‘Is this your day to join the Revolution?’. In this chapter, I was particularly concerned with exploring the readerly experience of cognitive estrangement and the cognitive processes involved in understanding the logic and consequences of a dystopian world. The analysis in the chapter, which focused on the oligarchic structures and political motivations of the narrative, added to existing discussions of political dystopian themes. Additionally, significant focus was placed on the reliability of the narrative and the unreliability of particular text-world enactors. I argued that the unreliability of the text-world characters and the frequent ambiguities and contradictions of world-building and function-advancing information resulted in a high level of cognitive processing and world-repair to be required of the reader during reading.

Finally, Chapter 8 brought together several of my earlier points of focus (particularly the readerly experience of cognitive estrangement and dystopian world-building) to provide a cognitive-poetic account of Adam Marek’s ‘Dead Fish’. The analysis in the chapter primarily concerned the unnatural temporality of ‘Dead Fish’ and the relationship between the reader, narrator and narratee. This chapter placed additional focus upon readerly positioning and further expanded Whiteley’s (2011, 2014) work on psychological projection, immersion, identification and disassociation, to examine the readerly experience of projecting (or resisting projection) into an unnatural consciousness (see Alber, 2009; Alber and Heinze, 2011).

**9.1.2 Reading Dystopian Minds**

In addition to offering a new contribution to the literary criticism of dystopian literature and initiating, or adding to emerging theoretical analyses of works by Saunders, Bacigalupi, Valentine and Marek, this study has also aimed to emphasise the importance of dystopian character to the experience of reading dystopian texts. Throughout each of my four analysis chapters, I have addressed the presentation of four disparate forms of focal enactors, including first-person character narrators, unnatural narrators, and text-world focalisers, whose perspectives were filtered through external heterodiegetic narrators. Each of these points of view provided unique insights into a particular dystopian world and invited varying levels of empathy and readerly identification.

Chapter 5 focused upon the readerly processes involved in mind-modelling the epistolary narrator and the relationships between the narrator and the implied reader and/or narratee. In analysing the point of view of this focal enactor, I coined the term ‘direct writing’ to refer to those instances of narration in which the narrator shifted from narrative exposition to talking directly to a future enactor of himself or an imagined enactor of his future reader. Such shifts initiated a world-switch and highlighted some of the complexities of epistolary world-building. Throughout the chapter, I also placed particular focus on the shifting style of narration attributed to the diarist and identified key graphological and typographical features aligned with his particular mind-style.

In addition to modelling the mind of the narrator, Chapter 5 also provided an initial discussion of the dystopian ‘outsider’ through an extended analysis of the Semplica girls. I provided a detailed account of the prescription of thought, beliefs and opinions onto the Semplica girls from several character perspectives within the narrative and argued that the multifaceted accounts of the women’s consciousness resulted in the creation of opposing continuing-consciousness frames being constructed for their characters. The argument that multiple, potentially competing frames can be constructed for a single character advances both discussions of mind-modelling – in terms of how character attributes are inferred subjectively by other characters and by the reader – and Palmer’s (2004, 2010) original model for conceptualising whole minds in action.

In developing Palmer’s work further, this chapter also built upon his research into social cognition and the conceptualisation of social minds. Through a detailed analysis of the modelling of the Semplica girls and the overarching thought processes of the narrator, I proposed a more nuanced model of intermental thought as framed within Text World Theory, coining the term ‘intermental frame’. In discussing the notion of a frame rather than a mind, I have aimed to ameliorate the more contentious aspects of Palmer’s original model of social thought in terms of its undermining of the core cognitive concept of embodied consciousness. I have argued that an intermental frame as opposed to an intermental mind highlights the influence of a particular enactor’s ideological point of view and their subjective mind-modelling of the opinions of others.

Chapter 6 focused primarily upon the attribution of consciousness to the ‘trogs’ in ‘Pump Six’ and the often parallel characterisation between these devolved creatures and the degenerate American population. I discussed the animalistic characterisation of these posthuman creatures and reflected briefly upon online reader responses to both the trogs and their relationship with the remaining human characters. I argued that the representation of the trogs invites readers to make several cross-world mappings between the discourse-world and the text-worlds of the narrative as the cause of the trog mutation stems from pollution and climate change – ecological concerns that are of pressing importance within the real-world.

