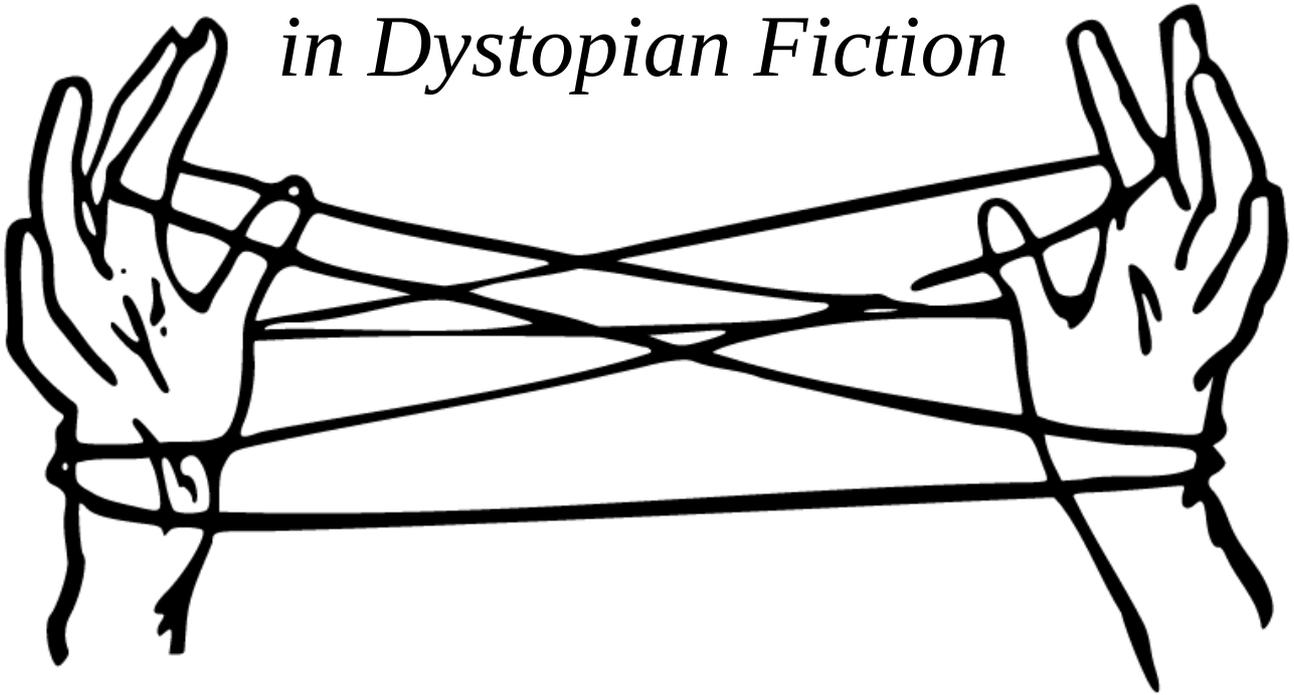# *On Constructed Enemies in Dystopian Fiction*

Nineteen Eighty-Four, Cat's Cradle, and Snowpiercer

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Introduction

Dystopian fiction has long since been a way for writers to imagine and project all sorts of mishaps human beings could come across in the process of developing the self, and of developing the self as a social being within a community. Societies that are depicted in dystopian fiction seem to have taken a dream, and applied Murphy's Law to its pursuit; they are realistic nightmares, often even portrayed as imminent and dreadful futures that should actively be avoided, or so their creators seem to imply.

Even when one studies dystopian fiction quite superficially, it becomes apparent there is a peculiar type of character present in a number of dystopian works. It is an enemy figure, set up by the totalitarian regime of the dystopian society, whose existence serves the narrative in such a way that it perpetuates the regime's dominance. Sometimes, this constructed enemy is the antagonist; in other cases, they are supported by the protagonist. Also, they are not always the enemy of the regime itself. The relations are rather complicated, and not uniform across the three dystopian fictions that will be discussed; an attempt at clarifying them will be made later.

Information on the significance of this constructed enemy figure is rather limited and not at all satisfying. There is a number of sources that mentions a "fictional rivalry between groups that actually operate as a cartel" and a constructed reality as aspects of dystopian fiction (Miller); there are those that centre around the establishment and discussion of enemies in real life (Kakar 17) (Bauman 97); and there are researchers that focus on the contribution of fiction to the construction and perception of enemies in real life (Srikanth 8, 11), but no article or book seems to comment on the constructed enemy figure in fiction as a dystopian factor. Since its appearance cannot be dismissed as merely incidental, this thesis will investigate the way or ways in which it may both contribute to and reveal the dystopian character of a fiction.

The thesis will start off with an introduction to the subjects of research, and certain concepts that will be referred to throughout the analysis of these fictions; after this, there will be a more

analytical approach. What will be highlighted for each fiction is the process of the construction of the enemy, the motivations for this construction, and whether and why this is a relevant aspect of these narratives, and especially of their dystopian essence. What this research intends to discover is whether or not there is some aspect of the constructed enemy, or of the constructed opposition of powers, that is essentially dystopian.

Chapter 1

Introduction to the research

The dystopian fictions that will be discussed in this thesis are the novels *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) and *Cat's Cradle* (1963), and the film *Snowpiercer* (2013), a recent Korean-produced film adaptation of the 1982 graphic novel *Le Transperceneige*. This small selection offers a considerable variety when it comes to their moment and place of publication, the issues they reflect, and, more relevantly, their treatment of the constructed enemy figure. These three fictions will be the main focus of this thesis; it may briefly comment on others in passing, but intends to investigate the role and significance of the constructed enemy within the aforementioned three works.

