Contemporary Hollywood and the Spirit of Hope: America, Celluloid, and the Desire (mis)called (dis)Utopia

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Abstract:
As a recent article on *The Raw Story* suggests, contemporary filmmakers are becoming more interested in utopian genres than ever before. The Summit Entertainment films *Divergent* and *Ender's Game* as well as Sony Pictures'*The Mortal Instruments: City of Bones*, 20 Century Fox's *Maze Runner*, TriStar Picture's *Elysium* were all released in 2013 or 2014 and could be described as utopian movies. In fact, the popularity of *The Hunger Games* is one of the main reasons why movie studios have become interested in movies that explore utopian themes. Thus, if the past several years saw cinema interested in wizards, werewolves, and vampires popularized by*Harry Potter* and *Twilight*, this fantasy has now given way to the time of utopian movies and especially dystopias with dark images, a situation which is not limited to American cinema. *Snowpiercer* (2013) and *Les Combattants* (2013) are just two examples of recent utopian movies developed outside of Hollywood. Granted, the relationship between cinema and utopia has a long history and is not limited to the contemporary period but this is the first time that cinema has given such serious attention to a political genre like utopia, so why is this happening? What can this interest tell us about the socioeconomic structure of our time? How do these movies respond to the shortcomings of modern society? What types of alternative societies do they represent? In order to answer these questions, I analyzed six contemporary American movies. My argument throughout this work has been that cinema has been associated with entertainment, escapism, and "wish fulfillment" (Dyer, 1981) ever since its very earliest origins. For audiences, engagement with cinema provides an opportunity to experience a different world which shows them the possibility of something better than the world in which they live, a reality which might otherwise seem to be unassailable. Thus, cinema creates a

space for envisioning alternatives and harboring hopes and desires. As I argued here, dystopia has definitely become a dominant concept in recent decades, where dystopian visions clearly dominate the scene with utopian themes neglected.

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1.1. Introduction

As a recent article on *The Raw Story* suggests, contemporary filmmakers are becoming more interested in utopian genres than ever before. The Summit Entertainment films *Divergent* and *Ender's Game* as well as Sony Pictures' *The Mortal Instruments: City of Bones*, Twentieth Century Fox's *Maze Runner*, and TriStar Pictures' *Elysium* were all released in 2013 or 2014 and might be described as utopian movies. In fact, the popularity of *The Hunger Games* is one of the main reasons why movie studios have become interested in movies that explore utopian themes. Thus, if the past several years saw cinema interested in wizards, werewolves, and vampires popularized by *Harry Potter* and *Twilight*, this fantasy has now given way to the time of utopian movies, especially those portraying dystopias with dark images.

Granted, the relationship between cinema and utopia had a long history before the contemporary period but this is the first time that cinema has given such serious attention to a political genre like this. Conducting a research project to understand the reasons for this serious attention is worthwhile since, utopians had enormous impacts on the development of society, cities, and sociopolitical matters (Picon, 2000; Solinis, 2006; Choay, 1965; Eaton, 2001; Stauffer, 2002). Utopian thinking is a method that gave birth to a society with fewer problems (Fishman, 1977; De Moncan, 1998; Pinder, 2002; Solinis, 2006). Utopians throughout the ages saw the problems of their respective times to be growing and tried to propose a functional and universal panacea named "utopia" in order to present a better alternative for their citizens. For example, Patrice De Moncan (1998) argues that several attributes of contemporary cities are the direct results of

utopian thinking. The separation of pedestrians from automobiles (Cabet, Garnier and Hénard), the separation of urban functions, zoning (Garnier), and the generalization of prefabricated systems (Le Corbusier) are just some examples that have been generated by utopian thinkers.

Secondly, hope is a central part of human life (Bloch, 1986) and hope for a better life has been a central aspect of utopian claims throughout history (Sargent, 2006; Choay, 1965; Pinder, 2002; Eveno, 1998; Mumford, 1921). Thus, utopian models and literature secure the need to dream, the need for mystery, and sometimes even the desire to create poetry (Choay, 1965), making us aware of the future. These projects are a means of escaping a monotonous life, the continuation of which could result in ongoing disinterest and frustration.

For the reasons mentioned above, it can be argued that utopian thinking has many benefits for society. This explains why utopia is currently a popular research topic (Eveno 1998, Gindin and Panitch 2000). Today, several research laboratories are working on this subject, including the Centre for Utopian Studies at the University of Ohio. A number of political institutions, such as the Urban Forum of the United Nations in Vancouver, and various conferences, such as *Future for Cities* held in Nancy in 2005, are concerned with or have recently worked on the theme of utopia. Therefore, contrary to Francis Fukuyama's claim regarding the End of History, utopian thinking as a mode of thinking positively about the future is alive and well (Pinder, 2002).

1.2. Objectives

Given the above rationale, the objective of this research is to understand how utopia is portrayed and represented in contemporary cinema. In order to achieve this goal, I aim to answer the following questions: Why is there a newfound cinematic interest in utopia? What can this interest tell us about the socioeconomic structure of our time? How do these movies respond to the shortcomings of capitalist society? What types of alternative societies do they represent? What cinematic language do they use in those representations? For whom have they been produced, and why?

Unfortunately, there is very little discussion about contemporary utopian movies. Aside from Richard Dyer (1981) and Fredric Jameson (1979), the notion of utopian inquiry is strangely and surprisingly absent from film studies. Due to this lack of investigation, we know very little about what the utopian movie genre means and so it is difficult to answer some of the research questions I have posed. Having the capacity to think about the ideal world, and its status in the contemporary time, is fundamental, given the fact that the financial crisis that occurred in 2008 had a huge impact on the society. It's difficult to be neutral in regards to the destructive effect of the 2008 worldwide economic crisis on the economy of the United States and rest of the world. The secure economic exchanges of nations around the world turned into insensibility, and mortgage holders found themselves without property on the street. The stun waves reverberated for a considerable length of time after, forever re-shaping the lives of many individuals. With such a significant impact on the human life, it was unavoidable that films would endeavor to represent the emergency; the moving images attempted to clarify, sensationalize, and reprimand the conduct of the people who added to the swelling and were responsible for

the collapse of the housing market. Inside Job (2010), Margin Call (2011), Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps (2011), Too Big to Fail (2011), Killing them Softly (2012), The Wolf of Wall Street (2013), 99 Homes (2014), The Big Short (2015) are a few examples in this regard. In regards to this research and its objectives, it appears that a positive image about the future is no longer possible.

As I will show through my research, the utopian narrative in cinema is being replaced dominantly by dystopia, a category of utopia which appears to be defining the cinematic vision of the future, though very little is known about dystopia in current cinema. This project's practical contribution to film studies is to fill this gap in the literature, the result of which will help scholars to more systematically investigate utopia in contemporary cinema, thus revealing the shared concepts, specific differences, and innovative ideas in each case. The "wishful" hope of the research is to enable filmmakers and storytellers to re-examine the conventional way of cinematically representing utopia and to then suggest a new mode of cinematic utopian representation.

1.3. Methodology

I have selected cinema as the medium for my research due to its important mass market contribution and status as the historically dominant mode of artistic representation in our time. Cinema is essential for our way of understanding the world. As Slavoj Zizek argues (Fiennes 2006), "*Cinema* is the ultimate pervert art. It doesn't give you what you desire - it tells you how to desire." In this sense, movies directly shape our desires, aspirations and utopia dreams about the world (Fitting, 1993). Furthermore, as Stanley Cavell (1979) argued, movies give cinemagoers an opportunity to feel a part of the world being

portrayed. As Cavell argues, because of the interruptions that modernity has caused in the relationship between human beings and nature, we lack the ability to comprehend our position in the world at many levels and therefore feel alienated. It is only through cinema that we can once again feel capable of controlling the world, dream about our utopias and feel part of it.

Given this line of thought, cinema is more than mere entrainment. Instead, it invites us to think about the world and how others shape it. This then opens up the possibility of thinking about the other cinema and inviting us to think philosophically. According to Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, only a subject who transcends the particular and thinks through the universal is capable of thinking philosophically. As I argue below, for Hegel it is essential to comprehend the other in this regard. This research project keeps Hegel's importance in mind as it investigates the close affinity between philosophy and cinema studies. Cinema studies has a tradition of deeply investigating this relationship with special focus upon the work of people like Alain Badiou, Jacques Ranciere, Georgio Agamben, Gilles Deleuze, and Slavoj Zizek (Colman, 2014). The field generally divides into two positions which people adopt (Smith, 2008). First, there are those who argue that cinema is not an effective medium for investigating philosophical questions. This position advances the claim that cinema's emphasis on narrative holds it back from creating structures such as we find philosophical texts, which typically begin with an introduction outlining the issue to be discussed, followed by arguments which seek to prove the superiority of this position. The cinematic emphasis on plot makes it difficult for films to offer the same structure as a philosophical text, which is the basis of the

argument that this medium cannot offer an opportunity for reflecting on questions of right or wrong; at best, it is a limited tool for achieving these goals. The argument that literature is a superior medium for investigating philosophical issues is built upon the idea that language plays a significant role in philosophical texts. The second school of thought regarding cinema and philosophy takes the contrary position that although language does not play as strong of a role in cinema as it does in other media, particularly literature, cinema can still make us reflect upon philosophical questions using aesthetic tools such as mise-en-scene and acting. Those who adopt this position take a more general approach to understanding philosophical questions while also believing that cinema can make us think in a more lively and emotional way about philosophical issues. An example of this is the *The Third Man*, which can inspire its audience to reflect upon the meaning of friendship from an Aristotelian perspective. The movie in itself does not provide a deep understanding of the philosophy behind friendship, especially not when compared to how this is represented in Aristotle's writings, but it introduces the possibility of reflecting upon this issue through a specific story told using cinematic tools.

This current research project is situated within the second school of thought since I am not interested in taking a classical approach to analyzing philosophical issues in a movie. Instead, I am more interested in analyzing the ways that a movie can help us to reflect upon philosophical issues that originate within the writings of a given philosopher. In the case of my approach to this issue, that philosopher is Hegel, whose perspective I adopt. My way of understanding the world is deeply influenced by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, who believed that philosophical understanding is always retrospective and that it

is impossible to understand in advance how a qualitatively different future society will look. As he wrote:

> A further word on the subject of issuing instructions on how the world ought to be: philosophy, at any rate, always comes too late to perform this function. As the thought of the world, it appears only at a time when actuality has gone through its formative process and attained its complete state…when philosophy paints its grey, a shape of life has grown old, and it cannot be rejuvenated, by the grey in grey of philosophy; the owl of Minerva begins in flight only with onset of dusk… (1991a: 23).

This quote suggests that philosophy – or critical enquiry – has the role of explaining why we make judgements rather than prescribing how we ought to make judgements. Critical thinking cannot overlook the concepts, beliefs, and values of its own time and make an appeal to some objective, transcendental, and ahistorical standard of right and good.

Inspired by Hegel, I believe that human reasoning alone is unable to help us think rationally about the world. Humans are children of their times and cannot think beyond it. Furthermore, I believe that individual human thinking is not sophisticated enough to tell one what he or she ought to do in the face of most moral and political dilemmas. There are inconsistencies in human decisions and feelings when we want to make judgements and these inconsistencies hinder our ability to make rational decisions. When facing a moral or political problem, Person A could suggest that we need to think a certain way

but Person B, who has a different life experience, could suggest another way. If we want to base our decisions on reasoning or motivation alone, we could accept both as being morally or politically correct since it is easy to find a justification for every moral or political action. As Hegel argues, "even the lowest degree of understanding is enough to discover, like those learned theologians, a positive aspect in every action and hence a good reason and intention underlying it" (1991: 175). Given this, in each dilemma, every individual could see his own reasoning as good, which leads to a tug of war between goods; it is hard to believe that a mere consideration of individual thought will be enough to let one decide rationally.

Considering the inadequacy of human faculties for decision making, it is therefore necessary to refer to some universal laws in order to decide what is good. What are these universal laws? Inspired by Hegel, human minds seem to be bounded by the structure of the world in which they exist; hence, humans are unable to think beyond the world. The human mind is shaped by the structure and institutions in which it lives, so rational decisions require an understanding of the social structure that creates each period. Such an understanding enables universally rational actions. Thus, any critical thinker must first understand the social structure of the world around him, which is shaped by laws, institutions, mores, and conventions unique to any culture and developed throughout history; understanding them enables rational action. This can be clarified by an example. Suppose there are two people who live in different environments, one from the United States and one from Iran. Clearly, the different environments in which they live will furnish them with different life values. The two environments are shaped by the structure

of each country and this directly impacts how each of them acts in matters of morality and politics. Understanding these socioeconomic structures is an important task for any critical thinker who wants to make a rational decision. When a human subject understands this structure and tries to act by taking it into account then he can think rationally. These structures are the norms that guide subjects in matters of moral and political decisions and only when subjectivity embraces this universality will we have the birth of rational decisions.

One note of caution is worth mentioning here. There is a misconception in the literature that Hegel is an enemy of utopia. As I will discuss later, this is mostly related to the way that Hegel defines the role of philosophy and his famous claim that "what is rational is actual and what is actual is rational." However, as I will outline later, this claim does not do justice to Hegel. To put the reader into context, I should say that the way great utopian thinkers like Karl Mannheim and Ernst Bloch define utopia suggests a great affinity with Hegelian thinking. For example, Mannheim (1979) argues that utopias express "those ideas and values in which are contained in condensed form the unrealized and the unfulfilled tendencies which represent the needs of each age" (179). Utopias "break the bond of the existing order" (173) and enable the spread of tendencies that were put into place by the conservative mentality of the status quo. One can sense from this quote how preoccupied Mannheim was with the practice à la Hegel; he even points out the "dialectical" relationship between existing order and utopia. Without a doubt this is the way he tried to give new value to utopian thinking after Karl Marx's harsh criticism of Saint-Simon, Fourier, and Owen (1996). One could argue that Mannheim and Bloch

redefined utopia in order to make it a practical tool for political thinking. That's why Mannheim argues that "only those orientations transcending reality will be referred to by us as utopian which, when they pass into conduct, tend to shatter, either partially or wholly, the order of things prevailing at the time" (173). Although one can detect such affinity between Hegel and utopia in the literature, it is very difficult to find a good example of a research project in this regard. My concentration on Hegel for developing my theoretical framework helps me to remedy this gap.

Considering the above, my research positionality defines me as pragmatic thinker who dislikes making normative claims without having a deep socio-historical understanding of a phenomenon. What is really important for me before engaging in any serious critical activity is to gain a deep comprehension of the phenomenon in relation to society. In this process, what is necessary for me is comprehension, as described by Hegel:

> The truth concerning right, ethics, and the state is at any rate as old as its exposition and promulgations in public laws and in public morality and relation. What more does the truth require, inasmuch as the thinking mind is not content to possess it in the proximate manner? What it needs is to be comprehended as a whole; so that the content which is already rational in itself may also gain a rational form and thereby appear justified to free thinking. For such thinking does not stop at what is given, whether the state or of mutual agreement amongst human beings, or by the authority of inner feeling and the heart and by the testimony of the spirit which immediately concurs with this, but starts out from

> itself and thereby demands to know itself as united in its innermost being in the truth (2001: 11).

