

Dystopian wor(l)ds: language within and beyond experience

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Summary of thesis

This thesis examines language in a range of modern and contemporary dystopian literary fiction, and argues for a reinterpretation of Whorfian linguistics as a means of advancing understanding of the dystopian genre's acknowledged propensity to influence the habitual world-view of its readership. Using close stylistic analysis, and with an emphasis on textual patterning, it identifies and examines two distinct and characteristic 'languages' of dystopia, and considers the ways in which these discourses contribute to linguistic relativity as a dynamic process in the reading of these fictions.

Chapter one defines more precisely the literary genre of dystopia, particularly in relation to notions of space and time, and emphasises the genre's necessary participation in the socio-historical circumstances of its conception and production (the site of a discourse here termed *reflective language*). The (re)placement of these environments in a futuristic setting is also examined and is shown to be marked by a second discourse, termed *speculative language*.

Chapter two outlines the theoretical foundations of the study and supports its positioning at the interface between the study of language and the study of literature by drawing on theories from both disciplines to orient its subsequent analyses. In this chapter, the concept of linguistic relativity, or Whorfianism, is re-figured as a *process* intrinsic to the reading of dystopian narratives, and is combined with the more literary critical theory of cognitive estrangement. In order to maintain focus on the reader-text relationship, and to locate the analyses from a readerly perspective, some common, or 'folklinguistic', beliefs about translatability and the 'inadequacy' of language are also invoked.

Chapters three, four, and five are devoted to case studies: chapter three discusses the non-Newspeak speculative language in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and chapter four begins with an analysis of reflective language in the same novel before looking at three other twentieth-century dystopian texts (Katherine Burdekin's *Swastika Night*, L.P. Hartley's *Facial Justice*, and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*). Chapter five brings together speculative and reflective language in its consideration of Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*, which also serves to bring this study into the twenty-first century. A summary and conclusions follow in chapter six.

Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future,
And time future contained in time past.
If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable.
What might have been is an abstraction
Remaining a perpetual possibility
Only in a world of speculation.
What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present.

T.S. Eliot (1945) 'Burnt Norton', *Four Quartets*, ll. 1-10

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1. Language and dystopia

Language is the armory of the human mind, and at once contains the trophies of its past and the weapons of its future conquests.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1817) *Biographia Literaria*

1.1 Introduction

The autumn of 2005 saw an exhibition of contemporary art entitled ‘The Real Ideal: Utopian Ideals and Dystopian Realities’ installed at a UK city’s leading art gallery. The pre-event marketing materials for the exhibition offered the following:

Allow us to challenge your ideas of utopia, your Real Ideal. Experience visually stunning works in a range of media which convey both the ideal and harsh reality of contemporary life.¹

The translocated orthography here illustrates and encapsulates the main concerns that motivate this study: it defamiliarises language sufficiently to challenge and destabilise perceptions of reality, while retaining just enough familiarity to fulfil its communicative aim; it subtly embodies the potential for disorder to be concealed within ostensible order; additionally, it serves to draw its readers’ attention to the ways in which their preconceptions may be confronted, examined, and reconstructed. In short, it captures the essence of what this study considers: the distinctive manipulations, re-evaluations, creations, and re-presentations of language that characterise and animate conceptions of dystopia. The intention of this thesis is to examine the form and function of language in the context of dystopian narrative. More specifically, it focuses on two inter-connected linguistic strands which go to make up part of the complex narrative texture of these fictions; for the purposes of this study I have termed these *speculative language* and *reflective language*. By way of analysis of a range of post-1900 dystopian works, I shall elaborate on my formulation and understanding of these terms, and consider the ways in which self-reflexive, foregrounded, defamiliarised, non-standard – and often invented – language both sustains and constitutes the dystopian narrative project. Through this focus I shall argue for a genre-specific dystopian view of language as fundamentally implicated in world-view; moreover, through reinterpreting the relevance of Benjamin Whorf’s conception of linguistic relativity, and applying this approach to dystopian writing, I argue that this Whorfian perspective functions beyond and outside – but through – the language of these narratives to disaggregate, transmute, and

reconstitute readers' perceptions, not just of the fictional world, but of the world beyond the fiction. The primary motivation underlying these investigations lies in dystopian fictions' universal postulate – whether explicit or implicit – that all possibilities of existence, all inter-relationships, all potentials (either within or beyond current comprehension), in this world or a future world, are intimately and inextricably encoded in language. Dystopian fictions evince the intrinsic connection between language and perceptions of reality, with each text contributing a compelling argument towards an understanding of how human existence is essentially predicated on the facility to use and manipulate language. Any attempt to encompass the entirety of this aspect of the dystopian impulse would be unmanageable given the magnitude of the field; my contribution, therefore, is limited to a detailed examination of the stylistic and affective properties of language in a small representative selection of dystopian texts written in English in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

Dystopian fictions are, according to Ildney Cavalcanti, 'stories about language' (2000: 152). As 'stories' they belong in the province of literary study; yet their being 'about language' invokes the field of linguistic study. A stylistic approach – the application of linguistic concepts to elucidate and interrogate literary effects – brings together the superficially distinct disciplines of linguistics and literary studies; an alliance which is clearly applicable to this study given the hybrid nature of its subject matter. Accordingly, traditional stylistic methods, frameworks, and analyses are employed to explore and account for the consequence of language as it is foregrounded in these texts. The methodology used here relies in part on what Ronald Carter wryly terms *steam stylistics* (Gavins 2005: 405): that is to say, conventional interpretive analysis based on the systematic application of linguistic techniques, rather than the cognitive- or corpus-based approaches that have become highly visible in stylistics in recent years.² While either of the latter approaches might yield interesting results in relation to the texts studied here, my aim is to use stylistic methods as the foundation upon which I might synthesise other approaches drawn from both the study of language and the study of literature. To this end, I incorporate relevant linguistic theory – primarily linguistic relativity – with theoretical notions from literary studies (the concept of cognitive estrangement in particular). Stylistics provides the practical instrument through which these theories are assessed, applied, and evaluated in an effort

to extend the existing body of academic work on the nature and import of language in dystopian fiction.³

Stylistic analysis also has a distinct advantage, in terms of the aims of this study, in that it acknowledges the triangulation between language (or text), meaning (or effect), and the reader. It recognises the reader as an integral element in the formation of meaning, and the reception of effect, rather than allowing that meaning might be made intra-textually and in isolation. While accepting that much of what is loosely termed ‘meaning’ in language is necessarily codified and understood by consensus, my focus here is more often on language which challenges, inverts, subverts, and otherwise renders mutable the accepted definitions of itself and of language as a medium in a more general sense. In addition, much of the language I consider is essentially *sui generis*, existing only within the context of one dystopian text. To comment on ‘meaning’ or ‘effect’ in relation to the reader as recipient and generator of meaning in these linguistically non-conventional circumstances is often to position myself as ‘reader’ in this tri-partite relationship. The rigour and systematicity of mediating this reception through a stylistic lens will, I hope, attenuate the worst excesses of subjectivity and the impressionistic, interpretive leaps that might otherwise undermine such an undertaking. While this is not the place to rehearse old arguments about the ‘objectivity’ of stylistics (for example, the Fowler-Bateson controversy (see Fowler 1971), or the McKay-Short debate (see Short *et al* 1998; Short & van Peer 1999), I work from the understanding that stylistic methodology has the capacity to produce balanced, accessible, and concordant readings of these texts. Moreover, where I mention ‘readers’ in an abstract sense, as a representative collective of recipients, I refer not just to scholars either of language or literature; nor to the informed, astute, and responsive ‘ideal readers’ construed by some reader-response theories (see, for example, Culler 1975); furthermore, I do not anticipate what Fish (1980) terms an ‘interpretive community’ with a particular schema, ideology, or approach to the texts. My conception of ‘readers’ is somewhat re-positioned from the norm. Given that dystopian fiction – often indivisibly from science fiction (see §1.3.3) – is highly representative of, and implicated in, any conception of popular fiction with a wide appeal to a generalised reading public, it follows that any attempt to characterise its readership must necessarily assimilate its popular status – even insofar as ‘popular’ may impute a pejorative sense. Consequently, where I use ‘the reader’, ‘readership’, or ‘readers’ in this study, either as

formulators of meaning or as recipients of effects, it is with the understanding that any such meaning or effect is readily retrievable, accessible, and expressly defensible, since it will be supported and demonstrated by means of stylistic analysis. In taking advantage of the methodical thoroughness of stylistics, my aim is to accomplish readings which – so far as is possible within any interpretive framework – would represent a consensual majority interpretation among a diverse and heterogeneous readership.

In the remainder of this introductory chapter, I define more explicitly my understanding of what constitutes the genre of dystopia, and introduce the notion of these fictions as characteristically being distinguished by their incorporation of ‘two languages’, one speculative, one reflective. Sections 1.2 and 1.3 focus on (re)defining dystopia in order to circumscribe much of the indeterminacy which surrounds the classification of the genre: §1.2.1 and §1.2.2 together locate dystopia in relation to place and time, both of which are vital to the categorisation of dystopia, in ways which differ from many other fictional genres. Taken together, these two sections develop a refined account of the dystopia-specific context upon which the subsequent sections depend. In order to come to an understanding of what dystopia *is*, however, it is equally important to be clear about what it is *not*. To this end, §1.3.1 investigates the range of intersections between dystopia and those other genres with which it is sometimes conflated, and makes a distinction between those texts which are wholly dystopian and those which, while not entirely dystopian, exhibit dystopian elements. Of the many genres with which dystopia overlaps and intersects, utopia on the one hand and science fiction on the other present the most complex inter-relationships and interstices. An approach to clarifying the blurred boundary between dystopia and utopia is the subject of §1.3.2, where the point of view of the focalising character (or characters) is invoked as a means of differentiating between these two closely related genres, while §1.3.3 considers the engagement of dystopia with science fiction, and argues for the inclusion of dystopia within the more terrestrial reaches of this far-reaching genre.

A central principle of this thesis, visible in its methodology, its theoretical positioning, and its analytical emphasis, is that the perceptions of the readership may be affected, altered, or amended as a result of reading dystopian fiction. Empirical studies which conclude that reading such texts results in a changed view of self and society are discussed in §1.4, together with an examination of the ways in which the didactic

impulse, intrinsic to all dystopias, contributes to this adjustment of world-view. As noted above, this study identifies language as the locus of dystopia's remarkably powerful capacity to re-define its readers' outlook; the latter part of this chapter is, therefore, devoted to a preliminary delineation of the particular realisations of language which are common to all dystopian fictions. The three parts of section 1.5 together conceptualise the direction this study pursues in respect of language: §1.5.1 addresses the issue of whether 'two languages' can be said to co-occur within the bounds of one text, and appeals to precedents established in stylistics, linguistics, and literary criticism to warrant such a partition in this study, while §1.5.2 and §1.5.3 introduce, in outline, the notions of speculative language and reflective language respectively. Speculative language is identified as dystopia's 'language of the future', while reflective language is proposed as the genre's 'language of the past'. Both of these linguistic strands depend on dystopia's conjunctions with a definable context: a sense of 'place', which, as will be seen throughout this chapter (and indeed throughout the entire thesis) is essential to my exposition of dystopia's extraordinary effect on its readers. It seems fitting, therefore, to move now to an exploration of dystopian 'place'.

1.2.1 Dystopia in space: 'elsewhere [...] but here'

While it may be true that no place has always seemed elsewhere or elsewhere, in fact all utopian fiction whirls contemporary actors through a costume dance no place else but here.

Greenberg, Olander, and Rabkin (1983) *No Place Else*

Throughout this study, I frequently make reference to language – and to readers – as they exist in the real world; on occasion, I discuss the real world as it is represented in dystopian fiction. Furthermore, there are some references to the dystopian authors' real worlds. In addition to these various configurations of reality, there are various configurations of unreality and unreal-reality: the fictional dystopian worlds, each of which, as I shall elaborate, has conjunctions with both the author's real world and the reader's real world. While accepting that, with reference to postmodernist thinking, neither 'real world' nor 'reality' can be presented as neutral terms, I continue to use both in this study, but with some qualification.⁴ To disambiguate the non-fictional 'real' worlds I employ two distinct terms, each defining a particular spatio-temporal relation. Firstly, to denote the contemporary real world – that is to say the empirically observable reality of the present known world – I follow Peter Stockwell (2000: 147 and *passim*) and use *base-reality*. Secondly, to distinguish the historically-bound real

world of the author – the temporal circumstances from which a given dystopia emerges – I employ Tom Moylan’s term, *historical spacetime* (2000: xii) (generally pre-modified by the relevant author’s name) as a means to differentiate the ‘then-world’ from the ‘now-world’. However, to disambiguate the fictional, dystopian realities, unrealities, and non-realities, and to locate them in relation to both base-reality and the historical spacetime of the author, is a much more complex task; one which requires an understanding of dystopia as depicting a futuristic, non-existent ‘no place’ simultaneously with its envisioned ‘bad place’, both of which embody some re-working of a ‘this place’.⁵ Later in this introductory chapter I revisit the issue of ‘reality’ when I examine the positioning of dystopia within the genre of science fiction (§1.3.3); in advance of that discussion, in this section I examine the critical movement towards acceptance of dystopia’s deep-rooted location in some identifiable, more-or-less real ‘place’.

Critical recognition of dystopia as emergent from, and merged with, a sense of ‘place’ is a fairly recent development, held latent for decades by a doctrine of regarding dystopian place or space as analogous with a utopian sense of ‘nowhere’. *Dystopia* derives its etymological roots from Thomas More’s coinage of *Utopia* to name both his imaginary island and eponymous book, published in Latin in 1516 and translated into English by Ralph Robinson in 1551.⁶ More’s punning neologism, contrived from Greek *ou* (*not*) in combination with *topos* (*a place*) – meaning literally *a place that is not* or *no place* – invites the interpretation of the first syllable as *eu* (meaning *pleasant* or *good*) when transliterated via Latin back into Greek. This ingenious bilingual wordplay thus denotes a place that is non-existent while simultaneously being ideal. More elaborated this paradox in a short verse on the volume’s flyleaf, which ends with the lines:

Wherefore not Utopie, but rather rightly
My name is Eutopie: a place of felicity.⁷

Utopia, in its double sense of ‘good place’ and ‘no place’, was a late revision of More’s original working title for the book, which was *Nusquamus*, from the Latin *nusquam*, meaning ‘not anywhere’.⁸ Although this suggests More’s intention may have been to advance the ‘placelessness’ of *Utopia* over its idealism, the two senses – imaginary *no place* and exemplary *good place* – remain inseparably bonded in our understanding of the term today.

When John Stuart Mill coined the word *dystopia* in 1868 it was those qualities antithetical to the concept of utopia as a ‘good place’ that he sought to name, while retaining the concept of ‘no place’. The *Oxford English Dictionary* records his invention in the following illustrative quotation:

It is, perhaps, too complimentary to call them Utopians, they ought rather to be called dys-topians, or caco-topians. What is commonly called Utopian is something too good to be practicable; but what they appear to favour is too bad to be practicable.

(*The Oxford English Dictionary*: earliest illustrative quotation for *dystopia*)

Here, Mill acknowledges the double meaning embodied in More’s invented term. His explanatory remarks include the notion of either state as chimerical: ‘too good *to be practicable*’ or ‘too bad *to be practicable*’ [my emphasis]. Yet this apparent antonym is not a complete inversion of the twofold signification of *utopia*. Mill’s neologism inverts only one of its two concurrent meanings – *bad* as the converse of *good* – while preserving intact the parallel meaning – *impracticable, imaginary*. So this early conception of dystopia maintains More’s original paradox – *good / no place* – by part-reversing it to *bad / no place*.

Mill’s coinage did not immediately gain currency, and, in 1952, when J. Max Patrick was reaching for a term to describe ‘*utopia* in the sense of *nowhere*; but [...] the opposite of *eutopia*, the ideal society’, he settled on the (re)formulation *dystopia*, ‘if it is permissible to coin a word’ (Negley & Patrick 1952: 298). Like Mill’s, Patrick’s ‘new’ word deliberately semi-inverts *utopia*, as he, too, maintains ‘the sense of *nowhere*’ as an intrinsic semantic component while focusing on the inversion of *eu-* ‘good’ to *dys-* ‘bad’. The retention of utopia’s defining sense of ‘nowhere’ in these neologisms figures dystopia as a genre relating to imaginary societies located in illusory settings: thought-experiments, far-removed from reality.

Although three of the dystopian genre’s defining texts – *We* (1924), *Brave New World* (1932), and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) – had been published during the years between Mill’s creation and Patrick’s re-creation of the term *dystopia*, none was classified as such at the time of its publication. Instead, critics and commentators persistently attempted to index dystopian texts in terms of their relationship to the utopian genre. The range of classificatory labels employed include: *utopian satire, anti-utopia, reverse utopia, negative utopia, inverted utopia, regressive utopia, cacoutopia,*

non-utopia, satiric utopia, nasty utopia, negative quasi-Utopia, and sour utopia (Aldridge 1984: 5; Booker 1994a: 22n; Frye 1973: 28; Sisk 1997: 5). What is immediately apparent is the inclusion of *utopia* as a delimiting concept embedded in the various constructions. The relationship between dystopia and utopia is framed as inter-textual, mediated always through a utopian ‘no place’. Furthermore, the terms of the inter-text relationship are strictly those of progenitor and progeny, with ‘positive’ utopia generating its ‘negative’ offspring. This relationship is characterised by Krishan Kumar as ‘a chain of challenge and response’ (1987: 128; 1991: 47), with utopia laying down the challenge to which dystopia provides the response. Anti-utopia (a term which Kumar considers synonymous with dystopia), he claims, is:

formed by utopia, and feeds parasitically on it. It depends for its survival on the persistence of utopia. Utopia is the original, anti-utopia the copy – only, as it were, always colored black. It is utopia that provides the positive content to which anti-utopia makes the negative response.

(Kumar 1987: 100)

According to this view, dystopia – or indeed any of the negative manifestations of utopia listed above – is generated only in response to utopian textual stimuli: dystopia is a reaction or response to extant utopian literature, or utopian political tracts, rather than a response to an existing actuality. By incorporating, rather than inverting, the sense of ‘no place’ inherent in our understanding of utopia, each of these terms perpetuates the sense that there is no connection with the author’s historical spacetime, and denies the possibility that dystopia can be an independent genre addressing concerns that fall outside a previously-conceived utopia.

One of the most widely used terms, *anti-utopia*, does adequately name this negative reaction to utopia; it describes the ways in which some texts criticise utopian ideals and utopian thought (Sargent 1975: 138). But dystopia is both more and less than anti-utopia. It is more in that it moves beyond criticism of the ideals portrayed in other (utopian) texts and encompasses an extra-textual, grounded world-view. It is less in that it may be defined more narrowly than anti-utopia. An anti-utopia could, conceivably, be equally utopian in its aims as the utopia to which it responds: criticism of the originating utopian text could take the shape of an alternative utopia which takes the essential tenets of the original and improves upon them – criticising the utopia of the source text, thus being anti-utopian. Consequently, any given dystopia *may* be simultaneously an anti-utopia, in that it may arguably be located in opposition to

utopian thought, but not all anti-utopias are necessarily dystopias in that they may not be directly concerned with any aspect of the author's empirically-observed society.⁹

Margaret Atwood, author of two of the dystopias considered in this study (*The Handmaid's Tale* and *Oryx and Crake*), has outlined the importance of the actual historical moment to the generative inspiration for her works. She frames this in terms of what she calls a *what if*: 'Every novel begins with a what if,' she states, 'and then sets forth its axioms. The what if of *Oryx and Crake* is simply, What if we continue down the road we're already on? How slippery is the slope?'¹⁰ To expand Atwood's comments out to dystopia in general, and more specifically, the distinction between anti-utopia and dystopia, it is illuminating to accept firstly, that, as the author says, every book 'begins with a what if'. An anti-utopia would look at another utopia, a utopian tract, blueprint, or ideal, and ask 'what if?', and begin to set forth its axioms, framing a better or worse society. If a better, more ideal world were to be outlined, a secondary utopia – now an anti-utopia – would ensue. If the world depicted were worse than that of the source text, the result would be a text that is traditionally anti-utopian. On the other hand, when asking 'what if?', if authors – like Atwood – looked, not at another utopia, but at their own historical spacetime, and set forth their axioms based on their conception of this reality, either a utopia or a dystopia is possible. If the author outlines an apparently better, more ideal world than that which s/he perceives, a utopia would result. Only if the world portrayed is worse than the author's historical reality would a dystopia be formed. The essential difference, then, between anti-utopia and dystopia is that the latter is firmly grounded in the author's material and cultural reality, while the former need not be. As David W. Sisk (1997) remarks:

Dystopian fiction is fundamentally concerned with the writer's present society and builds its horrific power on extrapolating current trends to what the writer considers their logically fearsome conclusions. Dystopian fiction borders on the hortatory polemic: anti-utopian fiction may (or may not) address the existing problems of its writer's world, but dystopia must always do so. For this reason, dystopian novels rarely attack specific utopian visions, lashing out instead at serious flaws within the writer's contemporary society.

(Sisk 1997: 7)

Dystopia, then, comments on 'place' in a way that anti-utopia need not: the connections with, observations about, and criticisms of, the author's historical spacetime are always manifestly retrievable from the dystopian work. Thus, while it retains utopia's sense of

‘nowhere’, both in that it is essentially fictional, and in that its futuristic settings are at a remove from base-reality, it is its distinct conjunctions *with* reality that define and impel it.

It is not until the latter part of the twentieth century that literary critics wholeheartedly accepted this notion of dystopian genesis being based on a concrete reality. Critics of the science fiction genre are foremost among those who locate narrative in relation to place (as well as to cultural, socio-political and historical aspects), and dystopian texts extensively overlap with this definitively ‘other-world’ fiction (see §1.3.3). Because science fiction has been routinely viewed as marginal to the conventional literary canon, critics in the field have striven particularly hard to demonstrate the significant ways in which science fictions are connected to, and comment on, the actual societies from which they originate. An attempt to locate explicitly the constructed settings of dystopias in relation to their authors’ contemporary reality comes from science-fiction critic Darko Suvin (1998), who defines dystopia as:

a community where sociopolitical institutions, norms, and relationships between its individuals are organised in a *significantly less perfect way* than in the author’s community.

(Suvin 1998: 170) [original emphasis]

Suvin’s definition makes clear the connection of the dystopian society to cultural and personal correlates situated in the author’s society. This actualises the place – ‘the author’s community’ – as the locus which provokes the dystopian response, which contrasts markedly with earlier ‘placeless’ definitions.

Lyman Tower Sargent (1994; Claeys & Sargent 1999) similarly recognises the importance of the author’s community as the inspiration for dystopian writing, but additionally, he invokes the reader’s ‘place’ as part of his definition. Like other commentators, he characterises utopia as ‘a nonexistent society described in detail’, but unlike them, he goes on to situate this society as ‘normally located in time and space’ (1999: 1). Dystopia, or *negative utopia*, he suggests, is:

A utopia [a nonexistent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space] that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as considerably worse than the society in which the reader lived.

(Sargent 1994: 9; Claeys & Sargent 1999: 1)

Sargent's definition emphasises dystopian 'place' as directly relative to the reader's world – in other words, based in an actualised, concrete reality that the author intended the reader to recognise as such. In doing this, his definition of dystopia achieves further inversion of the paired significations inherent in More's original conception, while retaining the central interpretation of the depicted community as fictional. More's *good place* is countered by a 'considerably worse' place, and his *no place* becomes relevant to a concrete location: 'the society in which the reader lived'. The dystopian society is not the author's society reproduced with verisimilitude, but a speculative, future-based version of it, connected to reality by way of extrapolative threads. It re-replaces the author's society in a futuristic possible world as it delineates possible outcomes of present trends in clearly recognisable trajectories; moreover, it emphasises this 'place' – the setting, society, or environment – as commensurate with the reader's 'place'.

Samuel R. Delany suggests that what is conventionally the 'background' in realist (or, as he terms it, *mundane*) fiction, is foregrounded in science fiction in such a way as to 'replace, displace, and reorganize the elements of the mundane world *into new worlds*' (1991: 525) [original emphasis]. The same is emphatically true of dystopia: its sense of 'place' prevails – even over its sense of plot or characterisation – to the extent that Stockwell (2000) terms these texts *architexts*; a term designed to capture and reflect the inherent focus on what he calls their 'conceptual architecture'. An architext, in Stockwell's terms, is 'any science fictional narrative which configures a fully worked-out, rich world'; furthermore, this world 'provides stylistic cues that encourage a mapping of the *whole* textual universe with the reader's reality' (2000: 204).

Acceptance of dystopia as representing a bleak, dislocated – but possible – reality had, by the end of the twentieth century, become the dominant mode of interpreting dystopia. Consequently, the antonymical inversion of utopia's 'no place' has been completed. Shifting the focus from ethereality to reality resulted in more confident assertions that dystopia comments directly upon – (re)produces, even – the society from which it emerges. The contemporary approach to dystopia, therefore, is to admit, encourage, and explore both its relevance to, and its referents in, the actualised 'place' – the concrete, real-world concerns of its author. This fundamental shift in the critical focus on dystopia – a move from reading dystopia as social imagining to dystopia as social reality – has allowed critics to evaluate frankly and comment on the real-world referents of the fictions. M. Keith Booker, for example, takes this aspect as

the thesis of his book, *The Dystopian Impulse in Modern Literature: Fiction as Social Criticism* (1994b) where he explains at the outset:

I wish to underscore the role of dystopian fiction as social criticism. In particular, I emphasize throughout this study that the treatment of imaginary societies in the best dystopian fiction is always highly relevant more or less directly to specific “realworld” societies and issues.

(Booker 1994b 18-19)

Similarly, Tom Moylan advances the relevance of real-world issues as the central interpretational principle of his Marxist-oriented readings of dystopian texts. Moylan’s ‘critical dystopia’, like Booker’s ‘dystopia as social criticism’, takes as axiomatic the representation of reality inherent in the dystopian ‘place’. Dystopia has, Moylan remarks, ‘produced challenging cognitive maps of the historical situation by way of imaginary societies that are even worse than those that lie outside their authors’ and readers’ doors’ (2000: xi). He continues:

Its very textual machinery invites the creation of alternative worlds in which the historical spacetime of the author can be re-presented in a way that foregrounds the articulation of its economic, political, and cultural dimensions. [D]ystopian critique can enable its writers and readers to find their way within – and sometimes against and beyond – the conditions that mask the very causes of the harsh realities in which they live.

(Moylan 2000: xii)

One obstacle remains in reading dystopia as directly relevant to a given historical place. This lies in the apparently subjective judgement of what constitutes ‘considerably worse’ or ‘less perfect’ than the author’s reality.¹¹ Suvin goes some way to resolving this problem in the continuation of his definition quoted above. Dystopia is ‘significantly less perfect [...] than the author’s community’ when it is ‘seen by a representative of a discontented social class or fraction, whose value-system defines “perfection”’ (1998: 170). There is little doubt that the dystopian world is viewed as flawed from the point of view of the focalising character (or characters) in any given dystopia, as their principal function is to highlight the injustice or inequality of the oppressive or totalitarian system under which they live (§1.3.2 considers the stylistic notion of focalisation as key to the reading of dystopian fiction). However, the temporal and spatial location of the reader in relation to the author is less straightforwardly predictable. For example, the ruling fundamentalist theocratic order of Gilead in *The Handmaid’s Tale* is positively dystopian for Offred and most Western

readers. Yet how dystopian is the setting from the point of view of a religious fundamentalist who may regard such a society as a utopian ideal?

Erica Gottlieb considers just this problem in *Dystopian Fiction East and West: Universe of Terror and Trial* (2001), which attempts to differentiate between the 'classic' Western dystopia and narratives relating stories of oppression and the miscarriage of justice produced from *within* totalitarian societies that are the setting for yet other dystopian works. To this end, Gottlieb considers a range of political novels written under various phases of totalitarian dictatorship in the USSR, Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia between 1920 and 1991, and notes that 'these works are still clearly expressive of the dystopian impulse, although they deal with the writer's own society "as is"' (2001: 5). She concludes that one of the key differences between the two groups of fictions is that the characteristic Western speculative futuristic time-frame disappears in Eastern European works, to be replaced by 'a nightmare world not as a phantasmagorical vision of the future but as an accurate reflection of the "worst of all possible worlds" experienced as a historical reality' (2001: 17).

In these works, 'place', in terms of the physical location of the author, is replicated – rather than speculatively constructed – as a dystopian 'bad place'. Although these works may be regarded as having a dystopian element when viewed from the standpoint of one whose 'value-system defines "perfection"' in Western terms, they cannot be properly said to be dystopias, since they lack the speculative, temporally dislocated aspect that defines the genre (which is explored further in §1.2.2). While dystopia has a specific connection to real-world concerns, that is not to say that it reflects the author's historical spacetime in an uncomplicated mimetic fashion; rather it takes aspects of the author's reality as starting points for extrapolative projections and possibilities, and draws them out to horrific proportions. Dystopia's representation of 'place', then, is one of its chief defining characteristics: to be categorised as dystopia, a text cannot locate its spatio-historical aspect in what *is*; instead it re-envisions salient aspects of what is, and transmutes them temporally into what *could be*.

An advantage of working from the assumption that there is a genre-specific connection to 'place' in dystopia is that it enables meaningful links to be made between actual socio-historical and cultural issues in the author's historical spacetime and the fictional treatment of the same. The understanding of dystopian 'place' that underlies this study mirrors exactly that expressed by Booker: dystopias are, he says, 'more or

less thinly veiled refigurations of a situation that already exists in reality' (1994a: 19). Throughout this study, I presuppose an explicit connection to real-world phenomena, and therefore assume that any fictional representation of language is based on – or extrapolated from – language as the author perceives it in his or her reality.

1.2.2 Dystopia in time: 'elsewhen [...] but here'

They spend their time mostly looking forward to the past.

John Osborne (1956) *Look Back in Anger*

Dystopia is a peculiarly recent phenomenon in literary terms: while anti-utopias have responded periodically to utopias ever since More's *Utopia* initiated the process, the dystopia proper – that is to say, the genre which derives its genesis and motivation from its author's historical spacetime rather than from utopia or utopian thought – is no older than the twentieth century. Concern with the development of the genre through time is evident across the humanities, through the interest of literary, political, historical, and philosophical scholars, and discussions of how and why this era should provide such rich resources for the dystopian imagination appear across similarly extensive disciplinary boundaries.¹² Such considerations are beyond the scope of this study, which, although firmly rooted in texts published in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, attends to temporal questions only insofar as they have the potential to impact upon language. This is, however, a significant potential, and one which requires some clarification, since the peculiarities of the way dystopian fiction is located in time are indicated by linguistic markers which, for the reader, locate the fiction in relation to complex temporal states.

Dystopian fiction, along with its utopian counterpart, is, in part, defined by its idiosyncratic temporal positioning. Commonly set in a remote future, these fictions are ostensibly discontinuous with the present, yet are continuous with it via extrapolative links. Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), for example, is set in the year 'A.F. 632', hence around six centuries into the future, given that 'A.F.' ('After Ford') is taken to refer to the US motor tycoon, Henry Ford (1863-1947). Ford's pioneering and revolutionary assembly-line mass production methods immediately precede – and accordingly inform – the historical spacetime in which Huxley wrote and published *Brave New World*, with the famous Model T being produced by these then-novel techniques from 1908 to 1927. Consequently, at the point of publication, an aspect of

the author's historical spacetime – here, the emergence of mass-production methods – coincides temporally with the contemporaneous reader's base-reality (accepting that a 1930s adult reader would have some cognisance of Henry Ford, his product, and his methods). So, at its simplest level – and in keeping with a New Historicist reading – the socio-historical temporal context of the text's production is inherently realised in its internal substance. In this respect, it does not differ from other genres whose influences and themes can be seen to be cotemporaneous with their conditions of composition. It does differ, however, in its presentation of these circumstances as though they occurred in the distant past, and have already become historical rather than contemporary. *Brave New World*, consonantly with other dystopias, begins *in medias res*, engaging its reader in this futuristic setting without ever explicitly acknowledging that it is the future. As Raffaella Baccolini notes, dystopias customarily 'open directly on the nightmarish society, with no need for time and/or space dislocation for the dystopian citizen' (1996: 343).¹³ In short, the author's present is relocated to the past when viewed from the narrative perspective of the future.

Brave New World is more specific than many dystopias in providing a fairly exact date for its temporal location. More characteristic of the genre is to suggest its projection into the future by way of an oblique reference to the past (which, of course, is some approximation of the author's present). David Karp's *One* exemplifies this implicative tactic quite effectively. Published in 1953, it opens, without any reference to temporal setting, in a busy dining hall peopled by timeless characters eating and conversing. However, as early as the third page, when the narrator, Professor Burden, lip-reads a fellow-diner's mention of the artist, Picasso, his musing on the name begins to suggest some temporal dislocation: 'Early and middle twentieth-century painter, Burden decided. But he knew little about him.' (p.7).¹⁴ The possibility of a historical standpoint lies in his reference to the 'middle twentieth-century' since it occurs in a text produced almost exactly mid-twentieth-century. This, together with the reference to Picasso, who in his lifetime (1881-1973) was consistently prominent throughout Europe, gestures toward the future, although somewhat indefinably. The early allusive temporal signalling, however, is confirmed just a few lines later when, having heard another character ask, 'Wouldn't you even care for one quick roll in the hay?', Burden 'didn't quite understand the meaning of the expression, which he knew was archaic English' (p.7). To position modern idiomatic English as 'archaic' is clearly to describe

a time so far into the future – if idioms such as this have fallen out of use and become incomprehensible – that the temporal distance must be measurable in centuries rather than decades. Dystopia propels its readers directly into this indefinite future, but simultaneously maintains contact with the author's present. In both *Brave New World* and *One*, it is a living human referent – Henry Ford in the former, and Pablo Picasso in the latter – that provides a point of reference from which extrapolative filaments trace a connective path from the present to the future; and the bi-directional nature of this path enables – encourages, even – the cognitive return journey, so that the present may be viewed from the perspective of a possible future.

As will be elaborated, dystopia's peculiar relationship with time contributes to its didactic impetus. It does so largely because, in addition to its characteristic setting in the future and its explicit conjunctions with the author's present, it is further defined as a genre by its incorporation and interrogation of the historical past. Writing in 1967, Mark R. Hillegas cites the influence of 'the governments of Hitler, Stalin, or Roosevelt' (1967: 4) on the genesis of the dystopian genre; by 1982, Sargent is able to add 'Korea, Vietnam, the Middle East, Northern Ireland, the Gulag Archipelago, the rising rate of violent crime, the Cold War, the apparent failure of the welfare state, ecological disaster, and corruption' to this list of what he calls the 'failure' of the twentieth century (1982: 577). At the end of the century, Moylan reflects on a 'hundred years of exploitation, repression, state violence, war, genocide, disease, famine, ecocide, depression, debt, and the steady depletion of humanity through the buying and selling of everyday life' (2000: xi). These 'terrors of the twentieth century' supply the historical material which motivates the dystopian nightmare: as Sisk affirms, '[t]wentieth-century history provides an embarrassment of riches with which dystopian writers construct fictions that are as plausible as they are bleak' (1997: 10). This focus on the mistakes and failures of the past is insinuated in every dystopian image of the future; crucially, for most authors of dystopias, the derelictions and disintegrations of the past provide salutary indications of the way the future *could* transpire. Terry Eagleton's (2005) articulation of this extraordinarily complex utopianist treatment of time captures some of its capacity to disorient: 'we must', he says, 'move backward into the future with our eyes fixed mournfully on that great heap of wreckage that is the past.'¹⁵

Dystopia, then, can be figured as a double-sided temporal mirror: held up to the present, it reflects the past in one plane and the future in the other. Yet, if it is a mirror

it is a peculiarly distorted one: its reflection of the past is translucent, allowing history to filter through and shape the future; while its reflection of the future bears an uncanny – and enlightening – resemblance to the present. This commingling of past, present, and future is central to any understanding of dystopia at a generic and thematic level. Moreover – and of particular importance to this study – the realisation and execution of this aspect of the dystopian impulse is communicated to the reader largely by reference to linguistic markers of each of these temporal states. Chapter three considers the impact of ‘future’ time in greater detail in its examination of speculative language, while chapter four looks at ‘past’ time as represented through reflective language. As will become clear through the case-studies considered in these two chapters, time and language are intimately connected in dystopian fictions.

1.3.1 Genre boundaries: dystopia’s ‘matrix of amalgamates’

To the extent that art approaches one or another of its boundaries, to that extent it gradually loses something of its essence and assimilates the essence of that which it borders upon.

Gary S. Morson (1981) *The Boundaries of Genre*¹⁶

The genre boundaries of dystopia are notoriously difficult to establish, most problematically where they collide and overlap with science fiction and utopia. As Edward Mozejko (2002) resignedly notes, ‘dystopian fiction does not lend itself to easy explanation’. He continues:

[I]ts difficulty arises from the complexity of its matrix which amalgamates, as it were, a variety of narrative strategies ranging from satire and social and politically committed prose to utopian literature, science fiction, fantasy, and the absurd. It is placed at the intersection of all these generic paradigms, and with its futurological mind-set remains on the fringe of science fiction and as part of speculative literature.

(Mozejko 2002)¹⁷

Dystopia’s ‘matrix of amalgamates’ extends outward to include fable, allegory, and, in the case of Orwell’s much alluded-to, re-interpreted, and adapted *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, even myth. Classification of the genre of dystopia has been examined at length, often in a quest to delineate absolute boundaries capable of unambiguous definition. Ultimately, however, most attempts are confounded by the complexity and heterogeneity of dystopia, and result in necessarily ambivalent categorisations, such as Gary Saul Morson’s ‘threshold’ or ‘boundary’ works (1981: x), Baccolini’s ‘genre-blurring’ (2000: 13-34), and Moylan’s ‘hybrid textuality’ (2000: 147). In practice, it seems many

works of dystopian fiction may feasibly belong to more than one of Mozejko's intersecting categories concurrently. Since neither narratology nor genre classifications are the primary focus here, I consider genre only as a means to define the term *dystopia* more precisely as it pertains to this study. In succeeding sections, I pay close attention to the two most blurred boundaries: firstly, that separating dystopia from utopia, where it would seem that contradictory and mutually exclusive genre-categorising characteristics must exist between such polarised concepts (§1.3.2); secondly, that – if any such boundary exists – between dystopia and science fiction (§1.3.3). Prior to that, however, I shall consider the above-mentioned 'intersections' with other genres, since a preliminary survey of these associations will clarify the understanding of dystopia that informs this work. Since the genres most closely allied to dystopia often incorporate treatments of language specific to, or characteristic of, their own genre – science fiction being a prime example (see §3.3.1) – it is important to the central aims of this study to differentiate, as far as is possible, between those other genres and what might be termed *dystopia proper*.

Of those categories mentioned above, the 'amalgamates' which are reciprocally inclusive in terms of dystopian genre classification include satire, allegory, and speculative fiction; indeed, Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Oryx and Crake*, each of which is treated in subsequent chapters, fit unequivocally into these categories. Satire, as a literary convention which exposes, ridicules, and derides the failings of people, institutions, and cultures, perfectly accommodates the dystopist's compulsion to depict societal shortcomings.¹⁸ Allegory, likewise, covers and discovers co-existent layers of meaning beneath the obviously visible in much the same way that dystopia conventionally embodies correspondences between its internal concerns and their external manifestations. Of particular significance to this study is the co-classification of dystopian fiction with speculative fiction. Dystopia, in its very nature, is a genre marked by its speculative impulse – whether speculative is conceived either as deeply contemplative or as conjecturally extrapolative – and this particular aspect of genre classification will substantially inform the discussions of language in subsequent chapters. Satire, allegory, and speculative fiction, then, are subsumed within the conception of dystopia that underpins this study; moreover, each admits of, and indicates, the essential connections to an underlying sense of 'place' as outlined above.

Fantasy, fable, myth, and the absurd, however, conspicuously lack the conjunctions with 'place' that are so crucial to the definition of dystopia. Each of these categories may include fictional works which feature a significant dystopian *element*, but their delimiting conditions of genre definition render them discrepant with the dystopian genre *per se*. Fantasy, for example, routinely admits within its boundaries the impossible, the magical, and the supernatural; dystopia seldom does. Philip Pullman's 'His Dark Materials' trilogy (*Northern Lights* (1995), *The Subtle Knife* (1997), and *The Amber Spyglass* (2000)), for example, is routinely read as dystopian children's literature. Yet, given that these narratives incorporate soul-eating Spectres, angels, and daemons which exist in worlds accessed through a 'patch' which enables the protagonist to step 'through the hole in the fabric of this world and into another' (*The Subtle Knife* (1997: 16)), they belong more definably to the genre of fantasy than they do to the genre of dystopia.¹⁹ That is not to say a significant dystopian element does not permeate these texts; clearly it does, but I would suggest that the otherworldly fantastic elements exceed and subsume the dystopian elements, thus locating these texts generically more within fantasy than dystopia. Nevertheless, I acknowledge the 'fuzzy' nature of the boundary between these two genres, and would suggest that to regard them as gradable, along a continuum from fantasy-dystopia to dystopia-fantasy might provide a workable solution. Pullman's trilogy, according to these criteria, might be usefully positioned as fantasy-dystopia, while the other end of the scale, where dystopia is predominant, would accommodate, for example, Doris Lessing's *The Memoirs of a Survivor* (1974). Lessing's text features a protagonist who, like Will in *The Subtle Knife*, enters a different time-space continuum by transcending physical barriers in the known world; unlike Will, however, Lessing's protagonist returns frequently to the novel's 'real world', and reflects on a reality that is identifiably consistent with our own. I elaborate on the conception of more and less 'reality-bound' in §1.3.3; meanwhile, I reiterate that the understanding of dystopia I adhere to throughout this study takes as axiomatic the existence of a recognisable, textually evinced 'place' in the form of a 'dis-placement of our reality' (Stockwell 2000: 211); hence only those fantasy narratives at the dystopia-fantasy limit of the spectrum are considered here.

Returning to fable, myth, and the absurd as 'intersections' with dystopia, I would indicate that, again, these genres, like fantasy, demonstrate an absence of a concretising 'real' location; in addition, each has a specific narrative strategy that

distances it from dystopia. Fable, like dystopia, didactically conveys a lesson; but unlike dystopia, it is incumbent on the fabular tale to conclude with a moral, precept, or aphorism. Dystopia, characteristically, ends without resolution, leaving an open play of possibilities, and thus encouraging the reader to contemplate its contingency. L.P. Hartley's *Facial Justice* (1960), often considered dystopian, counters this principle – its protagonist, Jael 97 conquers, eradicates, and supplants the totalitarian 'Dictator' – and it is this plot conclusion which ultimately brings into question the novel's dystopian classification; indeed, in his introduction to the 1987 Oxford Classics edition, Peter Quennell amends his categorisation of the text from 'tale' to 'fable' (Quennell 1987: 5). Similarly, Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945), subtitled *A Fairy Story*, exhibits a morally didactic and decisive ending, thus rendering it more fable than dystopia; yet despite this, its dystopian elements cannot be denied. As with the category of fantasy, above, this assimilation of non-dystopian characteristics does not preclude a text from including significant elements of dystopia; instead, it suggests an alternative primary genre categorisation, with dystopia as an ancillary – rather than principal – genre designation.

Myth, as a generic order, has interesting intersections with dystopia: each serves as a means of accounting for the imperfections of humanity; each expresses fundamental truths about existence; each invites a new or metaphorical understanding of culture and society. Additionally, dystopia's peculiar relationship to time, encompassing past, present, and future, is perhaps most closely reflected in the 'universal' qualities of myth. These correspondences notwithstanding, there are consequential differences between the two genres that make myth incompatible with the definition of dystopia used here. Once again, the main obstacle is discovered in dystopia's categorical insistence on establishing its narrative in relation to a tangible 'place'. Throughout this study, the texts discussed are demonstrably located in, or around, twentieth-century Western societies; myth, however, requires no such historical anchorage; although it often purports to take place in the past, myth also can have a timeless and placeless quality, evincing a classic and multiform mode of existence. A given dystopia does, however, if subjected to the re-tellings, adaptations, and varying interpretations that distinguish myth, have the potential to develop into something approaching the mythical: aspects of Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, arguably, have already attained mythical status. The novel's depiction of 'doublethink', for example, has transformed into the present-day 'doublespeak'; 'Big Brother' and 'Room 101' have

been adapted to name television programmes; and the adjective *Orwellian* connotes any authoritarian intrusion into privacy and liberty. Since both forms – dystopia and myth – centrally concern extreme or undesirable aspects of humanity, these convergences are probably quite unremarkable; indeed, to read dystopia as the contemporary equivalent of myth would be a productive interpretive convention.²⁰ However, the focus on dystopia's dependence on a particularised 'place' throughout this study precludes such a reading.

To make a distinction between dystopia and the absurd also necessitates consideration of dystopia's location in relation to some kind of reality. Moreover, it requires an understanding of the absurd as located in incomprehensible unreality. Additionally, the two genres diverge through their contrary presentation of purpose: dystopia manifests the purposeful, while the absurd exposes the purposeless.²¹ Franz Kafka's *The Trial* (1925) exemplifies both the unreality and the purposelessness of the absurd, even while revealing recurrent dystopian elements. Josef K's arrest, trial, and punishment in *The Trial* are markedly congruent with the circumstances of Winston Smith's corresponding experiences in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, which suggests that the two texts share a dystopian motivation. Yet, while the effect of totalitarian authority is seen equally in both texts, the rationale behind this authority is entirely absent from Kafka's work; there is never, at any point, any construction of a higher purpose impelling Josef K's trial. Also entirely absent from *The Trial* is any discernible sense of geographical or temporal location: the narrative pointedly declines to situate itself beyond vague and indeterminate references such as 'one morning', 'the street', and 'the courtroom'. As with fantasy, fable, and myth, the absurd discloses the conventions of its dominant genre in such a way as to subordinate its dystopian elements. While the existence of such dystopian elements encourages 'intersections' of these disparate genres with dystopia, they deflect – or at least discourage – such texts' inclusion in any postulated unalloyed dystopian 'canon'.

The 'intersections' that Mozejko observes of dystopia with science fiction and utopian literature are somewhat more intricate, and are examined in more detail in §1.3.2 and §1.3.3 respectively. His remaining category – 'social and politically committed prose' – is one where some clarification would help specify the range of this study. Firstly, I note that, in its very temperament, *all* dystopian literature is inevitably socially and politically committed. But since there exist many other forms of socially

and politically committed prose, I realise that this area is potentially burdened with associations I would wish to avoid here. By way of an example, Steven Carter's (2000) *A Do-It-Yourself Dystopia: The Americanization of Big Brother* typifies socially and politically committed prose in a form which sets it beyond the scope of this study. This text, which considers, among other issues, the economic and social ramifications of the loss of individual freedoms in America today, aims, with reference to Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 'to search for hidden oligarchies of the American self' (2000: back cover). While it is clearly socially and politically committed in its subject material, it is fundamentally non-fictional commentary mediated through a fictional dystopian focus: its constituent essays examine contemporary American society not as a literary construct, but as it exists as an actuality. Although I have already stressed the importance of dystopia's relationship to 'place', crucially, it is the dis-location, or alienation of a recognisable 'place' which contributes so profoundly to identification of the genre; any literal, accurate presentation of place as a present social reality lacks the imaginative dis-placement that characterises dystopia.

The genre's amalgamation with allegory, to which I refer above, perhaps best elucidates the distinction between the dystopian treatment of socio-political issues and their realisation in other literary or non-literary forms. That the dystopian alternative social realities are temporally and spatially dislocated imaginary constructs – albeit intimately attuned to actual societies, events and trends in their authors' historical spacetime – is essentially allegorical, and encourages the reader's comprehension, assimilation, and subsequent transposition of correspondences and parallels between the textual and the material worlds.²² This allegorical impetus bolsters dystopian fictions' sustained relevance and enables interpretations of the reader's base-reality mediated through the allegory. As Moylan notes, dystopian fiction invokes enlightening connections 'between an individual reader's limited perspective, the estranged re-vision of the alternative world on the pages of a given text, and the actually existing society' (2000: xvii). Andrew Stone (2003) provides just such a topical – and allegorical – interpretation of Orwell's dystopia, and considers a range of what he suggests are 'features of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* which should give the modern reader pause for thought'. He continues:

The use of torture in a legal vacuum should remind us of the plight of 'enemy combatants' held indefinitely and in legal limbo by the US at Guantanamo and Bagram, as well as the 'terrorist suspects' denied due

process in Britain [...]. This is a richly detailed vision of a society we should all want to avoid.

(Stone 2003)²³

In Stone's analysis, the allegory inscribed in Orwell's delineation of Winston Smith's treatment in 'Room 101' commutes, over half a century later, into a critique of contemporary 'torture in a legal vacuum' at Guantánamo and Bagram, and silently appeals to the web of associative connotations encrypted in that allegory. It is precisely what Moylan terms the 'estranged re-vision' (2000: xvii) of socio-political issues in dystopian fiction which creates its allegorical possibilities; non-fictional accounts are neither 'estranged', nor are they 're-visions'. Victoria Brittain and Gillian Slovo's (2004) dramatisation *Guantanamo: 'Honor Bound to Defend Freedom'*, for example, transcribes interviews with detainees held at Guantánamo Bay (and their families) and reproduces letters, political debate, and legal opinion. Like those narratives emerging from within Eastern bloc societies discussed in *Dystopian Fiction East and West: Universe of Terror and Trial* (2001), *Guantanamo* depicts torture and oppression under a totalitarian regime as 'a nightmare world [...] experienced as a historical reality' (Gottlieb 2001: 17), but, unlike those narratives, *Guantanamo* is not fiction: it is testimony. In consequence of its verbatim reportage, it is essentially literal rather than metaphorical, and thus lacks the necessary figurative, allegorical, dystopia-defining distance. Political and social accounts which focus on factual, extant circumstances are non-fictional; dystopia is always fictional.²⁴ Dystopia, like utopia, 'distinguishes itself', as Kumar confirms, 'from other forms of [...] society, and from other forms of social and political theory, by being in the first place a piece of fiction' (1991: 20). The conception of dystopia in this thesis solely pertains to fictional representations; I refer to dystopia here only insofar as it is understood to indicate the literary genre.

The foregoing assessment of some of dystopia's complex 'matrix of amalgamates' at their intersections with the other genres suggests a 'cline of dystopian-ness', or a 'relative dystopianity', which admits those texts revealing dystopian *elements* toward its lower reaches, but reserves its upper extent for those texts which cannot readily be appropriated by other genres. Throughout this study I focus primarily on those texts at the most unequivocally dystopian extreme of the scale; however I occasionally include discussion and analysis of some of those texts whose predominant genre classification lies elsewhere. The often-significant dystopian elements contained

in such texts render them suitable examples for an examination of their presentation of language, even if only as a means of comparison with more manifestly dystopian texts.

1.3.2 Utopian boundaries: 'a matter of point of view'

Like all walls it was ambiguous, two-faced. What was inside it and what was outside it depended upon which side of it you were on.

Ursula K. le Guin (1974) *The Dispossessed*

Before examining the boundary between dystopia and utopia, it is necessary to point out that I follow Sargent (1999) in accepting all dystopias and all utopias as variants of his superordinate classification *utopianism*, or 'social dreaming' (Sargent 1999: 1).²⁵ Within utopianism, Sargent includes *utopia*, *eutopia*, *dystopia*, *utopian satire*, *anti-utopia*, and *critical utopia* (Claeys & Sargent 1999: 1-2), and uses the superordinate term to indicate 'the imaginative projection, positive or negative, of a society that is substantially different from the one in which the author lives', the 'primary characteristic' of which is 'its nonexistence combined with a *topos* – a location in time and space', which must be 'recognizably good or bad to the intended reader' (1999: 1).²⁶ While accepting *utopianism* as a formal 'umbrella-genre', I focus here exclusively on those texts which, in Sargent's terms would be 'negative' and 'recognizably bad to the intended reader': that is to say, dystopias. However, even within this narrowed-down field, the definition – and the distinction – between dystopia itself and its fellow sub-genres of utopianism is somewhat problematic; not least insofar as its situation and interpretation remains dependent on what Sargent terms the 'intended reader'.

The boundary between utopia and dystopia is indistinct, mutable, or contingent, in the view of those critics who consider the differentiation dependent on the relative critical positioning of the 'intended reader'. In his 1965 essay, 'Varieties of Literary Utopias', Northrop Frye expressed the belief that 'what is a serious utopia to its author, and to many of its readers, could be read as a satire by a reader whose emotional attitudes were different' (1973 [1965]: 29).²⁷ Similar views are often seen: Kumar, for example, suggests that 'anti-utopian satire can be read as utopia by those so minded' (1987: 105); while Lucy Sargisson notes not only that 'one man's dream may be another's nightmare', but also that 'feminists have pointed out that men's utopias are often women's dystopias'.²⁸ Anna Vaninskaya considers this confusion axiomatic: 'that

one person's utopia can act as another's dystopia', she notes, 'is a fundamental paradox of utopian thought' (2003: 83).

These comments suggest that the reader's subjective judgement – his or her beliefs, opinions, and values – constitute the determining factor in distinguishing dystopia from utopia generically. John Carey would seem to corroborate this 'viewpoint' approach when he insists that 'dystopia is merely a utopia from another point of view' (1999: xii). Robert M. Philmus expresses much the same idea: 'the difference between utopia and dystopia', he summarily states, 'finally comes down to a matter of point of view' (quoted in Moylan 2000: 312n). If it is the constitution, governance, or ideological basis of the dystopian society itself that is being judged, it seems reasonable to assume that individual readers may come to different interpretations of whether this is a good (utopian) or bad (dystopian) system in principled accordance with their personal beliefs, opinions, or values. Carey favours this rationalisation, explaining that 'Orwell's Big Brother or the directors of Huxley's *Brave New World* [...] are utopians in their own eyes' (1999: xii).²⁹ Thus, in Carey's purview, a reader with a predisposition for insensate hedonism might perceive the society of Huxley's *Brave New World* as conceptually better than the society in which that reader lives, and therefore view it as utopian, despite its more prevalent reception as dystopian. Certainly, the opposite can be true: in spite of B. F. Skinner's assertions that his *Walden Two* (1948) was conceived and written as a utopia, it is 'received by most readers as decidedly dystopian or even anti-utopian' (Moylan 2000: 73). Ultimately, these critical positions allow that different readers will read a text differently, which may well be true; however, for the purposes of this study, I shall focus on the stylistics-based notion of 'point of view' as a functional basis upon which to build a generic distinction that allows for – and, to an extent, accounts for – this readerly disparity.

Katie Wales defines *point of view* (in the context of its stylistic function in narrative fiction) as a concept which:

entails not only the presence of a conceptualising character or focalizer, but also a particular way of conceptualising a world-view or ideology, whether the focalizer is a character or an implied author.

(Wales 2001: 307)

The 'conceptualising character', or *focaliser* is central to the understanding of what Paul Simpson (1993) calls 'a projection of positions and perspectives' and 'a way of

communicating attitudes and assumptions' (1993: 2).³⁰ It is also, I claim here, central to the understanding of whether a text is primarily utopian or primarily dystopian. The narrative 'mood', or 'psychological point of view' (Simpson 1993: 33), is always communicated through a character (or characters) representing the focalisation of the narrative. In dystopian fiction, focalisation is invariably through a character (or characters) positioned peripherally to the controlling structures, but always close enough to be directly affected by the actions of those in control. Winston Smith, the protagonist of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, for example, occupies this mid-level estranged-yet-entangled situation: connected sufficiently to the Party to be to some extent aware of its machinations, yet externalised enough to be disaffected. The details of the fictive world that the reader of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* must assimilate are presented exclusively through Winston as the focalising character. As Roger Fowler (1995) has established, the whole text 'is communicated through the sensations and thoughts of Winston Smith, without any authorial commentary [...]. The reader is told things that s/he did not know, but nothing that Winston could not have known' (1995: 186-7). Given that focalisation, as Wales notes, inevitably entails an ideological perspective, the reader of a utopia or dystopia is drawn to an interpretation of the relative merits of the society (that is to say, its degree of dys- or u-topianism) by way of a narrative mediated through the ideological standpoint of this (usually malcontent) part-informed observer.³¹

If, then, the generic distinction between utopia and dystopia is based on readers' evaluation of the society *as mediated through the ideological stance of the focalising character(s)*, rather than being based on an interpretation of the ideological stance of the societal infrastructure, it seems likely that there might be a higher incidence of agreement between readers as to whether a given text is utopian or dystopian. This hypothesis is the subject of an undeveloped reader-response pilot study I conducted in May 2003 with student-participants who had read Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (see Appendix I).³² These participants were asked to consider eight characters in turn from each novel, and rank on a 1-5 scale how dystopian or utopian they (as readers) judged the society to be *when viewed from the perspective of each character*. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*'s focaliser, Winston Smith, was allotted values of 1 or 2 (1 = completely dystopian, 2 = mostly dystopian) by all respondents, as was *The Handmaid's Tale*'s first-person narrator and focaliser, Offred. These results quite clearly demonstrate that readers are unified in their reception of these texts as

dystopian when viewed from the focaliser's perspective. However, when the participants responded to the same question in relation to characters who were identifiably part of the controlling powers, responses varied across the scale. Two characters from *Nineteen Eighty-Four* – Big Brother and O'Brien – evoked strong responses at both extremes of the continuum, and the same is true of Aunt Lydia and the Commander from *The Handmaid's Tale*. In most cases, readers' opinions are polarised at 1 (completely dystopian) and 5 (completely utopian), but all rankings from 1-5 were given to these representatives of the oppressive state.

From these results, it would appear that the more closely a character is allied to the political structures of control, the more divergent the readers' judgement of where that character should be placed on the utopia – dystopia continuum. This suggests that it is the readers' appraisal of the overarching political structures that corresponds with the mutability and contingency identified by the above-mentioned commentators: while readers are unanimous in their response to the relative positioning of the focalising character, such difference of opinion as occurs is focused on the representatives of the controlling state apparatus. I would further suggest that those readers who accord a ranking at the 'completely dystopian' extent of the spectrum here are likely to regard the text as unequivocally dystopian (especially given that this would be together with a 'completely or mostly dystopian' reading of the focalising character's position). However, a ranking at the 'completely utopian' end of the scale for the controlling power would explain much of the critical indeterminacy. In those cases where a reader allots a 'completely or mostly dystopian' ranking to the focalising character, but also evaluates the representatives of the governing body as 'completely or mostly utopian', there is potential for some generic confusion.

The utopia-dystopia distinction, it would appear, relies less on the critical positioning of the reader, and more on the critical positioning of the focalising character: thus, his or her point of view. This remains true of a text with multiple focalisation. *Brave New World*, as an example, features several focalisers, including Bernard Marx, Lenina Crowne, and John the Savage. While variant ideological perspectives are revealed as a result of this shifting focalisation, all these characters are in some way disadvantaged by the command of the World Controllers, and all occupy a similar peripheral position in relation to the central governing structure. Despite the multiplicity of focalisation, the essential dystopia-defining pattern remains constant

across these focalisers: they all experience some constraint of freedom, individuality, or expression which is attributable to the system under which they live, and which they communicate – always negatively – via their focalising position, to the reader.