Besides an introduction to the narratives and their relevance to the research, there will be some discussion of the separate groups and the relations between them preceding the explanation of a few more technical terms, the understanding of which would be rather useful for the reader.

1.1 *Scope*

Nineteen Eighty-Four

George Orwell's 1949 novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, his last before his death in 1950, is one of the most iconic dystopian texts. Its protagonist is Winston Smith, a citizen of Airstrip One (formerly known as the United Kingdom, and now part of the superstate of Oceania), who turns against the state's totalitarian regime by joining the Brotherhood. The Brotherhood is headed by Emmanuel Goldstein, a former companion of Oceania's leader Big Brother, who now attempts to undermine the Party's reality-obstructing practices and their attempts at controlling the minds of all citizens. Winston and the reader later discover that Goldstein had been a construct of the state all along.

Because there are many parallels between the situation in Oceania and Soviet-Russia, it is generally believed that the USSR was at the very least an inspiration to Orwell when he wrote *Nineteen Eighty-Four.* The characters Big Brother and Emmanuel Goldstein physically resemble

Joseph Stalin and Leon Trotsky, respectively: Big Brother and Stalin are both "black-haired, black-moustachio'd, full of power and mysterious calm" (Orwell 18) (Fulgham), and both Goldstein and Trotsky are bespectacled Jewish men with fuzzy hair and a goatee beard (Orwell 14) (Kurtagic). Besides the physical similarities, their positions of the betrayed leader versus the deserter or, from another perspective, the dictator and the revolutionary, seem to match up ("Background"). The overlap of the Oceanian and Soviet-Russian society is also significant: the habit of altering history occurs in both (King 27), as does the introduction of new words to positively represent new concepts. Because of these parallels, the novel's critique of the dictator-governed, individuality-obliterating totalitarian state is commonly interpreted as a critique of Stalin's regime. It is this critical position that has contributed to the establishment of this novel as the iconic text it remains today. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* also remains relevant to a contemporary audience in light of recent revelations, such as those by Edward Snowden about the surveillance practices of the National Security Agency in May 2013 ("Revelations"), which caused a massive spike in the novel's sales (Subramanian).

Cat's Cradle

Unlike the protagonist in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, John, or Jonah, as he asks the reader to call him, is not a citizen of the totalitarian state, but an American traveller into the island nation of San Lorenzo. John has come to the island to look for Franklin Hoenikker in order to gather information on Frank's father Felix, one of the scientists that helped develop the first atomic bomb. No one but Felix's children know their father also happened to have invented a substance called *ice-nine*, which can turn any body of water into ice upon contact; at the end of the novel, a body frozen by *ice-nine* slides into the sea, turning it and all connected waters into ice.

The possible threat to humanity scientific development poses is not the main story line, however. There is also the tension between San Lorenzo's head of state, "Papa" Monzano, and the

followers of Bokonon, an outcast leading a forbidden religion. Though practising Bokononism is punishable by death on a giant metal hook, everyone, including "Papa", are Bokononists.

Cat's Cradle is a very witty and at times misleading text. In hindsight, its misleading character is implied from the very beginning: after all, its epigraph states that "[n]othing in this book is true" (Vonnegut vii). Bokononism itself is based on *foma*, or "harmless untruths" (Vonnegut vii), and everyone seems to be well aware of this. Still, the *foma* are accepted, for if they are accepted, one may live a happy life. *Cat's Cradle* satirises religion and science, as well as American superiority, while it also shows the complications and obstacles that come with the pursuit of utopias. Though it is not as well-known as *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, or as much a part of contemporary popular culture as *Snowpiercer*, it is a cleverly written and brilliantly funny yet critical text, deserving of more attention and discussion.

Snowpiercer

Of the three fictions to be discussed, *Snowpiercer* is the most recent, though this film is based on a graphic novel that had been published some 30 years before. However, it has somewhat shifted the issues of the 1982 original in order to be more applicable to modern times.

After counter-global warming measures backfired in the 2010s, the world has been covered in snow and ice for seventeen years. A precious few have found refuge aboard a train that has thus far been riding and riding its way through the frozen landscape. Aboard the train, a class system has been established, with the people from the front section oppressing the tail-sectioners. Curtis, the tail-sectioner protagonist, organises a revolution against the head of the regime and engineer of the train, Wilford. At the very end, Curtis finds out that the rebellions of the tail section had been engineered in order to kill off excess organisms from the train's fragile closed ecosystem, and that the children Wilford kidnaps from time to time are used to replace broken parts of the train's engine.

Snowpiercer sheds light on contemporary threats to humanity, such as ecological disasters,

and shows, on a very small scale, the problems of overpopulation and the Malthusian catastrophe that it may eventually cause. It also deals with issues of class segregation, and the significant lack of opportunity for upward mobility between classes. Since this film was only produced so recently, it has not been critically analysed much; besides this, its treatment of the constructed enemy is quite different from that in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Cat's Cradle*, as will be illustrated later, and therefore, its inclusion should bring more diversity into this research.

1.2 *Groups and positions*

One of the more intricate aspects of the narratives, as mentioned before, is the set of relations between regime, revolutionaries, protagonist, antagonist, and so on. An attempt at simplifying them can be found in Appendix 1, which is a visual schematic representation of the positions of groups as well as of specific characters. To put them into words is a somewhat more difficult task. Two important distinctions to make are that between focal group and dominant group, and between antagonist and constructed enemy.