Given Hegel's suggestion, it appears that full comprehension means, first of all, conducting a deep analysis of the societal structures in which a phenomenon occurs in order to know how the society works. This is followed by a systematic analysis to understand the relationship between the structure of this society and the phenomenon that we intend to analyse. For example, if the law in England tells me to wear a seatbelt or else face punishment, a full explanation of why this law exists requires first understanding the culture of England and the necessity of wearing a seatbelt there. Only then can I attempt to comprehend the necessity of wearing the belt. This process will help me to deeply comprehend the phenomenon and such comprehension could help me to not just unthinkingly obey the rules as they are given. À la Hegel, it will help me to understand and see the rules rationally if I feel at home in them. This process also helps me to understand that something came into existence for a reason and that the imposition of our ideas with the desire to change without first understanding the reason behind its creation is wilful.

My way of understanding the role of critical theory is generally opposed to radicalism and anarchism but I do not see it as being conservative. Working through the structure of the system that surrounds us does not mean there is no way to be radical. As Hegel puts it, the system needs to be rational, and this emphasis on the term rationality means that

there is a possibility for a subject to be critical of his own time; this understanding opens the way for a systematic criticism of the world which could be called the immanent criticism. The current structure of the world, its legislators, its state of affairs, institutions, conventions, and laws could fail to fulfill their promises and instead be just mere semblances of what they ought to be. In this step there is the possibility for a subject to resist and criticise them.

In summary I can identify five assumptions that I make as a researcher:

1. Meanings are socially and historically constructed.

2. We are all born into a world shaped by institutions; thus, understanding of meaning is possible through the quantitative or qualitative analysis of the institutions that shape the world.

3. Research must help individuals to understand whether or not the institutions around them are rational. The goal of research is to create political debates and discussions so that a deep comprehension of the phenomenon can actualize.

4. The main research questions are “how” and “why.”

5. There is a world outside of us. We must ask questions about this world and how it functions in order to understand our rational orientation.

I will conduct case studies in order to meet these assumptions since this research method will enable me to deeply comprehend the phenomenon in the question. As Hegel argued

(2001), what is really important for engaging in any serious critical activity is to gain a deep comprehension of the phenomenon in relation to society. This might explain why the majority of research in utopian studies has used the case study method of analysis, since it allows for deeper and more profound research on this topic and this depth is important, especially when the nature of the research is exploratory (Fischler, 2000).

1.3.1. Sampling Strategy

The objective of this research is to analyse the representation of utopia in contemporary American cinema, which I will achieve by analyzing seven utopian Hollywood movies. Unlike musicals or comedies, it is difficult to define what is meant by utopian films. There are, of course, some original utopian films like *Things to Come* (1936) as well as screen adaptations of utopian novels like *Lost Horizon* (1937) but both of these categories fail to serve as effective examples (Fitting, 1993). In fact, there is no specific utopian film genre. Glimpses of utopianism can be seen in a variety of genres and sub-genres including zombie films, apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic films, and fantasy. Given this, researchers have proposed a number of different ways to discuss the issue of utopian films. For example, the radical cinema of directors like Jean Luc Godard, the works of filmmakers in developing countries, and feminist film projects are all considered to be utopian films (Fitting, 1993).

I will use Lyman Tower Sargent's definition of utopia as "non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in a time and space that the author intended a

contemporaneous reader to view as considerably better than the society in which that reader lived" (Sargent, 1994: 9). It typically presents a better place and a better society than those in which its audience members or readers actually live and it breaks the bond of the existing order. If the alternative society represents a negative or catastrophic vision of the future then the utopia will be called *dystopia*. The two concepts should be defined not so much as being opposed to each other but instead as very closely connected since they are two sides of the same coin. As Krishan Kumar argues (1991), while dystopia expresses the fear of what the future may hold if we do not attempt to end the catastrophe, utopia encompasses the hope of what could be.

I prioritized this definition of utopia over those defined in cinema studies because it combines the arguments of both Sargent and Mannheim regarding utopia. Sargent is the most important contemporary thinker in this field; he is founder of both the Utopian Society and Utopian Journal. The majority of scholars who write about the concept of utopia are members of the Utopian Society and there is a general consensus that Sargent is a key figure in this field. Furthermore, this definition of utopia let me engage more critically with dystopia in cinema. As I will show throughout my analysis, dystopia is becoming the dominant form of utopia in contemporary cinema and there is a need to consider this transition fully as part of research on this topic. What is missing from his conceptualization of utopia is the Hegelian understanding of actuality. Mannheim's condition regarding the relationship between utopia and practice responds to this gap. I am aware that my adoption of this conception of utopia disconnects me from the tradition of thinking which comprehends utopia based upon the model found in Thomas More's

Utopia (1516). As I will later argue, by referring to Bloch's writings on utopia, we can criticize More for having proposed a historically naïve concept of utopia. My definition of utopia here contrasts with More's view since mine relates to the "structural" features of history, which makes it defensible against Marxist critiques of utopia. This definition found its ingredients in empirical reality while at the same time being open to the "theoretical" issues of history. Because of such a conception of utopia, I will be more hesitant to accept Dyer's take on utopia since for me his definition of utopia does not provide the possibility of thinking and acting politically while reflecting on utopia.

Furthermore, in order to further narrow down my cases, I will look at utopian glimpses in science fiction movies because, according to Thierry Paquot, utopia in cinema is mostly discussed through this genre (2007). Finally, I will select mainstream Hollywood movies produced after 2010, thus emphasizing contemporary utopian movies since the classics like *Blade Runner* and *Metropolis* have been discussed substantially in the literature but little is written about more recent productions (AlSayyad, 2006). I have omitted American independent movies from this selection since they do not fit my Hegelian paradigm. Independent films generally work against the dominant historical forces, aiming to differentiate themselves from conventional modes of production. Granted, this critical differentiation could be seen as a positive sign and help us to think about alternative representations of utopia; but what they suggest in most cases has very little in common with the dominant and hegemonic mode of production and consumption in American society. Thus, it is very difficult to analyze institutions and the forces of history

by analyzing independent movies, which hardly fits with my objective of research and its Hegelian paradigm.

I have selected six movies for analyses; they are *Elysium* (2013), *Snowpiercer (2013), The Hunger Games* trilogy (2012, 2013, 2014, 2015), *The Giver* (2014), *Divergent* (2014) and *Tomorrowland* (2015), all of which were released between 2013 and 2015. I have selected these cases because, first of all, they are science fiction movies in which we can see a non-existent alternative society. Secondly, this is because they all have features that we could see in a utopian movie, such as a sophisticated planned community; a charismatic leader; a system which controls human life and prioritizes collectivism over individual rights; and the story of a confrontation between the hero and this society. Thirdly, some of them have received a significant amount of critical reviews in the daily press, and some of them have received less. This provides a good opportunity to complete or initiate a research project: I can reflect upon these criticisms, complete them, question them or provide other ways of interpretation. Thirdly, they are among the most popular movies produced during those three years and this popularity may be helpful in understanding the reason behind the interest in this genre.

I have omitted from my selection *Her (2013), Looper* (2012), *The Mortal Instruments: City of Bones* (2013), *World War Z (2013), The Purge (2013), This is the End (2013), Ender's Game* (2013), *Oblivion* (2013), *Warm Bodies* (2013), *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes* (2014), and *Maze Runner* (2014), since these narratives provide less information

about the socio-political structure of the world in which their stories are set and because they also fit into other genres like romance, zombie movies, and musicals.[1]

There are some limitations to my project associated with the method I have chosen. First, I focus more on large mainstream productions. It has been argued that some indie filmmakers have levelled the resource playing field through the invention of cognitive storytelling software, totally collaborative film projects facilitated through crowdsourcing, and the transformation of single-family households into community creative workspaces. All of these methods are evidence of filmmakers using their imaginations to engage in "dialectical dreaming," a playful process of generating ideal possibilities out of everyday limitations. These aspects will not be addressed in my project. Furthermore, this research is limited to movies produced in North America, so it is difficult to generalize my data. In fact, I am not concerned about the transferability of my research since it is largely bound to the time, people, and setting of this particular study. However, I believe that some meanings are shared amongst many individuals. In this regard, while my study applies to the experience of a very small sub-group, it is possible that it may be common to a larger group. Finally, this research is primarily concerned with big Hollywood productions since it is impossible to neglect the racial structure within which mainstream American movies are produced, as can be seen in the way that the concepts of Orientalism and whiteness have been used to discuss racial issues in American cinema. As Edward Said explains (1985), Orientalism has constructed a body of knowledge about the East alongside a body of power-knowledge relations

[1] I am aware that other scholars define utopia in a way which encapsulates musicals and other genres but, as I will argue later, I decided to omit these categories from my studies since it fits better with the Hegelian approach that I am using for this dissertation.

which have been articulated in the interest of Western power, arguing that the Orient was a European invention. Said uses the term Orientalism in order to describe the relationship between Europe and the Orient, particularly the way the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) by serving as a contrasting type of human civilization in terms of the images, ideas, personalities, and experiences that each offers. Said also tries to show that European culture increased its own strength and identity by portraying itself in opposition to the Orient. Orientalism in this way fundamentally shaped American cinema and Said's analysis of mainstream American cinema refers to different movies that perpetuate the myth of the West. Other the other hand, the concept of whiteness is based on the fact that white people are a minority of the world's population but are the dominant racial group in terms of power and privilege. Part of the power of whiteness is that it seems to exist outside of categories of race and ethnicity, which appear to apply only to non-white people. This is why white people in American Hollywood cinema have historically been defined as normal while the rest of humanity is a sort of deviation. These aspects of American mainstream cinema will be included in my research since they have important implications for my analysis and the limitations that it has produced. One could also argue my using of this particular Hegelian paradigm is based on assumptions about race. It is true that Hegel was not inclined towards democracy and in fact his writings can be said to contain traces of a racist reading of the world. In Fanton's analysis of master-slave bondage he refers to some of these same issues (Villet, 2011). However, my own intention when reading Hegel is to get some idea about how he might have thought if he were living in contemporary society. What interests me about Hegel is his methodology for understanding the world, and the way that his suggestions were based

on the historical context into which he was born, and the way that this reading of the world is sometimes problematic for understanding current society.

The case study analysis will be conducted on the two levels of form and content. First of all, I will attempt to understand what media languages and codes became the norm in utopian cinema and why this happened. This means the investigation of mise-en-scene, setting, visual style, themes, characters, narratives, iconography, cinematography, special effects, and sound. After reviewing each case, I will generally attempt to reveal the shared concepts, specific differences, and innovative ideas in each case. Secondly, I will conduct content analysis on each of the movies. I will discuss the manner in which utopia is shaped and represented in these movies, its relationship with contemporary society, and its shortcomings, as well as the discourses of gender and race. Throughout this process I will use the Hegelian lens to try understanding what institutional, economic, and political structures justify the creation of dystopian movies. Furthermore, I will investigate who the ideal reader of utopian genre is, and why.

The body of data used for this research will come from books, articles, and monographs published about each movie. Secondary sources offering an interpretation of the critical aspects of each movie will also be used. This data will then be analyzed using interpretative, critical analysis of various documents, whether textual or pictorial.

Now that I have defined my method, the next task is to understand how this impacts the way that I engage in doing research. As my discussion of Hegel points out, before engaging in any revolutionary project we first need to understand the phenomenon in its totality. This means that the first step of this project consists of completing a literature

review of the various studies that currently exist in the field of utopian studies. This knowledge will help me to understand how the current form of utopian thinking has been shaped along with its limitations and shortcomings and what critical solutions can be created in dialogue with them.

1.4. Literature Review

Unofficially, wishful thinking always existed in human affairs (Mannheim, 1979). As soon as human beings felt dissatisfaction with the real world they began to look for a wishful constructed refuge. Promise of religion, humanistic fantasies, travel romances, and myths all took different approaches to expressing what was lacking in human life. Officially, this wishful thinking became a norm in human affairs the first time that it was introduced into human literature. As the utopian literature argued, the term *utopia* is a Greek neologism coined by Thomas More in 1516 to describe the ideal society in his work of the same name. The word comes from the Greek οὐ, meaning "not," and τόπος, meaning "place," so we can say that More used this concept allegorically and did not consider such a place to be possible. Later, however, More used the term "Eutopia," meaning "good place," in reference to utopia (Eaton 2001; Merlin and Choay 1988), so we can conclude that for More utopia is a good, ideal place which cannot exist anywhere. In general, More's *Utopia* was a radically original urban, social, and political proposal that opposed the ideology of its time period which was based on a critique of an existing society in order to propose a framework for a better world. The transition from critique to project materialized through a spatial model, the values of which performed a transformative function (Choay, 1965).

Discourses about collectivism, work, sex, education, and family constitute the essential elements of utopia (More, Logan, & Adams, 2002). In fact, private property held no meaning at all in Utopia, and all citizens were equal in the eyes of More (Hawkes, 1985). Furthermore, they could access all facilities offered by their society (Desbazeille, 2008). The reduction of time spent working was another important element that More discussed since he believed that this reduction would lead to a more egalitarian society. More hoped that his utopia would last for several generations and so he saw it as necessary to educate and train future utopians, the children of pioneers (Paquot, 2007); thus, he proposed a rigorous model of education. Another important social value is that More considered the family structure to be the basic unit of his utopian society and so he proposed a rigorous order concerning sexual relations and the duties of married couples to society. Beyond these common values, *Utopia* is also fundamentally intended to exist in a peaceful world (Desbazeille, 2008). The issue of health was also a central aspect of this utopic project (Hawkes, 1985). Several of this society's design guidelines, like the quality of housing or streets, were proposed to improve the health of its citizens (Hawkes, 1985).

The transition from a dream to a concrete project materializes through a spatial model and according to More's description utopia would be located in remote and inaccessible places surrounded by a system of fortifications. The grid organization was the first distinguishable aspect in his portrayed city (Moncan & Chiambaretta, 1998; Solinís, 2006) and standardized buildings were favored in order to create a more egalitarian atmosphere (Eaton, 2002; Picon, 2008). Flat ground and orthogonal geometry were also

preferred to complex design models since they helped More's city be more flexible and designable (Moncan & Chiambaretta, 1998). Ideally, he preferred empty land for his utopian ventures (Eaton, 2002). In this regard, the elements of this new city are characterized by a rupture with the past and the use of progressive technologies (Eaton, 2002; Picon, 2008).

More proposed the first utopia but his model was copied by other scholars throughout history, such as in *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), a satirical novel consisting of four separate explorations of imaginary worlds (Swift & Rivero, 2002). The story features a daydream proposing a cultural and political model which opposes the failures and flaws of the European community. Each trip in the novel is an ethnographic work that offers a detailed analysis of each visited region. Here, the character Gulliver portrayed Jonathan Swift himself, who in reality was the victim of the government under which he lived and used his utopia to denounce the bellicose ardor of his society.

