

**Defining the dystopian chronotope:
Space, time and genre in George Orwell's
*Nineteen Eighty-Four***

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Abstract

The paper examines George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a canonical example of the dystopian novel in an attempt to define the principal features of the dystopian chronotope. Following Mikhail Bakhtin, it treats the chronotope as the structural pivot of the narrative, which integrates and determines other aspects of the text. Dystopia, the paper argues, is a particularly appropriate genre to consider the structural role of the chronotope for two reasons. Firstly, due to utopianism's special relation with space and secondly, due to the structural importance of world-building in the expression of dystopia's philosophical, political and social ideas. The paper identifies the principal features of dystopian spatiality, among which crucial are the oppositions between the individual and the state, the mind and the body, the high and the low, the central and the peripheral, the past and the present, the city and the natural world, false and true signs.

Keywords

dystopia, chronotope, space, genre, Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

Definiując dystopijny chronotop: przestrzeń, czas i gatunek w *Roku 1984* George'a Orwella

Abstrakt

Analizując *Rok 1984* George'a Orwella jako kanon powieści dystopijnej, artykuł podejmuje próbę zdefiniowania głównych cech dystopijnego chronotopu. Za Michaiłem Bachtinem traktuje on chronotop jako strukturalną oś narracji, która integruje i określa inne aspekty tekstu. Dystopia, jak twierdzą w artykule, jest szczególnie odpowiednim gatunkiem do rozważania strukturalnej roli chronotopu z dwóch powodów. Po pierwsze, ze względu na szczególny związek utopianizmu z przestrzenią, po drugie ze względu na strukturalne znaczenie procesu konstruowania świata dla wyrażenia dystopijnych idei filozoficznych, politycznych i społecznych. Artykuł identyfikuje podstawowe cechy dystopijnego chronotopu, wśród których najważniejsze są opozycje między jednostką a państwem, ciałem a umysłem, tym co niskie i wysokie, centralne i peryferyjne, między przeszłością a teraźniejszością, miastem i światem natury oraz między fałszywymi a prawdziwymi znakami.

Słowa kluczowe

dystopia, chronotop, przestrzeń, gatunek, Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

1. Introduction

Dystopia, like its predecessor and optimistic relative – utopia, has a special relationship with space. The name utopia and its generic derivatives, dystopia, eutopia and anti-utopia, share the root word “topos”, which in Greek signifies “place”. The term “utopia” was coined by Thomas More in a narrative which gave birth to a series of related literary genres and which named and subsumed a much older philosophical tradition of utopian thinking. As Fátima Vieira explains, “In order to create his neologism, More resorted to two Greek words – *ouk* (that means not and was reduced to *u*) and *topos* (place), to which

he added the suffix *ia*, indicating a place” (2010: 4). The term is thus “spatial” in a double sense – through the root word “topos” *signifying* “place” and the suffix “ia” *indicating* “place”. At the same time, however, the two spatial signals are contrasted with the prefix *ouk* (reduced to *u*) that carries a powerful negation. “Etymologically, utopia is thus a place which is a non-place, simultaneously constituted by a movement of [spatial] affirmation and denial” (4). Or, as Gregory Claeys and Lyman Sargent put it, “the primary characteristic of the utopia is its nonexistence combined with a *topos* – a location in time and space – to give verisimilitude” (1999:1). This double move of spatial affirmation and denial suggests, among other things, that even though utopia does not exist as a place, it is essentially spatial in so far as it formulates ideas by imagining and constructing worlds. Utopian, and later on dystopian, narratives are narratives of ideas in which space- and world-building is given a prominent structural function.

The importance of space for utopian thinking is particularly evident in literature and in other narrative forms. Since space is one of the principal categories of human experience and cognition, it is a fundamental aspect of the world-building function of narrative texts. As Marie-Laure Ryan argues, “all narratives imply a world with spatial extension, even when spatial information is withheld” (2009: 420). To construct a world is to construct its space, even if by negating spatiality. For Yuri Lotman (1990), the language of spatial relations, one of the fundamental means for interpreting reality, is crucial in constructing and analysing representations of reality modelled by individual texts. Through the analysis of space, we can interpret other, non-spatial categories and define the world view of a particular work and ultimately of a given culture.

The utopian narrative, as an expression of an idealized social system, makes the link between space and systems of values particularly strong. Utopian narratives function as expressions of ideas inscribed in the structure of the utopian world and they can be read as models of the axiological order adumbrated by the construction of space. Artur Blaim in *Gazing in*

Useless Wonder argues that early utopian literature was possible thanks to the growing importance of moral geography at the time:

The emergence of utopian fiction as a mode of European cultural and literary practices [...] was possible only in a culture which based its conception of geographical space on the moral opposition of good, at first identified with one's own land and people, and evil, represented by alien lands and their inhabitants [...]. (2013: 135)

Blaim thus points to the interrelation of spatiality and the axiological order as a defining feature of the utopian tradition. In an extended analysis of utopian spaces and places, he defines individual spatial constructs and elements, such as boundaries, private and public spaces, gardens and the natural world, as expressions of the rules and values of the ideal (or best possible) world.

The emergence of dystopia, as utopia's "anti-model" (Blaim 2013: 231) and "critical friend" develops the link between space and the social order that defines utopian worlds further. The term "dystopia" is of a recent coinage, though Gregory Claeys (2010: 109-111) locates the two dystopian turns in the period following the French Revolution and after the 1890s respectively. Yet, as Blaim convincingly argues, even in early utopian narratives, constructed before the dystopian turns, the existence of dystopian space is assumed and volubly implied. The construction of the normative model of the ideal state would not be possible without the suggested existence of its counterpart, its direct opposite. While it is not always described, its "ontological status within the fictional universe is identical to that of the utopian world" (Blaim 2013: 231) and indicative of "the suggested or open negation of the narrator's world" (242). The negative world functions as a reversed paradigm of the utopian idealization and the reader is expected to take a critical stance through a dialectic movement between the two.