The focal group is that (part of) society that the protagonist is a functioning part of, id est, that within which they openly live their lives, as opposed to the more secret lives they may live as part of another group. The dominant group is not necessarily the same as the focal group, though this is the case in both *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Cat's Cradle*; it could be used synonymously with the totalitarian regime. Winston Smith and John are overtly part of the dominant focal group, even though they are simultaneously insiders of the resistance movements that attack or defy these totalitarian focal groups. Taking *Snowpiercer* into account, however, it becomes clear that one cannot make the general statement that the focal group and the dominant group are the same. Curtis is clearly a tail-sectioner, and opposed to the dominant front section's regime. Similarly, the counterparts of the dominant and the focal group, which will be called the resistance movement and the "opposing group", respectively, do not necessarily overlap.

The second distinction is that between the antagonist and the constructed enemy. The antagonist is the protagonist's enemy, while the constructed enemy mainly serves and is set up as a negatively portrayed counterpart and threat to the focal group. Again, the choice to discuss *Snowpiercer* necessitates this distinction. In the two other works, the antagonist (the enemy of the protagonist) is the leader of the dominant focal group, and the constructed enemy leads the opposing resistance movement, while in *Snowpiercer*, the antagonist and the constructed enemy are combined in Wilford, who is the leader of the dominant opposing group.

In short: in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the dominant focal group is the state of Oceania, with its leaders, Big Brother and the Party, being the antagonists; the opposing resistance movement is the Brotherhood, and its leader Emmanuel Goldstein is the constructed enemy. In *Cat's Cradle*, the dominant focal group is San Lorenzo, and the opposing or defiant resistance movement of Bokononism is headed by the constructed enemy Bokonon; and in *Snowpiercer*, the focal resistance movement of the tail-sectioners is opposed by the dominant front section and its leader Wilford, who is simultaneously the antagonist and the constructed enemy.

1.3 *Key terms*

Dystopia

The dystopia as a genre of fiction is most closely connected to the utopian genre, since dystopia is generally classified as a sub-genre of the utopian genre. The word *utopia* was coined by Thomas More in the 16th century, and his 1516 fiction takes the word for its title. The term's intrinsic ambiguity is its most significant feature: *topos*, which means "place" in Greek, is combined with *-ia*, which is a location marker as well, strengthening the geographically concrete image of the imagined society. However, the prefix *u-* is simultaneously a reduction of *ouk-*, which means "no" or "not", and of *eu-* which means "good". A utopia is therefore at the same time a good place and a non-existent place (Vieira 4). Utopian or eutopian fiction centres around a positive vision, a hopeful

imagination, which visions were around long before More coined the term; what it unique about its invention, however, is that it eliminates the possibility of separating a perfect society from its non-existence (Vieira 5), and that it introduces new formal characteristics of the genre (Claeys *Reader* 3). It is from this utopian genre that the dystopian sub-genre springs. If the former is a dream, the latter is a nightmare.

Around the French Revolution, the first turn towards dystopian fiction sets in. The Revolution itself was a product of decades of widespread utopian dreaming, a drastic act to reach a vision of liberty, equality, and brotherhood. Still, utopian thought of the time was met with some criticism, and especially its ideal of perfectibility. Some argued that the utopian impulse to perfect human behaviour is first and foremost unnatural (Malthus 86), and furthermore, that it implies a desire to control the whole of human nature and societal norms, which is characteristic of totalitarianism; therefore, utopianism has an inherent tendency towards the negative and dystopian (Popper 161, 163, 165). However, utopianism would generally accept a significantly improved society rather than a perfect one as its ideal, and has proven to be effective in small, non-totalitarian communities (Claeys *CC* 108) (Manuel 48). The critical academic view of the utopia as inherently dystopian is clearly incorrect; therefore, one cannot explain the dystopian by stating it simply follows from the utopian.

As in academics, the response to utopian visions in literature was critical. An example of this would be Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, or even his "Modest Proposal"; both explore societies (gone wrong) based on reason, which was idealised by contemporaries. In the sense that it plainly goes against the utopian thought of the time, the term "dystopia" in the first dystopian turn could be used interchangeably with the term *anti-utopia*.

In the second dystopian turn, which is associated with the late nineteenth and the early to mid-twentieth century, one could maintain a different interpretation of "dystopia". Rather than an anti-utopia, a response to utopian thought, the dystopia has now become a direct response to

contemporary developments in society and science. A powerful event that inspired dystopian narratives was the First World War, which showed the dangers and destructive powers of glorified science. Other phenomena that sparked dystopian imagination were socialism, the possible manipulability of Darwinian selective reproduction, and the emergence of a World State or superstate (Claeys *CC* 111, 126). In brief, eugenics, and the manipulation thereof, as well as the loss of autonomy are typically associated with dystopian societies; other common traits of dystopianism are ecological catastrophes, and the satirising of purely reasonable or utilitarian rule (Claeys *CC* 110, 112).