The study of these other utopias shows that only the tripartite structure of More's Utopia is common among all of them (Paquot, 2007). Utopian demands changed in future models, such as Charles Fourier's (1772–1837) utopia for the new industrialist society, which was full of praise for individualism and diversity – there is a section on sexual diversity and its implications for society in the project – both contrary to the values in More's *Utopia* (Fourier, 1971). The same logic can also be applied to other utopias. The Englishman William Morris presented *News from Nowhere, on an Epoch of Rests* as a utopian romance (1976). It is the story of a narrator called Guest who meets different inhabitants of a futuristic England. According to the author, the country was divided into

small-scale, decentralized, self-governing units (communes, wards, or parishes). Here in contrast to More's utopia, large-scale factories were replaced by cottage industries and small-scale workshops. Cities were more spaciously planned and many buildings were broken down and replaced by green areas so the difference between town and country decreased. Homes are described as elegant but sparsely furnished. In fact, Morris' utopia was a severe critique of industrialization, where mechanized productions were replaced by traditional handwork.

On the other hand, during the twentieth century the task of projecting an alternative universe passed more to artistic media like science fiction while architects and urban designers also put forward their ideas for utopian cities (Picon, 2008). The dreams of Ruskin, Morris, and Bellamy found a practical formulation in 1898 when Ebenezer Howard published *To-Morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform*. Contrary to other utopias, these new urban projects were characterized by a radical critique of the shortcomings of existing cities (Picon, 2008). The most famous urban utopian projects of the twentieth century were those of Howard, Wright, and Le Corbusier (Fishman, 1977), whose works were undoubtedly utopias but not in the pejorative sense of the term meaning something unrealizable and impossible. In fact, their utopias were defined as coherent programs of action resulting from a deep reflection that sought to transcend the immediate situation—a program that, if implemented, would break the structure of an established society (Fishman, 1977).

Given that the twentieth century was such an auspicious time to propose utopian projects, many hoped that the time had come for the dream of an ideal world to finally materialize. Soon, however, those hopes turned to despair as despotism, censorship, and other harmful political conditions came as the unwelcome gifts granted by the Soviet regime. The fate of the utopian dream largely shattered when one of its realized expressions in the form of the USSR turned into a concrete experience of oppression and terror. The realization of this regime did not reflect people's expectations, especially as other aspects of such a society arose alongside the political effects, including the standardization of life and the acculturation of society in favour of collectivism. A new kind of utopian novel was born - "anti-utopia." In the novel *Brave New World*, Aldous Huxley portrayed the result of Athenian civilization as imagined by Plato 23 centuries earlier in his *Republic* (Jonas & Centre de documentation de l'urbanisme (France), 2003). As Gregory Claeys (2013) argues, while utopia "embodies ordered freedom, dystopia embodies unfreedom and exposure to the constantly capricious rule of a supremely powerful force, which may be human, natural, superhuman or utterly artificial" (17). Thus, contrary to Plato's work, this book showed a world in which leaders who claim to act for the good of mankind instead seek only to satisfy their own personal needs (Jonas & Centre de documentation de l'urbanisme (France), 2003).

It was during this time that the most elaborate critiques of utopian thinking emerged among liberal thinkers including Karl Popper, Leszek Kolakowski, and Isaiah Berlin (Davis, 2000). Popper's view is that the utopian focus upon perfection leads this way of things to propose that people should "purge, expel, banish, kill." Leszek Kolakowski

warns that if the utopian dream triumphs then next it will undoubtedly lead to a totalitarian nightmare and ultimately the end of human progress. Isaiah Berlin holds that while utopias do hold great value for broadening human potential, they are also undeniably deadly (Davis, 2000). These thinkers generally equate utopianism with totalitarianism.

In fact, according to their critics, utopians hold a deterministic view of cities but their thoughts offer poetic qualities that are difficult to achieve with soulless buildings, thus resulting in the failure of realized utopian projects. Several critics have suggested that diversity, pluralism, and tolerance do not play a role in a utopian society (Davis, 2000; Eaton, 2001; Jacobs, 1961; Merlin & Choay, 1988; Picon, 2000). Utopians suggest that every veritable question of significant worth must have one genuine reply, unique for all individuals in any location and at any given time in history (Davis, 2000). According to one famous claim, utopian citizens are the prisoners of time. By assuming that utopia is the ideal form of society, utopians do not authorize any change over time. Utopia, therefore, contrasts with time's evolution and there is no hope in a utopia for any other perfect form (Paquot, 1996). As Paquot proposed, the most important question regarding these projects is what will happen after the utopia is constructed and workers have less work to occupy them. Citizens may then question the utility of working and the benefit that it brings to society (Paquot, 1996). Critics have raised the issue that utopia is the fruit of the intellect of one charismatic master (Eaton, 2001; Hawkes, 1985; Paquot, 1996). Utopian environments are formed as the results of human effort without divine assistance (Eaton 2001). In the words of Francoise Choay, God is always absent from these projects

(Choay, 2005) so this model was therefore imposed on the city by someone who regarded himself as wise (Choay, 2005).

1.4.1. Contemporary Utopia

According to Anderson, the postmodern era did not provide good conditions for utopian projects. From its origins modernism was virtually defined as anti-bourgeois but in postmodern times the bourgeois culture has become obscured and ceased to be defined by traditional values. Thus, the author of a utopian project finds it difficult to propose a radically different value system (Anderson, 1998). Additionally, utopian fantasy and speculation have been rendered boring by otherwise positive advancements such as the creation of unparalleled wealth, the advent of computerized production which increases productivity, scientific and medical discoveries which improve quality of life, and a variety of commercial goods and cultural products (Jameson, 2004). If capitalism finds any value in utopian impulses, it will be used to increase the desirability of its commodity. The anti-hope politics of neoliberalism are best summarized by Margaret Thatcher's motto "there is no alternative." This attitude is another reason for the blasé postmodern attitude towards utopia (Harvey, 2000) and through neoliberal politics issues of personal survival became the major paradigm of society. Negotiation instead of critical thinking became the norm (Ranciere, 2004) and increasing wealth became the ultimate objective of society. All sorts of meta-narratives and propositions were considered to be anti-democratic and contrary to individual freedom and liberty with the negative results in the USSR and Eastern Europe held up as evidence of the dangers of utopian thinking (Choay, 2000; Paquot, 1996, Davis 2000).

The reasons outlined above explain why utopian projects are now discussed far less than in the past and critics, especially on the left, seem to be pessimistic about the future of avant-gardism. In the words of Perry Anderson, modernist avant-gardes were originally combative, critical, oppositional, subversive, underground, and utopian; however, the new ones pander to capitalism rather than confront it (Anderson, 2004). Faced with the current lack of enthusiasm towards utopia Mannheim (1979) argued that:

> The disappearance of utopia brings about a static state of affairs in which man himself becomes no more than a thing. We would be faced then with the greatest paradox imaginable, namely, that man, who has achieved the highest degree of rational mastery of existence, left without any ideals, becomes a mere creature of impulses. Thus, after a long, tortuous, but heroic development, just at the highest stage of awareness, when history is ceasing to be blind fate, and is becoming more and more man's own creation, with the relinquishment of utopians, man would lose his will to shape history and therewith his ability to understand it (238).

Can we accept this claim that history has reached its end? It is difficult to do so. As recent political issues demonstrate, different sets of societal problems are widespread and we are still very far from being able to claim that we live in a perfect society, a gap which has been recognized in literary utopia. Sustainable development paradigms are often essential and important themes for utopian projects. Sustainable utopia has existed for in the writings of Ernest Callenbach and Murray Bookchin - both of whom praise green

societies - for twenty years and comprises the third generation of literary utopia (Geus, 1999; Paquot, 2007). Additionally, since 1960 there has also been an abundance of feminist utopias (Jameson, 2004) so the proposition is that we can still see the project of utopian hopes.

Keeping Ernst Bloch in mind, the current literature attempts to give a more democratic, pluralist, and open picture of utopia, which makes the concept more relevant for contemporary society (see Harvey 2000; Jacoby 1999; Levitas 1990; Ganjavie 2015). Bloch defines utopia as a hunger drive which can never be satisfied and he argues that the drive toward utopia occurs in the human mind because of the gaps or lacks in the world. For Bloch these gaps can never be filled since society always has shortcomings. Utopia here aims to fill the gaps which tarnish the image of reality and make life difficult. These gaps motivate us, move us, and encourage us to refer back to utopia. They urge humanity to always look to the future, to be rebellious, and to act as "an explosive force against the prison of deprivation" (Bloch, 1986: 75). Utopia is therefore always mobile and forward looking, a conceptualization which makes it clear that for Bloch, characterizing utopia as an end state and "given" would be dehumanizing. In this definition, we do not conceive of our knowledge of the world as "given" and stable; we instead become interested in a creative epistemology of the possible. Here, utopia should be fundamentally critical and disruptive. It should disrupt the ideas and frameworks that consider the current world and its realities to be the only possible future. It should be critical of efforts to pacify the radical and it should be transgressive to any idea that there will be any order to things. Based on Bloch, Ben Anderson (2006, 693) defines utopia "as a type of process in which

plural ‘goods’ or ‘betters’ are ‘not-yet’ but immanent to life and therefore have disruptive, interrogative qualities.” While reading the examples of sustainable utopia I argued (2015) that Alberto Magnaghi’s utopia is a utopia of discovery because of its discursive and open-endedness. Here citizens are always engaging in a life process of perpetual discovery and the city in this process will be defined as a place that encourages citizens to participate actively in discussions in order to discover new solutions to their problems. I also put into relief the educative value of utopia, arguing that the “elsewhere” project provides the opportunity to envision the “utopian” society and to know the result of the juxtaposition of the different elements in a utopian work. As I argued, the point of a utopian project is not to go elsewhere but rather to use elsewhere as a reflection on where we are and to grasp the limitations and benefits of such a society that incorporates all of these elements. For example, with the help of a utopia it is easy to imagine where the residents of such a society live, how they get to work, how they come into contact with other people in their green environment, and how they use green transport. In the case of a sustainable utopia like Magnaghi’s, it enables us to envision a green utopian society. In fact, this scenario offers us the tools to assess the “acceptability” of such a green medium and it will help us to identify and improve upon it less attractive factors. Ultimately, this green city can be diagnosed by an interlocutor.

We could also see an emphasis on the cultural reading of utopia. It is now argued that utopia could have meaning across cultures and period. As Jacqueline Dutton (2010) noted, “based on the evidence available to us regarding the diverse belief systems and worldviews, cultural manifestations, and socio-political movements that demonstrate

fundamentally utopian visions, it seems that the desire for a better way of being in the world is indeed a universal concept" (250). Furthermore, utopian and dystopian thought and practice are highly gendered, as can be seen starting from Antiquity through the Middle Ages to contemporary times. All along this process, women activists and female-focused writings have helped to form the idealistic mode of utopia. Some of the notable names in these regards are Christine de Pizan (medieval Italy and France), Sarah Scott (eighteenth-century England), Pandita Ramabai (nineteenth-century India), Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain (twentieth-century India), Marge Piercy (twentieth-century and contemporary United States), and Ursula le Guin (twentieth-century and contemporary United States).

With this methodology in mind, the literature indicates that we can benefit from a utopian approach, whether it is focused upon mass culture or high culture. Postmodernism has greatly devalued utopian thinking and replaced it with a blasé attitude – something that jeopardizes the opportunities of Western society to renew its views on the contemporary city (Harvey, 2000). This neglect provides us with a great opportunity to use the utopian approach as a model for tackling current urban problems differently.

As Anderson argues, there is some optimism about the future of utopia, mainly through the reimplementation of the new strategies in cinema and on the internet. For Paquot, the use of science fiction can propel us centuries back to catch a glimpse of utopia (Paquot, 1996). Science fiction blends cinema with utopia and here a digital image is more

effective than a written description of an imaginary society. Cinema is therefore a good medium for discovering contemporary utopian aspirations and new utopian projects can result from the search for values like globalization, individualization, and feminism (Paquot, 2007; Sandercock, 1998). As Bloch (1986) argues:

> It is a question of learning hope. Its work does not renounce, it is in love with success rather than failure. Hope, superior to fear, is neither passive like the latter, nor locked into nothingness. The emotion of hope goes out of itself, makes people broad instead of confining them, cannot know nearly enough of what it is that makes them inwardly aimed, of what may be allied to them outwardly. The work of this emotion requires people who throw themselves actively into what is becoming, to which they themselves belong. It will not tolerate a dog's life which feels itself only passively thrown into What Is, which is not seen through, even wretchedly recognized. The work against anxiety about life and the machinations of fear is that against its creators, who are for the most part easy to identify, and it looks in the world itself for what can help the world; this can be found. How richly people have always dreamed of this, dreamed of the better life that might be possible. Everybody's life is pervaded by daydreams: one part of this is just stale, even enervating escapism, even booty for swindlers, but another part is provocative, is not content just to accept the bad which exists, does not accept renunciation. This other part has hoping at its core, and is teachable (3).

Given this, Bloch (1986) sees a close connection between dreams and hope. Furthermore, he writes about fashion, fairytales, and film as manifesting the principle of hope:

> Instead of the unregulated little wishful images of the report, those harnessed and manipulated by the bourgeoisie now become visible. Thus manipulated, these images can be held down and misused, coloured pink and with blood. The third part: transition shows wishful images in the mirror, in a beautifying mirror which often only reflects how the ruling class wishes the wishes of the weak to be. But the picture clears completely as soon as the mirror comes from the people, as occurs quite visibly and wonderfully in fairytales… The appeal of dressing-up, illuminated display belong here, but then the world of fairytale, brightened distance in travel, the dance, the dream-factory of film, the example of theatre. Such things either present a better life, as in the entertainment industry, or sketch out in real terms a life shown to be essential (13).

As this brief literature review demonstrates, the tradition of proposing utopian projects was very common in past centuries and different scholars have introduced their own thoughts and beliefs about the future in the form of utopian thinking. In this process, it is important to remember that the evolution of utopia throughout the course of history, from More's original utopia to the utopian projects of the late nineteenth century, leads one to discern a "utopization" of the concept of utopia. In other words, utopia is not a predefined concept but rather an evolving one, hence the importance of referring to many utopias. Thus, according to the specific socioeconomic history, new demands have been introduced and these demands have been introduced in new utopian projects.

It can be suggested that as the original demands of classical utopias were implemented and became normal parts of society, they were replaced with new demands from new utopians.

1.4.2. Cinema and Utopia

Not only has the content of utopian demands evolved but also the medium used to present them. If the first utopian projects were suggested in literary formats, as time has passed, the task of projecting an alternative universe passed more to visual media and cinema (Picon, 2004). As Choay (2000) argues, in utopia the passage from critique to project materialized via a spatial model, the values of which performed a transformative function. Thus, the spatial model played a significant role in the transmission of utopian demands. Because of the visual quality of cinema, utopian thinkers could more effectively propose their spatial vision. A digital image in three dimensions proved to be more effective at suggesting an imaginary society than even an excellent written description of a society. Nobody explains this better than Peter Ruppert (1996), who argues that:

> A powerful myth-making machine, the cinema provides a particularly dense system of meaning, one that borrows from different discourses --narrative, politics, fashion, advertising-- and articulates our social experience in various ways. Not just forms of entertainment, films also convey myths and values; not just products of mass culture, they also project fundamental needs, beliefs, and

> desires, including Utopian desires. Their carefully orchestrated sounds and images are culturally charged and produce various effects – physiological, emotional, psychological, intellectual (140).