This focaliser-centred approach may also help to disambiguate the reception of texts such as *Walden Two*, which, in authorial intention is entirely utopian, but in reception, more often dystopian. *Walden Two* is a planned community governed by the principles of behaviourism. The novel's focalising character, Professor Burris, is one of a party visiting the commune, and, from the outset, Burris adopts a sceptical attitude toward the behaviourist ethos described by Frazier, the community's architect and spokesperson. Burris's colleague and fellow visitor, Castle, is more than sceptical: he is appalled by the psychological manipulation and behavioural conditioning that characterises *Walden Two*, and believes Frazier is guilty of 'one of the most diabolical machinations in the history of mankind' (*Walden Two*, p. 252). Because the focalising character – Burris – takes the role of problematiser himself, pointing out inadequacies in the system, and because the more aggressive problematising of Castle is mediated through Burris' focalisation, the inherent world-view and ideology of these characters inevitably colours the readers' perception of the community. Burris' and Castle's negative view of *Walden Two* dominates the narrative; it is only towards the end of the final chapter that Burris unexpectedly capitulates, and returns to live at the commune (Castle, however, remains unconvinced). Until that point of the narrative is reached, the reader has received only the negative perspective of his focalisation, which must contribute to the widespread reception of this intended utopia as dystopian.

As Philmus states above, the distinction between utopia and dystopia 'finally comes down to a matter of point of view'. Having based the utopia-dystopia distinction I use in this study on a consideration of the point of view of the readers taking part in the 2003 pilot study, I use the perspective – and point of view – of the focalising character(s) as a guiding principle in the selection of texts here. Where the focalising character is in some definable way disadvantaged by the society in which he or she is located – and, importantly, sees him- or herself as disadvantaged – I consider the text dystopian rather than utopian. Nevertheless, these selection criteria are not used entirely without qualification: I realise that this approach is not impermeable. The possibility still remains for a reader to evaluate the ideological doctrine of the fictional society as positive or ideal, and hence deem the text utopian, not least because, as Morson argues,

'genre does not belong to texts alone, but to the interaction between texts and a classifier' (1981: viii) [original emphasis].

1.3.3 Science Fiction Frontiers

[T]he same word, or the same concept in most cases, means very different things when used by differently situated persons.

Karl Mannheim (1936) *Ideology and Utopia*

Any attempt to delineate dystopia generically must acknowledge its evident intersections with science fiction; any attempt to define the nature, extent, and position of boundaries between the two forms, however, must also acknowledge the inherent indeterminacy, inconstancy, and contradictions that characterise such an undertaking. To be able to speak of 'science fiction' and 'dystopia' as discrete forms suggests the presence of discernible boundaries, but my approach here is to accept such boundaries as exist as dynamic and provisional. This is, in no small part, because science fiction as a genre continues to engage in an endeavour to define itself, and, as John Clute and Peter Nicholls report, 'no one has yet emerged with a prescription sufficiently inclusive to satisfy all or even most readers' (1999: 313). Darko Suvin has been foremost among those who have striven to define the limits of science fiction: since the early seventies, Suvin has persistently pursued incontrovertible generic distinctions. In his (1979) *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre*, Suvin outlines the most influential and enduring definition of science fiction, which he states thus:

[A] literary genre whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition, and whose main formal device is an imaginative framework alternative to the author's empirical environment .

(Suvin 1979: 7-8)

In positing science fiction as the literature of 'cognitive estrangement' (1979: 4), Suvin amply defines the understanding of science fiction which informs this study; I shall return to this aspect in chapter two, where I consider its implications in more detail. More pressing here, however, is the question of distinguishing dystopia – as an element of utopianism – from the science fiction field *in toto*. Suvin's delineation above would clearly encompass utopianism; similarly, his more nuanced definition of the formal properties of science fiction makes no distinction between the two:

[Science fiction] should be defined as a fictional tale determined by the hegemonic literary device of a *locus* and/or *dramatis personae* that (1) are *radically or at least significantly different from the empirical times, places, and characters* of “mimetic” or “naturalist” fiction, but (2) are nonetheless--to the extent that [science fiction] differs from other “fantastic” genres, that is, ensembles of fictional tales without empirical validation--simultaneously perceived as *not impossible* within the cognitive (cosmological and anthropological) norms of the author’s epoch.

(Suvin 1979: viii) [original emphasis]

Insofar as utopia and dystopia consistently illustrate a ‘fictional tale’ based on ‘a locus [...] significantly different from the empirical times [...] nonetheless [...] not impossible within the cognitive [...] norms of the author’s epoch’, this definition would appear to subsume utopianism entirely. Later in the same work, Suvin’s attempt to clarify the relationship results in more, rather than less, entanglement, since he states that science fiction is ‘collaterally descended from utopia [...] if not a daughter, yet a niece of utopia’ (1979: 61), which seems to position science fiction as a sub-genre of utopianism; yet, he also believes that the growth of science fiction has resulted in its ‘englobing of utopia’ (1979: 61). Only retrospectively, he argues, can utopia be positioned as the ‘*sociopolitical subgenre of science fiction*’ (1979: 61) [original emphasis]. This apparent confusion typifies science fiction’s attempts to locate its own boundaries: defined too narrowly, they exclude works which would justify inclusion; yet defined too broadly, they include works which belong, generically, elsewhere.³³

Veronica Hollinger questions what she sees as a ‘lack of consensus’ in the field, asking: ‘is sf a narrative genre? a field of discourse? a mode of thinking? a body of literary texts? [...] Where exactly are its borders (does it have borders)?’ (1999: 238). Patrick Parrinder responds to Hollinger, saying:

In fact, the lack of consensus within SF studies (and also utopian studies) is not a sign of scholarly anarchy, still less of a malfunction within these disciplines. Rather, it reflects the presence of different critical communities with their own distinctive values, interests and priorities.

(Parrinder 2000: 2)

While agreeing with Parrinder’s views here – and anticipating my own limiting of the field to a small corner of science fiction – I remain aware of Ruth Levitas’ astute remark that ‘there is a temptation to try to delimit the field [of utopia] to one’s own area of interest and set up boundaries which exclude large areas of material as not properly utopian’ (1990: 4). Nevertheless, given the changeable outline of science fiction, the

potential immensity of its field, and the disputable nature of its many conjunctions and disjunctions across and between its boundaries and borders with utopia and dystopia, some limiting of the scope is indicated for the purposes of this study.

Returning briefly to Hollinger's questions of consensus: in the same essay she proceeds by asking 'When, if ever, should we call it science fiction, speculative fiction, sf?' (1999: 238). This, as with many other questions, occupies commentators, critics, and writers of science fiction; again, it would seem to be an area where unanimity is absent. My intention here is to take advantage of the term *speculative fiction*, since it ties that section of the genre I examine to a more reality-bound model. Furthermore, this term parallels, and supports many of the linguistic concerns I treat here. From within the science fiction domain Judith Merrill formulates a detailed definition of what constitutes speculative fiction; one which effectually enables and encourages the intersections and imbrications of dystopia with speculative fiction:

Speculative fiction: stories whose objective is to explore, to discover, to *learn*, by means of projection, extrapolation, analogue, hypothesis-and-paper-experimentation, something about the nature of the universe, of man, or 'reality' [...]. I use the term 'speculative fiction' here specifically to describe the mode which makes use of the traditional 'scientific method' (observation, hypothesis, experiment) to examine some postulated approximation of reality, by introducing a given set of changes – imaginary or inventive – into the common background of 'known facts'.

(Merrill, reproduced in Clute & Nicholls 1999: 312)

Merrill's definition of speculative fiction embraces several consonances with the interpretation of dystopia that underpins this study, while de-prioritising – or at least, allowing the side-stepping of – the more outlandish, unearthly or extra-terrestrial excesses typically found in the outer, most otherworldly, reaches of science fiction. Her identification of 'projection' and 'extrapolation' as being central to the ways in which readers might 'explore', 'discover', and 'learn' – in other words, gain a new perspective on – 'the nature of the universe' and "reality", is particularly relevant here, while her opinion that this is facilitated by way of an examination of 'some postulated approximation of reality' goes right to the very heart of the dystopian proposition. In addition, as Clute and Nicholls point out, Merrill's definition shifts the emphasis somewhat from 'science itself to the idea of extrapolation', which enables a wider view of the genre to 'depict social change without necessarily making much fuss over scientific development' (1999: 312).

In arriving at the view of speculative fiction – albeit not entirely indivisibly from science fiction – as that which bounds and encloses dystopia, I have been influenced by the views of Margaret Atwood, whose (ongoing) dialogue and debate with the science fiction community has largely clarified my own approach to the issue. Since Atwood is the author of two of the primary texts considered in later chapters: *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Oryx and Crake*, and since these texts, as dystopias, occupy exactly that professedly indeterminate generic area around and between science fiction and speculative fiction, I shall trace the author's vigorous justification of her decision to classify her works as speculative fiction – in preference to science fiction – as a means to demonstrate the more reality-bound nature of the former.

In 1987, Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* was presented with the Arthur C. Clarke Award for 'Best Science Fiction Novel of the Year', and was shortlisted for the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America's 'Nebula Award'. Despite this acknowledgement from within science fiction, Atwood elected to remain outside the classification; when asked (of *The Handmaid's Tale*), 'Is it science fiction?', she responded resolutely:

No, it certainly isn't science fiction. Science fiction is filled with Martians and space travel to other planets, and things like that. That isn't this book at all. *The Handmaid's Tale* is speculative fiction in the genre of *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was written not as science fiction but as an extrapolation of life in 1948. So, too, *The Handmaid's Tale* is a slight twist on the society we have now.³⁴

With these remarks Atwood begins to make the distinction upon which she later elaborates: speculative fiction, in her view is reality-bound, connected extrapolatively to the historical spacetime of the author (here, both Orwell's 'life in 1948' and her own contemporary 'society we have now'); whereas science fiction, encompassing alien life-forms and space travel beyond current ability, is less constrained by terrestrial considerations. On the publication of *Oryx and Crake* in 2003, Atwood reiterated this conviction, observing '*Oryx and Crake* is a speculative fiction, not a science fiction proper. It contains no intergalactic space travel, no teleportation, no Martians': once again, she emphasises the reality-bound nature of the work, noting 'it invents nothing we haven't already invented or started to invent'.³⁵ Clearly, the extrapolative possibilities are a genre-defining aspect for Atwood; that the fictive events portrayed *could* potentially occur in the future distinguishes speculative fiction from science

fiction. As she confirms, 'science fiction has monsters and spaceships; speculative fiction could actually happen'.³⁶

Atwood insists on making a distinction between speculative fiction and 'science fiction proper'. The latter, she claims, 'denotes books with things in them we can't yet do or begin to do, talking beings we can never meet, and places we can't go' (2004: 513). Elsewhere, she offers 'things [...] such as going through a wormhole in space to another universe'³⁷ as an example of the kind of less reality-bound possibilities which she sees as constituent of the genre she would term 'science fiction proper'. In contrast, Atwood maintains, speculative fiction 'employs the means already more or less to hand and takes place on Planet Earth' (2004: 513). She cites instantiations: 'such as DNA identification and credit cards'³⁸ to exemplify the positively reality-bound nature of these Earth-bound fictions.³⁹

In Atwood's view, speculative fiction 'can speak of what is past and passing, but especially of what's to come' (2004: 515). Thus, speculative fiction when realised as utopia or dystopia, she continues, can 'explore proposed changes in social organisation in graphic ways, by showing what they might be like for those living under them' (*ibid*). David Ketterer responds to Atwood's rejection of science fiction in this context, saying:

Much science fiction is indeed best read, like much satire, as an estranged or distorted version of the world we know. Many of the aliens of science fiction *are* best read as disguised representations of women or of oppressed races and classes. In this way stories about extra-terrestrials can be mundanely recuperated for Atwood's sense of speculative fiction.

(Ketterer 2005: 247)

While acknowledging that less reality-bound science fiction may also have a representational quality, I would remain with Atwood's distinctions – especially in terms of things 'already more or less to hand' and located 'on Planet Earth' – as being a workable distinction between science fiction and speculative fiction, at least insofar as it pertains to dystopian fiction.⁴⁰ While according with Atwood's interpretation of the more reality-bound nature of speculative fiction in relation to science fiction, I differ from her on the relative positioning of the two. Atwood sees science fiction as a sub-genre of speculative fiction, proposing the latter as the 'tree, for which science fiction [and others] are the branches' (2004: 513). Conversely, I prefer to position science fiction as the 'parent' genre, with speculative fiction an issue from that source. Once again, this relates to more and less reality-bound concerns: science fiction, as a super-

genre, may include otherworldly alien life forms; speculative fiction, as I discuss it above, is confined to that which relates to this planet. Further – and in the tradition of nesting Russian dolls – I locate dystopia as a singular scion of speculative fiction: that particularised realisation which concerns human-to-human interaction rather than any configuration of human-alien contact.

That is not to say that dystopia does not exist outside these parameters: Suzette Haden Elgin's *Native Tongue* trilogy, for example, features human-alien contact, and Ursula K. le Guin's *The Dispossessed* includes inter-galactic space travel; that these texts merit consideration of their significant dystopian elements is demonstrable by any genre-defining criteria. However, given that the primary concern of this thesis is language – more specifically, English language – I confine my primary analyses to those dystopian texts which are explicitly situated in terrestrial English-speaking locations, and imply communication between human subjects. While I refer on occasion to less reality-bound texts – for instance, Elgin's and le Guin's cited above – their role is augmentative rather than elemental to the purpose in this work. As will become clear in the discussion of Whorfianism that follows in chapter two, the notion of a 'native' or 'habitual' natural language is central to the direction of this study, and the subsequent textual analyses assume an English-speaking readership.

1.4 Dystopia, didacticism, and the reader

I'm not trying to *predict* the future. I'm just doing my best to *prevent* it.

Ray Bradbury (1979) *Beyond 1984*

Science fiction, according to Joanna Russ, is a particularly didactic genre (1975: 113). Dystopia, too, as a related genre, concerns itself overtly with the communication of an informative and instructive message. In addition to providing a didactic focus on the social and the historical, these fictions repeatedly foreground the political and the cultural in an explicit and didactic manner. While accepting that all literature could be construed as didactic to some extent, I argue here for dystopia as an exceptionally didactic genre: a body of literature that could be categorised by its attention to communicating an edifying message to its readership.⁴¹ In this respect, Sisk's opinion, that '[d]ystopian didacticism borders on the hortatory polemic' (1997: 7), is a view I share; these narratives unapologetically promulgate diverse warnings – cautions against rash and reckless continuance of present trends in numerous areas – yet have essentially

one primal objective: to prevent their envisioned future from becoming a reality. Dystopia's 'political effect', Frederik Pohl notes, 'is to show how inevitably destructive one possible pathway into the future might be' (1997: 9). The didactic effect toward which a dystopian writer strives is to prevent this 'possible pathway' to the future from being realised: as Sisk explains: '[i]f a writer warns of a reality that may not necessarily exist, but which, the author fears, could come about if no action is taken, this fulfills the genre's didactic mission' (1997: 162).

For Kumar, dystopia's pedagogical impulse undermines its artistic or aesthetic novelistic qualities, since its 'didactic purpose overwhelms any literary aspiration' (1987: 25). To some extent, the awkwardness of reconciling didactic function within the dystopian form does compromise the literary potency of these works, even while it strengthens their cogency; plot and characterisation are somewhat subordinated to the demands of the 'message'.⁴² There has 'long been a critical tendency to see utopian and dystopian fiction as sacrificing artistic merit in the interest of content', Booker concedes (1994b: 173), but he points out also that critical dismissal of dystopian fiction can 'be attributed partially to a bias against literary works that are socially and politically engaged, from an apparent belief that such engagement somehow contaminates the works and deprives them of their pristine literary purity' (1994b: 174). This is not a substantive postulate in relation to dystopian fiction in Booker's view: 'such literature gains its principal energies precisely from its literariness', he argues, citing its 'ability to illuminate social and political issues from an angle not available to conventional social theorists and critics' (1994b: 175) Furthermore, Booker claims, the didactic impulse of dystopian fiction renders it more, rather than less literary:

If the main value of literature in general is its ability to make us see the world in new ways, to make us capable of entertaining new and different perspectives on reality, then dystopian fiction is not a marginal genre. It lies at the very heart of the literary project.

(Booker 1994b: 176)

While an assessment of the relative centrality of these fictions to the broad body of twentieth-century literature would be illuminating, such an undertaking is beyond the aims of this project; instead, the focus here is on what Booker identifies as a conjoint 'value' of dystopia with other forms of literature: its capacity to 'make us capable of entertaining new and different perspectives on reality'. In terms of its form, dystopia customarily foregrounds distinctly new perspectives on reality – in common, arguably,

with other literary modes – but in terms of its function, it diverges from these other modes insofar as it consistently foregrounds its didactic intent in relation to these new perspectives.⁴³

While most commentators on dystopian fiction acknowledge its didactic function, the degree of consequence they accord to it varies. Parrinder's (2000) somewhat hesitant view is that dystopia (under the umbrella of utopia and science fiction), has a 'commitment to visions of human transformation', and 'an inherent – though frequently fragile, ambivalent and compromised – potential for political radicalism' (2000: 2). Walter E. Meyers (1980), less diffidently, claims 'strong didacticism' is one of the 'distinguishing characteristics of the genre' (1980: 4), and proceeds to identify a categorical distinction between didacticism of *purpose* and didacticism of *method*. The former – that which Meyers recognises as 'a vehicle for arguing the author's point in just the same way that a medieval morality play or one of Donne's sermons does' (*ibid*) – is the most commonly observed incarnation of dystopian didacticism, and that which is the most productive conceptualisation for this study. The latter, which is more obviously instructional – Meyers' example takes a science fiction text incorporating several pages of explanation about how conjectured spacecraft engines function – while relevant to some degree, is less applicable in the current context. Didacticism of purpose alludes to the candid political and social designs that inhere in these texts: designs which, according to Moylan, could inspire readers to 'think about the world in ways not sanctioned by hegemonic institutions and ideologies', and encourage 'willing readers' to reflect on their own base-reality 'with new or clearer perceptions' (2000: xvii). More specifically, the 'purpose' of this didacticism for Moylan, is to 'raise [readers'] consciousness about what is right and wrong in that world, and even to think about what is to be done, especially in concert with others, to change it for the better' (2000: xvii). Dystopia's didactic disposition makes demands of its readers that go beyond the interpretive conventions of other genres: it attempts to engage readers in an exacting process of triangulation between the world of the text, the world of their base-reality, and their perceptions of each. This readerly response to the texts' didacticism is termed *feedback oscillation* by Suvin, who describes it as a kind of reciprocal interchange, which 'moves now from the author's and implied reader's norm of reality to the narratively actualized [...] and now back from those novelties to the author's reality, in order to see it afresh from the new

perspective gained' (1979: 71). The didactic potential of these fictions is similarly implied in Sisk's comment that 'a dystopian work fails if it does not move its reader to compare his or her "real world" to the fictional society and consider how the latter could arise from the former' (1997: 9).

In his 1986 study, *Reader in a Strange Land: The Activity of Reading Literary Utopias*, Peter Ruppert proposes a prescriptive framework for the way 'the potential effects of literary utopias' [...] 'ought to be inferred' by readers (1986: 5) [my emphasis]. Ruppert's conception of an 'ideal' reader, who engages with, and responds to, the invitations of the text is a reader-construct bearing many similarities to Moylan's 'willing reader' (2000: xvii): one who will receive the text as an invitation to reflect upon his or her own society through the medium of the fictional world, extending and remodelling his or her perception of his or her own society in the process. Ruppert's framework depends largely on the didacticism of these texts for its effectiveness: the reader, who is positioned in a dialectical relationship with the text, is an 'active producer of meaning', which 'grows out of the interplay between social fact and utopian dream' (1986: 6). Although he allows that 'different readers with different priorities, values and ideological commitments continue to read utopias in fundamentally different ways' (1986: 410), he also believes that dystopia didactically implies a more desirable alternative to itself, 'the construction of which is left up to the reader' (1986: 116).

Moylan's and Ruppert's beliefs here represent a common – if subjective – view of the efficacy of dystopian didacticism in its propensity for transforming its readers' perceptions. Pohl relates a similarly subjective popular impression in this area: '[t]here are people who maintain', he notes, 'that one important reason why the year 1984, when it came, was nothing like the one described in George Orwell's novel was because the novel had warned its readers of what they must do their best to avert' (1997: 9-10). Such views, while subjective, are not without foundation. Reader-response experiments, based on objective methodological procedures, reach much the same conclusions. Brigitte Scheele and Norbert Groeben (1986), for example, measure the modification of psychology students' 'cognitive-reflective function' (or 'knowledge system') before, during, and after reading utopianist works (including Skinner's *Walden Two* and le Guin's *The Dispossessed*). The reader – or 'recipient' – in this study, Scheele and Groeben note, 'uses models of the world of aesthetic works actively, constructively, deliberately, and with self-determination to broaden, to improve and to

change his world experience, especially in the dimension of his (cognitive) world- and self-view' (1986: 529). Although this study is primarily an evaluation of its own methodological framework, the authors report briefly on the 'modifications' they find: 'the cognitive structures of the subjects', they conclude, had become, post-reading, 'more extensive and differentiated in content as well as in regard to formal structure' (1986: 547). In confirming one of the initial hypotheses of their study – that which proposed that 'a change in the behaviour of the recipient on a long term basis inevitably lies in the cognitive-reflective function' (1986: 528) – Scheele and Groeben provide substantive evidence of the capacity of these narratives to affect readers' perceptions.

More recently, and from a qualitative-interpretive, rather than cognitive-scientific point of view, Kenneth Roemer contributes an extensive empirical intervention to the discussion of didacticism in utopian texts. His reader-response study, *Reading Utopia, Reading Utopian Readers* (2003), attempts to determine how utopias have become 'important agents of changed perceptions and even changed realities' for their readers, and to establish 'the processes they use to transform authors' "temperaments" and their words into personalized guides and inspirations' (2003: 3). Roemer cites the 'didactic, often prescriptive, nature of and the strong non-fictional elements in much utopian literature' (2003: 119) as being central to readers' responses when texts 'invite perceptual or even behavioural changes', and to 'understand how readers transform no place into their own someplace' (2003: 60). Having undertaken his wide-ranging and meticulous study with 733 respondents, one of Roemer's important findings is that, post-reading, 'each one of the 3,158 transformative associations described [by participants] reflect some form of altered view of self and society' (2003: 217). These results, in combination with Scheele and Groeben's, supply objective, empirical, and material validation to support the critical contentions outlined above: hard, data-driven evidence to confirm that reading dystopian fiction, and responding to its didactic overtures, can change readers' world-view.

The notion of dystopia as implicated in the transformation or reconstruction of world-view is a theme which recurs throughout this study. Given the widespread critical belief in the effective properties of dystopian didacticism, together with the empirical evidence of its affective properties, I proceed from the position that the genre's perception-altering faculty is self-evident. The central concern of this thesis is to demonstrate the ways in which language – in the genre-specific speculative and

reflective manifestations I identify and examine here – is implicated in, precipitates, and engenders dystopia’s remarkable propensity to redefine readers’ understanding of the world and their own position in relation to it.

1.5.1 Speculative and reflective language

For according to the outward man, we are in this world, and according to the inward man, we are in the inward world [...]. Since then we are generated out of both worlds, we speak in two languages, and we must be understood also by two languages.

Robert Bly (1967) *The Light Around the Body*

Dystopia, in common with much science fiction, distinguishes itself through its extraordinary exposition of language: neologism in particular characterises these fictions, and the popular conception of such narratives often centres on what Meyers identifies as ‘the introduction of an alien word [...] in an effort to emphasize the “otherness” of the society which produced it’ (1980: 7). Invented language is indeed a prevalent aspect of the defamiliarising and estranging strategies that dystopia typically presents, but it is by no means the sole method of linguistically proposing the future: recontextualisations, relexicalisations, and unexpected collocations of language are also frequently employed in the attempt to depict the dystopian prospect. Nor is invention confined to word-level interventions in language: these occur regularly from morphological, through lexical, to syntactic level. These persistently recurring linguistic phenomena which animate and inscribe the envisioned dystopian future, and which I have termed *speculative language*, are considered at length in subsequent chapters.

In addition to the language of dystopian futures, I also address the language of the dystopian past. For the purposes of this study, I term this *reflective language*. Under this rubric I examine the propensity of these fictions to foreground, defamiliarise, and estrange (ostensibly) antecedent and archaic language by incorporating it conspicuously within the framework provided by speculative language in such a way as to encourage comparisons and contrasts. Reflective language, unlike speculative language, seldom exhibits invention, manipulation, or transformations; instead it is explicitly marked by its congruence with the commonplace, the prosaic, the familiar. Perhaps because of this apparently unremarkable conventionality, this category of

language in dystopia has received less critical attention than has the speculative variety. I aim to redress this imbalance through my focus on it here.

Briefly, speculative language is the language of the future, while reflective language is the language of the past. The language of the present is markedly absent. Given the distinctive treatment of time in dystopia, as discussed in §1.2.2, the present is invariably the past when viewed from the perspective of the dystopian future. While the dystopian future is elaborately constructed, the present is merely alluded to and insinuated, figured as history or antiquity. As I shall argue, language, realised as the two distinct yet interweaving strands, one speculative and one reflective, is consequent to the realisation of the dystopian future and past; moreover, together, the two language strands comment on, and contribute toward a (re)vision of the present.

To posit the co-occurrence of two discrete ‘languages’ within texts written in English is, I realise, somewhat contentious, and is addressed further in §2.2.3, where I revisit the debate within stylistics surrounding the possibility of ‘two languages’ in William Golding’s *The Inheritors*. In the meantime, I proceed from the position that two linguistic strands are indicated in relation to dystopian fiction, even while the same may not be a legitimate claim for all fiction. Moreover, I accept that to persist in calling these discrete forms *languages* is arguably untenable given the utility of the term *discourse* in modern linguistics; a term which is clearly more appropriate for, and applicable to, the linguistic phenomena I identify. While accepting that what I term *speculative language* and *reflective language* should rightly be termed speculative and reflective *discourse*, I use *language* throughout this work both to capture the efforts and ideals of the authors of these fictions, and to accord with earlier critical enquiries into language in the genre of dystopia. The work of other critics in this field provides ample precedent for this approach; and although differing in some fundamental respects from the specific instantiations of speculative and reflective language I discuss here, these critics unanimously assert the co-existence of two forms (and, often, two functions) of language in dystopian fiction.

In his (1979) essay, ‘Metalinguistics and Science Fiction’, for example, Eric S. Rabkin makes a distinction between two languages: ‘the reader’s language’ and ‘the language of the narrator or of a character’ (also figured as ‘English and East Martian’) (1979: 88; 90). Only in the latter – the language of the narrator or character – can ‘true neologism’ occur, Rabkin says, drawing a distinct line between this and the

'transformations' that are possible in the language of the reader. Using the neologism *kemmer* from le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* to exemplify the perception-altering metalinguistic function of character-bound language, Rabkin proceeds to contemplate the 'implicit claim for the reality of [le Guin's] alternative world with its alternative values' implicated in this invented language (1979: 88). Transformations ('mere slang formations from current readers' language' (1979: 89)), on the other hand, do not have the capacity to 'engage a code of alternative values as neologism would' (*ibid*).⁴⁴ In discriminating between these two linguistic strands, Rabkin is able to isolate one as the singular locus of neologism which can 'present us with new intellectual categories' (1979: 93), and the potential (albeit unrealised, he notes) for 'a true alternative ideology' (*ibid*). Rabkin's 'East Martian', broadly defined, has some correspondence to the conception of speculative language used here, insofar as it is the site of neologism, while his categorisation of 'the readers' language' – or English – is more closely allied to the notion of reflective language as I outline it here.

Ildney Cavalcanti also identifies two disparate aspects of language in her (2000) 'Utopias of/f Language in Contemporary Feminist Literary Dystopias', where she outlines her approach in terms of a 'linguistic struggle' enacted within feminist dystopias, in which language represents an 'instrument of both (men's) domination and (women's) liberation' (2000: 152). 'Off language' describes women's movement, or escape, from the limiting structures of spoken language, while 'of language' describes their movement toward language as a liberating medium with the potential for effective resistance. Cavalcanti's conceptualisation of 'off' language resonates with reflective language to some degree, since 'off' language references the desire to access a utopian space outside the constraining and colonising properties of the hegemonic language. Reflective language, as I shall elaborate, similarly opposes the oppressive linguistic practices of dominant dystopian orders. 'Of' language is evoked in Cavalcanti's conception by, for example, the creation of a women's language in Suzette Haden Elgin's *Native Tongue* and *The Judas Rose*, in which women invent new language – which they term 'encodings' – to articulate emotions and states of being specific to women, and which are inexpressible within the existing resources of language. 'Of language', in its neologising and perception-altering capacities, resonates with speculative language to some extent, although it differs significantly in terms of function. Despite functional differences, *mutatis mutandis*, Cavalcanti's delineation of

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contrary – and contrastive – linguistic utilities embodied in feminist dystopias supports the intention in this study to disjoin the language of the fictions considered here.

Cavalcanti's formulation of 'of' and 'off' language addresses separate language strands in broadly thematic terms, examining specific instantiations before drawing genre-wide conclusions. Raffaella Baccolini's approach to the issue of distinct linguistic strands is similarly focused on structural strategies and narrative form. In her 1995 essay, "'It's not in the Womb the Damage is Done": The Construction of Gender, Memory, and Desire in Katherine Burdekin's *Swastika Night*", Baccolini argues that dystopian narratives are 'built around the construction of a narrative [...] and a counter narrative' (1995: 293n), which represent oppression and resistance, respectively. Within this framework, she identifies 'social' and 'anti-social' language, with the former linked to the appropriation of language by the dystopic order, and the latter representing a distinct reappropriation of language as a means of resistance. Baccolini's distinctions are particularly relevant to the conception of speculative and reflective language, since in many (but not all) instances, the 'narrative language' she outlines is broadly consonant with speculative language, while the language of the 'counter-narrative' is functionally cognate with reflective language.

Sisk's (1997) book-length treatment of dystopian language, *Transformations of Language in Modern Dystopias*, in common with Cavalcanti's and Baccolini's approach, proposes functionally dissimilar languages locked in a struggle for control. 'Twentieth-century dystopias in English universally reveal a central emphasis on language as the primary weapon with which to resist oppression', he argues, while noting that this responds to 'the corresponding desire of repressive government structures to stifle dissent by controlling language' (1997: 2). Sisk's presentation of embattled, adversarial languages implies – although does not identify formally – two manifestations of language, one tyrannically dominant, the other repressed but potentially insurgent. Sisk discusses the language of power and the language of resistance in relation to a number of dystopian texts before continuing the metaphor of confrontation in his concluding remark that 'we must come to understand that the struggle for mastery of the world boils down to mastery over the word' (1997: 180).

Sisk, together with Rabkin, Cavalcanti, and Baccolini, distinguishes between two linguistic strands evident in dystopian fictions. I coincide with these commentators in respect of this narrative strategy, since I similarly differentiate between two layers,

strands, or materialisations of language in these fictions. I diverge, however, from these critics insofar as they consider language chiefly in terms of its literary effects, or function; I focus to a greater extent on the form of the language, with function as a consequent – although still important – aspect. Literary criticism, as evinced by the above, offers perceptive and workable distinctions between the interconnected threads of language woven through dystopian narrative, but for a more technical approach to the formal qualities of disparate languages, it is necessary to appeal to examinations of language in these fictions which originate from within the discipline of linguistics and the study of language.

Among linguistic approaches to dystopia, those which segregate distinct language forms include Roger Fowler's delineation of *anti-language* in relation to Burroughs' *Naked Lunch* and Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange* in the chapter 'Anti-language in Fiction' in his (1981) *Literature as Social Discourse: The Practice of Linguistic Criticism*.⁴⁵ Here, Fowler traces the dialogue, or dialectic, between standard language and anti-language, and looks at the ways in which this creates a true polyphony between reality and counter-reality.⁴⁶ Although Fowler is cautious about expressly claiming complete separation between the two opposed strands of language ('anti-language is a process rather than a code' he offers), he proceeds to describe it as 'a negotiation of status, identity and ideology between an official establishment and a group which diverges from its norms' (1981: 157). 'Negotiation', together with 'dialogue' implicitly entail the existence of two parties; given that these are, in Fowler's analysis, two individual forms of language, I would make a more definite division between language and anti-language than he does. In this respect, my view is closer to that of, for instance, Brian McHale (1996) and Paul Simpson (2004). McHale claims anti-language is 'conducting an implicit polemic against the standard language and its world-view. It creates in effect an "anti-world-view", a counterreality of its own that is dialectically related to "straight" or "official" reality' (1996: 168), while Simpson echoes McHale in proposing 'distance' between the two forms:

Antilanguages are the semi-secretive languages born out of subcultures and alternative societies. These societies, 'antisocieties', are consciously established as alternatives to mainstream society such that their relationship to the dominant social order is one of resistance, even active hostility.

(Simpson 2004: 104)

Both McHale and Simpson figure anti-language as an alienated and removed entity, confronting standard language from a position of distance and representing an alternative, or counter-society or reality. A similar proposition is implied, if not overtly stated, in Fowler's work.

Paul Chilton also outlines a separately configured language, but rather than an anti-language, Chilton identifies a sub-language present in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. In his (1983) essay 'Orwell's Conception of Language', he notes:

What the novel depicts is linguistic conflict, and the process of linguistic imposition. The linguistic divergences are, moreover, presented not as variant dialects [...] but as different languages. The socio-linguistic position portrayed is the following: a rigid codified language which is the preserve of an elite, and an oral vernacular (Oldspeak) which is spoken by the rest.

(Chilton 1983: 103)

In short, these linguistic assessments of the twofold nature of language in dystopia echo the literary opinions in the same area, and support the intention of this work to treat language in dystopian fiction as comprising two disconnected – yet not entirely autonomous – strands: speculative and reflective language. Although both linguistic and literary views illustrated above have influenced the direction of this study, its theoretical orientation is not optimally aligned with the views of any one particular linguist, literary critic, or school of thought in either discipline; the aim here is to extend, by way of rigorous analysis of linguistic form, existing notions of the function of dystopia's 'two languages'.

1.5.2 Future wor(l)ds

To portray the future in the language of the present is inevitably to betray it.

Terry Eagleton (2005) 'Just My Imagination'

'Most dystopian fantasies', according to Gorman Beauchamp, demonstrate a 'failure of imagination in creating a "future language": a language, that is, reflecting the specific reality of the projected future' (1974: 463).⁴⁷ This thesis seeks, in part, to counter Beauchamp's assertion by demonstrating not only that dystopia, as a genre, is remarkably successful in its attempts to create elements of a 'future language', but also that, in doing so, it reflects the 'specific reality' of the future in ways not sanctioned by, or encoded in, current standard language.⁴⁸

Speculative language, as I have indicated, represents the language of the future in dystopia. That language in the real world changes over time is axiomatic: innovation, change, and development modifies, supplements, and mutates our language incessantly; even casual observers with no formal linguistic training would be aware of new forms and new meanings in language emerging intermittently in their own experience as language users. In many ways, dystopia is an accelerated microcosmic representation of the process of language change, presenting new language for novel concepts where these concepts differ from those which are known to exist. This accounts for much of the neologism found in these works, and, at this rudimentary level, responds to Beauchamp's assertion that dystopia fails to imaginatively present a 'future language': patently, through its neologising strategies, it does exactly that. However, this, I contend, is only the surface manifestation of the dystopian language impetus; other genre-wide strategies contribute to dystopia's fundamentally perception-challenging – and perception-altering – capacity. These strategies, which, as I shall elaborate, are essentially linguistically encoded and realised, refute Beauchamp's secondary contention: that dystopian fictive language fails to reflect a 'specific reality of the projected future'. Chapter three of this thesis outlines the importance of neologism to the construction of an alternative reality in dystopia; in addition it considers further instantiations of speculative language, all of which contribute significantly to understanding and reception of the projected fictive future. I group linguistic inventiveness in dystopian fiction into four primary categories, all of which reflect futurity via novelty. These can be broadly defined as new words, new meanings, new permutations, and new contexts.

This emphasis on new, manipulated, or transformed language in dystopian fictions is often linked symbolically to representations of thought-control at the behest of oppressive, totalitarian, or otherwise malevolent hegemonic orders, resulting in many commentators' assertion that it is, at some fundamental level, indicative of, or implicated in, a representation of Whorfianism. Myra Barnes, for example, suggests 'all dystopian languages involve a measure of thought control' (1974: 150), a belief which supports her conviction that 'all dystopian languages technically belong to Whorf' (1974: 151). My primary argument in this study coincides, to an extent, with such views; language in dystopia is, I agree, implicated in perception-altering fictional scenarios. However, in terms of speculative language, I develop this proposition in two

related directions: firstly, I extend critical examination of the Whorfian function *within* the confines of dystopian fiction, to account for the ways in which linguistic relativity impacts intra-textually on the citizens of the postulated future. In so doing, I aim to increment those earlier studies which identify Whorfian explanations to account for linguistic phenomena in dystopia, but fail to develop or effectively interrogate this position. Sisk's (1997) *Transformations of Language in Modern Dystopias* adequately exemplifies this critical propensity to invoke – but not substantiate – Whorfianism. Sisk claims, in his assessment of language in *Brave New World*, for example, that 'John exemplifies Whorf's theory taken to the extremity of its conclusions' (1997: 29); of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, he asserts that '[i]mplicitly, Newspeak depends on Benjamin Whorf's theory that thought depends on language' (1997: 43); while, of Elgin's *Native Tongue* and *The Judas Rose*, he states that the author 'takes the Whorfian hypothesis to its logical, if grim, conclusion' (1997: 119). Sisk's comments here broadly illustrate literary critics' under-specification, misinterpretation, or misapplication of Whorf's line of reasoning, as set down in a series of essays reproduced in John B. Carroll's (1956) edited collection, *Language, Thought, and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf*. Much of the analysis in subsequent chapters endeavours to amend and augment erroneous or insufficient applications of Whorf's theories to the language of dystopian fictions.

Secondly, I consider the influence of speculative language *beyond* the fiction. Continuing to refract my exploration through a Whorfian lens, I consider the extra-textual implications of language on readers' perceptions and world-view. Taking into account the essentially didactic propensity of dystopia, and its implicit relationship with base-reality, I consider how far – and by what means – dystopian uses of language embody the potential to enable readers to re-envision their own version of reality, and their relationship to it.

Under the heading of speculative language in this study I consider language which articulates a state or action for which there is no current straightforward linguistic expression. Most prevalently, this is because the futuristic setting of these fictions requires the communication of postulates; that is to say, they necessitate the verbalisation of that which has not yet come into being. In this respect, much of the language I consider is more extrapolative than it is speculative: it takes as its generative roots some aspect of the current, known language and projects, extends, or estimates

these foundational properties outward – or forward – in an extrapolated curve into a possible future world. In its most literal sense, pertaining to its origin in mathematics, extrapolation infers unknown values beyond data which is known by extending trends observable in the known data on the basis that patterns visible in that which is known will continue into that which is not known. To extrapolate, then, entails some known or observable circumstance, whereas to speculate does not (necessarily); speculation may be no more than conjecture. For that reason, *extrapolative* would more accurately define many of the linguistic phenomena foregrounded in dystopian narratives, given that most exhibit discernible connections with the author's historical spacetime, and would reflect also the thematic extrapolation that characterises dystopia. However, *speculative* denotes much more than simply the act of estimating: it is also synonymous with deeply introspective thought processes (*meditative, cogitative, hypothetical, and theoretical*, for instance, are offered by most thesauri as synonyms). It is this twofold meaning of *speculative* that I aim to take advantage of in the discussion and analyses which follow; a coalescence and intertwining of projected language with contemplative language, resulting in a linguistic contribution to dystopia which mirrors its function not only as a thought experiment, but also as a thought-provoking and potentially thought-transforming genre. Its extrapolative genesis is, however, crucial to the understanding of language in dystopian fiction: the origin of speculative language in the standard language contributes significantly to the issues of perception and world-view to which I later refer. Consequently, some consideration of the standard language in dystopia is indicated: the extant language of the author's historical spacetime, or *reflective language*.

1.5.3 Past wor(l)ds

Oh, snatch this relic from the wreck! the only and the last
And cherish in your heart of hearts the language of the Past!

Michael Mullin (1869) *The Book of Irish Ballads*

While speculative language, in its diverse – and visibly foregrounded – manifestations is customarily associated with the literary rendering of a futuristic dystopia, the role of less conspicuously marked language does not usually receive so much attention. Often unobtrusive, and not always immediately distinguishable from the surrounding narrative language, reflective language subtly and symbolically determines the dystopia's

immediate and distant past. This intimate correlation between language and the past echoes – encodes, even – the distinctive dystopian relationship with historical time in all its complexity and convolution.

Reflective language, as I discuss it in this study falls into two broad categories: that which represents the distant past and that which represents a more recent past. Of course, given dystopia's peculiar temporal positioning, these are necessarily imprecise categorisations: for instance, those dystopian fictions temporally located in an indeterminate future deny accurate reckoning of not just their 'present', but concomitantly, of their contributory 'pasts'. Some – Russell Hoban's *Riddley Walker*, for example – are set in a future distanced by several millennia from the contemporary world, while others – as illustrated by Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time*, set in the year 2137 – are located in the relatively close future. Yet others – as famously instanced by Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* – are positioned in a future so close at hand that the calendar has now swept over, and historicised, its postulated future. However, while the configurations of futurity and historicity may vary, one temporal plane remains constant across all dystopias: the 'absent' present. As noted in §1.2.1 and §1.2.2, dystopia emphatically comments on its own present by way of offering the author's historical spacetime *as* an indefinitely remote past, as seen from a future standpoint. One layer of reflective language, then, is that which identifies the 'present' in dystopia; functioning as a mirror held up to the author's time and space, this particular linguistic representation is a *reflection of* the social, political, and temporal conditions underlying its origin, and captures those trends and tendencies which concern the author in his or her world.

The second layer of reflective language I consider here extends the dystopian reach back in time from the conditions of the text's composition. Focusing on the historical past as it appears from the viewpoint of the author's historical spacetime, this language represents *reflections on* events, conditions, beliefs, values, and understandings of the past, which are insinuated in, and constitutive of, the presentation of the fictional dystopian society. In practice, the distinction between reflections 'of' and reflections 'on' is frequently indistinguishable textually; moreover, since dystopia often re-envision universal or eternal notions, the margins of these reflections merge, and render differentiation unworkable. The understanding of reflective language,

therefore, as it is used throughout this study, comprises both conceptions: language as a *reflection of*, and language representing *reflections on*, the dystopia's multifaceted past.

Reflective language, as noted above, is seldom marked by the linguistic novelty which so often identifies speculative language; this manifestation of dystopian language more closely mirrors the standard. However, that is not to say it is unremarkable (although some examples are more accessible than others). Returning to Karp's *One* and Huxley's *Brave New World*, for example, instances of reflective language occur in each in a relatively unmistakable form, quite early in the narrative. In order to exemplify my conception of reflective language, I offer these particularly obvious cases, although those I discuss in later chapters are often a great deal more understated. An early example in *One* claims the reader's attention unambiguously. The protagonist, Burden, while contemplating his obligatory writing of reports on unorthodoxy in the Church State in which he lives, muses on the purpose of this procedure:

It had nothing to do with the punishment of heresy. *Punishment*. Burden shook his head again at his own stupidity. There was no punishment. Punishment, punitive – odd the way the concept kept cropping up in his thinking. That was done with. It no longer existed as a socially accepted concept.

(*One*, pp. 9-10)

This instance of reflective language is unusually evident: the word *punishment* is not only italicised, it is repeated four times in succeeding sentences, and appears together with its adjectival form; additionally, lest its significance be overlooked, three accounts of its redundancy occur almost consecutively: there 'was no punishment'; it 'was done with'; it 'no longer existed as a socially accepted concept'. To conceive of a culture where an entire fundamental concept such as punishment 'no longer exists' is to contend that this is a world extraordinarily distant from that which is currently known: essentially, a futuristic or dislocated world. However, were it the case that this was in fact, a world where punishment was an archaic concept, its inhabitants would be unlikely to find 'the concept kept cropping up in [their] thinking'. Essentially, reflective language such as this grounds the narrative in the circumstances of its originating time-frame: it both reflects the fact that the concept of 'punishment' exists in the author's historical spacetime, and reflects on (or more accurately, as I shall elaborate, invites the reader to reflect on) the historically enduring and prevalent nature of the notion.

A similarly prominent example of reflective language is employed early in *Brave New World*. The Director of Hatcheries and Conditioning, having introduced a new cohort of students to the highly mechanised human reproduction laboratories, begins a question-and-answer session with the students, eliciting their understanding of the meaning of the word 'parent':

There was an uneasy silence. Several of the boys blushed. They had not yet learned to draw the significant but often very fine distinction between smut and pure science. [...]

'In brief,' the Director summed up, 'the parents were the father and the mother.' The smut that was really science fell with a crash into the boys' eye-avoiding silence. 'Mother,' he repeated loudly, rubbing in the science; and, leaning back in his chair, 'These,' he said gravely. 'are unpleasant facts; I know it. But, then, most historical facts *are* unpleasant.'

(*Brave New World*, p. 20)

'Parent', 'father', and 'mother', then, are realigned conceptually, in keeping with the text's thematic concerns; recontextualised in order to equate to 'smut'. Parenthood is a concept which, in this future world, embarrasses the students sufficiently to cause blushing and discomfort. Like 'punishment' in Karp's text, 'parent' has been conceptually challenged here; moreover, it is overtly referred to as an 'unpleasant [...] historical fact', emphasising its obsolescence, or archaic status, in terms of the novel's time-frame. Within the same stretch of text, 'viviparous' is positioned as a similarly discomfiting concept, while a student's attempt to engage with such outdated historical notions sees his use of 'decanted' corrected to 'born' to stress the distinction between the world of A.F. 632 and Huxley's historical spacetime. This particular instantiation of reflective language, foregrounded in the characters' dialogue, confronts and defamiliarises the customary notions of natural reproduction and parenthood. More subtly, a second concept is being reflected upon here: the intervening narrative instigates the dystopian rationale underlying *Brave New World* by supplanting the concept of parenthood with the concept of science. Three illustrative examples of this displacement occur in this extract:

very fine distinction between *smut* and pure *science*

The *smut* that was really *science*

'*Mother*,' he repeated loudly, rubbing in the *science*

The italicised words demonstrate the significantly recontextualised understanding of *science that underpins Huxley's dystopia: parenthood, along with all its connotations of*

conception, gestation, and childbirth, conflated into ‘smut’, is figured as an unpleasant but inevitable factor to be understood as merely a developmental – but outdated – stage of scientific advance. Thus, this understanding of science in the future reflects on the understanding of science in the past (which is, more accurately, Huxley’s 1930s present) and reconceptualises it in terms of dystopian possibility and potential.⁴⁹

Focus on language – individual lexical items (as in *One* above) or related lexical fields (as in *Brave New World* here) – as a medium through which to communicate the estranged understandings of fundamental existential or historical concepts is a genre-wide feature; the foregoing are not isolated examples. I shall argue that the readers’ customary, habitual world-view is overtly examined and challenged through such reflective language: ostensibly ‘standard’ language, and, by extension its ‘standard’ meanings, are contested, alienated, and re-evaluated. Reflective language, then, has a Whorfian aspect in this respect; like the speculative language to which I refer above, it is implicated in dystopia’s inclination to influence world-view. However, while speculative language exemplifies this function both intra-textually and extra-textually, reflective language, I argue, reserves its affective function chiefly for the reader. Through detailed analysis of these representations of language in dystopian fictions I aim to develop existing scholarship in this area. Essentially, I attempt to offer linguistic evidence in support of, and to substantiate, beliefs such as that expressed by Moylan: that the act of reading dystopian fiction can ‘lead to an empowering escape *to* a very different way of thinking about, and possibly being in, the world [and] bring willing readers back to their own worlds with new or clearer perceptions’ (2000: xvii).

1.6 Narrative worlds

We want wisdom. We want hope. We want to be good. Therefore we sometimes tell ourselves warning stories that deal with the darker side of some of our other wants.

Margaret Atwood (2005) ‘Aliens have taken the place of angels’

The range of dystopian texts written in English is extensive and includes some renowned, canonical works as well as many less well-known examples of the genre; in addition there are numerous works with a significant dystopian element, and many whose genre classification is problematic in some respect. In selecting texts for this study I have attempted to examine a representative sample of those available, and,

overall, I examine a cross-section of familiar, or ‘classic’, exemplars together with some less well-known titles.

The selection criteria employed here rely largely on those aspects of dystopia discussed in the foregoing sections: a sense of ‘place’ is crucial to my understanding of dystopia, and, consequently, the primary texts I discuss in chapters three, four and five are those explicitly located in relation to a Western – most often Anglo-American – setting. Temporal dislocation also figures significantly in my definition of dystopia, so, in each case, the ‘setting’ to which I refer is ‘re-placed’ into a futuristic time-frame (although some science fiction and fantasy texts with indefinable spatial and temporal co-ordinates are referred to occasionally in support of ‘mainstream’ works). My distinction between utopia and dystopia aims for objectivity in being dependent on the point of view of the focalising character(s); I concede, however, that I rely to some degree on my own subjective view of what constitutes ‘good’ (*eu-* or *u-*topian) or ‘bad’ (*dys-*topian) for those characters in relation to their narrative world. Additionally – and vitally – all the texts I consider were originally written in English. This last criterion excludes Yevgeny Zamyatin’s brilliant and influential dystopia, *We* (1924), which was originally written in the author’s native Russian, and is thus only available in translation to English. Since I focus almost exclusively on linguistic form and function, the potential re-interpretations inherent in translation-shift render translated texts unworkable for the purposes of this study. In his introduction to the 1993 Penguin edition of *We*, for example, translator Clarence Brown comments on some of the vagaries intrinsic to accurate translation of invented or otherwise novel language: while he settled on OneState as the most apt transliteration of the Russian *Yedinoe Gosudarstvo*, his predecessors had variously opted for *United State*, *Single State*, and *The One State* (1993: xxiv); similarly, Brown decided on *yuny* as an abbreviated form of *uniform*, although he acknowledges the literal translation of Zamyatin’s Cyrillic equivalent ought to be *unif* (1993: xxiii). Translation-shifts such as these would have a material impact on my analyses, especially those of speculative language. Reluctantly, therefore, I eliminate *We* together with any other works in translation.

Given the focus of this study, and the selection criteria outlined in earlier sections of this chapter, *We* represents the first spatially- and temporally-bound dystopia of the twentieth century: that is to say, the first which does not feature a journey through time or space, or some form of magical or improbable dislocating device (such as an

inordinately long sleep) as part of its narrative strategy. Its exclusion from this work results in some imbalance, with most of the texts I consider appearing around mid-twentieth century onwards, and into the early twenty-first (although both Katherine Burdekin's *Swastika Night*, published in 1937, and Ayn Rand's *Anthem* from 1938, which are included, represent pre-war dystopian writing). Broadly speaking, this spread is representative of the genre, since the 'dystopian turn' from utopian to dystopian imagining is predominantly represented textually by a post-war, contemporary concentration which intensifies through the seventies and eighties, and continues uninterrupted to the present day. Despite the breadth of the era covered in this study (1937-2003), which stretches across the modern and contemporary literary periods, and encompasses both modernism and postmodernism, a remarkably congruent genre-specific range of linguistic strategies emerges in relation to both speculative and reflective language. For that reason, there is no deliberate chronological sequencing of the texts; although I do begin with an early example (Rand's 1938 *Anthem*) in chapter two, and conclude with a recent text (Atwood's 2003 *Oryx and Crake*) in chapter five, the intervening chapters focus on texts from across the post-1900 historical range.

The following chapter is concerned with establishing the theoretical foundations of the thesis, and integrates three otherwise unconnected approaches: firstly I revisit Benjamin Whorf's original writings on what he terms *the linguistic relativity principle* and reconstruct his work as a *process* of investigating the relationship between language and world-view. In the light of this reformulated notion of Whorfianism, I examine the opening page of Rand's dystopia, *Anthem* as a cumulative process of defamiliarisation for the reader. Secondly, I draw in discussion of some popular or 'folk' beliefs about language. Translatability is the first of these, which, although often offered as a rebuttal of Whorfianism, would seem to corroborate rather than deny Whorf's principle when considered from the point of view of a broad-based, non-specialist readership. Strongly held beliefs about language as an inadequate medium through which to communicate the minutiae that constitute a world-view are also included under the heading of 'folk linguistics', but here the beliefs are those expressed by authors of dystopias rather than their readers. These authors universally believe that there are states of being beyond language in addition to those which can be captured by the current lexicon, a belief which, I suggest, is manifest in their futuristic fictions. The co-existence of the familiar and the unfamiliar in language – the known and the unknown – underpins Whorf's

investigations, and also informs popular beliefs about language. The concluding part of the chapter, consequently, appeals to a literary theoretical position which explicitly acknowledges the fusion of the known and the unknown: Darko Suvin's concept of *cognitive estrangement*, which, originating in science fiction criticism, proposes that the interanimation of that which is within the bounds of experience with that which lies beyond (current) experience, is a defining characteristic of the genre. Together, these three approaches form a framework through which I examine and account for the 'doubleness' of dystopia's characteristic language, with speculative language symbolising the unknown and unfamiliar, while reflective language represents the (ostensibly) known and familiar.

Chapter three is dedicated to reconsideration of George Orwell's seminal (1949) dystopia, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in the light of the theoretical framework I outline in chapter two, and focuses in depth on the speculative language in this text. While Orwell's conception of Newspeak has been examined at length in previous studies emanating from both literary and linguistic sources, the form and function of the non-Newspeak language occurring in the main body of the text – rather than in the Appendix, 'The Principles of Newspeak' – has received less critical attention. I consider some socio-historical aspects of Orwell's non-Newspeak speculative language at the outset of this chapter, before identifying and categorising the various realisations of speculative language through which Orwell constructs his bleak and desperate dystopian future. The chapter concludes with some reflections on the effect of speculative language on the reader.

Reflective language is the focus of chapter four, where I begin by continuing my examination of Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, this time with reference to its instantiations of reflective language. The ensuing discussion of reflective language as it is presented in three further dystopian texts returns to the notion of focalisation, and develops this, together with an assessment of the ways in which the mode of narration impacts upon the reader's reception of reflective language. Katherine Burdekin's (1937) *Swastika Night* is examined, followed by L.P. Hartley's (1960) *Facial Justice*, and Margaret Atwood's (1985) *The Handmaid's Tale*. Although together, these four texts span much of the twentieth century, and they differ substantially in terms of setting, plot, themes, and characterisation as well as in divergent narrative strategies, they reveal a marked consonance in their treatment and presentation of reflective

language. As with earlier chapters, the emphasis remains on the effect of this language on the readers of these dystopias.

Chapter five brings together the two linguistic strands that comprise dystopia's destabilising, reformulating didactic energy: Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003) amply exemplifies both speculative and reflective language, and thus unifies the preceding discussions and analyses. Following examination first of the speculative language of this text, and then of its reflective language, I proceed to consider the influence and effect of the two 'languages' in relation to each other, and assess the ways in which the two in conjunction contrive to accentuate the reader's understanding of, and response to, his or her conception of self and society. Since *Oryx and Crake*, published in the early years of the twenty-first century, brings this study almost up to date, it seems an apt text with which to conclude.

2. Language within and beyond experience

To name is not to possess what cannot
be owned or even known in the small words
and endless excuses of human speech.

Marge Piercy (1992) 'Mars and Her Children'

2.1 Introduction

Dystopian fiction is challenging. For its readers, it is challenging in several senses: typically, it is thought-provoking, stimulating, and demanding at the level of theme; confrontational, oppositional, and inherently political at the level of plot; dissenting, rebellious, and subversive at the level of character. Dystopia confronts its readers with their own taken-for-granted notions about self and society and compels them to examine and explore habitual beliefs. In short, dystopia challenges readers to (re)cognise reality.¹ The ways in which language contributes to – or even initiates – this revision of world-view is the theme of this study; the textual analyses which follow in chapters three, four, and five will endeavour to demonstrate how language is implicated in, and propels the process of (re)cognition. In advance of that, in this chapter I outline the theoretical approaches which underpin and frame the subsequent examinations of speculative and reflective language in dystopia.

Since stylistics provides the methodological 'backbone' of this study, and since the inter-disciplinary nature of stylistics situates it somewhere between the study of language and the study of literature, it follows that this thesis will be similarly located at the interface of the two disciplines. For this reason, I invoke theoretical frameworks from both disciplines to orient my discussions. From linguistics I draw upon the notion of *linguistic relativity* (although *Whorfianism* is my preferred term, for reasons I shall elaborate below), and from a literary perspective, I use the concept of *cognitive estrangement*, which originates in the study of science fiction. In addition, I draw upon some less formal – but equally relevant – popular, or 'folk' beliefs about language. If dystopia challenges habitual thought and automaticity of response, it does so chiefly by reference to habitual, unconscious use of language; if it succeeds in de-habituating thought, and stimulating renewed or altered awareness, it does so, I shall argue, by presenting language as the site of challenge and counter-challenge, where both familiar and unfamiliar language is foregrounded, interrogated, and assimilated. Since both Whorfianism and cognitive estrangement acknowledge, and to an extent, depend on, the

co-existence of the familiar (or the unconscious, the automatic, the habitual) and the unfamiliar (or the brought-into-consciousness, the de-automised, the defamiliarised), my intention is to draw on the salient points of both of these theoretical approaches in order to account for the ways in which language is implicated in the perception-altering capacity of dystopian fiction.

2.2.1 Whorfianism: the preliminaries

To be great is to be misunderstood.

