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Niculae Gheran

Past History in the Dark Future

Romantic Heterotopias and the Preservation of Memories within the Dystopian City

ABSTRACT
The essay focuses on spatiality within negative utopias, more specifically on the manner in which authors of this type of writing have incorporated into their texts a sense of nostalgia for a better, often idealized pre-dystopian past. This nostalgia is textually embedded in the symbolic geography associated with certain heterotopian locations as well as connected with objects that function as temporal connectors between the dystopian present tense of the novel and the past. The issue is very important because historical memory itself often seems to be under attack in dystopian universes; therefore, such isolated environments act as singular bridges between the dire state of affairs of the present that is the object of the author's critique and a better lost, longed-for past. The purpose of this essay is show how the critique many authors of negative utopias have made is rooted in the Romantic critique of the modern ethos. Authors of negative utopias seem to have inherited romanticism's dislike of a mechanistic and rationalistic conception of space, the disenchantment of the world, authoritarianism as well as the nostalgia and longing for a different symbolic order situated in the past.

KEYWORDS
Utopia; Negative Utopias; Romanticism.

NICULAE GHERAN
Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania
dum_spiro_spero09@yahoo.com

As science fiction deals with worlds of the future and, more specifically, as negative utopian science fiction focuses on a future gone wrong, often beyond any hope of repair, one may ask what then is the role of the past tense for the authors of such works? We can observe subtle and sometimes not so subtle ways by which authors of negative utopias have emphasized the importance of the symbolic order of the past as opposed to that of the present and future of their fictional spaces. George Orwell commented, for example, that *1984* does not represent a clear unshakable verdict for the future but rather a warning that the future may possibly be developing in that direction. Our job, of course, is to avoid such developments in light of the dark vision presented to us. "He who controls the past controls the future, he who controls the present controls the past" is the famous Orwellian maxim. The shaping of the future, the key, after all, to surmounting the bleak present depends on the past. But what past is that and how is it imagined by authors of negative utopias?

In *Romanticism Against the Tide of Modernity*, authors Michael Lowy and Robert Sayre underline the fact that, apart from the 19th century, the romantic ethos propagated itself in different forms in the 20th and

even 21st century. While aesthetically differences developed, many authors that would certainly not have labelled themselves "romantics," given the specific critique they made modernity, can be easily associated with the Romantic ethos. The two authors claim that, from movements offering a critique of the mechanized state and totalitarianism (not restricted to but also including those of the 1960s) to modern feminism, new spiritual movements (or those that desired a return to the spirituality and social forms of the past) have their source partly in the Romantic ethos.

Among the ten possible reactions against the ethos of modernity stemming from Romanticism, Lowy and Sayre mention restitutionism and conservatism. They come with both nostalgia for the past and alternative plans for "repairing" the faulty present by looking backward. Max Weber considers that the primary characteristics of modernity are industrialization, the disenchantment of the world, instrumental reason and bureaucratic domination, while in *Conservatism: A Contribution to the Sociology of Knowledge,* his pupil, Karl Mannheim, talks of Romanticism as a conservative mode of opposition against bourgeois philistinism, as a *weltanschauung* "ideologically opposed to the forces that gave birth to the modern world."

We should thus notice that, during the 19th century, the romantics reacted against many of the elements that later on, in the 20th century, became the objects of criticism for many authors of negative utopias, who integrated them in their dark portrayals of the modern world: the mechanized state, instrumental reason, the disenchantment of the world, social reification, industrialization. In the case of conservative romanticcism, a nostalgia for the past as a world where all these were not present is also noticeable.