Chapter 7 investigated the point of view of Liz, the focal enactor of Valentine’s ‘Is this your day to join the revolution?’, presenting the only narrative (of the four discussed in this thesis) to be narrated from an external, third-person perspective. In examining the data collected during the think-aloud study, I analysed the participants’ identification with Liz and their feelings of empathy with her character.

Chapter 8 focused upon the modelling of unnatural consciousness and the emotional and ethical impact of readerly positioning, identification and empathy with the unnatural minds in ‘Dead Fish’. In addition to discussing the readers’ modelling of the mind of the unnatural narrator, I placed analytical focus in this chapter on the experience of reading ‘we’ narratives and the processes of mind-modelling and interpretation required to conceptualise unnatural minds. I argued that in aligning with the morally indifferent perspective of the ‘we’ in ‘Dead Fish’ readers were encouraged to become desensitised to the narrative’s violent coda. I discussed the estranging experience of reading this particular narrative and the ambiguity surrounding the identity of the unnatural minds in the text – a topic debated in detail by the reading group participants.

**9.1.3 Text World Theory and Dystopia**

The analyses in this thesis have been framed primarily within Text World Theory and have extended the application of Text World Theory to epistolary and unnatural narratives and to dystopian fiction more broadly. Chapter 5 provided a detailed Text-World-Theory analysis of ‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’ and addressed, in particular, the estranging experience of conceptualising its refracted text-worlds. Within this analysis, I placed particular analytical focus on the construction of epistolary worlds. In doing so, I applied Lahey’s (2005) conceptualisation of ‘empty text-worlds’ to both ‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’ itself and more generally within an extended discussion of epistolary texts, which present characteristically redundant text-initial text-worlds. I provided an in-depth discussion of readerly positioning, building upon Whiteley’s (2014) discussions of multiple-projection and identification in an extended analysis of the narratee. I argued for a more nuanced understanding of the narratee within epistolary fiction in line with Text-World-Theory logic concerning ontological boundaries and upward access.

Additionally, in Section 5.4, I put forward an adapted model of intermental thought that calls for a more detailed discussion of social cognition and collective thought. I proposed the term ‘intermental frame’ as replacement term for ‘intermental mind’ and put forward an argument for the accommodation of ‘intermental frames’ within Text World Theory (Gavins, 2007; Werth, 1999). The conceptualisation of an intermental frame offers an alternative solution to Palmer’s (2011b: 396) contentious notion of a disembodied, distributed mind, as the thoughts described remain aligned with the subjective perspectives of the individual. In this way, a particular intermental perspective (akin to ideological point of view) frames the thoughts of the individual who performs social thought in line with a particular intermental unit of which they are or wish to be a part. I argued that the narrator’s naivety as to the unhappiness of the Semplica girls is a result of his performance of intermental thought and his desire to be equal to his peers. In a similar way, Eva’s resistance to such shared thinking and her refusal to perform intermental thought suggests that her thought processes are not intermentally framed and she is instead resistant to the negotiated beliefs of her society.

In Chapter 6, I looked specifically at the representation of urban and technological decline within the text-world, coining the term ‘techno-world-builders’ to refer specifically to the mechanical, often futuristic world-building elements featured in this text and common to science-fictional dystopias more broadly. I examined the presentation of ecodystopian text-worlds and the impact of such world creation upon the ethical and emotional experiences of the reader.

In Chapter 7, I built upon my own research into paratextual text-worlds (see Norledge, forthcoming) and the impact of their conceptualisation upon the experience of reading the narratives they accompany. I argued that the paratextual editor’s note that is presented alongside ‘Is this your day?’ in *Brave New Worlds* primes the creation of a much richer opening text-world. Not only does it provide some insight into the world-building elements presented within Valentine’s narrative, but it also makes several implications as to the unreliability of the text-world and the ambiguity of its conceptual features. I therefore argued that paratextual worlds must be taken in to account when discussing an individual’s experience of a text.

**9.1.4. Cognitive Poetics and Empirical Stylistics**

As highlighted in the previous sections, this research was primarily intended as an extended application of Text World Theory to dystopian narrative. However, across the analyses, which are framed by Werth’s (1999) model, several additional cognitive models and/or tools were drawn upon to enhance my examination of each of the four texts. As a result, the analyses presented here have also furthered cognitive-poetic discussions of ethics and preferred responses, mind-modelling, deictic positioning, prototypes and schema theory.