Cinematic history provides various examples of engagement with utopian thinking. The first time that film seriously engaged with the concept of utopia was in *Things to Come* (1936), a collaboration between H.G. Wells, Cameron Menzies, and Alex Korda. This work did not satisfy audiences and was both a commercial and critical failure; however, this did not mean the end of the utopian adventure in cinema. The birth of science fiction allowed cinema to become the major cultural field in which to engage with utopian literature. Some of the best science fiction movies, such as *Metropolis* (1927), *Alphaville* (1965), *Blade Runner* (1982), and *Brazil* (1985), are products of this mutual interest between utopia and cinematic storytelling. Here, cinematic tools and devices have been used for the depiction of a *dystopia*, a genre which, instead of proposing an ideal world, uses a provocative and subversive tone to portray a dark picture of a realized utopia (Halper et al, 2002). By demonstrating the potentially devastating impact of a realized utopia in its different forms (ranging from capitalist to socialist), and by depicting the absurdity of each type, filmmakers sought to generate debate and offer people the opportunity to think differently about specific societal problems occurring around them. For example, in *Playtime* (1967) Jacques Tati depicted Paris as a cold city of factory-like buildings in which the entire rhythm of life is controlled by a Taylorist mentality. For Tati, this depiction is the total realization of the extreme modernist city of Paris and its

lived reality has been used as a model to shock readers and persuade citizens to acknowledge the social gaps and problems within a modernist society.

Such examples are abundant in cinematic history and have been fully reviewed by film scholars. Cinema has impacted utopian literature to a degree that, according to Guy Baeten (2002), all modern discussions of utopia are now mediated by cinematic images. For all the reasons mentioned above, it can be argued that cinema is an excellent medium for scrutinizing and discovering utopian aspirations (Paquot, 1996). In response to the importance of utopia for cinema, this relationship has been extensively reviewed by film theorists and critical thinkers.

1.4.3. The Nature and Definition of Utopia in Cinema

Two perspectives on utopia are dominant in film studies; the first perspective concerns the nature and definition of utopia in cinema, and the second discusses the relationship between mass culture and utopia.

The first perspective attempts to understand the meaning of utopia in cinema. Some scholars suggest that it is difficult to see utopia in cinema due to the nature of film. Literary utopias provide a detailed discussion of an alternative society and this makes it easy to imagine where the residents of such a society live, how they get to work, and how they come into contact with other people. However, the same is difficult to say about a movie that has only two hours in which to tell its story. Scholars have attempted to answer such questions, such as Richard Dyer, who argues that “entertainment does not

present models of Utopian worlds, as in the classic utopias of Sir Thomas More, William Morris, et al. Rather, the utopianism is contained in the feelings it embodies. It presents, head on as it were, what utopia would feel like rather than how it would be organized. It thus works on the level of sensibility" (Dyer, 1981:181). For Dyer, utopia in cinema should not be compared with the full-fledged model of More's utopia; it is through the impact on the level of sensibility that utopia in the movies should be discussed.

For Dyer, both representational and non-representational signs define the level of sensibility for measuring utopia. As he argues, there is a tendency to concentrate on the representational mode in cinema while ignoring non-representational signs. However, the nature of non-representational signs is actually not very different from that of representational signs and both are iconic. Through his analysis of music, and by showing how utopia can be deployed in both numbers and narratives, Dyer attempts to investigate utopia on both levels of sensibility for musicals in cinema.

By analysing both levels in the context of musicals, Dyer argues that there is a close affinity between entertainment and utopia. As he points out, the concern about the ideal situation for human beings to live in is detectable in entertainment given the fact that entertainment provides escape and moments of release from the tension found in capitalist societies; audience members get to see and imagine what they do not actually have in their everyday lives. According to Dyer, the ingredients of utopia are hopes, wishes, and alternatives; these suggest that things can be better than they currently are.

Essentially, entertainment is essential to utopia because it can present an image of something better which can be contrasted with the day-to-day experience of reality.

Dyer's take on utopia has several positive aspects, such as his very promising discussion about the relevance of cinema for utopian studies and the fact that specific utopian moments can be detected in film. In this sense, he is very Blochian since for Ernst Bloch, the most important critical mind on utopia, elements like the existence of a literary genre or a philosophical written work are not the only conditions by which a thought can be considered utopian. Bloch notes that "to limit the utopian to the Thomas More variety, or simply to orientate it in that direction, would be like trying to reduce electricity to the amber from which it gets its Greek name and in which it was first noticed" (Bloch, 1986: 15). Similar to Dyer, Bloch analyzes a wide range of cultural forms including daydreams, fairy tales, myths, travellers' tales, the sea voyages of medieval Irish monks, and the work of alchemists attempting to synthesize gold, considering all of them to be productive utopian impulses (Levitas, 1990a). The common element in these diverse examples is that all of them have the audacity to propose a better life. They all hope to go beyond the present reality and they all dream of a transformed future. Bloch did not reject ideology per se since he believes that there are utopian elements which might be contained in ideological features (Kellner, 1997). This means that, as Kellner (1997) argues, ideology for Bloch is "Janus-faced" and has two sides - it contains mystifications, errors, and techniques of domination and manipulation but at the same time it embodies a utopian surplus or residue which is useful for the advancement of progressive politics and social critique. With this approach towards utopia and ideology Bloch could be described as the

father of the method that David Bordwell described as “contradictory readings” in film studies (1991). Dyer’s work is a good example of this contradictory reading. His take enables us to think critically about what is often considered pure entertainment - the musical - as a form of escape and ideology as well as how this form help us to escape from real contradictions. As Dyer argues, musicals propose a utopian dimension through genre, song, dance, and style. They help us to define solutions for the real shortcomings in our communities, an argument that reminds Jameson of when Dyer argued that musicals do not simply reproduce what the capitalist demands but rather have two sides - one which is in the service of capital and the other which is critical of its position. In this way musicals outline contradictions while attempting to answer the demands of both sides. Readers might compare Dyer’s attitude with Hegel when the latter argued that a genuine philosophical approach sees both negative and positive sides in a dilemma and will not reject something based on the claim that it is false. A truly philosophical approach will criticize any distortions in an ideological product but will also consider the fact that it might contain emancipatory details.

Therefore, it is not style, lighting, acting, mise-en-scene, editing, or any other specific technical cinematic factors which define utopian movies. They are also not defined by the level of accuracy or detail with which they present alternative societies. Instead, utopian cinema evokes an idealised world and a glimpse of utopian possibilities but it does this without portraying a fully-fledged utopian reality. In this process, the essential criteria of utopian movies are their sensory impacts on the audience to make them aware of the deficiencies within their own society. As Peter Ruppert (1996) puts it:

> Utopian film is better understood in terms of the social attitudes and assumptions that operate in various film genres and in various film styles; it is better gauged in terms of what a film does: its functions and effects on the audience. Seen this way, the Utopian potential of film emerges in indirect ways - in fleeting moments of hope, a yearning for something better, a desire for other possibilities. More absent than present in the film itself, utopia is more like a shadow that haunts our social and personal psyches. This is because the idea of utopia - the good place that is also no place - cannot be conveyed with precision, in fact, cannot be represented at all; it can only be evoked or suggested… (140)

According to this line of thought, when we study utopia in film we need to use a critical lens in order to uncover the way that utopia shows itself through flickers and glimpses and its "effects" on spectators.

By invoking the idea that utopia is represented by the glimpses and flickers that suddenly come to life in movies, Dyer makes it clear that for him utopia is neither fixed nor stable, repudiating the concept of a closed utopia, which is another Blochian aspect of his thinking. For Bloch, characterizing utopia as an end state or a "given" would be dehumanizing. For him, utopia should be fundamentally critical and disruptive to the ideas and frameworks that consider the current world and its realities to be the only possible future; it should be critical of efforts to pacify the radical and transgressive to any idea that there will be any order to things. Bloch's utopia is a constant questioning of the present and the "given" which leads to prefiguration and fuels the transformation of the given. For

him, when utopia becomes "given," it is no longer a utopia, meaning that utopia cannot be considered a blueprint or legislation of a polity (McManus, 2003). As Bloch argues, when utopia is "cast in a picture… one is thus deceived… [and] there is a reification of ephemeral or non-ephemeral tendencies… as if the day were already there" (Bloch and Adorno, 1988: 11), which means that a utopia reaches its end as soon as it becomes institutionalized. Dyer follows Bloch's recommendation and reminds his readers that utopia is only a glimpse that suddenly comes, appears, emerges, and disrupts the order of the universe but the moment of its apparition is also its death. Utopia in this sense could only be conceived of as the unimaginable, something that always refers to something other. This conceptualization of utopia makes cinema a proper medium of investigation since it is difficult to reflect upon the moments of fluctuations, non-stability, and ongoing evolution in literary form, but within film boundaries, these Deleuzian becoming moments appears to be easier to grasp.

Having said this, Dyer's project neglects one essential characteristic of a Blochian utopia. As Bloch notes, "utopia is the expression of hope, but that hope is to be understood 'not… only as emotion… but [also] more essentially as a directing act of a cognitive kind'" (Bloch, 1986: 12). In fact, as Ruth Levitas (1990b: 14) argues, "although Bloch remains adamant that all forms of utopian venturing beyond are better than anti-utopian or pragmatic attitudes which close off the future, not all Utopian imagining is as good as any other." Thus, Bloch distinguishes between abstract and concrete utopias. An abstract utopia is fantastical and compensatory, providing a detailed representation of a better world, especially its sociopolitical organization, but here there is a *wish* to change things

rather than a *will*. Thus, an abstract utopia is not accompanied by a will to change something; it conceptualizes a transformed future in which the position of everything in the world remains as it is except for that of the dreamer, which will somehow change, perhaps through a large lottery win or other stroke of luck. Thomas More offers a good example of an abstract utopia. Although he described a comprehensive picture of a new world, his utopia is not based on a deep understanding of the reality of England but rather an abstract portrayal. Unlike the abstract utopia, the concrete utopia is anticipatory rather than compensatory. The goal here is to move toward an ideal and yet possible future; it is not only wishful thinking but also willful thinking. Concrete utopias embody an essential utopian function since they simultaneously anticipate and influence the future. Marx's political project is an example of a concrete utopia because his description of a utopian society is based on a deep understanding of the problems of his time. Furthermore, Marx suggested concrete ways by which to change the world, combining these changes with a concrete will in order to realize his dream. As Levitas (1990) argues, the method to arrive at concrete utopia by subtractions of its abstract trappings leads to what Bloch defines as "educated hope." It involves,

> Knowledge and removal of the finished utopistic element… knowledge and removal of abstract utopia." However, what then remains? Is it the unfinished forward dream, the docta spes which can only be discredited by the bourgeoisie? This seriously deserves the name utopia in carefully considered and carefully applied contrast to utopianism; in its brevity and new clarity, this expression then means the same as: a methodical organ for the New, an objective aggregate form of what is coming up (Levitas, 1996:57).

Dyer does not take into account the Blochian distinction between abstract and concrete utopias so he does not provide the possibility of a real, concrete, emancipatory project. In fact, Dyer proposes a very loose definition of utopia under which anything in a movie, even a banal wish, could be called a utopian glimpse; this is not the case with Bloch. As Jameson (1971) argues, for Bloch distinguishing between truth and falsehood is essential. Dyer acknowledges the fact that entertainment is produced for profit and that it is performed mostly for the goal of pleasure, suggesting that there is tension between capital (the backers) and the artists over control of the art product. Dyer attempts to show the contradiction in the analysis of the musicals that he addressed but in general his analysis remains at the level of "thinking." One could argue that from Dyer's perspective utopia is a mind game - it is up to consumers to decide whether or not a project is utopian. However, as Hegel argues, the problem with such a way of thinking is that with a little bit of intelligence, anybody could find some justification in his thoughts, arguments, and wishes. According to Hegel, no concrete freedom is possible through the valorization of particular struggles without a sense of unity. With this in mind, nothing positive can emerge from the individual wishful strategies that Dyer favours. I would like to believe that a new world could arise purely through individual strategies, wishes, and the critical method that Dyer suggests but, unfortunately, I know very well that only in the dark fantasy room of a movie theatre can society be redefined through individual heroes and their wishes. The representational and non-representational modes that Dyer argues for should work towards a unified project. We could not judge Hitler based on his moustache and argue that he was a good man because he had a beautiful moustache! There should be a universal, unified guideline that orients the whole project. The lack of a unified picture

could lead everyone to claim that what they define are good wishes, potentially leading them to misuse emancipatory thoughts and wishes.

1.4.4. Mass Culture and Utopia

The second perspective on the literature focuses on the relationship between utopia and mass culture. From the birth of cinema, the question was whether or not utopia could be portrayed in mass productions like Hollywood movies. Theodore Adorno and Marx Horkheimer (1944) severely criticized mass culture and ridiculed any attempts to look for emancipatory projects and dimensions in mass products, a debate which Fredrick Jameson continues, amongst other contemporary scholars.

Walter Benjamin (1936) points out that in a capitalist society, technological developments mean that every piece of art can be produced on a large scale. On the one hand, mass production democratizes art since more people are able to use artistic production. However, on the other hand, mass production jeopardizes what he calls *aura*. According to Benjamin, "We define [the aura] as the unique appearance of a distance, however close it may be. Resting on a summer afternoon and letting one's gaze follow a mountain range on the horizon or a branch which casts its shadow on one that means breathing the aura of those mountains, that branch" (1936: 232). With this statement, Benjamin relates aura to its unique quality, which mass production jeopardizes since it shatters the auraic quality of art products. Benjamin argues later in the essay that the uniqueness of an object is related to its historical dimensions, explaining that "the authenticity of a thing is the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning,

ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced" (1936: 221). This historical development that Benjamin later labeled as *a ritualistic tradition* provides an authenticity for the object which has been threatened by mechanical production. In fact, Benjamin's main concern is that mass production has dramatically changed the experience of this feeling; in the modern world, a painting can be reproduced and sold to millions of viewers without preserving its aura-based qualities.

If Benjamin's analysis remained at this level then his project would not be very different from those of his contemporaries who rejected mass culture. However, Benjamin makes an interesting claim by arguing that each mode of production leads to a specific mode and sensibility. As he puts it, "during long periods of history, the mode of human sense perception changes with humanity's entire mode of existence" (1936: 221). Thus, his essay suggests that a new mode of human sense perception is being shaped in relation to the mechanical production of art. As the latter argument shows, it is in cinematic expressions that one can find the essence of this new human sense perception. Cinema helps its audiences to feel secure and safe when they encounter the shock of modernity. In this sense, Benjamin regards cinema as a useful medium to politicize art.