In this article I wish to focus on environments associated with a nostalgia for the pre-dystopian past that are situated within the urban setting itself, as well as connected to various memory objects like books and other miscellaneous objects that seem to be around them. These include cities of the past, hidden rooms within the dystopian city, monuments, old buildings, churches, or simply memories of a totally different spatial practice and symbolic order. The emphasis of the authors on their existence, often in a ruinous state, but still connected symbolically with the past is noticeable and important for the ways authors of negative utopias understood the relationship between time and space. I find that this type of intermingling of temporal planes, the idealization of the past and more specifically the usage of such spaces as repositories of historical as well as individual memory are part of a literary device that has its origin in the romantic world view and the romantic critique of modernity. Ann Whitehead notes in her book, *Memory*, that the intersection between memory and place can be seen in mnemonic landscape.[1] This landscape assumed a fundamental role, as Raphael Samuel notes in *Theatres of Memory*, in the Western Christendom of the Middle Ages, which centred on a "far-flung network of pilgrim routes and landmarks … conveniently sited for commemorative worship."[2] Something of the "commemorative worship" of place can also be discerned in the internalized Romantic landscapes of the mind, exemplified by Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey," and it can also be felt in Proust's evocations of his beloved childhood landscape of Combray.[3] Other important figures like Maurice Halbwachs[4] also commented on the intersection of memory and place, regarding the locations in which social groups gathered as crucial to the preservation of memory while, Pierre Nora derived the phrase *lieux de mémoire*[5], "sites of memory," from Frances Yates' loci memoriae.[6]

Spatiality, then, is crucial to the activity of remembering, and seems as important as temporality to both its conceptualization and its practice.

Richard Terdiman argues, on the other hand, that that the turn of the 19th century witnessed an intensification of relation with the past, which amounted to what he terms a "memory crisis."[7] Based on this argument, Whitehead dedicates a chapter in her book on the conceptualization and representation of memory from the late 19th century onwards. She argues, in particular, that there is, in 19th and 20th-century accounts of memory, a continued emphasis on the individual.

Indeed we see the fact that the authors of negative utopias were very much conscious of the modern memory crisis by depicting locations where we see how *collective memory* fails as a source of truth about the past. However, we should be taking into account arguments such as Ann Whitehead's and Richard Terdimant's on the importance of *individual memory* for 19th- and 20th-century discourse as well as critics that concentrate on the issue of the historical past in certain negative utopias like Philip Wegner, so we can observe important points of connection and resemblance between some 19th- and 20th-conceptions of memory, for it seems that the individual memory of the past is not as completely erased as many critics discussing the spatiality of negative utopias have assumed.

What is extremely interesting is that such a supposition alters our very perception of many novels as "anti-utopias" and helps us detect some veritable "utopian" tendencies behind the author's pen, an active desire and nostalgia for the past. Northrop Frye believed that "utopia is the comic inversion of the tragic structure of the "contract myth" and, hence, represents the desire for the restoration of that "which existing society has lost, forfeited, rejected, or violated."[8] If we hold this to be true, then the residual topographies are not only linkable with a romantic ethos and critique of modernity but also with the utopian, rather than the anti-utopian tradition. In the essay "Modernity, Nostalgia and the Ends of Nations" from the book *Imaginary Communities Utopia, the Nation and the Spatial History of Modernity,* Phillip E. Wegner mentions the fact that Orwell, in *1984*, inaugurates a new form of "conservative utopia" (in the sense discussed by Karl Mannheim in *Ideology and Utopia*[9]). The critic notes the author's tendency and desire of return to a romanticized topography of the past by constructing spaces that are connected with this temporal plane.[10]

In accordance with the theory developed by Michel Foucault, I propose nominating the romantic, quasi-utopian spaces that evade the dominant symbolic spatial ordering present in the text as heterotopias, that is, spaces of otherness, sites constituted in relation to other sites by their difference. In *The Badlands of Modernity: Heterotopia and Social Ordering,* Kevin Hetherington in *The Badlands of Modernity: Heterotopia and Social Ordering* says that heterotopias "organize a bit of the social world in a way different to that which surrounds them. That alternate ordering marks them out as Other and allows them to be seen as an example of an alternative way of doing things."[11]

In this particular sense, I see these marginal symbolic topographies in the novels as being heterotopic in relation to the rest of the novel's symbolic space, their difference being constructed as Other (Foucault), as romantic with respect to the specific form of critique of modernity they underline (Lowy and Sayre) and utopian for they represent the desire for the restoration of that hich existing society has lost, forfeited, rejected, or violated' (Frye).