Totalitarianism

As mentioned above, the loss of autonomy to a superstate is generally linked to dystopianism, but the loss of autonomy on an individual level is often an even more prominent aspect of dystopian fiction. A form of government that is often featured is totalitarianism, making the governed territory a totalitarian state. It is commonly associated with dictatorships, but there are clear differences between the two: while a dictator claims all political power and authority by force ("Dictatorship"), the totalitarian regime tried, and succeeds, to actually gain its subjects' loyalty and love through subtle enforcement of a complete control of the citizens' minds and hearts (Claeys *CC* 119). In other words, the dictator steals power, while the totalitarian regime tricks its subjects into handing over their power; how the enemy functions within this power scheme is detailed in later chapters. The totalitarian state typically has but one party, headed by one inspiring, admirable and charismatic leader, that has control over the secret or not so secret police, but also over surveillance of citizens, economic, cultural and informational resources, and the media. It also demands the complete merging of the individual with the state, and sacrifice of privacy and personal interests for the greater good of the state, as well as the destruction of enemies in however large numbers. The focus on some higher purpose than the totalitarian dictator's pleasure is essential in distinguishing

totalitarian rule from other forms of government: "the totalitarian dictator, in sharp distinction to the tyrant, does not believe that he is a free agent with the power to execute his arbitrary will, but, instead, the executioner of laws higher than himself" (Arendt 346).

The societies depicted in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, *Cat's Cradle*, and *Snowpiercer* all fit into the mould of the totalitarian state in one way or another. Oceania is a surveillance state that does not allow for individualism, and that executes enemy hostages on a regular basis; San Lorenzo's regime also suppresses any expression of individualism outside of set boundaries, quite arbitrarily punishing law-breaking Bokononists by execution on the hook, "one every two years" (Vonnegut 123); and the snow-piercing train's leader Wilford clearly has spies in the tail section, while also directing an aggressive police force that helps to execute excess individuals, or rather, units whose presence endangers the train's survival. All of these regimes are motivated by higher purposes, too, which will be explained in further detail in the third chapter.

The Other

What also happens in each of the narratives is that the non-dominant or opposing groups and their leaders – so the Brotherhood with Goldstein, Bokonon and his Bokononism, and the front section with Wilford – are actively 'othered' in order to construct the opposition. Othering often occurs when people in a group are in some way, any way, different from each other, and it negatively distinguishes the Other from the Self, or One. The Other can be the homosexual to the heterosexual One, the black person to the white, the female to the male, and the foreigner to the native. The creation of the Other is most often a device used to define the Self by creating a binary opposition, and therefore, the conceptualised Other and Self are dependant on each other's existence (Haynes 2). Usually, it is a dominant group that has the power to enforce this stereotypical othering. The identification of groups works on many different levels, such as sexuality, skin colour, gender, and country of birth, and therefore, people can fit into several categories at the same time.

For the Self or One, the categorisation of people is essential, as the One seems incapable of defining what it is without defining the Other; so to belong to the dominant One, one must be able to identify characteristics that set oneself apart from other, non-dominant groups. Though the main grounds for the perception of people as separate groups seem to be derived from a person's natural or biological essence, like skin colour or sexuality, their importance as a distinguishing factor is, in reality, a social construct following from multiple types of basic binary opposites (De Beauvoir).

Chapter 2

Methods of construction

This chapter will show the various methods and devices that are used by the dystopias' regimes to vilify the opposing groups and their leaders. It will focus on the use of propaganda, and of othering, as well as the grounds for this process of othering.

2.1 *Propaganda*

The *dominant group* in each of the three fictions attempt to influence the citizens of the *focal group* in such a way that these citizens will support the state, without obviously forcing any kind of obligation on them. One method used to achieve this is the distribution of propaganda, which, simply put, is a message in words or images, of which the intention is to control or alter public opinions ("Propaganda"). Its goal is for members of the public to incorporate these messages into their individual sets of beliefs, ideally without questioning them: this is called indoctrination.

In *Nineteen Eighty-Four,* propaganda is more prevalent than in the other two fictions. It is everywhere: on the transceiving telescreens that are found in every home, in the streets, and in pop culture, if we can speak of such a thing in Airstrip One. It is both pro-Oceania, and anti-Goldstein (as well as anti-Eurasia and anti-Eastasia; the focus will remain on Goldstein as the individual constructed enemy). The protagonist, Winston, even contributes to the production of propaganda in his job at the Ministry of Truth: he is assigned the task of writing an article for a newspaper, based on a non-existent speech of Big Brother, which Winston will have to come up with himself. He uses this liberty to promote certain qualities that the Party deem desirable (Yeo 52), by having Big Brother praise a fallen soldier for his devotion to his country in battle, for his commitment to the Junior Anti-Sex League, and for his purity (Orwell 50). Yeo actually argues that Winston's girlfriend Julia writes propaganda as well in the fiction department, since the literature she helps to create

promotes certain values (Yeo 53).

Besides this self-promoting propaganda, there is also that propaganda that vilifies the opposing group and its leader, therein setting up or constructing this individual as an enemy figure. The most remarkable piece of Oceanian propaganda evoking anti-Goldstein sentiments is probably a short film shown during the Two Minutes Hate. This is a daily event in the workplace, where Goldstein's face is shown on a screen, and workers are expected and encouraged to express violent hatred towards him (Orwell 17). This process, which effectively forces Oceanians to feel, or at the very least express, hate towards Emmanuel Goldstein, involves a combination of pressure from peers and from authoritative figures, and a fear of standing out from the mass: those exhibiting peculiar behaviour are likely to be scrutinized by the Thought Police, a surveillance force that tracks all citizens through, for example, the telescreens, in order to detect even the slightest sign of unorthodox or compromising activity. Those that are found to be guilty of expressing such compromising thoughts will be vaporised, which the reader has to assume means something along the lines of "erased from existence". The propaganda distributed in Oceania, then, evokes anti-Goldstein feelings in citizens, because it is combined with pressure from peers and authorities, and a fear of being liquidated by the Thought Police.