Adorno seems happy to accept Benjamin's claim regarding the death of aura but he cannot accept the political usefulness of mass-produced artwork (2001). For him, the culture industry, including cinematic products, is formulated as a system of domination and exploitation for two reasons. First of all, because of the commodity character of mechanical art, the cultural practice of such art, whether we call it low or high, has a

single function: to define and shape the spectator/viewer as a consumer. Given this, an artist who produces an artifact in the capitalist mode of production experiences a sense of alienation. According to this claim, the (industrial) capitalist mode of production inhibits, or restricts, the creation of techniques in the aesthetic sense in such products. Furthermore, there is a regressive quality of childishness in mass products that, according to Adorno, make them unsuitable for political strategies. Given this, he criticizes the Hollywood film industry since he believes that through Hollywood movies industrial capitalism has penetrated into the cultural life of individuals and begun to create and shape their ways of life. Thus, people's wants and desires are both created and satisfied through the marketplace. For him, this new way of life is devoid of any deeper meaning or understanding of the world and the pleasure derived from commodities lasts only as long as it takes for new commodities to appear on the market. The second reason that Adorno mistrusts the value of film is its relationship with photography and the immediacy which is claims, meaning the inherent tendency of film towards iconic representation. It seems that the core of Adorno's issue with film aesthetics is the way that the photographic origin of cinema prioritizes iconic representation over aesthetically autonomous procedures. So, as he argues, "Even where film dissolves and modifies its object as much as it can, the disintegration is never complete" (Adorono, 1966: 202). Given this, because of the photographic basis of film and its tendency to represent reality, film does not permit absolute and total construction.

So, if we accept these two claims of Adorno and believe that the culture industry commodifies human artistic experience and limits all sorts of arts to advertisement, and if

we accept the claim that film has a very limited possibility to actually represent reality, it makes no sense to speak of a revolutionary potential in films. This is not the whole story. Adorno's position on the culture industry, especially technologically-driven and circulated media, including film, has usually been characterized as myopic, mandarin, and conservative. Scholars, ranging from the new Left to cultural studies, see Adorno as a bad object in theory canons. This followed by the valorization of Benjamin, as the latter has been seen as a cool bourgeois intellectual who provides the possibility of a utopian dimension in such media. However, Adorno's contribution to the study of cinema should not be so quickly thrown out like the baby with the bathwater. In fact, Adorno argued in favour of the continued and perpetual significance of autonomous/independent art, even if their aura could only be actualized in irreversible decay and could emerge as a false resurrection. In fact, Adorono argued about the aporias and potentialities of film as an implicit and provocative challenge against Modern art, especially in the matter of the interconnection between aesthetic technique and industrial technology. So as Miriam Hansen argued (2012), in the struggle between mass culture and Modernism, film is essentially defined as the verdict and form of resistance against the culture industry. Given this, it is possible to detect some trace of utopia in Adorno writings in regard to film. It is mostly in relation to the Modern (or avant-garde) practice of cinema that Adorno detected utopia. To know more on this, we need to look at Adorno writings in "Transparencies on Film".

It is in "Transparencies" where Adorno develops most of his film theory. In this essay, which could be seen as series of discontinuous reflections, Adorno rethinks the issue of

the connection between technology and technique, especially in relation to film aesthetics: for this he examines the experience of emerging independent cinema in West Germany and other European countries. Surprisingly, Adrono argues that it is very difficult to separate filmic technique, that which is related to the internal organization of the work, and technology and the means of (re)production. Under contention is the autonomy of filmmaking in modern practices. The crux of this argument is very distinct compared to his earlier propositions on the culture industry. There, he argued that, because of the industrio-technological nature of filmic practice, it is not possible to detect a utopian dimension in the medium of film. Here, however, he abandons such a thesis.

To evaluate the above-mentioned argument we should remember that the ideological effects of film's duplication and naturalization of the world is not Adorno's real concern here. Instead, he pursues the photographic irreducibility of objects as an aesthetic problem, relating this to Modern art's attacks against meaning and intentionality, that is, the negation of its own function and role as art. It is with this in mind that Adorno discusses the autonomous practice of filmic production.

This autonomous practice of filmic production actualizes in avant-garde practices. For Adorno, in autonomous and independent cinema, there is no pressure to be perfect. There are, in other words, no already established technical standards to follow. Because of technical standards, the products of the culture industry exclude everything that is not already pre-digested and integrated. However, autonomous arts have neither fully absorbed, nor been dominated by, their technique, and consequently they could propose a

form of art defined as uncontrolled, accidental, and contingent, which gives them a liberating/emancipatory quality. They might not represent, for instance, the spectacular beauty of a superstar in their images, but the flaws in their representation of a beautiful girl encapsulate the method that accurately captures the clean and unsullied face of the professional actor. Therefore, the lack of a virtuoso mastery of means and thorough planning in the independent filmmaking process allows these films to develop other means of conveying immediacy. This hypothesis is based on his claim that a future which is supposed to be different can't be conceived in advance (Benzaquen, 1998). As Adriana Benzaquen argues, this is what Adorno also looks for through the method of critical theory. In critical theory, we criticize the existent as that which should and can change but there is no guarantee that utopia will certainly happen; there is an absence. Absence here remains a possibility. Only a method which is itself grounded in uncertainty can enable us to think critically about a future for which we are not certain about its shape; such a method enables us to know that there will be a different future without being sure about its forms (Benzaquen, 1998). What Adorno argues here is similar to assumptions in contemporary film literature that argue that some indie filmmakers have levelled the resource playing-field through the invention of cognitive storytelling software, totally collaborative film projects facilitated through crowdsourcing, and the transformation of single-family households into community creative workspaces. All of these methods are evidence of filmmakers using their imaginations to engage in "dialectical dreaming," a playful process of generating ideal possibilities out of everyday limitations. Due to this, Adorno valorizes the significance of independent films. On the other hand, Adorno's different writings are very critical of enlightenment and its logic of identity thinking. For

him, the recovery of the nonidentical is the achievement of the true work of art (Benzaquen, 1998). With this in mind, the space occupied by the independent cinema is defined by the features that criticize discursive logic. Independent cinema reveals itself as the only mode of expression that can question the compulsive logic of Western reason to understand the universe by transforming it like itself, by abstracting from it, by systematizing it, and by "rationalizing" it. Independent cinema is a new way of being, a new way to relate to nature and to otherness (Benhabib, 1989). The vision of giving voice to the diffused, the split, and the senseless in "a sphere of non-violent communication" is the way that a utopian cinema could emerge, a vision that hopes to venture beyond modernism while not leaving aside the utopian tradition of the Enlightenment. Having said this, one should remember that Adorno maintains a dialectical position in relation to Enlightenment. Although Adorno rejects reason, he simultaneously tries not to neglect the fact that he is a child of enlightenment. He argues that the reflex-like ego cannot be a substitute for autonomous self-control, instead proposing that we should think of autonomy as the situation of an ego with fluid boundaries, an autonomy which will not disintegrate in relation to otherness. This means that Adorno's ideal utopia is a form of utopia of the nonidentical or, in the words of Seyla Benhabib (1989), "individual autonomy is now understood as the capacity of the self to let 'diffuse nature be' and yet retain a coherent sense of selfhood (1446)."

Although Adorno`s film theory helps us think more seriously about the relation between culture and politics in the capitalist mode of production, at the same time, one should not underemphasize the limited potentials of his thought to analyze the mass produced art works.

In his writings, Adorno did not consider the fact that the analysis of mass-produced art works is essential because most people get their entertainment and information from these products. People do not get their sense of identity by listening to Shubert's music alone; it is by watching Lady Gaga music videos that most people build their sense of masculinity or femininity. It is essential therefore to analyze these popular forms and investigate their political dimensions. Furthermore, Adorno's theory is weak in its ability to capture the complexity involved in the response of spectators to modern art: the modern art forms could be interpreted differently according to different situations and spectators. Thus, a spectator who has limited knowledge of modern and independent cinema could read these strategies differently and even romantically.

Because of the emphasis on Modernist works, there is a great degree of individual heroism in Adorno theories; as he argues, no guidelines or conventional tools should be suggested in relation to cinema. My reading of such suggestions is that it is up to the individual to decide the outcome of an art project, meaning that the individual will decide whether or not such a project is politically good. If this is true, I see real danger in Adorno's thought since, as Hegel once argued, in the absence of some universal guidelines, everybody could claim that what he thinks is good. In fact, as Hegel puts it (1991), with a little bit of intelligence, everybody could find some justification in his thoughts and arguments. He also stated that no concrete freedom is possible through the valorization of particular struggles without a sense of unity. With this in mind, very few

positive outcomes could emerge from the individual strategies that Adorno favours. I would like to believe that a new world could arise only through individual strategies and wants but, unfortunately, I know very well that only in a dark fantasy room of a movie theatre can society be redefined through individual heroes. To create an emancipatory society, some guidelines for a unified project are needed since an activist needs to know what to do in the face of "real" and concrete struggles in the world. The lack of a unified picture could lead everyone to claim that they are building a post-capitalist society without fear of contradictions, which could lead to the misuse of emancipatory writings. Political art needs guidelines. We should be critical of a blueprint, but, without some degree of guidelines, it is impossible to propose a real project of emancipation.

The debate between Benjamin and Adorno regarding the political and utopian usefulness of mass-produced art including cinema has been repeated several times during the past century with its most recent example in the writings of Jameson, who mostly follows in Benjamin's footsteps.

Jameson has a unique perspective on the interaction between high culture and low culture. In his text, *reification*, Jameson accuses capitalism of being the guilty party, but what is innovative about his thought is that he does not consider this to be completely troubling or even surprising. For Jameson, "Works of mass culture cannot be ideological without at one and the same time being implicitly or explicitly Utopian as well: they cannot manipulate unless they offer some genuine shred of content as a fantasy bribe to the public about to be manipulated" (Jameson, 1979:144). So, instead of the usual

denigrating reading of low culture, Jameson simply wants to investigate it differently; for him, mass-produced movies simultaneously address the actual and coming-to-be modality of human social relations and because of this they are at the same time utopian and ideological, which means that they can help humans in creating a better world. Jameson assumes that cultural and critical scholars must wake up and understand that, in fact, current society presents us with essential issues that go beyond the shallow nostalgic elitist tendency to create dichotomy between the present and the past. "No society," Jameson states, "has ever been saturated with signs and messages like this one" (139). Additionally, he argues that "mass culture and modernism have as much content… as the older social realisms" (141).

In order to apply his framework, Jameson employs the strategy of the contradictory text, attempting to discover the repressed meanings that disrupt explicit or implicit meaning in the text. As Bordwell argues (1991), here the critic hopes to unmask ideology by showing all the flagrant distortions in the film but he tries to "save" the film by pointing out how it either embodies progressive elements or contains in its very incompatibilities some illuminating indications of how firmly ideology must battle in order to keep its authority. In this process, the Jameson's general goal is to "restructure the problematic of ideology, of the unconscious and of desire, of representation, of history, and of cultural production, around the all-informing process of narrative" (Jameson 2013: 13).

For example, concerning *The Godfather,* Jameson argues that its Utopian impulse lies in its representation of the family as the fantasy of a resolution, a fantasy to redefine the

meaning of the other. As he argues, *The Godfather* emerged at a time when masculinity and its representation was a source of constant questioning in cinema. A significant number of movies during this time presented images of weak men, as can be seen in the works of Marlon Brando and James Dean. Furthermore, the idea of family seemed to be an alien, outdated concept in this period but *The Godfather* placed family and strong men at the center of its universe. It represented the repressed desire of parts of American society who fantasized about the lost patriarchy.

Clearly, it is possible to argue that Jameson has based his conceptualization of the political impulse in mass production upon neither pure enthusiasm or upon the total rejection of popular culture as the commoditisation and manipulation of art. His model does not treat any phenomenon with preconceptions about what is good or bad. With this in mind, the cultural products of capitalism will be studied here more seriously to see if they contain a "political surplus" dimension. In this regard, history plays an important role for Jameson and helps him to define what is good or bad. His approach fits well with my Hegelian research paradigm.

Jameson reminds us that only lazy thinking leads to the dismissal of popular culture with the pretext that they serve the system of capitalism. As I argued above, the analysis of mass-produced artwork is essential because most people get their entertainment and information from these products. It is essential to analyze these popular forms and investigate their political dimensions. It is in this sense that the cultural critic's task is to understand the surplus political qualities of cultural products while reading them critically. Through this process, the critic can separate them from their ideological

content in order to have a discussion of what these ideological tools have offered, what has been suppressed, under what conditions, and why this has happened. It is possible in this way to recognize those things which are deficient and missing in this world and to also recognize what should be fought for and sought in order to build a better future. This positive attitude towards popular culture seems very useful in our time, in which the number of utopian movies has increased significantly. Although Jameson himself explains in several articles how his position can be used to read movies, he rarely mentions utopia in contemporary cinema; this provides a good research opportunity.

1.5. Proposed Chapters

This manuscript is structured as a book with chronologically-structured chapters, the first of which sets out the introduction, methodology, and literature review. The second chapter, "Reading *Divergent* Through the Hegelian Paradigm," will focus on analyzing the film *Divergent*. Here, I will try to debunk the myth that Hegel was a conservative thinker by outlining the utopian dimensions in his thinking. For this attempt, the concepts of state, actuality, and rationality in Hegel will be defined. I would also look at the way that Hegel defines the master-slave relationship. The latter concept will define the theoretical framework for the third chapter, "*The Hunger Games*: Hegelian master-slave bondage revisited." Here, I will attempt to read *The Hunger Games* from the perspective of the master-slave relationship and I will provide more contexts for understanding the relevance of Hegelian thinking for analysis of a utopian movie in cinema. The fourth chapter will be "Utopia: The (limits of the) abstract utopian function in late capitalist

society: A critical reading of *Tomorowland*," which will look at *Tomorrowland* from the perspective of abstract utopia. For this chapter, I refer to Hegel's writings about romanticism and stoicism. The fifth chapter is "*The Giver* - On Memory, Language, and Child Killing," which will use Hegelian concepts of the state as a prism through which *The Giver* can be interpreted. Given the importance of the film *Snowpiercer*, the sixth chapter, "*Snowpiercer* and the possibility of hope for a better future," will be dedicated to analyzing it and I will refer to Hegel's intervention in the story of creation to read the film. The seventh chapter is "Reading *Elysium* Through a Utopian Lens." Here I will use the concept of history and the way that Hegel defined it for my analysis. The final chapter will bring together all of the films that have been examined throughout the dissertation and will synthesize the application of the method, a summary of my research findings, and how the whole doctoral project overall answers my research questions and gives the thesis a sense of completeness.

Chapter 2: Reading *Divergent* Through the Hegelian Paradigm

Although Hegel's thoughts opens the way for a systematic criticism of the world and a meagre possibility of a radical break, he has been accused of anti-utopianism. According to his writings, the current structure of the world, its legislators, state of affairs, institutions, conventions, and laws could all fail to fulfill their wholly promises, hinder freedom, and thus be mere semblances of what they ought to be. In this step there is the potential for subjects to resist and criticise these states for the sake of creating an ideal, concrete utopia in the form of the state. To prove this point I want to read and analyse Divergent through such a lens, but before this, I will introduce Hegel's thoughts in relation to utopia.