There are a great number of rooms and corridors associated with the past within the dystopian city. Most of them are liminal

spaces, or spaces of transit that connect the city with an outer world usually banned or abandoned.

In the case of Owen Gregory's *Meccania: The Superstate,* the author describes the imaginary country of Meccania, a country loosely based on how the author perceived Germany at the beginning of the 20th century. We notice from the beginning that we are dealing with a clockwork universe, a rationally planned totalitarian country where freedom is absent and the individual is merely a cog in the machine of the state. The narrative is constructed around the travels of a Chinese man in Europe. After visiting Luniland (England) the main character is suggested to visit Meccania, for a radically different form of European social organization. In this country, as the name might suggest, everything is modern, mechanized and efficient. Symbolically and geographically, the past of the country has been negated as obsolete, every vestige of the old medieval buildings has been eliminated and replaced by Meccanian town planning, which is boasted as more efficient, functional and rational[12].

However, in certain parts of the city, somehow the past still makes itself apparent intuitively to the main character. It is interesting how it is precisely irregularity that triggers this association with the old world, the fact that the buildings are not fully imbued with the rational planning characteristic of "the Meccanian spirit."[13]

With regards to personal freedom, as a quote from the novel subsumes it "the machine seems to absorb everything and the individual counts for nothing."[14] Two things are important to note for the purposes of the present article. The first is the fate of the individuals that fail or refuse to adapt to this form of social organization. Such individuals are diagnosed with a mental illness named Znednettlapseiwz (Chronic tendency to Dissent) and are placed in mental asylums. According to Michel Foucault's definition of heterotopias, more specifically heterotopias of deviation, enunciated in the essay "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias" as "spaces in which individuals whose behaviour to the required mean or norm are placed. Cases of this are rest homes and psychiatric hospitals and, of course prisons."[15] Obviously in our case, two types of heterotopias overlap, for the mental hospital is used as prison by the totalitarian Meccanian state.

Another important thing to notice is the dialogue between the traveller and his Meccanian guide regarding literature. The guide recommends that the traveller should read modern Meccanian literature. However, when the traveller demands to know if the Meccanians do not have more imaginative writing, the answer he receives is that they used to have such literature in the past but it has been abolished and replaced with new modern literature. The old one, dating from two hundred years before the present time of the narrative is only read by the mental patients in the asylums reserved for the individuals that oppose the Meccanian order.[16]

Owen Gregory wrote *Meccania: The Superstate* in 1918. We know from the beginning of the novel that the events are imagined by the author as taking place in 1970. Thus, the present time of the novel is 1970. Judging by this, we can logically deduce roughly to what epoch belonged the books read by the people interned in the asylums. Two hundred years ago would place the period at the end of the 18th century. We know that the end of the 18th century marks the beginnings of Romanticism, an epoch in which a strong focus was placed on concepts like "imagination" as opposed to the scientific rationalism of works that characterized the Enlightenment era.

In fact, when the guide argues that the preference for the two hundred year old books as opposed to modern scientific