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1841) *Essays: First Series*

To arrive at the salient aspects of what I here term *Whorfianism* it is necessary to cut through much of the dense tangle of competing inter-related interpretations, arguments, counter-arguments, construals (and misconstruals) that have grown out of – and almost entirely obscured – Benjamin Lee Whorf’s original conception of what he called *the linguistic relativity principle*. Whorf’s most explicit articulation of this ‘principle’ is found in his 1940 paper ‘Linguistics as an Exact Science’, where he explains it thus:

[T]he “linguistic relativity principle,” which means, in informal terms, that users of markedly different grammars are pointed by the grammars toward different types of observations and different evaluations of externally similar acts of observation, and hence are not equivalent as observers but must arrive at somewhat different views of the world.²

(Whorf 1956: 221)³

Whorf’s own delineation of the ‘linguistic relativity principle’ is the one which guides and informs my application of the theory to the language of dystopian fiction: the term *Whorfianism* I employ throughout this work refers directly to the ideas described in Whorf’s extant writings rather than the confusing – and often confused – plethora of interpretations, elaborations, and digressions that emanate from the inclusion of Whorf’s insights within the broad-spectrum catch-all term *Sapir-Whorf hypothesis*.⁴ In this respect, I follow Penny Lee, author of *The Whorf Theory Complex: A Critical Reconstruction* (1996), who adroitly summarises the main problem facing those who would discuss, analyse, or examine Whorf’s theories in relation to any language-related issue: ‘[r]eferences to [Whorf’s] ideas about relationships between language, mind, and experience are often made in texts written for students of language [...]’, she observes, ‘yet for most people knowledge of what he said is either second hand, or limited to a few frequently quoted statements’ (1996: xiii). Lee returns to Whorf’s original writings

in a substantive endeavour to disentangle Whorf's own beliefs from those of his predecessors, especially Edward Sapir (with whose work Whorf's own is frequently conflated), and Franz Boas. Although Whorf's ideas were extensively derived from the earlier work of anthropologists Sapir and Boas (which would account for the formulations 'Sapir-Whorf hypothesis', 'Whorf-Sapir hypothesis', and occasionally 'Boas-Sapir-Whorf hypothesis'), his ultimate position differs from theirs in several respects.⁵ This, together with consideration that '[Whorf's] overall theory is not explicated as such in any one place in his writings' (Lee 1996: 15) begins to explain why, as John A. Lucy notes, '[d]espite the significance of his work, it has often been greatly misunderstood' (1992: 8). Lucy's *Language Diversity and Thought: A Reformulation of the Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis* (1992) is designed to 'correct many of the prevalent misunderstandings' (1992: 8), while Lee's monograph aims to 'at least partially redress' the 'unwarrantedly superficial interpretations of [Whorf's] ideas' arising from '[h]asty and inadequate reading of his work' (Lee 1996: xviii).⁶ For this reason I have drawn on the research of these scholars in coming to my own understanding of Whorfianism; in addition – and noting especially Lee's comments regarding insufficient attention to Whorf's original material – I refer extensively to John B. Carroll's (1956) definitive collection of Whorf's work, *Language, Thought, and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf*, and to the 'Yale Report', which is reproduced for the first time (from Whorf's handwritten draft document) by Lee (1996: 251-280), and which, she notes, 'is probably as important in theoretical and historical terms as Carroll's 1956 collection' (1996: 251n).

Some 'misunderstandings' (Lucy 1992: 8) and 'superficial interpretations' (Lee 1996: xviii) of Whorfianism can be found in earlier analyses and critical assessments of dystopian fiction, mainly arising as a result of the conflation of Whorf's theories with the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis in its diverse entirety. In part, these misconceptions, some of which are discussed below, contribute to my decision to return to Whorf's original writings rather than employ the notion of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis without qualification. In addition, two further – and allied – considerations motivate this decision. Firstly, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis has undergone such radical expansion across many disparate disciplines that it currently encompasses a bewildering collection of applications in, for example, anthropology, psychology, and philosophy, where its implications are considered in relation to an extensive range of cultural, societal,

political, and historical questions. Similarly, in the study of language and linguistics, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis serves as a kind of umbrella term, which subsumes linguistic relativity and linguistic determinism, as well as aspects of, for instance, prescriptivism and language development. Illustrative of the imprecision and fuzziness that surrounds the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis are the caveats which accompany any glossary-style definition of it: R.L. Trask's entry, for instance, in *A Student's Dictionary of Language and Linguistics* (1997) for Sapir-Whorf hypothesis reads: 'The hypothesis that the structure of our language significantly affects the way we perceive the world', summarily followed by the note: 'This hypothesis is controversial.' (1997: 192). The hypothesis is indeed controversial, not just because linguists break into distinct 'for' and 'against' factions with regard to it, but also because, at the most basic level, its formulation as a hypothesis is nebulous. Neither Sapir nor Whorf ever labelled their investigations into the role of language in cognition as any kind of hypothesis; thus, no definitive or authoritative foundational statement of the hypothesis exists.⁷ Instead, commentators from various disciplines have, over the years, formulated and reformulated their interpretations of the precepts advocated in both Sapir's and Whorf's writings with the result that the hypothesis is multiply delineated and expounded, often reflecting some particular bias toward the disciplinary interest of the formulator (definitions from within anthropology and sociology, for example, focus on cultural relativity, while those from the cognitive sciences draw out the implications for perception and mental information-processing).⁸ Consequently, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis as a theoretical notion in its entirety is contentious at best, and overextended, diluted, and bleached of meaning at worst.

Even within a single discipline, interpretations of the theory are manifold: an illustrative sample from within the study of language would include at least the following variations:

[T]he Sapir/Whorf hypothesis, which states that language can determine our thought and behavior patterns.

(Martyna 1980: 483)

The fundamental observation of the Sapir/Whorf Hypothesis is that the structure of language shapes thought in profound and pervasive ways.

(Wetherell, Taylor & Yates 2001: 58)

According to what has come to be called the *Sapir-Whorf hypothesis*, it is claimed that languages can differ radically in the way that they categorize

and structure the world, and that linguistic categories determine cognitive categories. Thus, the structure of one's language determines how one perceives and thinks about the world.

(Barr *et al* 1996: 716)

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis also holds that language and thought co-vary. That is, diversity in language categories and structure lead to cultural differences in thought and perceptions of the world.

(Samovar, Porter & McDaniel 2005: 215)

[Sapir and Whorf maintain that] there is a causal relationship between semantic structure and cognition: that language influences thought, in the sense that its structure channels our mental experience of the world.

(Fowler 1991: 4)

From this small sample, it is clear that there are significantly dissimilar conceptualisations of the Sapir-Whorfian relationship of language to experience: it variously 'determines', 'shapes', 'categorize[s]', 'lead[s] to', and 'influences' thought (or 'behavior patterns', or 'cognitive categories', or 'perceptions', or 'mental experience'). Traditionally, those conceptions which make some strong claim that thought and language are interdependent and indivisible – that we are incapable of non-linguistic thought, or that we cannot conceptualise something for which our language does not include a label – are collected under the category *linguistic determinism*, and are largely discounted by modern linguistics. The weaker claims, however – those which cluster around the notion that language *influences* thought and perception – are grouped under the classification *linguistic relativity*. In general these claims are much more faithful to Whorf's original ideas, and my focus in this study remains at this 'weaker' end of the spectrum, although mediated through Whorf's own words rather than secondary interpretations of what he may – or may not – have said.

Secondly, and in a point related to the first, I return to Whorf as a foundational source of writings on linguistic relativity to counter any inclination to overstate the theory. Perhaps as a result of the want of a definitive originating statement from either Sapir or Whorf to limit or circumscribe the scope of their contentions, the concepts they outlined have been, on occasion, extended to untenable lengths. It has become unremarkable to see unsustainable exaggerations attributed to Whorf, most of which follow the pattern 'Whorf states that if there is no word for *x* in a language, then *x* does not exist for the speakers of that language'. Less embellished, but still overstating Whorf's position, are ascriptions such as this from *World Literature Today*: 'Whorf has

argued that any change in language will transform one's appreciation of the cosmos' (Jirgens 1998: 271). Attention to his writings confirms that Whorf's line of reasoning is a great deal more cautious than this argument – here directly credited to him – would imply. Similar amplifications appear in relation to the language of dystopian fiction: in his survey of the use of linguistics in science fiction, *Aliens and Linguists: Language Study and Science Fiction* (1980), Walter E. Meyers considers what he terms *the Whorf hypothesis*. While he begins by referring to Whorf's observations on the Hopi language, quoting Whorf's original words, Meyers proceeds to extend the fundamental tenets considerably:

The Whorf hypothesis has a corollary: if it is true that our language determines our perception of reality, then whoever controls language controls the perception of reality as well. If language can be controlled, then would-be despots have available a subtle and efficient means of restricting thought.

(Meyers 1980: 163)

Meyers' 'corollary' here demonstrates the apparently straightforward reasoning process by which elaboration of the originating tenets may seem like nothing more than an obvious deduction. From his preceding discussion of the Whorf hypothesis in terms of linguistic relativity (1980: 161), Meyers has broadened the discussion to include linguistic determinism ('our language determines our perception'), supplemented this with the suggestion that language and perception can be controlled ('whoever controls language controls the perception of reality'), and arrived at the conclusion that such controls pertain not just to language but to thought ('efficient means of restricting thought'). While such augmentation of Whorfianism may represent a useful approach to interpreting, say, Orwell's depiction of Newspeak in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, where the fiction requires some level of belief that language, thought, or the perception of reality can be controlled, it does not represent the essential principles espoused in Whorf's own work. His writings demonstrate that he adopted a relativist stance (rather than the determinist position so often ascribed to him); and, it is worth noting, he never made any suggestion that language or thought could be 'controlled'. The prevalence of overstatements of Whorfianism serve to attenuate the consequence of the provocative and astute insights his work does embody; insights which will be explored further in what follows.

Before turning to the germane details of Whorf's concept of linguistic relativity, I shall briefly consider the issue of the 'misunderstandings' of his work to which Lucy (1992) refers. As a broad concept, linguistic relativity is routinely – and often cursorily – invoked as a means of rationalising the linguistic phenomena that characterise dystopian fictions, as is the case in David W. Sisk's critical assessment of the language of such texts, *Transformations of Language in Modern Dystopias* (1997), where the author states: '[o]ne theme found in all the novels herein discussed is a wholehearted acceptance of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, also called the "linguistic relativity principle"' (1997: 12). In a somewhat misguided effort to explicate the theory (and one which exemplifies the above-mentioned hazards of overstatement) Sisk claims: 'In Whorf's conception, a person cannot understand any concept that he or she cannot frame in words' (*ibid*). Although this assertion neither represents Whorf's stance, nor accurately reflects his words, it is the following factually inaccurate statement which best corroborates Lucy's claim that Whorf is 'greatly misunderstood' (1992: 8), and Lee's declaration that Whorf is both 'misread' and 'unread' (1996: 14):

Edward Sapir's honing of Whorf's theory broadens the relationship between thought and language into a two-way exchange in which language and thought can influence one another, as opposed to Whorf's one-way idea.

(Sisk 1997: 12)

In fact, Whorf 'honed' Sapir's earlier work, not vice versa (Whorf was the pupil of Sapir, who died in 1939, the year before Whorf formally described his principle of linguistic relativity); secondly, neither Whorf nor Sapir suggested the process was 'two-way'.⁹ However, given the preponderance of inaccurate definitions of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis permeating the available literature, it is perhaps not surprising that erroneous presentations of it occur.¹⁰ The ramifications of such fundamental misunderstandings, however, reach out beyond what may appear to be superficial pedantry on my part: they permeate into the application of the theory in subsequent critical assessments. This is the case with Sisk's use of Whorf's ideas in relation to dystopian fictions, where he would appear to make some claim for a proportional or gradable application of the theory, and one for which there could be said to be a limit-case. Sisk alludes to the work of Suzette Haden Elgin and asserts that she 'takes the Whorfian hypothesis to its logical, if grim, conclusion' (1997: 119) in her *Native Tongue* and *The Judas Rose*, while John the Savage of Huxley's *Brave New World* 'exemplifies Whorf's theory taken to the extremity of its conclusions' (1997: 29). In both cases, Sisk alludes to a

supposed end-point, threshold, or cut-off point of Whorfianism, which is an intractable argument to sustain, given Whorf's carefully considered use of 'relativity' to describe his theory: relativity, even in simple terms, describes uniform relative motion.¹¹ This type of approach to Whorfianism is common – if fallacious – and relies on the kind of incremental expansion seen in Meyers' construction above: reasoned movement from 'language *influences* perception' to 'language *determines* perception', and from there to 'language *controls* perception'. From this point, a slight movement yields 'language is *contingent* on thought and thought is similarly *dependent* on language' or some comparable formulation. Since it could be argued that such exponential intensification of Whorf's initial concept has now become so general as to have become axiomatic, I make no claim here to rectify such misunderstandings and misapplications; my aim is to clarify rather than to correct. In returning to Whorf's original writings on the 'principle of linguistic relativity', I offer an assessment of the utility and consequence of *the original conception of Whorfianism* as a theoretical approach through which to illuminate the particular instances of language which characterise dystopian literature.

2.2.2 Whorfianism: the parameters

We move in a world of language; unless we become aware of it, it can escape our attention and we notice it no more than a fish notices the water it swims in.

Walter E. Meyers (1980) *Aliens and Linguists*

Our knowledge of language is tacit: unless some aspect of it is called to our attention, we remain, for the most part, unaware of it. This factor is crucial to Whorf's explication of the connections between language and experience; his writings are punctuated by frequent references to this essential precondition to understanding the principles of linguistic relativity: in order to appreciate the potential of an alien language to encode reality differently, one must first acknowledge that one's native language is profoundly habitual and automatic. His most lucid treatment of this theme immediately precedes his 1940 definition of the 'linguistic relativity principle', where he states:

The phenomena of language are background phenomena, of which the talkers are unaware or, at the most, very dimly aware – as they are of the motes of dust in the air of a room, though the linguistic phenomena govern the talkers more as gravitation than as dust would. These automatic, involuntary patterns of language are not the same for all men but are specific for each language and constitute the formalized side of the language, or its "grammar" – a term that includes much more than the grammar we learned in the textbooks of our school days. (Whorf 1956: 221)

In Whorf's view, awareness of one's own language is at the level of 'background phenomena', perceived as faintly as 'motes of dust in the air of a room'; moreover, he here makes explicit the habitual nature of one's relationship with language. Elsewhere, he notes that 'the forms of a person's thoughts are controlled by inexorable laws of pattern of which he is unconscious. These patterns are the unperceived intricate systemizations of his own language' (1956: 252). Simply stated, his foundational argument is that, for most people – and as I shall argue, for most readers – language is deceptively transparent and instinctual: in short, automatised. In describing the customary view of language as 'automatic', 'involuntary', 'unconscious', and 'unperceived', Whorf does not make any claim that language is structurally or grammatically uncomplicated – in fact, he frequently highlights its complexity – but he does recognise that '[e]very language of course seems simple to its own speakers because they are unconscious of its structure' (1956: 82). Whorf terms this customarily unconscious linguistic status quo the *habitual thought world* (1956: 147), which is a term I adopt in this study, with the understanding that it is defined here just as Whorf defined it in his paper 'The Relation of Habitual Thought and Behaviour to Language', where he explains:

By "habitual thought" and "thought world" I mean more than simply language, i.e. than the linguistic patterns themselves. I include all the analogical and suggestive value of the patterns (e.g., our "imaginary space" and its distant implications), and all the give-and-take between language and the culture as a whole, wherein is a vast amount that is not linguistic but yet shows the shaping influence of language. In brief, this "thought world" is the microcosm that each man carries about within himself, by which he measures and understands what he can of the macrocosm.

(Whorf 1956: 147)

From this explanation, it can be seen that the habitual thought world is a functionally intricate and richly detailed world, but the crucial point is that it is an intra-linguistic world; it comprises only the world-view embodied in one's customary language. In Whorf's conception, this mental space, which 'shows the shaping influence of language', indiscernibly influences the way a person 'measures and understands' the world.

Accepting that one's own language is deeply automatised is the first step towards understanding that it may not encode all possible ways of perceiving reality. This clearly raises something of an incongruity in respect of this study: in order to adopt

an analytical approach, I – like Whorf – must acknowledge the tacit nature of language while at the same time disregarding it. Some clarification is, therefore, indicated, which I attempt here before proceeding. My approach to the language of dystopian fictions originates from a position corresponding to Whorf's: I presuppose that, for most readers, language, as an everyday phenomenon, is habitual, automatic, and outside 'critical consciousness and control' (Whorf 1956: 211). This stance is problematic in at least two respects. Firstly, the focus and direction of the present study requires detailed analyses of language, which entails a concomitant bringing into 'critical consciousness and control', not just of the language itself, but also of the metalanguage employed to discuss and evaluate the language of the fictions. Secondly – and equally paradoxically – any consideration of linguistic relativity may inescapably embody its own linguistic relativity, as Lucy (1992) despairingly notes:

If there is a linguistic relativity, then it may create real dilemmas for the conduct of research, because researchers themselves are not exempt from these linguistic influences [...]. A linguistic relativity, if there is such, will not only lie *out there* in the object of investigation, but will also penetrate right *into* the research process itself.

(Lucy 1992: 2)

'This "reflexivity" is a general problem', Lucy concludes, and notes that it intersects with questions of developing an adequate methodology (1992: 2). For the purposes of this study, I appeal to methodology – more specifically, the analytical methods of stylistics – as mitigation in respect of both potential contradictions. As discussed in §1.1, I adopt, in my analyses, the position of reader, and, consequently, recipient of effects generated through language. Similarly, from this position, I grant that I may also be the recipient of the effects of linguistic relativity. I rely on the objective nature of stylistics, which Katie Wales (2001) qualifies as "objective" [...] in the sense of being methodical, systematic, empirical, analytical, coherent, accessible, retrievable and consensual' (2001: 373), to attenuate both the language-within-language and the relativity-within-relativity paradoxes (although I acknowledge both remain intractable dilemmas, and make no claim to have reached an unassailable solution).

To return to Whorf's notion – that one must recognise 'habitual thought' before coming to any understanding that there may be possibilities beyond this – is to acknowledge that this is problematic chiefly *because* of the habitual nature of language: its automaticity tends toward an inward self-perpetuation of unawareness. The

‘difficulty of appraising such a far-reaching influence’, Whorf confirms, ‘is great because of its background character, because of the difficulty of standing aside from our own language, which is a habit and a cultural *non est disputandum*, and scrutinizing it objectively’ (1956: 138). The second step – recognising that other possibilities may exist – comes only when irregularities are brought into consciousness. In Whorf’s own words, ‘if a rule has absolutely no exceptions, it is not recognised as a rule or as anything else; it is then part of the background of experience of which we tend to remain unconscious’ (1956: 209). He continues:

Never having experienced anything in contrast to it, we cannot isolate it and formulate it as a rule until we so enlarge our experience and expand our base of reference that we encounter an interruption of its regularity. The situation is somewhat analogous to that of not missing the water until the well runs dry.

(Whorf 1956: 209)

From this statement, it follows that, for Whorf to have reached his conclusions about linguistic relativity, he must first have furthered his own experience of language and expanded his ‘base of reference’ with regard to it; similarly, by his own definition, he would have to have encountered an ‘interruption of its regularity’ in order to formulate any hypotheses. Consideration of the ways in which he did so is beyond the scope of this thesis, but Carroll’s biographical introduction to *Language, Thought, and Reality* and Whorf’s own explanations – especially those concerning the linguistic revelations he experienced during his work as a fire prevention engineer (1956: 134-137) and in relation to the Hopi language (1956: 137-159) – attest that he did indeed expand his linguistic knowledge far enough to encounter sufficient cross-linguistic ‘irregularities’ to suggest a systematic base for his ‘principle of linguistic relativity’.

If Whorf’s first step is to recognise the automaticity of language, and his second is to move beyond automaticity to recognise the latent potential of language to ‘differently’ package reality, his third is to examine other linguistically established world-views (which he did variously with the Hopi, Aztec, Hebrew, Nahuatl, and Maya languages (Lee 1996: xvii)). Only by empirically observing the ways in which other speech communities use their own ‘habitual thought worlds’ to measure and understand their experience of reality was Whorf able to recognise discontinuities and discrepancies from one language group to another. As he notes in a letter to John Carroll, he gave ‘a good deal of attention’ to ‘the psychic factors or constants of the American Indians in

the given linguistic community' in relation to 'the organization of raw experience into a consistent and readily communicable universe of ideas through the medium of linguistic patterns' (1956: 102). In other words, Whorf's method necessitated gaining access to alien or other 'habitual thought worlds'; only by encountering and becoming aware of other languages' differing configurations of world-view was he able to acquire the evidence for his comparative insights. His fourth step – and the one which receives most attention in critical terms – is to compare these languages with his own 'habitual' language, and thereby reveal linguistically encoded differentiation in the perception of reality, or world-view. This stage, then, is Whorf's formulation of his 'principle of linguistic relativity'. These four stages are retrievable from this well-known delineation of Whorf's thinking, which is often quoted as a definitive statement of his views:

Stage 1: *automaticity of habitual language:*

We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native languages.

Stage 2: *recognition of possibilities and linguistic irregularities:*

The categories and types that we isolate from the world of phenomena we do not find there because they stare every observer in the face; on the contrary, the world is presented in a kaleidoscopic flux of impressions which has to be organized by our minds –

Stage 3: *examination of other speech communities:*

and this means largely by the linguistic systems in our minds. We cut nature up, organize it into concepts, and ascribe significances as we do, largely because we are parties to an agreement to organize it this way – an agreement that holds throughout our speech community ...

Stage 4: *conclusion: the principle of linguistic relativity:*

... and is codified in the patterns of our language. The agreement is, of course, an implicit and unstated one, BUT ITS TERMS ARE ABSOLUTELY OBLIGATORY; we cannot talk at all except by subscribing to the organization and classification of data which the agreement decrees

(1956: 213-214)

These four constitutive stages of what I here term *Whorfianism* provide, in part, the basis for examining the language of dystopian fictions. What is suggested from Whorf's account of how he approached and formulated his 'principle of linguistic relativity' is the possibility that exists for all readers, as native speakers of natural

languages, to weaken the influence of their own language upon thought by following the line of enquiry that Whorf follows. Dystopian fictions, more than any other genre, encourage the reader to participate in this process of questioning and reformulating – or at least becoming aware of – the conceptions and preconceptions that inhere in habitual language; in foregrounding, defamiliarising, and transforming language, they provide the ‘interruption of regularity’ which is pivotal to a Whorfian understanding. In subsequent sections of this chapter I supplement the overall theoretical perspective for this study with other approaches; in the meantime, I consider an extract from the opening page of a dystopian text – Ayn Rand’s *Anthem* (1938) – in the light of Whorfianism-as-process to demonstrate how this approach may contribute toward an account of the ways in which the reader’s response to the language of dystopia is implicated in its consciousness-changing tendency. *Anthem*, in common with most dystopian fictions, begins *in medias res*, pitching the reader straight into the narrative world without the benefit of orienting description or background. This structural consideration is reflected in the language of Rand’s text: the reader is presented with the language of the character’s habitual, automatised world-view; moreover, the peculiarities of its language appear without introduction or explanation. In effect, the reader’s position is analogous to that of Whorf among the Hopi: the reader encounters an alien speech community, just as Whorf entered the speech community of his Native American research subjects. The narrative of *Anthem* begins:

It is a sin to write this. It is a sin to think words no others think and to put them down upon a paper no others are to see. It is base and evil. It is as if we were speaking alone to no ears but our own. And we know well that there is no transgression blacker than to do or think alone.

(*Anthem*, opening page)

The first thing to note is that the language here would appear to be completely conventional: there is no evidence of neologism, or of typographical or structural deviation; the lexis, grammar, and orthography are standard, as is the syntax. The plural personal pronoun *we* appears twice, and the genitive *our* once, but there is no indication that there is any significance in this; at this point, it simply suggests that more than one referent is implied. Since, for the English-speaking reader, the language is essentially unmarked standard language, this opening paragraph invites an automatised response: the language has not yet been brought into consciousness. In Whorfian terms, the

language here is still a 'background phenomenon', corresponding with the reader's habitual thought world.

By the beginning of the third paragraph – still the opening page of the novel – the second stage of Whorfianism is suggested:

It is dark here. The flame of the candle stands still in the air. Nothing moves in this tunnel save our hand on the paper. We are alone here under the earth. It is a fearful word, alone. The laws say that none among men may be alone, ever and at any time, for this is the great transgression and the root of all evil.

(*Anthem*, opening page)

While the language remains standard in most respects discussed above, specific inconsistencies in grammar and vocabulary begin to awaken recognition that this is not, in fact, either entirely ordinary language, or an entirely everyday, familiar world. Firstly, in 'our hand on the paper' there is a disquieting lack of agreement for number between the plural possessive pronoun *our* and the singular noun *hand* which suggests that all is not quite as might be expected. Secondly, attention is drawn to an inconsistency of language at the level of lexis: *alone* appears for the third time on the opening page (and then twice more), and it appears with the plural pronoun and verb form. While *we are alone* is a grammatically well-formed phrase, and is certainly possible in English in some circumstances, its appearance here is beginning to suggest some irregularity. More specifically, this 'irregularity' is of the kind that, for Whorf, indicates the bringing into consciousness of something which is no longer a 'background phenomenon': automaticity is revealed and challenged. This is intensified by the short sentence which follows: 'It is a fearful word, alone', since *fearful* directs focus more intently on *alone* as a concept. The discrepancy between the known world and the unknown world of the narrative is emphasised more sharply as the reader discovers the 'laws' decree that 'none among men may be alone'. From the point of view of a reader's world where the habitual patterns of language would suggest that *alone*, in general, would apply to a single referent, which 'none among men' – understood as *no-one* – would corroborate, this language is becoming internally contradictory: the repeated *alone* seems incongruous in the context provided by the use of plural pronouns. As Whorf notes, it is only when 'a rule has absolutely no exceptions' that it is 'part of the background of experience of which we tend to remain unconscious' (1956: 209). Only by moving beyond the standard frame of reference – or

'encounter[ing] an interruption of its regularity' (*ibid*) – do we begin to recognise that other ways of framing the world are possible. This section of the narrative, then, is fulfilling the requirements of the second step of Whorfianism: it is extending and expanding the reader's base of reference, and providing the kind of linguistic inconsistencies and irregularities that could suggest the existence of other potential ways of perceiving the world.

The third step of Whorfianism – the examination of another speech community or language – is invoked by the final sentence of the novel's opening page:

And now there is nothing here save our one body, and it is strange to see only two legs stretched on the ground, and on the wall before us the shadow of our one head.

(*Anthem*, opening page)

This extraordinarily unfamiliar juxtaposition of plural pronouns with a singular referent – *our one body, our one head* – trenchantly denies and challenges the security and familiarity of the reader's habitual thought world; it disrupts the known and familiar patterns which are commonplace in his or her speech community, and unequivocally declares that this world – the world of the narrative – is not equivalent linguistically to the reader's world. This closely parallels the third stage of Whorfianism, where differences, variations, and inconsistencies of language (now de-automised and brought into consciousness) are considered, examined, and contemplated. In short, it alerts the reader to the possibility that the 'reality' of the narrative world is differently configured to that which is known and familiar in the extra-textual world: that the characters' view of their world must be somehow differently constructed or constituted if they habitually refer to a single entity by using pronouns in the plural form. This third stage of Whorfianism-as-process arguably continues for the duration of the text: in gradually assimilating the language of the characters, the reader progressively comes to understand their consciousness or world-view. In the case of *Anthem*, it becomes apparent in the course of the narrative that the pronoun-to-referent irregularity equates to the group consciousness demanded by its collectivist society; similarly, the inconsistency of associating the plural pronoun with the word *alone* reflects the narrative world's communal disdain for individualism.

In essence, the opening page of this novel represents the collision of two distinct habitual thought worlds: that of the reader with that of the narrating character. The

reader of *Anthem* is thus thrust into a kind of Whorfian role: s/he encounters a linguistically ‘other’ world in the early pages of the narrative, one which challenges and disrupts a settled or automatic reception, and one which makes an implicit claim for an alternative way of signifying conception or constitution of world-view. If the reader of *Anthem*, like Moylan’s ‘willing reader’ (2000: xvii), accepts this didactic-linguistic invitation to think about the textual world in de-habituated ways, and is able to reflect this de-automatised world back onto his or her base-reality, then they may, as Moylan anticipates, return to ‘their own worlds with new or clearer perceptions’ (2000: xvii).

I make no claim that the typical reader of dystopian fiction will proceed to the fourth stage of Whorfianism, and will formulate a detailed account of the cause and effect of linguistic relativity; I do plan to demonstrate, however, that the characteristic transformations, creations, and manipulations of language in these fictions encourage - or even enact - the first three stages of Whorfianism in such a way as to motivate or induce a changed world-view for its readers. In making this claim for dystopian fiction, I am influenced by opinions from a non-linguistic perspective; from literary criticism, for example, comes the assertion that reading dystopia encourages ‘analytic thinking as a reader engages with the premises and puzzles of an intellectually demanding text’ (Moylan 2000: xvii), and furthermore, that this engagement ‘requires consistent thought [and] mental leaps that stretch the mind beyond the habitual or the accepted’ (*ibid*). While I concur wholly with this view, and aim to demonstrate, through the application of a linguistic theory, how language - and linguistic relativity - is implicated in such ‘mental leaps’ in the reading of this literary genre, I remain aware that there are several obstacles which hinder the simple reassignment of a linguistic framework to a literary application; furthermore, even within the study of language, Whorfianism can be problematic (and is frequently problematised). It is to these issues I turn in the next sections.

2.2.3 English and East Martian: dystopia’s ‘two languages’

Western culture has made, through language, a provisional analysis of reality and, without correctives, holds resolutely to that analysis as final. The only correctives lie in all those other tongues which [...] have arrived at different, but equally logical, provisional analyses.

Benjamin Lee Whorf (1940) ‘Languages and Logic’

Whorf’s principle of linguistic relativity has always been controversial, with linguists often polarised into distinct ‘for’ and ‘against’ factions with regard to it, while others

remain ambivalent (Stephen Murray, for instance, who observes, '[d]espite a widespread feeling that "There's something there," no one has established quite what it is' (1982: 158)). Earlier twentieth-century trends in linguistic theories, such as Noam Chomsky's construal of the 'universality' and 'innateness' of language, at times, almost completely overshadowed it, while more recent theoretical developments (George Lakoff's notion of conceptual metaphor, for instance) have revived interest in the potential of Whorfianism to rationalise beliefs about the connection between language and perception. On the whole, Whorfianism remains contentious, yet compelling: as George Miller notes 'if the Whorfian hypothesis is gone, it is not forgotten, for there is something right about it' (1978: 95). It is not my intention to rehearse the range of competing arguments here, since they are well-documented elsewhere;¹² rather I propose to outline, in broad terms, the principal objections to the theory where they pertain to this project and present some validation for the use of it here. In the main, opposition to Whorfianism centres on the issue of translatability, which presupposes the application of Whorfianism across at least two distinct languages. I shall return to this contra-Whorf argument below; but first, it is necessary to address the question of whether or not it can be said that there exist 'different' languages in dystopian fiction.

In §1.5.1 I introduced the idea of two languages – that is to say, speculative and reflective language – in dystopian fiction, and discussed these in terms of a 'language of the future' (i.e. speculative) and a 'language of the past' (i.e. reflective). Reflective language, as I have noted, seldom differs qualitatively from the standard English of the author's historical spacetime; it is – at least in terms of form – essentially our own familiar language. Speculative language, however, differs significantly from standard English as we know it, and the difference is so marked in these fictions that it can constitute, I believe, a distinct 'future' language. Although some commentators contend that dystopian treatments of language do not adequately capture or reflect the reality of a distant future – Beauchamp (1974), for example, claims that 'their language is indistinguishable from our own, and thus anachronistic' (1974: 463) – I would suggest that dystopian fictional languages do represent a *possible* future development of new and different language. Given that the pace of language change transforms language so rapidly that we are content to talk about 'Old English', 'Medieval English', and 'Renaissance English', for example as specific 'languages'; it seems inconsistent that we are less inclined to assume that language change will render our own current

language a distinct, identifiable language from the vantage point of the future.¹³ Whorf recognised that the language of the future would ‘facilitate advances in conceptual thinking’ (Lee 1996: 247), and, while he made no claim that this would be an entirely different language, he does acknowledge that language will change in the future to reflect new ways of conceptualising the world:

And now, turning to the more distant future [...] to look at the subject of linguistics and its bearing upon thinking from the standpoint of the whole human species. [...] We cannot but suppose that the future developments of thinking are of primary importance to the human species. They may even determine the duration of human existence on the planet earth or in the universe. The possibilities open to thinking are the possibilities of recognizing relationships on the mental or intellectual plane, such as will lead to ever wider and more penetratingly significant systems of relationships. These possibilities are inescapably bound up with systems of linguistic expression. The story of their evolution in man is the story of man’s linguistic development.

(Whorf 1956: 84)

Dystopia, typically, expresses the possible ‘evolution’ of a society in the distant future, and, as Whorf suggests, this evolution is ‘inescapably bound up with systems of linguistic expression’: in reworking this world into displaced potential worlds, dystopia consistently maps out new linguistic territory, and refigures language into a representation of an alternative mode of being, of knowing, and of thinking about the world. Dystopia is crucially, to use Whorf’s expression, ‘the story of man’s linguistic development’. While I agree with Beauchamp that it is rare to see an entire narrative ‘create an imaginatively valid language reflecting the specific social and technological realities of the future’ (1974: 464), and sustain it throughout (although Russell Hoban’s *Riddley Walker* (1980) comes creditably close), there is sufficient linguistic innovation and creativity apparent in the speculative language of dystopian fictions to justify describing this as a separate future language. In this, I follow Eric S. Rabkin (1979), who, in his article ‘Metalinguistics and Science Fiction’, distinguishes between ‘the language of the reader’ and ‘the language of the narrator or of the characters’ (1979: 85). These separate languages – ‘English’ and ‘East Martian’ respectively in Rabkin’s conception – feature consistently throughout dystopian narratives, insofar as Rabkin’s ‘English’ is the standard narrative language, and his ‘East Martian’ is the speculative language, created by the author, and ascribed to the characters and their world. This language, which predictably occurs in dystopian fictions, is quite clearly not familiar everyday contemporary language; the characters speak the language of their

indeterminately futuristic world, while the narrative also speaks of – and in – this language of the future. Also of relevance to the discussion of ‘two languages’ is Bakhtin’s notion of *heteroglossia*, which, while not featuring explicitly in my discussions, supports the idea that a narrative may comprise more than one language. Sue Vice (1997) summarises Bakhtin’s approach thus:

Bakhtin uses the term ‘heteroglossia’ to mean not simply the variety of languages which occur in everyday life, but also their entry into literary texts. These languages bring with them their everyday associations, which can of course include literary ones, as well as making their own in the textual setting.

(Vice 1997: 18)

Although Whorfianism in its original conception pertains to differing *spoken* languages, or language groups, rather than written languages *per se*, its fundamental tenets hinge on comparison of differences *between* languages. In positing the existence of two distinct languages in the dystopian fictions I consider here, my aim is to maintain the cross-linguistic integrity of the notion of Whorfianism while conveying its precepts to a literary context. In the effort to relate what is essentially a spoken-language theory to accommodate the differing demands of a literary narrative application, my approach has been informed by the work of earlier linguists, notably Myra Barnes, whose *Linguistics and Languages in Science Fiction* (1974) includes a foundational attempt to illuminate dystopian language use via Whorfian ‘metalinguistics’, and Walter E. Meyers, whose *Aliens and Linguists: Language Study and Science Fiction* (1980) explicitly ‘is aimed at extending and to some extent correcting’ Barnes’ formative explorations (1980: 3). Additionally, in mediating this transfer through stylistic methodology, I appeal to the longstanding stylistic model of recognising that two distinct languages can co-exist within the bounds of one text written in English, a precedent which was established by M.A.K. Halliday in his landmark (1981) essay ‘Linguistic Function and Literary Style: An Inquiry into the Language of William Golding’s “The Inheritors”’. In this piece, Halliday illustrates his conception of an *ideational function* of language (that which ‘serves as the expression of content [...] through which the speaker or writer embodies in language his experience of the phenomena of the real world’ (1981: 327)) by way of an analysis of the language of the two tribes of Golding’s novel, *The Inheritors* (1955). Halliday concludes that the language of the last sixteen pages of the novel, which is the language of a second ‘tribe’ (Language C) is so different from that used by the characters populating the rest of the

narrative (Language A) as to constitute a distinct language. In comparing these ‘two “languages”’ (1981: 352), Halliday asserts that ‘[t]here is no doubt that the first paragraph is basically in Language A and the second in Language C’ (1981: 349). In positing ‘two languages’ Halliday initiated extensive discussions and exchanges within stylistics which took a variety of directions,¹⁴ but significantly, as David L. Hoover points out, none of these critical debates actually ‘question the division of the novel into two languages’ (2003: 347). Hoover has contributed a corpus-based computational stylistic analysis to the discussion in his (1999) *Language and Style in The Inheritors*, which he later augments with a further corpus-based cluster-analysis and frequency investigation in his (2003) article, ‘Multivariate Analysis and the Study of Style Variation’. In the latter study of *The Inheritors*, Hoover concludes that:

[O]n the basis of a much fuller analysis of the structure and content of the vocabulary of the novel [than in his (1999) study], I argue that Halliday’s division of the novel into two languages is a legitimate one.

(Hoover 2003: 348)

In the light of this recent, corpus-based evidence, which substantiates Halliday’s original partition of one text into two discrete languages, I proceed from the understanding that there is a valid and justifiable case for proposing that two languages may exist within one fictional work written in ‘English’. Accordingly, I offer that speculative language (the language of the future) and reflective language (the language of the past) may be treated, both in stylistic and in Whorfian terms, as two separate languages. Furthermore, and acknowledging Halliday’s influence on my thinking, I propose to show that each language encodes ‘a particular way of looking at experience’ (Halliday 1981: 342); ‘a norm, a world-view, a structuring of experience that is significant’ (1981: 354); and ‘the linguistic representation of experience’ (1981: 355).

2.3.1 The Greeks had a word for it: translatability and folk linguistics

We handle even our plain English with much greater effect if we direct it from the vantage point of a multilingual awareness.

Benjamin Lee Whorf (1940) ‘Languages and Logic’

While Whorfianism as a broad idea informs the theoretical outlook of this study, and it is in order to maintain the academic-linguistic veracity of this approach that I ground my discussion of it on the existence of two separate languages in dystopia, I move outside of a specifically academic framework in order to address the problem of

translatability in relation to Whorfianism. This is not to say that I abandon scholarly focus altogether; rather it is that I appeal to popular conceptions of language, or ‘folk’ linguistics in order to respond to some of the more esoteric and abstruse anti-Whorf arguments. Since dystopian fiction is essentially a ‘popular fiction’ genre, especially at its intersections with science fiction, and since this study repositions the notion of ‘the reader’ to reflect this (see §1.1), I consider common, prevalent views of language as providing a more extensive, more readerly critical perspective.

To outline the substance of the academic arguments I begin within the discipline of linguistics, where the main contra-Whorf line of reasoning revolves around issues of translatability, and is generally advanced as some permutation of the following, as presented in William Frawley’s (1991) mordant summation of the typical anti-Sapir-Whorf hypothesis attitude:

If the Sapir/Whorf Hypothesis is correct, then Whorf and Sapir themselves could not have known that it is correct. If language, culture, and thought are all bound up as they say, then Whorf and Sapir are forever trapped in their own language/culture/thought, and their hypothesis that language variation reflects cultural and conceptual variation is a figment of their own language, culture, and thought [...] So, the only way for the Sapir/Whorf Hypothesis to be correct is for it to be incorrect.

(Frawley 1991: 46)

Since Whorf (and Sapir) were able to communicate their findings, the typical argument runs, their conceptualisations cannot have been determined by language, or they would have been unable to perceive or articulate the differences they found. In a similar vein, Donald Davidson’s argument on translatability, presented in his essay ‘On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme’ (2001 [1974]) contends that because differences in languages can be explained in one’s own language – as Whorf used his native English to explain the conceptual differences of the Hopi language – this necessarily means that those differences cannot be conceptual differences, or the translation would be impossible. Davidson finds it absurd that Whorf, ‘wanting to demonstrate that Hopi incorporates a metaphysics so alien to ours that Hopi and English cannot, as he puts it, “be calibrated”, uses English to convey the contents of sample Hopi sentences’ (2001 [1974]: 184). Davidson’s argument here would appear to rely on a complete equivalence of language – or linguistic symbol or sign – to meaning; the kind of absolute correspondence that is suggested only by the most extreme ‘prisonhouse’ versions of linguistic determinism. David Crystal notes that such determinism ‘is

unlikely to have any adherents now' (1997: 15), yet the translatability argument continues as Crystal's comments demonstrate:

The fact that successful translations between languages can be made is a major argument against [Whorfianism], as is the fact that the conceptual uniqueness of a language such as Hopi can nonetheless be explained using English. That there are some conceptual differences between cultures is undeniable, but this is not to say that the differences are so great that mutual comprehension is impossible. One language may take many words to say what another language says in a single word, but in the end the circumlocution can make the point.

(Crystal 1997: 15)

Crystal illustrates his point by reference to the range of words for *hole* in Pintupi, an Aboriginal language, which 'takes between three and 14 English words to distinguish the various senses' (1997: 15). The most prolix circumlocution necessitated by this is for *katarta*, which is not succinctly translatable into English, and in Pintupi, defines 'the hole left by a goanna when it has broken the surface after hibernation' (*ibid*). Crystal proceeds to balance his rebuttal of Whorfianism with what he calls 'a limited salvation for the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis' which he finds in psycholinguistic studies, and summarises thus:

Language may not determine the way we think, but it does influence the way we perceive and remember, and it affects the ease with which we perform mental tasks. Several experiments have shown that people recall things more easily if the things correspond to readily available words or phrases. And people certainly find it easier to make a conceptual distinction if it neatly corresponds to words available in their language.

(Crystal 1997: 15)

The psycholinguistic studies to which Crystal refers will be, in all probability, empirical studies, complete with informant-participants: people who demonstrably 'recall' and 'make a conceptual distinction' more easily if there is a 'readily available' or 'neat' correspondence 'available in their language'. In other words, if there is a one-to-one mapping of word onto concept that concept will be more clearly remembered, understood, and evoked. People (and here, in reproducing Crystal's non-specific term for language-users, I infer 'readers' also) *like* to have access to a word which directly encodes and encapsulates a notion which might otherwise require a lengthy circumlocution. The numerous popular (non-academic) language reference titles in high-street bookshops are testament to this; thus it is to popular conceptions of language and its usage I now turn.

The notion that the English language cannot ‘label’ certain concepts because it lacks the necessary expressive tokens is one that is firmly established in folk linguistics, or popular conceptions of language. Fuelling this anxiety is the belief that other languages *do* possess the elusive, all-encompassing, definitive lexicalisations which enable more accurate and meaningful communication of a range of perceptions and impressions. Indeed, several recent mainstream titles demonstrate the widespread belief that other languages possess words for things that cannot be succinctly or meaningfully labelled in English: concepts that are, it is supposed, *untranslatable*.

Howard Rheingold’s (2000) book: *They Have a Word for It: A Lighthearted Lexicon of Untranslatable Words and Phrases*, for example, expressly incorporates the idea of untranslatability in its title, thus seeming to confirm that English is somehow incomplete; that it lacks functional or descriptive equivalence with other languages. In his lexicon, Rheingold includes 150 words from 40 languages, which, he claims, have no counterpart in English. One such example is *tingo*, from the Easter Island language Pascuanese, defined as ‘outrageously aggressive borrowing behaviour’ (2000: 18). In relation to *tingo*, Rheingold makes a distinction between those concepts we can know – or know of – and those concepts we can succinctly and precisely verbalise, saying:

[T]he concept of outrageous borrowing as a form of social aggression is well known to most English-speaking people. But we don’t have specific words for different kinds of outrageous borrowing.

(Rheingold 2000: 18)

It is perhaps because English so conspicuously lacks a concise word or phrase to describe such anti-social borrowing that this word appears again in the title of a more recent popular volume of words for which there are no direct equivalents in English. Adam Jacot de Boinod’s (2005) *The Meaning of Tingo and Other Extraordinary Words from Around the World* records *tingo* as ‘borrowing things from a friend’s house, one by one, until he has nothing left’.¹⁵ The engaging unfamiliarity of other languages’ ability to articulate concepts that English does not name is reflected in a third recently published volume, *In Other Words: A Language Lover’s Guide to the Most Intriguing Words Around the World* (2005) by Christopher J. Moore. Moore’s book similarly lists examples of words which lack a synonymous parallel in English.

The very existence of titles such as these exemplifies two common beliefs: firstly that language – more specifically, the currently recorded lexicon of English – does not

encode or embody all possibilities, and secondly, that other languages do (or at least they encode or embody *different* or *other* possibilities). While linguists, as exemplified by Crystal, above, insist that the English language has the necessary and sufficient resources and creativity to articulate all potentialities, even if that requires circumlocution, this view conflicts markedly with popular opinion. Widely available lexicons such as Rheingold's, Jacot de Boinod's, and Moore's serve to perpetuate and reinforce the existing folk beliefs by, in effect, illustrating the 'shortfall' of labels in English for certain things, states, and actions. Furthermore, they assume a pedagogical function: the back cover of Moore (2005), for instance, claims that it will give readers 'a whole new vocabulary for those elusive things you never had a word for', while Rheingold's back-cover blurb suggests that these 'genuinely useful words' have the capacity to 'open up new ways of understanding and experiencing life'. Rheingold expands this point in his introductory remarks to the first chapter, 'The Cracks Between our Worldviews', where he claims:

[Y]ou should know that reading this book might have serious side-effects at a deeper level. Even if you read one page as you stand in a bookstore, you are likely to find a custom or an idea that could change the way you think about the world.

(Rheingold 2000: 1)

'It has to do with the insidious way words mold thoughts', Rheingold continues (*ibid*), and goes on to explain his quest to find '[w]ords that would open a window on the way other cultures encourage people to think and feel, and thus point out new ways for us to think and feel' (2000: 2). Rheingold reflects further on the connections between the words he sourced and their effect on world-view, both from his own perspective: 'I found myself looking at the mundane elements of everyday life through a new kind of lens', he recalls, 'which revealed to me dimensions in my familiar environment that I simply had not seen before because I hadn't known how to look' (2000: 4); and from the point of view of his readers, for whom '[f]inding a name for something is a way of conjuring its existence, of making it possible for people to see a pattern where they didn't see anything before' (*ibid*). During the compilation of the book, Rheingold 'gradually came to realize' he says, 'that the collective human worldview is far larger than any one of our individual languages leads us to believe' (2000: 4); moreover, in consequence of this, he 'became sympathetic to the idea that we think and behave the way we do in large part because we have words that make these thoughts and

behaviours possible, acceptable, and useful' (*ibid*). While Rheingold gestures in the direction of linguistics (and the beliefs of linguists in general) by sketching in the fundamentals of linguistic relativity, he emphasises the popular, non-academic focus of his collection: 'although I respect the need for formal, systematic study of language', he acknowledges, 'I have never strayed too far from the idea that languages are living systems and are shaped by people who use words, not by linguists who study them' (2000: 9).

Having established this non-specialist 'folk' stance, he proceeds to make some interesting claims for the influence of language: not only can it 'make visible that which was previously unnoticed [and] help us to see new characteristics and possibilities' (2000: 8), but also, the influence of language can 'become an instrument of change' (2000: 5). In a passage which chimes conspicuously with the popular beliefs about language which figure so often in dystopian fiction, Rheingold claims:

If you want to change the way people think, you can educate them, brainwash them, bribe them, drug them. Or you can teach them a few carefully chosen new words. I believe that the memes and messages conveyed by the entries in these pages have the power to change the way you see the world. [...] Ultimately, I believe the foreign words collected and discussed here have the potential for transforming the way our entire culture sees the world.

(Rheingold 2000: 5)

The views expressed here may be at odds with the standpoint of linguistics as a science; nonetheless, they represent strongly held 'common-sense' general beliefs about the power of language through which 'a few carefully chosen words' ostensibly 'have the power to change the way you see the world'. These views also adhere to the folk belief that language – and concomitantly, its meanings and associations – can be 'given' – granted, conferred, or made available (as in these books' aim to present novel lexis and meaning). Rheingold is quite explicit with regard to his intention to empower readers and provide them with the means to perceive the world differently, urging them to understand that:

[T]hese words are meant to be used. Some will make you see things differently, many will help you show others how to see in new ways. [...] Go ahead and make these words an active part of your vocabulary. [...] You will find a confident power when you muster the courage to help expand the scope of our language.

(Rheingold 2000: 10) [original emphasis]

The kind of folk-linguistic notions Rheingold espouses – that new forms of language, encoding new ways of perceiving the world, are both available to those who would seek them out, and once learned, confer a certain ‘power to change the way you see the world’ – are exactly the kind of folk-linguistic notions that arise out of – and feed into – popular beliefs that some things exist beyond experience, or beyond knowing, until they have been harnessed by language and brought into being by lexicalisation. This belief, in essence, is diametrically opposed to academic-linguistic thinking in terms of Whorfianism: the very argument that denies Whorfianism in some linguistic circles – that is to say, that cross-language translation is *always* possible, even if that necessitates lengthy circumlocution – is precisely the same argument which confirms folk-beliefs in Whorfianism. The lengthy circumlocution, in the shape of the wordy description and explanation (on occasion amounting to several hundreds of words of definition in the above-mentioned lexicons) necessary for accurate translation of a single-word concept from another language, stands as evidence, from the generalised non-academic viewpoint, that there are concepts encoded in other languages which have no equivalent in English. Moreover, it is only by absorbing these new, unfamiliar words into one’s vocabulary, as Rheingold advocates, that the associated concepts can become known, understood, and used.

These folk-linguistic beliefs often inform and underpin dystopian fictions, notably those which advance the notion that learning different words, or even a different language, will manifestly entail an altered world-view in the language-learner. Orwell’s bleak depiction of Newspeak in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* stands as the paradigm case of this type of ‘enforced’ Whorfianism, but other dystopias embrace the notion that characters’ perceptions and behaviour can be altered by the introduction of new words into their vocabulary. David Karp’s (1953) dystopia, *One*, for example, features a ‘psychosemanticist’ whose expertise is called upon in the treatment of Professor Burden, the protagonist who is alleged to have perpetrated the grave crime of heresy. The expert explains:

Essentially Burden is a problem in re-education. He must be retaught the meanings of words like a bright child who has, without instruction or guidance, constructed a world of words that sound the way he likes them to sound, mean what he likes to think they mean, and uses them the way he prefers to use them. After all, a man without words is a blank. We have to erase Burden’s understanding and begin again. Change his appreciation, understanding, and use of words and you will change the patterns of his

thoughts and the motives that move him. You will only then permanently erase the basic heresies that he maintains.

(*One*, p. 80)

Significantly, the belief underlying this passage is that a change, or ‘re-education’ in respect of language will result in simultaneous change in ‘the patterns of his thoughts and the motives that move him’. In essence, the novel’s ‘psychosemanticist’ appeals to exactly those popular beliefs about language that motivate the publication of lexicons of ‘untranslatable’ words: the popular conviction that language not only encodes, encapsulates, or even enacts one’s ways of knowing, understanding, and being in the world, but also that there exists language ‘out there’ – beyond habitual experience – which makes other ways of knowing and perceiving possible. Together with the belief – erroneous from the point of view of scientific linguistics, but feasible from the point of view of folk linguistics – that language can be ‘given’ or ‘taken away’, these popular conceptions of language and perception are comfortably compatible with treatments of language in dystopian fictions.

At the intra-textual level – as seen in the extract from *One*, above – such notions often drive characterisation and plot, and rely, for their effectiveness, on the implicit understanding that language, and language users, have the above-noted qualities and potentials. In itself, this characteristic of dystopia, as other commentators have observed, is inherently Whorfian insofar as it evinces the fundamental premises of linguistic relativity (or, as is sometimes the case, linguistic determinism). In later chapters I attend to this intra-textual evocation of Whorfianism, but here my intention is to return from dystopian treatments of familiar and unfamiliar language to briefly examine the relationship of untranslatability – or language beyond experience – with the reader’s extra-textual reception of language. As discussed in §1.4, I work from the position that readers’ perceptions of reality can be altered by reading dystopian fictions; similarly, Rheingold’s comments above demonstrate the popular belief that readers’ perceptions of reality can be altered by introducing them to new language. The obvious connection – that readers’ perceptions of reality can be altered by the *language* of dystopian fictions – is a recurring theme in this study, and one which depends to some extent on taking into account unorthodox, folk-linguistic beliefs about the potency of language to act as an agent of changed perceptions. Whorfianism is thus implicated in this extra-textual relationship also; since lexicons such as the three examples cited above arguably ‘enact’ a microcosmic version of Whorfianism for the reader, since the

reader becomes more linguistically self-aware through the process of scrutinising his or her own language in comparison to others (or through comparing other languages to his or her own). In effect, they acknowledge – or at least, presume – the existence of the reader’s habitual thought world as a starting point, and proceed to demonstrate the ways in which other languages encode alternative ways of conceptualising the world. Potentially, as Rheingold repeatedly asserts, these lexicalisations of experience outside the familiar can ‘have the potential for transforming the way our entire culture sees the world’ (2000: 5). Indeed, Rheingold himself exemplifies the Whorfian possibilities that inhere in bringing language into consciousness: he reports that the words that ‘have entered his own vocabulary’, ‘affected his worldview’ and which he ‘uses from time to time’ over 25 years since he first sourced them include *dirigiste*, *wabi*, *sabi*, *dharma*, and *schadenfreude* (all of which are included in his lexicon).¹⁶

2.3.2 For want of a word: linguistic inadequacy

The question is simply of finding a way in which one can give thought an objective existence.

George Orwell (1940) ‘New Words’

I remain in the field of folk linguistics, broadly defined, to examine some prevalent beliefs about the human facility to encode experience linguistically, but here the focus shifts from readers’ beliefs about language to authors’ beliefs about language. More specifically, I look at notions of language and perception as expressed by authors of dystopian fictions. Each of the authors discussed below has, at some point, commented on the inadequacy of language as a fully expressive tool, noting that there are some areas of experience that are beyond the current capacity of the language to convey. Significantly, however, these authors illustrate the belief that un-named experience can be actualised into ontological wholeness via language itself; that naming, or lexicalising prelinguistic concepts has the power to bring them into a shared consciousness.

Linguistic inadequacy, in isolation, is often seen as proof positive that the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (especially linguistic determinism) is flawed, or as Steven Pinker claims, ‘wrong, all wrong’ (1994: 57). Pinker deploys the argument of linguistic inadequacy to refute the broad-spectrum hypothesis, saying:

Think about it. We have all had the experience of uttering or writing a sentence, then stopping and realizing that it wasn’t exactly what we meant to say. To have that feeling, there has to be a “what we meant to say” that is

different from what we said. Sometimes it is not easy to find *any* words that properly convey a thought.

(Pinker 1994: 57-58)

Pinker continues by asking ‘if thoughts depended on words, how could a new word ever be coined?’ (1994: 58). Pinker’s argument here (‘if thoughts *depended* on words’) is aimed at the most extreme version of linguistic determinism, which, as we have seen, Whorf did not subscribe to, but nonetheless, these kinds of arguments are often advanced against linguistic relativity. Pinker later reluctantly notes that empirical testing of what he calls the ‘banal “weak” versions of the Whorfian hypothesis’ (1994: 65) ‘have actually worked’ (*ibid*), and that in these experiments, ‘language is, technically speaking, influencing a form of thought’, but rejects this finding with a dismissive ‘but so what?’ (1994: 66). The ‘so what?’ for these authors of dystopian fictions lies in the inherent ‘connectedness’ of language and perception; the correlative that inexorably links language with experience: in much the same way that ‘finding a name for something is a way of conjuring its existence’ (Rheingold 2000: 4) in terms of the issue of translation considered above, these authors disclose the belief that language – especially new language – can reconfigure ways of perceiving the world.

Brave New World’s author, Aldous Huxley, for example, was aware of the existence of states of being that are outside and beyond language. In his essay ‘Culture and the Individual’ (1963),¹⁷ Huxley insists that ‘words in the familiar language do not stand (however inadequately) for things’. He explains:

The universe in which men pass their lives is the creation of what Indian philosophy calls *Nama-Rupa*, Name and Form. Reality is a continuum, a fathomlessly mysterious and infinite Something, whose outward aspect is something we call Matter and whose inwardness is what we call Mind. Language is a device for taking the mystery out of Reality and making it amenable to human comprehension and manipulation. Acculturated man breaks up the continuum, attaches labels to a few of the fragments, projects the labels into the outside world and thus creates for himself an all-too-human universe of separate objects, each of which is merely the embodiment of a name, a particular illustration of some traditional abstraction.

(Huxley 1963)¹⁸

This passage demonstrates Huxley’s belief that language is not merely inadequate, but that it is radically incomplete. Only ‘a few of the fragments’ of the potentiality of the continuum that is reality have been captured and subsumed into linguistic form; the rest remain, but are exterior to language. The lexicalisation of the segmentary parts that has

already occurred in a given culture represents the totality of that culture's language, and therefore a necessarily limited world-view, since, Huxley notes, 'most of them naïvely believe that culture-hallowed words about things are as real as, or even realer than their perceptions of the things themselves'.¹⁹ Only those who possess the capacity to see beyond the constraints of language, he believes, (citing artists, visionaries, and mystics) are able to 'cut holes in the fence of verbalized symbols that hems [them] in'.²⁰

George Orwell, similarly, in his essay, 'New Words' (Angus *et al* 2000 [1940?]),²¹ claims that 'parts of our experience [are] now practically unamenable to language', and that 'our language is practically useless for describing anything that goes on inside the brain' (2000: 3). Before proposing the deliberate, considered invention of new words to capture those abstract states that are 'unamenable to language', Orwell examines several instances of linguistic inadequacy. Within these he includes dream-states, where, he maintains, 'no words that convey the atmosphere of dreams exist in our language' (*ibid*); certain feelings, emotions, and responses, which constitute 'things an ordinary man has to keep locked up because there are no words to express them' (2000: 9-10); and the capacity to reason, where he suggests 'you are invariably aware that your *real* reason will not go into words' (2000: 3-4). The result of what Orwell frames as the disparity between language and meaning ('words', he says, 'are no liker to the reality than chessmen to living beings' (2000: 3)), is a shortfall amounting to deceit on the part of the writer. 'The art of writing', he asserts, 'is in fact largely the perversion of words' because 'the lumpishness of words results in constant falsification' (2000: 5-6). For Orwell, the root of the problem of linguistic inadequacy lies in the difficulty of coding certain concepts. His solution, accordingly, lies in inventing a vocabulary to name abstract concepts in such a way that they become easily codable; a system that exhibits an isomorphic correspondence between sign and signified, and that evinces a level of exactitude that is 'like working out an equation in algebra' (2000: 6). This mathematically precise solution reflects Orwell's belief that language – or at least mid-twentieth-century English – requires radical modification, not only in order to express meaning fully and unambiguously, but also to render it less liable to prevarication. In order to effect this scheme to verbalise the previously unarticulated, Orwell proposes:

What is wanted is to discover the now nameless feelings that men have *in common*. All the powerful motives which will not go into words and which

are a cause of constant lying and misunderstanding, could be tracked down, given visible form, agreed upon, and named.

(Orwell 2000: 10)

This necessity to supplement and extend language at a fundamental level arises, for Orwell, from the need to identify and name thoughts and perceptions that he considers inexpressible within the current resources of the language; in short, he offers the creation of new language to address and resolve the inadequacies he identifies.