2.1. The Role of Utopian Thinking for Hegel

Hegel occupies an impeccable position in the field of political theory and is among the most read and discussed scholars. However, because of the complexity of his ideas and his convoluted arguments, he is simultaneously one of the most misunderstood thinkers in history, having been wrongly accused of being a defender of the status quo (Wood, 1991). Hegel's attack on Fries, his attempts to justify the censure, and his famous quote that what is rational is actual and what is actual is rational, gives his critics enough materials to wrongly charge him as a philosopher of state. As Fries himself put it, "Hegel's metaphysical mushroom has grown not in the gardens of science but on the dunghill of servility" (Fries quoted in Hegel, 1991a: viiii). Granted, Hegel shows hostility towards abstract utopia since for him mere understanding, dreaming, and wishful

scenarios are not enough to propose a concrete project. Human will, work and comprehension of history is necessary to achieve utopia and so Hegel rejected the abstract position on utopia. Even if this form of utopia could be realized, the example of the French Revolution demonstrated that this form of thought could be very violent since it is not based on a deep comprehension of the forces of history. Having said this, Hegel never denied the possibility for a better future nor reduced it to actuality. He famously praised Christianity because of its demands to abolish the slavery. As he argues, for Romans few were free, but for Christian religion everybody was free. Furthermore in his conceptualization of state, he contends that if the individual does not feel at home in the state, if no mutual interaction between universal and particular actualized, the individual has the right to not accept his position in the state. With this in mind, Hegel approved human attempts to shape a better future for them and this is best exemplified in his famous claim that "what is rational is actual and what is actual is rational" (1991a: 20), and in his reflection on master/slave dialectics.

Hegel's famous claim that "what is rational is actual and what is actual is rational" was introduced in the *Philosophy of Right*. This is a very complex argument and is often misinterpreted by Hegel's critics, who argue that he justifies the status quo. However, this is a very naïve understanding of Hegelian thought and we should, in fact, remember that in this argument, this "is" is categorical, meaning that the rational must be made the actual, and the actual must be made the rational. Thus, as Hegel argued, "what ought to be, in fact also is, and what only ought to be without [actually] being, has no truth" (1991a: 151).

In order to have a better sense of what Hegel means in this sentence, we should remember that actuality and rationality for Hegel are deeply related to the utopian impulses. As Hegel states in the *Encyclopaedia of Logic*, actuality is a far advanced and developed phase of reality; it is the culmination of immediate being, appearance, and existence (1991b). The unity of essence and existence defines actuality; this form is contrasted to mere existence.

According to this conceptualization of actuality, norms should not be defined merely in terms of their essence, meaning, and justification, or be reduced to their coming-into-being, their present facticity and historical emergence. As Hegel argues, the form of actuality that he discussed in this proposition is not what merely exists. As he puts it:

> In common life people may happen to call every brain wave, error, evil, and suchlike "actual," as well as every existence, however wiled and transient it may be. But even for our ordinary feeling, a contingent existence does not deserve to be called something-actual in the emphatic sense of the word; what contingently exists has no greater value than that which something-possible has; it is an existence which (although it is) can just as well not be (1991b: 30).

Given this sentence, I suggest that by actuality Hegel means the way that human practices are supposed to function in utopian/idealized moments and it is not the mere perpetuation of the statue-quo. My understanding is based on the fact that for Hegel actuality is shaped in relation with the "impulses of perfectibility" in each historical stage. What are the

impulses of perfectibility? They are very similar to utopian impulses. In the *Philosophy of History*, Hegel argued that:

> The mutations which history presents have been long characterised in the general, as an advance to something better, more perfect. The changes that take place in nature—how infinitely manifold so ever they may be—exhibit only a perpetually self-repeating cycle; in nature there happens "nothing new under the sun," and the multiform play of its phenomena so far induces a feeling of ennui; only in those changes which take place in the region of spirit does anything new arise. This peculiarity in the world of mind has indicated in the case of man an altogether different destiny from that of merely natural objects – in which we find always one and the same stable character, to which all change reverts – namely, a real capacity for change, and that for better – an impulse for perfectibility (2004*:* 54).

With this quote, Hegel argued that the human's mutations in history, which are supposed to be actuality, are driven by utopian impulses. They attempt to create a better and more advanced future. This happens because reason exists in the progress of history, that history "has constituted the rational necessary course of the World-Spirit," and that the world of "intelligence and conscious volition is not abandoned to chance, but must show itself in the light of the self-cognizant Idea" (2004:10). History's final goal is to achieve freedom; as Hegel puts it "all the qualities of Spirit exist only through freedom, that all are but means of attaining freedom; that all seek and produce this and this alone" (2004: 10).

This does not mean that Hegel sees no flaws in the progress of history; Hegel knows very well that history can bring horror, injustice, dissatisfaction, and suffering to the lives of particulars, famously arguing that history is a "slaughter bench" on which the desires and happiness of peoples, the wisdom of states, and the virtue of individuals have been denied (2004:21). There are two sources of failure in the history. On the one hand, history can produce evil. According to Hegel, evil actualizes mostly when humans exist only 'according to nature' in a state of immediacy (Hodgson, 2005: 149). Existence in harmony with the flesh is a fall into a state of innocence, while living in accordance with the spirit is a progress into responsibility. So, when consciousness becomes consciousness of being-for-myself in contrast to the ultimate universal truth, when consciousness attempts to singularize myself against the universal and others then evil occurs. Furthermore, there is impossibility in human capacity to actualize the impulse of perfectibility. According to Hegel, as soon as the actual is reified it loses its utopian quality because, "immediate actuality bears the seed of something totally different in itself. This different is initially only something possible whose form is then changed and translated into actuality" (Hegel, quoted in Wenning 2009). This sentence means that because of the historical conditions and motivations of historical actors, the imperfectability of particulars, and the bureaucratic structure of exercising power, the actuals are always shaped in an imperfect way. To give one example of the reason behind this imperfectability we could refer to Mannheim (1979) when he argues that:

> What was once merely a formal scheme and abstract, total view tends to dissolve into the investigation of specific and discrete problems. The utopian striving towards a goal and the closely related capacity for a broad perspective disintegrate

> in the parliamentary advisory council and in the trade-union movement into a mere body of directions for mastering a vast number of concrete details with a view to taking a political stand with reference to them (225).

Nobody has explained this better than William Morris (2001) when he wrote that "men fight and lose the battle, and the thing that they fought for comes about in spite of their defeat, and when it comes it turns out not to be what they meant, and other men have to fight for what they meant under another name" (31). This is what Miguel Abensour called Persistent Utopia. As he argues (2008), human beings have a stubborn impulse towards justice and freedom – to end domination and relationships of servitude and exploitation because we are never satisfied with what we have right now and always look for something perfect. The structure of society always leaves something to be desired. As Bloch (1995) argues:

> Until this possible fulfillment the intention waking-dream-world is in progress; no part payment allows it to be forgotten. No making absolute of a mere presentiment may allow us to forget the mindfulness of this intention. ... [A] realization has never yet been made absolute without a final part of its waking dream being left over, and therefore moved on further beyond the attained to its possible Being-even-better. ... Anyway, the duration, the non-renunciation of the image of hope, have their origin in the enduring problem, realization, and in the reasons for this problem itself (306).

This tension between how reason is supposed to manifest and what is now is where the possibility of radicalism and utopianism lies for Hegel. Here, the function of the philosopher is to detect the manifestation of reason and spirit in his time, to clearly detect whether any moments for the realization of utopia have failed in the past, to understand if utopia has been seized by evil, and to search for rational (actual) tendencies which point towards a "totally different" state of affairs. These rational tendencies are the mediating connection between the past and a better future. This methodology does not mean that one needs to neglect what is but it provides the possibility to comprehend the phenomenon as an appearance looking beyond itself. A human could only achieve this quality when he becomes able to reason about his time. As Hodgson puts it (2005), "Only from the point of view of reason or thought is it possible to conceive the infinite as that which 'overreaches' the finite, both encompassing and transcending it as an 'affirmative infinitude'" (79).

By emphasizing rationality Hegel wanted to say that these impulses of perfectibility could come into existence if a subject could connect finite with infinite, particular and universal. They could not be defined only in relation to something particular existing in its own right, something projected from dreams that has never before appeared for human consciousness. At the same time these moments of actuality should be connected with the infinite. As Hegel argued, if we leave it to the individual to decide, any form of scenario could be suggested without any sense of unity. So, there should be some relation between subject and the demands of universal (infinite). Thus, none of the moments of particularity and universality are sufficient to help the actual happen. A unification

between them is necessary or else only destruction will occur and no real progress will be achieved. We can better understand this argument by looking at the master-slave bondage section of Hegel's writing.

The section of Hegel's *Phenomenology* concerning lordship and bondage is considered to be its best known, especially because of its influence on the political and social philosophy of Marx. To follow up on my previous section, I also want to add that this section shows the utopian quality of Hegel's thoughts and why unity between the particular and the universal is necessary for actuality to come into being. The overarching goal of this section is to prove that in the interaction between slave and master it is the master who is the slave of the slave and that a unification of master and slave is the only way to achieve freedom.

Let's first start with the master-slave origin of struggle. For Hegel, one of the differences between humans and animals is that humans search for the process of recognition and for this they look for desire for its own sake. Desire directed towards another desire for its own sake will be shaped by the process of negating and assimilating others, which eventually means that humans accept risking their lives, the ultimate desire, for the process of self-recognition. Fighting for recognition is part of human nature but in this process of fighting there is an unequal relationship between those who are stronger – the masters – and those who are weaker – the slaves – with them initially fighting against each other. That being said, one finds an inherent dissatisfaction in the permanent human struggles over life and death through which people achieve recognition. A struggle of this

type requires that either the subject kills the other, which leaves him or her without another subject to do the recognizing, or else the primary subject is killed its selfhood vanishes at the same time. According to Hegel, the absurdity of this struggle means that two groups will be formed – one that decides to give up the struggle, the slave, and the other who continues the struggle, the master.

Who is the master and slave? For Hegel, the master "is a consciousness existing for-itself which now relates to itself through the mediation of another consciousness" and the slave is this "consciousness whose essence is to be synthesized with independent being, or with thingness in general" (Hegel, 1961: 234-3). The first reading of this passage could lead us to conclude that the master is the actual realization of an entity, a dream world, in the way he is. This might lead us to see the master from a Nietzschean perspective and believe that masters are naturally destined to rule the world. However, as Hegel's passage shows, there is an inherent contradiction in this state of domination. In fact, the master is a master because he is recognized by the other group, the slaves; thus, his autonomy lies in the process of mediation by another self-consciousness. Consequently, his independence should be seen as relative rather than natural. This recognition will be shaped through an intermediary process of thinghood.

Given this, the master has a mediated relationship with the slave and Hegel argues that the master is related to the slave because of the intermediary of life and that the slave is not the slave of the master but rather the slave of life. In fact, as argued above, what makes a slave a slave is that he has retreated in the face of the life-and-death struggle;

therefore, his choice was voluntary and so he is more inclined to accept servitude than liberty in the face of death. This could explain why for Hegel the slave is more the slave of life than the slave of the master. As Hegel puts it, "That is the yoke from which he has been unable to free himself through struggle, and that is why he has shown himself to be dependent, having his independence in thingness" (1961: 235). In fact, life defines the servitude of a slave.

Hegel continues this section by arguing that there is no separation between the being of life and the world of desire for the master, who always wants to reach something to feel satisfied; in Hegelian terms, he is the master of the slave through thingness. As Jean Hyppolite (1979) argued, this relationship to the thing is sustained because of the intermediary of the slave; through the activities of the slave, the master is able to enjoy things. Through the slave's actions he can negate them totally and through this could affirm himself totally. Thus, the master's life is a total negative datum; he can only see the slave as a thing and is unable to be in contact with the slave to realize his potentialities. For Hegel, this puts into question the whole process of master recognition; a good dialectical process needs to account for negativity; dialectic can only achieve a new stage when such recognition of the other is achieved, which cannot happen for the master. Although the master hopes to prove himself as a subject when facing the other, in reality he sees the other only as an object, as a mere instrument of his will, and this will make it difficult for him to achieve recognition. This defines the position of the master as an abstract utopia for the slave, with the master being an ideal for which the slave searches.

As Hyppolite (1979) pointed out, the slave's situation is different since he is aware of the fact of the being of desire. He has such understanding because he can elaborate things and work on them. Hard work is the slave's fate and through this process he shapes the world in the way that the master can purely and simply negate in order to enjoy it. The master is capable of consuming the world; the slave could elaborate it. Negation has value for the master, and this gives him the possibility of self-certainty; however, production gives value to the slave's life (Hyppolite, 1979).

Thus, the master finds his self-certainty through dominance and the mediation of the slave's activities. Mediation and recognition of the master in this process is achieved through another consciousness – that of the slave. The whole process means that the slave in this dialectic plays a more fundamental and active role. As Hypopolite puts it, the truth of the master's consciousness thus lies in the inessential consciousness of the slave.

Why is the situation so different for the slave? Why could slave-consciousness be seen as the truth of self-consciousness when this self-consciousness is alien to him and is defined by something outside of it? How is this possible? First of all, for the slave, the master is outside of him and has his own essence that defines his own ideal. In fact, as far as the slave recognizes his own identity as that of a slave, he also de-valorizes his own identity and takes into account the master's features, thus seeing in the master a utopia to look for, an idea to achieve. The master in this regard is the self-consciousness that the slave himself is not, so here liberation is introduced to the slave as a form outside of it. This de-valorization (the fact that the slave recognizes his own dependence) and the fact that the

slave's ideal is situating outside of himself defines a dialectic that shaped the essence of unhappy consciousness; here man as consciousness of nothingness and of the vanity of his life will be situated in opposition to another more perfect consciousness (Hyppolite, 1979).

Here, the slave sees truth in the master but this truth is external to the master. He realized the meaning of otherness. It is through the fear of the Lord that he eventually became acquainted with the meaning of freedom. As Hegel puts it (2006, Vol 2), "Fear of the Lord is the absolute religious duty, to regard myself as nothing, to know myself only as absolutely dependent— the consciousness of the servant vis-a`-vis the master' (155). What God demands is that his people "shall fear him, and have the basic feeling of their dependence" (Hegel 2006, Vol 2:158).

The slave hears the Lord and feels responsible to the other as the other is responsible to him. Through the fear of the Lord, the slave can see his whole life and the whole specificities of Dasein. Human consciousness for freedom and the search for utopia can only be shaped through this fear of lord. Through this fear, the slave looks for a way to go against this life's miseries. It is through demands of Lord that a slave can surmount the frustration of life. Utopian impulses, caused by fear of the Lord, encourage the slave to change his life, realize what freedom is, and fundamentally change the course of the past; it helps him to generalize his beliefs about what the world could be as the true future of the world. In this way, utopian thinking secures the pleasure of the construction and redefinition of the world. Thus, it is the master and not the slave who has the most

"immediate," pure, organic relationship with his natural existence since he has not heard the Lord's command.