treatises is a sign of the patients' "arrested development," he associates these individuals with an anti-modern ethos belonging to the past, a past that is quite simple to localize in time. In contrast to the world outside the asylums, the existence of such books is permitted as a form of therapy in the mental establishments. In the novel, the traveller visits one of the asylums and has contact with one of the "patients." The author refers to him as "an individual belonging to an older generation altogether, a generation older than his contemporaries, if you understand what I mean"[17]. The asylum's location is also important. It is placed "upon a lonely moorland, far away from any village"[18] or another Meccanian settlement. This wild setting of the asylum needs to be emphasized, its placement on the outskirts of Meccanian settlements, as well as the detained individual's interest in the historical past of his country of which he mentions that "it was full of its old traditions, and not even the peaceful charms of Bridgeford – an island that seemed like a vision of Utopia – could stifle my passion for the pine forests of Bergerland, our old home in Meccania."[19] The patient has a feeling of nostalgia with respect to an idealized pre-modern symbolic order. Such a vision is clearly identifiable as romantic in the scholarly sense due to the nostalgia for an idealized pre-modern past associated with home, nature, old folk traditions and the past. In the novel's dystopian state, individuals that value this symbolic order and dislike the modern one are placed in what is basically an asylum whose purpose is precisely the eradication of this type of ethos.

One should also have in mind Romanticism's antipathy towards all things mechanical. In *Romanticism against the Tide of Modernity*, Lowy and Sayre mention works like Franz von Baader's *On the Concept of Dynamic Motion as Opposed to Mechanical* (1809) as a work that had considerable reverberations among the Romantics. They argue that "in the name of the natural, the organic, the living, and the dynamic, the Romantics often manifested a deep hostility to everything mechanical, artificial, or constructed. Nostalgic for the lost harmony between humans and nature, enshrining nature as the object of a mystical cult, they observed with melancholy and despair the progress of mechanization and industrialization, the mechanized conquest of the environment. [. . .] The Romantics were also haunted by the terrifying prospect that human beings themselves could be mechanized."[20]

Thomas Carlyle wrote in *Signs of the Times* (1829) that "Were we to characterize this age of ours by any single epithet, we should be tempted to call it, not an Heroical, Devotional, Philosophical or Moral Age, but above all others, the Mechanical Age. It is the Age of Machinery, in every outward and inward sense of the word."[21] This particular Romantic anxiety with mechanism flows through all the text of Owen Gregory's 20th century negative utopia *Meccania: The Superstate*, as well as arguably through most 20th century negative utopias written in the vein of great authors like George Orwell, Aldous Huxley, Yevgeny Zamyatin and Margaret Atwood, works that centre on clockwork universes. Meccania is presented as a country containing "the living forces of the present."[22] We can conclude that the asylums contain by contrast the living forces of the past and in no small extent, the Romantic ethos associated with it. Having this in mind and also Michel Foucault's definition of heterotopias, we can thus safely speak of the asylum in Gregory's novel as a romantic heterotopia of deviation. Such heterotopias of deviation, where those that cannot or will not submit to the will of the dystopian status quo are sent, can be found throughout negative utopias.

Another novel in which the mental asylum performs a similar function is Horace

Newte's *The Masterbeast* (1907). Newte imagines the fate of Great Britain under a socialist dictatorship. The main point that his novel conveys is that socialist thinking is, above all other ideological considerations, a system that is against nature itself. For him, social hierarchy is a natural phenomenon; nature is constructed as to favour the strong and competition. A political system is only successful in his opinion inasmuch as is constructed in harmony with the laws of nature. Departing from this harmony with nature will lead to disturbing social effects like dictatorships as well as to the collapse of the system sooner or later. Freedom can exist as well only within a system that accounts for human nature. Having this perspective in mind, one can see how socialism for Newte may take power on account of having stronger popular support at a given moment in time, despite the fact that it is not in harmony with the laws of nature, that it does not encourage competition and that it will eventually fail into a dictatorship which imposes unnatural laws and will eventually collapse by itself. This is precisely what happens in his novel and the author uses the trope of the heterotopian asylum among other devices to illustrate this.