This study proposes to examine George Orwell's novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a canonical example of the dystopian novel in an attempt to define the principal features of the dystopian chronotope. The concept of the chronotope, defined by Mikhail Bakhtin in "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel" in terms of post-Einsteinian time-space, points to "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (Bakhtin 1981: 84). Bakhtin's conceptualization of literary spatiality goes beyond the traditional idea of the setting. For him, the chronotope is the structural pivot of the novel; it functions as "the organizing cente[r] for the fundamental events of the novel. The chronotope is the place where knots of narrative are tied and untied. It can be said without qualification that to them belongs the meaning that shapes narrative" (Bakhtin 1981: 250). The semiotic importance of the chronotope lies in its ability to organize and concretize information by "giving flesh and blood" to "dry information and communicated facts" (Bakhtin 1981: 250). In effect, the chronotope:

emerges as a centre for concretizing representation, as a force giving body to the entire novel. All the novel's abstract elements – philosophical and social generalizations, ideas, analyses of cause and effect – gravitate toward the chronotope and through it take on flesh and blood, permitting the imaging power of art to do its work. (Bakhtin 1981: 250)

Through the chronotope the abstract and the general "thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible" (Bakhtin 1981: 84); through its "representational importance", ideas and values, generalizations and abstractions become artistic worlds and universes. Thanks to its "wholeness and fullness" (Bakhtin 1981: 243), the chronotope functions as the foundation of the artistic modelling of reality.

The chronotope offers a particularly important form of expressing structures of values and norms. "In literature and art itself, temporal and spatial determinations are inseparable

from each other, and always colored by emotions and values". Therefore "the chronotope in a work always contains within it an evaluating aspect" (Bakhtin 1981: 243), which explains why it is such an important aspect of utopian and dystopian narratives. The chronotope functions as "an optic for reading texts as x-rays of the forces at work in the culture system from which they spring" (Bakhtin 1981: 427). It guarantees the unity of the work and determines its relation to reality but it also underlies the representation of the human realm. Bakhtin links the model of the world as inscribed in the chronotope with the modelling of individual and social worlds. As he writes, "The chronotope as a formally constitutive category determines to a significant degree the image of man in literature as well. The image of man is always intrinsically chronotopic" (Bakhtin 1981: 85).

As a structural centre of the novel, the chronotope is closely interrelated with genre. The chronotope in literature, writes Bakhtin, "has an intrinsic generic significance. It can even be said that it is precisely the chronotope that defines genre and generic distinctions" (1981: 84-5). While the quote suggests that chronotopes determine generic variations (Bakhtin 1981: 243), the relation between the two is of interrelation rather than of hierarchy. Bakhtin does not define the form of this interrelatedness, rather his conceptualization of the chronotope "brings space, time, and genre together in a conceptually integrated way" (Tally 2013: 56). In his analysis of forms of chronotope in the novel, as Robert Tally aptly explains,

at times the chronotope primarily appears to be defined by its respective genre, such as the chronotope of the ancient Greek romance, while in other moments it seems to refer to a particular spatiotemporal figure within a work or genre, such as "the road" as distinctive chronotope. (Tally 2013: 57)

The structuring role of the chronotope is explicated by Bakhtin's analysis in "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel". He demonstrates the way the chronotope integrates

and determines other aspects of the text. It is shown to model not only the setting but also the plot, character construction and structure of values – the novel's philosophy or ideology.

In what follows, I shall try to define the dystopian chronotope in the way it organizes and models the represented world in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Dystopia, as a novel of ideas, a satire on a particular social order, is a particularly apt genre to consider the structural function of the chronotope. From the inception of the utopian tradition, utopian world-building functioned as a way of expressing – “giving flesh to” as Bakhtin puts it – general and abstract ideas about the social order. In utopian literature, the link between genre, space, time and the social and axiological orders is thus particularly strong and defining for the whole tradition. The spatial model of the world is the structuring centre that gives the text its unity but also determines, as pointed out by Blaim, its relation to external reality – the criticised “now and here” of the writer and the reader.

2. Plot

Contemporary dystopian narratives developed from “the colossal failures of totalitarian collectivism” (Claeys 2010: 108) of the twentieth century and take these failures as their principal concern. The structuring theme of dystopia is the relation between the individual self and the oppressive, monolithic state. The plot usually takes on the story of a protagonist that awakens to the true nature of social and political reality and starts to rebel, usually unsuccessfully. The story often ends with the protagonist's failure, though in critical dystopias a way out of dystopian reality is offered, or at least, hinted at. A common motif in dystopia is the protagonist's interrogation and trial (Gottlieb 2001: 10), which may function as a way of explicating the ideology behind the authoritarian state.

One of the principal tensions in the composition of dystopian narratives is the tension between the demands of the dramatic plot and the need to explicate the ideological premises of

the totalitarian state, which characterises many novels of ideas. Dystopian narratives often contain a comprehensive presentation of the principles of the organisation of the system, which may take the form of a separate narrative, an extended discussion or a monologue.

Nineteen Eighty-Four tells the story of Winston Smith, a citizen of London, the chief city of Airstrip One in Oceania in the not-too-distant future. In a limited omniscient narrative focalized by Winston, we learn of his failed rebellion against the totalitarian state ruled by Big Brother. The functioning of the state is explained in his diary, in his thoughts, in conversations with other characters, especially with his lover Julia and torturer O'Brien, but also in Goldstein's book and in the novel's Appendix, containing "The Principles of Newspeak".