The slave is in a position to act since through the process of labouring he has learned how to transform the world. The master, on the other hand, is capable of satisfying his desires through enjoyment and he can completely negate the thing. However, the slave is only able to transform the world since he is constantly labouring to provide service to the master and it is only through this apparently inessential activity that the slave becomes able to give to his own being-for-itself the subsistence and the permanent structure necessary for the realization of utopia. As Hegel argues "Through this rediscovery of himself by himself, the bondsman realizes that it is precisely in his work wherein he seemed to have only an alienated existence that he acquires a mind of his own" (1977: 118–19). Thus, not only can the slave shape himself by shaping things but he can also imprint self-consciousness onto being. Hence, the slave finds himself in the products of his works. In this process, the master achieves only a transitory enjoyment but the slave will achieve through his labour the possibility of being an ideal. "This being-for-itself externalizes itself in labor and passes into the element of permanence; laboring consciousness thus comes to the intuition of independent being as an intuition of itself" (Hegel, 1961: 238). Thus, the slave's labour achieves the authentic process of achieving the utopian dream of being for-itself. In this process, the thingness which has trembled the slave will be eliminated.

It is through the combination of the Lord's fear and labour that the slave can realize his liberation and freedom. As Robert Stern (2013) argues, the combination of both factors is necessary; "fear will remain 'inward and mute' unless the subject can find himself again through work, while work without the experience of fear will mean it once again becomes 'an empty self-centered attitude'" (Hegel, 1977: 119). Because of these qualities, the universal power of the slave is now shaped by a utopian consciousness that is not satisfied with negation and he attempts to discover himself and to actualize utopia within it. Here the search for utopia is not a wish but a will that needs labour. Now the slave works for someone else's satisfaction and needs so he knows how to respect an independent existence that is around him, or the object on which he works. This moves the freedom of consciousness to a new level since the new consciousness will not see the world as a place in which someone having various skills can define himself as master over some things. Instead, new consciousness will see the world as a place for human interaction and will be respectful of others and negativity. This process helps the slave to know that human need to go beyond the master-slave relationship and find a reconciliation between them. With this in mind, Hegel suggests utopia as a unity between the particular and the universal. Hegel's total philosophy could be defined as an utopia quest to discuss the possibility of achieving such an ideal, I would suggest that such an idea could only be achieved when the kingdom of God is actualized in the world.

Given the centrality of kingdom of god in Hegel, and its importance for utopian glimpses, a line on this concept is necessary. We could better grasp the true meaning of kingdom of god if we pay careful attention to Hegel's writing on religion. Hegel was among the first

in the modern world who tried to equate philosophy and religion (Hodgson, 2005). As he famously argued, 'The goal of philosophy is the cognition of the truth—the cognition of God because God is the absolute truth....Philosophy knows God essentially as concrete, as the spiritual, realized universality that is not jealous but communicates itself.' (Hegel, 2006, vol 3, 347). Against those who want to remove God from the universe, and define God as not-thinkable, he wanted to bring back god into the world and make him an object of philosophy. With this perspective in mind, for him, "philosophy of religion is a distinctive sort of philosophical or speculative theology, which claims that a postmetaphysical way of thinking about God is possible and that religion is a unique shape of consciousness alongside psychological, ethical, and aesthetic experience" (Hodgson, 2005: 14)

For him, God is not a metaphysical entity that lives in the heaven. Following the incarnation of Jesus, God descends into the earth and lives among the humans. Hegel equates God, reason and spirit (Hodgson, 2005). As he argued, the story of spirit development is a self-consciousness in humanity and humanity's knowledge of God and god and god's knowledge of humanity. God is only God to the extent that God knows godself.

God lives in human community and could only understand himself through its mutual, non-asymmetrical relation with humans. This means that both god and humans are in contact with each other and nourish from the other. Neither of them, rejects the other. They both know that a rejection of the other will cause again a master/slave relationship,

a perpetual state of ignorance and violence. God, of course, has more power than humans, but because of his love, he rejects his power. A true love relation actualizes that which is defined by God's sacrifice.

Hegel argued that it is in the society, in the community, that such a mutual relation could happen (Hodgson, 2005). One could suggest that the art of living together is the most sophisticated art for Hegel. It is in such harmony that God could find its true vocation in the world. Here god rules the universe but his hope is not to create a total system into which everything is god; instead he hopes to create a world in which god is everything. But God is not a totalizing substance, it is a unity that both generates and emerges from determinacy and difference (Hodgson, 2005)

God's needs a state to conserve his kindly relation with human; a state that let its individuals to preserve their uniqueness while creating a whole from the mutual relation between himself and the humans. For Hegel, the history of the world is the history of creation of such a kingdom, the absolute moment of realization of freedom. The kingdom of God is the moment that the spirit fulfilled its potential in the history, when reason reached its full culmination and God could truly understand his vocation in the world. At such a moment, God comprises the whole particular diversity in itself and merges with them. The resulting essence is a religion community in which "a new kind of human bond or intersubjectivity is created in which "distinctions based on power, position, sex, and wealth are renounced, in which self-possession is given up in favour of compassion, of suffering with and on behalf of others" (Hodgson, 2005: 280). Here, the individual

subject knows itself to have absolute freedom and infinite worth, but at the same time he surrenders this stability and keep itself in what is completely other. This is the utopian ideal of Hegel, which overcomes the master/slave bondage.

As my previous arguments make clear, although Hegel has been accused of anti-utopianism, his thoughts open the way for a systematic criticism of the world and a meagre possibility of a radical break. According to his writings, the current structure of the world, its legislators, state of affairs, institutions, conventions, and laws could all fail to fulfill their wholly promises, hinder freedom, thus being mere semblances of what they ought to be. In this step there is the potential for subjects to resist and criticise these states for the sake of creating an ideal, concrete utopia in the form of the state. Given the secular nature of our time, very few critics discussed the kingdom of god and its relation to current political structure. I do believe that the religious reflection of Hegel still deeply resonate with our world and still could help us to evaluate our contemporary thought, reflection and behaviour in the world. To prove this point I want to read and analyse *Divergent* through such a lens.

2.2. Reading *Divergent* Through the Hegelian Paradigm

The film *Divergent* portrays a utopian world in which the universe is divided into five factions: dauntless (the brave), abnegation (the selfless), amity (the peaceful), candour (the honest), and erudite (the intellectual). Because of their selfishness quality, members of the abnegation faction govern the society. The story falls into literary genre of youth

coming to age and tells the story of a young girl named Tris who is trying to discover her purpose in life. This search for her true vocation in society is exemplified by her participation at the age of sixteen in a ceremony which is designed to help individuals chose their faction. Before going to the ceremony, individuals are injected with a serum that makes them enter a simulated world where they are faced with different dilemmas which they must solve. The programmer of the stimulated work is capable of detecting their responses and reactions and suggests to them a faction to join. Following this, the individuals participate in the ceremony and choose their factions based on the results of the simulation combined with what they feel are their true vocations in the world. Tris and her brother Caleb participate in the ceremony but she has difficulty choosing. In fact, right from the very beginning the story *Divergent* shows us the struggle that Tris has in selecting her destiny as she constantly questions which category is right for her. According to the test, she fits into the category of the individuals labelled as divergent, which are people who simultaneously adhere to several factions. This is very troubling news since the divergent are considered by society to be evil and in need of removal because of the threat they pose to its structure by calling into question its power relations based on the faction's system. Eventually, the story becomes a heroic struggle during which Tris fights against the totalitarian regime and tries to discover her true nature.

How can we think about the dystopia depicted in *Divergent* based on Hegel's writings? The society in which Tris lives appears on the surface to be the kingdom of God. This claim may seem awkward but there are similarities between the kingdom of God and Divergent's society. First, there is a very a close connection between individuals and the

state. Individuals see the state as the realization of their dreams and believe that if they can be involved in shaping the state then they can be happy. As the narrative unfolds following a bloody war between the factions a new state emerges and constantly reminds the people that its faction system is the only option if they want peace. The logic used to justify this division is similar to the Hobbesian method of justifying central government. As Thomas Hobbes reminds his readers (1996), life is short, nasty, and brutish, and humans are wolves ready to devour each other. Only a strong central government can put an end to anarchy and create a stable society. In order to avoid this catastrophic world of anarchy, individuals must support the strong state and in the case of *Divergent* this means accepting the faction system.

Although the state in *Divergent* appears to be secular, it is also possible to detect a religious structure. It is a society with important rituals for creating "faith" in its individuals. According to Hegel, religion is a matter of the heart rather than teaching or dogma but some form of religious instruction is necessary because "everything that is for consciousness is objective to consciousness. Everything must come to us from outside" (Hegel, Vol 3:252). Given this, in his reflection on Christianity Hegel argues that a system must be developed to help individuals engage with religion. In his words, society requires that "out of the womb of the church there be formed a free life, a civil and political life, stemming from eternal principles, a rational, worldly kingdom in accord with the idea of freedom and the absolute character of rights" (Hegel, Vol 3:151). Here society has a significant role to play in creating such a form of body politic; it is the creator of goals, ideals, frames of reference, and the relationship between the world and

the community of faith. In *Divergent* the state uses different mechanisms to create such a kingdom, such as how children learn from an early age that a good citizen must find his or her true vocation in society and that only this will bring happiness. We constantly hear the voice of devices that remind people what they must do in order to feel happy. The people in this world are born into such religious teaching, which they gain implicitly from the beginning, but they are not spiritually conscious subjects. The truth is outside of them and comes to them through authority figures since the system is based on the idea that all truth first comes from authority and consequently must be learned and taught. Given this, society defines good and bad. Through this process, it is supposed that evil has already been eliminated and that the goal of cultivation is to accustom the learner to the true and the good, and in that way to deny evil from re-emerging (Hegel, Vol 3:335). These are the reasons that made me claim that it is possible to detect a religious structure in this society. Based on this premise, we can try to read the society from Hegel's perspective and evaluate its structure.

In *Divergent* Tris represents the qualities of bravery, intelligence, and humility, all of which identify her as a threat to the system since she and other divergent people represent abnormality and prevent unification. Aristotle argued in the *Politics* that if somebody enters a society that embodies several cardinal virtues that he has himself then the king has only two options: either kill or banish the newcomer. Tris is the God feature of the system, a dangerous individual, an abnormal person who cannot be tolerated and must be removed. But what about Hegel? What would Hegel think of this if he were alive?

It might be possible to argue that a Hegelian state needs to act against such individuals, especially when they could be defined as evil. Can Tris be defined as evil according to Hegel's system? It is difficult to believe so. First of all, the society in which Tris lives is not a good example of a religious society from a Hegelian perspective. As Hegel puts it, an individual must respect his state unless the state does not let him feel at home in it. Tris fits into the category of individuals who does not feel at home since the society in which she lives does not let her express her character due to the fact that Tris is a divergent and does not fit into any one category. She and people like her need a new category since her current society does not provide an existing space for her integration. However, the fact that society wants to suppress Tris does not fit with the Hegelian paradigm since the suppressions of otherness is not in line with Hegel's philosophy.

The Hegelian way of thinking gives value to the life of the other as one can never achieve dialectical thinking without the presence of the other. According to Hegel, "Life is the resolving of the contradiction, the satisfying of the need, giving it peace, though in such a way that the contradiction emerges once more. The distinction, the contradiction, and its annulment alternate back and forth" (Hegel 2006: 281–2). To say this differently, life preserves itself by jumping into differentiation and clashing with particularity, finding itself in that and progressing to new forms. It is an ongoing course of diversification and unification (Hegel 2006: 281-2). Given this, Hegel acknowledges the value of otherness and even attributes this quality to God, saying that "God is absolutely free within godself, and it is precisely in this absolute freedom that God 'absolves' or 'releases' [entla ̈ßt] the other to exist as a free and independent being. This other, released [entlassen] as

something free and independent, is the world as such" (2006, Vol: 292). Given this, Hegel's God is not the wholly other but rather the whole of wholes, the universal that accepts all difference. As Hegel suggests, God is "the absolute womb or the infinite fountainhead out of which everything emerges, into which everything returns, and in which it is eternally maintained" (2006, Vol 1: 372). God is both substance and subject, person and power, mind and life, existence and essence. The enduring unity that characterizes God's infinite subjectivity does not dismiss difference but rather keeps different people in constant play in the form of creative relationships (Hodgson, 2005: 264). Such respect for the other can be hardly attributed to the dystopian version of Chicago in which *Divergent* opens. This is a system that clearly plans to suppress otherness rather than providing a space for integration of different types of people. Individuals have the right to act against such a totalitarian system and Tris can only realize her personality through such rebellious actions. Specifically, it is only through expressing love for the other that she can achieve her subjectivity. Hegel clearly argues that individuals do not live on their own but rather must surrender their separateness and isolation. Ethical life can be achieved only by giving up particularity and isolation and by the extension of one's life to include respect for universality and the lives of others. It is in love that the individual loses his abstract personality, instead capturing his concrete subjectivity and personality. It is with immersion in others that the truth of personality can be found (Hodgson, 2005: 137). Tris clearly understands the dilemma and attempts to create more connection between herself and others, a possibility which the state has denied to them.

Furthermore, rebellious acts are also necessitated by the fact that the institutions in this quasi-religious world do not work rationally, with the community of spirit and the kingdom of God needing institutional forms. The institutions of ethical life are divine not because they are holy in contrast to what is worldly but because reconciliation between the human and the divine is possible through them. Hegel believed deeply that it is through the organization of the state that the divine has broken through into the sphere of actuality (Hegel, 1991). The creation of the earthly realm is "the divine will, the law of right and freedom. The true reconciliation, whereby the divine realizes itself in the domain of actuality, consists in the ethical and juridical life of the state: this is the authentic discipline of worldliness" (Hegel, Vol 3:342). Earthly forms are not appropriate for containing the spirit but without such form the spirit dissipates into thin air. Worldliness must be disciplined, controlled, and made to function for the divine purposes instead of pursuing self-gratifying desires and idolatrous whims. When properly governed, the state achieves this discipline and the alternative is barbarism and anarchy.

Hegel may argue that institutions contain some form of divinity but this does not mean that he is making an ontological statement about the fabric of institutions. This also does not suppose that Hegel thinks there is a magnificent mind operating in the background of institutions. Hegel saw reason rather than mere chance manifesting itself in the kingdom of God institutions through the unfolding of natural or historical events. The rationality of institutions is based on the fact that, as the manifestation of spirits, they hope to achieve freedom because "all the qualities of Spirit exist only through freedom, that all are but means of attaining freedom; that all seek and produce this and this alone" (Hegel 2004:

10). If there is a leitmotif in Hegel's work then it is the theme of freedom since he argues several times that the history of religion is a path of progress towards conscious freedom. This is not only human freedom, but also God's freedom - the absolute and absolving spirit upon which human freedom is based. Religion's vocation is to enhance this freedom project through his knowledge of God and humanity, redemption and evil. In order to achieve this, religion must be liberated from improper representational forms and advance towards critical and speculative thinking, a process that understands the limits of all practices, symbols, and metaphors. Thus, for Hegel the actualization of the spirit can only be achieved through the rational development of institutions towards freedom. Given this, from the Hegelian perspective, there is the possibility of seeing flaws in the progress of institutions. Hegel was very well aware of this and he knew that institutions, even those of churches, can bring horror, injustice, dissatisfaction, and suffering to the lives of particulars, which is why he provides the possibility of criticizing institutions.