In his socialist dystopia, children are taken from the mothers after birth to be raised in state institutions. The mothers suffer psychological ailments from having their children taken away at birth. In his socialist state, despite the fact that socialism proposed equality between man and woman, it ironically ends up taking away women's power to vote, precisely on account of the fact that many women, as a fact of nature, do want to keep their offspring and may use their voting power to get this freedom and thus, as a consequence, destabilize the socialist state as shown above. The "mad" women that refuse to give their children away at birth or genuinely suffer terrible psychological trauma as a result of this parting are interned into asylums that function, as we have seen in the case of Owen Gregory's *Meccania: The Superstate* as heterotopias of deviation. It is however peculiar to note Newte's obsession with his idea of the organic symbiosis between politics and nature, his emphasis on the artificial, rationalized, bureaucratized and mechanized structure of the socialist state. His problem is not with the ideal of socialism per se, but with the fact that this ideal is not compatible with his conception of the natural organic link between politics, nature and the people. Such a vision is inherent in Romanticism also, particularly with forms of romantic nationalism. Also, it is extremely important to note the device by which Newte introduces his fictional dark future. As in many utopias and dystopias we are dealing with the traveller trope, an outsider character used by the author to explore the new world. In Owen Gregory's *Meccania* we had a Chinese traveller exploring Europe. In the case of Horace Newte's *The Masterbeast*, this traveller does not belong to a different geographical space but to a different time. The main character dies in the historical past and is somehow brought back to life in the socialist state of the future with all his memories intact. The time traveller is able to compare the two different ways of organizing society. The author emphasizes the fact that the past was better because it was more attuned with the laws of nature.

Another interesting work is the novel written by E.M. Forster: *The Machine Stops,* where we have the ventilation shafts that link the underground world of 'the machine' with the world outside. The author portrays a world in which humanity has chosen to live in underground cities wholly dependent on artificial means of life support and abandoning the natural world above. These

shafts date from a period "when man still breathed the outer air"[23] and are the means by which the rebellious main character Kuno gets to the surface of the planet. The ventilation shafts date from the time when the city was under construction and therefore act as passageways between the two worlds. In the economy of the underground world, having a wish to go outside is equal to "throwing civilization away,"[24] the scientist world view that led to its development. Forster pits scientific rationalism and nature against each other with a clear bias in favour of the latter and the young man that chose to leave the city and return to the natural world. This turn from cityscape to natural landscape, as well as the turn from reason and rationality to feeling, impulse and longing for communion with the natural world can be connected with reminiscences of the romantic ethos in E.M Forster's work.

Another three very important authors that constructed such a space that is placed at the intersection of two worlds, or rather two temporal planes, past and present are Yevgeny Zamyatin, George Orwell and Margaret Atwood. I have chosen to discuss the three together because it is fascinating from a comparative perspective to observe how the symbolic space fulfilled by Zamyatin's "Ancient House" – the place where D-503 is shown by I-330 many relics of the past that dates before the revolution that gave birth to the World State – heavily influenced George Orwell in his depiction of the room in the proletarian district where Julia and Winston Smith secretly meet in *1984* and, furthermore, how the depiction of this latter room prompted Margaret Atwood to create a much similar room of her own in *The Handmaid's Tale*. It is important to note that the authors used the space for roughly different reasons. For Yevgeny Zamyatin, it is a transitional space connected with the past that links the world of the World State with the natural world of the Mephi, a world that extremely important for the main character's psychological progress. Many commentators of Zamyatin's text have noted that the text's vision of redemption lies not in a reformed future but rather in a mythical, idealized archetypal past.[25] The room is for the Russian author, as is for Orwell, a space where the past can be recaptured and relived in a somewhat sublimated and nostalgic form. Mnemonic spatiality is present in dystopias, as Philip Wegner astutely notes that "*Nineteen Eighty-Four* attempts to delink the values of modernity from the very ongoing process of modernization which gave rise to these values in the first place, and promotes instead a nostalgic return both to the older form of the imagined community found in the English nation and the kind of "literate" intellectual critique formed within it."[26]

Wegner notes that for Orwell aesthetic objects serve as "self-contained, autonomous monads."[27] The room becomes thus "a world, a pocket of the past where extinct animals could walk."[28] These self-contained worlds instigate in Winston Smith what Herbert Marcuse would later describe as aesthetic anamnesis:[29] The main character notes on how "The room had awakened in him a sort of nostalgia, a sort of ancestral memory."[30]