Cat's Cradle also shows some use of propaganda: it is somewhat different from that in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in that San Lorenzo's self-promoting propaganda is also aimed at foreigners, rather than just at its own citizens. An example of this would be the way the San Lorenzan regime attempts to turn the island state into a pleasant destination for entrepreneurs as well as tourists, specifically Americans, by renewing infrastructure and building hotels, and by maintaining an incredibly simple dollar-to-corporal conversion rate of 50 American cents per corporal.

The San Lorenzan population, on the other hand, is given very contradictory signals. First of all, the national anthem is about freedom, pride, and strength (Vonnegut 97), for which reason it

could be seen as self-promoting propaganda; however, the words were written by Bokonon, and this apparent acceptance of his words starkly contrasts with the anti-Bokononist propaganda that is also widely distributed in order to set up Bokonon and his followers as the enemies of San Lorenzo as a progressive, Christian state. Secondly, this anti-Bokononist propaganda also seems contradictory to itself: it takes the form of pamphlets that call for the persecution and extermination of Bokonon and all of his followers, while the pictures of Bokonon that are included on these pamphlets depict him as an old black man who "looked clever and kind" (Vonnegut 95). What these pamphlets supposedly intend to express is a negative attitude towards Bokononism, while their contents do not seem to effectively convey this message; but then again, it is not meant to be effective, as will be detailed in the next chapter.

Besides encouraging the persecution of Bokononists, the pamphlets also threaten all those practicing Bokononism with death on "the hook", a large gallows-like structure from which a massive hook hangs. People are publicly executed on this hook on a semi-regular basis by being pierced with the hook from side to side, and left to hang in that manner until they die, to serve as an example for future law-breakers. The hook itself is another visible form of anti-Bokononist propaganda.

In *Snowpiercer*, indoctrination is a more obvious way of spreading propaganda to the children that have been born on the train and do not know anything outside it. In a memorable and rather creepy scene, we see a classroom full of children being taught that Wilford created the train (*Snowpiercer* 01:08:30), which of course requires intelligence and creativity, though in the audiovisual materials as well as the songs the children sing with their teacher, Wilford is depicted as a divine and benevolent provider figure, which description is prevalent among front-sectioners, such as minister Mason (*Snowpiercer* 00:19:10). This is the dominant group's self-promoting propaganda; the tail section, or the focal group, also has something that could be interpreted as a more physical, tangible

form of propaganda. One of the tail-sectioners, only known as the Painter, makes drawings of certain events and people, such as the children that are stolen from their parents without any reason being revealed to them, and the humiliation and punishment of a father who attempts to save his child. These paintings, no doubt circulated among tail-sectioners, are a constant reminder of the oppressive and painful actions of the front section as carried out by their police force. These reminders would especially inspire those that have lost loved ones to Wilford's regime, and in the tail section, this means that practically all tail-sectioners are collectively inspired with a desire to rebel against the front-sectioners' oppression. Therefore, the lingering traces of pain and abuse by Wilford and his followers stress the need to overcome this injustice.

Besides the propaganda, from both sides, concerning Wilford's dominance, all passengers are constantly told that they belong to be, and deserve to be, in the section they find themselves in now. After all, the front section versus tail section division is based on tickets. When the earth froze over, some people had already booked themselves a trip around the world aboard the train, while others were allowed on later, so those that genuinely deserved a spot on the train are privileged over those that were not actually supposed to be on it. The children born on the train have been raised with this idea, and their positions and functions within the orderly organism that is the train seem natural and obvious to them. They have been raised with the idea that "we must, each of us, occupy our particular, preordained position" (*Snowpiercer* 00:17:26), and this is why the front-section children are so quick to condemn the tail-sectioners, and why the tail-section children, heartbreakingly, willingly commit themselves to a life as a literal cog in the machine when a part of the engine breaks and their service is required.

Propaganda and indoctrination in *Snowpiercer* are mainly a tool to ensure everyone stays in their proper place, so that the balance is maintained; in the tail section, it also inspires anti-Wilford sentiments, making him into an enemy figure to this focal group.

2.2 *Othering*

The concept of othering has been explained in the introductory chapter; it is especially relevant to the discussion of in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Cat's Cradle* (though *Snowpiercer* will still be commented on). To briefly recapitulate: othering is a way of creating binary oppositions so that human beings can be categorised, especially into groups that are superior or inferior to other groups. Examples of this can be the positioning of blacks as inferior to whites, in which case black people are the Other, and white people are the Self or the One.

The othering of Emmanuel Goldstein is obvious as of the very beginning of the novel. His depiction in the Two Minutes Hate-video is described as a man with a Jewish face, and both his first name, derived from Immanuel (Hebrew for "God is with us"), and his last name sound Jewish. The Jewish people are haunted by a history of hatred, scapegoating, and persecution; this was also the case during the Second World War, and it is generally believed that Orwell drew parallels between Oceania and Nazi-Germany. However, one could not simply dismiss Goldstein's appearance as being copied from a real-life inspiration: in the depiction of the enemy of the state, it is most significant that he appears to be a Jew, in other words, to be part of a group that has a history of being discriminated against, and of being blamed. Also, Jews, at the time the novel was written, made up for about an estimated half a percent of the world's population; therefore, most Oceanians, would not identify with Goldstein on grounds of his ethnicity, assuming the ethnic-demographic situation of Oceania are anything like the actual contemporary situation.