3.1. Private vs public: spaces

The defining plot pattern of dystopia, focusing on the relation between the individual and the state, translates into a particular construction of space, in which the boundary between the space of the individual and the space of the state becomes a crucial locus of signification. The lines separating the private from the public, the individual from the communal, the intimate realm belonging to the self from the shared (or transgressed) space controlled by the state, become an important source of narrative dynamics – either because the boundaries exist and are transgressed or because they do not exist and the reader is expected to interpret the lack in negative terms. The first case characterises *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, in which, as will be demonstrated below, the drama of the plot hinges largely on the revelation of the state's penetration of the realm of the individual self. The second defines the spatial construction for example in *Brave New World*, where the very first scene of infant conditioning shows the individual self to be completely shaped by the discourses of the system, which suggests the nullification of the boundary between the private and the public, between the individual and the communal. The lack of this

boundary functions as a signal of the dystopian character of the represented world that the reader is expected to note and criticise.

3.2. Private vs public: social relations

The dystopian problematization of the tension between private, individual and public, communal spaces entails a recurrent use of certain common spatial tropes, and since in dystopian narratives the spatial and the social are closely interrelated, spatial themes signal specific forms of social relations. Among the common spatial motifs are the destruction of private space – most importantly the destruction of home and/or home privacy, a critical representation of different forms of communal living and the ubiquity of surveillance systems, be it in the form of the eye of Big Brother in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the glass houses in *We* or infant conditioning into sameness in *Brave New World*. Dystopian society either discourages or firmly forbids the forms of social interactions that might promote privacy, intimacy and individualism. The destruction of private space signals the disintegration of family life, intimate relationships and the impossibility of individual development outside the system of the state.

3.3. Private vs public: mind vs body

The semiotic importance of the boundary separating intimate and shared spaces highlights the significance of other, related boundaries, among which crucial is the one separating the inner, mental and the outer, bodily space. In this sense, the thematic preoccupation with the body, common in dystopian narratives, can be seen as a corollary of the semiotic and dramatic importance of the tension between private and public spheres. In dystopias, the body is often portrayed as the area where the conflict between the individual and the state is waged. The state wants to bring the corporeal under control, while the individual tries to protect it and in principle, the

more intimate the experience of the body, the more dystopian is the effect of its control. Thus, for example, the control of food and consumption tends to be seen as less intrusive than the control of sexual relationships and procreation, the latter being a particularly important theme in feminist dystopias. What is more, the evaluation of biological manipulation as a form of social engineering as either positive or negative tends to function as an important marker of utopian versus dystopian society.

3.4. Private vs public: *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

The dystopian problematization of the tension between private, individual and public, communal spaces is well observable in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The authoritarian state of Oceania constructs social relations by depriving its citizens of any sense of privacy and individualism and promoting instead obligatory communalism and conformism. In the novel, the family is either completely absent, as in Winston's present life, or is subordinated to the principles of the state, as illustrated by the fate of Parsons, whose arrest is the result of his daughter's denunciation.

The disintegration of the family and the values that it stands for, mutual support, comfort, intimacy and sharing, finds a material equivalent in the dilapidated condition of the houses. Dominating the landscape of the city are rotting nineteenth-century houses, in which nothing seems to function and which prevent any sense of comfort, cosiness or intimacy. Obligatory communal activities and constant surveillance by the ubiquitous telescreens, present not only in public but also in private spaces, function as consistent markers of the destruction of the private sphere.

The destruction of the private realm is the principal characteristic of the novel's spatial construction but it is also inscribed in the development of the action. In fact, one might argue that the principle of transgression, of the state intervention and destruction of the private space of the individual, is

the structuring principle of the novel's plot. This theme, as I suggested elsewhere (Terentowicz-Fotyga 2015: 76-77), is signalled in the very first sentence of the novel, portraying Winston's frail attempts to prevent the atmospheric turmoil from entering the space of the house:

It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen. Winston Smith, his chin nuzzled into his breast in an effort to escape the vile wind, slipped quickly through the glass doors of Victory Mansions, though not quickly enough to prevent a swirl of gritty dust from entering along with him. (Orwell 1975: 7)

Winston's inability to stop the wind from entering the house functions as ominous foretelling of his subsequent failure to defend not only his private realm, but also his inner self from the intrusion of the state.

In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the development of the plot is propelled by the shifting of the boundary separating the inner from the outer realms. In the totalitarian reality of Oceania, state surveillance embraces all the material spaces in which Outer Party members are allowed to exist: from public, communal and work spaces to the private space of home. Big telescreens in the streets and in private quarters ensure the system's total penetration and control of the realm of the individual.

In effect, all spaces become metonymic expressions of the dominant ideology. As *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism* explains, the maintenance of the *status quo* of a hierarchical social system, demands that the growth of wealth be controlled and limited to a small minority, while the majority of Oceania kept "bare, hungry [and] dilapidated" (Orwell 1975: 153) by a continuous shortage of consumption goods. This principle, as Winston notes observing the people in the canteen, is reflected both in the urban fabric and in the human body. The urban and the corporeal, in equal measure, are the canvas of the Party's dominance:

A low-ceilinged, crowded room, its walls grimy from the contact of innumerable bodies; battered metal tables and chairs placed so close together that you sat with elbows touching; bent spoons, dented trays, coarse white mugs; all surfaces greasy, grime in every crack; [...] there had never been enough to eat, one had never had socks or underclothes that were not full of holes, furniture had always been battered and rickety, rooms underheated, tube trains crowded, houses falling to pieces, bread dark-coloured, tea a rarity, coffee filthy-tasting, cigarettes insufficient. [...] He looked round the canteen again. Nearly everyone was ugly, and would still have been ugly even if dressed otherwise than in the uniform blue overalls. [...] The majority of people in Airstrip One were small, dark, and ill-favoured. It was curious how that beetle-like type proliferated in the Ministries: little dumpy men, growing stout very early in life, with short legs, swift scuttling movements, and fat inscrutable faces with very small eyes. It was the type that seemed to flourish best under the dominion of the Party. (Orwell 1975: 51-2)