Winston Smith reflects in the novel that: "Always in your stomach and in your skin there was a sort of protest, a feeling that you had been cheated of something you had a right to."[31] Philip Wegner argues that the room, along with other objects that I aim to discuss later "provides the truth content of these feelings, offering a means of access to the now-repressed reality of the historical past."[32] Further on, the critic notes that "unlike Marcuse's theory of Platonic anamnesis, the recollection of a moment of a prehistoric happiness before the establishment of a repressive civilization, Orwell's memory of happiness looks backward to a very

specific moment in the English national past. [. . .] These objects become the-Thing-incarnate, a concrete manifestation of the shared 'organization of enjoyment' that, as Slavoj Žižek points out, fuses together the imagined community of the nation (and crucially, as he also suggests, is imagined to be under constant 'menace' by some Other)."[33] The room and its furnishing are a product of Orwell's own childhood. The better world, that of his childhood, toward which Winston Smith looks back longingly, is located in the moment that, not coincidentally, coincides with the high-watermark of Great Britain's power, a moment which by the conclusion of the Second World War seems to have vanished forever. Wegner believes that the autonomous aesthetic object enables the creation of Winston Smith's own "free" subjectivity, by recalling another kind of autonomy, that of the "English" or (imperial) "British" nation-state, the two, as the previous passage makes evident, always already identical in Orwell's mind.[34] As Winston Smith points out, as long as such aesthetic, nostalgic objects exist, the Party's domination remains incomplete: "What mattered was that the room over the junk shop should exist. To know that it was there, inviolate, was almost the same as being in it."[35] These self-contained material embodiments of the past serve as the irrefutable proof of the possibility of another, better, situation, and consequently provide the normative ground from which Winston Smith can critique the horror, deprivation, and poverty of Oceanic life.[36]

Orwell clearly idealizes and romanticcizes the past. However, what is more interesting is the process of aesthetic anamnesis by which the author's main character attempts to revive his memory, invoke the past, connect with memories of his childhood, to a different way of being and a perceived better social order. A similar process of anamnesis takes place in *1984* with respect to the dream Winston has of the almost mythical natural landscape of the "Golden Country." If such a thing had been present in a 19th century work, we would immediately think of the writer as being influenced by poets of the romantic tradition. We should realize, however, that consciously or unconsciously Orwell uses the room, various objects in it, as well as the dream of the countryside landscape of the mythical Golden Country in the same manner the British romantic poets used landscapes: to retrieve an obscured, lost, idealized, past state of personal and historical bliss much different from the dark presents they were witnessing changing the world. Memory seems to be obscured by something and it takes a conscious effort on the part of the protagonist, as well as the individual's correct placement in space to retrieve and remember and recollect what is lost from the present.

I would argue that the same thing happens in the case of Zamyatin's Ancient House, where, among other things recreating the ambient of the old world before de World State, the author mentions books by the Russian romantic poet, Alexander Pushkin. These constant symbolic associations with an idealized better past that is in stark contrast to the dystopian present are not random, or specific to some author or another, they form a veritable trend observable all throughout 20th century dystopian fiction.

In the third case, Margaret Atwood uses heterotopian spaces rather differently, focusing more on gender issues and feminist perspectives, as a space where the main character of her dystopia, Offred, can manifest her feelings and sexuality free from the moral confines of the dystopian world outside thus simultaneously glorifying the independence and freedom enjoyed in the past by the feminine characters of her novel but on the other hand responding to what many

critics perceived as the misogynistic view point embedded in many classic dystopias like Orwell's and Zamyatin's.