What is also interesting is that the Two Minutes Hate-film is edited in such a way that, towards the end, his face briefly changes into that of a sheep. The bleating voice he is said to have combined with the visual of a sheep would create, within the citizens of Oceania, the connotation of an animal when confronted with Goldstein's image and words, and a rather dumb animal at that. The anti-Goldstein propaganda is here used to other him, to have people associate him with a silly

sheep – or, possibly, with a sheep gone astray from the shepherding of the Party – which, together with his Jewishness, allows citizens to further dissociate him from themselves.

Bokonon also has ethnic features that are traditionally Othering ones. When Bokonon, the black adventurer, and Earl McCabe, a white deserter, arrived on the island of San Lorenzo, they found its native people battling each other while Western corporations and conquerors exploited the land; at first, Bokonon and McCabe ruled together for a while, but then Bokonon decided they needed to set up the power relations in a different way (the reasons for which will be detailed in the next chapter). It may seem like the new power relations are based on a pitting of the black outlaw against the white (head of) state, which would be a rather classic example of othering; however, the population of San Lorenzo itself is not white. Therefore, if we look at the separation of constructed enemy and dominant regime as a white versus coloured division, this would be quite ineffective in the case of San Lorenzo, but as with the propaganda, this separation is not actually meant to be an effective way of keeping the natives away from practising Bokononism.

The othering features of the constructed enemies in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Cat's Cradle* are not a direct cause for the binary opposition of the state, or the focal group, and the resistance movement or opposing group: Goldstein is not the enemy because he is Jewish, and Bokonon is not the enemy of the state because he is black. These are merely contributing factors, whereas in *Snowpiercer,* the constructed enemy's highlighted othering features really are a direct cause for the struggle between the focal resistance movement and the opposing dominant front section. Wilford's othering features are that he is a front-sectioner, the divine creator-leader of the train, and therefore he is the Other because he is privileged. It is exactly this unequal distribution of privilege that that tail-sectioners are fighting against, and therefore, the constructed enemy in *Snowpiercer* is somewhat different from Emmanuel Goldstein and Bokonon in that the focal group's hatred is directly aimed at

Wilford's othering features, while the Oceanians and San Lorenzans do not seem to be actively stimulated to loathe Goldstein and Bokonon, respectively, for their ethnic Otherness.

Chapter 3

Motivations

This third chapter will focus on the motivations and reasons of all focal societies and, when applicable, of the constructed enemies themselves, for the perpetuation of the dominant group's rule by means of the society-versus-enemy system. To ensure the dominance of the regime is maintained, one could imagine that having the loyalty of all citizens to the state would suffice; this could be achieved by stimulating the population to love the state, rather than to teach them to love the state and to hate some enemy figure. Still, the regime in each of the three fictions choose to construct an enemy figure, and this section will show why the "love us, hate the enemy" system could be seen as more effective and more desirable than simply promoting a "love us" attitude.

3.1 *Dynamic tension*

The most direct answer to the question: "Why would anyone want to construct an enemy to oppose their own leadership?" comes from Bokonon, who speaks of dynamic tension. This is an ancient concept, which has been discussed as an underlying aspect of existence itself: Heraclitus, a Greek philosopher, argued that tension is the essence of all things, taking a bow as an example (Cohen). What dynamic tension basically entails with regard to Bokononism is explained by referring to Charles Atlas' 1920s body building method of the same name, in which muscles are forced to move against their own tension in order to make them stronger: one tenses the muscles in a certain body part, which then contract, and forces the body part to move against this contraction. What Bokonon and McCabe have set up on San Lorenzo is essentially the same: they create a tension (Bokononism) for the San Lorenzans to counter, in order to strengthen them as a unit, even though they are simultaneously a part of creating the tension. Like with Heraclitus' bow, some sort of relationship between and cooperation of the two opposite camps, so of both the dominant group and the resistance movement, is required, if they are to counter each other.

Another important motivation for the establishment of two opposites is also explained by Bokonon, who, in one of his calypso's, says: "without Papa's badness / […] / how could wicked old Bokonon / ever, ever look good?" (Vonnegut 72). There seems to be a very black-and-white approach to the relationship between the two opposite groups; however, the word "look" in the last line of the calypso, like so many other signs included in *Cat's Cradle*, already suggests that the distinct good versus bad separation is but an illusion, and this is not only the case in Vonnegut's novel, but in all three of the dystopias. It is only after a final confrontation that the protagonist realises that the choice for what they deemed to be a good cause had been a deception, and that reality knows only shades of grey.

In short, the constructed enemy functions as a force against which the focal group can unite, becoming stronger in the process, while this figure also creates the illusion that there is such a thing as a pure and good cause to fight for.

3.2 *Wastefulness*

The regimes of the dominant groups seem to want their subjects to remain occupied, and therefore, they assign them projects that will only result in a waste of goods, effort, and lives. Oceania wages war on Eurasia and Eastasia, building massive structures called Floating Fortresses, a sort of ship, which will be considered obsolete before they have ever been put to good use (Orwell 199). Bokonon is hunted by the San Lorenzans, but mysteriously escapes just as they are about to catch him, never actually being captured. Gilliam (in cooperation with Wilford) could also be said to coach his fellow tail-enders into futile battles and hopeless escape attempts, while he knows that they will die.