As the novel opens, the only space that truly belongs to the individual is the space of the mind. The private realm, opposed to the shared and controlled outer reality, in this case is limited to the reality of thoughts, as one of the most powerful sentences in the novel suggests: “Nothing was your own except the few cubic centimetres inside your skull” (Orwell 1975: 25). The biggest crime in Oceania, “the essential crime that contained all others in itself” (Orwell 1975: 19) is Thoughtcrime, the crime of independent, individual thinking, as it contradicts the most essential rule of the system – that no private realm beyond the control of the state should exist. Inner freedom, the freedom of the mind, can only be assured by outer conformity and self-control. To keep the boundary between the private and the shared realms tight and in effect to keep the inner thoughts sealed, you need to control not only what you say and what you do but even your voluntary and involuntary body reactions, face expressions, breathing, even the heart-beat. As Winston says, “To keep your face expressionless was not difficult, and even your breathing could be controlled, with an effort: but you could not control the beating of your heart,

and the telescreen was quite delicate enough to pick it up” (Orwell 1975: 66).

When Winston decides to rebel against Big Brother, he in fact decides to disturb the boundary that separates the private realm of thoughts from the sphere controlled by the state, to extend the space of inner freedom beyond the space of the mind. What starts as an expression of his thoughts that so far belonged to the “locked loneliness in which one had to live” (Orwell 1975: 18), gradually takes over the material spaces in which Winston functions. The rebellious activity spills first into the little corner of the room in which he writes his diary, then into the places that Julia and Winston visit during the trip to the country and finally into the space of the room above the junkshop. Visiting O’Brien convinces him that dissident activity has even penetrated the spaces of some Inner Party members. This conviction is soon to be painfully contradicted and Winston will realize that the process of extending the space of dissidence has only been apparent, that the perception of spaces as free of state control has been misconstrued.

When Julia and Winston start the affair, they do not believe that the external rebellion can last; deep in their hearts they know that they will not be able to get away with what they are doing. However, they are convinced that inner space will remain intact, that the realm of thoughts and feelings is ultimately beyond the reach of the state. In one of the crucial passages in the book, Julia tells Winston: “Confession is not betrayal. What you say or do doesn’t matter: only feelings matter. [...] They can make you say anything – *anything* – but they can’t make you believe it. They can’t get inside you” (Orwell 1975: 136), to which he answers in his thoughts:

With all their cleverness they had never mastered the secret of finding out what another human being was thinking. [...] They could not alter your feelings: for that matter you could not alter them yourself, even if you wanted to. They could lay bare in the utmost detail everything that you had done or said or thought;

but the inner heart, whose workings were mysterious even to yourself, remained impregnable. (Orwell 1975: 136)

Yet, the conviction that the inner self is beyond the reach of the Party is precisely where the lovers are proven wrong and the failure of their rebellion consists in gradual unravelling of the scale of the state intervention into their private space. First, the outer spaces that for a while seemed impregnable to state control – the little corner of Winston’s room, the room above the junk shop – are revealed to have been infiltrated all along. Then, the most inner space of individual thoughts and emotions is penetrated. The collapse of Winston’s world is marked first by the destruction of material spaces, then by the devastation of his body and finally, and most importantly, by the ruin of his inner self, signalled by the emotional betrayal of Julia and his declaration of love for and belief in Big Brother.¹

As I argued elsewhere, it is in the destruction of the most private, inner realm, the one that separates the inner space of the mind from the shared, communal reality controlled by the state, that the truly dynamic character of the novel lies.

Not in the failure of the external rebellion, not in the brutal ending of Winston and Julia’s relationship – right from the start they and us, readers know that they cannot succeed. But it is only [...] in the long interrogation and conversations with O’Brien, do we realize that totalitarian power *can* alter thoughts and emotions, that the system *can* undermine the most basic form of identification [rooted in the inner self]. (Terentowicz-Fotyga 2015: 78)

The drama of the plot lies precisely in demonstrating to the reader and to the characters themselves that the space of the mind is not impregnable, that inner feelings, thoughts and convictions are alterable, that the state “can get inside you” and “make you believe” and thus that not even “the few cubic centimetres inside your skull” belong to you. Ultimately, all

¹ The transgression of the state into the inner space leads to its materialization when Winston’s most private fear, the fear of rats, is externalized in Room 101.

individual thought is erased and the type represented by Winston's wife, one that "had not a thought in her head that was not a slogan, and there was no imbecility, absolutely none that she was not capable of swallowing if the Party handed it out to her" (Orwell 1975: 57), is to predominate.

4. Dominant-dominated, appropriated, reappropriated spaces

Whereas the binary division into the private, individual and public, shared (and controlled) realms may be seen as a basic principle of dystopian spatiality, a more complex conceptualization of dystopian spatial worlds can be proposed. In an illuminating analysis of eutopian mapping, Ludmiła Gruszevska-Blaim (2012) constructs a model of dystopian spatiality based on Yuri Lotman's definition of the semiosphere and Henri Lefebvre's conceptualizations of dominant-dominated, appropriated and re-appropriated spaces.

In this reading, the dominant-dominated spaces are "the hegemonic, monologically oriented dystopian" realizations of a master's-project (Gruszevska-Blaim 2012: 169-173); they represent spaces that are controlled by the state, defined and determined by its rules and ideology. In dystopian narratives, the master's-project tries to control ever greater areas, as its principal aim is to "freeze altogether the inner dynamics of the semiosphere" (Gruszevska-Blaim 2012: 173) and impose a singular code upon the whole space.