Huxley's and Orwell's conceptions of language as a medium unequal to the task of encoding the extent or magnitude of human existence could be termed a macrocosmic view of the inadequacy of language; both believe that there are unlexicalised states of being both within and beyond experience that remain outside of communication. A related but microcosmic view inheres in the theory that the currently available lexicon is deficient in its capacity to express adequately the perceptions of an entire section of its users: more specifically, women. Feminist scholars, including Julia Kristeva, Hélène Cixous, and Luce Irigaray have variously expressed the view that language 'silences' women by encoding only masculine perceptions, and have proposed the adoption of a 'women's language' to redress this imbalance (Squier and Vedder 2000: 320-321). The view that language inadequately communicates the consciousness of women is the central argument of Dale Spender's *Man Made Language* (1982). Spender outlines her belief that 'the English language has been literally man made and that it is still primarily under male control' (1982: 12), which, she says, perpetuates the 'invisibility or "other" nature of females', since they are obliged to communicate their conception of female reality only in terms of the patriarchal order from which male language-as-norm renders them deviant. In a passage that significantly echoes Orwell's beliefs about the consequences of linguistic inadequacy, she says:

Language is our means of classifying and ordering the world: our means of manipulating reality. In its structure and in its use we bring our world into realisation, and if it is inherently inaccurate, then we are misled. If the rules which underlie our language system, our symbolic order, are invalid, then we are daily deceived

(Spender 1982: 2)

Linguistic inadequacy, thus expressed, relates not only to unlexicalised potentiality, but also to previously-lexicalised states that incompletely or inaccurately represent the perceptions of a given group within society; in this case, women.

Suzette Haden Elgin, writer of the dystopian *Native Tongue* trilogy, feminist, and pro-Whorfian linguist, exemplifies Spender's beliefs, noting women's 'constant tension and frustration that comes of not having words for the things [they] want to say', and suggests, by way of analogy:

Think of foot-binding. It's easy to list the restrictions foot-binding places on a woman and to understand what removing those restrictions would mean. An inadequate language (one of the hypotheses in *Native Tongue*) imposes less obvious but equally repressive constraints; it could be called tongue-binding.²²

Elgin's response to this particular manifestation of language inadequacy is twofold: firstly, her response is to lexicalise those states she believes are outside of language, by creating Láadan, a fully-functional 'female language' (Squier and Vedder 2000: 305). Láadan, Elgin notes is 'the first language constructed by a linguist and designed to express the perceptions of women'²³; secondly, she produced the *Native Tongue* trilogy, a series of dystopian fictions in which Láadan is central to the plot. Her aim in both cases is to test several hypotheses, including; 'that change in language brings about social change, rather than the contrary', and:

that if women were offered a women's language, one of two things would happen—they would welcome and nurture it, or it would at a minimum motivate them to replace it with a better women's language of their own construction.²⁴

The intention of Láadan, in its fictional context is to lexicalise (or, in the words of the Linguist women of *Native Tongue*, 'encode') 'a chunk of the world that so far as we know has never been chosen for naming before in any human language' (Elgin 2000: 22); in its real-world context, Elgin originated Láadan for the specific purpose of plugging the 'gaps' she perceived in the language available to express the perceptions of women. In an appendix to *Native Tongue*, Elgin gives some examples of the kinds of experiences that are lexicalised in Láadan but not in contemporary English. Her introductory remarks to this glossary are notably resonant with the issues of translatability discussed in §2.3.1 above, as she says '[a]s is true in the translation from any language into another, many words of Láadan cannot be translated into English except by lengthy definitions' (p. 302). One such lengthy definition – of the Láadan word *doroledim* – requires 178 words to explain its meaning, but others can be defined somewhat more economically: *núháam*, for example, is elucidated as 'to feel oneself cherished, cared for, nurtured by someone; to feel loving-kindness' (p. 302). Both

within and beyond the fiction, Elgin confirms the opinion that there are areas of experience specific to women that remain outside language; in addition, she demonstrates a belief that these areas have to be named – or brought into language – before they can exist.

Elgin's view is shared by Marge Piercy, author of feminist dystopias *Woman on the Edge of Time* and *He She and It*. Piercy similarly feels disadvantaged by the shortfall between the vocabulary which is available and that which she feels is necessary to actualise a concept. In particular, she suggests that without the appropriate language with which to explicate a complex concept, there can be no tangible understanding of it. For Piercy, this includes the insufficiency of language to represent the female condition. Speaking, for example, of the early lack of a feminist vocabulary, she says:

[T]here is no vocabulary for discussing your situation, when you're a woman before there is language of feminism, trying to understand what it's like to be a woman, you have no concepts, no vocabulary for even understanding your own situation.²⁵

In their musings on the inadequacy of the available language, what all these writers reveal is an awareness – perhaps more acute *because* they are writers – that their current language does not precisely capture every eventuality they would wish. Each identifies a concept, a way of being, an abstraction, or a belief, that seems to exist beyond language, and while linguists would offer circumlocution as a solution, and anti-Whorfians would note that they have adequately (and proposition-defeatingly) used language to articulate what they claim is inarticulable, the authors amply demonstrate the popular folk belief that language does not always possess the capacity to verbalise all perceptions.

This common belief permeates the fictional worlds: the chicken-and-egg language problem that Piercy outlines in relation to the language of feminism, above, is realised as a fundamental communicative impasse between the present and the future in *Woman on the Edge of Time*. Luciente, a time-travelling character from the future utopia of Mattapoissett attempts to explain that, in her time – the year 2137 – understanding of cognitive capabilities and potentials has developed to a stage where cross-temporal telepathic communication is a reality. However, while this development has been matched by a concomitant evolution of language in the future, both the concept and its

lexicalisation are absent in the fictional present. The mismatch between the future-bound proposition and the present lexical inventory is such that a frustrated Luciente declares:

To explain anything exotic, you have to convey at once the thing and the vocabulary with which to talk about the thing.... Your vocabulary is remarkably weak in words for mental states, mental abilities, and mental acts—

(*Woman on the Edge of Time*, p. 42)

A similar belief about the paucity of language is expressed by the character, Grace, in Elgin's *Native Tongue*, in which the multi-lingual women of the Lines spend their days communicating with extra-terrestrial alien species. While the young girls of the community have learned the 'female language' Láadan from birth, and can thus express female perceptions fully, the older women lack much of the language. Grace remarks:

What that must be like. Not to be always groping, because there aren't any words – while the person you want so desperately to talk to gets tired of waiting and begins talking of something else. To have a language that works, that says what you want to say easily and efficiently, and to have *always* had that? No loves, I cannot imagine it. I am too old.

(*Native Tongue*, p. 267)

The dystopian-fictional representation of linguistic inadequacy parallels the authors' views on the subject in the real world. As a means of bringing these unlexicalised perceptions into consciousness, Orwell proposes language – notably, invented language – as the key to unlocking its own potential, submitting:

The solution I suggest is to invent new words as deliberately as we would invent new parts for a motor-car engine. Suppose that a vocabulary existed which would accurately express the life of the mind, or a great part of it. Suppose that there need be no stultifying feeling that life is inexpressible, no jiggery-pokery with artistic tricks; expressing one's meaning simply [being] a matter of taking the right words and putting them in place.

(Orwell 2000: 6)

Orwell's solution to the problem as he sees it in his own historical spacetime is the solution which is extensively adopted in dystopian fiction: to invent new language in order to encapsulate an otherwise inarticulable concept. The phenomenon I term *speculative language* throughout this study depends, to a great extent, on these authors' belief that the currently available lexicon is inadequately equipped to encode all that is asked of it; in order to communicate a not-yet-known perception existing in some future

world, they believe that they must move outside, or beyond the known language. Elgin, for example, invents Láadan, while Piercy coins the verb *intersee* to describe the particularly psychic level of communication Luciente enjoys in her future world. Not only do these authors subscribe to the folk view that there are states and abstractions that are beyond the capacity of current language to verbalise, they actively imagine perceptions beyond current knowledge, in futuristic worlds, and bring them into being through language. This would seem to be indicative of a writerly Whorfian-style process: these authors have all recognised that language sets up certain channels of thought; moreover, they all express the desire to break out of these channels, to challenge and subvert them by reaching beyond the existing lexicon. The dystopian imagination achieves exactly the effect these authors strive towards: dystopian fictions characteristically transcend, spatially and temporally, the known world – and its language – and actualise, in narrative form, the unknown. In dystopian fiction, language assumes the twofold task of presenting reality and a state beyond reality; it communicates the known and the unknown, the familiar and the unfamiliar. Essentially, in giving substance – through language – to states both within and beyond experience, dystopia simultaneously articulates the present and verbalises the ineffable.²⁶

2.4 The mundane meets the exotic: cognitive estrangement

[A] new society is generated in the author's mind, transferred to paper, and from paper it occurs as a convulsive shock in the reader's mind, *the shock of dysrecognition*.

Philip K. Dick (1990) Preface to *Collected Stories*

A distinct contrast recurs throughout the discussions of language in this chapter: that between the known and the unknown, the familiar and the unfamiliar, the habitual and the extraordinary. Essentially, in each area considered so far, language existing *within* the bounds of experience is examined in relation to language existing *beyond* the bounds of experience. Everyday, customary language, as Whorf notes, is a 'background phenomenon', routinised, automatised, and largely beyond consciousness. It is brought into focus, into consciousness, and foregrounded, however, when it is considered in relation to unfamiliar, strange, or alien language(s), or what Whorf terms *exotic language*. Musing on the 'difficulty of standing aside from our own language [...] and scrutinizing it objectively' (1956: 138), he comes to the conclusion that:

[T]he problem, though difficult, is feasible, and the best approach is through an exotic language, for in its study we are at last pushed willy-nilly out of our ruts. Then we find the exotic language is a mirror held up to our own.

(Whorf 1956: 138)

Through consideration of ‘an exotic language’, then, in Whorf’s opinion, we are impelled (‘pushed willy-nilly’) out of our habitual thought worlds (‘our ruts’), and challenged to examine our world-view in relation to the world-view encoded in the exotic language, which is a ‘mirror held up to our own’. This juxtaposition of two worlds – and their languages – also underlies linguist and science fiction writer Samuel R. Delany’s approach to explaining the challenging nature of science fiction through its strange syntax in his (1977) *The Jewel-Hinged Jaw: Notes on the Language of Science Fiction*. Delany, in the extract below, applies the Saussurean notion of the syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes to account for the significant schism (in science fiction) between the unfamiliar or ‘wholly unexpected’ and the familiar or ‘mundane’ language. ‘[W]hat science fiction does’, he claims is,

to take recognizable syntagms and substitute in them, here and there, signifiers from a till then wholly unexpected paradigm. The occurrence of unusual, if not downright opaque signifiers in the syntagm focuses our attention on the structures implied [...]. This focusing does not occur in mundane fiction.

(Delany 1977: 255-256)²⁷

Delany’s investigations into language in this volume, and in his later (1984) *Starboard Wine: More Notes on the Language of Science Fiction* deal with science fictional texts at the more outlandish, extra-terrestrial, alien end of the spectrum, where anything is linguistically possible; as such, much of the material he looks at falls outside of the scope of this study. I briefly refer to his work here though, to take advantage of his conception of *mundane fiction*, and, more pertinently, to adopt his claim for the genre-specificity of these particular linguistic phenomena. Delany recontextualised the term *mundane* to describe any fiction which is not science fiction; that is to say, realistic, mimetic fictions set in familiar worlds. Mundane language characterises mundane fiction just as extraordinary language characterises science fiction, in Delany’s view. Dystopian fictions, with their futuristic settings in potential alternative worlds, are, as discussed in §1.3.3, a sub-genre of science fiction, and in a very similar sense imagine the unimaginable; realise the unknowable; foresee the unforeseeable. Yet, unlike much science fiction they reveal and interrogate mundane worlds (see §1.2.1). The animation

of this meeting of the exotic and the mundane is largely achieved through the deployment of speculative – or exotic – language set against a background of reflective – or mundane – language, each brought sharply into focus with relative reference to the other. Just as Whorf shows that habitual language is best brought into focus by reference to exotic language, Delany shows that the extraordinary language of science fiction is best brought into focus by reference to mundane language.

The coincidence and interanimation of the familiar and the unfamiliar is also the vital, defining aspect of Darko Suvin's delineation of the influential science fiction theory of *cognitive estrangement*, which he outlines in his (1979) *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*. Science fiction, Suvin argues, is:

[A] literary genre whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition, and whose main formal device is an imaginative framework alternative to the author's empirical environment.

(Suvin 1979: 8-9) [original emphasis]

Estrangement, in Suvin's view, 'differentiates [science fiction] from the "realistic" literary mainstream', while cognition distinguishes science fiction from myth, folktales, and fantasy (1979: 7-8). Cognition (the known and familiar) co-exists with estrangement (the unknown and unfamiliar) in Suvin's conception. His argument, in essence, is that the prime concern of these fictions is not to draw readers' attention to the details of exotic alien worlds and galaxies, but rather, to use these familiar-yet-unfamiliar settings to confront taken-for-granted notions about their own environment and ways of being, and advance the possibility that there are other perspectives from which to view their world.

In formulating his theory of cognitive estrangement, Suvin draws on the Russian Formalist theory of defamiliarisation (*ostranenie*) and also Berthold Brecht's theory of the 'alienation effect' (*Verfremdungseffekt*), both of which rely to some extent on assessing or gauging the familiar by reference to the unfamiliar. Brecht's 'alienation effect' suggests that in drama, the audience should be estranged from the action to the extent that they are aware that what they witness is a defamiliarised illusion, and thus become aware of the potential to extend the freshly perceived knowledge out into their lives beyond the theatre. Defamiliarisation, in Formalist terms, is the function of art (including literature) to make strange, or challenge, the habitual, the automatised, and

thus restore, or refresh, the novelty of perception. In his essay 'Art as Technique', Formalist Viktor Shklovsky considers the habitual, noting:

Habitualization devours works, clothes, furniture, one's wife, and the fear of war. 'If the whole complex lives of many people go on unconsciously, then such lives are as if they had never been.' And art exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone *stony*.

(Shklovsky 1965: 12)

Here, Shklovsky outlines the central tenet of defamiliarisation: art has a perception-challenging function, insofar as it makes the familiar unfamiliar, and conveys a consciousness of things as they are freshly perceived, rather than as they are customarily known. While the early Formalist focus was on art in its widest sense, the Prague School theorist, Bohuslav Havránek defines this defamiliarisation effect in terms of the automatisation and foregrounding of language in his essay 'The Functional Differentiation of the Standard Language' (1932), where he explains:

By *automization* we [mean] a use of the devices of the language, in isolation or in combination with each other, as is usual for a certain expressive purpose, that is, such a use that the expression itself does not attract any attention.

[...]

By *foregrounding* we [mean] the use of the devices of the language in such a way that this use itself attracts attention, and is perceived as uncommon, as deprived of automization, as deautomatized.

(Havránek 1932: 10)

The automatisation of language, as discussed above, is the crucial first stage of Whorfianism, or the habitual thought world, while foregrounding, or bringing into consciousness, represents the second stage, or the point at which inconsistencies or irregularities are perceived (see §2.2.2). Carl Freedman's interpretation of Suvin's theory, in his *Critical Theory and Science Fiction* (2000), figures this contrast between foregrounding and automatisation as a *dialectic* between estrangement and cognition. Estrangement, Freedman suggests, 'refers to the creation of an alternative fictional world that, by refusing to take our mundane environment for granted, implicitly or explicitly performs an estranging critical interrogation' of cognition (2000: 16-17). He continues:

But the *critical* character of the interrogation is guaranteed by the operation of cognition, which enables the science-fictional text to account rationally

for its imagined world and for the connections as well as the disconnections of the latter to our own empirical world.

(Freedman 2000: 17)

The idea of cognitive estrangement as a dialectic – the interplay of ostensibly contradictory principles – is illuminating here, since it contributes to an account of the ways in which the familiar and the unfamiliar may interact – and, as I shall elaborate, the ways in which reflective and speculative language may interact. In conflating the theoretical perspectives of *ostranenie* and *Verfremdungseffekt* into his proposal for science fiction as ‘a literature of cognitive estrangement’ (1979: 4), Suvin argues that science fiction presents readers with an aspect of their reality ‘made strange’, or defamiliarised by way of a new perspective ‘implying a new set of norms’ (1979: 6). This approach almost exactly parallels Whorf’s conception of the principle of linguistic relativity: his ‘habitual thought world’ is the known, the familiar, the automatised, just as Suvin’s ‘cognitive’ represents the understood, the accepted, the norm. Similarly, when Whorf speaks of ‘expand[ing] our base of reference’ and ‘encounter[ing] an interruption of its regularity’ (1956: 209), he is effectively speaking of defamiliarising the familiar, or what Suvin calls ‘estrangement’. In both instances, emphasis falls on the assumption that outside the realm of perceptual evidence – of what we know that we know – there are potentially other ways of knowing and understanding the world that are as yet unfamiliar, but nevertheless exist ‘out there’, beyond current experience. Suvin’s theory of cognitive estrangement proposes science fiction literature as the locus of challenging and (re)cognising the automatised and habitual, while Whorfianism isolates language as the medium within which world-view resides, and different, ‘exotic’ languages as the means of (re)cognising reality. This study draws on both views, and proposes the specific language of dystopia as exemplifying both cognitive estrangement and Whorfianism, since, in its presentation of reflective and speculative language, it exemplifies the familiar and the unfamiliar, the cognitive and the estranged, the habitual and the exotic.

Cognitive estrangement is a potently present feature of the texts to be discussed in subsequent chapters; the fictitious futuristic worlds, extrapolatively connected to our own, coherently dislocate our sense of reality as they reflect, emulate, and challenge the familiar by reference to the unfamiliar. The reader’s habitual thought world is confronted, and a settled sense of being is challenged; ultimately, perceptions of self and society – or self *in* society – are questioned as an alternative way of being unfolds.

Language plays a vital, constitutive role in this re-conception of the world. In the next chapter I examine Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in the light of Whorfianism and cognitive estrangement, and consider the ways in which speculative language exemplifies both approaches.

3. Speculative language in dystopia

Bold ideas, unjustified anticipation, and speculative thought, are our only means for interpreting nature ... our only instrument for grasping her. And we must hazard them to win our prize.

Karl Popper (1959) *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*

3.1 Introduction

George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) symbolises the genre of dystopia: as David Sisk (1997: 37) notes, 'readers who know of no other dystopian work – indeed, readers unfamiliar with the word *dystopia* – will almost certainly know (or know of) Orwell's proleptic nightmare'. It is 'the composite political dystopia', according to Harold L. Berger, who considers it such a definitive text that 'previous fictional totalitarian societies seem but anticipations and later ones variations of Orwell's' (1988: 426). With its relentlessly bleak delineation of an oppressive totalitarian state, and its charting of the hopeless resistance of one man, which culminates in defeat, despair, and crushed acquiescence, it is probably the genre's most shocking and brutal glimpse into a dystopian future. More pertinently, its depiction of domination and tyranny through extreme control of language (in the form of Newspeak) is the most radical dystopian example of language being used as an instrument of control. In this respect, Newspeak epitomises linguistic determinism, the model which most readily comes to mind when prompted by observations such as Tom Moylan and Raffaella Baccolini's that:

Throughout the history of dystopian fiction, the conflict of the text turns on the control of language [...]. Language is a key weapon for the reigning dystopian power structure.

(Moylan & Baccolini 2004: 5-6)

Such is the notoriety of Orwell's concept of Newspeak, a language designed gradually to narrow the range of ideas and restrict independent thought, that it has come to define – rather than be defined by – the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis: numerous language reference works cite Newspeak as the exemplar of extreme linguistic determinism in practice. Trevor A. Harley's (2001) *The Psychology of Language*, for instance, includes a glossary entry which illustrates just how Newspeak has come to symbolise linguistic determinism: to define the *Sapir-Whorf hypothesis*, Harley explains:

In George Orwell's novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, language restricted the way in which people thought. The rulers of the state deliberately used "Newspeak", the official language of Oceania, so that the people thought

what they were required to think. “This statement ... could not have been sustained by reasoned argument, because the necessary words were not available” (Orwell, 1949, p. 249, in the appendix, “The principles of Newspeak”). This is a version of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis.

(Harley 2001: 80)

Despite its eminent status with reference to the question of language and thought, I consider Newspeak only tangentially here. While acknowledging that no study of language in dystopian fiction would be complete without some mention of Orwell’s invented language, my intention in this chapter is to explore speculative language – the language of the future – in the novel’s main narrative in terms of its stylistic qualities and possible perceptual effects on the reader, rather than restricting my discussion just to Newspeak and its potential to affect thought, beliefs, or behaviour. Furthermore, Newspeak has received a great deal of critical attention since the publication of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in 1949, and the area is already heavily debated and documented in terms of the ways in which Newspeak accords with the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (at least with more deterministic interpretations). Over thirty years ago, in 1974, the already-burgeoning weight of scholarly attention prompted Myra Barnes reluctantly to give the issue ‘less attention [...] than it deserves’ (1974: 155) in her study *Linguistics and Languages in Science Fiction*, while a full two decades later, Roger Fowler echoes Barnes’ comment in *The Language of George Orwell* (1995) where he notes not only that ‘Orwell’s views on “Newspeak” have been extensively discussed’, but also that ‘one begins by despairing of saying anything fresh about it’ (1995: 181).¹ Yet another decade on, I am similarly hesitant to attempt yet another intervention into the Newspeak debate, and, although I outline some earlier critical approaches below, I do not engage with the determinist position they explore; my approach is focused more on the language of the main text, rather than Newspeak *per se*, and my theoretical perspective remains firmly on the relativist Whorfian side of the deliberations.

Although it is unlikely that Orwell had any direct knowledge of Whorf’s (or Sapir’s) work (Milroy & Milroy 1998: 38), most of the available studies attending to language in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* focus primarily on Newspeak’s Sapir-Whorfian connections: Sisk, for example, suggests that ‘[i]mplicitly, Newspeak depends on Benjamin Whorf’s theory that thought depends on language’ (1997: 43), while Walter Meyers believes that ‘the frightening potential of linguistic relativity is the largest cloud on the already-gray horizon of George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*’ (1980: 163).

Barnes (1974) also, in a chapter entitled ‘The Language of Thought Control’, considers Orwell’s text among ‘richly Whorfian’ dystopian examples (1974: 158), and confirms that ‘[t]he Newspeak language in Orwell’s *1984* is probably the world’s best known fictional, imaginary language’ (1974: 155). A brief sketch of the range of views on the plausibility and efficacy of Newspeak would include comments from within literary criticism, such as Krishan Kumar’s claim that ‘[i]t has been impossible for all but the most literal-minded reader to take Orwell’s invention of Newspeak as anything but satiric’ (1987: 321), and Sisk’s opposing view that ‘most readers find the Newspeak of Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* a plausible and terrifying instrument of totalitarian thought control, which “could work”’ (1997: 12). Views from linguists tend more towards Kumar’s position: Fowler’s belief – that ‘Newspeak is a fallacy, and Orwell knows it’ (1995: 211) – contributes succinctly to the debate, while James Milroy and Lesley Milroy summarise the prevailing view from within linguistics, saying:

It is true that an authoritarian government can directly limit freedom of thought and public expression of ideas, but it cannot directly intervene in language structure in order to destroy the human capacity to exploit linguistic resources. All languages change and vary despite attempts to fix and standardise them. Orwell’s ‘Newspeak’ exemplifies an impossible extreme of the prescriptive ideology.

(Milroy & Milroy 1998: 38)

Similarly, Elizabeth Traugott and Mary Pratt appeal to the inherent creativity of natural language as a rebuttal of the assumptions which underpin Orwell’s presentation of Newspeak:

[Newspeak] overlooks the creative nature of language that makes the uttering of new sentences in new contexts possible and thereby opens up the possibility of new ranges of meaning. It denies any notion of semantic features that can be reused in different groupings of sound-meaning correlations. It denies the possibility of saying one thing and meaning another, as in puns and ironic statements [...]. In reality, people are always having new thoughts and seeking out new words to express them. In short, Orwell’s discussion presents an incomplete view of what human language is, and to the extent that this is so, Newspeak is not a real possibility.

(Traugott & Pratt 1980: 109)

My position in this study echoes the latter two points: while I acknowledge Orwell’s linguistic inventiveness in his representation of Newspeak, and recognise it as an example of speculative language, I accord with the view that linguistic determinism, at least insofar as it is espoused in Newspeak – as a systematically manipulable means of

controlling and diminishing independent thought – is simply untenable outside of the world of the fiction. It would seem that it is also untenable *within* the world of the fiction, since Orwell demonstrates, in an exchange between Winston Smith and his lover, Julia, that Newspeak words alone do not circumscribe or control thought. In response to Winston's question 'do you know the Newspeak word *goodthinkful*? Meaning naturally orthodox, incapable of thinking a bad thought?', Julia's reply, 'No, I didn't know the word, but I know the kind of person right enough' (p. 138)² lays bare the fallacy of Newspeak. Newspeak, however, appears only rarely in the main narrative, and, while I shall attend briefly to those instances, my chief interest in this chapter is not in the potential of language to control the perceptions of the characters (the declared purpose of Newspeak), but focuses instead on the ways in which speculative language challenges, defamiliarises, and brings into consciousness the perceptions of the readership. In order to examine the relationship of Whorfianism and cognitive estrangement to readers' perceptions I concentrate on the form and function of Orwell's other 'non-Newspeak' speculative language, paying attention to the linguistic strategies by which the main text (rather than the Appendix, 'The Principles of Newspeak') is constructed. The greater part of this chapter is devoted to analyses of the four main language-specific strategies by which Orwell – and, as I shall suggest, other authors of dystopias – create an estranged, futuristic, perception-challenging re-visioned world. Neologism and neosemy (that is to say new word forms and new meanings attached to existing word forms), perhaps the most accessible and obvious linguistic strategies, are investigated in Orwell's work, and world-construction in terms of phrasal units and narrative structure is also explored. Prior to that, I begin with an account of the speculative language of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in its socio-historical context as a means of assessing the impact that diachronic language change may have in the years which intervene between the author's historical spacetime and a contemporary reader's base reality. As with the direction of the rest of this study, my focus remains on the relationship between language and perception; in what follows it will become clear that Whorfianism, in combination with cognitive estrangement, is significantly implicated in Orwell's speculative language.

3.2 Speculative language in time and place

The main reason most people don't use metric measurements is that they don't *think* in metric.

UK Metric Association (2005) *Think Metric!*

Writers of dystopias have to achieve a complex linguistic balance. Firstly, they need to project their language to a point at which it plausibly represents the kind of language change that might have occurred at the time of their futuristic setting. Secondly, they must take into account any restrictions or prescriptions that may – and typically will – have been made to the language by an autocratic state. Thirdly – and most importantly for this study – they must describe, and lexicalise, concepts and areas of experience that currently (in the author's historical spacetime) are beyond being. Fourthly, and in order to achieve their didactic purpose, they must maintain the link with 'place' and base-reality which differentiates dystopia from other genres such as fantasy (see §1.2.1). Finally, they must still present the reader with language that is understandable and does not violate the principle of communication that they customarily expect a novel to provide. Orwell achieves this multifaceted linguistic balancing act with remarkable acuity in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and contrary to widespread opinion, he does so within the compass of the main narrative, rather than simply relying on Newspeak as the medium for communicating the speculative nature of his dystopia. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* looks towards a future much less temporally distant than is usual for dystopias: the calendar date 1984 has long since passed, which has prompted some commentators to suggest that the novel's proleptic force is spent. However, this atypically brief temporal dislocation enables – encourages, even – an assessment of the speculative language originating in Orwell's historical spacetime in comparison to the language of contemporary base-reality. By returning, figuratively, to the time (1948) and the place (post-war Britain) of the text's composition, my aim in this section is to examine Orwell's means of encoding and communicating his perceptions of a totalitarian dystopian future, and to contextualise his linguistic strategies with reference to the language of today.

The tension between the familiar and the unfamiliar that typifies dystopia is evident in the opening sentence of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Beginning with an unremarkable locative proposition: 'It was a bright cold day in April', it seems entirely consistent with traditional narrative sequencing, and perfectly familiar. The following

clause, however: ‘and the clocks were striking thirteen’ abruptly signals something unusual in its unexpected use of *thirteen*. A clock striking thirteen is anomalous, and disrupts the familiarity set up in the preceding part of the sentence; it becomes a conceptual irregularity that is foregrounded, defamiliarised, and estranged. Even today, clocks do not habitually strike thirteen, but, because the concept of a clock displaying 13:00 is not so unusual to a contemporary reader, it is less cognitively alienating than it would have been in Orwell’s time. To understand the full import of its speculative function in the novel it is necessary to consider how the conjectural combination of *clock* and *striking thirteen* could have been perceived as symbolic also of ominous portents pertinent to Orwell’s post-war Britain, rather than simply representative of the alien and threatening quality of the totalitarian world of Oceania.

By 1948, although the twenty-four hour clock had been adopted by the administrative systems of the military, rail networks, and aeronautics, to aid precision in scheduling, it was not used outside of these applications in Britain. However, much of Continental Europe at this time used the twenty-four hour system in preference to the ‘2 x 12’ system operative in Britain. Consequently, references such as that to ‘thirteen’ (and, later in the opening chapter, ‘it was nearly eleven hundred’ (p. 11), and ‘he had to be back at work by fourteen-thirty’ (p. 29)) were to a system then popularly known as the ‘Continental Clock’. Given that Britain had recently been at war with much of Europe, connotations actualised by such reference might include not only *foreign*, *alien*, and *other*, but conceivably also connotative links to the recent hostilities. At this elementary level of speculative language, the language is known, insofar as these individual lexemes – *thirteen*, *eleven*, *hundred* – are familiar. They become estranged, or defamiliarised, only when used in specific unfamiliar contexts, and even then, only by comparison with the prevailing norms of standard language. Speculative language at this lexical level subtly challenges the reader’s perceptions while not overtly estranging the language itself.

Science fiction commentators are familiar with the analogical positioning of the reader as a visitor to a strange land: this comparison, I would suggest, might usefully be extended to incorporate the kind of ‘dysrecognition’ (Dick 1990), or cognitive estrangement that the mid-twentieth-century reader might experience as s/he encounters the ‘strange land’ of Oceania where fundamental units of measurement are defamiliarised. Furthermore, the ‘foreign’ or alien quality of such language resonates

with second-stage Whorfianism (see §2.2.2), since it is brought into consciousness because it breaks with, or challenges, the norm, the habitual, or expected. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, not just the measurement of time, but *all* weights and measures are expressed in unfamiliar-yet-familiar units. Currency is expressed in the monetary units of dollars and cents, and dimensions are expressed in metric units. The following examples all occur within the early pages of the first chapter: ‘more than a metre wide’ (p. 3), ‘A kilometre away’ (p. 5), ‘bought the book for two dollars fifty’ (p. 8), and ‘a 20 kilo bomb’ (p. 10). Metric weights and measures, like the twenty-four hour clock, were not familiar in post-war Britain, which remained staunchly imperial in its measurement systems. It was not until many years later, in 1965, that the British government recommended that the imperial system should be abolished in favour of the metric, and outlined a 10-year plan for its implementation (although this project for ‘international alignment and harmonization’ has only, to date, been fully accomplished in Eire, and is not yet complete in the UK mainland).³ Thus, while the language of the *Système international d’unités* is perhaps only minimally irregular to a twenty-first-century reader, especially those readers educated after the mid-1970s, when British schools adopted a policy of teaching metric units, it would be far more cognitively challenging – and speculative – to a contemporaneous reader. More saliently, in the immediate post-war wave of patriotism (and at a time when the British Empire still had many offshore colonies), to conjecture upon such a radical change to an established system would be to articulate a perceived threat to Britain’s independence, character, pride, and national identity.

While Orwell’s choice to use alien units of measurement in the construction of his fictional world to some extent reflects and represents the fictional future division of the world into three blocs: the superpowers of Oceania, Eurasia, and Eastasia, it also represents a disturbing concern Orwell perceived in his historical spacetime, which is considerably less prominent today, and may even be practically invisible to a young contemporary reader. In common with other dystopias, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* depicts a world that is flawed in comparison to the author’s community, a world in which trends and tendencies evident in the author’s historical spacetime are extrapolated and extended to undesirable lengths. Orwell considered the possibility of widespread metrication just such a flaw, as evidenced by his prognostications in his 1947 *Tribune* column, ‘As I Please’, where he opines:

Another thing I am against in advance – for it is bound to be suggested sooner or later – is the complete scrapping of our present system of weights and measures [...] there is a strong case for keeping on the old measurements for use in everyday life.

(Angus *et al* 2000 Vol 4: 305)

Orwell was never a man to withhold an opinion. Many of these strongly-held convictions find didactic expression in the language of his novels; three of his essays written during 1946 ('Why I Write', 'Politics and the English Language', and 'The Prevention of Literature'), for example, are frequently cited as formative to *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Peter Huber (1994) suggests the novel is largely 'a palimpsest' of his earlier writings, citing numerous examples of what he terms Orwell's 'self-plagiarism' (1994: 8). In the *Tribune* article Orwell outlines a view that will influence his later decision to use the language of the metric system in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*; and, it is worth noting, his explanation of his misgivings about metrication in the real world also reveals his own experience of cognitive estrangement, and a notably Whorfian perspective:

[T]he metric system does not possess, or has not succeeded in establishing, a large number of units that can be visualised. There is, for instance, effectively no unit between the metre, which is more than a yard, and the centimetre, which is less than half an inch. In English you can describe someone as being five feet three inches high, or five feet nine inches, or six feet one inch, and your hearer will know fairly accurately what you mean. But I have never heard a Frenchman say, "He is a hundred and forty-two centimetres high"; it would not convey any visual image.

(Angus *et al* 2000, Vol 4: 305)

Orwell's clear belief here that the metric system 'does not possess ... units that can be visualised', and that it 'would not convey any visual image' illustrates his inability to conceptualise the physical dimensions denoted by these unfamiliar measures; they are simply beyond the bounds of his perception. This immediately recalls Whorf's central argument that:

We cut nature up, organize it into concepts, and ascribe significances as we do, largely because we are parties to an agreement to organize it in this way – an agreement that [...] is codified in the patterns of our language.

(Whorf 1956: 213)

Orwell's speech community – English-speaking 1940s Britain – agrees to calibrate its weights and measures in imperial units, thus the dimensions signified by the language

used to describe these are conceptually available and familiar or, in Orwell's words, 'can be visualised'. Had he used his speech community's units – *yard, mile, pound* – in place of *metre, kilometre, kilo*, the language would have been unremarkable and non-speculative, encoding nothing more than regular communication, and, by extension, the kind of normal cognition which supports an automatised reading. If his intention, on the other hand, were simply to illustrate the 'otherness' of the fictional world, he might have constructed creative neologisms to name weights and measures, relying on the strangeness of the language to suggest an alien system. This strategy, however, would induce only estrangement, since the reader would be unacquainted with both the lexis and the proportions denoted. His use of the existing, but essentially extrinsic, alien, language of the metric system facilitates linguistic intelligibility and conceptual alienation simultaneously: in other words, cognitive estrangement.

This language is also speculative: not just because the author is speculating on a hypothetical possibility that the way he divides up his world may be displaced, but also because this linguistic-cognitive overthrow in the novel is so comprehensive that its use has already become deeply habituated for the inhabitants of Oceania. Fowler (1995) has shown that the entire text is focalised through Winston Smith; it is through Winston's perceptions that this speculative metric dislocation is communicated. 'Everything that Orwell wants to say about totalitarianism', Fowler notes, 'is communicated through the sensations and thoughts of Winston Smith, without any authorial commentary' (1995: 186). The markers of free indirect discourse that Fowler identifies as indicative of Winston's world-view can be seen in the following examples, all of which are attributable to Winston, and all of which illustrate his habitual, automatic use and understanding of metric terminology:

Nothing was your own except the few cubic centimetres inside your skull (p. 29)

He had walked several kilometres over pavements, and his varicose ulcer was throbbing (p. 85)

They were perhaps four metres apart when the girl stumbled (p. 111)

'Free indirect thought is used to make Winston's thoughts immediate to the reader', Fowler (1995: 190) notes, and this seeming unplanned, immediacy is apparent not just in Winston's automatic use of metric measures in his inner-thought world, but is also seen quite clearly in his conversations with other characters; exchanges which reveal their equal familiarity with, and habitual use of, metric language. Winston's lover,

Julia, for example, on bringing supplies to their illicit meeting place above Mr Charrington's shop, says 'It's Inner Party coffee. There's a whole kilo here' (p. 147), while Party member O'Brien, Winston's interrogator and torturer, refers to the stars as 'bits of fire a few kilometres away' (p. 278). These signifiers of weights and measures have become codified in their language, each describing a distinct unit in the perception of each member of the speech community.

Orwell does make one brief contextualising reference to imperial measures through the voice of a minor character. When Winston visits the prole quarter and attempts to elicit first-hand accounts of life before the current regime, he offers to buy a drink for the elderly prole he meets in a pub. The exchange between the prole and the barman provides an indication of the existence of a former system:

'You telling me you ain't got a pint mug in the 'ole bleeding boozer?'

'And what in hell's name *is* a pint?' said the barman [...].

'Ark at 'im! Calls 'isself a barman and don't know what a pint is! Why, a pint's the 'alf of a quart, and there's four quarts to the gallon. 'Ave to teach you the A, B, C next.'

'Never heard of 'em,' said the barman shortly. 'Litre and half litre – that's all we serve. There's the glasses on the shelf in front of you.'

'I likes a pint,' persisted the old man. 'You could'a drawed me off a pint easy enough. We didn't 'ave these bleeding litres when I was a young man.'

(p. 91)

This conversational extract provides the essential link to referents in Orwell's historical spacetime: in this case, the familiar British imperial measures. Much of any dystopia's didactic force is contained in its ability to enable the reader to make enlightening connections between the fictional world and his or her own base-reality; thus, if speculative language were to be *only* speculative – simply a conjectural attempt at sketching a futuristic language – the opportunity to infer relevant and meaningful connections from text to reality might be missed. Here, it is not the focalising character, Winston, who elucidates these connections (as we have seen, he is entirely conceptually indoctrinated into the metric system), but a 'very old man ... who must be eighty at the least', who would have been 'middle-aged when the Revolution happened' (p. 90). The older man's comments – 'A 'alf-litre ain't enough [...]. And a 'ole litre's too much' (p. 92) – echo Orwell's own opposition to metric measures on the grounds that the

measures are, to him, arbitrary and strange. Orwell's contemporaries, like him, would be familiar only with imperial standards and the language that betokens them: the 'pint', 'quart', and 'gallon' of the above extract, as Orwell confirms in the *Tribune* article, where he writes: 'Rods and acres, pints, quarts, and gallons, pounds, stones and hundredweights, are all of them units with which we are intimately familiar, and we should be slightly poorer without them (2000: 305-306). Moreover, the familiarity of the naming of these measures denotes a level of comfortable security which Orwell regards as absent from the language used to describe metric equivalents: the 'names of the units in the old system are short homely words', he claims. 'Putting a quart into a pint pot is a good image', he continues, 'which could hardly be expressed in the metric system' (2000: 306). For Orwell, as for the elderly prole (who might conceivably represent Orwell's contemporaries, given the novel's time-frame), the imperial measures are 'homely words', while the alien metric measures disturb and disrupt perceptions of what constitutes appropriate, visualisable units. However, the barman, a 'young man' (p. 92) has no conception of what measure the term 'pint' might denote, and knows only the litre and half litre measures. Thus, while the language denoting measurement in the text corresponds with the perceptions of the barman (and Winston, Julia, O'Brien, and the rest), the solitary voice of the elderly prole represents Orwell's and his contemporaneous readers' historical spacetime, and thus maintains the necessary connection to 'place'.

Other than in this short but illuminating exchange, little attention is drawn to this fundamental shift in the way Oceania's citizens 'cut nature up, organize it into concepts, and ascribe significances as [they] do' in their weights and measures. Instances of speculative metric language are unmarked typographically: there is, for example, no use of italics such as would customarily signify inclusion of a foreign word. All the measures featured are represented in orthographically standard forms.⁴ Nor is there any explanation or gloss within the text, or allusion made to any reason underlying this change; it is simply unmarked: presented as the norm. This is especially notable in comparison to the treatment of Newspeak in the main text, for example:

There was even a word for it in Newspeak: *facecrime*, it was called (p. 65)

[A]rtificial insemination (*artsem*, it was called in Newspeak) (p. 69)

There was a word for it in Newspeak: *ownlife*, it was called, meaning individualism and eccentricity (p. 85)

Crimestop, they called it in Newspeak (p. 291)

Each example of Newspeak language here is introduced by, or clarified by, a metalinguistic tag: 'it was called', or 'they called it'. Furthermore, in each case it is named as Newspeak, rather than the standard narrative language, and it is further distanced from the standard narrative language where the introductory clause 'there was a word for it' is used. Italicisation marks each instance, emphasising its foreignness and also acting as an indicator of novelty. These features, which anticipate and foreground the unfamiliarity of Newspeak, are entirely absent from examples of metric terminology, which is presented in the standard, unmarked narrative form. There is no obvious re-assignment of meaning; as far as can be surmised from the text, the metric terms denote exactly those quantities they signify in the real world. In short, units of metric measurement are presented as mundane and ordinary, natural, automatic, habitual language, while Newspeak is marked by its presentation as unfamiliar and exotic. As with the plural pronoun use in Rand's *Anthem* (see §2.2.2), Orwell's use of metric units represents the language of the habitual thought world of the characters who populate the fictional world; they do not question it or notice its irregularity: it is, for them, deeply automatised, and indicative of their world-view. In effect, there are different 'levels' of speculative language in Orwell's text: while both Newspeak and the metric terminology are clearly intended to indicate the text's futuristic setting, only the latter is presented as the norm in this world. Newspeak is emblematic: its marked presentation emphasises its symbolism, its exaggeration, its worst-case-scenario quality. Newspeak is part of the plot of the novel; a device which overtly exploits the dangers inherent in totalitarian control. The metric terminology, meanwhile, is not part of the plot. It is part of the background, the setting, the habitual world. As such, it subtly – covertly, even – mirrors and enacts the possibilities which, the reader is given to understand, inhere in Newspeak: it compels the reader to re-calibrate and re-envision his or her perceptions in order to understand the world of the text.

The accepted, automatic, unmarked exchange of one system of measurement for another symbolises the conceptual dislocation of the world of Oceania from the post-war reality, while at the same time it maintains a discernible connection between the two worlds. The gap between these two worlds is considerably narrower for today's reader, at least in terms of weights and measures, than it would have been for a reader sharing Orwell's historical spacetime. Arguably, the fact that today's reader may automatically use, understand, and visualise metric units as part of their habitual

thought world is evidence of the prescience of Orwell's dystopian vision and confirms the author's belief that: 'something like NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR *could* happen. This is the direction in which the world is going at the present time' (Orwell 1949, reproduced in Crick 1980: 152-153). Although Orwell was referring here to the 'political, social and economic foundations of the contemporary world situation' (*ibid*), his comments on the speculative nature of his novel could apply equally to speculative metric language through which he symbolises 'the direction in which the world is going at the present time'.

However prophetic Orwell's use of metric terminology, it could not be argued that he – or the text – is responsible in any way for the gradual adoption of these terms into contemporary use; nor is he the only dystopian author to employ this strategy: Aldous Huxley similarly marked off the clock into 24 hours, and linear distance in metric units several years earlier in *Brave New World* (1932), where the progress in foetal growth, for instance, is measured on a conveyor belt 'travelling at thirty-three and a third centimetres an hour', and a complete gestation cycle is '[t]wo hundred and sixty-seven days at eight metres a day' (Huxley 1932: 9). Nevertheless, there are instances of speculative language used by Orwell to depict the nightmare world of Oceania which will be very differently received by today's readers than would have been the case for readers in post-war Britain, and these are directly attributable to Orwell's linguistic speculation. Many terms from *Nineteen Eighty-Four* – for example, 'Big Brother', 'Newspeak', 'Room 101', 'doublethink', 'Thought Police' – have now entered the language, and 'Orwellian' is established as an adjective describing any overbearing repression of personal liberty, yet none of these existed with its current connotations in the immediate post-war era when the novel was published. For a contemporaneous reader, the above constructions (with the exception of Orwellian, which was a much later entry into the lexicon) would be unfamiliar. All of the above are now established in the English language, and are codified in its lexicon (the *Oxford English Dictionary*, for example), and, for a modern reader, signify quite a different concept than would have been the case at the point of publication.

Taking Orwell's construction of 'Big Brother' as an example, his re-appropriation of a term connoting, in its literal sense, benevolence and protection would, in all likelihood, have been alienating and defamiliarising for a reader of his own historical period, and would probably have been interpreted as indicative of the novel's

satire. However, a reader of today cannot encounter this construction with the same world-view or perception as could an early reader: Big Brother now, defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as ‘an apparently benevolent, but ruthlessly omnipotent, state authority’, carries with it all the associations of tyrannical oppression, constant surveillance, and authoritarian repression of free-will suggested by the originating text. Yet it exists independently as a signifier outside of the text, and is part of the habitual lexicon of most speakers of English, including those who have not read the novel. In my experience, at least throughout the time I have been working with dystopian fictions, a week seldom passes without some mention of Big Brother – or the associated adjective Orwellian – in the media, usually with reference to intrusive or unwarranted surveillance or some threat to civil liberties.⁵ Although he was deliberately speculating in his linguistic construction of this term, Orwell could not have predicted, nor could his early readers have known, that the expression would enter the public consciousness in quite the way it has. What Orwell has accomplished in the naming of Big Brother stands as testament to the perception-changing potential of the language of dystopia: he has lexicalised, and brought into consciousness and world-view a new, previously unnamed, chunk of experience.⁶

It is worth reiterating that none of the above-mentioned speculative language is Newspeak. As Fowler has previously noted, ‘no ‘pure’ example of Newspeak is given in the text of the novel’ (1995: 219). ‘In the year 1984 there was not as yet anyone who used Newspeak as his sole means of communication’, the Appendix ‘The Principles of Newspeak’ reports, and notes that the date by which Newspeak ‘would have finally superseded Oldspeak (or Standard English, as we should call it)’ was expected to be 2050 (p. 312). In the case of ‘Thought Police’, for example, which appears throughout the main text in this form, the Appendix records its Newspeak realisation as *thinkpol* (p. 321), a clipped construction which reflects the intensely rule-bound nature of the proposed language. The tone of the Appendix is ‘quite clearly satirical’, Fowler observes, and Newspeak is presented as ‘the implausible fantasy of an overconfident regime’, part of the ‘myth about *Nineteen Eighty-Four* to the effect that Orwell predicts a future in which thought can be controlled by an artificial language’ (1995: 211). Newspeak, in its final form, is also inconsistent with the author’s aim of communication with his readership: a novel entirely written in the proposed language would be unintelligible (and, as Beauchamp ironically notes, would carry the ‘difficulties of

telling a story of rebellion in a language that would render rebellion impossible' (1974: 466)). In the Appendix, Orwell is acknowledging the satire of Newspeak: he is exposing it as iconic and symbolic; an extreme – yet untenable – version of the speculative language he employs much more subtly and insidiously throughout the narrative, for example, in his shrewd re-calibration of space and time, weights and measures. It is also in the Appendix that Orwell acknowledges that language change is a gradual process, not one that can be achieved or imposed instantly. He suggests that a time-frame spanning more than 66 years (from 1984 to 2050) will be necessary for the complete replacement of the old language with the new. The language of the main text is, therefore not Newspeak at all: it is instead Oceania's version of 'East Martian': the language of the focaliser, Winston, and the characters (see §2.2.3), a language which exists somewhere on the speculative continuum of language change between the language of Orwell's historical spacetime and the language of the distant date he projects for the implementation of Newspeak. From the perspective of a future almost as far distant from Orwell's historical spacetime as his proposed time-frame for the adoption of Newspeak, it becomes possible to see the impact of language change on perception more clearly, as one considers the sociolinguistic positioning of readers of different generations. Moreover, it is disturbingly possible to see the ways in which the speculative language of the novel moves ever closer to base-reality, continually narrowing the gap between speculation and actuality.

3.3.1 The form of the wor(l)d: neologism

New words are the birth certificates of change – change in attitudes, in mores, in human relations, in technology, in the social and economic landscape, in the natural world.

Cullen Murphy, foreword to Anne H. Soukhanov (1995) *Word Watch*

Dystopia, like science fiction, its 'kindred estranged genre' (Suvin 1988: 35), is characterised by neologism, and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* accords with this model even beyond the obvious inclusion of Newspeak. Realist, 'mundane' fictions seldom neologise, save perhaps for occasional place names, but dystopia invariably does, as a means of constructing and communicating the alternativity of its fictional world. Dystopia differs from science fiction, however, insofar as it does not have an established 'code' of neologism, such as that explained as follows in Damien Broderick's (1995) *Reading by Starlight: Postmodern Science Fiction*:

[S]f is written in a kind of code [...] which must be learned by apprenticeship. [T]he coding of each individual sf text depends importantly on access to an unusually concentrated 'encyclopedia' – a mega-text of imaginary worlds, tropes, tools, lexicons, even grammatical innovations borrowed from other textualities. [T]he sf neophyte must work her way into the specialised narrative structures and vocabulary of sf .

(Broderick 1995: xiii-xiv)⁷

Dystopia does not possess this genre-specific, inter-group vocabulary: each dystopian text must create its own linguistic world without recourse to the lexical short-cuts and jargon enjoyed by science fiction. Dystopias are less flamboyantly neologistic than science fiction because, Broderick argues, they 'sharply rein in their lexical inventiveness, reflecting the impoverished world they guardedly deploy' (1995: 15). While I agree with Broderick's claim that dystopias are less elaborate in their lexical inventiveness, I would suggest that this is less contingent on their 'impoverished worlds', and more indicative of their obligation to maintain the connection to 'place': there is inevitably a more visible gesture towards realism in dystopian fiction than is the case with much science fiction. Dystopia, therefore, constrains its neologism in the direction of verisimilitude, while science fiction, is freer to neologise innovatively.

Meyers (1980) identifies two levels of neologism in science fiction: *elementary* and *higher level*. Elementary neologism is 'the introduction of an alien word together with a denial of the exact translatability of that word in an effort to emphasise the "otherness" of the society which produced it' (1980: 7), which Meyers illustrates by reference to Poul Anderson's use of the word *choth* to designate 'a basic social unit, more than a tribe, less than a nation, with cultural and religious dimensions corresponding to nothing human' (Anderson, cited Meyers 1980: 7).⁸ At this elementary level, Meyers notes, 'the new coinage stresses the alienness of the situation', and 'bestows precisely the denotation he wants on the word, while avoiding unwanted connotations of words already in currency' (1980: 8). Higher-level neologism introduces a new word without any gloss or definition, thus it 'brings to the context in which it appears only the associations suggested by its form', Meyers claims, and furthermore, 'if the wordmaker perceives those associations keenly, they can help establish the tone of the story by connotation alone' (1980: 8). Meyers culls examples of higher-level coinages from Theodore Sturgeon's (1949) 'The Huckle is a Happy Beast' which include: *Lirht*, *Hvov*, *fardled*, *funted*, and *fupped*, none of which, he notes, is explained or defined in Sturgeon's text. Dystopian neologism, while drawing on

characteristics of both elementary and higher-level neologism, differs from both: often, dystopia introduces a new word without definition, and, in general, it introduces such words as a marker of ‘otherness’. However, quite differently from Meyers’ examples from science fiction, dystopian neologism is rarely designed to appeal to ‘only the associations suggested by its form’, or to avoid ‘unwanted connotations of words already in currency’. The converse more accurately defines dystopian neologism: it is precisely designed to reflect or to suggest some connotative link to language in the author’s historical spacetime as a means of drawing on the familiarity of those associative links, thus reinforcing the connections with ‘place’.

In this respect, dystopian neologism more closely mirrors the word-formation processes which occur in natural language, while science fiction neologism is more spontaneously imaginative. As linguist Grover Hudson (2000) notes, in the creation of non-fictional new words ‘[i]t is not evident that language places any limits on imagination, or therefore on new possibilities of meaning. The opposite is as likely: only the possibilities of coherent meaning place limitations on language’ (2000: 241). The consequence of this leads Hudson to formulate what he terms the *principle of limited novelty*, which he bases on the observation that new words with both new meaning *and* new form occur only rarely, whereas new words with *either* new meaning *or* new form do occur frequently.⁹ Hudson’s expression of the principle of limited novelty reads: ‘[n]ew meanings are preferred in old forms, and new forms are preferred in old meanings’ (2000: 241). As a result of this principle, Hudson asserts:

[R]arely are new morphemes entirely new, and this partial familiarity of most new words, being familiar in either form or meaning, presumably helps to make them more effective and therefore more acceptable than they would be otherwise.

(Hudson 2000: 241)

What is true of neologism in actual language change holds true, in most cases, for neologism in dystopia: ‘partial familiarity’ is maintained, while some level of unfamiliarity is introduced in order to destabilise and dislocate the word’s meaning, as will be seen in Orwell’s word-formation strategies in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Before examining the neologism of Orwell’s dystopia, however, it is necessary to define neologism more specifically, especially in terms of the ‘form’ and ‘meaning’ mentioned in Hudson’s principle.

In *The Poetics of Science Fiction* (2000), Peter Stockwell develops a taxonomy of neologism-types in science fiction language, garnered from 130 neologisms listed under the entry for 'Terminology' in Clute and Nicholls (1993) *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*. The resulting taxonomy, like Hudson's 'principle', makes a clear distinction between form and meaning (2000: 115-131): new forms, or 'word-shapes', are termed *neologisms* in Stockwell's model, while 'new meanings attached to existing words' he terms *neosemes* (2000: 119). Appositely, for a discussion of neologism, Stockwell coins the term *neosemy* to describe the latter process; a term which I make use of here in my discussions of the ways in which Orwell exploits the potential of meaning-shift in the language he uses in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Both neologism and neosemy 'constitute new *uses* of a word', Stockwell notes, and both are 'important in the linguistic practice of [science fiction]' (2000: 119). Since both neologism and neosemy contribute to the linguistic strategies by which dystopian fictions are constructed, I adopt Stockwell's model in this chapter as an organising principle through which to consider the various realisations of word-formation, although I adapt it slightly to reflect the fact that I consider here the language of just one text, rather than a whole genre over its entire history.

Stockwell sub-divides neologism into six types: *creation*, *borrowing*, *derivation*, *compounding*, *shortening*, and *inflectional*, while his nine sub-categories of neosemy are *broadening*, *narrowing*, *metaphor*, *metonymy*, *synecdoche*, *hyperbole*, *litotes*, *quality shift*, and *recontextualisation* (2000: 120). I shall consider instances of these categories where they occur in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and although I find – as Stockwell finds in science fiction – that not all categories of neologism or neosemy are equally – or at all – represented, those that do occur provide a kind of microcosmic view of the processes of the kinds of language change that Orwell speculates may have occurred by the time of the futuristic setting.

Beginning with neologism, the first sub-category, *creation*, is 'the prototypical form of neologism' (Stockwell 2000: 123), and describes the entire invention of a new word. Meyers' examples from science fiction – *choth*, for instance – characterise creation, and, as noted above, this type of neologism rarely occurs in dystopia; indeed, there is not one example of 'pure' creation in the whole text of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, including its examples of Newspeak (except perhaps in the naming of *Oceania*, which might occur in any fictionalised setting). While expressions such as *artsem* (p. 69) may

appear at first sight to be wholly invented, closer examination reveals this example to be the product of a combination of shortening and compounding derived from *art*-ificial *in-sem*-ination. The absence of true creation-type neologisms in Orwell's dystopia is representative of the genre, and reflects dystopia's emphasis on maintaining a perceptible connection with, and focus on, the world from which it extrapolatively emerges: the language, like the setting, plot, and characterisation, must be recognisably continuous-yet-discontinuous with the author's historical spacetime. For this reason, dystopian neologism inevitably discloses its etymological origins in its morphemes.¹⁰

Borrowing from other languages is common in natural language, and English has historically borrowed extravagantly from many other languages. Borrowing in science fiction, in addition to drawing on words and morphemes from terrestrial languages, 'can be from ostensibly alien language systems', Stockwell notes (2000: 125), although the problem this raises is that 'since in reality we don't know any alien languages, the borrowing is always ostensible and therefore analytically speculative' (2000: 126). Such borrowing as occurs in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is exactly this kind of 'ostensible' borrowing: Newspeak is positioned as an alien language, and where expressions from this language are mentioned in the main text, they are introduced with all the stylistic paraphernalia that indicates its status *as* an alien language system. As already mentioned, none of the characters actually speaks Newspeak, and attention is drawn to the alienness of the language where it does occur, as in Emmanuel Goldstein's recorded speech replayed during the 'Two Minutes Hate'. Watching the recording, Winston observes:

Goldstein was delivering his usual venomous attack upon the doctrines of the Party [...] and all this in the rapid polysyllabic speech which was a sort of parody of the habitual style of the orators of the Party, and even contained Newspeak words: more Newspeak words, indeed, than any Party member would normally use in real life.

(p. 14)

That Winston finds it necessary to remark that Goldstein uses 'Newspeak words' underlines the alterity of this language and its contrast to the narrative norm. Additionally, his use of the intensifier *even* reinforces the strangeness and unexpectedness of Goldstein's use of these words, and establishes Newspeak as an unfamiliar language (although the actual Newspeak words he uses are not reproduced in the text). On the rare occasions that Newspeak words are incorporated into the main

narrative, they are distinctly treated as borrowings from another language: as I have already noted, such words are italicised, glossed, and introduced with a metalinguistic tag, as in the following example relating to the activities of the Ministry of Truth: ‘There was even a whole sub-section – *Pornosec*, it was called in Newspeak – engaged in producing the lowest kind of pornography’ (p.46). Here, *Pornosec* receives the standard typographical and explanatory markers accorded to any newly borrowed or unfamiliar foreign word or expression seen in written discourse. This stands in pointed contrast to Orwell’s methods for introducing a word or expression that emanates from the controlling powers, but that is not Newspeak. For example:

The messages he had received referred to articles or news-items which for one reason or another it was thought necessary to alter, or, as the official phrase had it, to rectify.

(p. 41)

[T]he Ministry of Plenty had issued a promise (a ‘categorical pledge’ were the official words) that there would be no reduction of the chocolate ration during 1984.

(p. 42)

In both cases here, the foregrounded expression – *to rectify*, and a ‘*categorical pledge*’ – originates in the dominion of the Party, but it is not the alien language, Newspeak. The metalinguistic tags still occur – *the official phrase*, and *the official words* – but these expressions are derived from the standard narrative language rather than from Newspeak, and although scare quotes mark the second example, drawing attention to it, it does not receive the typographical marking that characterises borrowing from Newspeak. This language is not alienated; its lexis is that of the standard, and, as a result it does not have the distancing ‘otherness’ of the borrowed Newspeak expressions. The occasional inclusion of a Newspeak word in the main narrative, on the other hand, represents what Stockwell terms borrowing from an ‘ostensibly alien language system’, and carries with it the alternativity of the society that produced it. Newspeak is also responsible for most instances of the neologising processes of derivation, compounding and shortening in the text, but these processes all occur in other ‘non-Newspeak’ speculative language. Stockwell’s remaining category of neologism – inflectional extensions – he acknowledges, is not always considered neologism proper (2000: 130), but he includes it in his framework for completeness. Since the emphasis here is on vocabulary rather than on grammar, I shall disregard inflection here. (Although Orwell discusses the inflectional qualities of Newspeak in

the Appendix (pp. 315-316), its main function is to maintain the ‘rules’ and ‘regularity’ of Newspeak.)