Goldstein's book, the *Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism*, explains the need for perpetual war (Orwell 206) in these totalitarian dystopian regimes: "So long as defeat meant the loss of independence, or some other result generally held to be undesirable, the precautions against

defeat had to be serious." The loss of independence is a public reason to continue warfare, and to always be prepared for battle, lest surprise attacks from enemies would overwhelm Oceania. Furthermore, Goldstein writes that Floating Fortresses are simply a way to use up whatever goods and materials are left after the population's most basic needs are met, so that everyone is deliberately held in poverty. This makes the allowance of small privileges all the more significant, so that the general populace is both delighted and their loyalty easily "bought" by these privileges: for example, the Oceanians thank Big Brother, with large public demonstrations, for a small increase in their chocolate ration.

What is also created by the wastefulness of the dominant group is a permanent need for labour, so that unemployment is reduced; this holds true for *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Cat's Cradle*, especially. Analysing *Snowpiercer* is a bit more complicated on this point, since the discarding of lives and goods does not perpetuate the need for jobs in a direct way. In an indirect way, however, it is required for the survival of everyone on the train, and the survival of the system that has been set up within it. The system must be derailed – so the failure of revolutions does not eliminate the need for new revolutions. The discarding of lives, therefore, means a need for more lives, which demands the discarding of lives, and so on. Because there is always a need for revolutions, more living room is created constantly, which ensures the survival of the train's population.

The above shows that the constructed enemy figure is an excuse for keeping the population occupied and poor, but with low standards of happiness, so that the smallest privilege (or the illusion thereof) will satisfy the masses.

3.3 *Illusions of belonging, resistance, and freedom*

When the rebels of the dystopian societies turn against the dominant group, they unite under the leadership of the enemy of the state, who, again, is not necessarily the constructed enemy. If one cannot find their own moral standards within the dominant group, they will want to rebel against it;

since the dominant group does not want them to set up a few dozen different rebel groups, there has to be one united resistance movement. The enemy of the state is therefore also, in all three of the works, a construct of the dystopian regime. What defines them as a strong leader is that, for all the dominant society's slander and demonisation, they apparently still pose a threat to the dominant society that is significant to the point that they must continuously be prosecuted, and that citizens must always be warned and reminded that they should not join the resistance (in the case of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Cat's Cradle*, especially; *Snowpiercer* does not have the flows from dominant group to resistance movement, since the opposing groups are physically segregated).

The choice to be a part of the resistance movement, rather than of the dominant society, suggests to the characters that they actually have some sort of freedom to choose. In reality, the resistance movement has been constructed in such a way that it is the only logical choice for those who question the system. The revolutionary leader fights against oppression, and would appear to be a powerful ally, so it would be reasonable to join their cause. Thus, there is no real freedom of choice; however, the characters that do question the system remain, ironically, convinced that they are actually critical thinkers.

Besides preventing the cropping up of small rebel groups without any form of central, neat, easily observed organisation, the existence of a leader figure heading one resistance movement (the tail section, the Brotherhood, or Bokononism) ensures a sense of belonging in the rebels. In *Snowpiercer* and *Cat's Cradle*, it is clear who of the people around you belong to what group; in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, however, it is not. Winston and Julia only know each other and O'Brien to be members of the Brotherhood; they have no idea who else is part of this group they are so glad to belong to, so apparently, being part of a group does merely require the *sense* that one is part of a group, rather than going to actual conventions and such. The illusion of belonging is therefore not necessarily an illusory feeling of belonging, but a true sense of belonging to an illusory group. The image of an individual at the head of a group forms the base of another deception: that an individual

could actually make a difference, and that the resistance of the rebel movement to the dominant group matters. All these significant individual rebels put together in one group would certainly make for a powerful revolution.

Conclusion

What can be concluded so far is that even though the dystopias discussed here have constructed enemy figures, there are considerable reasons for this construction. It offers citizens a chance to choose which side they believe to be right or wrong, rather than to enforce only one option; whichever side they do choose, they will feel as if they belong to a group; the continuous failure of the resistance movement to actually overthrow the static dominant society shows members of the dominant group that they are being kept safe; the perpetual war against the constructed enemy means that there are always shortages, making for low standards among citizens, which means they are easily kept happy as well; there is job security for everyone, because more lives and more supplies are always needed (*Cat's Cradle*, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*); in the case of *Snowpiercer,* the "job security" could be changed to "living space", because the battle against the constructed enemy demands death – in other words, the clearing of living space. While there are perfectly reasonable motivations for the construction of an enemy figure, there are certain values and human rights that are violated by the presence and intentional perpetuation of the constructed enemy figure.

The main problem with the constructed enemy is that it completely eliminates the concept of choice, since a choice for either one of the two opposing groups is a manipulated one. Choosing to fight against the dominant group is still choosing *for* something established by the dominant group. The dominant group has erased free choice, because it would threaten the stability of their own system, by means of which they keep each of their citizens happy, whether they choose to support the regime or secretly work against it. However, the elimination of free choice in itself undermines the moral autonomy of people.

One of the most famous figures in modern philosophy, Immanuel Kant (do note the similarity between his first name and Goldstein's), states in his Categorical Imperative that one must always treat another person as an end as well as a means, and not merely as a means to an end ("Categorical Imperative"). To treat a person as an end means to acknowledge that they are not a

tool, but another person with an own rationality and desires. For the dominant group to deceive them to the point that whichever choice they make, it will always benefit the established system, is to deny its citizens the freedom to make a choice based on their own rational consideration, to deny their rationality, and to deny their autonomy. By taking away the autonomy and free choice from a person, they can no longer be seen as a moral actor, since their perception of right and wrong, and thus their moral decisions, are completely warped.