In taking what I have termed a mixed-mixed-methods approach to the experience of dystopian reading, this research has also aimed to build upon existing studies of reader responses to literature and empirical stylistics more broadly. I have argued for the benefits and advantages of drawing upon introspective, experimental and naturalistic response methods in the examination of reading experience and for the added benefit of using multiple response methods from within a particular approach. Such mixed methods soften the limitations of each of the response techniques incorporated into this thesis and present a multifaceted account of dystopian reading.

The use of online response data in Chapter 6 allowed for a more nuanced discussion of the authenticity and believability of Bacigalupi’s text-worlds, as several online readers discussed their ability to make cross-world mappings between their discourse-worlds and the worlds presented across his wider collection. The responses also provided useful insights into readers’ perceptions of the narrator, his society and of the ‘trogs’ in particular, whose states of mind were of particular interest to my own analysis.

To my knowledge, the think-aloud study conducted in support of Chapter 7 was the first to apply the method to a full short story, with earlier studies focusing upon short poems or specific sections of longer texts. The study therefore tested the limitations of the think-aloud model and suggested the benefits of studying written protocols in relation to lengthier narratives. The data collected was particularly useful in advancing my discussion of world-building in ‘Is this your day?’ and allowed me to draw several conclusions as to the emotional experience of conceptualising and ‘filling in’ a particular world – a process typically backgrounded in relation to emotional responses to character.

The data collected during the reading group study, which informed Chapter 8, built upon and advanced existing research into reading group discourse – a burgeoning field of research within stylistics in particular. I was able to offer a more thorough investigation into the experience of reading ‘Dead Fish’ and more closely examine the conceptualisation of unnatural minds. The data collected also provided additional insight into the ability of readers to project into unnatural texts and align with unnatural points of view, highlighting that readerly immersion is possible even within texts that should logically jar such an experience.

**9.2. Future Research**

In this section I propose several future directions for this research, both in terms of the study of dystopian fictions and the application of cognitive-poetic tools and empirical-stylistic methods. In section 9.2.1, I propose several future pathways that research into dystopian narratives might take in order to generate broader, cross-medium insights into contemporary dystopian practice and support the arguments presented here as to the evolution and mutation of the dystopian genre and the readerly experience of engaging with dystopian texts. Section 9.2.2 suggests future directions for Text World Theory and 9.2.3 for the further application of empirical stylistic methods. In section 9.2.4, I argue for an extended discussion of the short story, highlighting once again the socio-cultural relevance of this particular form and posit the need for further study of the short story from a stylistic perspective.

**9.2.1 Dystopian Narrative**

The narratives analysed within this thesis offer only a small insight into the wealth of dystopian worlds created within the boundaries of the short story form. In building upon this research, broader arguments as to the experience of reading dystopian short stories could be made if additional texts from within this grouping were considered. Given the historical development of the dystopian genre, it would be especially interesting to examine the growth of the dystopian short story, including the shift in contemporary dystopian focus, potential mergers within outlying genres, and its role within the wider spectrum of dystopian media.

In the pursuit of a fully rounded account of the experience of dystopian narratives there is additional call for an extended investigation into the motivations and impact of YA dystopian fiction. As outlined in Chapter 2, dystopian fictions are particularly prolific within the YA subcategory and literature aimed at this particular audience is often overlooked as a result of critical bias as to narrative quality. It would also be interesting to extend my discussions of immersion and readerly positioning in relation to dystopian text-worlds to the worlds created within other media such as digital narratives, film or videogames which, as outlined in Chapter 2, have become increasingly popular in the last ten to fifteen years.

**9.2.2 Text World Theory**

My primary contribution to Text World Theory was made in Chapter 5 during my discussion of social cognition within which I coined the term ‘intermental frame’. In order to support this analysis further the concept must be applied to additional texts both within the dystopian genre and more broadly in literary studies.

Arguably, as fictional minds are processed in much the same way as real ones, intermental framing could also be applied to non-fictional discourse. The notion of an intermental frame could prove useful for example, in the discussion of reader response data, particularly reading group discourse. For example, it is commonly perceived that reading groups produce new, collective interpretations during their discourse that are based upon shared thoughts, beliefs and opinions (Peplow et al., 2016; Swann and Allington, 2009). Readers may even shift their initial, personal interpretations to align with such collective thinking. In this way, readers’ online interpretations are filtered through the intermental frame of the small intermental unit of which they are a part. Such an argument supports the belief that reading group thought is relatively performative and subject to social bias. As in the discussion of fictional group thought, the notion of an intermental frame maintains that an individual’s thoughts are private and embodied yet accounts for the evident influence of an immediate shared set of beliefs and opinions in line with the individual’s mind-modelling of the thoughts and opinions of others.