The addition of – or affixing of – morphemes to a word creates neologisms by *derivation*, and is particularly productive in the formation of Newspeak terms, where prefixing generates antonyms such as *ungood* by means of affixing the negative morpheme *un-* to an existing word; the suffix *-ful* forms all adjectives; and *-wise* is suffixed to generate all adverbs. Newspeak is also characterised by *compounding* (of which *Newspeak* itself is an example, being an adjective + verb compound of *new* and *speak*), and *shortening* contributes to the ‘clipped’ style of the language, with forms being abbreviated as seen in *Ingsoc* for *English Socialism*. Compounding and shortening are the processes Orwell cites in the Appendix, ‘The Principles of Newspeak’ where he notes that the words of the ‘B vocabulary’ ‘consisted of two or more words, or portions of words, welded together in an easily pronounceable form’ (p. 317). Yet these three neologising processes construct expressions throughout the text that are not Newspeak, but, like Newspeak, still convey alienating, defamiliarising and threatening qualities. New words, in and of themselves, can make people feel intimidated, as morphologist Valerie Adams (1973) observes; people may even find neologism ‘offensive’ (1973: 1). ‘Innovations in vocabulary’, she continues, ‘are capable of arousing quite strong feelings in people who may otherwise not be in the habit of thinking much about language’ (1973: 1-2). Orwell’s narrative clearly depends on this alienating force of unfamiliar language, since neologisms accumulate densely, especially in the early part of the text, where multi-word compounds – *Hate Week*, *Ninth Three-Year Plan*, *Thought Police* – quickly build up a bewildering world, while derivations – *Junior Anti-Sex League*, for example – confound the norm both linguistically and conceptually, and shortening, as seen in the abbreviated *telescreen* (in combination with compounding) suggests the futurity both of the narrative ‘landscape’ and its technological status. With the exception of ‘telescreen’, which is accorded the tag ‘it was called’ and some explanation, these neologisms, all of which occur within the first nine pages of the narrative, appear without introduction or definition. Dystopia, as mentioned earlier, invariably opens *in medias res*, catapulting the reader straight into the alternative world, destabilising immediately his or her conception of what constitutes the norm, and challenging – and denying the reassurance and stability of – his or her habitual thought world. The neologisms – new word *forms*, it must be

stressed – appearing in the early pages *Nineteen Eighty-Four* map out the new territory that the reader encounters. Just like the ‘stranger in a strange land’ of science fiction, the reader visits a new physical location, with new and unfamiliar labels attached to it; an alternative world differently constituted to the reader’s known and familiar base-reality. However, just as dystopia is never completely estranged from base-reality, neither is its language ever completely detached from the language of base-reality (or, at least, the author’s historical spacetime). The communication of this different-but-analogous location is maintained by selecting, in every case mentioned above, morphemes that are known and familiar to the reader, and (re)building them into new constructions which structure the world of the future. New word forms, in short, actually form the material world of the dystopia. However, it is the potency of neosemy – new word *meanings* – which really impels the dystopian project, and it is to examples of neosemy in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* that I now turn.

3.3.2 The meaning of the wor(l)d: neosemy

Human language is an embarrassment for evolutionary theory because it is vastly more powerful than one can account for in terms of selective fitness.

David Premack (1985) *Cognition*

If neologism assembles the dystopian world, neosemy disassembles it. By maintaining the known contours of words while shifting and displacing their familiar meanings, neosemy incrementally destabilises habitual perceptions and challenges the reader to (re)perceive the strange futuristic world signified through the language of its inhabitants. Neosemy both symbolises and enacts the dystopian impulse as it penetrates any automatic reception of meaning, disaggregates it, and reorders it, while preserving ostensibly – and often deceptively – known form. Stockwell describes neosemy as ‘a sort of linguistic entropy by which all words mutate or disappear from current usage’, and emphasises the ongoing nature of this process in natural language, where words ‘undergo shifts in meaning from the moment they are coined to the moment they “die”’ (2000: 119). Readers, therefore, might be expected to be familiar with the notion of their language progressively shifting, but dystopia intensifies, accelerates, and condenses the process to such a degree that it subverts any taken-for-granted expectations, and, indeed, often inverts them, as will be seen in the following examples of neosemy from *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

The first sub-type of neosemy identified by Stockwell – *broadening* – refers to an extension of meaning from the specific to the general, as seen in the English word *holiday*, which originally signified a religious work-free day – *holy day* – but has broadened to include any work-less day. Orwell resourcefully exploits the potential of broadening to satirical effect in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, with examples such as *spontaneous* in the ‘spontaneous demonstrations’ (p. 24), which are organised by a committee. The word, it is suggested, has mutated beyond its meaning of *unplanned, impulsive* to incorporate its antonymical sense of *structured, planned*. Satire is undeniably an element of many of the examples of broadening in this text, but some examples are more central to communicating the very ‘dystopian-ness’ of the text. The department where Winston works – the ‘Records Department’ – is one such example. This is not a Newspeak expression: the Appendix details its Newspeak form as *recdep*; thus it is part of the language of the characters, the language of the future. ‘Records Department’ is also part of the language of Orwell’s – and his readers’ – historical spacetime, at least in terms of its form, and signifies an administrative area dealing with what the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines as ‘evidence about the past, especially a written or other permanent account of something’. The extensively broadened meaning attached to the existing word form of *Record* in its Oceanian sense admits radically modified and extended meaning, where ‘permanent’ mutates into transitory, and ‘evidence’ becomes nothing more than forgery, as Winston ‘verifies’ historical accounts, and ‘rectifies’ the official records in line with the Party’s orders. The broadened sense of *Record* in the narrative world which transforms the specific meaning (enduring, accurate, historically faithful report) to the general (ephemeral, transient, historically mutable report) maintains the essential connection with the primary known sense, insofar as it preserves the notion of a written account (report), but extends this familiar concept to incorporate new – and disconcerting – meanings. As with other neosemic shifts, the word shape remains unchanged, which makes this a particularly effective way to confront and unbalance perceptions: the familiarity of the word form invites an automatised, habituated response which is gradually challenged as the reader becomes aware of, and assimilates, the wider implications embedded in the neosemically broadened word.

Paradoxically, the converse process to broadening – *narrowing* – has a similar destabilising effect in dystopian writing. Narrowing is the specialisation of meaning,

and accounts for the progression from the general to the specific in neosemy (Stockwell cites the example of 'meat', which in Early Middle English meant food in general (2000: 120), and Hudson offers 'brave' which in Shakespeare's phrase 'brave new world' meant 'bright and gaudy' (2000: 261)). Orwell prominently appeals to the notion of narrowing in his depiction of Newspeak, where words such as *free* are 'stripp[ed] [...] of unorthodox meanings, and so far as possible of all secondary meanings whatever' (p. 313). However, Newspeak's declared intention to redefine words so that all 'ambiguities and shades of meaning had been purged out of them' (p. 314) is likely to be dismissed as unfeasible by most readers, many of whom might be outraged by the idea that all the abstract connotations of a word like 'free' could somehow be wiped out of consciousness. Yet narrowing of meaning occurs throughout the main text. The generic term *novel*, for example, loses its inherent connotations of creativity and imagination as it becomes clear that fiction is produced on 'novel-writing machines', or 'kaleidoscopes' and consists, Julia tells Winston, of 'six plots, but they swap them round a bit' (pp. 136-137). Equally indicative of narrowed meaning is the fact that the words of songs are 'composed without any human intervention whatever' (p. 144). The same is true of the wider, familiar meaning of *news*, which is narrowed to define just the (provisional) information that the Party deems reportable, while *history* as a concept has diminished to the 'official' version (p. 162). *Orthodoxy* has specialised meaning, according to the lexicographer, Syme, who tells Winston 'Orthodoxy means not thinking – not needing to think. Orthodoxy is unconsciousness' (p. 56). The lexical tokens – *novel*, *songs*, *news*, *history*, *orthodoxy* – remain the same as their real-world counterparts, but a narrowed, more specialised area of meaning is signified by these superficially familiar words. Including, or alluding to, such narrowed vocabulary is a particularly effective way for the dystopian author to symbolise both the disparities and the similarities between the projected world and the reader's world since it invites a comparison between the pared-down, reduced meaning and the fuller range of signification available beyond the fiction.

This manoeuvring and manipulation of meaning is typical also of *metaphor*, Stockwell's next category, which, in natural language, consciously draws attention to perceived resemblance between the language it uses to describe a concept and the existing language which it attempts to substitute. Within the category of metaphor, I subsume *metonymy*, *synecdoche*, *hyperbole*, *litotes*, and *quality shifts*, since all these

incidences of neosemy entail some level of metaphorical extension or projection. Over time, meaning shift in metaphorical language can occur, Stockwell notes, 'when creative metaphorical neologisms lose their original sense', resulting in 'dead' metaphors which are 'popularly not regarded as metaphors at all, but as having a literal coincidence of denotation and reference' (2000: 120-121). The 'death' of a metaphor is a long-term process in natural language, but is a process which is expedited and exploited to unsettling effect in dystopian fiction, where the results of diachronic language change are presented as already having happened by the time of the future-based time-frame. As a particularly effective example of the destabilising potential of speculative language, dystopian metaphorical language exists in a relationship of peculiar 'doubleness' with language in the readers' base-reality, a relationship which hinges on readers' tacit understanding that this speculative language *is* the language of the future.

In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Orwell recurrently embeds innovative creative metaphor in his future language – that of the narrative and characters – but presents it in such a way as to deny its novelty. In this way, the synecdoche of *Room 101* or *Airstrip One* is invisible to the characters – in terms of their language these expressions have become commonplace, dead metaphors – but it is startlingly new and heavy with creative inference for the reader, who, unlike the characters, is encountering the formulation for the first time. Similarly, the hyperbole of 'victory' in *Victory Gin* and *Victory Cigarettes* is unremarkable within the narrative world, where the characters are daily conditioned by reports of ostensible victories, but marked by its absurdity for the reader positioned beyond the linguistic boundaries of the fiction. These products in the fictional world also exist in metaphorical relationship with their extra-textual counterparts – the referent of 'gin', for example, being quite different in the reader's reality from the 'synthetic' alcohol denoted by the same referent in the text. Language which is understood to have an unambiguous, non-metaphorical meaning in the reader's world – *alter*, and *rectify*, for instance – assumes the status of litotes when seen in the light of Winston's job of 'correcting' the Party's news items, as do the understated expressions *slips*, *errors*, *misprints*, and *misquotations* as referents of the deceitful falsification he is required to commit. Quality shifts of considerable magnitude are apparent to the reader as the meaning of *spies*, for example, (with reference to children reporting to the authorities their parents' and others' 'symptoms of unorthodoxy' (p.

26)) has become elevated to a commendable and worthy occupation for children. These examples, all of which are linguistically innovative in terms of the language of Orwell's historical spacetime – and remain so to the reader over half a century later – present the metaphorical language of the future as having undergone neosemic meaning-shift to the extent that it has already become part of the characters' habitual thought world, unremarkable, and unnoticed. The characters use this language automatically, and seem unaware of its metaphoricity. The reader is thus presented, in each case, with a complexly layered metaphor, which, as in his or her real-life language, is decodable via its shared referents. However, in the case of dystopian metaphor, the reader has not only to process the decoding in terms of his or her own language, but must also duplicate the process in terms of the characters' language, in an act of triangulation resembling Suvin's notion of 'feedback oscillation' (see §1.4), as referents in both the real and the fictional world are invoked in order to make sense of the linguistic construction.

Like neologism, neosemy challenges the reader to (re)consider – and compare to his or her own world – the kind of society which might produce and use this futuristic language. However, unlike neologism, which identifies, labels, and builds the future world, neosemy takes existing language and re-defines it in terms of its re-placed time and space. One further category of neosemy perhaps best illustrates this process of re-definition: *recontextualisation*, which is considered in more detail in the following section.

3.3.3 The perspective of the wor(l)d: recontextualisation

There are little constellations of language here and there, and the meaning of a word changes according to its context in the constellation.

Margaret Atwood (1990) *Conversations*

Recontextualisation, the final category of neosemy, is, Stockwell explains, 'a global textual effect of changing the meanings of words' (2000: 121). In contrast to the earlier categories treated above, which are equally applicable to natural language, recontextualisation is a text-specific type of neosemy, one where 'the peculiarities of the text world affect the semantic field of a word' (*ibid*). By way of example, Stockwell cites the semantic well-formedness of the phrase 'The king is pregnant' on the planet Gethen in Ursula le Guin's science-fiction text (1981) *The Left Hand of Darkness*, where the inhabitants are genderless save for occasional periods – called *kemmer* – where either male or female sexual characteristics temporarily develop. In keeping with

the peculiar circumstances of this alternative text world, “king” is neither male nor female, and so “The king was pregnant” is semantically well-formed’ (Stockwell 2000: 122). Thus, the alternativity of the text world sanctions and rationalises the recontextualised lexical meaning of an existing word, *king*, which does not automatically carry the semantic component ‘male’ in this Gethenian context. ‘Since science fiction deals centrally with alternative realities, there are many examples [of recontextualisation]’, Stockwell observes (2000: 121). Like science fiction, dystopia also textually evinces an alternative reality, but unlike science fiction, dystopia’s alternative reality is more exactly defined by, and more essentially related to, the earth-bound reality from which it develops. For this reason, dystopian recontextualisations are generally more restrained than those found in extra-terrestrial science fictions. While semantic clashes do occur in dystopian text worlds, they are seldom so radical or disconcerting as the ‘pregnant kings’ of Gethen; instead, dystopia relies on a more prosaic method of recontextualising language: *collocational clashes*. The difference between the two is slight; a matter of degree rather than of classification, since a semantic clash is (usually) also a collocational clash; however, dystopia typically takes advantage of the neosemic potential of collocational conflict by deliberately placing known – and normally unconnected – words in combinations in such a way that the union results in a recontextualised meaning far more complex than the combined meaning of the individual words.

In dystopian fictions, this linguistic ‘synergy’ typically gains its force from the unexpected combination of two or more known words into neosemic multi-word units which reflect the habitual world-view of the text’s speech community. Since these novel linguistic amalgamations do not exist outside of the text world, they are intimately bound up with, and indicative of, the alternativity of the text world, but because they are constructed from linguistic tokens existing in the reader’s reality, they bring with them to the new context, the connotations, associations, and denotations that they encode in the world beyond the text. Examples encountered in the early pages of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* include *Hate Week*, *Thought Police*, and *Memory Hole*, all of which are constructed from recognisable, conceptually available words in seemingly incompatible or anomalous collocations, and all of which create new lexical items which evoke the dystopian world of Oceania. As with most of the examples of neosemy considered above, this language is not Newspeak (*Thought Police*, for

instance, is rendered *thinkpol* in Newspeak (p. 317)); it is part of the language of the characters, and is used habitually. The first instance of *Thought Police* occurs on the second page of the narrative in a section of Winston's free indirect thought, and appears as a brief reference before the narrative moves off in an unrelated direction: 'It was the police patrol, snooping into people's windows. The patrols did not matter, however. Only the Thought Police mattered' (p. 4). While the importance of this construction is foregrounded – it is capitalised, as would customarily mark proper nouns, and is predicated on the verb *mattered* – it is not introduced, glossed, or accompanied by any explanatory tags in the way that marks the inclusion of Newspeak in the text. This stands in distinct contrast to the treatment of *telescreen* earlier on the same page, which is described ('an oblong metal plaque like a dulled mirror'), rephrased ('the instrument'), and marked for novelty with a metalinguistic tag ('it was called'). The innovative and estranging force of the construction *Thought Police* is not a feature of its constitutive lexemes, each of which is a well-known, frequently used word, nor is it attributable to meaning-shift *within* either word individually – *thought*, in this context, still denotes the cognitive capability it denotes in standard English, and *police* retains its nominal meaning of regulatory force – rather it is the extraordinary collocational clash of this pairing which provides its shocking, estranging, and destabilising force.

The combination of an abstract noun premodifying a concrete noun is commonplace in English, as is the compounding of nouns into multi-word phrasal units; the coinage is morphologically, grammatically and syntactically well-formed, and could – theoretically, at least – have been generated from the resources of the standard language at any point in history. That *thought police* – or any synonymous version of it – was never coined prior to Orwell's use of it is indicative of the futuristic context of the dystopian world where concepts exist that are not named within the lexicon of English. These concepts only exist in the world of the text. In order to bring such a concept into being, the dystopian author names, or labels it. The formulation of these clashing lexical tokens, however, is not an arbitrary process: in drawing together known constituent lexemes, the author draws together at the same time their inherent connotations, first of all alluding to the familiarity of known concepts, but then swiftly subverting and challenging any automatised response by means of an abrupt combinatorially achieved estrangement of those concepts. By selecting terms which fail to collocate in English, (since there is no known referent for the resulting pairing in that

language), but which do collocate in terms of the dystopian language, these neosemes recontextualise meaning only by way of adjacency, and only on the terms of the narrative's own language. Similarly, the phrase *Hate Week* also retains lexical familiarity in both worlds, but only has a referent in the context of the text world. The relationship between the recontextualised expression and the concept it denotes is one of contradiction and paradox with the referents of its constitutive lexemes in the real world: while both *hate* and *week* retain their base-reality meanings, the combination, in drawing on other similar formulations draws attention to the disparity between the two worlds. Other examples which occur in the text exemplify the same collocational clash, and often a similar linguistic structure: *memory hole*, for example, the customary name of the paper-evidence disposal chutes which are built into the walls of the Ministry of Truth, is constructed from the same abstract noun + concrete noun combination as *thought police*, while *Reality control* – although the second term is less concrete – shows the same kind of composition. In each case, the collocational clash arises from the sheer incongruity of combining an abstract noun reflecting fundamentally unrestrained human capacities, emotional responses, or perceptions (*thought, memory, hate, reality*) with a concrete noun which confines, restricts, or governs it (*police, hole, week, control*).

Recontextualisation following this same basic structure occurs throughout the dystopian genre, and is a particularly effective linguistic strategy, since it meets all the requirements outlined at the beginning of §3.2: it emphasises the language change the author imagines will have occurred in the future, and reflects the ways in which language may be manipulated by an autocratic state; importantly, it lexicalises new concepts – concepts which are not named prior to their appearance in the text (as seen in §2.3.2, Orwell, like other writers of dystopias, firmly believes that there are areas of experience outside the current lexicon). The requisite dystopian connection to 'place' is accomplished by the use of familiar language, and by alluding to its real-world referents, which also facilitates the communicative aim (this is not indecipherable or wholly invented language). For the reader, the result of this recontextualising process is that s/he encounters a phrasal unit which first encourages and then resists an automatised reading: while the language itself is of the world of his or her base-reality, the concept it denotes is of the new reality played out in the text. In this respect, recontextualisation differs little from the other instantiations of neologism and neosemy

detailed above. Where it does differ – and significantly so – is that neither the shape or the meaning of the individual constitutive words is changed; only the condition of its collocational clash communicates the revisioned world; in the case of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, a world where thought can be policed, memory can be disposed of through holes, a week can be set aside to celebrate hatred, and reality can be controlled.

3.3.4 The location of the wor(l)d: narrative structure

Structurally, dystopias, as noted above, open *in medias res*. Linguistically, too, dystopias plunge the reader into the new world with only limited preliminaries, explanation or introduction of speculative language. In general terms, the physical form of the displaced dystopian world is accorded some introduction (and this is where neologism chiefly occurs), while the aspects that contribute to an understanding of the ways in which the dystopian world differs from, yet is also similar to, the world from which it extrapolatively arises, are accorded fewer orienting cues (this being where most instances of neosemy are found). The latter category represents the area where dystopian speculative language is at its most perception-challenging and destabilising; where it both defamiliarises the familiar and normalises the unknown, bringing the not-yet-happened into being and demonstrating the consequences of its existence. By taking two examples from the opening page of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* – *poster of Big Brother* and *Hate Week* – and considering these in relation to their positioning and treatment in terms of the narrative structure, my aim is to demonstrate the ways varying degrees of estrangement contribute towards the reader's perceptions of the dystopian world in comparison to his or her own world.

Analysis of these examples' informational content in terms of *given* and *new* information afford some insight into their relative positioning. *Given information*, particularly at the beginning of a narrative, is that which appears as 'information already known to the participants: either supplied in the co-text; or presupposed from the situational context, or from the (wider) context of assumed common knowledge' (Wales 2001: 179), and tacitly assumes a shared frame of reference between the reader and the details of the text. *New information*, on the other hand, 'is not known, or not assumed to be known, to the addressee', Wales explains, or is that which 'is regarded as particularly "newsworthy"' (*ibid*). The treatment of *poster of Big Brother* is quite different from the treatment of *Hate Week* in terms of its given (or 'known') and new

(or 'unknown') presentation, and demonstrates a recurrent type of structural patterning in dystopian narratives.

The first two paragraphs of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (represented schematically in Fig. 1) comprise three thematic strands: firstly, Winston's journey from outdoors to his seventh-floor flat; secondly, his en-route observation and description of the poster of Big Brother, and thirdly, a short parenthetical interpolation of circumstantial detail. Both *Winston Smith* and *Victory Mansions* are introduced in the second sentence, and both are introduced without preliminary remark: 'Winston Smith, his chin nuzzled into his breast in an attempt to escape the vile wind, slipped quickly through the glass doors of Victory Mansions'. These two named entities then provide the referents to which much of the ensuing given information in this extract anaphorically refers. Winston is the antecedent referent of *his chin*, *his breast*, and so on, while Victory Mansions accounts for *the hallway*, *the wall*, *the stairs*, *the lift*, *the flat*, and similar locative information. These unremarkable examples are similar to those found at the outset of traditional 'mundane' narratives. However, the poster of Big Brother, prior knowledge of which cannot be assumed or inferred, is introduced in a series of clauses denoting new information: *a coloured poster*, *an enormous face*, *a man of about forty-five*, each of which is marked for novelty by the use of the indefinite article. The only phrases marked for given information in relation to the poster are those which refer to information introduced in an immediately preceding clause (so 'It' is a pronominal reference to its antecedent *poster*, and *the face* refers to its antecedent *an enormous face*). The figure of Big Brother is a dystopian world-constitutive element of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and this chain of clauses introduces the concept of him in a pattern typical of the presentation of new information. The indefinite articles which introduce each new aspect to the reader make no assumption of prior knowledge, and permit the reader an incremental, staged introduction. This new presentation contrasts with the later reference to the poster at the end of the paragraph, where, having being introduced as new, it is now preceded by the definite article: '*the poster with the enormous face*', which marks it as given.

This presentation contrasts distinctly with the presentation of *Hate Week*, which is not only introduced as given information, but also occupies a structural position which reinforces its ostensible status as normalised, circumstantial detail. As Fig. 1 shows, the opening paragraphs track Winston's journey from the street to his flat

(sections 2, 4, and 6). Interwoven into his journey is the description of the poster of Big Brother (sections 3 and 7). The description of the poster becomes part of the description of Winston's journey, as it exists physically: 'tacked to the wall' of the hallway, and 'on each landing, opposite the lift shaft'. The remaining section of text (section 5), containing the reference to Hate Week, does not constitute part of the physical journey; rather it appears as background information, inserted parenthetically between two sections detailing Winston's journey:

It was no use trying the lift. Even at the best of times it was seldom working, and at present the electric current was cut off during daylight hours. It was part of the economy drive in preparation for Hate Week

The first sentence here provides a cohesive link to Winston's journey, explaining his choice of the stairs rather than the lift, so it is not entirely disconnected from the surrounding text, but from this point, the narrative abruptly moves out from the local detail of the journey to the wider background. The second sentence, beginning with the fixed idiomatic expression 'even at the best of times', moves away temporally from the journey to make an extraneous, timeless statement, which is presented as new information, insofar as it informs the reader of a factual circumstance that could not have been previously known or inferred from the text – that the lift seldom functioned. Returning to the narrative time with 'at the present', the remainder of this sentence is similarly introducing new information that the reader could not be expected to know or infer; the cutting off of the electric current is intrinsic to the text world, rather than being knowledge available in the world of the reader. However, the final sentence of this section is marked as given: *the* economy drive, with its definite article, suggests information already known to the reader, and *Hate Week* is presented as though it is a well-known event (compare, for example, the unmarked presentation of 'in preparation for Christmas', which would assume a shared frame of reference). Hate Week is, like the cutting off of the electricity, specific and intrinsic to the world of the novel – and as unknowable for the reader – but its presentation as given deceptively suggests that this is known, commonplace, familiar information.

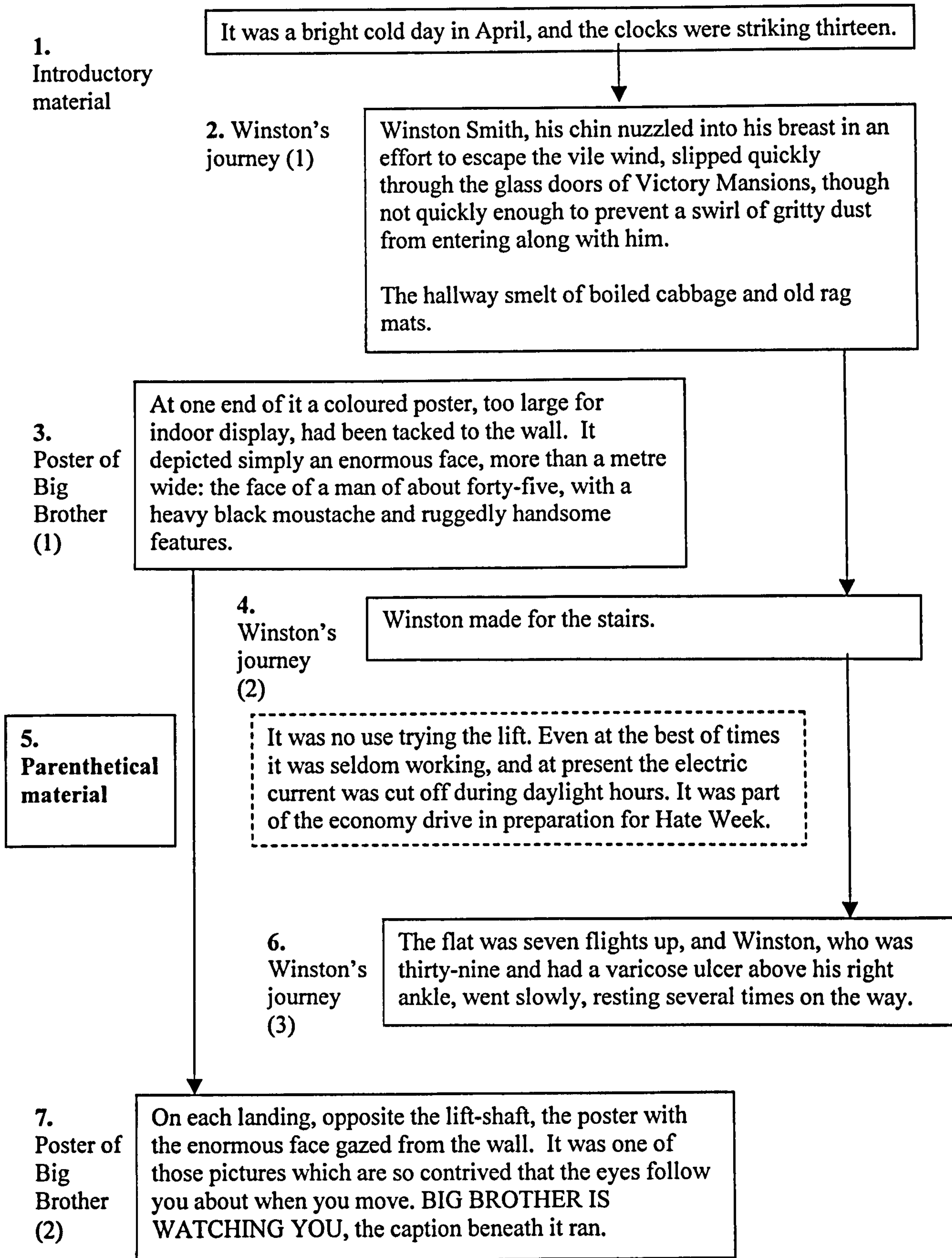


FIG. 1 Schematic representation of thematic strands

To the text's focalising character – Winston – this is, of course, simply part of the ordinary daily routine in Oceania, which would seem to account for the understated presentation. But the poster of Big Brother is also a familiar part of the landscape for Winston, yet it is presented quite differently: it is described and introduced to the reader, while Hate Week is accorded neither description nor introduction. As noted earlier, *Big Brother* is neologism – a construction with new form – while Hate Week is neosemy, or a construction with new meaning, and while the former physically delineate the dystopian world, the latter act to defamiliarise it. To an extent, this accounts for the differing introduction of these two terms in the opening of the narrative: Big Brother is a structural component of the text world, representing the totalitarian government, while Hate Week is an abstraction of the ruling powers' mode of operation and authority. The reader is 'formally' introduced to the concept of Big Brother, but s/he meets the notion of Hate Week as something given, accepted, and unremarkable within the fictional framework; it is known to Winston, although not to the reader. While it represents a minor circumstantial detail to him – as shown by the perfunctory reference to it – it is marked as a significant dislocation of reality for the reader principally because of its conceptual unfamiliarity.

To consider this structural difference in terms of *foregrounding* and *backgrounding* is also illuminating. In traditional, mainstream, realist narrative, the parenthetical presentation of Hate Week as given information would identify it as a background detail; however, in dystopian fiction, the 'taken-for-granted background (the setting), as Moylan notes, actually *is* 'the foreground (or driving force behind the whole creation)' (2000: 5). Moylan develops this idea from Samuel R. Delany's extensive explorations into this process of reversal in science fiction (Delany 1984; 1991), and extends Delany's observations to encompass dystopian narrative structure. I return to Delany's original theorising of this aspect in relation to science fiction since his consideration of the effects of this structural realignment on the reader are particularly pertinent to the direction of this study. I do, however, take advantage of Moylan's prior application of Delany's work to dystopian fiction, and assume that Delany's comments are equally appropriate to dystopia.

Delany's work on science fiction is characterised by its focus on the reader, and the ways in which s/he might receive and respond to the language, syntax, and structure of science fiction. The 'foregrounded background' theory he outlines is, for him, a

genre-defining difference between science fiction and ‘mundane’ literature. Delany’s main contention is that, while mundane literature in general attempts to re-create ‘reality’, science fiction’s relation to reality is ‘one of dialogic, contestatory, agonistic creativity’ which creates ‘a significant distortion of the present that sets up a rich and complex dialogue with the reader’s here and now’ (1984: 177). This triangulation between the reader’s world and the fictional world hinges on the foregrounding of the background, or what Delany calls the privileging of *object* over *subject*. Where mundane literature focuses on the *subject* – character or plot – science fiction focuses on the *object*, or the setting or delineation of the fictional world. This results, Delany suggests, in a fundamental adjustment to the reading process:

Because the world of mundane fiction is fixed, at least in comparison with the multiple worlds of science fiction, when we read some distortion in the representation of the world in a piece of mundane fiction we are led to the questions, *Why did the character (the fictive subject) perceive it this way? or Why did the writer (the auctorial subject) present it this way?*¹¹

(Delany 1984: 145) [original emphasis]

In contrast, because of science fiction’s concentration on the setting, or object world, if the reader should encounter some detail that differs from, or contradicts, his or her knowledge of the real world, s/he would, Delany believes, instead ask, ‘*How would the world of the story have to be different from our world in order for this to occur?*’ (1984: 146) [original emphasis]. Speculative language such as *Hate Week* (or, indeed, any of the other examples mentioned above), is exactly the kind of ‘background’ detail that dystopia subtly foregrounds: this re-formed and re-appropriated language ostensibly constructs the backdrop against which the characters play out their roles, yet the setting is foregrounded because of the disruptive, disorienting incongruity of the language in which it is embodied. In order to decode and make sense of such language, the reader (who, according to Delany, will be engaged in questioning how the fictive world differs from his or her own) is compelled to consider similar linguistic constructions which fall within his or her frame of reference. While I cannot presume to represent the cognitive processing of all readers, it seems reasonable to suggest that, in order to decode the textual detail *Hate Week*, readers will refer to similar, conceptually available forms; *Easter Week*, or *Enterprise Week*, perhaps, or any one of the many charity or profile-raising periods nominated ~~xxxxx~~ *Awareness Week* which occur in their base-reality. Given the word-initial capitalisation of *Hate Week*, this is more likely than alternatives

such as, say, *Thursday week* or *working week*. Delany's theory finds application in respect of *Hate Week* (and, by extension, other constructions such as *Thought Police*) because the decoding process requires the reader to ask the question he proposes – 'How would the world of the story have to be different from our world in order for this to occur?'. From the point of view of a base-reality where *Week*, capitalised and pre-modified typically signifies an annual week-long period designated to draw attention to or celebrate a particular topic, the world of the story differs significantly in its notion of a week-long observance of hatred, yet understanding the construction depends on its similarities to these existing constructions in the reader's world. A minor modification to Delany's question accommodates this linguistic triangulation process: 'How would the *language of* the world of the story have to be different from the *language of* our world in order for this to occur?'. Speculative language, in this case, is the site and stimulus of 'the rich and complex dialogue with the reader's here and now' to which Delany refers; the 'background' is foregrounded by means of speculative representations of the language of the present, re-creating itself as the language of the future.

3.4 Speculative language, perception, and the reader

As an extreme example of linguistic determinism, Newspeak is designed to restrict the thoughts and perceptions of its users, as the lexicographer, Syme, explains to Winston:

Don't you see that the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought? In the end we shall make thoughtcrime literally impossible, because there will be no words in which to express it. Every concept that can ever be needed will be expressed by exactly one word, with its meaning rigidly defined and all its subsidiary meanings rubbed out and forgotten [...] Every year fewer and fewer words, and the range of consciousness always a little smaller.

(p. 55)

Newspeak is, in many respects, speculative language as the term is understood in this study: it is a fictional representation of a language of the future, and is explicitly designed radically to alter the world-view of its users. It differs, however, from the speculative language I identify above, and in significant ways. Firstly, and crucially, it is part of the plot of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*: the linguistic enactment of the tyranny of the Party, the totalitarian power which attempts to control the freedom and freewill of its citizens in every sphere of human existence. Orwell emphasises its presentation as a

fictional construct, not only by appending 'The Principles of Newspeak' as a kind of grammar and glossary which accentuates its alien or 'other' status, but also, as noted earlier, by means of introducing – and translating – every instance of Newspeak in the main text. The language is presented to the reader, but s/he is not expected to decode it; it is essentially extrinsic to the process of communication between text and reader. Speculative language, on the other hand, is not part of the plot – it is part of the communicative process; language the reader must decode throughout the reading process. In this respect, the relationship between the reader and speculative language is much more direct and personal than that which pertains between the reader and Newspeak. As Sisk notes, not all readers will respond to all the invitations of the text; moreover, there exists part of the readership for whom

the only meaningful requirement that Newspeak must satisfy is that of plausibility as a self-contained fictive construct. Bluntly, Newspeak has to appear as if it could do what the Party intends it to do [...]. Read on this level, Newspeak succeeds as another terrifying aspect of the Party's crusade to wipe out dissent.

(Sisk 1997: 49)

When seen as a 'self-contained fictive construct', the concept of Newspeak becomes one that readers may choose to – or choose not to – engage with. The same is not true of speculative language, since it permeates the communicative act and even comprises the very medium of the communication. To read the text at all, the reader is compelled to assimilate speculative language, the language of the future.

Secondly, and in a point connected to the first, insofar as it relies on the notion of Newspeak as a fictional construct, Newspeak is designed to act upon the citizens of the future; to control their capacity to communicate and to think. In other words, its design acts on the characters rather than the readers. Speculative language, by contrast, has no discernible effect on the characters at all: they use this language habitually and without comment. Instead, at the heart of speculative language is the writer's desire to make the language of the text impact upon the reader; to use the potential of the author-reader relationship to communicate the awful possibilities of the dystopian world.

A third distinction between Newspeak and speculative language is also relevant to this study: functionally, Newspeak is designed to restrict the perception of its users. Paradoxically, speculative language is designed to broaden perception (although by this I mean the perceptions of the readers, rather than those of the characters). Speculative

language encourages - facilitates, even - the process of triangulation between the fictional world and the real world, since it has referents - and thereby meaning - in both dimensions. As noted above, speculative language invariably adheres to the 'principle of limited novelty', exhibiting either new meaning in existing word-forms or existing meaning in new word-forms; rarely in dystopian fiction is the new form *and* new meaning combination seen (although this occurs regularly in extra-terrestrial science fiction). This results in dystopian speculative language characteristically being an unsettling and destabilising interanimation of the familiar and the unfamiliar, a fusion of the known with the unknown. In short, it is a coalescence of the established language of the present with the yet-to-be-determined language of the future, and one which - like metaphor - requires the reader's cognisance of both fields in order to process and retrieve meaning. Unlike metaphor, however, where an abstract meaning (typically) maps onto a more concrete meaning, speculative language has a concrete referent in each of its time frames: the core meaning of the constituent lexemes in *hate, week, memory, hole, thought, police, reality, and control*, for example, is the same in both the real and the fictional worlds; only through extraordinary combination and recontextualisation do reappropriated meanings emerge. The reader's awareness of this 'doubleness' of the language expands his or her perception of what is encoded in language to include what *could be* encoded by the language, since the blending of both actuality and possibility necessitates awareness of both. Arguably, this amalgamation of linguistic signification suggests the reader might ask Delany's question, 'how would the world of the story have to be different from our world in order for this to occur?'; in other words, the energy of speculative language is contained in its propensity to challenge the reader's habitual acceptance of language, and perceive that this deceptively transparent medium is as liable to manipulation, distortion, and corruption as the dystopian world itself. In this respect, speculative language is much more than simply a microcosmic representational symbol of the dystopian world: rather it is a portentous exemplification of how the malignity and horror of the dystopian world could insidiously and inexorably emanate from the reader's own world.

The design of speculative language is such that cognitive estrangement is invariably visible: this language presents the reader with a communicative medium which is continuous with his or her own, insofar as the language (or at least its constituent morphemes) is familiar and never resists interpretation, yet it is

discontinuous in that, while closely resembling the language of the reader's world, it subtly infuses futuristic unfamiliarity into each word, destabilising meaning and challenging taken-for-granted perceptions. The same unsettling combination of known-yet-unknown language places the reader in an almost involuntary 'Whorfian' position, whereby s/he is invited to negotiate a route through the interpretative process which closely resembles the stages of Whorfianism outlined in §2.2.2. Firstly, speculative language is presented as the norm for the world of the future. As the preceding examples from *Nineteen Eighty-Four* have demonstrated, this language is used habitually by the inhabitants of the dystopian future; it is their standard mode of communication. In other words, it illustrates what Whorf terms the 'background character' of language: it quickly becomes clear to the reader that the language of the future is as automatised for the fictional characters as their own language is to them: 'part of the background of experience of which we tend to remain unconscious' (Whorf 1956: 209). Secondly, as the reader encounters anomalous language of the nature discussed earlier in this chapter, its dissonance, or irregularity is brought into consciousness. This process, enacted in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by metric terminology, for example, and other neologism, neosemy, and recontextualisation, alerts the reader to the possibility that a different world-view inheres in the language s/he encounters; that it is only superficially familiar, and that what it encodes represents a radically different way of conceptualising the world. As Whorf explained, it is necessary to come into contact with some contrast to the norm in order to appreciate not only that there *is* a norm, but also that other alternatives are possible. Speculative language provides exactly this 'contrast to the norm': the reader is confronted by language which challenges and even subverts the norm while indirectly maintaining a clear connection with the 'norm' of the reader's habitual language. Whorf's third stage - his examination of alternatively constituted world-views - is a process which engages the reader throughout the entire reading of the narrative: repeatedly, s/he must dismantle and reconstruct language in order to grasp the discontinuities and discrepancies between the language of the dystopian future and the language of the non-fictional present. The final stage of Whorfianism - the process of comparing and assessing the differences in world-view encoded within the language - is contingent on the reader: if s/he responds to the invitations of the language, s/he will come to understand that this language, formed extrapolatively from elements of his or her own language, reveals a world formed extrapolatively from his or her own world.

Speculative language then, takes linguistic elements from this world and distorts and contorts them in order to communicate a possible world-view of the future; one that draws in the reader as a participant in the process as s/he negotiates and retrieves signification and significance from disordered language. However, speculative language alone does not entirely drive the dystopian project: speculative language provides only the language of the future. The language of the past - that which I have termed *reflective language* - contributes equally to the extraordinary perception-altering propensity of dystopian fiction, as well as to its peculiar relationship with time and 'place'. Accordingly, an examination of reflective language, together with some discussion of its connections with speculative language, will be the subject of the following chapter.

4. Reflective language in dystopia

Language is testimony: it contains geological strata of past events and out-of-fashion values.

Ben Pimlott (1989) Introduction to *Nineteen Eighty-Four*¹

4.1 Introduction

Speculative language, as outlined in chapter three, constructs and animates the world of the dystopian future, presenting the reader with unsettling formulations and re-formulations of language; manipulations and transformations that are consistent-yet-inconsistent with the language of the world beyond the fiction; language representative of what could be if current trends continue unchecked. However, speculative language alone does not communicate either the potential threat of the dystopian future or its undeniable connections to the societal circumstances of its composition. One important contribution that this study makes to the critical assessments of language in dystopian fiction is to recognise that speculative language – especially where the future is conceived as communicable chiefly through the estranging qualities of neologism – functions most effectively when considered in tandem with known and familiar language, or that which I term *reflective language*. Reflective language, as noted in §1.5.3, is the language of the past. While speculative language encodes the futuristic temporal status of the dystopian fiction, reflective language anchors it to what went before. If speculative language exists at the furthest-distant extent of the extrapolative thread which ties dystopian narratives to base-reality, then reflective language exists at the opposite end of the thread; the point from which the dystopia emerges. To discuss this language as ‘the language of the past’ in terms of naturally-occurring language would be largely unworkable: not only does natural language transcend temporal boundaries, and largely resist categorisation into neat temporal divisions, but much of the lexicon moves in and out of use and fashion, meaning that – in general, at least – language cannot be accurately ‘dated’. Dystopia, however, as outlined in §1.2.2, has a peculiarly complex relationship with time, which results in the author’s historical spacetime (which may or may not coincide temporally with the reader’s base-reality) being positioned as the indeterminately distant past when viewed from the perspective of the dystopian future. Moreover, the present (that is to say, the author’s empirical present) is always absent from dystopian narratives, except by way of analogy with this fictionalised past. Reflective language takes two main forms, both of which relate to

time and temporal positioning. Both of these will be discussed in this chapter: firstly language which identifies the trends and tendencies of the immediate past and the present upon which the dystopian author founds his or her fictional world (which might be conceptualised as reflections *of* the present) and secondly, language from a further distant past (which, crudely, could be thought of as reflections *on* the past). These representations of reflective language will be developed throughout this chapter, supplemented by some consideration of the ways in which reflective language interacts with speculative language, and each gains didactic energy from the other (although the latter aspect is considered in more detail in chapter five). While there are significant differences between speculative language and reflective language, there are also points of convergence. One of these is the potential of reflective language to affect the perceptions of the reader; this aspect is also examined here.

George Orwell's (1949) *Nineteen Eighty-Four* provides those examples of speculative language discussed in the preceding chapter; the same text also features examples of reflective language, and I introduce some of these in the early part of this chapter as a means of defining more precisely my understanding and use of the term *reflective language*. As with the treatment of Orwell's speculative language, I take examples for analysis from the main narrative, rather than from his invented language, Newspeak. From Orwell's immediate-post-war dystopia, I return to an earlier, pre-war era in my reading of Katherine Burdekin's (1937) *Swastika Night*. Originally published under the pseudonym 'Murray Constantine', Burdekin's anti-fascist dystopia posits a world some 700 years in the future which imagines a fascist-controlled state, incorporating Germany and Britain, where 'Nazism has been elevated to a militaristic religion predicated on the glorification of male tyranny and the absolute diminution of women' (Schneider 1997: 42). Andy Croft believes Burdekin's dystopia influenced Orwell's dystopian writing, 'especially the way he adapts some of the anti-Fascist techniques and ideas from the book into anti-Socialist ones' (quoted in Patai 1984: 315 n30); I note here that Orwell's techniques for introducing reflective language are indeed similar to those employed by Burdekin. L.P. Hartley's (1960) *Facial Justice* is next to be considered, a text which differs from the other texts examined in this study in that it is narrated by an unidentified narrator who explicitly frames the text as a 'story'. This narrative perspective, to some extent, has an impact on the presentation of reflective language, although Hartley's text shares some common ground with other dystopias in

its strategies for incorporating reflective language. Margaret Atwood's (1985) *The Handmaid's Tale* is the final text to be examined in relation to reflective language; this is the only text in this study which features a first-person narrator, a strategy which also is shown to have some effect on the presentation of reflective language. These four texts span much of the twentieth century, embracing both modern and contemporary literary periods, yet the focus on reflective language – the narrative strategies by which it is introduced, the categories of subject matter, and the relationship with time, place, and the reader – remain remarkably consistent. These consistencies draw together these four texts, and consideration of the ways in which reflective language has the potential to affect readers' habitual world-view and perception locates these analyses in relation to the overall aims of this thesis.

4.2 *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and 'the destruction of words'

The obsolescence and destruction of words and phrases cuts us off from the nobility of our past, from the severed masses of our race overseas, far more effectually than any growth of neologisms.

H.G. Wells (1903) *Mankind in the Making*

Speculative language, as seen in chapter three, manipulates and re-forms language to construct an imagined future world and populate it with unfamiliar concepts, strange ways of being, and novel ways of understanding. Reflective language, by contrast, draws on existing language to describe existing concepts, and relies on the regular word-form and its associated denotations to communicate the same basic understanding as applies in the extra-textual world. In short, its form is essentially standard language, and its meaning is exactly that which pertains in the reader's and the author's empirical reality. However, in the context of dystopian writing, there is one aspect in which this apparently standard language differs radically from its extra-textual realisations: dystopian societies commonly deny the very existence of a given concept by the simple expedient of eliminating the language which encodes the concept. The basic model of reflective language takes as axiomatic the notion that if the sign does not exist then neither does the signified. This simple mechanism serves ostensibly to eradicate those concepts which the dystopian societies' controlling powers deem unacceptable within the limits of their dominion. Reflective language then, would seem to be a self-defeating contradiction, a paradoxical use of language as the medium which denies the existence of itself; an elaborate oxymoron wherein an existing non-existent concept

must be delineated in order to name that which is nameless. Dystopian texts reveal some creative mechanisms and means to incorporate the artifice and contrivance that inheres in reflective language, several of which are presented in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, so it is to this text I turn to outline the fundamental parameters of reflective language.

Nineteen Eighty-Four expressly acknowledges the co-existence of two languages: Oldspeak and Newspeak. Oldspeak, as discussed in chapter three, is not actually Standard English as we know it in the twenty-first century, nor is it the language of Orwell's historical spacetime. As deployed in the text, it is a kind of hybrid transitory language with its roots in the language of post-war Britain and its developing shoots reaching out into the hypothetical language of the future. The focalising character of the novel, Winston Smith reaches out of this linguistic framework to grasp the language – or at least, selected lexical tokens – of the absent present (which is his past) and draw these into his narrative as a means of reflecting on the present (which is the author's historical spacetime) as though it were a lost past, an irretrievable Golden Age. In turn, the reader is introduced – or re-introduced – to the language of his or her base-reality as an estranged symbolic representation of an earlier era, and consequently, through language, experiences the peculiar temporal 'doubleness' that characterises dystopia. The paradox that is reflective language recurs throughout Orwell's narrative; indeed, towards the conclusion of the text, in a conversational exchange between Winston Smith and Party official, O'Brien, Winston, weary and almost defeated, acknowledges the contradictory and duplicitous potential that inheres in a language which is the means of denying its own being:

'You do not exist,' said O'Brien.

Once again a sense of helplessness assailed him. He knew, or he could imagine, the arguments which proved his own non-existence; but they were nonsense, they were only a play on words. Did not the statement, 'You do not exist', contain a logical absurdity?

(p. 272)

'[T]he arguments which proved his own non-existence' to which Winston alludes belong in the field of metaphysics rather than linguistics. Explorations in philosophy are beyond the scope of this thesis, but from a purely linguistic point of view, to address an interlocutor by use of the second-person pronoun while sharing the same physical space entails – or assumes – the existence of the hearer. It is, therefore, as Winston

suspects, a 'logical absurdity' for *you*, a pronoun which occupies the subject position, to be figured as not a subject; moreover – and crucially for this study – the means to refute the assertion relies on 'a play on words': words are the only mechanism available, in narrative fiction, through which to make the claim that that which is – or exists – is not. Reflective language embodies this claim in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, as in other dystopias, by claiming – or proclaiming – that which no longer exists in the realm of the fiction does actually exist. *Freedom, happiness, love, privacy, and friendship* are counted among those things no longer existing in the grim future world of Oceania; *history, the past, laws, and science* are also non-existent concepts within the fictional world, yet the language that betokens their one-time existence – each of the lexemes listed above – appears in the text in exactly the form given here. For the fiction simultaneously to disclaim and affirm the existence of such concepts, a number of textual strategies must be invoked, and these are present in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as in most other examples of the dystopian genre. Firstly, the past – which these words represent – must be erased or rendered mutable. This is achieved in Orwell's dystopia by the continual rewriting of all records of anything preceding the present instant: Winston's job in the Ministry of Truth, where he is required daily to 'amend' and 'rectify' news reports to suit the needs of the Party's propaganda machine, ensures that:

Day by day and almost minute by minute the past was brought up to date. In this way every prediction made by the Party could be shown by documentary evidence to have been correct, nor was any item of news, or any expression of opinion, which conflicted with the needs of the moment, ever allowed to remain on record. All history was a palimpsest, scraped clean and reinscribed exactly as often as was necessary.

(p. 42)

Secondly, the population of the dystopian future must be denied access to books. All reading matter – in some texts, even the very act of reading itself – is considered reactionary. A literate society, it is assumed, with unrestricted access to language (and, by extension, access to prohibited words and their associated concepts) is potentially incendiary, and less amenable to autocratic control. Hence, in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, there were 'persons whose duty it was to track down and collect all copies of books, newspapers and other documents which had been superseded and were due for destruction' (p. 43), so that it was 'very unlikely that there existed anywhere in Oceania a copy of a book printed earlier than 1960' (p. 101). This thematic strategy recurs throughout dystopian fiction; indeed, the entire plot of Ray Bradbury's (1954) dystopia,

Fahrenheit 451, revolves around this perceived need to destroy reading matter if stasis is to be achieved, and the populace is to be subdued.

Thirdly, the controlling powers of the dystopian society must recognise the inherent power of language to communicate, encode, and embody revolutionary potential, and take action to prevent this. The Party of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* manifestly recognise the possibility of insurgence having a basis in language, and deploy Newspeak to deter rebellion in the short term, and prevent it entirely in the longer term. The proposed function of Newspeak is so well known that there is no necessity to rehearse the full range of its purpose here, although it is worth reproducing some relevant comments made by Syme, a lexicographer employed by the Party to work on the ‘definitive’ Eleventh Edition of the Newspeak Dictionary, since his Party-faithful remarks encapsulate the optimal dystopia-wide conditions against which reflective language engages. In the canteen of the Ministry of Truth, Syme fervently remarks to Winston:

By 2050 – earlier, probably – all real knowledge of Oldspeak will have disappeared. The whole literature of the past will have been destroyed. Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Byron – they’ll exist only in Newspeak versions, not merely changed into something different, but actually changed into something contradictory of what they used to be. Even the literature of the Party will change. Even the slogans will change. How could you have a slogan like “freedom is slavery” when the concept of freedom has been abolished?

(p. 56)

Winston, of course, as the novel’s rebellious and dissenting focalising character, is vitally aware of the term *freedom*, and all that the word denotes. ‘*Freedom*’, he writes in his forbidden diary, ‘*is the freedom to say that two plus two makes four. If that is granted, all else follows*’ (p. 84). While the adherents of the Party’s dictatorship, like Parsons, ‘one of those completely unquestioning, devoted drudges on whom, more even than the Thought Police, the stability of the Party depended’ (p.24), and the child-like enthusiast, Syme, accept the Party’s edicts, Winston constantly questions the principles upon which the ruling powers establish their dominance. In this respect, he is similar to most other dystopian protagonists: he refuses, until absolutely and forcefully compelled, to relinquish his individuality and freewill to the dictates of the totalitarian government. This aspect of Winston’s characterisation represents the fourth – and crucial – narrative strategy which enables and empowers reflective language: Winston is, in common with

many dystopian rebels, effectively bilingual. He negotiates a tortuous path between the language that represents the dystopian future and the language that represents the past. The latter is invoked as a measure of the values, beliefs, and different understandings of self and society that obtained before the ascendancy of totalitarian tyranny. Winston is aware that he differs from most of his fellows: when he is apparently the only person present who recognises the deception intrinsic to the Party's propaganda regarding production statistics, shortages, and rationing, he asks himself 'Was he, then, *alone* in the possession of a memory?' (p. 62); yet it is this memory – especially the memory of earlier language – that enables him to assess, judge, and renounce the current regime. The words he recalls are, as already mentioned, exactly the same words in form and function that exist outside the fiction, so the difficulty for the dystopian author is to introduce these words into a fictional world in which they no longer exist. This is achieved intra-textually in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a result of Winston's 'bilingual' aptitude: his knowledge and memory of the past, and the language of the past. It is achieved stylistically through Winston's focalisation together with a range of metalinguistic strategies which, in general, introduce a word, often explicitly *as* a word, or lexical token, in order to deny its existence, or to assert its extinction. Many of the examples listed at the beginning of this section – *freedom, happiness, love, privacy, and history*, for instance – are complex, multi-sense abstract nouns, and as such, resist simple classification or definition; by beginning the following analysis with reference to more concrete nouns, my aim is to illustrate that the stylistic devices employed to negotiate the complexities of temporal discontinuity characterise the presentation of reflective language.

At the most elementary level, the futuristic setting of the novel itself substantiates a claim for linguistic obsolescence. Winston's observation that 'The pen was an archaic instrument' (p. 8), for instance, is a simple declarative structure, the copula of which conforms to the simple past tense of the narrative. The subject *pen* is positioned as belonging to a previous era by the simple use of the adjective *archaic* in the predicate. This tactic, which acts to reinforce the temporal distance between the textual world and the actual world, does not unduly estrange the concept of *pen*; it simply draws attention to the fact that it has become outdated, superseded by concepts which are represented by the speculative language of Oceania: the 'ink-pencil' and the 'speak-write' (pp. 8-9). At a slightly more developed level, there is direct acknowledgement that the governing

powers are attempting to control or proscribe language. Thus, when Winston describes his neighbour as 'Mrs Parsons', he almost immediately recants with the parenthetical statement, '(“Mrs” was a word somewhat discountenanced by the Party – you were supposed to call everyone “comrade”)' (p.22). Here, the influence of the Party is plainly seen, although it is disapproval of certain naming and titles that Winston mentions, rather than an outright prohibition; *Mrs* still exists in Oceania in much the same form as it exists outside of the fiction ('with some women one used it instinctively', Winston notes (p. 22)). Significantly though, it is overtly introduced as a linguistic entity: *it was a word*. The parenthetical sentence would make sense without metalinguistic reference: '*Mrs* was somewhat discountenanced by the Party' is a well-formed clause, especially given the use of quote marks to direct focus to the word *Mrs* itself. The reflexive use of *a word*, however, is seen throughout the text in examples of reflective language, and functions to illustrate the ostensible mutability and instability of language. For example, in the following extract, language is similarly self-reflexive:

He turned round. It was his friend Syme, who worked in the Research Department. Perhaps 'friend' was not exactly the right word. You did not have friends nowadays, you had comrades: but there were some comrades whose society was pleasanter than that of others.

(p. 51)

Initially, Winston uses 'friend' in its familiar, extra-textual sense, before observing that 'Perhaps “friend” was not exactly the right word'. The meaning of *friend* is brought into sharp focus through Winston's apparent doubt that it is 'the right word'. His later comment – that 'there were some comrades whose society was pleasanter than that of others' – resonates with the well-known altered 'Commandment' of Orwell's earlier dystopia *Animal Farm*, which reads 'All animals are equal. But some animals are more equal than others' (Orwell 1945: 90). The satire and internally contradictory irony that is directed upon the word *equal* in the latter example is apparent in the word *comrade* in the former. *Comrade* is not synonymous with *friend*, and the distinction between the two is clear here. The more significant clause for the purposes of elucidating the stylistics of reflective language, however, is that which occurs between the metalinguistic question and its ironic negation: *You did not have friends nowadays*. The pronoun *you* is the generic pronoun, replaceable by *one*, denoting the general and inclusive nature of the utterance, and the tense of the verb is carried by its auxiliary *did*, rather than in the negation *not*, or in the main verb *have* which appears in the bare

infinitive form. All these markers are consistent with the simple past tense form of the narrative, where the aspect is perfective (as seen in the verbs *turned* and *worked* in the above extract). What marks *friends* as reflective language is its adjacency to, and modification by, the temporal adverb *nowadays*. Meaning *at this time*, or *in these times*, *nowadays* marks the disjunction between narrative time and the reader's – or author's – present; it overtly acknowledges the artifice of the fictional (re)presentation of the future by self-reflexively encoding the temporal disparity. Given that the entire narrative begins *in medias res*, and continues in this vein throughout, ostensibly speaking from the vantage point of a future world, the inclusion of the temporal adverb should be unnecessary – and indeed, is. As with other sentence adverbials (*nevertheless*, *moreover*, *however*, for example) the paired clauses lose none of their surface meaning if the adverb is removed: compare *you did not have friends, you had comrades* with the original, and it becomes clear that this would follow the pattern of the dominant narrative tone. *Nowadays* is dispensable; optional, even. Orwell's deliberate use of it (and I assume deliberate use, since this pattern, and others similar to it, are seen repeatedly in relation to reflective language), acts like a linguistic beacon, proclaiming the temporal disjunctions that inhere in the narrative, and – vitally – drawing attention to the noun in question: here, *friends*, and all that word connotes.

The denotation of the foregrounded word, as seen in *friends*, above, remains unchanged. Sometimes termed *conceptual meaning*, denotation is the 'most central part of the meaning of a word' as defined by R.L. Trask (1997); more specifically, it is 'that part of its meaning which is intrinsic to it and which is always present, independent of context and free of association' (1997: 50). The *connotative meaning* (which 'means about the same as *associative meaning*' (Trask 1997: 52)), or '[t]hat part of the significance of a word which goes beyond its strict linguistic meaning and includes all of its associations, whether personal or communal' (Trask 1997: 51) is central to any discussion of language and its effect on perception, and it is connotative meaning to which Orwell's reflective language appeals. The denotative meaning of words is continually figured as clashing and conflicting with their futuristic connotations. For example, the embedded narrative, 'The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism', ostensibly authored by Emmanuel Goldstein, features a lengthy discussion of the incessant but spurious state of conflict which apparently continues between the state of Oceania and either Eurasia or Eastasia, depending on the whims

and machinations of the Party. This propaganda machine has re-defined the word *war*, according to the narrative, where Goldstein claims:

The war is waged by each ruling group against its own subjects, and the object of the war is not to make or prevent conquests of territory, but to keep the structure of society intact. The very word 'war', therefore, has become misleading. It would probably be accurate to say that by becoming continuous war has ceased to exist.