Appropriated spaces, by contrast, are spaces that serve the needs and possibilities of a group of people and thus enable the introduction of different codes than those defined by the master's-project. Appropriated spaces lean to uniqueness, estrangement, and an aesthetic function (Gruszevska-Blaim 2012: 175-176) and can be linked to the personal, intimate realm of the individual or to spaces dedicated to specific activities of a group of people. Quoting from Lefebvre, Gruszevska-Blaim mentions the spaces of the family and of the individual but also the school, the workplace, the church, even a square

or a street, as potentially appropriated spaces. What distinguishes dystopia, however, Gruszevska-Blaim convincingly argues, is that in contrast to many other genres that “revel in producing spaces of one’s own: private, familiar, idiosyncratic, the dystopia apparently undermines the very idea of the appropriated space” (Gruszevska-Blaim 2012: 176). Since the masterminds of the dominant-dominated spaces aim at reducing the diversity of the space under its control, they limit the possibility of introducing other codes than those defined by the master’s-project.

Therefore, in dystopia crucial is the structural function of the third kind of space – reappropriated space, being the locus of dissidence, the place where “most counterfactual and liminal plotting originates and develops” (Gruszevska-Blaim 2012: 178). Though, due to the threat they pose to the master’s-project, reappropriated spaces in dystopia can only be transient and temporary:

The reappropriated space in dystopia, which is born of the “utopiacrime” committed by protagonists, is the most likely location to dream the eutopian future. The most typical sub-space where eutopian mapping may occur are the peripheries of the dominant space: cellars, roots, dilapidating, pauperized city districts, woods, seacoasts, as if encourage reappropriation. [...] reappropriation takes place whenever two or more characters are capable of finding their own way out of the dystopian chronotopos through verbal exchange, gazing, touching or other signals and means of communication. (Gruszevska-Blaim 2012: 179)

In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the master’s-project of Ingsoc dominates the whole space of Oceania, even if in the areas inhabited by the proles the rules are more lenient, mostly due to the fact that proles are considered incapable of constructing a meaningful code of their own. What appears as appropriated space, the junk shop or the Chestnut Tree Café, proves to be fully controlled by and inscribed in the dominant ideology. The appropriation is thus only illusory. Reappropriated spaces are of necessity only temporary. As Winston says, “[r]ebellion

meant a look in the eye, an inflexion of the voice; at the most, an occasional whispered word” (Orwell 1975: 59). The brightly-lit corridor in which Winston and Julia first touch and exchange the written message, the little corner in his room, where he seems to be beyond the reach of the telescreen, the natural spaces they explore during the trip to the country and, finally, the room above the junk shop, ultimately prove to have been fully invigilated by the state. As Gruszevska-Blaim explains in an unpublished paper entitled “The Dystopian Beyond: George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*”, Orwell’s dystopia “eliminates one kind of beyond after another, leaving its subjects with neither space nor time or discourse that could allow them to feel or imagine that they are behind the confines of the dystopian semiosphere” (2).

5. Heightened semantics of the extreme

As was argued in the Introduction, the structural function of the chronotope as “a centre for concretizing representation” in which “philosophical and social generalizations, ideas, analyses of cause and effect [...] take on flesh and blood” (Bakhtin 1981: 250) is particularly well-observable in dystopias. The close relation between space and ideology in dystopian narratives means that social and political ideas about nightmarish reality find very marked, symbolic expressions in the construction of space; the spatial language of architecture functions as a visible expression of the social order. And since dystopias tend to portray extreme visions of society and its future, the language of space also tends to rely heavily on the poetics of the extreme.

Apart from the dynamic semiotization of the private-public boundary, the markedness of forms can be observed in a strong dynamization of such binary oppositions as the centre and the periphery and top and bottom. Gruszevska-Blaim writes about the second of these aspects, the importance of verticality, as a defining feature of dystopia. She argues that the “heightened semantics of the extreme (i.e. the highest and

the lowest) points on the vertical axis” (Gruszevska-Blaim 2012: 171) is used in dystopia to represent the relation between the ruling and the ruled:

Images of verticality and great height as the spatial expression of potentially violent power (Lefebvre, *Production of Space* 98) have regularly inspired dystopian cinema. The arrogant verticality of the architectural design, appropriately conveying ‘the spatial disposition of a totalitarian state defined by a pyramidal, hierarchical structure, in which power flows from the top’ (Erickson 28), appears already in Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis* (1927). (Gruszevska-Blaim 2012: 170)

The dystopian social structure is strongly stratified and hierarchical. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, this is most evident in the image of the imposing pyramidal structures of the Ministries dominating the landscape of the city. The Ministries “dwarf [ing] the surrounding architecture” (Orwell 1975: 7) function as marked indicators of the power of the state, visible symbols of its tyranny and oppression. The dominance of verticality in a totalitarian social architecture, John Erickson rightly argues, signals the imposition of power from above:

though verticality dominates, the movement is usually downward, the downward movement of the dystopia, where only oppression and subordination, not release, are possible. “[T]he black-moustachio’d face [of Big Brother gazes] down from every commanding corner” (4). Helicopters descend from the sky to peer into people’s windows (4). Winston thinks of his disappeared mother as “sitting in some place deep down beneath him [...] down in some subterranean place – the bottom of a well, for instance, or a very deep grave – but it was a place which, already far below him, was itself moving downwards” (31). (Erickson 1993: 28)

Vertical hierarchies and the downward movement of power, Gruszevska-Blaim argues, is accompanied by the impenetrability of the top and the penetrability of the bottom realms. The ruling caste, living in “visible yet inaccessible towers” can

“choose the degree of (in)visibility of their own persons and/or places of residence” (2012: 171), which is a privilege denied to those at the bottom. “Social and/or spatial invisibility of the dystopian elite successfully blocks rare attempts on the part of the disempowered mob to open a dialogue with the empowered top” (171).