Additionally, given the spatial limitations of this thesis it was possible to conduct a text-worlds analysis of only the fictional worlds created in the engagement with each of the dystopian short stories. The reader response data, which informed much of this analysis, was considered only in terms of supporting evidence, rather than as text-world forming in its own right. However, in moving this research forwards it would be interesting to conduct a Text-World-Theory analysis of the various types of reader data gathered for this project.

**9.2.3 Empirical Stylistics and Reader Response**

Throughout this thesis, I have incorporated mixed reader response methods alongside stylistic analysis. The examination of ‘real’ reader responses was, however, limited as a result of the small amount of data I was able to incorporate into this study. As the focus of my thesis was primarily on the language of the short stories themselves, reader response data was drawn upon as supporting evidence rather than focal content. For this reason, only select examples from each study were included in the analysis. In expanding this study, further attention could be paid to the experiences of other readers with a shift in focus to a reader-led study. In extending such work several considerations can be made.

Firstly, in terms of the analysis of online reader response data, such investigations could be extended further in several directions. Given the wealth of online reader reviews available, it would be beneficial to review a larger corpus of online responses to dystopian texts, either on a particular text or in relation to how readers discuss dystopian reading more broadly. Corpus linguistic methods could be applied in order to examine a broader dystopian corpus or additional software such as NVivo could be employed to tag patterns across a wider data set. The use of such methods could provide additional insights into the experience of dystopian reading and reveal further similarities, differences or patterns in ‘real’ readers’ accounts of dystopian narratives.

Secondly, in extending the think-aloud and/or reading group studies, a more diverse set of readers could be accounted for so as to provide a more accurate insight into dystopian reading. Additionally, a larger number of participants could be used so as to offer a more thorough representation of reading experience – enhanced even further by such readers’ engagement with a larger number of texts.

**9.2.4 Reading Short Fiction**

There is also a need for an extended cognitive account of the short story as a narrative form. Much research into the medium focuses upon modernist narratives (see Head, 1992), particularly works by canonical authors such as Virginia Woolf or James Joyce and to my knowledge is investigated, as a form, primarily from within traditional literary criticism (see Head, 2017). Within stylistics, the short story has been the focus of several interesting studies such as Gavins’ (2003, 2013) work on absurd short stories.

Short stories take equal focus in many empirical stylistic studies (for example Miall, 1990; Miall and Kuiken, 1994, 2002; Oatley, 1999) given their usefulness in terms of length and accessibility. There is arguably room, however, for a more extensive discussion of the short story from a stylistic perspective.

**9.3 Thesis Review**

Throughout this thesis I have aimed to produce a cognitive-poetic account of the dystopian short story that, being framed within Text World Theory addresses both the particular linguistic craft of the works themselves and the personal, ethical and emotional experience of dystopian reading. Given the spatial restrictions of this thesis, focus was placed upon four short stories in particular, George Saunders’ ‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’, Paolo Bacigalupi’s ‘Pump Six’, Genevieve Valentine’s ‘Is this your day to join the Revolution?’ and Adam Marek’s ‘Dead Fish’. Each of these narratives can be seen to have championed a key trend or concern within contemporary dystopian practice and highlighted the evolution of the genre since its inception in the nineteenth century. In working with Text World Theory in particular, my attention has been primarily placed upon readerly processes of world-building and the conceptualisation of new and estranging world-building elements. This research has therefore built upon existing work in Text World Theory and extended text-world discussions of world-building and mind-modelling. Several new adaptations to the model were also outlined during my analysis of paratextual text-worlds and most importantly in terms of my work on social cognition and intermental frames.

This thesis stands as an original contribution to cognitive poetics and to Text World Theory in particular. It is intended to expand upon existing cognitive-poetic analyses of genre and further test the use of empirical stylistic methods. It is hoped that this work will stand as an important piece of dystopian literary criticism that in its combined consideration of both text and reader, promotes further investigation into the peculiar cognitive experience of reading the dystopian short story.