In Atwood's dystopia, Offred's generation of women is the first one after the collapse of the old world order, therefore what becomes particularly important for the author is the fact that they can still have a clear image of the past, despite the state's effort to erase it or modify it.This is also taken into account by the people at the head of the re education centres for women who point out to the first generation that: "You are a transitional generation, said Aunt Lydia. It is the hardest for you. We know the sacrifices you are being expected to make. It is hard when men revile you. For the ones who come after you, it will be easier. They will accept their duties with willing hearts. She did not say: Because they will have no memories, of any other way. She said: Because they won't want things they can't have."[37]

The existence of memory thus creates the context for comparisons and evaluations in an environment where the focus is precisely on making such comparisons impossible. This is very similar to the symbolic role that Zamyatin's Ancient House and Orwell's old room fulfil within the economy of their works. What differs is only the targeted time frame. For the two authors, this desired better world was manifested as nostalgia for a pre-modern natural existence, while for Atwood, this revered past is much closer to the present. However even in the case of Atwood we have heterotopian environments that seem to evade the symbolic order of the present by a connection with the past, more specifically with the sexual and emotional freedom enjoyed by former residents, freedoms now absent from the main character's universe. On one hand, we have Offred's room, where traces of the past survive and constitute memory markers the character is drawn to. The main character notices "On the top of my desk there are initials, carved into the wood, and dates. The initials are sometimes in two sets, joined by the word loves. J.H. loves B.P. 1954. OR. loves L.T. These seem to me like the inscriptions I used to read about, carved on the stone walls of caves, or drawn with a mixture of soot and animal fat. They seem to me incredibly ancient. […] M. loves G. 1972. This carving, done with a pencil dug many times into the worn varnish of the desk, has the pathos of all vanished civilizations. It's like a handprint on stone. Whoever made that was once alive."[38] "The stains on the mattress. Like dried flower petals. Not recent. Old love; there's no other kind of love in this room now. When I saw that, the evidence left by two people, of love or something like it, desire at least, at least touch, between two people now perhaps old or dead, I covered the bed again and lay down on it."[39]

These are markers of an extinct past that serves as the reminder of a different symbolic order; however, on the other hand, we also have a space in the novel where that past can be temporarily reenacted. That space is the room in which Offred and Nick meet and engage in erotic coupling."Being here with him is safety; it's a cave, where we huddle together while the storm goes on outside. This is a delusion, of course. This room is one of the most dangerous places I could be. If I were caught there would be no quarter, but I'm beyond caring."[40] Through their erotic coupling in the heterotopian spaces, the three pairs, D-503 and I-330, Winston Smith and Julia, Offred and Nick, manage to recapture freedoms of the past the dystopian present now forbids; the difference in Atwood's case is that she focuses on the female perspective of being caught within the boundaries of a totalitarian state and the means of escaping those boundaries, and not only the male one, as we have in the case of Orwell and Zamyatin.

However, whatever the specific meaning of the environment's presence for the above-mentioned authors, what unites all these symbolic spaces is their connection with a past and symbolic order that is lost to the present of their universes, a past that incorporates freedom, be it psychological, intellectual or sexual; most importantly, it is a space where that past state of being can be temporarily regained. The past and old symbolic order is thus preferred, sanctified and temporally recaptured in the room. It is a space cut off from the rest of the symbolic space, a place where a notion of the individual can be given free play, in opposition to the collectivist identity encouraged by the dystopian state.

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Notes

[1] Anne Whitehead, *Memory*, Routledge, 2008, p. 11.

[2] Samuel Raphael, *Theatres of Memory*, vol. 1: *Past and Present in Contemporary Culture*, London and New York, 1994, p. viii.

[3] Anne Whitehead, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

[4] Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, trans. Francis J. Ditter and Vida Yazdi Ditter, Harper and Row, New York, 1980.