Humans have been described as rational animals: if no citizen of the dystopian society can be said to possess any moral capabilities or true rationality, then there is nothing to make them any different from a brainless object, a mere part of the machine. The constructed enemy is a device that ensures the perpetuation of the current system, and has not much of a purpose higher than that. One could argue that the dominant groups pursue and achieve some sort of utilitarian dream of keeping everyone reasonably happy, and that the construction of an enemy figure is not necessarily evil; on the other hand, as it turns out, the construction of the enemy obliterates the presence of anything that is truly good, since the concepts of right and wrong are actually an illusion set up by the dominant group. The fact that the totalitarian regime is practically inescapable makes the bleak hopelessness of the dystopia all the more obvious.

The research at hand would suggest that the presence of a constructed enemy and a constructed conflict significantly contributes to the dystopian essence of a film or text, since such a manipulation of reality annihilates the freedom, as well as the fundamental human capability, to rationally make practical and moral decisions.

Evaluation

Of course, the conclusions drawn from the analyses in this work may not hold true for all works of dystopian fiction. Nonetheless, this research has selected and analysed three works spanning twentieth and twenty-first century dystopian imagination. As such, it may provide insights into the dystopian genre, the essence of which remains difficult to grasp to this day.

What would be suggested to be useful further research is first and foremost to test the assumptions of this thesis further by looking at more works of dystopian fiction. It could also be interesting to turn to novels, films, and other media, from other genres of fiction, to investigate any presence of constructed enemies.

While this thesis has focused on individual enemy figures, it may be worthwhile to extend the assumptions of this thesis to collective enemies, or non-personal enemies, since what constitutes the dystopia as such might just be the demonisation of anything, and not necessarily of one individual.
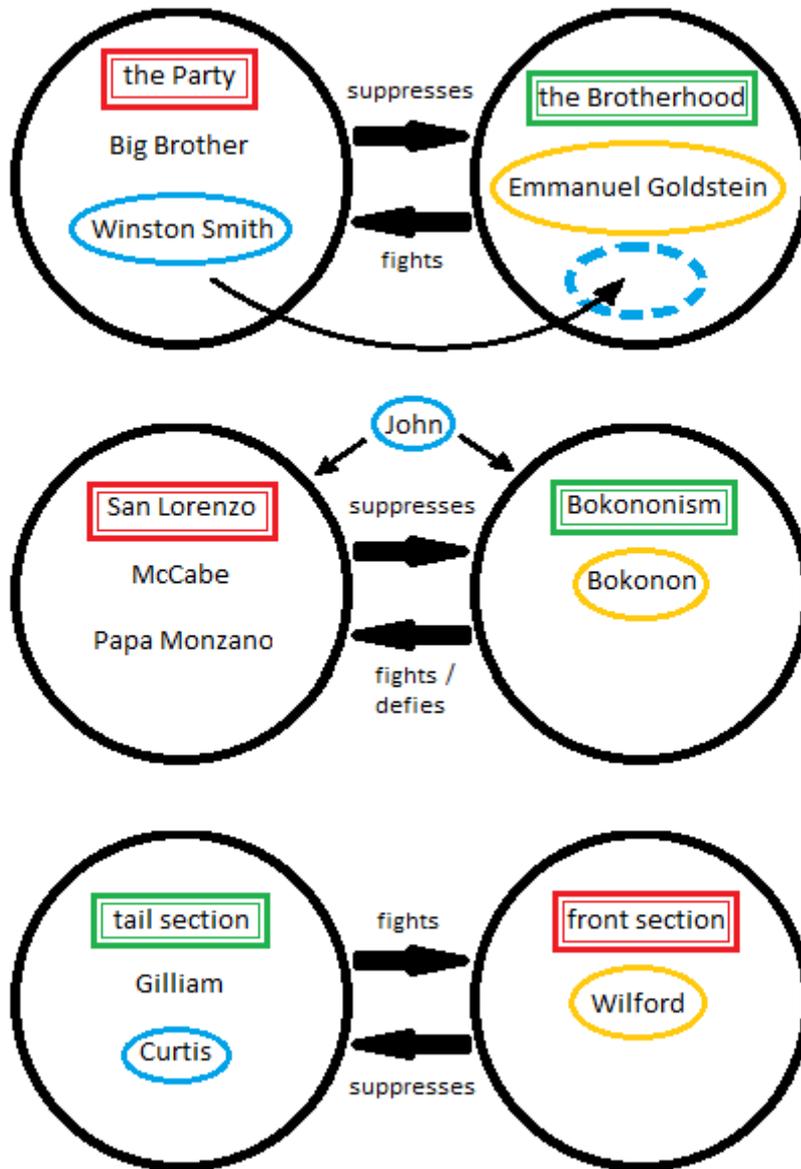
Circles on the left: focal group.

Circles on the right: opposing group.

Blue oval: protagonist.

Yellow oval: constructed enemy.

Red rectangle: dominant/oppressive group.

Green rectangle: resistance movement.

Arrows for Winston Smith and John signify their movement into or involvement in different groups.
Winston clearly becomes an insider to the resistance movement; John is not positioned within either
the focal group or the opposing group, since he mainly remains an outsider to both.

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