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Appendix A: Contextualised Think-Aloud Data

Below are each of the textual passages discussed in relation to the think-aloud data collected for Chapter 7. Each passage is reproduced in the format of the think-aloud and is followed by the respective responses from each of the four participants. Where N/A is given, a response was not provided for that section.

\*Typographical errors correspond with the original reader data.

Section 2

[PASSAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT. FOR FULL REFERENCE SEE, VALENTINE [2009] 2012: p. 268, ll. 1-5]

P1: What's with the masks? Presumably some sort of close-contact infection.

“The TV in her subway car” reads like an idea from a 1970s style sci-fi. If this was written in 2009, the idea of smartphones and personal media isn't entirely futuristic. It feels like sentimental approach to sci-fi/dystopian world-building - but that's no bad thing.

P2: This feels very 60s public information video - although I could never decide whether they were hilarious or terrifying

P3: lot of info here a bit hard to follow makes me think it is set in America ‘Screwed everything up’ ‘subway car’ etc also feels a bit dated in a weird way

P4: The brand name, Coke, sticks out to me in particular. It seems particularly jarring, almost sinister, alongside the idea of mass disease control or potential contamination.

Section 6

[PASSAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT. FOR FULL REFERENCE SEE, VALENTINE [2009] 2012: p. 269, ll. 48-65]

P1: Is there going to be anything in this story that isn't government controlled? Where does the power to organise this much omniscience come from?

P2: Liz liked the dancing. Greg liked Joe Murray' - ha! Although on second thoughts this is really dark - so much sexual repression. Also the way it says 'droned' then talks about how all the guys have matching arms round their dates makes it all feel very robot-y

P3: All these names of brands/places etc are too much for me! Again really struggling to follow. Again this feels really retro, kind of 50's America. Getting the sense that there might be some reproductive policing going on, maybe? Are people supposed to be conceiving? Again super conservative vibes (the tag line caused a scandal)

P4: The familiar being used in an uncanny way is starting to freak me out a bit. It's like watching a film you've seen before but someones dubbed over the actors voices and you cant quite spot the difference but every now and then it just hits you.

Section 12

[PASSAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT. FOR FULL REFERENCE SEE, VALENTINE [2009] 2012: p. 271, ll. 135-144]

P1: N/A

P2: Yesss, get in Greg!

P3: Why have they suddenly started calling him Johnny? I thought Greg was making a joke about the John Doe thing.

P4: Despite the 'action' in this scene I'm most drawn in by the 'subsidized dates'. I want to know more about this matching system, and why this goverment is sending people on dates- is it to maintain a false sense of normality? Why bother?   
Or, is this actually a situation where there has been an incident of biological warfair and I'm assuming that there's a shady dystopian government because that's what I automatically expect?

Section 19

[PASSAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT. FOR FULL REFERENCE SEE, VALENTINE [2009] 2012: p. 273, ll. 234-242]

Participant responses to Section 19

P1. Don't believe a word at this stage

P2. I don't think we are supposed to believe Randall

P3. What, surely not? Oh actually, never mind. He's lying, obviously

P4. N/A

Section 20

[PASSAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT. FOR FULL REFERENCE SEE, VALENTINE [2009] 2012: p. 273, ll. 243-251]

“Our field man did his damnedest, but I told him – I said, That girl has her head on straight, you won’t get her to help you! He tried twice, the theatre and the street, but did Elizabeth fold?” He laughed. “I told him he’d have as much luck getting help from me as from you.” She thought about giving Johnny her keys to Greg’s place, telling him the fastest way to get there, taking Greg’s arm to go for an alibi date. No one had told Randall about that. This was no undercover job, then; Johnny Doe had died and taken that secret with him. “Thank you, sir” she said.

P1: I wonder if her compatability for dates will save her from a sticky end? Well, if there is no disease, then she has no bargaining chip there, I suppose.

P2: Ah, so he IS lying. Knew it. I'm glad she does too

P3: Liz realises he is lying too. She assumed JD is dead but maybe he isnt?

P4: N/A

Section 22

If you have any additional or closing thoughts about the text please add them here.

P1: Ah, I thought this was a final closing paragraph! Now I feel like I don't have closure! But then I guess I was making up my own 1984 style ending, based on the endless misinformation.  
I think in retrospect I enjoyed that more than my comments might make it seem like I did. One of the things I enjoy about reading a story/watching a film is pulling the narrative apart, and questioning its structure, as well as guessing for twists and turns - this certainly delivered on the latter.