(p. 207)

Here again, attention is drawn to the subject *war* and its denotative meaning by means of introducing it in terms of a lexical token: [*t*]he very word. It is claimed that the word 'has become misleading' because, in the world of the future, it has gained a new range of associative, or connotative meanings; meanings that contradict its earlier sense. This 'earlier' sense is, of course, the understanding of the term in Orwell's historical spacetime, which is positioned as the past from the narrative viewpoint. Moreover, this developed sense of the word, within the narrative framework, suggests that, effectively 'war has ceased to exist'. This strategy – introducing a word only to deny its existence – typifies much reflective language, and is seen frequently in Winston's discourse, where it is assumed that the denotative meaning remains outside of the narrative – and in the reader's consciousness – but connotative meanings, drawn from the dystopian future, have mutated the word, in some instances, beyond recognition and in others, beyond utility.

In a conversation with Julia, Winston attempts to explain just how the post-Revolution era in Oceania differs from earlier times; that records have been destroyed, books re-written, streets and buildings re-named (p. 162). In an attempt to explain the gravity of this situation, Winston appeals to Julia:

Do you realize that the past, starting from yesterday, has been actually abolished? If it survives anywhere, it's in a few solid objects with no words attached to them [...]. History has stopped. Nothing exists except an endless present in which the Party is always right.

(p. 162)

The past 'has been actually abolished', and '[h]istory has stopped' according to Winston's explanation; '[n]othing exists', he claims, yet in so doing, he invokes – by naming – the very denotations the text denies. *History* and *the past* are vital constitutive elements of any dystopia, including Orwell's, since these narratives' didacticism is intimately bound up in their (re)presentation of the present (that is to say, the author's

historical spacetime) as the past; as history, in order that the reader might recognise (and possibly even respond to) the dire warnings of the text. The words *history* and *past* retain denotative meaning in the narrative – or, at least, in Winston’s consciousness, which is being communicated here – and that denotative meaning is that of the reader’s understanding. The entire range of connotative meaning, however, has been fundamentally transformed by the circumstances of the narrative, to the extent that both states no longer exist. Textually, this is achieved not by Newspeak-style elimination of the words themselves – they must be present even if only to deny their own existence – but by the contradiction between verb and subject. This contradiction – here, *stopped* governing *history*, and *abolished* governing *the past* – is only a contradiction in terms of language outside of the text; within the world of the text, both are perfectly well-formed. The textual agreement between *history* and *stopped*, as with *the past* and *abolished* is a conceptual absurdity in the extra-textual world; a collocational impossibility.

In short, reflective language is the language of the author’s and the reader’s reality, incorporated into a fictional world which challenges or denies the words’ existence; moreover, reflective language typically comprises linguistic markers of those complex concepts upon which the fundamental essence of human existence depends. Winston muses on just such ‘obsolete’ concepts here:

The thing that now suddenly struck Winston was that his mother’s death, nearly thirty years ago, had been tragic and sorrowful in a way that was no longer possible. Tragedy, he perceived, belonged to the ancient time, to a time when there was still privacy, love, and friendship, and when the members of a family stood by one another without needing to know the reason.

(p. 32)

Tragedy, like *privacy*, *love*, and *friendship*, belong ‘to the ancient time’ in Winston’s strange new world. The ‘ancient time’ – in other words, the text’s absent present; the author’s present – is figured as a Golden Age, a time when such language actively denoted the concepts known to the author and reader rather than their re-configured or eradicated meanings. Reflective language presupposes that words are indicative of, or constitutive of, their denotations, and, furthermore, that they have the facility to enact their connotations. For example, when Winston is discussing the past with the elderly prole in the pub, he mentions to the old man his understanding that ‘[e]very capitalist went about with a gang of lackeys’ (p. 94).

‘Lackeys!’ [the elderly prole] said. ‘Now there’s a word I ain’t ’eard since ever so long. Lackeys! That reg’lar takes me back, that does. I recollect oh, donkey’s years ago-

(p. 94)

Significantly, it is the word *lackeys* which brings about the prole’s memory of the past: a clear indication that language is conceived – at least in terms of fictional dystopian narrative – as being intrinsically connected to cognitive functioning, or perception. The characters see linguistic tokens as mapping onto, or directly representing, certain memories, consciousness, and states of being. This phenomenon is, broadly stated, characteristic of the distinction I make, in general terms, between reflections *of* and reflections *on*: the treatment of *history, freedom, the past*, for instance, is a reflection *of* the dystopian present, while Winston’s musing on *tragedy, privacy, love, and friendship*, and the old man’s language-provoked memories are reflections *on* the dystopian past, or, at least, so much of the past as is accessible. This distinction is not always clearly distinguishable, and therefore is not always sustainable, but would seem to occur quite often; as such, it is worthy of mention, even though it does not contribute consequentially to the direction of this study. Another fairly clear example, however, does appear in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and I include it here since it represents a recurrent trope in dystopian fictions.

Given the genre’s habitual reliance on devices such as the banning of books, the obliteration of history, and attempts to effect control of access to language, it is scarcely surprising that rebellion often takes the form of reclaiming language and the culture of literacy. Hence Winston’s private insurrection is to write a diary: to create a permanent record of life in a world where other records are mutable; to recover literacy; to restore his claim to unfettered use of language in a society which proposes to restrict and remove language. As Mario Klarer remarks: ‘Only in a tradition based on literacy, in which the past is archived, is it possible to place the present in relation to the past’ (1995: 129). Klarer’s comments are made in respect of Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*, yet the substance of his argument applies across the dystopian genre: a culture of orality will inevitably re-emerge as literacy is threatened. This belief accounts for another instantiation of reflective language which is found recurrently in dystopian fictions: a renewed awareness that orally transmitted artefacts are implicated in any understanding of history. Consequently, in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the rhyme ‘Oranges and Lemons’ assumes greater significance for Winston as he struggles to

maintain a personal link with the past. The rhyme, to him, represents ‘a composite picture of the room where his mother had spent her last days, and the little room over Mr Charrington’s shop, and the glass paperweight’ (p. 186). Winston makes explicit the connection between the rhyme and the past when re-introduced to wine (which ‘aroused in Winston dim memories of something seen long ago’ (p. 178)) during a visit to O’Brien’s flat:

Winston took up his glass with a certain eagerness. Wine was a thing he had read and dreamed about. Like the glass paperweight or Mr Charrington's half-remembered rhymes, it belonged to the vanished, romantic past, the olden time as he liked to call it in his secret thoughts.

(p. 178)

The rhyme, in common with the examples of reflective language detailed in the foregoing discussion of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, belongs ‘to the vanished, romantic past, the olden time’. Patently, to the reader, wine and folk-rhymes, like freedom, friendship, love, and the rest, belong to the present, a present which is rendered as a past Golden Age from the dystopian future stance. While the dystopian future is delineated by means of speculative language, its contributory past is encapsulated and communicated by means of reflective language. The reader is invited to negotiate and assimilate the distorted connotations and denotations of both dystopian languages in order to arrive at a new (re)cognition of the present and its possibilities. The ways in which this process relates to cognitive estrangement and Whorfianism are discussed further at the conclusion of this chapter. Prior to that discussion, and having outlined the basic parameters of reflective language, I consider examples from other dystopian texts which are mediated through differing modes of narration. Katherine Burdekin’s (1937) *Swastika Night* is the first of these; a dystopia which pre-dates Orwell’s by more than a decade, and, consequently, cannot draw on the Second World War and its immediate aftermath for its influence or subject matter.

4.3 *Swastika Night* and ‘words that are lost’

Even words get lost. Lost words, wild words without a home wander endlessly for years, sometimes lifetimes, before they resurface and make an impression in a different time.

Mike Golden (1999) *The Buddhist Third Class Junkmail Oracle*

Although, as Daphne Patai observes, there is ‘no direct evidence that Orwell was acquainted with *Swastika Night*’, she further notes that ‘only the internal similarities

suggest that Orwell, an inveterate borrower, borrowed from Burdekin' (1985: xii).² Katherine Burdekin's dystopian novel, first published in 1937, and re-issued in 1985, undoubtedly has much in common with Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and the correspondences between the two that Patai enumerates are extensive. She notes, for example, that both novels depict totalitarian regimes; both imagine a world where individual thought, memory, history, and books have been destroyed (the ideal conditions under which reflective language thrives, as noted in relation to *Nineteen Eighty-Four*). Additionally, both feature a world divided into distinct empires, and a hierarchical structure of control; both maintain a secret opposition called a 'Brotherhood'; both also include a secret book, an eternal mythical leader, and a rebellious protagonist (Patai 1985: xii-xiv).³ Despite the manifold parallels, there are also significant dissimilarities between the two texts which impinge on their relative representation of reflective language: firstly, *Swastika Night* is set some seven centuries into the future, unlike the same-century future of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Secondly, although both texts feature an embedded narrative in the form of a reactionary, clandestine book, that of *Swastika Night* is considerably more prominent throughout the narrative. Finally, Burdekin's narrative is more reliant on the function of a 'delineator figure', a role which will be expanded upon in what follows.

Swastika Night, set in 'this year of the Lord Hitler 720' (p. 11), presents a world divided into two Empires in a constant state of conflict: the Nazi Empire (where the action takes place) and the Japanese Empire. Much speculative language constructs the Nazi Empire, where a mythologised seven-foot tall, blond, athletic Adolf Hitler, who 'exploded' from the head of his father, God the Thunderer, is worshipped as the god of this holy Empire. The feudal and intensely patriarchal society is controlled by Teutonic Knights, who, as priests, also control the church ('We had the sense not to have priests *and* Knights. That always leads to trouble' (p. 135)). Women, having historically submitted to the Empire's 'Reduction of Women' strategy, are caged, demeaned, and unvalued; they dress in uniform 'dirty brown' clothes, and are shaven-headed and coweringly subservient. They are of equivalent status to breeding animals, and, as Nickianne Moody notes, 'have been reduced to empty vessels, with no name, no voice and no language of their own' (2000: 181). During the course of the quarterly church service, the 'Women's Worship', the Knight reminds the women of 'the Lord Hitler's supreme condescension in allowing them to still bear men's sons and have that amount

of contact with the Holy Mystery of Maleness' (p. 9). In this strictly hierarchical society, Christians, like Orwell's proles, are contemptible and considered beneath the trouble of policing; a Christian woman is 'the lowest thing, / The meanest, filthiest thing / That crawls on the face of the earth' (p. 7). Procreation – at least the production of valued sons – is a cheerless duty for the Nazis, among whom homosexuality is common (and the only legitimised form of relationship). Within this framework, Burdekin composes a withering attack on fascism specifically through a critique of the ideology of patriarchy, which she positions as central to, and underpinning, fascism.

The routines, the beliefs, the values, and the ethos of this militaristic society are related through varying focalising characters: firstly Hermann, a loyal Nazi farmworker, from whom focalisation shifts to the Knight, von Hess, and from him to Alfred, the protagonist, a visiting 'pilgrim' from the subject-nation England. Focalisation subsequently shifts between these characters. The mode of narration, being omniscient, allows access to the thought processes of these three characters, although – in contrast to Orwell's dystopia – reflective language seldom occurs in the characters' interior discourse. The mode of discourse does influence the presentation of reflective language to some extent, as does the degree of temporal dislocation from the time of writing. Both of these factors, in turn, influence the narrative structure: *Swastika Night* is almost entirely dependent on its embedded text – a secret chronicle of the political and social framework of the Empire – in order to relate the history and development of the society, since its origins predate living memory by many centuries. This historical account, hand-written on parchment by 'Friedrich von Hess, Teutonic Knight of the Holy German Empire, of the Inner Ten' and handed down through many generations of sons of the same noble line, is now in the charge of Hermann's 'family Knight' (or feudal master), also called Friedrich von Hess. Having outlived his three sons, von Hess finds himself with no heir to succeed him as custodian of the precious 'real book, the only one in the world' (p. 74), and settles on Albert, the English visitor, as the only example of a real 'man' (in contrast to the 'ageless boys' produced by Germany's excessively militaristic regime) to be the inheritor of the secret knowledge. Consequently, much of the narrative is occupied by conversations between Alfred and von Hess, interspersed by extracts from the Book.⁴

These conversational episodes take a form more traditionally seen in utopian fictions, whereby – as with Thomas More's prototype *Utopia* – a visitor to a community

is given a guided tour by a representative of the society (the delineator figure) who promotes the political ethics, the organisational principles, and the belief systems of the organised society in response to questioning by the visitor. In employing this narrative strategy, Burdekin provides, through von Hess's intimate knowledge of the contents of the Book, access to the historical past reaching back to the early days of the Reich (Hitler's rise to power and the 'Twenty Years War' in Europe, which presciently anticipates the Second World War). The Book, then, is the essential link with the author's historical spacetime (the beginnings of the history being contiguous with the time the novel was written); it is also largely the source of reflective language in *Swastika Night*.

Reflective language in Burdekin's novel, as in Orwell's, is language representative of a bygone age from the futuristic dystopian standpoint, and language representative of the here and now from the reader's standpoint. The status of language is already somewhat complex in Burdekin's text, since the characters ostensibly speak in a combination of English and German (when the English Alfred and the German Hermann converse, they do so 'each in his own language, understanding, but not straining themselves to form foreign words' (p. 19)), but the text is presented almost entirely in English. The Book, although originally written in German, is translated (without any acknowledgement that this *is* translation) by von Hess, whose conversations with Alfred are held in English. Since this is done silently in the text, I make no inferences about translation. Alfred does question von Hess, the delineator figure, on the subject of language, asking 'If you wanted to Germanise us, why did you let us keep our own language and our own script? It's bound to hold Englishmen together if they have a different language' (p. 135). The response von Hess gives encapsulates the philosophy of Aryan superiority which informs and sustains the Nazi supremacy:

We didn't want to Germanise you in any way except in making you accept our philosophy and your inferiority. If our blood and our language are sacred we cannot have every little Russian and Italian and English boy acquiring our language as a birth language. It is not fit for such as you to have by *right*, you must learn it for our convenience, that's all.

(p. 134)

Other than this exchange, and the occasional acknowledgement, as mentioned above, that different languages are being spoken, the issue of language as a controlling

mechanism – in contrast to *Nineteen Eighty-Four* – does not figure in Burdekin’s novel; nor is it a plot device as it is in Orwell’s dystopia. *Swastika Night* does, however, correspond with Orwell’s text in one significant aspect of reflective language: this language identifies, and brings into sharp focus, those values, states of being, and ways of understanding the world that have been threatened or eliminated by the new order. So while the reflective language of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* revolves around the freedoms of the lost past – *privacy, love, friendship, happiness, history* – the reflective language of *Swastika Night* falls into two main lexical fields that might be conceptualised as ‘domestic’ and ‘political’. The former reflects on the segregation and subjection of women, and the consequent breakdown of the family unit under the Nazi regime (a male child is ‘removed’ from his mother at eighteen months of age, and is reared by ‘skilled men, trained men’ who ‘bring him up to manhood’ (p. 10)); the latter reflects the broader ideological foundations of the dystopian world. Both encourage the reader to compare his or her world – a world which retains this reflective language – to the dystopian world in which it is absent.

Reflective language in the domestic sphere in *Swastika Night* includes *marriage, family, and wife*, for example, while the political sphere is represented by examples such as *Socialism* and *democracy*. Because the novel is set so many hundreds of years into the future, all knowledge of these words has been lost; only von Hess, through his knowledge of his ancestor’s Book, knows the words and their associated conceptual meanings. Thus, not only is von Hess the delineator figure, he is the only character who is bilingual (in the sense that Winston Smith is bilingual (see §4.2 above): knowing and understanding both speculative and reflective language). In addition, as mentioned above, the text assumes each of the main characters is bilingual in English and German, a fact that is alluded to in the following extract, but which has no actual stylistic effect. Here, von Hess is discussing, with Alfred, the life of the ‘Holy One’, Hitler:

“[...] The records of his personal life, if there were any, were lost or destroyed. It is certain that he never married, but whether he had intercourse with women in a sexual sense or not, we do not know.”

“Married?” said Alfred. “I’m sorry, sir, that’s a German word I don’t know.”

“It’s a lost word. It occurs nowhere except in von Hess’s book. Being married means living in a house with one woman and your children, and going on living continually with her until one of you dies. It sounds fantastic, doesn’t it? that men ever *lived* with women. But they did.”

(p. 69)

Apparent translation problems are responsible for Alfred's lack of understanding initially, yet it soon becomes clear that the word *married* no longer has currency in either English or German; it is 'a lost word'. Only in a society where language is not recorded and codified in books and dictionaries, only in a society where history prior to the new order is denied, could a word ever become so 'lost' that it 'occurs nowhere' except one book, yet that is the claim made by Burdekin's text; a claim well-supported by the historical circumstances of the previous seven centuries, during which most of the population (including most men) have become illiterate. Even the original Friedrich von Hess had to write the Book 'all from memory' because books 'were all being burnt. Destroyed' (p. 74). The notion of 'lost words' accounts for much of the reflective language in *Swastika Night*; moreover, as indicated by von Hess's lengthy definition of the term *married* above, it is clear that the associated concept is similarly lost in the fictional world. Certainly the same is true of the idea of *families*: von Hess assumes that Alfred will not understand the concept. 'Alfred, you may not know it', the Knight begins,

but the Christians in their communities don't live like we do, men and women separately. They live in *families*, that is the man, the woman, and their children, sons and daughters, all together.

(p. 69)

The emphasis falls clearly on *families* since it is italicised in the text; furthermore von Hess feels bound to explain the denotative meaning, as with *marriage*, above. An associated word – and concept – is defined by von Hess later in the text, when he says (of his forbear Friedrich von Hess): 'His wife (that's the woman he permanently lived with)' (p. 86). It becomes clear that, in the future world of *Swastika Night*, a whole lexical field has disappeared; become 'lost' language. Without the benefit of a planned language policy, as seen in the Newspeak of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the Nazi regime has succeeded in eliminating – except for the Book's precarious but tenacious recorded instances – an entire semantic network.

A second lexical field is similarly 'lost' in this totalitarian future: that which encompasses notions of any other political framework beyond the militaristic, imperialistic autocracy which rules the German Empire. Again, emerging from conversations between von Hess as delineator and Albert as visiting questioner, the language which encodes a concept is shown to be lost, as is the very concept itself.

Speaking of the early days of the Reich, von Hess explains that its rulers wanted to eliminate any historical records which might remind them that Empires can both ‘rise, and *fall*’ (p. 78). He continues:

It was not enough for them to know that they *now* ruled a third of the world [...] they wanted to forget that there ever had been, in Europe, any other civilisation at all. There was so much beauty *they* had not made, so many books they had not written, [...] and so many ideas of human behaviour which were anathema to them. Socialism, for instance, was absolutely smashed, practically, but the idea was still there, in men’s minds. No, Alfred, I will not stop to tell you what Socialism was. You can read it in the book.

(p. 78)

Having established the pattern – that the Book contains ‘lost’ words that are beyond Albert’s linguistic competence – the text silently assumes his questioning of the word *Socialism*. It is clear that von Hess knows the word and its meaning; clear also that the earlier von Hess possessed the same knowledge, an idea which, back then, ‘was still there, in men’s minds’; tacitly, too, the text presumes the reader’s familiarity with the concept of Socialism. Albert alone does not understand the language because it, together with its associated conceptual meaning, we are given to understand, is forgotten. As seen in examples of reflective language from Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, discussed earlier, the indication of the status of the language (and concept) is embodied in an adjacent verb: here, the past form of the copula in ‘what Socialism *was*’. Carrying the sense *is no longer*, the inclusion of *was* here discloses *Socialism* as another ‘lost’ word.

Democracy is yet another of *Swastika Night*’s ‘lost’ words. Following a lengthy discussion between von Hess and Alfred about issues of leadership and government, Alfred questions the efficacy of ‘*blind* obedience to any man’ (p. 146). ‘Without knowing anything about democracy’, responds von Hess, ‘you have found the flaw in it’ (*ibid*). The suggestion that Alfred is unaware of the ideological concept, or its name, is confirmed when Alfred, ‘frowning with concentration’, offers ‘I don’t think people ought to chuck – what did you call it? democracy, just because it’s *difficult*’ (p. 147). His hesitation over the naming of the concept – *what did you call it?* – emphasises Alfred’s lack of familiarity with the word *democracy* while simultaneously foregrounding the word for the reader. There are evidently more ‘lost’ words in von Hess’s Book: as Alfred makes ready to leave Germany and return to England with the

Book in his custodianship, he confesses to being concerned that he will be unable to understand all of it. The Knight responds by saying: 'Von Hess says a half-witted man can understand it. If there are, as there must be, words that are lost now, you will guess their meaning from the context' (p. 151). Throughout Burdekin's text, 'words that are lost now' occur: in addition to those noted above, *rape* no longer exists, either as a word or as a crime (p. 13); *love*, while not lost, is transmuted ('[m]en in those days could love their women' (p. 71)); *history* is distorted ('there *was* some history?', asks Albert, 'It wasn't all darkness and savagery?' (p. 74)); *women* 'are nothing, except an incarnate desire to please men' (p. 82); *surnames*, at least among ordinary citizens, are a lost concept, replaced by numbers (p. 133); *literature* is lost ('we killed [...] our literature – that is all gone' (p. 121); the concept – and words – of monarchy have disappeared ('[w]hen there were no more dynastic kings in Germany, and history had vanished, the word vanished too' (p. 125)). In essence, much that characterises the values and belief systems of the author's historical spacetime, is posited as 'lost' in the dystopian future, and this is achieved largely with reference to the claim that if the language that names the concept is lost, then the concept itself is lost.

The narrative strategies of using an informed delineator figure as a point of liaison between the fictional past and present, an interested, questioning (and rebellious) protagonist, an omniscient narrator, and an embedded text, allow Burdekin to present the reader with a richly detailed picture of the development of, as well as the consequences of, the futuristic dystopian society. Language, the dystopian author proposes, matches and parallels the stages of dystopian evolution: speculative language charts the development of the future society, while reflective language is invoked to encapsulate the demise – and ultimate disappearance – of the values of the real-world present. Burdekin's mode of narration differs from Orwell's: where Orwell's protagonist, Winston Smith, communicates all the reader learns about the totalitarian society, Burdekin's strategy permits several viewpoints to be assimilated. The focus on reflective language, however, remains remarkably consistent across both texts: each interrogates the meaning of the language of the present, and each estranges it by presenting it as the language of the past. Importantly, each makes the implicit claim that the substance and worth of the concepts signified by reflective language are fragile and threatened; moreover, each shows how easily the conceptual meanings of words could slip away together with the words themselves.

4.4 *Facial Justice* and ‘words which [...] vanish from the language’

The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there.

L.P. Hartley (1954) *The Go-Between*

L.P. Hartley’s *Facial Justice*, written between January 1953 and September 1959, and published in 1960, employs a mode of narration seldom seen in dystopian fiction: a self-conscious, or self-reflexive narrator relates the account of the future dystopian society from the temporal point of view of the historical spacetime of the author. While there is just one focalising character – the rebellious protagonist, Jael 97 – the narrator’s presence is impressed on the reader throughout by way of intrusive interpolations, digressions, and commentary. This results in a dystopian narrative where reflective language is frequently introduced by, or remarked upon, by the narrator, rather than only by the characters. Additionally, the verb group structures, which, as seen in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Swastika Night*, often reflect the peculiar temporal positioning of reflective language, are particularly notable since they vacillate between the present (narrator’s) time and the future (narrative) time. The opening paragraph illustrates the unusual temporal dimensions of the novel:

In the not very distant future, after the Third World War, Justice had made great strides. Legal Justice, Economic Justice, Social Justice, and many other forms of justice, of which we do not even know the names, had been attained; but there still remained spheres of human relationship and activity in which Justice did not reign.

(p. 9)⁵

The ‘not very distant future’ remains indeterminately vague throughout the text, although it becomes clear that the ‘Third World War’, which ‘all but eliminated the human race’ (p. 24) was a war of apocalyptic proportions. The narrator, whose use of *we* in the above extract assumes a shared diegetic and temporal frame with the reader, takes an entire chapter (ch. 3, pp. 24-31) to relate the historical circumstances leading up to the inception of the New State, thus declaring his or her status as the delineator figure. Most dystopian fictions feature a delineator figure who is also a character, and whose discourse is located within the confines of the textual world; most dystopian fictions also begin *in medias res* and only gradually reveal how the dystopian world evolved. *Facial Justice* counters both generic conventions in its use of an omniscient and informed narrator; it does, however, conform to the norms of the genre in its presentation of a dire and ominous future.

The dystopian society of New State began when half of the underground cave- and tunnel-dwelling population of a post-atomic, war-devastated England escaped from an even harsher totalitarian regime, the 'English Underworld', where 'scientists had devised ways of making people physically and mentally uncomfortable of which we, in these unenlightened days, know nothing' (p. 26). Led by a mysterious and disembodied 'Voice', a community of 'about a million in all' emerges into a desolate waste of mud and latent radioactivity to establish a new society, the ideological underpinnings of which are progressive and egalitarian. The narrative opens some fifteen years into the existence of this superficially utopian society where privilege, superiority, and individualism in any sphere of life is actively discouraged. All female citizens (who are named after Biblical murderers and required to wear sackcloth and ashes to express their humility) are graded from Alpha through to Gamma to classify their physical attractiveness. To be an Alpha is considered an abomination in New State, tantamount to deliberately causing unwarranted jealousy among less 'facially privileged' women, and 'leads to inflammation of the ego' in the owner of the face (p. 11). To be a Beta, however – the standard 'stock face off the peg' (p. 16) – is to be socially acceptable. The ostensibly benevolent ruler of New State, the 'Darling Dictator', has decreed, therefore, that all women of Alpha status shall be 'Betafied'; that is, undergo plastic surgery to remove the envy-causing Alpha face and have it replaced with a standardised Beta face.

The narrative opens with the protagonist, Jael 97, reporting to the 'Equalisation (Faces) Centre' in preparation for facial surgery, since her beauty has caused other women to protest. 'It was my eyelashes they mostly picked on', Jael 97 tells her friend, Judith 91, explaining '[o]ne woman complained she had lost several nights' sleep just thinking about my eyelashes. She felt they were digging into her, she said' (p. 13). Absolute equality is to be maintained in all aspects of this collective society, and this is enshrined in their language too: words overtly signify ideological and conceptual meaning in New State, a fact which is emphasised by formulaic rituals which must be observed when certain words are uttered. When Jael 97 almost utters such a word the narrator explains the rituals involved:

Equality and Envy – the two E's – were in the moral sphere the positive and negative poles on which the New State rotated. The one attracted, the other repelled. Either word, once uttered, involved the speaker in a ritual dance – a few jerky, gymnastic capers for Envy, a long, intricate, ecstatic exercise

for Equality. Some were excused both on medical grounds but the rest did their utmost to avoid these verbal pitfalls. The abbreviations Good E and Bad E were exempt from ritual consequences, as were their facetious counterparts, Good Egg and Bad Egg. A curtsey for Equality and a token spit for Envy were concessions to time-saving that came later.

(pp. 12-13)

Language in New State, then, is frequently foregrounded: dances, curtseys, and spitting are formally performed if a 'verbal pitfall' is encountered, although 'good' words are encouraged (for instance, 'the word "level" had no ritual consequences' (p. 13)). In addition, the 'Darling Dictator' issues a range of language-based 'Edicts', requiring citizens to learn ever-changing alliterative epithets which reinforce the ideology of the State. Not to have memorised a current epithet (for instance, 'Alpha is Antiquated' (p. 22)) is to risk a fine from a passing 'Inspector'. Further language controls are planned to support the cause of equality (although these are to be implemented in the future, rather than within the time-frame of the narrative). In the case of the 'tyranny of the Objective Case', for example, Jael 97's suitor, Dr Wainewright, reports:

Lots of people thought that the cases should be standardised – it wasn't fair for a word to be governed by a verb, or even a proposition. Words can only be free if they're equal, and how can they be equal if they're governed by other words? [...] They want to standardise the language [...] so that no one shall be better at writing than anybody else. Only quite simple words will be allowed, because it's so embarrassing for other people not to know them.

(p. 207)

It is against this background, where speculative language creates a world dominated by excessive zeal for equilibrium and equivalence ('the Horizontal View of Life, or On the Level as it was sometimes more familiarly called' (p. 60)), that reflective language occurs. Some instances recall the thematic concerns of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Swastika Night: families*, for example, 'were still permitted but they were very much frowned on' (p. 29), and the self, or ego is a forgotten concept; *yourself*, Judith 91 notes, 'doesn't exist' (p. 163). Other examples of reflective language draw attention to issues of possession, since the notion of ownership and property is condemned in this future world. When Jael 97, recovering in hospital following her facial transplant, insists on keeping a dying flower '[b]ecause it's mine', the ward Sister admonishes her, saying, "'Mine" is not a word you ought to use' (p. 86), and continues:

We only use it because we haven't found a substitute. We can say it's "yours", of course, but yours means everyone's. "In my charge", you ought to say, or "in my care" or "in my keeping".

(p. 86)

Pronouns, along with their associations with individuality and possession, often are at the centre of the dystopists' focus on language: Ayn Rand's use of the plural pronoun *we* in place of the singular *I* in *Anthem* (see §2.2.2) is indicative of similar concerns of the collective over the individual, while Marge Piercy's use of the generic third-person pronoun *per* as a substitute for the gender-marked *him* and *her* in *Woman on the Edge of Time* also reflects (among other things) that text's concern with egalitarianism. As a closed class of grammatical, rather than lexical, words, pronouns are more difficult for the writer to manipulate (as seen in *Newspeak*, where they are one of the very few word-classes to be 'allowed to inflect irregularly', and follow 'their ancient usage' (*Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 316)), yet, unlike other categories of grammatical words, pronouns carry conceptual as well as associative meaning. Thus it is the conceptual and associative meanings encapsulated in the word *mine* – connotations of possession, privilege, and desirability – to which the Sister objects. The foregrounding of the term, together with its proscription in the new society, directs the reader's attention to the word and all it conveys (in the future and in the absent present), in this instance, without recourse to narratorial intervention.

The narrator is overtly present in many instances throughout this text, however, acting as the delineator figure, and providing contextualising information. Reflective language is, on some occasions, explained by the narrator, although on other occasions it emerges from the characters' dialogue and internal discourse. The novel shifts repeatedly between these narrative modes, resulting in somewhat different treatments of reflective language. In a conversation with the Inspector who visits her in hospital, for example, Jael 97 looks forward to 'when the spring comes, or what they used to call the spring' (p. 119). This pattern resembles many of the examples given above from *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Swastika Night*: a character refers to the obsolescence of the word – here *spring* – in the temporal circumstances of the narrative future, while alluding to its existence in the past (the reader's and / or author's present). A metalinguistic tag, *they used to call*, directs attention to the noun, and the verb form *used*, together with the infinitive *to call*, expresses the habitual action taking place in the past but not continuing into the present (which is, of course, the future here). The

delineator-figure narrator's treatment of the same subject is characteristically historically informed:

Mental habit dies hard; the survivors of the Third World War helped out their thoughts with pre-war images. In the New World there was no frost, no soft spring mornings – the war had swept them away, along with all the other changes of climate, temperature and season; they had this uniform perpetual March [...]. But the language hadn't adapted itself to the new meteorological conditions; it was still, as ours is now, a storehouse of dead metaphors, still retained phrases like 'at daggers drawn', though no one in the New State had a dagger.

(p. 116)

The presence of the narrator is marked by the use of *as ours is now*, which clearly aligns him or her temporally and spatially with the reader (rather than the characters) by assuming a shared frame of reference. Similarly, the use of *they* in *they had this uniform March* excludes the narrator from the pronoun, and locates him or her at some distance from the events narrated, while the temporal adverb *now* signals the present (rather than the future) world. The narrator's omniscience is signified by his or her capacity to take an overview, encompassing factual details that the characters could not know. So when the narrator comments that 'the language hadn't adapted itself', and was 'a storehouse of dead metaphors', s/he is drawing on a panoramic temporal view incorporating the past, present, and future. This contrasts with Jael 97's world-view, which is constrained by the temporal limits of her memory, and a vague knowledge of history. In a passage of free indirect discourse, Jael 97 addresses much the same issue as the narrator:

Some writers said that history had come to an end with the Second World War; how little they knew! She herself could not remember that time; but this was like another incarnation and needed a new language. Why, in those days a meal had courses. Nominally it still had: [...] contained in three capsules [...] and the metaphors drawn from eating in the old days, such as a square meal, were totally undescriptive of them.

(p. 116)

Jael 97's musing on language here draws on her limited knowledge of the language of the past, and although she is able to take a somewhat historically informed view, she does not have access to the same range of trans-historical knowledge of language that the narrator enjoys. While the narrator is able to speak for all 'the survivors of the Third World War' and discuss their relationship to language – especially metaphor – in general terms, Jael 97 is able to draw on only that knowledge to which she has access in

her much narrower temporal field. Jael 97 can only speak for herself; the narrator, in contrast, speaks of the entire population of New State, and identifies himself or herself with the totality of the readership in the use of the inclusive pronoun *ours*. The narrator's interpolations are prominently didactic, reminiscent of the so-called 'info-dump' device (James & Mendlesohn 2003: 5) common to much early science fiction narratives, whereby technical information, communicated ostensibly to an inter-narrative audience, is actually intended to instruct the reader. Jael 97's less information-dense reflections on language are, I would suggest, more effective in the communication of reflective language, since the reader sees its effects on the character at a personal level, rather than simply receiving generalised information.

The immediacy of the characters' personal experiences of, and attitudes to, reflective language would seem to articulate far more lucidly the link between language and perception than the narrator's overtly didactic intrusions on the subject. Perhaps usefully conceptualised as *covertly* didactic, the characters' own reflections on language elucidate their belief that language 'contains', or 'packages' meaning, and furthermore, the belief that if the container – or the word – disappears from the language, so too does its content. Two further examples from *Facial Justice* exemplify this covert didacticism. The first comes from an article Jael 97 writes following her decision to rebel against the extremes of imposed societal equivalence. Acting as an *agent provocateur*, she addresses the populace through the columns of the newspaper, with the intention of inciting insurgence:

Instead of sports at which this or that man *wins*, stirring up, it has to be admitted, a faint whiff of Bad E in his "rivals" or "competitors" (to use words which, some of us dare to hope, will soon vanish from the language), we shall have sports at which all the entrants win, or lose. And those two words, which have occasioned so much needless heart-burning in the past, will become indistinguishable and so lose their sting.

(p. 200)

Jael 97's intention at this point is to encourage awareness of the value of individuality by satirically claiming advocacy of the extremist 'equalisation' position. Emphasis is drawn to *wins* by way of italicisation, while "rivals" and "competitors" are enclosed by scare quotes which similarly concentrate focus on these words; the lexical field of individual sporting achievement is invoked, only to be immediately revoked by the assertion that these are words that the author hopes 'will soon vanish from the language'. The underlying message, albeit ironically intended here, is that the concept

of sporting achievement – a cause of envy, or ‘Bad E’ – will vanish together with the words which express it. The stress remains likewise on the relationship between word and concept in the later part of this extract, where, it is claimed, the difference between the denotation of *win* and *lose* will become imperceptible if the concepts the words express are disordered and intermingled. For the reader in the extra-textual world, the notion of ‘equalising’ the meaning of verbs which are polar opposites is absurd, but this very absurdity directs the reader’s consciousness to the words and their meaning in both temporal dimensions: in other words, it encourages comparison between the connotations that inhere both inside and outside of the narrative.

A second example from a character, or characters – the dissident group of ‘conspirators’ called the ‘Dancing Class’ – also illustrates covert didacticism emanating from reflective language, but in contrast to Jael 97’s suggestion that eliminating a word will erase the associated concept, this group suggest that drawing a forgotten word back into the language will reinstate its attached concept. Having decided to mount a poster campaign as a means of provoking insurrection, the group is occupied in selecting a persuasive slogan to capture the notion of individualism as a valid alternative to the excesses of collectivism, and are searching for a word which ‘will express the opposite idea and ideal of fairness’ (p. 154). In response to the Chairman’s request for ‘an attractive-sounding synonym for unfairness’ (p. 157), the word *merit* is suggested. ‘Merit has been soft-pedalled for a long time, because it leads to Bad Egg’ the Chairman notes, and he further observes, ‘The word may have dropped out of the language – it’s ages since I saw or heard it used’ (pp. 157-158). Focus on the word *merit* is continued as the deeply conditioned citizens in the group refrain from suggesting a slogan containing the word for fear of being seen as ‘competitive’ or attempting to seem ‘cleverer than our neighbours’ (p. 158). Eventually, a group member asks: ‘Doesn’t merit speak for itself?’, to which the Chairman’s responds: ‘It used to [but] nowadays it’s silenced. That is one of the things that we complain of. Somebody must speak up for it’ (pp. 158-159). This exchange reinforces the idea that language is the locus of ideology, that a word can ‘contain’ or ‘embody’ a concept; it also relies on the existence of the word, together with its full range of connotative meanings, outside of the text, in the reader’s world, where it can ‘speak for itself’.

The lexical field of individualism that is signalled by reflections on the words *win, lose, rivals, competitors,* and *merit* is one that is characterised as ‘Bad E’, or envy in *Facial Justice*, since it is supposed these words all suggest inequality to some extent. As seen with examples of reflective language from other texts, in the dystopian world such undesirable words are depicted as having ‘dropped out of’ or ‘vanished’ from the language, or have become ‘silenced’. The futuristic setting of the dystopia sanctions the proposition that language change of such significance could feasibly have occurred between the author’s historical spacetime and the future the narrative anticipates. Indeed, reflective language largely draws its potency from this propounded temporal dislocation, since it is this futuristic (re)vision of the reader’s own language which activates the process of triangulating comparison, or *feedback oscillation*, to use Suvin’s term (Suvin 1979: 71; see §1.4). Such feedback oscillation would appear to function most effectively when it is the perceptions of the characters that are being communicated, as seen in Winston’s contemplations of language in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Albert and von Hess’s discussions about language throughout *Swastika Night*, and the characters’ views on the subject expressed in *Facial Justice*. Where a self-reflexive narrator, who also occupies the delineator-figure role, steps beyond the temporal boundaries of the narrative and mediates between the temporal dimensions, a measure of feedback oscillation, I would suggest, is lost to the reader. Because the delineator-narrator makes explicit the artifice of the absent present being portrayed as the past by locating himself or herself not only *in* that absent present, but also in alignment with the reader (see, for example, the narrator’s remark, ‘we, in these enlightened days, know nothing’ (p. 26), or ‘by that time many more were known than we know now’ (p. 28)), the reader is deprived of the opportunity to make those connections for himself or herself. Traditionally, dystopian fictions ‘show’ rather than ‘tell’; ‘they leave the act of reconstruction up to the reader’, according to Peter Ruppert (1986: 103-104), who also argues that they ‘force us to assume a more critical and detached position toward all social propositions, including the ones they offer’ (1986: 62). The narratorial interventions in *Facial Justice*, with their informed cross-temporal overview, it would seem, expropriate the reader of ‘the act of reconstruction’ and assume for the narrator ‘a more critical and detached position’, resulting in less effective – and affective – reflective language.

4.5 *The Handmaid's Tale* and 'so many unsaid words'

The more you begin to understand the language of the past the more grows
your conception of the living world not seen by outward sight.

Albert Christy (2003) *Numeral Philosophy*

If the overtly didactic delineator-narrator strategy of *Swastika Night* on occasion diminishes the force of reflective language, then it would follow that an 'unmediated' approach would intensify the effectiveness of this 'language of the past'. Margaret Atwood's (1985) *The Handmaid's Tale*, narrated in the first person by its focaliser and protagonist, Offred, purports to be the first-hand account of a subject living under the dictates of a fundamentalist totalitarian theocracy some time in the early part of the twenty-first century. To refer to this text as 'unmediated' is, of course, to collude with the deception of all narrative fiction mediated through an author, and I use the term with the appropriate reservations; as a narrative strategy, however, the first-person epistolary approach employed by Atwood to frame her dystopia does communicate the immediacy and the implications of reflective language with notable cogency. Atwood's dystopia is perhaps second only to Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in terms of prominence, and has received a great deal of critical attention; the two texts share a common concern with institutional controls of language. Language is a key motif in *The Handmaid's Tale*: issues of access to language, control through language, literacy and orality, gender and language, and power and language, for example, have occupied much of the critical reception of the text (see, for example Sisk (1997), Howells (2006), Klarer (1995), Cavalcanti (2000), Cohen (2001), Kauffman (1992)). My intentions here are quite narrowly defined in the light of the wide-ranging discussions of language in this text: I examine only that language which Offred reflects on as belonging to, or differing from, her lost past. Sisk notes the many examples of 'past' language in *The Handmaid's Tale*: '[m]ore than anyone or anything else', he notes, 'Offred remembers old words that are now proscribed or whose meanings have been rendered obsolete or heretical' (1997: 110). Sisk makes a further observation that is important to the direction of my argument here; following his assertion that 'Offred is deeply sensitive to the importance of names and words', he says:

Her knowledge of how Gilead's government works or how it seized power in the first place is very limited – but her understanding of what the revolution has done to language is profound. We discover what it is like to live in Gilead primarily from Offred's thinking about language.

(Sisk 1997: 110)

Offred's understanding of the structure and aims of the controlling powers of Gilead is indeed limited: her field of vision is limited in almost every respect; she is aware only of her immediate environment, and has almost no access to knowledge beyond her 'reduced circumstances' (p. 18).⁶ The reader, therefore, shares this constrained access to information with Offred; there is no enlightening embedded narrative in *The Handmaid's Tale* as seen in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Swastika Night*, nor is there much reliance on an informed delineator figure (although the Commander has some discussions with Offred about the ideology that underpins the establishment of the society, these are brief and relatively uninformative). Unlike *Facial Justice* there is no omniscient narrator figure; the only narrative point of view available in *The Handmaid's Tale* is Offred's. In comparison to the other dystopias considered in this chapter, the narrative world-view is narrower in several respects: firstly, the focalising character exists in a particularly restricted environment, enjoying fewer freedoms – of choice, of mobility, of communication – than other protagonists, even Winston Smith. Secondly, the time-frame is more limited: although the details are vague, it would seem to be set in the very early years of the twenty-first century, and features a protagonist who has clear and detailed memories of life before the regime (as an adult, in contrast to Winston's childhood pre-revolution memories). Thirdly, the totalitarian administration is still in its infancy ('Things haven't settled down, it's too soon' (p. 23)) and operates in a future quite temporally close to the past which Offred recalls. This narrower focus has an impact on the reflective language which occurs in this text: on the whole, Offred's reflections on language focus on the specific rather than the general, the personal details of her changed life, rather than the impact of the new regime on the whole society. That is not to say that the narrative does not engage with wider issues – clearly it does exactly that – but that its reflective language is more personal, more immediate, and consequently, more effective in reaching the reader's perception.

Offred's autobiographical narrative is explicitly directed to a future reader, addressed as *you*, and '[i]n addition to giving voice to a woman who is barred from language', as Nancy A. Walker notes, 'this method suggests Offred's efforts to take narrative control over a situation in which she is essentially a prisoner' (1995: 175). Offred's urgency to tell her personal story, to communicate the horror of her life and loss under the new order, drives the narrative, which alternates structurally between accounts of her daily existence in Gilead and memories of her earlier life. These

divergent temporal states are marked by speculative and reflective language respectively: the dystopian world is built with new language – *Guardians of the Faithful, Angels, and Eyes*, for example – while Offred’s quiet moments of reflection are marked by reference to the language of the past. A recurrent pattern of reflective language – one also noted in the texts examined above – is to introduce a word or phrase which no longer has currency in the dystopian world, and this is a pattern which emerges regularly throughout Offred’s tale:

Smells fishy, they used to say; or I smell a rat (p. 28)

That was freedom. *Westernized*, they used to call it (p. 38)

Not right now. Not, as they used to say, at this juncture (p. 101)

They used to say that. Exciting, they used to say (p.105)

Of having something on me, as they used to say (p. 191)

What does he control, what is his field, as they used to say? (p. 195)

Exactly the same construction seen, for example, in Jael 97’s comment, ‘when the spring comes, or what they used to call the spring’ (see §4.4 above) is repeated in each instance here: *they used to call* or *they used to say* draws the reader’s attention to some word or idiomatic expression indicative of the narrative past but simultaneously indicative of the reader’s present. The use of the generic pronoun *they*, however, suggests generalisation rather than immediacy, as do the verb phrases *used to call* and *used to say*, since both express a non-specific past tense. More directly expressive of the relatively brief interval (in dystopian terms) between the author’s historical spacetime and the proposed narrative time are the references to language *as* language belonging to another era. While she is contemplating ‘a version of reality I learned in the former time’, Offred recalls ‘*Networking*, one of my mother’s old phrases, musty slang of yesteryear’ (p. 212); elsewhere, she recollects ‘*Humungous*, word of my childhood’ (p. 37). Both of these italicised words lucidly bespeak the late twentieth century, since both are coinages from the late 1970s; *networking*, in its sense of ‘making use of a network of people for the exchange of information, etc., or for professional or other advantage’ was not recorded in the *Oxford English Dictionary* until 2003, and its earliest illustrative quotation in that volume is dated 1976. Similarly, *humungous*, which has been listed as ‘Current Slang’ in the *OED* since 1993, does not seem to have been present in the language prior to 1970, the date of its first illustrative quotation. The same is true of *zilch*, a word Offred spells out during an illicit game of Scrabble in

the Commander's study. In answer to the Commander's challenge, "Is that a word?", Offred responds by saying "It's archaic" (p. 193). *Zilch* also is listed as 'Current Slang' in the *OED* together with an illustrative quotation dating from 1966. This type of reflective language, then, is quite firmly anchored to the era of its emergence: while it is 'musty slang of yesteryear' for Offred, it is marked for its recentness in the extra-textual world. This language, fashionable in the era of the text's publication, and figured as outdated in the narrative future, is more generation-specific than the general *they used to say*, and consequently more immediately recognisable as a temporal marker for the reader. In addition, the absence of the metalinguistic tag in these instances means the temporal disjunction inheres in the relative age of the word itself, rather than being marked only in the verb phrase.

Offred is very aware of the importance of verbs and their tenses. She repeatedly corrects her narrative when she feels she has used an inappropriate verb. When speaking of her missing husband, for example, she amends the verb to reflect her hope that he is still alive, saying: 'Luke wasn't a doctor. Isn't' (p. 43); similarly, of her friend Moira, she says: 'She was still my oldest friend. Is' (p. 181). After learning that her mother has been sent to clear up toxic waste, she reverses this verb-amending process: 'The understatement of the year, was a phrase my mother uses. Used' (p. 148). Again reminiscing about Luke, she berates herself for thinking of him in the past tense:

And he was, the loved. One.

Is, I say. *Is*, *is*, only two letters, you stupid shit, can't you manage to remember it, even a short word like that?

(p. 239)

Offred's repeated self-correction indicates the relatively recent rise to power of Gilead's fundamentalist oligarchy, and underlines her hope that life will return to normal for her (although even the word *normal* itself becomes defamiliarised when towards the end of the narrative she reports, 'Things are back to normal', then immediately questions her own use of the word: 'How can I call this *normal*?' (p. 294)). Her constant adjustment of verb tenses is, for Offred, an important means of maintaining a link with her earlier life, of keeping it tangible. Just as the use of the present tense gives life to Offred's memories, so the use of the narrative present tense gives immediacy and vitality to reflective language. Direct speech – always present tense – contributes forcefully to the efficacy of reflective language here, since it resonates unequivocally with the reader's own automatised language use. The doctor at Offred's routine monthly examination,

for example, greets her: “‘How are we getting along?’ he says’ which she immediately identifies as ‘some tic of speech from the other time’ (p. 70). A similar greeting is foregrounded by its estrangement for Offred when she visits the Commander’s study for the first time:

“Hello,” he says.

It’s the old form of greeting. I haven’t heard it for a long time, for years. Under the circumstances it seems out of place, comical even, a flip backward in time, a stunt. I can think of nothing appropriate to say in return.

(p. 147)

Both *hello* and *how are we getting along* are unmarked in the extra-textual world: the former prevails customarily as a standard form of greeting in English, while the latter is perfectly familiar in the context of doctor-patient discourse. For the reader, neither is remarkable until it becomes estranged by the circumstances of its use in the text; only then does either of these expressions assume any reflective quality. The use in both examples of *he says* in the narrative present tense – in contrast to the *used to say* formulation of previous examples – brings the discourse into a notably immediate present. A similar effect is achieved in the present-tense focus on the word *out* in the following extract:

“Tonight I’m taking you out.”

“Out?” It’s an archaic phrase. Surely there is nowhere, any more, where a man can take a woman out.

(p. 243)

Out, or *taking you out* – a perfectly unremarkable construction outside of the text – is figured as *an archaic phrase* within the text. That such phrases as this, or the standard greetings above, should be supposed *archaic, speech from the other time, the old form, or a flip backward in time* directs the reader’s attention powerfully towards the dystopian temporal disjunction; moreover, in focusing on the potential consequences for everyday expressions which the reader uses regularly, this strategy communicates more immediacy than is evident in other methods of incorporating reflective language.

Offred is crucially aware of the ways in which language has changed within her lifetime, and while she is conversant with the new connotations which have attached themselves to old language, she also remains in touch with the original meanings. Offred is *The Handmaid’s Tale*’s essential bilingual link between the language of the future and the language of the past. This is illustrated in her reflections on changing

meaning resulting from her new circumstances. The details of her illicit first meeting with Nick, the Commander's chauffeur, she recounts thus:

“No romance,” he says. “Okay?”

That would have meant something else, once. Once, it would have meant: *no strings*. Now it means: *no heroics*. It means: don't risk yourself for me if it should come to that.

(p. 274)

As with examples of reflective language considered throughout this chapter, a word or phrase from the author's historical spacetime – and the reader's base-reality – is incorporated in the narrative only to be reconfigured and reconstituted within the terms of – or perhaps more saliently, within the times of – the dystopian future. Offred experiences an enforced narrowing of her world-view, and as a consequence of that, her reflections on language represent the minutiae of her constrained daily life. Although she, in common with other focalising characters in other dystopias, contemplates the larger, abstract issues – *freedom* (p. 38), *privacy* (p. 75), and *love* (p. 231; pp. 237-38) for example, which figure also in Winston Smith's reflective language – on the whole she considers language in the domestic sphere. Offred's narrow world-view does mean that her knowledge of the power structure and its intentions is, as Sisk notes, very limited. However, the immediacy of the first-person autobiographical narrative communicates the grim reality of life under the new regime with chilling effectiveness, since we witness the repercussions of totalitarianism from a deeply personal viewpoint. The reader is invited to participate in, or identify with, Offred's story by repeated instances of seeing their own language – the language of their base-reality – reflected back at them but distorted, perverted, or eliminated altogether by a tyrannical regime.

4.6 Reflective language, perception, and the reader

Reflective language is in itself an extremely effective tool for drawing the reader's attention to the potential horrors of any dystopian society: the professed attrition or annihilation of language common to all of these texts mirrors the destitution and destruction of societal values in dystopia. When considered together with its opposite force – speculative language – a fuller and much more alarming image of a possible future emerges. Reflective language stands in contrast to speculative language: the two are antithetical realisations of language in terms of dystopian fiction. Reflective

language details the past while speculative language outlines the future; reflective language portrays the absent present as a Golden Age while speculative language presents the future as the Age of Terror and Fear. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, for example, *privacy*, as reflective language is the converse of the speculative-language constructions *Big Brother* and *telescreen*; *freedom* contrasts with *Room 101*; *history* and *memory* are opposed by *Records Department* and *memory hole*. The co-presence and interanimation of these two linguistic strands is the focus of my examination of Margaret Atwood's (2003) dystopia, *Oryx and Crake*, which follows in chapter five. In advance of that discussion of dystopia's 'two languages', I consider some of the ways in which the reader may receive and respond to reflective language.

The form, the visible contour, of reflective language, as noted at the beginning of this chapter, is exactly that which exists outside of the fiction in the reader's base-reality; the meaning also corresponds with that which exists in the reader's consciousness of the extra-textual world. And yet, despite this apparent coincidence of form and meaning, reflective language challenges and confronts the reader's habitual or automatised reception of language. It does so chiefly by denying its own existence while simultaneously – and perceptibly – existing. In short, words such as *freedom*, *history*, *privacy*, *love*, and *family* denote the same in both dimensions, but, dystopia declares their future obsolescence as a means of drawing attention to the values and beliefs that inhere in the concepts these words encode. Like speculative language, reflective language is cognitively estranging, but the operation of cognitive estrangement is almost inverted: where speculative language is unfamiliar – or estranging – at first, but this estrangement is followed by cognition – or appreciation of its familiarity (see §3.4), reflective language is at first familiar, but then becomes estranged by the circumstances of the text. Suvin's original conception of cognitive estrangement does not assume particular ordering of its two components: he refers simply to '*the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition*' (1979: 8-9), which allows that the functions may occur in either sequence. In either order, the peculiarities of dystopian language hinge on challenging and defamiliarising readers' tacit understanding of language; in speculative language the movement is from unfamiliar to familiar, while reflective language moves from familiar to unfamiliar. In both cases, the reader is compelled to attend to the ways in which language represents the world(s).

A similarly reversed relationship is discernible between reflective language and Whorfianism. Where speculative language positions the reader as a kind of ‘Whorfian investigator’ by default (see §3.4), by way of presenting new or different language as a new or different way of conceptualising the world (as Whorf saw the Hopi language, for example), reflective language engages the reader as ‘Whorfian investigator’ of his or her own language (as Whorf, in investigating ‘exotic’ languages, was compelled to look more closely at his own language for the purpose of comparison). Importantly, reflective language also engages the reader earlier in the process – at the first stage of Whorfianism, in fact, where the investigator becomes aware of the automaticity of language. As Whorf remarks, awareness of one’s own language is as ‘background phenomena’ of which one is as ‘dimly aware’ as one is of ‘motes of dust in the air of a room’ (1956: 221). Typically, as readers, we process language unconsciously – or at least, we process our known, native, familiar language unconsciously. ‘Every language of course seems simple to its own speakers’, Whorf comments, ‘because they are unconscious of its structure’ (1956: 82); moreover, this unconscious processing is indicative of what Whorf terms the *habitual thought world* (see §2.2.2), which is ‘the microcosm each man carries about within himself, by which he measures and understands what he can of the microcosm’ (1956: 147). Reflective language, as ostensibly the reader’s own known and familiar language, would appear at first to conform to Whorf’s expectations of what it is that comprises a habitual thought world. One of the obstacles, Whorf notes, to appreciating the unconscious nature of our relationship with language is ‘because of its background character, because of the difficulty of standing aside from our own language [...] and scrutinizing it objectively’ (1956: 138). Reflective language compels the reader to ‘stand aside from [his or her] own language’ and see it afresh, since it is foregrounded by its very claim to non-existence: the presentation of this language as obsolete, as ‘lost’ or ‘vanished’, when it still exists in the reader’s world and consciousness, acutely draws focus on to it – or estranges it – and presents it as exactly the kind of ‘interruption of regularity’ that, for Whorf, triggers the process of investigation. Dystopian presentations of reflective language encapsulate those states and understandings of the world which constitute – at least in the Western world – the values of self and society. In proposing that this language will have disappeared in the dystopian world of the future, the concomitant proposition is that if the language disappears, then so too will the concept it encapsulates. The didactic warning of reflective language parallels Whorf’s comment

that '[t]he situation is somewhat analogous to that of not missing the water until the well runs dry' (1956: 209).

5. *Oryx and Crake*: two cultures, two languages

Language is the only instrument of science, and words are but the signs of ideas.

Samuel Johnson (1755) Preface to *Dictionary of the English Language*

5.1 Introduction

In his 1956 Rede Lecture at Cambridge, C.P. Snow famously conceptualised the emerging schism between the Sciences and the Arts as the ‘two cultures’, asserting that:

[T]he intellectual life of the whole of western society is increasingly being split into two polar groups. [A]t one pole we have the literary intellectuals [...] at the other scientists [...]. Between the two a gulf of mutual incomprehension.

(C.P. Snow 1959: 4)

Margaret Atwood’s (2003) *Oryx and Crake* extrapolates this cultural division to a point where it has become axiomatic: her dystopian vision of the United States in the twenty-first century imagines the Sciences as an inexorable imperialistic hegemonic power, and the Arts as an outdated and frivolous irrelevance with no practical application, a division reflected unmistakably in the ‘two languages’ of the novel. Scientists – or ‘numbers people’ – are highly valued, and live and work inside closely-guarded gated communities called ‘Compounds’ owned by giant multi-national biotech corporations; ‘word people’, on the other hand – the ‘literary intellectuals’ at the opposite pole of Snow’s ‘two cultures’ – are marginalised, considered wholly inferior to the scientists, and of value only for such trivial tasks as writing advertising copy, or ‘decorating the cold, hard, numerical real world in flossy 2-D verbiage’ (p. 221).¹ *Oryx and Crake* differs from the other dystopias considered in this study in that it does not propose a despotic totalitarian government; however, science, together with commerce (from which it has become indistinguishable), forms an absolute and indomitable supremacy which controls almost every aspect of human existence. Atwood’s dystopia, which Coral Ann Howells calls a ‘ferocious satire on later modern American capitalist society’ (2006: 164), speculatively extends not only the division between the Sciences and the Arts, but also extrapolates the potential for destructive human exploitation inherent in the now-prevalent tendency for scientific research and development to be driven and funded by government-sanctioned corporate interests. Alan Luke (1992) suggests that

the post-war collaborations between science, government, and commerce – in base-reality – have changed the fundamental nature of science, to the extent that:

What counts as ‘science’ in the period since World War II has been focal in the development of Western nation states, to the point where historical ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ in economic, strategic and geopolitical realms are assessed in terms of technological and scientific prowess [...]. What has come to count as science in technocratic culture is the applied, the corporate and the profitable.

(Luke 1992: xi)

Atwood takes this existing alliance of scientific endeavour with legislative authorisation and corporate fiscal interest and draws out from it a possible future where the scientific quest for human perfectibility (through, for example, advances in genetic engineering, pharmaceutical technology and embryology) is fiercely competitive, and scientists working on development projects are closely monitored by a network of armed guards (known as ‘CorpSeCorps’) in order to forestall attempted industrial espionage. Environmental devastation provides a bleak setting for the fictional future: ‘as time went on’, Atwood writes, ‘the coastal aquifers turned salty and the northern permafrost melted [...] the vast tundra bubbled with methane and the drought in the midcontinental plains regions went on and on, and the Asian steppes turned to sand dunes’ (p. 27). Against this grim background, powerful coalitions of science and commerce ruthlessly vie to develop and market products which exploit the widespread pursuit of perpetual youth, the expectation of cures for all ailments and disease, and the demand for improved leisure and personal happiness. Along with other thematic concerns that Atwood extrapolates in *Oryx and Crake*, the beginnings of these trends are clearly visible in the contemporary world, the author’s historical spacetime being far closer temporally to the contemporary reader’s base-reality than in other texts examined in this study. The fictional future too, is closer at hand: ‘around 2025’ according to Howells (2006: 163), and 2027 in the estimation of J. Brooks Bouson (2004: 140). The novel, Atwood claims, ‘invents nothing we haven’t already invented or started to invent’,² and, as with all dystopias, this discernible basis in the circumstances of the present contributes to its didactic force. As Howells notes, ‘Atwood shares the dystopian impulse to shock readers into an awareness of dangerous trends in our present world’ (2006: 164).