In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, extreme differences between the empowered top and the disempowered bottom are also reflected in the contrast between the rotting houses of the proles and Outer Party members and the neat, comfortable interiors of the Inner Party notables. The “huge block of flats, the richness and spaciousness of everything, the unfamiliar smells of good food and good tobacco, the silent and incredibly rapid lifts sliding up and down, the white-jacketed servants hurrying to and fro” (Orwell 1975: 137) that Winston admires during his visit at O’Brien’s signal the hierarchical superiority of Inner Party members over the rest of society.

The same principle of the “heightened semantics of the extreme” that Gruszevska-Blaim identifies at the vertical level can also be observed at the horizontal level. The representation of the relation between the ruling and the ruled can be portrayed through marked differences between the centre and the periphery. Any semiosphere, Lotman argues in *Universe of the Mind*, is marked by the asymmetry between the centre, where “the most developed and structurally organized languages” (1990: 127) are formed, and the periphery, which is “the field of tension where new languages come into being” (1990: 134). While the centre is associated with power and semiotic closure, the periphery is the space of dissidence and semiotic dynamism:

in the centre of the cultural space, sections of the semiosphere aspiring to the level of self-description become rigidly organized and self-regulating. But at the same time they lose dynamism and having once exhausted their reserve of indeterminacy they became inflexible and incapable of further development. On the periphery – and the further one goes from the centre, the more noticeable

this becomes – the relationship between semiotic practice and the norms imposed on it becomes ever more strained. Texts generated in accordance with these norms hang in the air, without any real semiotic context; while organic creations, born of the actual semiotic milieu, come into conflict with the artificial norms. This is the area of semiotic dynamism. (Lotman 1990: 134)

Using the terms employed by Gruszevska-Blaim, one might argue that the centre is the space of the master's-project, while the peripheries are the spaces of potential reappropriation. The more active the periphery, the more more potential for dissidence and in effect, the greater the semiotic dynamism of the whole semiosphere. Yet, since one of the principal markers of dystopia is the urge to “freeze altogether the inner dynamics of the semiosphere” (Gruszevska-Blaim 2012: 173) and impose a singular code upon the whole space, the control of the periphery is absolutely essential for the stability of the master's-project. The control is both physical and ideological, as the peripheries need to be kept politically powerless and semiotically inactive.

The hierarchical separation of different spaces of the dystopian semiosphere and the dominance of the master's code of the centre are only possible thanks to a strict organization of different spaces, a full control of people's movement and the marked and clearly visible definition of their codes. As Gruszevska-Blaim rightly argues, “[t]he rigidness of spatial arrangement, underlined by both vertical and horizontal compartmentalization, clearly marked centres, borders, and peripheries, repetitiveness of forms, etc. is often accompanied by the neatness and/or uniformity of colour codes or precisely defined trajectories of movement” (Gruszevska-Blaim 2012: 174). Different spaces are demarcated by different, strictly-defined principles and clearly marked verbal and visual codes. People's movements and activities, the books they are allowed or forbidden to read, the food they eat and the clothes they wear, all function as markers of people's position in “the dys-

topian pyramid” (Gruszevska-Blaim 2012: 182) that reflects their power or powerlessness.

In the reality of Oceania, though no spaces beyond the control of the state can be found, the scale of control clearly differs. On the whole, the further away from the centre, symbolized by the four Ministries, the lower the degree of the state penetration. The district of the proles is less invigilated than that of the Outer Party Members, yet more controlled than the space of the countryside, where there are no telescreens, only microphones and thus it is easier to have some sense of impenetrability than in the areas closer to the centre. At the same time, a degree of influence over Big Brother’s invigilation that is possible in the spaces of Inner Party members, which Winston witnesses when O’Brien turns off the telescreen, does not signify the absence of control. Relaxing the invigilation is only possible because Inner Party members themselves function as masterminds and guardians of the master’s-project. In the rigidly organized and compartmentalized space of Oceania, citizen’s class belonging is defined as much by the spaces they are allowed to frequent, as by the clothes they wear and the food they eat. The limited power to move beyond the marked trajectories, the standardised blue overalls resonating with the dominant greyness of the surrounding space, the nonsensical, repetitive drudgery of daily activities, all signal the typically dystopian uniformity and lack of individual agency.

6. Heterochronies: past versus present

Among the defining themes of dystopian narratives is the role of history and the past. As Erika Gottlieb argues, “one of the most typical ‘messages’ of dystopian fiction is that access to the records of the past is vital to the mental health of any society. [...] a past the totalitarian regime would like to distort or deny completely” (2001: 12). The contrast between the past and the present is thus inscribed in the principal dystopian conflict between “a narrative [of the hegemonic order] and a counter-narrative [of resistance]” (Baccolini qtd. in Moylan

2000: 150) and thus, by default, in the principal plot of the individual's rebellion against the state. People's experience of an "absolute break with their traditional time" (Foucault 1986: 26) has a spatial dimension, as narratives of history are in fact stories of the past worlds. Thus, the differences in the spatial organization of the past and present worlds speak of their different social models. As Gruszevska-Blaim explains in "The Dystopian Beyond: George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*":

Dystopia attempts to distance itself not only from its present beyond but also from the discourse, politics, culture, history and even topography of *the old world*, regardless of the ontological nature of the latter. Interestingly, the old world, or rather its picture conveyed by the official media, is often a propagandist, fictitious, doubly dystopianised construct conceived by those who control dystopia. (8)

In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the narrative of history is one of the principal areas of state control. In contrast to *Brave New World*, where the past of civilization finds material expression in the Savage Reservation, in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* the past has been fully appropriated by the master's-project, as one of Oceania's principal slogans declares: "Who controls the past controls the future, who controls the present controls the past" (Orwell 1975: 199). The past, O'Brien says during Winston's interrogation, does not exist "concretely, in space" (Orwell 1975: 199), only in the written records controlled by the Party, while history is constantly rewritten and fully manipulated. As Goldstein's book makes clear, the alteration of the past is necessary firstly to safeguard that no point of reference and standard of comparison for the present system exists and secondly to prove the full control of the Party over the real world: "Past events [...] have no objective existence, but survive only in written records and in human memories. The past is whatever the records and the memories agree upon" and thus the full control over the records both ensures and demonstrates

the “full control of the minds of its members” (Orwell 1975: 170).