[5] Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, 3 vols, Columbia University Press, New York, 1996.
[6] Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1966.
[7] Richard Terdiman, *Present Past: Modernity and the Memory Crisis*, Cornell University Press. New York and London 1993, p. 4.
[8] Northrop Frye, "Varieties of Literary Utopias," in Frank E. Manuel (ed.), *Utopias and Utopian Thought*, Beacon Press, Boston, p. 38.
[9] Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*, Harcourt, London, USA, p. 226.
[10] Philip Wegner, *Utopia, the Nation and the Spatial Histories of Modernity*, University of California Press, USA, 185-192.
[11] Kevin Hetherington, *The Badlands of Modernity. Heterotopia and Social Ordering*, Routledge, New York, USA, p. viii.
[12] "'That is an instance of the superiority of our culture,' he remarked. ‚All the other capitals of Europe,' he said, 'still preserve the plan of the mediaeval city, in the central parts at least. And the central parts are the most important. The authorities profess to have preserved them because of their historical interest. Any dolt can plan a new city, but we are the only people in Europe who know how to remodel our old cities'." in Gregory Owen, *Meccania: The Superstate*, Methuen & Co, London, UK, p. 67.
[13] "The streets were rather untidy and not too clean; the houses were irregularly built. I was in the old town apparently. As I walked farther I noticed that by far the greater part of the town had been built during the last fifty years or so, yet the place looked as if it were trying to preserve the appearance of age. At another time I should probably have thought the town rather dull and uninteresting, for there was nothing noteworthy about it. If there had once been any genuine mediaeval churches or guild halls or places of architectural interest they must have been destroyed, yet I discovered a strange joy and delight in everything I saw," *Ibidem*, p. 294.
[14] *Ibidem*, p. 53.
[15] "Of Other Spaces".
[16] "'Oh, certainly, we have scores of treatises on the imagination.' 'But I mean books that are the work of the imagination.' 'I see. You want them for your children, perhaps: they would be found in the juvenile departments; fables and parables, and that sort of thing.' 'No, I mean books without any serious purpose, but for grown-up people. I seem to remember such works in the old Meccanian literature.' 'How very odd,' answered Lickrod, 'that you should express a wish to see works of that kind.' 'Why?' I asked, in some surprise. 'Because we find works of that kind in great demand in the asylums for the mentally afflicted. You see, we treat the inmates as humanely as possible, and our pathologists tell us that they cannot read the books by modern authors. We have to let them read for a few hours a day, and they beg, really rather piteously, for the old books. It is always old books they ask for. I suppose in a way they are cases of a kind of arrested development. At any rate, they have not been able to keep pace with the developments of our ideas. Doctor Barm reported only last year that the only books that seem to have a soothing effect on these patients are those written, oh, *two hundred years ago*, and of the very kind you probably have in mind'" in Gregory Owen, *op. cit.*, p. 258.
[17] *Ibidem*, p. 265.
[18] *Ibidem*, p. 266.

[19] *Ibidem*, p. 278.
[20] Michael Lowy, Robert Sayre, *Romanticism Against the Tide of Modernity*, Duke University Press, USA, 2002, p. 37.
[21] Thomas Carlyle, ''Signs of the Times'' (1829), in *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*, University of California Libraries, USA, 1900, p. 2:233, 235, 245, 243.
[22] Gregory Owen, *op. cit*, p. 1.
[23] E.M. Forster, *The Machine Stops*, 1909, www.feedbooks.com consultat 2.09.2014.
[24] *Ibidem*, www.feedbooks.com.
[25] Philip Wegner, *op. cit*, p. 147.
[26] *Ibidem*. p. xxv.
[27] *Ibidem*, p. 206.
[28] George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 122.
[29] Philip Wegner, *op. cit.*, p. 206.
[30] *Ibidem*. p. 82.
[31] *Ibidem*, p. 52.
[32] *Ibidem*, p. 206.
[33] *Ibidem*, p. 206.
[34] *Ibidem*, p. 206.
[35] George Orwell, *op. cit*, p. 124.
[36] Philip Wegner, *op. cit.*, p. 206.
[37] Margaret Atwood, *The Hanndmaid's Tale*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Epub Edition, 2011, p. 212.
[38] *Ibidem*, p. 204.
[39] *Ibidem*, p. 96.
[40] *Ibidem*, p. 486.