P2: That was terrific - had no idea what was going on initially but the lack of exposition is great. Ending was amazing although I'm livid she didn't help him

P3: I wish I could have learned a bit more about the role of the doctors and what seemed like maybe a drive for the women to conceive? I didn't really like the shortness of the story because everything felt rushed and I think maybe tended towards being a bit cliched. Lots of the tropes were really familiar from other dystopian stories/films (the public service announcements in Blade Runner, for example). I didn't have any emotional reaction to the story but I'm not sure that the author meant me to!

P4: I've re-read the ending a few times, and I'm still confused. I can't tell if I'm reading into the text implications that I assume are there because of other dystopias I've read, or if that's done on purpose to unsettle the reader knowing their potential familiarity with the genre. The lack of answers or any real conclusion in the ending will definitley stay with me for some time.

Appendix B: Contextualised Reading Group Data

Below are each of the transcripts used in support of my analysis of ‘Dead Fish’ in Chapter 8. Each transcript has been extended slightly on either side of the focal discussion to provide additional context of from where in the broader reading group’s discourse they were taken. Transcripts are formatted in correlation with their positioning in Chapter 8, under the relevant subheadings.

**8.2 Unnatural Narration and the Worlds of ‘Dead Fish’**

***Transcript A***

P8. what (.) like there was a thing throughout em with the (2) when their talking about //us//

P6. //yeeeeah [incomprehensible]//

P7. //yeah weird//

P8. so from the narrative point of view they kept bringing in this us (.) like “next to us” and there was one later on that I circled

P9. there’s one quite near the end where they’re like about to run into the em brothers under the bridge cos I remember reading that and wondering because it said you know “scattered among the rooftops” I wondered if they were like birds

P6. I highlighted that whole thing I thought birds but also it said =

P8. = “but maybe like this he senses us for second all of us but not fully to him we are aberrations of light symptoms of exhaustion” like what (2) what are *we*

P7. yeah

P6. It seemed very like non-corporeal at first I thought bi-birds and then I got on to that bit and I was like are we are we spores are we just like floating

P7. mmm

P8. sentient fungus

P6. yeah cos it said like we are so like we’ll we couldn’t break the thinnest neck of the thinnest fungus our most violent action would struggle to loose a single petal // so then I was like well no bird is that small//

P7 //she when I’d read that// yeah when I read that I’d put like ghosts or something similar like that next to it

**8.2.1 Reading Unnatural Minds in ‘Dead Fish’**

***Transcript B***

P6. when It first started I loved it erm like I haven’t I don’t read that much fiction

P7. hmm

P6. so I did I did write kind of do I like this cos I don’t read that much fiction so this is so different and interesting for me

P7. ah ok.

P6. but those like those first few lines erm I was like oh oh I’m in this I’m so in this book em in this story erm and it did feel like I was I felt a bit like weightless as I was reading it as if I was being sped around carried through the story

***Transcript C***

P5. I’ve just thought I think I’m getting too obsessed with who we are supposed to be as narrator and I don’t know if I’ve already suggested this before [laughter] but just with you saying oh you know like the narrator is loving this power are we dead policeman

P8. oh we’re the ones who’ve like been drowned

P5. yeah and now we just like fly around like watching them kill other people

P8. could be

P6. //well like//

P5 //I need to stop thinking about this// and just accept that we’re spores

P6. up until like page kinda of page I’m looking at page 13 it looks different cos you’ve got this there’s few line breaks and again it seems he’s playing us a bit more as he gets to the climatic point he’s like now we are going to go over here (.) pause this is happening (.) pause dramatic pause em this is what they’ve waited for pause em theres a lot more kind of line breaks and suspenseful paragraph layouts em that again seems a bit like well we’re being played with a little bit as well

P7. that’s the thing I didn’t necessarily feel a part of whatever the narrator is you know how you were on about us being spores and things like that especially when he moves on to say (.) ‘if you look out the corner of your eyes you’ll see the rest of *us*’ (.) there’s just a distance an even bigger distance there between me and the guy narrating this story I just feel like he’s he’s sort of taken me with him because he can (.) or she can (.) it *it* can

[laughter]

P7. and as like you’ve just said with it being like a tour guide (.) there’s a (.) like an aspect of power and control there where I’m just taken wherever this thing or this person wants to go when he wants to go

[group digression about how many weeks there are to Christmas]

P7. so anyway I don’t feel like I’m necessarily that I am the same as what’s narrating this story

P8. yeah we’re not part of the us

P6: All the way through I’d really liked the way I’m being carried by the narrator and then I got to that bit and started resenting it and was like you don’t get to tell me how to feel […] it jarred at that point and I was like (.) not sure I like this as much.