Though the past is to some extent inscribed in the space of the city, in the rotten condition of the nineteenth-century urban fabric, Winston finds it difficult to decipher, as the disintegrating urban space speaks primarily of the destruction of the past. Similarly, the artefacts he finds in the junk shop are of limited use, as they remain only fragmentary and inconclusive. Moreover, as Gruszewska-Blaim demonstrates, these artefacts are in fact false signs:

However, neither an old engraving of St. Clement Dane, a church, nor the fragile glass paperweight with a coral inside, sheltering, as Winston believes, a world of its own, is the footprint of the past that leads backwards, into the temporal beyond. Misleading is also a light-hearted tone of the old nursery rhymes: [...] “Here comes the candle to light you to bed, / here comes a chopper to chop off your head”. In actuality, all of these ‘footprints of the past’ happen to be false signs—the indicators of the dystopian here and now testifying only to the omnipresence of the Thought Police. Ironically, they are the warnings the dystopia of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* can allow itself to issue, appropriating the old discourse and props. Behind the two-hundred-year-old engraving, there is a “bug” installed by the Thought Police. The paperweight with its fragile world is as easily crushed as Julia and Winston’s re-appropriated niche—their rented room which proves to be a trap and anti-home. And the chopper coming to chop off one’s head does not only belong to a playful poetic reality constructed for children’s sake. It really comes to claim Winston’s head. (Gruszewska-Blaim, “The Dystopian Beyond” 19-20)

In effect, the only truth about the past can be found in the individual mind, in Winston’s memories of his childhood years and in the inconsistencies of the documents he rewrites and tries to remember. Yet, once his mind is “rewritten”, his “defective memory” (Orwell 1975: 197), capable of remembering things unaccepted by the Party, is finally cured and the break with the past is complete.

7. Urban dystopia

Peter Fitting rightly contends that “[d]ystopia shares with the traditional utopia a predominantly urban emphasis” (2010: 120), primarily, it seems, because the spatial language of the city lends itself better to expressing the complex architectonics of the social order. Discussing urban dystopias in American film, Thomas Halper and Douglas Muzzio (2007) propose the following typology of dystopian cities: the city as chaos, defined by an anarchic return to pre-civilized forms, the city as a totalitarian machine, in which a totalitarian state imposes rigid system of control and order, the environmentalist’s city in which the ecological problems of today are shown to evolve into different forms of nightmarish futures, the postmodern city, as exemplified by *The Matrix*, and retro city presented, for example, in *Blade Runner*. Yet, a brief consideration of canonical dystopias suggests that the totalitarian city can take very different shapes that cut across Halper and Muzzio’s typology. It can take the form of sleek futurity, as well as of chaotic, retro urbanity.

In the representation of dystopian cities, the principle of “heightened semantics of the extreme” that Gruszevska-Blaim writes about also plays a major role. Dystopian cities tend to operate with extreme architectural and visual codes, which is perhaps exemplified best in the film medium. Dystopian urban spaces are associated either with sleek, sterile, technologically developed places, often organized with mechanical efficiency, as seen in *Equilibrium* or *Minority Report* or with grimy, chaotic, disintegrating spatialities represented, for example, in *Blade Runner* or *Escape from L.A.* Monochromatic colour codes, so memorably used in *THX 1138* contrast with splashy colours of *The Hunger Games*. Carceral places are juxtaposed with spaces of anarchic chaos; crowded, labyrinthine cities and buildings are contrasted with vast, empty, often desert-like landscapes, sometimes even within one narrative. Extreme visual codes function as clear signals of extreme forms of the social order.

In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, one of the principal purposes of the master's-project is to "arrest progress and freeze history at a chosen moment" (Orwell 1975: 163) and since science "has almost ceased to exist [and] technological progress only happens when its products can in some way be used for the diminution of human liberty" (Orwell 1975: 156), the London of Oceania encapsulates the idea of "used future" or "future as the past". Though some signs of futurity in relation to the writer's present are introduced into the novel, among which crucial are the ubiquitous telescreens, on the whole, the city is defined by the disintegrating nineteenth-century urban fabric, constantly threatened and demolished by bombs during air raids. The ugly, monochrome, grey, grimy city encapsulates the Ingsoc's vision of modern life – "its bareness, its dinginess, its listlessness" (Orwell 1975: 62). As Winston says:

The reality was decaying, dingy cities where underfed people shuffled to and fro in leaky shoes, in patched-up nineteenth-century houses that smelt always of cabbage and bad lavatories. He seemed to see a vision of London, vast and ruinous, city of a million dustbins, and mixed up with it was a picture of Mrs Parsons, a woman with lined face and wispy hair, fiddling helplessly with a blocked waste-pipe. (Orwell 1975: 63)

In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, there are no sleek interiors or technological gadgets to signal advanced civilization, there are only crumbling houses with dysfunctional appliances and crude machinery. As I argued elsewhere, the grey, derelict city is well portrayed in Michael Radford's adaptation of the novel:

A powerful aspect of the *mise en scène*, largely responsible for the film's haunting atmosphere, is its monochrome colour palette. The whole film is shot in washed-out, desaturated colours, in greyish and sepia tones. Since the camera is often placed behind a screen or a window, many shots have a rough, grainy texture, which further suggests the gap between the inner, private world and the public, official perspective. Radford's *1984* is reportedly a rare example of the use of a film processing technique called bleach by-

pass being done on every release print rather than the internegative or interpositive, which creates the washed-out look of the shots and gives the projected image depth (IMDb). The forest and the Golden Country are the only spaces portrayed in vivid hues and the change of the colour palette captures well Orwellian contrast of bleak urbanity and dreamy rurality. (Terentowicz-Fotyga 2015: 89)