The author’s approach to this didactic task is characterised by division: a ‘two cultures’ theme pervades the narrative throughout, from structure through to theme and

characterisation. The narrative divides into distinct 'before' and 'after' perspectives, as the novel's focalising character, Snowman, apparently the only human survivor of an apocalyptic chemically induced catastrophe, muses on the events leading up to the mass destruction of humanity in a series of flashbacks which reach back as far as his early childhood in the Compounds. There, as the only child of scientist parents, he observed at first-hand the development of transgenic animals bred for human organ transplantation. The 'after' temporal perspective sees Snowman attempting to survive the consequences of this earlier scientific development, where pigs with human neocortex tissue growing in their brains have become feral and stalk him with cunning intelligence; dogs with the genetic material of wolves spliced into their DNA hunt in packs; and other genetically mutated creatures constantly threaten his safety and peace of mind.

The pre-apocalypse world Snowman recalls also reveals a sharp cultural and social division – 'the divided world of haves and have-nots' (Bouson 2004: 143) that separates those who live within the protected and affluent Compounds from those who live beyond those boundaries in the 'pleeblands'. The inhabitants of the pleeblands, like Orwell's 'proles', are peripheral and unguarded, but unlike the proles, the plebs have become chaotic and disordered – 'the addicts, the muggers, the paupers, the crazies' (p. 31) – and are kept subdued by 'BlyssPluss Pills' which provide 'an unlimited supply of libido and sexual prowess, coupled with a generalised sense of energy and well-being', protection against 'all known sexually transmitted diseases, fatal, inconvenient, or merely unsightly', in addition to which, they 'prolong youth' (p. 346). This popular medication also – without the knowledge or consent of its users – acts as 'a sure-fire one-time-does-it-all birth-control pill for male and female alike, thus automatically lowering the population level' (p. 347), a side-effect which Atwood satirically employs to give some indication of the far-reaching controlling mechanisms made possible by ostensibly benign advances in science and technology.

Within the walls of the various commercially funded Compounds, the cultural divide is that which separates scientists and non-scientists distinctly into the 'two cultures' of the Sciences and the Arts, or, in Atwood's formulation, 'numbers people' and 'word people'. Snowman – also known as Jimmy (his pre-apocalypse name) – is unmistakably a word person; 'a mid-range student, high on his word scores but a poor average in the numbers columns' (p. 204), while his childhood friend, Crake – the

novel's brilliant but flawed scientist – is a numbers person of notable genius, who could 'crank out the differential equations in his sleep' (p. 204). In a society where scientific intellect is highly valued, and aesthetic pursuits deemed risible, Jimmy (Snowman) is markedly inferior; a puzzling disappointment to his scientist father, and destined to attend a second-rate Arts College, 'The Martha Graham Academy', which 'was named after some gory old dance goddess of the twentieth century', and had been 'set up by a clutch of now-dead rich liberal bleeding hearts from Old New York' (pp. 218-219). In his post-disaster musings, Snowman recalls that 'a lot of what went on at Martha Graham was like studying Latin, or book-binding: pleasant to contemplate in its way, but no longer central to anything' (p. 219). Science, on the other hand, is central to everything, and Crake, as a 'top of the class' numbers person finds himself being bid for by 'rival EduCompounds' at the 'Student Auction', is 'snatched up at a high price by the Watson-Crick Institute', which is 'like Harvard had been back before it got drowned' (p. 203), and is thus assured of employment with a prestigious scientific-commercial Compound upon graduation. Jimmy, on the other hand, drifts through his undistinguished early career writing advertising copy – 'verbal fabrications' (p. 292) – to sell the products developed by science. In his position as a 'wordserf' (p. 253), he 'discovered quite soon that, corporately speaking, he was a drudge and a helot' (p. 291).

If Crake represents 'the scientists' of C.P. Snow's 'two cultures', then Snowman-Jimmy represents the 'literary intellectuals', or the Arts. In Atwood's dystopian extrapolation of this inequitably divided world, the Sciences are privileged over the Arts to a significant – and ultimately disastrous – degree. The language of *Oryx and Crake* is similarly divided across these boundaries: as I shall demonstrate in this chapter, speculative language constructs the futuristic ascendancy of science and commerce, while reflective language looks back from this future perspective to contemplate a less divided, less recklessly intensive, more humanitarian, and more aesthetically aware age. In a telling inversion of the scientific dominion, reflective language, it will be seen, depicts the Arts as at least as necessary, as intrinsic, and as vital as the Sciences to the continued survival of civilisation, or, in the words of the original motto of the Martha Graham Academy (now obscured by the new slogan, 'Our Students Graduate With Employable Skills'): *Ars Longa Vita Brevis* (p. 220).

5.2.1 The speculative language of science

Science is beginning to find that there is something in the Cosmos that is not in accord with the concepts we have formed in mounting the spiral. It is trying to frame a *new language* by which to adjust itself to a wider universe.

Benjamin Whorf (1941) 'The Relation of Habitual Thought and Behaviour to Language'

The language Atwood uses to build and detail the world of the future – *proteonome*, *neuro-regeneration project*, *hyoid apparatus*, *neocortex control systems*, *bioprint*, *neural-impulse monitor*, *hostile bioforms*, *rapid-maturity gene*, *expandable chromosphores*, for instance – is formed from a bewildering combination of real science, pseudo-science, and informed neologism. In tapping into the language of science to depict her vision of a hostile and ruinous dystopian future, Atwood is extrapolating – and exploiting – a linguistic phenomenon that exists in her historical spacetime and also in a contemporary reader's base-reality. The language of science already enjoys a level of prestige and authority unparalleled by other forms of discourse, and a claim to neutrality and transparency which is tacitly acknowledged by most readers. As David Locke points out, '[s]cientific language has traditionally been viewed as "pure functional notation"' (1992: viii); furthermore, this belief in the integrity of scientific discourse has become institutionalised in Western culture to such an extent that '[i]t is not too fanciful to say', as M.A.K. Halliday and J.R. Martin claim, 'that the language of science has reshaped our whole world view' (1993:10). The language of science is a 'form of language that began as the semiotic underpinning for what was, in the worldwide context, a rather esoteric structure of knowledge', Halliday and Martin note, yet they also contend that this language 'has gradually been taking over as the dominant mode for interpreting human existence' (1993: 11). In essence, whether the reader recognises the hegemonic status of scientific language or not, it is likely that, as a twenty-first-century reader, his or her world-view is already influenced – albeit perhaps imperceptibly – by the preponderance of scientific (and pseudo-scientific) discourse which makes up his or her language.

In the extra-textual world, the language of science has penetrated the discourse of commercial, industrial, and political arenas, where its characteristic language constructions – especially nominalisation – have been adopted in the interests of authority, clarity, and precision. However, as Halliday and Martin suggest, where the language of science is 'borrowed' into corporate discourse, it is, 'largely a ritual feature, engendering only prestige and bureaucratic power. It becomes a language of hierarchy,

privileging the expert and limiting access to specialized domains of cultural experience' (1993: 15). Halliday and Martin also acknowledge that the 'reshaping' of 'our whole world view' occasioned by the ascendancy of scientific language is not an unqualified benefit, since 'it has done so in ways which (as is typical of many historical processes) begin by freeing and enabling but end up by constraining and distorting' (1993: 10). Benjamin Whorf himself would doubtless have agreed with their conclusion: one of Whorf's central beliefs is that 'no individual is free to describe nature with absolute impartiality, but is constrained to certain modes of interpretation even while he thinks himself most free' (1956: 214). The prestige and authority of the language of science, then, is already deeply embedded in the consciousness of modern readers; Atwood's speculative extrapolations of this language, therefore, build on, and take advantage of, an aspect of linguistic knowledge which is, for the reader, already profoundly habituated.

Atwood prefaces the novel with an epigraph taken from Jonathan Swift's (1726) *Gulliver's Travels*:³

I could perhaps like others have astonished you with strange improbable tales; but I rather chose to relate plain matter of fact in the simplest manner and style; because my principal design was to inform you, and not to amuse you.

Swift's claim to instruct rather than inspire, adopted by Atwood, is remarkably resonant with the declared aims of scientific writing: technical language is a medium designed to impart information, rather than to entertain. As Herman M. Weisman notes in his (1980) *Basic Technical Writing*, scientific – or technical – language is *not* literary or imaginative language. Indeed, Weisman's argument opposes, or polarises, the two modes of discourse:

Literature is concerned mainly with our thoughts, feelings, and reactions to experiences. Its purpose is to give us insight. Technical writing concerns itself solely with factual information; its language does not appeal to the emotions nor to the imagination, but to the intellect. Its words are exact and precise, and its primary purpose is to inform. Its information is the activity and progress of science and technology.

((Weisman 1980: 8), quoted in Locke (1992: 4-5))

To consider Atwood's prefatory assertion of didactic intent in direct comparison, line by line, with Weisman's claim for the veracity of scientific language is to reveal numerous correspondences:

I could perhaps like others have astonished you with strange improbable tales
Literature is concerned mainly with our thoughts, feelings, and reactions to experiences

but I rather chose to relate plain matter of fact
Technical writing concerns itself solely with factual information

in the simplest manner and style
Its words are exact and precise

because my principal design was to inform you
and its primary purpose is to inform

and not to amuse you
its language does not appeal to the emotions nor to the imagination

In appropriating Swift's words for her epigraph, Atwood is not only signalling the didacticism of her dystopian text; she is also alluding to the authority of the language of science, making a claim for the factual, informative nature of its discourse, and, by association, making the same claim for her text. *Oryx and Crake* is, of course, literature; the epigraph represents a self-consciously satirical duplicity, but one that is followed through in the novel's frequently scientific tone.

In a flashback which appears quite early in the novel, Snowman contemplates his parents' involvement, as scientists, in a top-secret project to breed a transgenic pig to provide organs suitable for transplant into humans. They 'explained to Jimmy when he was old enough' what this meant (p. 26). The relevant passage is excerpted here, since it typifies both the scientific tone and the speculative language of the novel:

Jimmy's father worked for OrganInc Farms. He was a genographer, one of the best in the field. He'd done some of the key studies on mapping the proteome when he was still a post-grad, and then he'd helped engineer the Methuselah Mouse as part of Operation Immortality. After that, at OrganInc Farms, he'd been one of the foremost architects of the pigoon project, along with a team of transplant experts and the microbiologists who were splicing against infections. *Pigoon* was only a nickname: the official name was *sus multiorganifer* [...]. The goal of the pigoon project was to grow an assortment of foolproof human-tissue organs in a transgenic knockout pig host – organs that would transplant smoothly and avoid rejection, but would be able to fend off attacks by opportunistic microbes and viruses, of which there were more strains every year. A rapid-maturity gene was spliced in so the pigoon kidneys and livers and hearts would be ready sooner, and now they were perfecting a pigoon that could grow five or six kidneys at a time [...]. A great deal of investment money had gone into OrganInc Farms.

(pp. 25-26)

The dystopian textual world of *Oryx and Crake*, where the commercial-science research-and-development principle predominates, is clearly communicated in this passage; the construction of the ‘foregrounded background’ (see §3.3.4) of the future science-driven society is established through the use of a distinctly scientific register, sustained by the inclusion of many of the characteristic linguistic conventions of non-literary scientific discourse. Among these is the feature Halliday and Martin term *lexical density*, or the relative proportion of lexical (or content) words to grammatical words per clause, which is typically high in scientific language. Lexical density is a variable quality: while the general tendency for informal spoken language is approximately two lexical words per clause, and for planned writing about four to six, scientific writing is considerably higher, often with a value between ten and thirteen per clause (Halliday & Martin 1993: 76). One clause taken from this extract – ‘The *goal* of the *pigoon project* was to *grow* an *assortment* of *foolproof human-tissue organs* in a *transgenic knockout pig host*’ (lexical words italicised) – has a lexical density value of thirteen, which represents the upper – or most scientific – end of the range.⁴ Much of this lexical density occurs as a result of the clustering of content words within the four noun phrases, which, together, contain twelve of the thirteen lexical words. Two particularly dense strings of four lexical items appear here without any intervening grammatical words: *foolproof human-tissue organs* and *transgenic knockout pig host*. Science customarily presents itself linguistically by using this kind of heavily pre-modified noun phrase since it represents an efficient and precise method of concentrating high informational value into compact syntactic constructions. It has also become ritualised, to the extent that it has become a functional intra-group shorthand notation system which eschews the use of ‘superfluous’ language. Noun phrases with similarly dense pre-modification of the noun occur throughout *Oryx and Crake*, for example:

analogue mammalian sex pheromones (p. 267)

a modified form of Kirilian-energy-sensing algae (p. 237)

the most efficient low-light, high-density chicken farming operation (p. 238)

Lexically dense noun phrases help to define the scientific tone of this extract at structural level, but the vocabulary used here is probably a more explicit indication of its scientific design. The subject-specific terminology creates an identifiably scientific lexical field: the Latin-derived taxonomical classification, *sus multiorganifer*, the

pigeon's 'official name', for example, is indicative of specialisation at the highest levels of science, while what might be termed 'discipline-specific' terminology, such as *genographer*, *proteonome*, *microbiologists*, and *transgenic* also contribute to the establishment of a scientific lexical field. Less specialised still is the group of familiar terms, including *transplant*, *infections*, *microbes and viruses*, and *gene*, which, while being well-known vocabulary, remain identifiably representative of a scientific lexical field. Atwood also mimics the impersonal, detached tone customarily employed in scientific discourse: in the above extract, this typically 'objective' effect is intensified by the use of nominalisations in place of the verbs from which they were derived. The use of *rejection*, rather than *their being rejected*, for instance, closely imitates the method by which science customarily turns processes into 'things' to which other things are predicable (a method which also effaces any suggestion of agency). Use of the passive voice also has a depersonalising effect, and can be seen here in the construction *was spliced in* which similarly eliminates agency.

The language of science is the dominant, prestige language of the dystopian future; the domain of the scientists, or 'numbers people' such as Crake, whose own language reveals his habitual reliance on scientific constructions. Jimmy recalls, for example, Crake's views on love and sex:

Falling in love, although it resulted in altered body chemistry, and was therefore real, was a hormonally induced delusional state, according to him [...]. As for sex per se, it lacked both challenge and novelty, and was on the whole a deeply imperfect solution to the problem of intergenerational genetic transfer.

(p. 227)

The same depersonalised and detached tone that typifies scientific discourse is present in Crake's language: love is 'a hormonally induced delusional state', and elsewhere, he categorises unrequited love as 'a series of biological mismatches, a misalignment of the hormones and pheromones' (p. 195). In the dystopian world Atwood envisions, 'problems' such as these are solved by an increasing dependence on 'trained professional' sex-workers, 'a system' Crake claims is preferable to real relationships since 'it avoids the diversion of energies into unproductive channels, and short-circuits malaise' (p. 244). The issue of sex being 'a deeply imperfect solution to the problem of intergenerational genetic transfer' is resolved by agencies which trade in the made-to-

measure ‘designer’ babies that have become widely available thanks to advances in the human genome project, genetic engineering, and embryology.

The language through which Atwood communicates this science-controlled, investment-led futuristic world is a compelling blend of existing scientific language together with a considerable measure of speculative language. Returning to the passage detailing Jimmy’s father’s involvement in the OrganInc-funded transgenics project, there are several examples of speculative language which, as seen with the speculative language of Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in chapter three, linguistically construct the dystopian world while maintaining recognisable links with the language of the author’s historical spacetime. The ‘principle of limited novelty’ (see §3.3.1) applies equally to Atwood’s speculative language as it does to Orwell’s (and, indeed, to most instances of speculative language in dystopia), even in the case of the bizarrely named *pigoon*, which is perhaps the most obvious neologism here. To coin this word, Atwood has extrapolated from existing word-formation practices: the same practices that have yielded other equally odd-sounding combinations, such as *tigon*, coined in 1927 to name the offspring of a tiger and a lioness, which was followed in 1938 by *liger* to describe the young produced by the pairing of a lion and a tigress. In a similar vein, the *Oxford English Dictionary* records *zedonk* (in the UK) and *zonkey* (in the US), both of which are contrived by clipping and blending composite parts of the parents’ names, zebra and donkey. In her (2005) article ‘Dis/integrating animals: ethical dimensions of the genetic engineering of animals for human consumption’, Traci Warkentin cites *geep*, which is ‘a sheep and goat hybrid, containing genetic material from both species’, and explains that a ‘transgenic organism is one that has been microgenetically engineered so that its genome contains material derived from a different species’ (2005: 83). While the method of producing such hybrid animals has changed due to advances in scientific knowledge, the method of coining a new name for a new species has remained the same since at least the early twentieth century; the neologistic strategy which creates *pigoon* is one with which readers are familiar. Similar examples appear throughout the text: *wolvogs* (p. 11) are a combination of wolves with dogs; *rakunks* (p. 43) a hybrid of racoons and skunks; *snat* is ‘an unfortunate blend of snake and rat’ (p. 57); and ‘the spoat / gider [is] goat crossed with spider to produce high-tensile spider silk filaments in the milk’ (p. 234).

The pigoon's 'official name', *sus multiorganifer*, is extrapolated from present-day linguistic reality in much the same way. This is a new species, being bred to produce five or six harvestable kidneys at a time, and as such, requires a new name. Science already employs a systematic Latin-based taxonomy to classify mammals by species and characteristics, and the name *sus multiorganifer* is constructed from this source. This neologism can be broken down into its constituent morphemes as follows:

- sus* (Latin: pig or hog)
- multi* (Latin: much or many)
- organ* (Latin: tool or sense organ)
- i* (for ease of articulation between consonants)
- fer* (Latin: to bear, carry, or hold)

Each of these morphemes, as defined in Ronald Wilbur Brown's (1956) *Composition of Scientific Words*, is meaningful within the field of taxonomical naming; the principles for this type of word formation are well established in the biological sciences. Moreover, if such an animal were ever to exist, the chances are that its taxonomical name would be much as Atwood has invented it here. Essentially, she has speculatively constructed this fictional name on principles extrapolated from scientific base-reality. Other lexical examples in this extract include *genographer* (decodable literally as 'mapper of genes'), and *proteonome*, neither of which exists in real science, but both of which are speculatively constructed from known morphemes that do exist in the realms of current science.

The speculative language that Atwood invents here builds an imagined future which is markedly continuous-yet-discontinuous with the circumstances of its conception and production. In encouraging the reader to make the connections between the fictional world and his or her own world, speculative language invites a dialogue between the temporal states of now – or what *is* – and the future – or what *could be*. As Howells (2006) notes, *Oryx and Crake* 'thinks through these stages of scientific enlightenment to their possible negative consequences, which, given human nature (as we know it) need to be taken into account' (2006: 163). Howells' argument is essentially a response to the text's didacticism; one which is repeated in numerous reviews of the novel. Bouson (2004) likewise comments on the didactic impulse of *Oryx and Crake*: 'Atwood', she notes, 'sounds a warning about the slippery slope we are going down in our contemporary culture of science' (2004: 153); moreover, she

records Atwood's comment that if she 'could select "one motto" for the way we should approach genetic engineering', it would be "Think it through" (2004: 153-154). Warkentin (2005) suggests that the novel itself provides the necessary space to consider its didactic message:

Oryx and Crake provides a transitional narrative space for the discussion of current biotechnological philosophies and practices in Western society and where they might lead to in the not-so-distant future.

(Warkentin 2005: 83)

While none of the above critics isolates language specifically as the locus of the didacticism to which they appeal, a response from within the field of genetic science does explicitly identify the language of *Oryx and Crake* as the prompt which compels the initiation of discussion. Anthony Griffiths, Professor of Genetics at UBC Vancouver, writing in the journal *Canadian Literature* (2004),⁵ acknowledges the didacticism of Atwood's dystopia, saying that the book 'seems to have a strong message about science (specifically genetics)',⁶ but protests that it 'uses genetic engineering as a lightning rod for wrath aimed at the negative outcomes of science in general'.⁷ From his perspective as a geneticist, Griffiths proceeds robustly to defend genetics as a field of science that 'has produced better food plants and animals, better clothing, new medicines, and new approaches to human disease therapy'⁸ (all of which are satirically treated in *Oryx and Crake*). Griffiths then cites *rakunk*, *snat*, and *wolvog* as examples of Atwood's misinterpretation of the present state of technology, and asserts that:

Her misconception can be inferred from her reference to the hybrids as "splices". In genetics, what Atwood refers to as splices are called transgenics [...]. Indeed, Atwood makes reference to a transgenic that has actually been made, a goat genome into which spider silk genes have been inserted in such a way that the silk is secreted into the goat's milk [...]. However, this animal, dubbed a "spcoat or gider" is referred to in *Oryx and Crake* as a product of a cross of goat and spider. It certainly did not come from a cross, whether a cross is viewed as a mating or some type of forced fusion [...]. The transgenic origin of the real-life spcoat is quite different from the supposed origin of the impossible hybrids such as rakunks and snats.

(Griffiths 2004)⁹

That Griffiths' takes issue with Atwood's 'scientific' language, particularly her use of 'splice' and 'cross' as synonymous with 'transgenic', is indicative of the text's didactic warning having been received, understood, and – significantly – responded to from the viewpoint of base-reality genetic science. *Oryx and Crake*, like all dystopias, blurs the

boundaries between the present and the future, between the real world and the fictional world; so too the language of dystopia mediates and negotiates the boundaries between what is and what could be. In the case of *Oryx and Crake*, Griffiths' response to the novel's provocative fusion of existing language and speculative language represents a critical dialogue taking place in that space between fiction and reality, a dialogue which affirms and ratifies the didactic power of the text. Crucially, the speculative language Atwood employs – *splice*, in this instance – is sufficiently plausible to induce the geneticist's response. As Griffiths notes, 'there are no fantastic futuristic technologies such as morphing, teleporting, or hyperdrive' in *Oryx and Crake*, which suggests to him that 'the genetic examples in the book must be presumed to be possible with technology not much more advanced than that which we have at present'.¹⁰ In essence, Griffiths' comments here make a clear distinction between the kind of creative neologism that typifies 'hard' science fiction (see §3.3.1) and the speculative language that typifies dystopia: while words such as *morphing*, *teleporting*, and *hyperdrive* signal 'fantastic' (therefore implausible) technologies, words such as *splice* signal, for him, that which is 'presumed to be possible'.

The language which depicts the 'science' viewpoint of the text's 'two cultures' is throughout the narrative a compound of existing scientific language and extrapolations of the same. The naming of the 'spoot / gider', for example, which, as Griffiths confirms, does actually exist both linguistically and corporeally, validates Atwood's subsequent naming of her fictional hybrids. Similarly, existing scientific language substantiates speculative scientific language throughout the novel. The morpheme *bio*, for example, a familiar and lexically productive prefix in scientific language, yields *bioprint* (p. 21), *hostile bioforms* (p. 32), *HotBioform* (p. 60), *bioform-proofed* (p. 237), *biolab* (p. 57), *biosuits* (p. 278), *bioterrorism* (p. 379) and *bio attack* (p. 382), each of which is responsive to elementary decoding. As happens in real-world scientific language, words cross class boundaries: Atwood's recontextualisation *splice*, the noun form of which induced Griffiths' scathing response, functions as a verb ('splicing against infections' (p. 25)), and also appears in the adjectival position ('their single-molecular-layer splicing project' (p. 87)), and is re-nominalised to produce 'splicers' (p. 404), to name the scientists who develop new splices. *Splice*, both as noun and as verb, it transpires, is central to the plot. The process of 'splicing' produces more than just hybrid creatures: the virus which wipes out the human population is a

‘supervirulent splice’ (p. 398) created by Crake’s ‘hand-selected’ splicers, and encysted in the universally popular BlyssPluss Pills.

Also concomitant with base-reality science is the notion of transforming complex scientific concepts into less scientific-sounding language as a means of aiding communication for the non-scientist general public. When the spliced virus begins to destroy whole communities, the ‘CorpSeCorps chief declares New New York a disaster area’ (p. 398), and the media panic escalates, Snowman notes news reporters had ‘given the virus a name, to make it seem more manageable. Its name was JUVE, Jetspeed Ultra Virus Extraordinary’ (p. 398). Chillingly resonant with base-reality acronyms like AIDS and SARS, coined as initialisations of lengthy terms, this process is used to ‘make it seem more manageable’ linguistically as well as conceptually. The ‘scientific’ neologism and neosemy of *Oryx and Crake* mimics base-reality processes of word-formation and meaning shift. The result is a cogent and acute didactic energy which continually alternates the reader’s focus from within the narrative to without as s/he identifies internal and external referents of the language. The dystopian world of *Oryx and Crake*, however, relies on more than just scientific language in order to achieve its didactic purpose: speculative language in the field of marketing and commerce forges more direct links with the reader, positioning him or her in the role of consumer of the products of scientific development as s/he recognises the distinct links between Atwood’s language of the future and the language of the present.

5.2.2 The speculative language of commerce

The culture of scientific development-led commerce that characterises Atwood’s depiction of a possible future is revealed and reinforced throughout *Oryx and Crake* by way of a steady accretion of speculative language which names – and thus conceptualises – a range of products, services, and consumer goods that have shaped the values and expectations of the futuristic society. Often satirical, even to the point of pastiche, the language Atwood creates to delineate her market-driven, corporate-funded, consumer-oriented fictional world is a disturbingly resonant elaboration of the language of her historical spacetime; one that contemporary readers will doubtless recognise. The process of word-formation imitates (and, as will be seen, occasionally exaggerates) the same process in base-reality. As Peter Stockwell points out:

Framing a new concept for a science fiction narrative, and then finding a plausible name for it, is the same process as devising a snappy marketable name for a newly conceived product.

(Stockwell 2000: 135)

Atwood devises 'snappy marketable name[s]' for her conceptions to such an extent that almost every aspect of life in the future is a branded – or re-branded – extrapolation of the developments visible in the contemporary world, from corporate interest and funding in education through scientifically developed food and production methods to medical and cosmetic enterprise.

Snowman's fragmented narrative encompasses flashbacks to the early days of his friendship with Crake at school, where the two were classmates at 'HelthWyzer High' (p. 81), a privately run Compound school funded by HelthWyzer, the prestigious corporation which employs the boys' parents. Private Compound schools such as these are 'awash in brilliant genes', while beyond the walls of the Compounds were 'those dump bins they still called "the public system"' (p. 204). The reflective language construction *they still called* draws attention to the division between the 'old' public system of education and the 'new' selective commercially funded system where the emphasis is on educating the pupils in skills which are marketable and economically useful in preparation for their anticipated entry into the world of scientific and commercial development. The names of the subjects taught at HelthWyzer high include *Neotechnology* (p. 63), *Geolonomics* (p. 71), *Nanotech Biochem* (p. 87), and *VizArts* (p. 220). The aggregation of familiar morphemes in unfamiliar combinations, clipping, and compounding, together with a move towards abbreviation and simplified respelling, produce neologisms that typify the kind Atwood employs throughout the novel to depict the increasing commercialisation of life. *VizArts*, for example (which supersedes 'Film-making and Video Arts, who needed them?' (p. 220)), equips students to use computer animation, digital enhancement techniques, and downloadable software to create 'whatever they wanted'; Jimmy's contribution to the class is to 'put together a naked *Pride and Prejudice* and a naked *To the Lighthouse*, just for laughs' (*ibid*). This attrition of the Arts is echoed in the language which describes it: *Visual Arts* is abbreviated, compounded, and the [s] of *Vis* substituted with [z] to produce a reduced, snappy, phonetic emulation characteristic of the techniques used in marketing in base-reality. A similar technique of reduction and simplification is apparent in the company name *HelthWyzer*: as with *VizArts*, a semi-phonetic orthography sees [s] replaced with

[z] and the unrealised [a] deleted from *health*. Internal capitalisation marks both constructions, a phenomenon which has become more prevalent in marketing and branding since the late twentieth century (the Microsoft Corporation's software program *PowerPoint* is one familiar example, and Apple Computers' *iPod* another).

The same technique of internal initialisation occurs in the names of the faculties at the EduCompound, the Watson-Crick Institute, the commerce- and science-driven university at which Crake studies after HelthWyzer High. The *JigScape Faculty* (p. 234), *NeoGeologicals* (p. 235), and *NeoAgriculturals* (p. 237) develop and produce prototype consumer goods which are then patented and marketed. When Jimmy visits Crake at Watson-Crick, he is shown 'fake rocks' in the grounds, which absorb water during periods of high humidity and release it in times of drought; 'originally developed at Watson-Crick', Crake tells Jimmy, 'and now a nice little money-spinner [...] Rockulators was the brand name' (p. 235). Derived from a combination of *rock* with *regulator*, the branding of the product follows present-day trends in naming new products. Watson-Crick is also developing a transgenically mutated food-producing unit, which Crake shows to Jimmy:

What they were looking at was a large bulblike object that seemed to be covered with stippled whitish-yellow skin. Out of it came twenty thick fleshy tubes, and at the end of each tube another bulb was growing.

(p. 237)

This food-production unit, which, to Jimmy, is 'like an animal-protein tuber' (*ibid*) is a genetically engineered chicken bred to produce chicken breasts in two weeks, which is 'a three-week improvement on the most efficient low-light, high-density chicken farming operation so far devised' (p.237); it is also highly lucrative for its developers, who 'got half the royalties for anything they invented', which, as Crake remarks, is 'a fierce incentive' (*ibid*). As with all new products, this requires a new name, and as with Atwood's speculative language discussed above, the neologism she uses features abbreviation, simplified spelling, and compounding: 'ChickieNobs, they're thinking of calling the stuff', Crake reports (*ibid*). Although this neologism may seem to be pushing the limits of plausibility and credibility, its formation has established base-reality antecedent models upon which to draw, the 'McChicken' products from the fast-food chain, McDonalds, being just one example.

Many of the names of food products in *Oryx and Crake* reflect similar mass-market commercialisation, while the scarcity of naturally occurring foodstuffs resulting from environmental degradation is also encapsulated in the branding of food. The brand names of *SoyOBoyburgers* (p. 85), *SoyOBoy sardines* (p. 273), and *CrustaeSoy* (p. 244), for example, are testament to the shortage of real meat and fish caused by the impact of global warming on agriculture. Word-initial and internal capitalisation mark these as commercially produced and heavily marketed goods, while *soy stew* (p. 272), *soydog* (p. 293), and *soyafries* (p. 370) have become so commonplace that the inclusion of *soy* in the naming of food is perfectly unremarkable to the characters. The established use of *soy* as a habitual pre-modification to the names of foodstuffs in the dystopian future world is made clear when Jimmy and Crake graduate from HelthWyzer High: at their graduation ceremony, which HelthWyzer liked to do ‘in the old style, with marquees and awnings and the mothers in flowered hats’, the catering for the event includes ‘Happicuppa coffee, and little plastic tubs of SoYummie Ice Cream, a HelthWyzer Own Brand, in chocolate soy, mango soy, and roasted-dandelion green-tea soy’ (p. 203). The artificial nature of food is similarly reflected in other unremarked-upon products, which include *melted butter substitute* (p. 76), *coconut-style layer cake* (p. 83), *cheesefood* (p. 101), and – with irony apparent in the extra-textual world even if ostensibly no longer noticeable within it – *a can of imitation Spam* (p. 179).

The primary area of investment for the corporate giants is not food, however; rather it is in the development of technologies with a medical or pharmaceutical application, and equally in the expansion and marketing of products which prevent or retard the ageing process and promise physical and mental wellbeing and cosmetic perfection. The boundaries between the strictly health-related medical fields and the pursuit of immortality have become indistinguishable, and any person with sufficient personal wealth expects to be able to purchase either or both. Consequently, development scientists pursue both fields indiscriminately: the technology which produces multiple organs for transplantation also yields a cure for ageing skin as part of the ‘neuro-regeneration project’ (p. 63). Jimmy’s father, for instance, moves on from OrganInc to ‘NooSkins [...] a subsidiary of HelthWyzer’ (p. 60), where he works on a project where pigeons are used to ‘develop skin-related technologies’ (p. 62). The aim of the project is to ‘find a method of replacing the older epidermis with a fresh one’ Jimmy’s father explains to him; ‘a genuine start-over skin that would be wrinkle- and

blemish-free’, and as he remarks, ‘the rewards in the case of success would be enormous’ (p. 62). The name of the company – NooSkins – is also the name of the product, and features in its marketing: ‘NooSkins for Olds, said the snappy logo’ (pp. 62-63).

The tendency towards orthographic simplification, compounding while retaining the original word-initial capitalisation, and near-phonetic representation seen in the branding of foods is repeated here in *NooSkins*. These features recur throughout the names of companies and their products: the *Fountain of Youth Total Plunge* (p. 205), for example, is a beauty treatment which, according to Jimmy, ‘rasped off your entire epidermis’ (*ibid*), *AnooYoo* is the ‘minor Compound’ where Jimmy is employed to work on ‘the promotionals’ (p. 288), *CryoJeenyus* specialises in cryogenic storage of the wealthy deceased in anticipation of their later ‘resurrection’ (p. 264), and the *RejoovenEsense Compound* (known familiarly as the *Rejoov Compound*) is the location of Crake’s eugenic *Paradise* project (p. 178). In the case of *NooSkins*, *Youth*, *AnooYoo*, and *RejoovenEsense* (or *Rejoov*), the phoneme /u:/, which is variously realised as <ew>, <ou>, and <u> in present-day orthography, appears as <oo> consistently, which is satirically suggestive of the reductive emphasis of the marketing of the future, and arguably an extrapolation of the move towards phonetic spelling seen in current company names such as *Vodafone* (*fone* rather than *phone*) and *Reebok* (where the standard spelling is *rhebok*). Similarly, in repeatedly including internal capitalisation Atwood echoes the present day trend seen in some company names: *eBay*, *FedEx* (which, like *VizArts*, is clipped), and *GlaxoSmithKline*, for example.

Any suggestion of cynicism in the naming of the commercial science-run culture of the future is doubtless deliberate: Jimmy, as a ‘word person’ is regarded as inferior by the scientists, and his narrative is characterised by sardonic references to the trivial status of the now-debased Arts in comparison to the Sciences. The subordinated status of ‘word people’ in the future world is exemplified by Crake’s manner of introducing Jimmy to other scientists when he visits the Watson-Crick Institute: “‘This is Jimmy, the neurotypical’” (p. 239); while the polarisation of the ‘two cultures’ is emphasised by Jimmy’s observation that, at Watson-Crick, ‘Crake’s fellow students [...] referred to other students in their own faculties as conspecifics, and to all other human beings as nonspecifics’ (p. 245). As a word person, Jimmy is employed in the Compounds because of his skills in writing creative advertising campaigns and persuasive marketing

materials, yet he is acutely aware of the deceitful nature of the language he uses to sell the products of science. He recalls, for instance, when he worked at the AnooYoo Compound that he noticed his hair thinning, 'despite the six-week AnooYoo follicle-regrowth course he'd done'. The disingenuousness of the product's claims are revealed in his subsequent comment that he 'ought to have known it was a scam – he'd put together the ads for it – but they were such good ads he'd convinced even himself' (p. 296). Jimmy is prepared for a life of 'wordmongering' (p. 342) by his 'Problematics courses' at the Martha Graham Academy, which include 'Applied Logic, Applied Rhetoric, Medical Ethics and Terminology, Applied Semantics, Relativistics and Advanced Mischaracterization, Comparative Cultural Psychology, and the rest' (p. 221), courses which enable him to participate in the culture of science, even if peripherally. Working at AnooYoo, 'cranking out the verbiage', Jimmy recalls spending 'ten-hour days wandering the labyrinths of the thesaurus' (p. 291) and producing advertising copy for:

Cosmetic creams, workout equipment, Joltbars to build your muscle-scape into a breathtaking marvel of sculpted granite. Pills to make you fatter, thinner, hairier, balder, whiter, browner, blacker, yellower, sexier, and happier. It was his task to describe and extol, to present the vision of what – oh so easily! – could come to be.

(p. 291)

The influential and far-reaching hegemony of science – and especially the language of science – is evident in Jimmy's admission that:

Once in a while he'd make up a word – *tensicity*, *fibracionous*, *pheromonimal* – but he never once got caught out. His proprietors liked those kinds of words in the small print on packages because they sounded scientific and had a convincing effect.

(pp. 291-292)

Jimmy's recognition of the persuasive power of language contributes to the novel's didacticism, since he exposes the potential for duplicity and equivocation in the language of advertising and marketing (seen in his comment '[h]e loved those two words: *practically*, *almost*' (p. 298), for instance). More specifically, however, as shown by his remark that if words 'sounded scientific' they 'had a convincing effect', Jimmy draws attention to the supposed authority of scientific language within the limits of the text. By constructing the dystopian world in the terms of analogous speculative scientific-commercial language, Atwood simultaneously draws the reader's attention to

the same phenomenon in the world outside the limits of the text: her speculative language is, like the dystopian near future she depicts, extrapolated from trends visible in her historical spacetime.

In recognising both the dominion of science and the power of language, Jimmy, like other dystopian protagonists, is positioned close enough to the controlling structures of power to be informed, yet detached enough to avoid being drawn in. He also, like the other protagonists – Winston Smith, Offred, Jael 97, for example – is the novel’s bilingual character, conversant with both speculative and reflective language; he understands both the language of the future and the language of the past. In a conversation with Crake, Jimmy comments on his friend’s pondering of humankind’s ‘imperfectly monogamous’ characteristics. Unknown to Jimmy, Crake is already designing a genetically engineered super-race who would have ‘no more sexual torment’ and ‘would never want someone [they] can’t have’ (p. 195). “‘But think what we’d be giving up’” Jimmy replies, and continues:

“Courtship behaviour. In your plan we’d just be a bunch of hormone robots.” Jimmy thought he should put things in Crake’s terms, which was why he said *courtship behaviour*. What he meant was the challenge, the excitement, the chase.

(p. 196)

That Jimmy has the competence to ‘put things in Crake’s terms’ illustrates his bilingual ability. His understanding of the language of science, however, is less important to Jimmy than his understanding of the language of the long-distant past: ‘old words [...] of a precision and suggestiveness that no longer had a meaningful application in today’s world’ (p. 230). §5.3.2 examines Jimmy’s – or Snowman’s – collection of old words, or reflections *on* the past; in advance of that, I consider linguistic reflections *of* the present (that is to say, Atwood’s historical spacetime) in *Oryx and Crake*.

5.3.1 Reflections of the present: ‘pointless repinings’

Reflective language – the language that identifies the author’s historical spacetime, and positions it as the past from the perspective of the future – occurs entirely in Snowman-Jimmy’s consciousness, since the narrative is focalised wholly through this one character; no other narrative voice mediates. As with Offred’s reflective language in Atwood’s earlier dystopia, *The Handmaid’s Tale* (see §4.5), the focus is on personal

recollections, but the reader learns more about the dominant cultural ideology of the controlling powers in *Oryx and Crake* than is the case in *The Handmaid's Tale*. The ascendancy of the culture of science and commerce is richly detailed through Snowman's reminiscences when compared to the limited knowledge Offred has of the controlling theocracy of Gilead, although, like Offred's, Snowman's narrative has the immediacy of first-person experience. The post-apocalypse sections of the novel are narrated in the present tense, while Snowman's memories of the events of his life prior to the disaster are narrated in a more conventional simple past tense.

As with other dystopias considered in this study, reflective language typically occurs in the absence of books: in the future Atwood envisages, '[b]etter libraries [...] had long ago burned their actual books and kept everything on CD-ROM' (p. 229), and knowledge of history is influenced by the internet and computer games. As adolescents, Jimmy and Crake play 'for a whole month', a game called 'Barbarian Stomp (See If You Can Change History!)' in which a player may trade a 'human atrocity' for a 'human achievement' ('one *Mona Lisa* equalled Bergen-Belsen, one Armenian genocide equalled the *Ninth Symphony* plus three Great Pyramids') (pp. 88-90). While knowledge of history is not restricted or proscribed as in some dystopian fictions, it is deprecated, distorted, and reduced to trivia by the far-reaching influence of computer games and the internet, which are figured as at least as definitive of character, and as psychologically formative, as parental or societal input. Language is not subject to overt control in Atwood's twenty-first century dystopia; however, only the language of science – and the scientists – has legitimacy and prestige. By becoming the dominant mode of discourse, scientific language has displaced literary, poetic, or otherwise artistic language, and has replaced it with functional, unyielding, precise discourse.

The cultural move towards the Sciences and away from the Arts is played out against a background of increasing environmental disintegration, which Atwood hints may be the inevitable result of privileging science over nature. Global warming and the depleted ozone layer mean that venturing outdoors without adequate sunscreen is hazardous, and violent storms strike daily. These changed climatic conditions are emphasised by reflective language: the noon sun is so hot that Snowman is 'sweating so hard he can almost hear it' (p. 44) and, while seeking shade, he notes 'the sun is at full glare; the zenith, it used to be called' (*ibid*). A similar instance of reflective language marks the collapse of seasonal variation in the damaged world of the future: when

recalling Crake's arrival at HelthWyzer High, Snowman remembers it was 'in September or October, one of those months that used to be called *autumn*' (p. 81). As seen in other dystopian fictions discussed in chapter four, this pattern of reflective language relies on the existence of a bilingual character to act as interpreter / translator between the language of the future and the language of the past. Also as seen in those other dystopias, a model of presentation recurs in relation to this kind of reflective language: the narrator negotiates the temporal boundaries between the language of his or her present (the reader's future) and the language of the narrative past (the reader's present). So while the reader is familiar with the words and what they denote – here, *autumn*, and *zenith* – the narrative defamiliarises and destabilises the denotation by claiming that it no longer exists in the future. The same characteristic verb-group construction – *used to be called* – marks both nouns here, and carries the implicature that, in the dystopian future, the concepts are no longer 'called' anything at all, since they no longer are.

The proposition that words can 'represent' a certain era is one that is axiomatic within the genre of dystopia. Just as Offred's narrative draws the reader's attention to language symbolic of the 1970s and 1980s (*networking*, *humungous*, and *zilch* in particular; see §4.5), Snowman's post-disaster musings return him to language emblematic of his teenage years, spent largely playing computer games and surfing the internet with Crake. The words upon which he focuses – *awesome* and *bogus*, for example – are generation-specific slang variations of existing language adopted by the teenage generation of the base-reality late 1980s and 1990s. *Bogus*, Snowman recalls, was a word 'he'd got [...] off an old DVD', and which he and Crake would use 'to tear each other down for being pompous. "Way too bogus!"' (p. 88). *Awesome*, similarly, 'was another old word, like *bogus*, that he'd dredged out of the DVD archives' (p. 95). That the relatively recent (in real-world terms) technology that produced DVDs is described as 'old' and stored in 'archives' signals temporal dislocation in itself, but the insight the reader gains from seeing fashionable language of his or her base-reality being presented as outdated is abundantly disquieting. *Awesome*, 'in trivial use, as an enthusiastic term of commendation; 'marvellous', 'great'; stunning, mind-boggling. *slang*' appears in the *Oxford English Dictionary* in this particular sense with illustrative quotations dating from 1980 onwards; *bogus*, a more recently adopted colloquialism, while appearing in unattested online slang dictionaries as a feature of 1980s culture,

does not appear in this sense in the *OED* at all. Both terms, *bogus* and *awesome*, were popularised by the (1988) film *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure*, directed by Stephen Herek, and starring Keanu Reeves and Alex Winter in the title roles. Since DVD players – and films on DVD – did not become available until the mid-1990s, it is likely that Herek's film would be one of the earliest available in this format.

In alluding to popular culture of the later twentieth century, Atwood's reflective language depends on a level of intertextuality between the cultural artefacts of the base-reality recent present and the perception of the same in the dystopian future. These intertexts, while employed satirically in *Oryx and Crake*, crucially identify the author's historical spacetime as the dis-placed, re-placed precursor to the horrors of the future. Once again, Snowman's recollections best exemplify this. He remembers, in his 'Life Skills' class at 'junior high', where he studied such areas as 'banking by fingertip [...] negotiating your own marriage-and-divorce contracts, [and] wise genetic match-making' (p. 47), the teacher had been:

[A] shambling neo-con reject from the heady days of the legendary dot.com bubble, back in prehistory. He'd had a stringy ponytail stuck to the back of his balding head, and a faux-leather jacket; he'd worn a gold stud in his bumpy, porous old nose, and had pushed self-reliance and individualism and risk-taking in a hopeless tone, as if even he no longer believed in them. Once in a while he'd come out with some hoary maxim, served up with a wry irony that did nothing to reduce the boredom quotient; or else he'd say, "I coulda been a contender," then glare meaningfully at the class as if there was some deeper-than-deep point they were all supposed to get.

(p. 46-47)

Snowman's typically wry and mordant tone is apparent in the reflective language of 'the legendary dot.com bubble, back in prehistory'; *prehistory* is clearly droll overstatement; the *legendary dot.com bubble*, however, is not. While *legendary* suggests an indeterminate time has elapsed since this phenomenon, *dot.com bubble* is located in a distinctly defined temporal moment: 1997-2001 circumscribes the period of rapid growth and investment in internet-based companies, and the subsequent collapse of the market. This linguistic construction, *dot.com bubble*, defines a specific phenomenon which occurred in a localised, delimited time, one that is – at least for contemporary readers – cognitively available within living memory. It is also within living memory of the teacher, whose 'bumpy, porous old nose' (as it is described by Snowman) suggests that he has aged considerably since the dot.com stock-market rise and crash. His advocacy of the future-outdated concepts, 'self-reliance and individualism and risk-

taking', further demonstrates connections with the author's historical spacetime, since these concepts are no longer valid in the dystopian future. Atwood's pastiche of the teacher as a washed-out, hopeless renegade also links, by way of 'dated' language, to its intertext in the author's historical spacetime: the teacher's futile "I coulda been a contender" references the classic (1954) film, *On the Waterfront*, directed by Elia Kazan and starring Marlon Brando as a failed ex-prizefighter whose memorable lines 'you don't understand. I could have had class. I could have been a contender. I could have been somebody' have become celebrated and often-quoted in Atwood's historical spacetime. Thus, the construction 'I coulda been a contender' is as linguistically bound to the second half of the twentieth century as 'dot.com bubble' is bound to the years around the turn of the century.

The reflective language considered here symbolises the reflections of the author's historical spacetime that typify dystopia. Signalling the temporal co-ordinates of the genesis of the thought-experiment that considers, as Atwood notes, *what if?*, this language locates the beginnings of the dystopian nightmare in the contemporary world.¹¹ *Awesome*, *bogus*, and *dot.com bubble* define the era just preceding the millennium, while *I coulda been a contender* indicates an era reaching a little further back into the twentieth century. *Autumn* and *zenith*, while stretching back considerably further etymologically, have meaning only outside of the dystopian world. As noted at the beginning of chapter three, the reader's perception of the socio-historical circumstances in which the dystopian fiction originates may be affected by the passage of time, thus varying the emphasis of either speculative or reflective language (see §3.2). At the time of writing (2006), the publication of *Oryx and Crake* (2003) is virtually cotemporaneous, so the base-reality referents of Atwood's reflective language are as visible to the current reader as to the author, and largely coincide with the same referents as seen from the perspective of the author's historical spacetime. Reflective language which is less temporally bound looks back into the more distant past from the point of view of the author's historical spacetime to supply reflections *on* that past. From the future-based dystopian perspective, this is a distant past at a further remove – perhaps best conceptualised as a *more* distant past. From the perspective of the reader of dystopia, here, specifically the reader of *Oryx and Crake*, this temporal kaleidoscope positions him or her as an intermediary between the future and the past, as s/he assimilates the language of the past as it is presented from the perspective of the future,

while simultaneously being aware that this the language of his or her own past. As with the reflections *of* the present detailed above, reflections *on* the past foreground and defamiliarise language, and draw the reader's attention particularly to words as 'containers' of meaning. In *Oryx and Crake*, the language reflecting the distant past is in danger of disappearing altogether.

5.3.2 Reflections *on* a Golden Age: 'Hang on to the words'

Science has adopted new linguistic formulations of the old facts, and now that we have become at home in the new dialect, certain traits of the old one are no longer binding upon us.

Benjamin Whorf (1940) 'Linguistics as an Exact Science'

Science dominates the society Atwood delineates; the culture of science is enabled by the authority of its language, and the authority of its language is empowered by the culture of science. This symmetrical and self-perpetuating reciprocation of power and prestige excludes and continually diminishes other, non-scientific language. Language, in this future world, is not valued for aesthetic reasons; its purpose is exactitude and functionality rather than elegance and artistry. The polarisation of these two modes of discourse, or what Locke terms their *antithesis*,¹² is mirrored by the depiction of the 'two cultures' in Atwood's dystopia, with Snowman-Jimmy's language inclining predominantly to the aesthetic, and Crake's tending primarily to the systematic and functional. A conversation between the two demonstrates the depth of the cultural schism: when Crake – still secretly planning his genetically engineered 'perfect' race – complains of the imperfections of humanity, Jimmy's response is to ask "Well, what about art? [...] It's been an inspiration [...]. Think of all the poetry – think Petrarch, think John Donne, think the *Vita Nuova*, think ..." (p. 196). He continues:

When any civilisation is dust and ashes [...] art is all that's left over. Images, words, music. Imaginative structures. Meaning – human meaning, that is – is defined by them. You have to admit that.

(p. 197)

Crake's logical scientific approach to the locus of 'human meaning' is explicitly in the rational and empirical domain. His response to Jimmy's argument is to claim that:

The archeologists are just as interested in gnawed bones and old bricks and ossified shit these days. Sometimes more interested. They think human meaning is defined by those things too.

(p. 197)

One of Snowman's later recollections is of discovering that Crake, as head of the 'Paradise Project' at the RejoovenEsense Compound, has succeeded in genetically engineering a race of 'perfect' hominids, the 'Children of Crake', or 'Crakers'. These disease-resistant creations, who survive the destruction of humanity, are Snowman's only companions in the post-catastrophe world. Their linguistic competence, however, is limited: as Snowman notes, on first encountering the Crakers, 'these people didn't go in for fancy language: they hadn't been taught evasion, euphemism, lily-gilding. In speech they were plain and blunt' (p. 406). Crake's scientifically generated race is intricately designed with a range of enhanced features which facilitate continued survival in ecologically hostile conditions – the Crakers eat grass, leaves, and berries, procreate without emotional involvement, and reach maturity rapidly, for example – yet they are also deliberately designed without any aesthetic ability or appreciation. Indeed, the opposite is true: Crake's scientifically utopian intention is to circumvent art and what he believes are the consequences of art. Snowman recalls:

Watch out for art, Crake used to say. As soon as they start doing art, we're in trouble. Symbolic thinking of any kind would signal downfall in Crake's view. Next they'd be inventing idols, and funerals, and grave goods, and the afterlife, and sin, and Linear B, and kings, and then slavery and war.

(p. 420) [original emphasis]

Art – or symbolic thinking – it seems, from Crake's purview, is more deleterious to civilisation than science – or rational thinking. However, having become cynical and embittered with his world, and especially what he perceives as the imperfection and inadequacy of humankind, his response is to eradicate this 'flawed' humanity and replace it with a fresh, carefully adapted, non-artistic new species. In so doing, one of his aims is to erase history, and to reinscribe it, this time, without art. While Crake looks back to earlier times and perceives a developmental correlative from 'Linear B' leading in incremental stages to 'slavery and war', Jimmy looks back to earlier times as a Golden Age, when art – as language – did enjoy the 'meaningful application' and 'precision' (p. 230) that, in the pre-apocalypse present, is only accorded to science.

When Jimmy – now Snowman – finds himself the only human survivor of the civilisation destroyed by science, he is the sole repository of art. This art takes the form of his collection of old words, culled from 'the more obscure regions of the library stacks' at the Martha Graham Academy, a library too poorly funded to transfer all of its

books to CD-ROM. 'Part of what impelled him' to collect all this 'arcane lore' is, he notes, 'stubbornness; resentment, even' at the inequality of a society which 'had filed him among the rejects' (p. 229). In addition, his accumulation of archaic language is his personal act of resistance against the hegemonic power of science; his rebellion against a system and a society that considers these words – and word people – inconsequential and anachronistic. Jimmy explains:

[W]hat he was studying was considered – at the decision-making levels, the levels of real power – an archaic waste of time. Well then, he would pursue the superfluous as an end in itself. He would be its champion, its defender and preserver.

(p. 229)

The 'lists of old words' (p. 230) Jimmy compiles are symbols of a culture of art which the culture of science has rendered redundant; as remnants of an outmoded way of life, these words he treasures no longer have a function. Even so, words such as *lodestone*, the archaic term for magnetite, feature on Jimmy's lists. While such words may once have had an application in the field of early science, they are dispensable to scientists (both in the present and in the proposed future), since scientific language moves on and develops in parallel with its own continuing development: the terminology of science, once superseded by more advanced discovery, names the new concept and discards the old. But to Jimmy, as a word person, old words still have value: he 'memorized these hoary locutions' and 'developed a strangely tender feeling towards such words, as if they were children abandoned in the forest and it was his duty to rescue them' (*ibid*).

Memories, moods, and milestones for Jimmy are inextricably linked to his collection of words. Like Offred in *The Handmaid's Tale*, who muses on old words from her previous life, Jimmy measures and constructs his life around words. Just as Offred says (of her contemplations on words and their meanings) '[t]hese are the kinds of litanies I use, to compose myself' (*The Handmaid's Tale*, p. 120), so Jimmy composes himself by way of words: 'he'd turn off the sound, whisper words to himself. *Succulent. Morphology. Purblind. Quarto. Frass.* It had a calming effect' (p. 401). Language is deeply sensual for Jimmy. Thinking back to his passionate affair with Oryx before the virus destroyed all, for example, he recalls her kissing him. '*Unguent, unctuous, sumptuous, voluptuous, salacious, lubricious, delicious,* went the inside of Jimmy's head. He sank down into the words, into the feelings' (p. 372). For Jimmy, it

is 'comforting to remember that *Homo sapiens sapiens* was once so ingenious with language' (p. 114).

Throughout the flashback sections of the narrative, Jimmy charts his life through his relationship with words, often making an explicit connection between the language and the experience. When he recalls, for example, his depression and disillusionment following his mother's execution for treason (on suspicion of having divulged classified scientific information), he traces his descent into despondence by way of language:

Everything in his life was temporary, ungrounded. Language itself had lost its solidity; it had become thin, contingent, slippery, a viscid film on which he was sliding around like an eyeball on a plate. An eyeball that could still see, however. That was the trouble.

(pp. 305-306)

At his lowest point – 'the worst nights' – Jimmy almost loses faith in his collection of words:

[O]nce in bed he'd stare at the ceiling, telling over his lists of obsolete words for the comfort that was in them. *Dibble*. *Aphasia*. *Breast plough*. *Enigma*. *Gat* [...]. *Knell*. *Kern*. *Alack*. But there was no longer any comfort in the words. There was nothing in them. It no longer delighted Jimmy to possess these small collections of letters that other people had forgotten about. It was like having his own baby teeth in a box.

(p. 307)

Later, in the early post-disaster days, when he is at his most optimistic, and his instinct for self-preservation is strong, he reminds himself he must "Hang on to the words", since, as the only surviving recorder of this archaic language – 'odd words, the old words, the rare ones. *Valance*. *Norn*. *Serendipity*. *Pibroch*. *Lubricious*' – he must act as their custodian. 'When they're gone out of his head, these words', he reminds himself, 'they'll be gone everywhere, forever' (p. 78). Yet, subsequently, when he is becoming weakened by 'slowly starving to death', he realises the lack of protein is causing him to become confused. Losing his mind, for Jimmy, is measured by losing his 'words':

[H]e has a vision of the top of his neck, opening up into his head like a bathroom drain. Fragments of words are swirling down it, in a grey liquid he realizes is his dissolving brain.

(p. 175)

Although Jimmy briefly considers teaching the Crakers his treasured words when he finds them still alive in the Paradise Compound soon after the chemical disaster takes

hold – he could, he muses, ‘[l]eave a legacy of knowledge. Pass on all my words’ (p. 396) – he quickly realises their primitive development would preclude this option, and concludes there is ‘[n]o hope there’ (*ibid*). Despite the fact the Crakers do not yet understand metaphor (p. 112), they are quickly developing a rudimentary culture of art of their own: they make idols and an effigy (p. 418), musical instruments (p. 419), and begin to deify the now-dead Oryx and Crake. Their fundamental language and understanding expand as they question one another, and question Snowman. In essence, despite Crake’s careful design, a culture of art begins to reassert itself naturally in this uncultured primitive post-apocalyptic civilisation.

In the dystopian future Jimmy inhabits, ‘all the entries on his cherished wordlists’ (p. 43) are ‘obsolete’ (p. 307); none has currency or application. However, many of the words he gathers are still an active and meaningful part of the lexicon of the author’s historical spacetime, and, by extension, the reader’s. Of those quoted above, *succulent*, *enigma*, *valance*, and *serendipity*, for example, are familiar and present in the contemporary English language. Others, however, are more archaic or less used. The entire catalogue of Jimmy’s wordlists is listed below, together with the date of first recorded use of each, as it appears in the *Oxford English Dictionary*:

Valance (1463), *Norn* (1450), *Serendipity* (1754), *Pibroch* (1719), *Lubricious* (1583), *Mephitic* (1623), *Metronome* (1816), *Mastitis* (1827), *Metatarsal* (1702), *Maudlin* (c1300), *Dibble* (1450), *Aphasia* (1867), *Breast plough* (1725), *Enigma* (1539), *Gat* (1723), *Knell* (c961), *Kern* (1351), *Alack* (1480), *Berating* (1548), *Bemoaning* (c1000), *Doldrums* (1811), *Lovelorn* (1634), *Leman* (1205), *Forsaken* (1305), *Queynt* (1225), *Unguent* (1440), *Unctuous* (1387), *Sumptuous* (1485), *Voluptuous* (1374), *Salacious* (1645), *Delicious* (c1300), *Fungible* (1818), *Pullulate* (1619), *Pistic* (1646), *Cerements* (1602), *Trull* (1519), *Prattlement* (1579), *Opsimath* (1883), *Concatention* (1603), *Subfusc* (1763), *Grutch* (1225), *Windlestraw* (1513), *Laryngeal* (1795), *Banshee* (1771), *Woad* (c1000), *Succulent* (1601), *Morphology* (1828), *Purblind* (1297), *Quarto* (1589), *Frass* (1600), *Wheelwright* (1281), *Lodestone* (1515), *Saturnine* (1433), *Adamant* (885) [italicisation reproduced from text].