**8.4. ‘Dead Fish’: Ending with Indifference**

***Transcript D***

P6. well I wrote a really weird comment on here and I read it and was like what’re you talking about but cos It gets to the bit where he’s kind of (.) building up to I suppose the climax of the story where erm (.) Ru- em er he gets to the point where he meets up with his brothers and Rupi’s dad’s cutting up a crayfish in the kitchen and then those people reach their orgasms and I suppose its a like a literal climatic point and I wrote

[P6 gestures]

P5. nice

P6. sexy masterchef editing

[group laughter]

P6. and what what I mean by that is like I can hear could hear I could here like kind of the //rumbly music//

P7 //yeah //

P8. //yeah yeah//

P6. on Masterchef where they’re like [sings Masterchef music]

[group join in with cooking noises]

P8. chop [more laughter]

P6. and someone chopping a carrot or like turning the blender on and that’s

P8. or pushing carrots into a pan =

P6. = into a pan yeah and it was that’s the really specific // atmosphere I could go for//

P8. //amazing//

**8.4.1 Comparing Emotional Reading Experiences to ‘Dead Fish’**

***Transcript E***

P7. When I got to the end as well I didn’t feel I was like neutral completely neutral I didn’t feel (2) sort of angry at the boys or sad for the policemen or the other way round I was just completely neutral and sort of like ‘oh’ do you see what I mean did anyone have any sort of

P6. //I was invested in it //

P7. //were you were you on either side// whose side were you on

P8. I was on on like Rupi’s side and his family

P7. were you

P8. I think maybe cos they’re identified

P7. yeah

P8. and sort of gave them a name so you’re like yeah steal that fish //I was really on the fish side of the argument//

P6. //And also that thing about //

P7. so at the end were you like HA policemen got drowned (.) good

P8. yeah!

P6. //but also the thing about the//

P7. //oh right that’s interesting //

P5. //I was on Rupi’s side// I was on Rupi’s side and I was glad when he made it

P7. yeah

P5. but felt like nothing when his brother’s drowned the policemen and walked away I was like oh right nothing […]

P7. yeah that’s what I thought yeah

P5. and I was on Rupi’s side until then and I didn’t stop being on his side I was like oh well done Rupi you survived carry on.

***Transcript F***

P8. yeah its weird I (.) saying that I was on Rupi’s side the whole policemen murder thing still erm I don’t think I came out of that thinking like yeah good eat it coppers

P6. no I didn’t not no

P8. It was like oooh oh oh they’ve //drowned them//

P6. //yeah it ends so abruptly//

P8. yeah when at first they’re caught in the net at first you’re like oh funny japes

P6. lol

[laughter]

P8. bit clever their just gonna leave them there to struggle on the floor while they run away what a lark and then are they (.) oh oh they’re drowning them (.) holding them under

P7. I’m disturbed that I genuinely thought they were catching them for food didn’t this occur to anybody (.) no

P8. well it makes sense within the context of all the horrible food

Appendix C: ‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’

[APPENDIX REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT. FOR FULL TEXT SEE: *TENTH OF DECEMBER* (SAUNDERS, [2012] 2014g: 109-167). PAGE NUMBERS FOR IN-TEXT CITATIONS ARE ACCURATE TO THIS EDITION]

Appendix D: ‘Pump Six’

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*PUMP SIX AND OTHER STORIES* (BACIGALUPI, [2008] 2010: 209-239). PAGE NUMBERS FOR IN-TEXT CITATIONS ARE ACCURATE TO THIS EDITION]

Appendix E: ‘Is this your day to join the Revolution?’

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*BRAVE NEW WORLDS* (ADAMS [2009] 2012: 267- 274). PAGE NUMBERS FOR IN-TEXT CITATIONS ARE ACCURATE TO THIS EDITION]

Appendix D: ‘Dead Fish’

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