8. The city versus the countryside

Another structuring spatial contrast characterising dystopian narratives is the contrast between rural and urban spaces. In the analysis of the English Robinsonade of the eighteenth century, Artur Blaim (2016) identifies the relation between nature and civilization as an important theme for the whole tradition. Evoking the binary model proposed by Harold Toliver, Blaim analyses utopianism's dialogue with the pastoral tradition with its contrasting visions of nature and civilization (2016: 151-3). The contrasting features Blaim identifies in *The English Hermit* can be said to define well the dystopian chronotope. Within this model, nature is associated with freedom, organicism, democracy, plainness and honesty, innocence, simplicity and cultural order, while society by constriction, mechanical formality, hierarchy, masked artificiality, experience, complexity and barbaric violence. In fictional dystopias, as Peter Fitting explains, "the rebel finds in the rural, pastoral world beyond the confines of dystopian society a space and freedom otherwise denied [...] the natural, organic character of the rural world is inalterably opposed to the controlling human design of dystopian society" (2010: 120-1).

Contrasting features evoked by Blaim define well the relation between nature and civilization in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, where the artificial and threatening space of the city is contrasted with the natural world of the countryside. What is significant, in the novel, the natural world functions both as real and mental space. The Golden Country of Winston's imagination, is both a distant memory of the past and the landscape he recognizes during the trip with Julia. Presented as an ideal-

ized image of natural beauty and harmony represented by peaceful coexistence of different elements and creatures, it stands in stark contrast with the drab ugliness, devastating hierarchies and barbaric violence of the city:

In his waking thoughts he called it the Golden Country. It was an old, rabbit-bitten pasture, with a foot-track wandering across it and a molehill here and there. In the ragged hedge on the opposite side of the field the boughs of the elm trees were swaying very faintly in the breeze, their leaves just stirring in dense masses like women's hair. Somewhere near at hand, though out of sight, there was a clear, slow-moving stream where dace were swimming in the pools under the willow trees. (Orwell 1975: 28)

The clash between the realistically represented city and the dreamy pastorality of the Golden Country represents the contrast between the brutal order of the present system and the idealised spaces of the past but also between the crude reality of the contemporary city and the imaginary Arcadia of the mind. Yet, like all reappropriated spaces, the Golden Country offers only a transient respite from the dystopian world of the city and ultimately it cannot "constitute a viable utopian enclave" (Moylan 2000: 162). In the last scene of the novel, the memories of the happy moments from the past are deemed false, while welcoming the future depends on Winston's acceptance of the propagandist version of the present "entering his brain" (Orwell 1975: 239).

9. The false signs of dystopia

Finally, the defining aspect of dystopian spatiality takes on the relation between language and reality. As Artur Blaim convincingly demonstrates, in contrast to utopia, being the domain of true signs, "the dystopian world is the domain of false or empty signs" (2013: 250), signs that are either openly misleading or meaningless. In dystopian worlds, the "bond between signs and their meanings becomes tenuous and relative (251) and in effect reality stands apart from its representations. Totalitarian

regimes, as Michael Urban demonstrated in his analysis of discourse in the communist countries, are dominated by “non-referential signification” in which the “official descriptions of the prevailing order lack the practical referents” while the actual practices of the dominant party cannot “be named or discussed” (2006: 122).

False signs are at the core of the philosophy of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as they pervade the notions of Newspeak, doublethink, Thoughtcrime, reality control and the denial of objective reality. In Oceania, Winston says, words have “no connection with anything in the real world, not even the kind of connection that is contained in a direct lie” (Orwell 36) and the different aspects of the split between language and reality are dramatized throughout the novel, from the lie about the chocolate ration to rewriting the past to the interrogation in which Winston learns to see the evidence of his senses as tentative and modifiable. [...] We are told, for example, that the Ministry of Peace concerns itself with war and Ministry of Love maintains law and order. The paradox culminates with the oxymoronic: “war is peace, freedom is slavery, ignorance is strength” (Orwell 25). (Terentowicz-Fotyga 2015: 79)

The split between language and reality has an effect on the representation of the dystopian world, which exists as if in two forms. In one, created by the incessant propaganda pouring out of the telescreens, life is plentiful, people beautiful and the system efficient. In the other, nothing works, emaciated people suffer from scarcity of everything and the system only “perpetuat[es] *unfreedom* and *inequality*” (Orwell 1975: 163) enforcing the “controlled insanity” of its citizens (Orwell 1975: 172):

Life, if you looked about you, bore no resemblance not only to the lies that streamed out of the telescreens, but even to the ideals that the Party was trying to achieve. [...] The ideal set up by the Party was something huge, terrible, and glittering – a world of steel and concrete, of monstrous machines and terrifying weapons – a nation of warriors and fanatics marching forward in perfect unity, all thinking the same thoughts and shouting the same slogans, perpetually working, fighting, triumphing, persecuting –

three hundred million people all with the same face. The reality was decaying, dingy cities where underfed people shuffled to and fro in leaky shoes, in patched-up nineteenth-century houses that smelt always of cabbage and bad lavatories. [...] Everything faded into mist. The past was erased, the erasure was forgotten, the lie became truth. (Orwell 1975: 63)

10. Conclusion

The contemporary popularity of dystopian narratives indicates that a range of themes, tropes and visual motifs used in portraying dystopian realities is very broad. But numerous features that characterise the dystopian chronotope in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, as identified in the study, have proved defining and persistent for the dystopian tradition. Crucial among those are the oppositions between the individual and the state, the mind and the body, the high and the low, the central and the peripheral, the past and the present, the city and the natural world and between false and true signs. Though they evolved through different forms and contexts, they continue to structure the nightmarish visions of the human world in literature and cinema.

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