It is immediately obvious that these are predominantly ‘old’ words. That is to say, the earliest record sourced by the editors of the *OED* (which is taken as an approximate indication of when the word first entered the language) is, in every case, before the end of the nineteenth century. The oldest recorded is *adamant*, with an illustrative quotation dating from 885, while the most recent, *opsimath*, dates from 1885. Some – *alack*, for instance – are classified ‘archaic or poetic’, while others are simply categorised

‘archaic’ (*leman*: ‘beloved, sweetheart’, for instance). Others which first appeared in the language centuries ago – *voluptuous*, *delicious*, and *sumptuous* being examples – have remained operative in English over time. A distinct temporal division is apparent between the speculative language of *Oryx and Crake* and the reflective language of the novel: all of the listed words Jimmy ‘rescues’ pre-date the beginning of the twentieth century in origin, while none of the language which describes the human genome project – either real or invented – existed before the twentieth century. *Oryx and Crake* was published, as Howells points out, ‘on the fiftieth anniversary of Crick and Watson’s discovery of the structure of DNA and in the same year that the entire human genome was sequenced’ (2006: 163). Consequently, the scientific language which describes these developments began to emerge from around the middle part of the twentieth century, and continues to develop today.

The full list of Jimmy’s precious words, to the contemporary reader, is a combination of both familiar and unfamiliar words, some known, and some unknown. Importantly, the reader is given to understand that *all* of these words are unfamiliar and unknown in the world of the future, except to Snowman-Jimmy. As with the reflective language which reflects the author’s historical spacetime (as discussed in §5.3.1 above and chapter four), much of this language represents that which *used to be called*, or *they used to say*, when viewed from the perspective of the contemporary reader. One of the most powerful didactic warnings of the text is that so much of the language the reader’s familiar base-reality language could be lost to the lexicon in a science- and commerce-dominated future: the almost exponential neologisation practices in these fields have the potential to dominate language; to overwhelm and subordinate the non-scientific; that is to say, the literary and the poetic.

5.4 The future meets the past: ‘old neurological pathways die hard’

In the twentieth century our world is shaped by science. It is only reasonable then that our atavistic urges to escape must deal with science. But science and atavism are enemies. Science allows no retreating in time, and insists on contemplating the consequences of actions.

Scholes and Rabkin (1977) *Science Fiction: History, Science, Vision*

The ‘two cultures theme’ of *Oryx and Crake* is illustrated through cultures separated by walls; cultures separated by wealth, class, and education; cultures separated by cerebral-hemisphere-determined aptitudes. But nowhere is this cultural division so pronounced

as it is in the depiction of two cultures separated by language. Atwood's speculative language constructs an appalling and deficient future, while her reflective language revisits a temperate and sufficient past. The dystopian temporal illusion means, of course, this past is the reader's present and recent past, rather than the distant past the text declares it to be, while the fictional future is just one realisation out of innumerable possible directions in which the world could evolve. *Oryx and Crake*, as is typical of dystopia, conflates these temporal dimensions into one narrative present which examines trends emerging in the author's historical spacetime and demonstrates the consequences if these tendencies continue unchecked. Just as the past and future merge into a narrative present in dystopia, so the language of the past and the language of the future co-occur within the temporal aspect of the narrative. Thus far, this study has created an artificial separation of these linguistic dimensions: chapter three considered speculative language, chapter four examined reflective language, and the foregoing discussion of Atwood's novel divides speculative and reflective language along cultural lines. However, in *Oryx and Crake*, as in all the dystopian fictions included in this study, neither speculative language nor reflective language functions in isolation. Indeed, the interanimation and juxtaposition of dystopia's 'two languages' creates the tension and energy which drives the narrative and sustains its didactic force.

As Scholes and Rabkin note, in the epigraph which heads this section, science and atavism are antagonistic, temporally exclusive objectives, since science pushes relentlessly forwards while atavism yearns for a return to an earlier time. This conflict is played out thematically in *Oryx and Crake* as scientific advances transmute the fundamental composition of humanity and other organisms, while non-scientists look on in horror at the aberration of nature, the vacuous artifice of life according to the new scientific principles. Science is portrayed as violating moral and ethical boundaries in its haste to refine and re-define the essential genetic constituents of being, especially when impelled by financial investment and reward. The atavistic impulse of the text, meanwhile, retreats to a past where the essential genetic code of the natural world is unadulterated, food is more than 'junk-gene cardboard' (p. 273), and 'word people' are valued as highly as their 'numbers' counterparts. As the foregoing discussions have demonstrated, these divided, now-incompatible cultures are marked by different languages: speculative language delineates the culture of science, while reflective language reaches back in time to reclaim the culture of the arts. Throughout the novel,

these two languages interact but never integrate: the relationship between the two is always contrapuntal; each acts as a foil for the other, contrasting and emphasising the discord and antithesis of the two cultures. Both the speculative language Atwood creates, and the reflective language she (re)covers, act to nurture an illusion: the speculative language of the novel does not exist, but the text makes the claim that it does; the reflective language of the novel, on the other hand, does exist, but the text makes the claim that it does not. Neither element of this paradox is true outside of the boundaries of the text: consequently the reader is positioned as an intermediary, continually negotiating a route through this complex linguistic disordering of the unfamiliar made familiar and the familiar made unfamiliar, experiencing the continual clash and contrast of cognitive estrangement.

Crucially, both linguistic strands of dystopia are bound directly to the reader's own language. Atwood's speculative language never loses sight of the language of base-reality; it never fails to adhere to the 'principle of limited novelty', and is thus decodable on the same terms that real-world scientific language is decodable. Her reflective language, while claiming obsolete status within the text, is, of course, nothing more or less than the language of the reader's base-reality. The reader, in his or her position as intermediary, encounters each as a foregrounded entity: speculative language because of its novelty, and reflective language because of its defamiliarisation. This foregrounding is central to an understanding of the ways in which these doubled languages of dystopia contribute to the reader's process of (re)cognition, since this (re)cognition is essentially Whorfian in nature. Considering each of the stages of Whorfianism-as-process identified in chapter two, it becomes possible to see the ways in which reading dystopian fiction – more specifically here, reading *Oryx and Crake* – engenders a renewed awareness of language and world-view, through which the reader may (re)cognise the world beyond the fiction.

As noted in chapter two, Whorf was at pains first of all to establish the habitual nature of language; to establish the idea that our own conception of our world-view is so indivisibly bound into our habitual language that it remains customarily unnoticed. The habitual world of 'linguistically conditioned features of our own culture' is one with which we have, Whorf notes, 'a deeply ingrained familiarity' (1956: 152). This familiarity, or automaticity of language functions in two distinct but related ways in respect of reading dystopian fiction. Firstly, as with 'normal' spoken language, so with

‘normal’ narrative language: just as our perceptions are neither challenged nor brought into consciousness in the routine, ordinary course of language use, so the standard, unmarked descriptive narrative prose which surrounds instances of speculative and reflective language invites the reader’s own habitual, automatised response. Secondly, the characters’ own use of language is presented as habitual, even where that includes speculative language with which the reader is unfamiliar. Whorf understood automaticity as the first hurdle to be overcome in recognising that other languages may encode reality differently, and, as he suggests, this is problematic chiefly ‘because of the difficulty of standing aside from our own language, which is a habit and a cultural *non est disputandum*, and scrutinizing it objectively’ (1956: 138). When reading dystopian fictions, however, even if the reader does not initially recognise his or her own use of language as being automatised, s/he is confronted by automaticity in undeniable form within the text, as characters habitually use their own automatised language. Just as the narrator of Rand’s *Anthem* habitually uses the plural pronoun to refer to the self as an individual (see §2.2.2), so Crake, the scientist of *Oryx and Crake* uses scientific language habitually – much of which is speculatively constructed.

In drawing attention to the normative, habitual nature of language in this way, *Oryx and Crake* denies, for the reader, the possibility of an automatised reading: that is to say, the languages of *Oryx and Crake*, both speculative and reflective, conspicuously act as what Whorf describes as ‘an interruption of [the] regularity [of our natural language]’ (1956: 209). This is equivalent to the second stage of Whorfianism-as-process, which necessitates some cognition that there may be language which ‘packages’ reality differently. Whorf’s description of this process in his exploration of natural languages perhaps best explains these phenomena:

The participants in a given world view are not aware of the idiomatic nature of the channels in which their talking and thinking run, and are perfectly satisfied with them, regarding them as logical inevitables. But take an outsider, a person accustomed to widely different language and culture, or even a scientist of a later era using somewhat different language of the same basic type, and not all that seems logical and inevitable to the participants in the given world seems so to him.

(Whorf 1956: 222)

The reader of *Oryx and Crake* is positioned, in relation to the world of the text, as the ‘outsider’ to whom Whorf refers. They may not, as Whorf suggests, initially be ‘aware of the idiomatic nature of the channels in which their talking and thinking run’, but

upon encountering the ‘widely different language and culture’ of the dystopian world, there is a realisation that ‘not all that seems logical and inevitable to the participants [for which, read ‘characters’] in the given world [for which read ‘dystopian world’] seems so to him [for which read ‘the reader’]. Of more direct relevance to the particular text under consideration in this chapter, Whorf notes that the ‘outsider’ effect could also apply to ‘a scientist of a later era using a somewhat different language of the same basic type’. *Oryx and Crake* reverses this positioning somewhat: the ‘scientist of a later era’, rather than being analogously the reader-as-outsider, is the character, Crake, so it is the task of the reader to decode his ‘language of the same basic type’ rather than the task of scientist himself. However, the same fundamental parameters apply: the reader-outsider encounters the language of the character-insider(s), and is compelled to realise that his or her own ‘channels of thinking’ are being challenged and defamiliarised by the linguistic indications of the text. As Whorf notes elsewhere, in encountering ‘exotic language’ we are ‘pushed willy-nilly out of our ruts’ of habitual thought (1956: 138).

The third stage of Whorfianism-as-process is, as noted in chapter two, to examine the alternatively constructed world-views encoded in the alien language(s). Through the study of ‘an exotic language’, Whorf claims, ‘we find the exotic language is a mirror held up to our own’ (1956: 138). The English-speaking reader of dystopian fiction written in English cannot read the text without assimilating numerous examples of ‘exotic’ language: s/he must negotiate both the ‘exoticism’ of speculative language and the (re)cognition of his or her language being rendered ‘exotic’ when presented (or (re)presented) as reflective language. However, rather than being the entirely alien foreign languages of Whorf’s investigations, the language(s) of *Oryx and Crake* are truly ‘a mirror held up to our own’: the text’s speculative language is constructed from the familiar morphemes – sometimes even the familiar lexemes – of base-reality scientific English, while its reflective language, by definition, is a defamiliarised version of base-reality English. For this reason, it remains lucid; always understandable, even though not sufficiently familiar to yield a wholly automatised reading. Yet these languages plainly bespeak a different reality: speculative language presents the reader with an unfamiliar new world, while reflective language presents him or her with the familiar world made new. This invokes the fourth stage of Whorfianism: the final realisation and conviction that, not only do different world-views exist, but that they are, in *Oryx and Crake*, linguistically encoded.

Just as Whorf gained access to the language and insights of the Hopi (among others), so the reader, through reading *Oryx and Crake*, gains access to the language and insight of the characters inhabiting the future dystopian world. And just as Whorf analysed and measured the similarities and differences between his own language and the language of the 'other', so the reading process encourages comparisons to be made between the language of the reader's base-reality and the language of the 'other' dystopian future. In terms of reading *Oryx and Crake*, the task of comparison is considerably more straightforward for the reader than was the task of comparative analysis for Whorf. 'We tend to think in our own language', Whorf remarked, 'in order to examine the exotic language' (1956: 138); in the case of either speculative or reflective language, the language is, at heart, 'our own language', yet it is our own language defamiliarised, transmuted or transformed, reformulated or re-formed. In short, it is our own language (re)cognised, and this linguistic (re)cognition reaches out from the text, through the reader's renewed consciousness, to engage with its own referents in the real world, albeit referents 'made strange' by their (re)presentation in the fictional world.

Both Atwood's speculative language and her reflective language contribute to the capacity of *Oryx and Crake* to change – or (re)cognise, in the sense 'to know again' – the reader's perception not only of the world within the fiction, but also of the world beyond the fiction. Moreover, what is true of Atwood's twenty-first century dystopia remains true of all dystopian fiction. This dystopian genre-wide propensity to enable its readers, through language, to make triangulating connections between the past, the present, and the future; between the world within the fiction and the world beyond the fiction, is summarised in the concluding chapter which follows.

6. Conclusion: Dystopian wor(l)ds

[T]he primary, survival-effective uses of language involve stating alternatives and hypotheses [...] leaps and cross-links and spiderwebs between here and there, between then and now, between now and sometime, a continual weaving and restructuring of the remembered and the perceived and the imagined.

Ursula K. le Guin (1989) *Dancing at the Edge of the World*

I have argued throughout this thesis for language, in its particular dystopian genre-specific realisations, as constitutive of world-view. Furthermore, I have illustrated that the different world-views insinuated in dystopia's 'two languages' – speculative language and reflective language – encourage and facilitate the reader's (re)cognition of his or her own world, as he or she is enabled to see beyond the automatised channels of thought that circumscribe his or her habitual consciousness. In arriving at this conclusion I have drawn on Whorfianism – more specifically, a reinterpretation of Whorfianism as a *process* – and cognitive estrangement; two previously unconnected theoretical perspectives which, when brought together, illuminate and help to account for the ways in which the reader may return from the fictional world to the real world with a revised understanding of self and society.

The reinterpretation of Whorfianism as a process is suggested and supported by Whorf's own accounts of his research into the connection between language and the perception of reality. As noted in chapter two, Whorf writes often on the subject of his own cognitive processing as he approaches the complexities of linguistic relativity, and frequently describes the *activity* of understanding that different conceptions of reality may be intrinsic to different languages. Whorf's reconstruction of the dynamic process of linguistic relativity relates his experience of breaking out of, and looking beyond, the ruts, channels, or grooves of his habitual thought world. Only by considering language *within* his experience is he able to consider the possibilities of language *beyond* his experience; and only by considering language beyond his habitual thought world is he able to return to the language of his original habitual thought world and see it anew from the new perspective gained. The process he describes is one which necessitates measuring the familiar against the unfamiliar: measuring known language relative to unknown language, and then making the cognitive return journey to measure unknown language relative to known language.

The process of conceptualising the known in terms of the unknown and the unknown in terms of the known finds echoes in the concept of cognitive estrangement, a process which similarly defines itself as a relationship between the familiar (that is, the cognitive, or known) and the unfamiliar (that is, the estranged, the unknown). The genre of science fiction (of which dystopia is a sub-genre) has long been understood as the prototypical site of cognitive estrangement, since it exemplifies ‘the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition’ (Suvin 1979: 8-9). Moreover, the characteristic invented language of science fiction narrative has long been recognised as typifying the ‘other-worldly’; the linguistic construction of alterity *par excellence*. This study has demonstrated that while dystopian narrative shares its parent genre’s capacity to facilitate cognitive estrangement via language, it does so in ways that are explicitly connected to the linguistic circumstances of the historical spacetime of the author. In short, a distinction has been made between the language that characterises science fiction and the language that characterises dystopian fiction. Close attention to the stylistic qualities of dystopian fiction reveals that the genre’s word-formation processes closely adhere to the same ‘principle of limited novelty’ (Hudson 2000: 241) that is seen in base-reality neologism. While science fiction often intentionally invents language that has no apparent association with the language of base-reality, dystopian fiction seldom does. Instead, the connection with ‘place’ (that is to say, the author’s and/or the reader’s empirically observable world) that is so crucial to the didactic force of dystopian fiction demands that the connection be made explicit in the language.

This argument is sustained by examination and close analysis of the textual patterning of dystopian texts, in particular, those patterns which recur across the genre. Two distinct yet interconnected discourses are identified as characteristically occurring in these fictions, each of which has a demonstrable conjunction with time and space: *speculative language* constructs the world of the future (which is typically an extrapolative reconfiguration of the author’s present), while *reflective language* reconstructs the world of the author’s present as if it were the past when viewed from the perspective of the future. Crucially, dystopia presupposes that the reader will be amenable to the genre’s central proposition: that defamiliarised language constructs and communicates defamiliarised worlds; in short, that language somehow ‘contains’ meaning, and therefore conceptualises – or even actualises – world-view. The Whorfian view of language which underpins this thesis depends on the notion that, as Whorf

himself stated: 'every language is a vast pattern-system, different from others' (1956: 252). The three chapters of textual analysis which precede this chapter demonstrate that both speculative and reflective language are 'different pattern-systems', each of which uses different – but consistent – models for communicating a particular way of conceptualising world-view. Whorf notes that within the 'pattern system' of each language are:

the forms and categories by which the personality not only communicates, but also analyzes nature, notices or neglects types of relationship and phenomena, channels his reasoning, and builds the house of his consciousness.

(Whorf 1956: 252)

The specific realisations of language in dystopian fictions both build and re-build the 'house of [the reader's] consciousness'. Speculative language builds the house of the future by using materials reclaimed from the house of the past in such a way that the old remains visible in the outline of the new. In other words, in dystopia, the language of the author's present provides the building blocks of the language of the future, thus maintaining continuity and connection with the past. Reflective language revisits the original building, which, from the perspective of the dystopian future has become a museum, ostensibly now a construction belonging to an earlier civilisation, yet the reader recognises – or (re)cognises – the building as belonging to his or her own world. Cognition and estrangement – the defining constituents of cognitive estrangement – are present in both constructions. The interplay of the known with the unknown which typifies cognitive estrangement also typifies dystopian language: the familiar building blocks in the unfamiliar configurations of the future – or speculative language – act to defamiliarise the reader's habitual response, while the familiar-made-unfamiliar – or reflective language – similarly destabilise his or her perceptions. In each case, the renewed awareness, the (re)cognised consciousness, encourages readers to examine their own world-view from an expanded and developed perspective.

The dystopian fictions considered in this study exemplify language within and beyond experience: reflective language is that which is familiar to the reader – within his or her experience – but not to the inhabitants of the future, while speculative language is unfamiliar – beyond the reader's experience – but indicative of the world-view of the future. Each dystopian text elucidates its concern with worrying trends in its author's historical spacetime – again, *within* experience – and gives them form and

consequence in the future – *beyond* experience – through language. As noted in §2.3.2, dystopian authors are keenly aware of the ways in which existing language constrains perception to what *is*; the examples in this study have illustrated the ways in which these authors have harnessed the potential of language to delineate what *could be*. In breaking out of the habitual thought-worlds of language, these texts are effectively attempts to negotiate with language in order to conceptualise, or lexicalise, states of being beyond those which are known, and bring them into the reader's consciousness. Yet, as this thesis insists, dystopian fictions never construct a world which is entirely disconnected with the author's or the reader's own: unlike their extra-terrestrial science-fictional counterparts, in which language may, as discussed in §3.3.1, eschew connotations with words familiar to the reader, dystopian fictions invariably emphasise the connections between language as it exists in the future and language as it exists in the reader's base-reality.

While I acknowledge that to elicit such a direct relationship between fiction and reality is an unusual – and unfashionable – approach to the study of literature, I am guided by the widespread acceptance of dystopia's genre-specific location in a recognisable 'place' which is – at least analogously – the reader's own 'place' (re)placed or (re)presented. The tracing of this dystopia-specific movement towards acceptance of dystopia's (re)construction of the author's historical spacetime, discussed in §1.2.1, is extended in this thesis to incorporate language as a (re)construction of the language of the reader's base-reality. My aim, in drawing explicit connections between the language(s) of dystopia and the reader's own experience of language, is to draw attention to the ways in which the macrocosmic didactic aims of dystopian fictions are played out at a microcosmic level through the reader's interaction with, and (re)cognition of, the language. The empirical studies noted in §1.4 provide evidence of the propensity of these texts to alter readers' perceptions; this study, in turn, demonstrates one of the ways in which this changed post-reading conception of self and society – or self *in* society – may be located in the reader's relationship with language.

While it remains the task of future research to establish empirically the degree of modification of world-view occasioned by the reading of dystopian fiction, this study has, I hope, contributed to the ways in which we understand the role language plays in forming and (re)forming readers' perceptions, not just of the textual world, but of the world beyond the text. It is also the task of further research to investigate and evaluate

the application of the theoretical precepts advocated here to other literary genres, and to other discourses. While this study has focused on literary dystopian conceptions of alterity, there are many literary utopian versions of alternative worlds which may lend themselves to stylistic analysis mediated through a dynamic Whorfian reading. Moving beyond prose literature, poetry suggests itself as a potentially productive area for analysis using this framework, as does drama, given its recognised propensity for the creation of alternative spaces and realities. The most immediate potential for future investigation, however, lies not in other genres, but in other discourses. Textual representations of dialect, for example, would seem to offer a specific world-view which begs exploration via Whorfianism-as-process (Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting* (1993) or his *Ecstasy: Three Tales of Chemical Romance* (1996), for example, both of which suggest a discourse-bound world-view); or those texts which propose a particular, character-specific world-view through their discourse (Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (2004) being an example).

The relationship between language and perception, or the ways in which language may influence perception (or, indeed, language may be influenced by perception) is a broad field, and one which is of interest to literary criticism, linguistics, and stylistics. This study has taken an interdisciplinary approach to the examination of one small area of the field; an intervention which will perhaps contribute some insight to each of these disciplinary areas. In particular, I hope it may have made a direct and immediate contribution to understanding the ways in which dystopian narrative disaggregates and re-forms, destabilises and (re)cognises, defamiliarises and reconstitutes the wor(l)d.

Notes

Notes to chapter one

¹ Sheffield Galleries and Museums Trust, 'The Real Ideal: Utopian Ideals and Dystopian Realities' (exhibition at Millennium Galleries, 17 September – 11 December 2005). For an account of the effect of letter randomisation, see Graham Rawlinson's (1999) 'Reibadaily' in *New Scientist* 162: 2188, p. 55, and also his (1976) 'The Significance of Letter Position in Word Recognition' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Nottingham).

² *Steam stylistics*, by Carter's own definition, is 'that version of stylistics which bears the closest relation to practical criticism. It has all the problems of text immanence and simplistic form-meaning correlations and, like steam trains, goes pretty much in an interpretive straight line; but it continues to generate a lot of power and influence, [...] even if other technologies have now superseded it' (personal communication, 23 January 2006).

³ In positing stylistics as a 'practical instrument' I am adhering to the conceptualisation of stylistics as outlined in both Ronald Carter's (1982) Introduction to *Language and Literature: An Introductory Reader in Stylistics* (London: George Allen & Unwin), pp. 1-17, and in H.G. Widdowson's (1992) Introduction to *Practical Stylistics: An Approach to Poetry* (Oxford: OUP), pp. viii-xiv. My choice of stylistics as a foundational methodological framework finds rationalisation in Paul Simpson's account in his (2004) *Stylistics: A Resource Book for Students* (London: Routledge) where he explains stylistics is 'a method of textual interpretation in which primacy of place is assigned to *language* [...] because the various forms, patterns and levels that constitute linguistic structure are an important index of the function of the text. The text's functional significance as discourse acts in turn as a gateway to its interpretation. While linguistic features do not of themselves constitute a text's 'meaning', an account of linguistic features nonetheless serves to ground a stylistic interpretation and to help explain why, for the analyst, certain types of meaning are possible' (2004: 2). I am guided also by Widdowson's statement: 'What is important here is not the interpretation itself, but the process of exploration of meaning; not the assertion of effects but the investigation into the linguistic features which seem to give warrant to these effects' (1992: xiv), and Carter's belief that 'the primary interpretative procedures used in the reading of a literary text are *linguistic* procedures' (1982: 4).

⁴ See, for example, Jean Baudrillard (1994) *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press). Baudrillard argues that we are so completely ideologically bound that there can be no neutral perception of reality such as could be articulated in language. Because we are so reliant on language to structure our perceptions, any representation of reality is always already ideological, therefore always already constructed by simulacra. In this view, each of the various realities I discuss would be, in itself, a simulacrum. While this approach may provide a productive way of understanding language in dystopian fiction, I do not engage with postmodernist theories here, or with the postmodernist stance which denies the possibility of an external, objective reality; I prefer instead to appeal to an understanding of reality as that which is (or has been) empirically observable.

⁵ In order to acknowledge the inherent complexity of interpretation of the notion of *place*, both within and beyond fictional constructions of the same, I enclose the word in quotation marks ('place') throughout. While somewhat clumsy, this concedes to the indeterminacy of conception that surrounds unmarked uses of the word, as attested by Albert Einstein in his (1953) Foreword to Max Jammer's (1969) *Concepts of Space* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), pp xi-xv. Einstein notes the 'eternally problematic character' of the concept (1953: xi), and continues: 'If two different authors use the word "red," "hard," or "disappointed," no one doubts they mean approximately the same thing, because these words are connected with elementary experiences in a manner which is difficult to misinterpret. But in the case of words such as "place" or "space," whose relation with psychological experience is less direct, there exists a far-reaching uncertainty of interpretation' (1953: xii).

⁶ Throughout this study I capitalise *Utopia* only when referring to More's text or the fictional island therein; *utopia*, in lower case, refers to the literary genre.

⁷ From 'A short metre of Utopia, written by Anemolius poet Laureate and nephew to Hythloday by his sister', reproduced from ancillary materials which appeared in some early editions of More's *Utopia*. See

Susan Bruce's (1999) Introduction and Notes to *Three Early Modern Utopias: Utopia, New Atlantis, The Isle of Pines* (Oxford: OUP), pp. ix-lxi and pp. 124-148.

⁸ David Roseman, 'Nusquamus'. Roseman claims 'More did not originally call his Island kingdom "Utopia", he called it "Nusquamus" [...]. Thus I would claim, More was essentially a outopian, rather than a eutopian [...] he was more concerned with ideals that could apply "not anywhere in particular" (Ou topos) than the idiosyncrasies of a particular good place far away (Eu topos)'. Available online at: <<http://www.roseman121.btinternet.co.uk/utopia/nusquamus.htm>> [accessed 15 December 2003] (para. 16 of 65).

⁹ In respect of the distinction between dystopia and anti-utopia, see Lyman Tower Sargent's (1975) essay, 'Utopia – the Problem of Definition' *Extrapolation* 16:2, pp. 137-148.

¹⁰ Margaret Atwood, 'Writing Oryx and Crake', published online in January 2003 <<http://www.randomhouse.com/features/atwood/essay.html>> [accessed 11 May 2003] (para. 7 of 9).

¹¹ Anne Cranny-Francis' (1990) *Feminist Fiction: Feminist Uses of Generic Fiction* (New York: St. Martin's) includes her definition of dystopia – 'the textual representation of a society apparently worse than the writer's/reader's own' – which neatly circumvents this problem by thoughtful use of epistemic modality to suggest possibility in her use of 'apparently' (1990: 125).

¹² From a literary perspective, Mark R. Hillegas' (1967) *The Future as Nightmare: H.G.Wells and the Anti-Utopians* (Oxford: OUP) reviews the development of the dystopian tradition in the early part of the twentieth century, while Krishan Kumar's (1987) *Utopia and Anti-Utopia in Modern Times* (Oxford: Blackwell) takes a broader historical view of the emergence of the 'formal' anti-utopia (under which heading Kumar includes dystopia).

¹³ Marge Piercy's (1976) *Woman on the Edge of Time* could be seen to challenge this hypothesis, since it juxtaposes the utopia of Mattapoisett with 1970s Manhattan by way of psychic 'journeys' taken by its protagonist, Connie. This text depicts the present as dystopian, and the future as utopian. However, it arguably has greater claim to be considered primarily utopian, rather than dystopian in its generic classification.

¹⁴ For economy of citation, where they refer to primary texts, page references will be given in this form (i.e page number without further citation).

¹⁵ Terry Eagleton (2005) 'Just My Imagination' in *The Nation* 13 June <<http://www.thenation.com/doc/20050613/eagleton>> [accessed 20 November 2005] (para 3 of 17).

¹⁶ V.G. Belinskij, as cited in Gary Saul Morson (1981) *The Boundaries of Genre: Dostoevsky's Diary of a Writer and the Traditions of Literary Utopia* (Austin: University of Texas Press), p. 15 and p. 190 n17.

¹⁷ Edward Mozejko, review of Erica Gottlieb (2001) *Dystopian Fiction East and West: Universe of Terror and Trial* in *University of Toronto Quarterly* 72:1 Winter 2002/3 <http://www.utpjournals.com/product/utq/721/721_review_mozejko.html> [accessed 12 July 2004] (para. 2 of 4).

¹⁸ For a discussion of the intersections between dystopia and satire (more specifically, Menippean satire), see Carter Kaplan's (1999) essay, 'The Advent of Literary Dystopia' *Extrapolation* 40:3, pp. 200-213.

¹⁹ For a discussion of the intersections between dystopia and fantasy, see John H. Timmerman (1983) *Other Worlds: The Fantasy Genre* (Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press), pp. 5-21.

²⁰ For a discussion of the intersections between myth and science fiction, see Damien Broderick's (1995) *Reading by Starlight: Postmodern Science Fiction* (London: Routledge), pp. 8-10 & pp. 121-123.

²¹ Although on the question of purposelessness, it could also be argued that, in Kafka's *The Trial*, the self-perpetuating nature of bureaucracy (that is to say, its 'purposelessness') brings under critique the real-world experience of bureaucracy.

²² See Stockwell (2000) *The Poetics of Science Fiction* which examines this aspect of dystopian fiction from a cognitive poetic stance, in terms of the mapping of the real world onto the text world metaphorically via a particularised form of constitutive isomorphism (2000: 202-204).

²³ Andrew Stone, 'Orwell Centenary: From 2003 to 1984', *The Socialist Review* July 2003. <<http://www.socialistreview.org.uk/article.php?articlenumber=8510>> [accessed 14 February 2006] (para. 14 of 18).

²⁴ The title of Steven Carter's text also usefully illustrates a conception of the term *dystopia* which differs from the sense in which it is used in this work: his recontextualised usage denotes an understanding of

dystopia as 'bad place' in antonymical relation to a utopian 'good place', and is used to describe aspects of contemporary American reality. The use of dystopia in this sense has increased in recent years, and it is no longer unusual to see the term used to connote any unpleasant or oppressive circumstance or location. (Newspaper journalism abounds with this sense of *dystopia*. See, for example, Isabel Hilton's Special Report: 'China's leap backward', *The Guardian*, 17 December 2003, where, she notes, 'A combination of greed, corruption and bad planning has transformed many of China's cities into polluted dystopias'.)

²⁵ Many critics and commentators, like Sargent, use the terms *utopia* and *utopianism* to refer to any text exhibiting the narrative features of either dystopia or utopia. I prefer to use *dystopia*, but do not intervene textually in others' use of *utopia* (or its many variants) when quoting their comments unless this is necessary for clarity (see, for instance, n27 below).

²⁶ Sargent's '*topos* – a location in time and space', which I refer to throughout as 'place', is precisely what distinguishes dystopia from utopia, according to Chris Ferns (1999) *Narrating Utopia: Ideology, Gender, Form in Utopian Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press), who claims: 'unlike the traditional utopia, dystopian fiction posits a society which – however outlandish – is clearly extrapolated from that which exists. Where utopian fiction stresses the *difference* of the society it depicts, often obscures the connection between the real world and its alternative, and rarely indicates *how* such an alternative might be created, the dystopian writer presents the nightmare future as a possible destination of present society, as if dystopia were no more than a logical conclusion derived from the premises of the existing order, and implies that it might very well come about unless something is done to stop it' (1999: 107).

²⁷ Frye uses 'utopian satire' in the sense of 'dystopia', a distinction which he explains in the same essay, arguing for: 'two kinds of utopian romance: the straight utopia, which visualizes a world-state assumed to be ideal, or at least ideal in comparison with what we have, and the utopian satire or parody, which presents the same kind of social goal in terms of slavery, tyranny, or anarchy' (1973 [1965]: 28).

²⁸ Lucy Sargisson, 'Utopia in the Twenty-First Century, Part One: anti-utopianism, religion and fundamentalism', unpublished conference paper delivered at 'Is there a Role for Utopia in Twenty-First Century Ideology?' Conference at the University of Sheffield's Centre for Political Ideologies, 17 June 2005.

²⁹ Carey is perhaps misguided on this point: the Inner Party of Orwell's dystopia does not, in fact, have any intentions of creating a utopia; as O'Brien tells Winston Smith during his interrogation in Room 101: 'Do you begin to see, then, what kind of world we are creating? It is the exact opposite of the stupid hedonistic Utopias that the old reformers imagined' (*Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 279).

³⁰ For the origins of the notion of focalising characters, see Genette (1980) *Narrative Discourse* (New York: Cornell University Press), pp. 188-192. On the stylistics-based application of this idea to narrative language in terms of the communication of ideology, see Simpson (1993) *Language, Ideology and Point of View* (London: Routledge). For a dystopian text-specific application, see Fowler (1995) *The Language of George Orwell* (London: MacMillan), pp. 181-227.

³¹ I follow Simpson's (1993) definition of *ideology*, since it emerges from the critical linguistic perspective best suited to this study. In Simpson's formulation, an ideology: 'derives from the taken-for-granted assumptions, beliefs and value-systems which are shared collectively by social groups' (1993: 5).

³² Since this is only a preliminary study, it lacks the methodological rigour of a full-scale study in terms of participant selection and statistical analysis, and so is perhaps best regarded as a general indication of the ways in which readers are likely to respond.

³³ Suvin usefully demonstrates the ways in which apparently sound definitions of science fiction, when analysed, entail contradictions, unqualified assumptions, and general indeterminacy (1979: 37-62). It is also notable that Suvin does not explicitly include dystopia in this early definition of science fiction, in fact, as Moylan notes, he 'did not turn his attention fully to the question of dystopia until 1998' (Moylan 2000: 127), which is the point at which he outlined the definition of dystopia reproduced in this work on p. 10.

³⁴ 'Reader's Companion to *The Handmaid's Tale*', Section 2: 'An Interview with Margaret Atwood' <http://www.randomhouse.com/resources/bookgroup/handmaidstale_bgc.html> [accessed 7 July 2005] (para. 2 of 24).

³⁵ Margaret Atwood, 'Writing Oryx and Crake', published online in January 2003 <<http://www.randomhouse.com/features/atwood/essay.html>> [accessed 11 May 2003] (para. 7 of 9).

³⁶ Atwood's comments are reproduced in Robert Potts' article 'Light in the Wilderness' *The Guardian* 26 April 2003, available online at <<http://books.guardian.co.uk/departments/generalfiction/story/0,6000,943485,00.html>> [accessed 7 July 2005] (para. 2 of 52).

³⁷ Margaret Atwood, 'Aliens Have Taken the Place of Angels', *The Guardian* 17 June 2005, available online at <<http://arts.guardian.co.uk/fridayreview/story/0,12102,1507718,00.html>> [accessed 7 July 2005] (para. 2 of 11).

³⁸ *ibid.*

³⁹ Atwood does note the fluidity and unfixity of the boundaries she would draw around her own categorical distinctions: in her estimation, 'speculative fiction may be used as the tree, for which science fiction, science fiction fantasy, and fantasy are the branches. The beast has at least nine heads, and the ability to eat all other fictional forms in sight, and to turn them into its own substance [...] genres may look hard and fast from a distance, but up close it's nailing jelly to a wall' (2004: 513).

⁴⁰ Although extra-terrestrial life forms may be read – or, in Ketterer's words, 'mundanely recuperated' – in terms of their representative qualities, successful execution of such reading requires, as Damien Broderick argues, readers 'with specialised training in the codes of construction and reception' of science fiction (1995: xiii). The genre 'is written in a kind of code', he continues, 'which must be learned by apprenticeship' (*ibid.*). On 'experienced' readers of science fiction, see also Stockwell (2000: 7), and Moylan (2000: 6-8). I make no claim to be a 'trained' reader of science fiction in its wider sense; and while I remain aware that I write here about a sub-genre of science fiction, I do not venture to write about it *as* science fiction; rather, I confine my discussion to merely that area where science fiction overlaps with dystopia.

⁴¹ Gary Saul Morson's distinctions between the novel form and the utopia / dystopia lie in the latter's didactic tendency. In his (1981) *The Boundaries of Genre: Dostoevsky's "Diary of a Writer" and the Traditions of Literary Utopia* (Austin: University of Texas Press), he argues that the 'interpretive conventions of utopias are radically different from those of novels – a difference which, as we shall see, reflects the two genres' antithetical philosophical assumptions. First, in the novel, unlike the utopia, the narrative is to be taken as representing a plausible sequence of events (i.e., as designed to be 'realistic'). Second, in a novel, the statements, actions, and beliefs of any principal character (or the narrator) are to be understood as a reflection of his or her personality, and of the biographical events and social milieu that have shaped it. An important corollary for our discussion of utopias follows from this second interpretive convention. The sort of unqualified, absolute truths about morality and society that constantly occur in utopias have no place in novels' (1981: 77). I agree with Morson's distinctions, and, within this study, proceed from the supposition that dystopia differs fundamentally from the novel form in exactly this respect.

⁴² The concern that dystopia's didactic political 'message' undermines the 'literary' quality of the genre resonates with similar concerns expressed in relation to the political content of postcolonial literature. Edward W. Said (1993) responds to this criticism of the latter genre in his *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage) with sentiments that, *mutatis mutandis*, represent my own in relation to dystopian fiction. Said explains: 'The novels and other books I analyse here I analyse first of all because I find them estimable and admirable works of art and learning, in which I and many other readers take pleasure and from which we derive profit. Second, the challenge is to connect them not only with that pleasure and profit but also with the imperial process of which they were manifestly and unconcealedly a part; rather than condemning or ignoring their participation in what was an unquestioned reality in their societies, I suggest that we learn about this hitherto ignored aspect actually and truly *enhances* our reading and understanding of them' (1993: xv) [original emphasis]. Like Said, I believe that the didacticism of dystopian fictions, and their 'participation in [...] an unquestioned reality in their societies' does indeed enhance, rather than detract from, our reading of them.

⁴³ I follow Baldick's (1990) definition of *didactic* in his *Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Oxford: OUP) here – that is to say, [of literature] 'instructive; designed to impart information, advice, or some doctrine of morality or philosophy' (1990: 57) – however, I note (and accord with) his caveat that the 'boundaries of didactic literature are open to dispute, since both the presence and the prominence of doctrinal content are subject to differing interpretations' (*ibid.*). I make no categorical claim that all readers will necessarily reach the same interpretations. I do, however, believe that didacticism is explicitly retrievable from the dystopian texts I later analyse.

⁴⁴ Rabkin uses ‘transformation’ in a subtly different sense than the one to which I adhere in this study; his transformations are reworkings of ‘canonical phrases we all recognize’ which ‘make us aware that this is not quite our own language, though like enough to it that we can map the transformations and know their causes’ (1979: 86). While broadly following the same line, I do not confine my conception of transformations to ‘canonical phrases’; rather I consider a variety of orthographical, typological, and lexical variations, alterations, and conversions under the designation of transformation.

⁴⁵ Fowler acknowledges the origination of the term *anti-language* in this context in the work of M.A.K. Halliday (1978) ‘Anti-languages’, in *Language as a Social Semiotic* (London: Edward Arnold), pp. 164-182.

⁴⁶ Fowler’s analysis here is mediated through a Bakhtinian theoretical standpoint. While acknowledging the relevance of such theoretical frameworks as polyphony and heteroglossia to a discussion of dialectic or dialogic languages, I do not pursue this in detail here. See §2.2.3 for acknowledgement of heteroglossia as support for the notion of dystopian fiction being comprised of ‘two languages’.

⁴⁷ Beauchamp does concede that ‘Orwell in *1984* and Eugene Zamiatin in *We* manage, where most dystopian novelists fail, to solve these problems successfully’ (1974: 464).

⁴⁸ Throughout this study I use the term *standard language* to mean something close to – but not quite the same as – ‘standard narrative language’. Speculative and reflective language are contrasted to what I am calling ‘standard language’, but not necessarily to what is normally termed ‘non-standard’. That is to say, standard, in the context of this study, includes the dialect representation accorded to Orwell’s ‘proles’ in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, for instance, while speculative and reflective language ‘deviate’ from this standard.

⁴⁹ To fully appreciate the gravity of this conceptual realignment of science from benevolent, intellectually rigorous advancement of humanity to malevolent, unethical eugenic programming, it is crucial to take account of socio-historical aspects of Huxley’s historical spacetime, which, in 1932, pre-dated procedures such as in-vitro reproductive techniques. Socio-historical perspective is treated at greater length in the discussion of Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (see §3.2).

Notes to chapter two

¹ In using the term *(re)cognise* in this form my intention is to draw attention to the *process* of recognition as ‘knowing again’, or ‘re-knowing’. This sense, marked in this study by enclosing the prefix ‘re-’ in parentheses, returns to the Latin etymological origin, *recognoscere*: ‘to know again’.

² This statement of Whorf’s ‘linguistic relativity principle’ represents one of just two occasions in his extant writings where his concept is outlined as a principle. The only other construction of it is found in his paper entitled ‘Science and Linguistics’, where he states: ‘We are thus introduced to a new principle of relativity, which holds that all observers are not led by the same physical evidence to the same picture of the universe, unless their linguistic backgrounds are similar, or can in some way be calibrated’ (1956: 214).

³ I have adopted a slightly unconventional format for referencing quotation where it is taken from John B. Carroll’s volume of Whorf’s selected writings, *Language, Thought, and Reality*, since this has become the standard source for Whorf’s views. References made to this volume are, for economy of citation, cited with Whorf’s name, rather than Carroll’s, and with pagination from this volume, except where references are taken from Carroll’s introductory biographical sketch (1956: 1-34).

⁴ While I prefer the term *Whorfianism*, and use it to differentiate Whorf’s own work from that of Sapir and Boas, I reproduce the term *Sapir-Whorf hypothesis* without comment or amendment where it has been used by other commentators.

⁵ See Lucy (1992) pp. 11-68 for the distinctions between Whorf’s theories and those of Boas and Sapir, and also for an overview of the ways in which Whorf’s position developed out of those of his predecessors.

⁶ On the over-simplification, reduction, and misinterpretation of Whorf, see also *Explorations in Linguistic Relativity* (2000) ed. by Martin Putz & Marjolijn Verspoor (Amsterdam: John Benjamins).

⁷ John Leavitt does however claim that the hypothesis was named in its enduring form as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis by Hoijer at a conference in 1954 (Leavitt 2006: 70).

⁸ Daniel Alford (2002) agrees with the estimate that there may be ‘over 200 different conceptions of Benjamin Whorf in academic literature – basically one per researcher, all different’. Daniel (Moonhawk) Alford, ‘The Great Whorf Hypothesis Hoax’, available at: <<http://www.enformy.com/MH-WhorfIntro.htm>> [accessed 17 March 2006] (para 2 of 34). Alford’s extensive writings on Whorf and Linguistic Relativity are also available online at: <<http://www.enformy.com/alford.htm#papers>> [accessed 19 May 2006].

⁹ Whorf comes closest to the idea of a two-way exchange when he asks: ‘Which was first: the language patterns or the cultural norms?’ His response, though, suggests contiguity rather than bi-directionality: ‘In main they have grown up together, constantly influencing each other’ (1956: 156).

¹⁰ A spectacularly inaccurate definition of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis occurs in Lena E. Hall’s (2005) *Dictionary of Multicultural Psychology: Issues, Terms, and Concepts* (London: Sage), which includes: ‘the Whorf hypothesis states that it is not the way things are actually said but the environmental factors that produce the reason for saying it’ (2005: 169), and ‘Whorf fully believed in linguistic determinism – that what one thinks is fully determined by one’s language. He also supported linguistic relativity’ (*ibid*). This is followed by several comments attributed to ‘Orwell 1990’, including ‘Orwell notes that the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis is generally associated with the position that language structures entail a general philosophical system for perceiving, ordering, and acting on reality’ (*ibid*). The references citing Orwell, it transpires, refer to a 1990 edition of the novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Given that such flawed definitions exist, predictably – and inevitably – there will be misunderstandings and misapplications of the theory.

¹¹ Penny Lee points out Whorf’s deliberate use of ‘a new principle of relativity’ which was intentionally a reference to Einstein’s Theory of Relativity (Lee 1996: 86).

¹² Eleanor Rosch’s (1977) ‘Human Categorization’ in N. Warren, ed. *Advances in Cross-Cultural Psychology* (London: Academic Press), pp. 1-49 provides an overview, while Ekkehart Malotki’s (1983) *Hopi Time: A Linguistic Analysis of the Temporal Concepts in the Hopi Language* (New York: Mouton de Gruyter) argues that Whorf was misguided in his view of Hopi time. G.K. Pullum (1991), in *The Great Eskimo Snow Hoax and Other Irreverent Essays on the Study of Language* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) takes an anti-Whorf stance, as does Steven Pinker (1994) in *The Language Instinct*. Lucy (1992: ch. 3) reviews the anthropological and linguistic studies by Trager, Hoijer, Lee, Casagrande, and others, while chapter 5 of the same volume reviews the psychology-based colour testing experiments of Lennenberg, Brown, Steffle, and others. Daniel Alford robustly defends Whorf’s position in several essays available online at: <<http://www.enformy.com/alford.htm#papers>> [accessed 19 May 2006].

¹³ There are exceptions to this generalisation, however: for an interesting discussion of dystopia in respect of a posited ‘language of the future’, see Peter Stockwell’s (2000) ‘Futuretalk: one small step towards a Chronolinguistics’ *Nottingham Linguistics Circular* 15, pp. 55-68.

¹⁴ M.A.K Halliday’s seminal essay, ‘Linguistic Function an Literary Style: An Inquiry into the Language of William Golding’s “The Inheritors”’ is reproduced in Donald C. Freeman, ed. (1981) *Essays in Modern Stylistics* (London: Methuen), pp. 323-360, as is Stanley E. Fish’s acerbic response, ‘What is Stylistics and Why are they Saying Such Terrible Things About it?’ (*ibid*), pp. 53-78. Other contributions to the debate are Leech and Short (1981) *Style in Fiction: A Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose* (London: Longman), pp. 31-38 and 54-57; Fowler (1996) *Linguistic Criticism*, 2nd edn. (Oxford: OUP), pp. 210-220; Simpson (1993) *Language, Ideology and Point of View* (London: Routledge), pp. 109-114.

¹⁵ John Walsh, ‘Weird and wonderful vocabulary from around the world’, review of *The Meaning of Tingo* (2005), *The Independent* (Online Edition) <<http://enjoyment.independent.co.uk/books/features/article315207.ece>> [accessed 5 December 2005].

¹⁶ Personal correspondence by email in response to an enquiry (7 December 2005). The original edition of this text was published in 1981, and, after being out of print for several years, was re-issued in 2000.

¹⁷ Aldous Huxley (1963) ‘Culture and the Individual’ available online at <<http://www.psychedelic-library.org/huxcultr.htm>> [accessed 20 June 2005]. The essay is also available in hard copy, in *Moksha: Writings on Psychedelics and the Visionary Experience 1931-1963* (1980), ed. by Michael Horowitz and Cynthia Palmer (London: Chatto & Windus). All references to Huxley’s essay here are taken from the online version.

¹⁸ *ibid* (para. 10 of 24).

¹⁹ *ibid* (para. 6 of 24).

²⁰ *ibid* (para. 17 of 24).

²¹ Question mark [1940?] as it appears in original: 'New Words', in Ian Angus, George Orwell, Sonia Orwell (2000) *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell* Vol. 2 (Boston: David R. Godine), pp. 3-12 (p. 10).

²² Kim Wells, 'Interview: Suzette Haden Elgin' available online at: <<http://www.womenwriters.net/editorials/hadnelgin.htm>> [accessed 11 September 2004] (para. 12 of 42).

²³ *ibid* (para 31 of 42).

²⁴ Suzette Haden Elgin, 'Láadan, the Constructed Language in *Native Tongue*' <<http://www.sfw.org/members/elgin/laadan.html>> [accessed 11 September 2004] (para. 3 of 8).

²⁵ "'Afterthoughts": A conversation between Ira Wood and Marge Piercy', available online at: <<http://www.margepiercy.com/interviews/afterthoughts.htm>> [accessed 11 September 2004] (para. 74 of 83).

²⁶ In respect of the relationship between dystopian writing and the ineffable, see also Peter Schwenger (1986) 'Writing the Unthinkable,' *Critical Inquiry* 13:1, pp. 33-48, and the same author's article on Hoban's *Riddley Walker*: Peter Schwenger (1991) 'Circling Ground Zero', *PMLA* 106:2 pp. 251-261. In the latter, Schwenger suggests that '[s]omething beyond knowing [...] must be called on if we are to come to terms with that which is called the unthinkable' (p.261). Also relevant is Eddie Marcus (1999) 'Speaking the Ineffable: Language and Dystopia' available online at:

<<http://www.gradnet.de/pomo2.archives/pomo99.papers/Marcus99.htm>> [accessed 22 August 2002]. Marcus argues that '[d]ystopian writers demonstrate that there are things to know and experience outside of language, and that while language may mediate reality, it does not master it' (para. 4 of 31).

²⁷ My understanding of Saussure's notion of what may appear in the paradigmatic axis differs from Delany's as he expresses it here, since I would anticipate anything from the 'expected' to the 'unexpected' (or even bizarre) might *possibly* occur in the paradigmatic axis. However, since this is not essential to the direction of study, I leave Delany's comments uncontested.

Notes to chapter three

¹ An indication of the continuing critical interest in Orwell's dystopia is found in R. R. Bowker, 'Books in Print With Book Reviews', which records 25 book-length treatments of Orwell and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* published or distributed in the US between the years 2003 and 2005 alone.

² All page references to *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in this chapter are to the (2000) Penguin Classics edition, and are given, without any other citation, in parentheses immediately following any direct quotation.

³ Department of Trade and Industry Consumer and Competition Policy Directorate, 'Report (1968) by the Standing Joint Committee on Metrication' available at www.dti.gov.uk/ccp [accessed 8 January 2005].

⁴ Interestingly, Orwell chooses to use Standard English orthography in all instances of units of measurement even while the US equivalents (i.e. *centimeter*, *meter*) were possible options. In doing so, Orwell ties the presentation of 'place' in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* to a demonstrably British model.

⁵ The British TV programme, *Big Brother*, has doubtless contributed something to modern perceptions of the term, with its 24-hour surveillance and authoritarian control of a group of participants.

⁶ In this respect, the term *Big Brother* validates what Stockwell (2000a) terms *chronolinguistics* in his article 'Futuretalk: one small step towards a Chronolinguistics' *Nottingham Linguistics Circular* 15 (2000), pp. 55-68. In this article, which outlines some preliminary criteria for predicting language change (especially through futuristic fiction), Stockwell suggests utopias and dystopias, or *architexts* ('richly imagined and detailed alternative worlds' (p. 61)) as the model 'empirical testbed' for his hypotheses. 'Theorisation', Stockwell says, can be 'validated or falsified by the actualisation of a state-of-affairs in the future, as the passage of time turns the future into the present. In this way, fiction becomes the laboratory of chronolinguistics' (p. 66). Since Orwell's predicted language has post-dated his predicted

future, it seems reasonable to suggest that the then-speculative, now actualised, language which has permeated the extra-textual world as testable data for these hypotheses.

⁷ In *Reading by Starlight*, Broderick outlines what he calls a *mega-text*, a scheme of reading protocols and characteristics which distinguish sf as a genre. Although my principal aim in this study is to provide an account of the ways in which speculative and reflective language interact with and impact upon the perceptions of the readership, part of that aim is realised by noting recurring patterns and structures of language across many dystopian texts. One consequence – or by-product – of this cross-textual assessment is the outlining of a preliminary framework for a dystopian linguistic mega- (or meta-) text, more modest in its comprehensiveness than Broderick's sophisticated account of the sf mega-text, but applicable in a similarly genre-specific way.

⁸ Meyers takes this example from Poul Anderson, 'Lodestar' (1973) H. Harrison, ed., *Astounding: John W. Campbell Memorial Anthology*), which is cited in the main text, but not in the bibliography, so incomplete publication details are reproduced here.

⁹ Hudson acknowledges that the 'claim that new word formation typically involves either new form or new meaning but rarely both' was known in the field of historical linguistics prior to his expression of it as the 'Principle of limited novelty' (personal communication by email 1 March 2005).

¹⁰ Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange* (1962) would appear to contradict my assertion here, since it is, as Beauchamp (1974) notes 'perhaps the most linguistically innovative novel of the future' (1974: 475). However, Beauchamp also outlines a very compelling language-based argument which explains why he considers this text not to be representative of dystopia in terms of its language. I reproduce Beauchamp's extended note here, since it exactly represents my own view on the subject: '*A Clockwork Orange*, narrated by its teenage punk of a protagonist in an argot called *nadsat*, which is composed (a psychologist in the book explains) of "odd bits of rhyming slang. A bit of gypsy talk, too. But most of its roots are Slav." [...]. Despite the dazzling tour de force Burgess brings off, I have not included *A Clockwork Orange* in my discussion for several reasons. First, *nadsat* is primarily a parody of the exclusiveness and ephemerality of teenage slang: the older generation of this society cannot understand it, but even more significantly, Alex (the narrator, age sixteen) cannot himself understand the equally exclusive slang of the "rising generation" of twelve year olds. After two years in prison, Alex finds *nadsat* already obsolete. Second, and concomitantly, *nadsat* reflects the social-technological realities of the society (which is but vaguely sketched) only in the sense that it demonstrates the alienation of the young from the old – and the younger from the young – and thus indicates the fragmented, uncohesive nature of this slightly futuristic world. *Nadsat*, that is, reflects the power structure only negatively, as one "unofficial" discourse in an increasingly officialized society' (Beauchamp 1974: 475).

¹¹ The term *auctorial* would seem to be Delany's own, and is understood here as broadly synonymous with *authorial*.

Notes to chapter four

¹ Pimlott's 'Introduction' refers to the (2000) Penguin Classics edition of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (London: Penguin). All subsequent references to *Nineteen Eighty-Four* are to this edition, and are given in parentheses, without any other citation, following any direct quotation from this text.

² All references to Patai's 'Introduction', and the text are to the (1985) edition of *Swastika Night* (Oxford: First Feminist Press), and are given in parentheses, without any other citation, following any direct quotation from this text.

³ For a detailed discussion of the correspondences between the two texts, see Patai's (1984) 'Orwell's Despair, Burdekin's Hope: Gender and Power in Dystopia', *Women's Studies International Forum* 7:2, pp. 85-95, and also her (1984) *The Orwell Mystique: A Study in Male Ideology* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press), pp. 253-263. See also M. Keith Booker's essay, 'English Dystopian Satire in Context', in Shaffer, Brian W., ed. (2005) *A Companion to the British and Irish Novel 1945-2000* (Oxford: Blackwell), pp. 32-44.

⁴ All references to Friedrich von Hess's untitled history appear simply as 'the book' in Burdekin's text. In the interests of clarity, I have capitalised 'Book' on each occasion I make reference to it, although I acknowledge that nowhere in the original text does it appear in this capitalised form.

⁵ This, and all subsequent references to this text are to the (1987) Oxford 20th Century Classics edition of *Facial Justice* (Oxford: OUP), and are given in parentheses, without any other citation, following any direct quotation from this text.

⁶ This, and all subsequent references to *The Handmaid's Tale* are to the (1996) Vintage edition (London: Vintage), and are given in parentheses, without any other citation, following any direct quotation from this text.

Notes to chapter five

¹ All references to *Oryx and Crake* are to the (2004) Virago edition (London:Virago), and are given in parentheses, without any other citation, following any direct quotation from this text.

² Margaret Atwood, 'Writing Oryx and Crake', published online in January 2003 <<http://www.randomhouse.com/features/atwood/essay.html>> [accessed 11 May 2003] (para. 7 of 9).

³ Many parallels are evident between Atwood's satire on science and Swift's treatment of the same in *Gulliver's Travels*, notably in his Book III, chapter V, which satirises the irrelevance and futility of science as observed at 'The Academy of Lagado'. A detailed consideration of these correspondences is beyond the scope of this thesis, but it is worth noting that, while Swift, like Atwood, satirises the language of science, the scientists of Lagado are a small group of curious eccentrics contained within the Academy; in Atwood's novel, such characters dominate and shape the world.

⁴ I follow Halliday and Martin's model in including the prepositional clause here in the calculation; the examples of clauses they cite include both prepositional and co-ordinated clauses: *cf* 'Griffith's energy balance approach to strength and fracture also suggested the importance of surface chemistry in the mechanical behaviour of brittle materials', and 'The model rests on the localized gravitational attraction exerted by rapidly oscillating and extremely massive closed loops of cosmic string' (1993: 76).

⁵ Anthony Griffiths (2004) 'Genetics according to *Oryx and Crake*' in *Canadian Literature: A Quarterly of Criticism and Review* <<http://www.canlit.ca/archive2004/181/181.griffiths.on.html>> [accessed 12 November 2004].

⁶ *ibid* (para. 3 of 16).

⁷ *ibid* (para. 4 of 16).

⁸ *ibid*.

⁹ *ibid* (para. 8 of 16).

¹⁰ *ibid* (para. 6 of 16).

¹¹ Margaret Atwood, 'Writing Oryx and Crake', published online in January 2003 <<http://www.randomhouse.com/features/atwood/essay.html>> [accessed 11 May 2003] (para. 7 of 9).

¹² Locke notes that '[s]cientific writing is traditionally viewed as the antithesis of literary writing' (1992: 2-3).

Appendix I

Results of a reader-response pilot study conducted in May 2003 with 9 student-participants who had recently read George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*.

The participants were asked the following question:

'For each of the listed characters from [each novel], please rank – on a scale of 1-5 (where 1 = completely dystopian; 2 = mostly dystopian; 3 aspects of both in similar proportions; 4 = mostly utopian; 5 = completely utopian), how dystopian or utopian you, as a reader, judge the fictional society to be *when viewed from the perspective of the character*.'

The following results were obtained:

Nineteen Eighty-Four

Character	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9
Winston	1	1	1	1	3	2	2	1	2
Julia	2	2	2	2	4	3	2	2	2
O'Brien	3	3	5	5	5	4	3	5	1
Big Brother	4	5	5	5	1	1	5	5	1
Goldstein	2	2	2	3	1	1	1	1	2
Charrington	3	3	4	4	3	3	4	3	1
Syme	2	4	3	3	1	1	3	1	1
Parsons	2	4	4	3	2	4	3	4	1

The Handmaid's Tale

Character	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9
Offred	1	1	1	2	3	3	2	1	1
Aunt Lydia	3	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2
Moirra	2	3	2	3	4	2	2	3	3
Serena Joy	2	3	2	3	2	3	3	2	2
Ofglen	1	2	2	3	4	2	2	1	2
Commander	3	5	4	3	2	2	3	4	1
Janine	1	3	3	2	2	1	2	3	3
Nick	2	3	2	3	4	2	2	2	2

R = 'reader' (i.e R1 = Reader #1)

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N.B. In the case of texts – especially primary texts – which are available in several editions, the first date cited following the name of the author is that of the particular edition used in this study and to which any page references refer. The date cited in square brackets is the date of first publication.

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