From the Hegelian perspective, institutions are rational when they help individuals to surmount their particularity and achieve universality; only through such possibility is actual freedom possible. What we see in the dystopian world of Chicago as depicted in *Divergent* is contrary to the authentic form of the state. *Divergent* shows a relationship in which one dominates the other and there is no possibility of reconciliation: the dystopian system dominates over the unreconciled world and the divergents. However, the domineering power absurdly has no connection with the Holy Spirit, instead becoming a worldly empire that controls the lives of its subjects and shapes them in the form of papal absolutism; "its ruling principle is that humanity is not at home with itself" (Hegel, 2006:

483). A total condition of bondage prevails and the consequence is the direct opposite of authentic reconciliation: human freedom is lost rather than gained in this process.

With this situation in mind, it is totally logical that an individual such as Tris would rise up against the totalitarian system. There is tendency to read such narratives in Hollywood films as a form of praise for the American neoliberal agenda which glorifies individualism. I would argue that it is possible to have a different understanding through the Hegelian paradigm. In a more controversial phase of his argument, Hegel goes on to emphasize that subjectivity or individuality is always unique; each subject exists on its own and differentiates from others. Consequently, there must be one individual in whom the idea of divine-human unity reveals itself in a definitive, unquestionable way. Hegel explains that "In one, all [are encompassed]; in several, divinity becomes an abstraction. [This individual appears] utterly and exclusively other over against them all, in order that they might be reconstituted" (Hegel, 2006:112–14). Although there could be several possible incarnations, such as divine men as cherished by the Romans or Greeks, there exists only one Christ figure in whom the infinite idea of humanity is fully known (Hegel, 2006:145). Given this line of thought, there is a possibility of understanding why Tris is the symbol of rebellious actions in this process. We should remember that what she fights for is not only her own concern. She is a worldly creature and has worldly desires, including romantic interest, but at the same time she is a Christ-figure who is coming to earth to save humanity from bondage and leads them towards freedom with the possibility of unification with the universal. Tris is the messiah from Benjamin's perspective. As Benjamin argues, "Only the messiah himself can close all historical events, and he does so by redeeming,

completing, and creating their relation to the messianic dimension. For this reason nothing historical by itself is able to relate itself to something messianic" (Benjamin quoted in Gur-Ze'ev: 3).

Tris is a hero who must undergo a tragic process, losing her father and mother and possibly her sister. This sees her following the steps of the Hegel's hero. In fact, the Hegelian perspective on the world is a tragic one, it valorises heroes as Christ figures who must go through a process of crucifixion and sufferings. In the Hegelian universe, negation and conflict are the essential parameters for living in a universe. It is through death that Hegel identifies divine love for humans since the infinite grief of death bring the infinite love of reconciliation (Hodgson, 2005:276). This is a process that happens for Tris as she loses her family and becomes a tragic, Christlike figure in *Divergent*.

In conclusion, this chapter has suggested that thinking of Hegel as being opposed to utopian thinking is a misunderstanding of his philosophy. As suggested above, Hegel opens the way for a systematic criticism of the world and the meagre possibility of a radical break. According to his writings, the current structure of the world, its legislators, state of affairs, institutions, conventions, and laws could all fail to fulfill their promises, in which case they could not become actual and would thus be mere semblances of what they ought to be. In this step, there is the potential for subjects to resist and criticise these states for the sake of creating an actual, concrete utopia in the form of the state. At the end, I suggested that the Judeo-Christian tradition of religion fits well the utopian

tradition and its inner logic can be used to read the heroic structure of Hollywood cinema since both rely upon the idea of progress and the optimistic historical conscience in general. While facing the horrors of life, the individual can connect his fate to a plan which is beyond individuality, thus gaining the hope of finding purpose and meaning for the pain and joy of life. The ultimate goal of this is a union between him and his fellow man which also connects the future with the past and the present.

Chapter 3: The Hunger Games: Hegelian master-slave bondage revisited

As I discussed in the previous chapter, the section of Hegel's *Phenomenology* concerning lordship and bondage is considered to be its best known, especially because of its influence on the political and social philosophy of Karl Marx. This section shows the utopian quality of Hegel's thoughts emphasising that for him a quest for the utopian ideal means an ideal in which both the master and the slave can contribute to the development of the world. The overarching goal of this section is to prove that in the interaction between master and slave it is the master who is the slave of the slave and in fact the slave is the master of the master. So, in order to achieve reconciliation we need to go beyond the master-slave relationship and find a process of mutual recognition between them. This section of Hegel's work is also very productive for understanding the utopian dimensions of the very popular dystopian movie *The Hunger Games*.

This initial fighting structure can be seen in *The Hunger Games*, which is set in fictional country called Panem. According to the plot there was, a war between the Capitol and the thirteen regions that it controls, which rebelled against the Capitol. Following a bloody war, the Capitol managed to regain control over all of Panem, thus becoming the master in the sense of the Hegelian dialectic; consequently, the thirteen regions become the slaves, accepting this situation since they find it absurd to lose their lives in the fight for recognition. In order to preserve its dominance over the regions and to keep its ritual dimension, the Capitol created two methods of control. First, it puts in place a force of so-called peacekeepers in the regions. The peacekeepers, watch over the district citizens

and inform the Capitol of any defiance or signs of an uprising, which the Capitol punishes severely. Second, the Capitol imposes an annual competition called the Hunger Games, for which each region is required to send two tributes, human competitors in a bloody competition which only one can survive.

In this struggle for survival, heritage—being a descendent of a rebellious district's citizens—is prioritized over wealth. All citizens, including affluent businesspeople and even the mayor's children, are qualified for "reaping," which is the process of selecting tributes for the Hunger Games, due to their congenital relation to the sectors that historically rebelled against the Capitol (Tan, 2014; Tyler, 2014). Thus, each year everybody watches while one boy and one girl from each sector are chosen for the lethal competition. The only child who remains alive is the victor, and his victory assures food and wealth to his district. In this way, the initial structure of master and slave for which Hegel argued is actualized in Panem. Although the master and slave, the Capitol and the regions, no longer fight each other, the symbolic struggle between them preserves the Capitol's dominant role. The victorious tribute will ultimately exist as both a reviled and sacrosanct figure detested for his or her "criminal acts," whether genuine or forced, since he must kill others for his/her own survival (Tan, 2014). However, in the meantime the tributes are adored for their role to preserve group cohesion. As René Girard contends (1977), to the chosen one the "apparent cause of disorder becomes the apparent cause of order because she is a victim who rebuilds the terrified unity of a grateful community, at first in opposition to her, and finally around her" (50). The chosen one in this way permits the enunciation of an inherent human penchant for roughness, thus sanctioning

cultural violence and becoming a typical figure of suppressed viciousness. These sacrifices safeguard the whole group from its own viciousness. In a structure reminiscent of Foucault's description of the panopticon, the Capitol requires all citizens to watch the Hunger Games in their homes and in open squares (Garriott, 2014). The citizens have no other choice since the Capitol has installed cameras everywhere in Panem to control the behavior of the citizens. The Capitol uses the games to remind its citizens of its power and to punish them for their rebellion. Forcing them to watch their children murder one another is a continuous method of discipline. Through the process of selecting two adolescent tributes to represent the districts in the Hunger Games and by observing their eventual struggle to survive, the Capitol deprives the district citizens of their beloved children and makes them suffer for what they did in the past. Because of their inability to protect their children from this process, the citizens of Panem feel weak and humiliated (Tan, 2014).

The hero of *The Hunger Games* is Katniss, who lives with her family among the slaves. Through the imposition of coercive laws, constant observation of the citizens, and because of the trauma caused by the annual Hunger Games, the Capitol has placed the citizens of the districts in a situation where they cannot think but can only know their world and hence are bound to behave as slaves. There is a difference between thinking and knowing. Thinking is the process of creating a dialogue with oneself; such dialogue creates the awareness of the nuance of existence. Thinking involves critical personal reflection; when we think, we put to test all of our taken-for-granted assumptions. However, knowing depends upon the acceptance of truth as external to individual

perception. When we know something, we accept it as something that will never change. What distinguishes Katniss from the other slaves is that by actively participating in the events of her life, she shows herself to be somebody who is capable of critical thinking, demonstrating this characteristic on several levels (Canavan et al, 2014). First of all, contrary to other citizens of Panem, she is very supportive of her family and is introduced while encouraging and comforting her younger sister Prim, who is worried about being chosen to compete in the Hunger Games. Katniss is more assertive than other members of her family and the movies represent her mother as an idle individual who is incapable of thinking. She is clearly not furnished to tackle the realities of the adult world, which is exemplified by her inability to supervise her children after the death of her husband as well as by her inability to support Katniss after Prim's selection for the Hunger Games.

On the other hand, the film represents the active role of Katniss through the Mockingjay pin that she discovers in the market and takes home as a present for Prim (Canavan et al, 2014). Katniss assures Prim that this will protect her against being selected for the games. While the pin, which is initially a symbol of Katniss's promise to her sister, does not actually prevent Prim's name from being drawn, it simultaneously implies that in order to let Katniss stay faithful to her commitment, Katniss must volunteer as tribute to secure her sister. Later, the pin is returned to Katniss, now as a symbol of the fact that she will try to stay alive and win the Hunger Games, thus exemplifying her obligation to be her family's provider and protector. More weight is put on Katniss in this part, as the pin signifies her promise to succeed, thus requiring her to more completely take on the role of a family leader, which she had possessed in a de facto sense beforehand.

Following her selection as a tribute, Katniss clearly accepts her role as an active, critical individual capable of thinking. When she enters the Justice Building, she holds from crying and commands her mother to not leave Prim and not to retreat into herself out of grief. (Canavan et al, 2014) There is no place for Kantiss to evaluate her own emotions about being a tribute; she only wants to elaborate a strategy for her family's survival. Katniss understands that due to the fact that her life is now a part of the show that is the Hunger Games, she must choose a narrative that can get her through the Games and win favor so she selects a courageous path in response to her family, the viewers, and other competitors; crying is not an option for her. The narrative grants her the capacity to express her agency by situating her in the positions of power—the forceful sister and the clever, qualified, and critical tribute. Correspondingly, Katniss' eventual support of the competitor Rue and her decision to save Peeta during the bloody fight in the Arena support the view that she wants to be active in the plot. These are not unselfish acts of self-sacrifice but instead a logical development of the function of adult-parent that Katniss has assumed. While Capitol law prohibits district residents from marrying and having children until the age of thirty, the position that Katniss had in her family made her ready to fulfill such a function. Contrary to other children of the districts, Katniss accepted the responsibility of a parent long before the law permitted her to do so and because of that she decided to take her sister's place in the fight (Canavan et al, 2014).

Furthermore, in the Arena, Katniss flawlessly demonstrates for the cameras her determination to control her own destiny. The Capitol has created a panoptical framework that catches the illicit actions of all citizens (Garriott, 2014). Katniss more

than once shows her awareness of the cameras that are recording everything she does and she reacts by concealing her feelings from other people. By being aware of the public persona she is portraying, Katniss finds herself able to take control of that image and make an engaging story out of it, a story that might make her more likely to survive the Hunger Games. This is because she realizes that the Hunger Games are not just a gladiatorial fight between twenty-four kids but rather they are intended to support those competitors with the most fascinating or engaging stories, who are then granted assistance by sponsors and the interventions of the Gamemakers. On several occasions throughout the story, the game's sponsors help the tributes to avoid being killed, which requires the sponsors to first feel sympathy for the tributes. Indeed, even before Haymitch starts the star-crossed lovers narrative, Katniss has already begun making a story for herself as a strong tribute with the added interest of having volunteered to take her sister's place. Thus, the Capitol's control over her is genuinely restricted and does not restrain her capacity to think critically about her situation (Canavan et al, 2014).

Given her qualities and recognition of the need to portray an appealing story and persona, it is safe to argue that Katniss is more capable of thinking critically about her life than the other citizens of Panem. As Immanuel Kant argues, "Enlightenment is the human being's emergence from his self-incurred minority" (Kant 1991:54). Thus, according to Kant, slavery is a form of life in which one is not free to think for oneself, instead knowing things and being told what to think. Katniss certainly does not accept her passive role in the community and hopes to transform the situation. She is a courageous person who not only does not fear the Hunger Games but is ready to sacrifice herself in order to achieve a

higher goal. She is an individual who from a Hegelian perspective should be praised and respected.

Two reasons might explain why Katniss demonstrates the quality of being active and critical from the beginning. First of all, the adults of the district are traumatic objects. I would argue that even if her father were alive, it would be hard to imagine that he and Katniss' mother could take care of their family (Tan, 2014). The parents of her district were scared, ruined, and broken by their losses and sad experiences . Their traumas were deep and each year they had to watch their dear children entered into a lottery for the Hunger Games. In the event that their child is selected a parent had nothing to offer but to wish that their child is the victor by becoming a murderer in order to survive. This traumatic experience is arguably acknowledged in the movie through the silence of the parents; we hardly hear their voices. Silence becomes another facet of banishment as the adult personality centered around the deficiency of speaking and lack of linguistic agency. Secondly, from the very beginning Katniss showed herself to be a rebel; she is an actor rather than a mere worker in the district. As Hannah Arendt argues, there is a distinction between action and working (Harper 2005). Action has no physical reification; it is generated by an actor and is entirely subjective and reflective of the surrounds of the act. Arendt presents action as subjective, that is, as non-instrumental, not based in knowing, aware of plurality and, therefore, grounded in thought. The fact that Katniss is an actor is implied by the fact that she provides food for her family. During an interview with the *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, Suzanne Collins characterizes the "use of hunger as a weapon to control populations" as a deed of authoritarian government

(qtd. in Baker, 2014). The Capitol undoubtedly relies upon this method to subjugate entire populations and we see the Capitol governing the districts by reducing supplies of food and other essential necessities of life. Despite this, one young girl confronts this systematic deprivation and calls into questions the authoritarian methods imposed by the Capitol, thus deciding to act as a mature citizen.

As Lauren Forster argues (2004), food in science fiction films is a vehicle for examining the interaction between the individual, physical, and the social. According to Blair Davis, the "other" is frequently meant through how their dietary patterns differ from what we define as "typical" (281). The substance of a meal and the way of eating - eating with animal abandon, drinking blood, eating crude meat, eating with hands - can define a character in connection to ideas of control, morality, humanity, and civility (288-289).

Katniss is capable of behaving as a mature citizen due to her willingness to put herself into danger. In fact, she even has the power to bring food to her family and friends regardless of the regulations inside the district. This is an entirely subjective, non-instrumental, and reflexive activity and such an active role could be attributed to her close relationship with nature (Baker, 2014). The Capitol appears to have a minimal relationship with nature, as seen in its reference to the season of harvest by calling the selection of tributes "the reaping." There is much food available in the Capitol but we never see how the citizens accumulate this food despite the fact that this is a world where people are controlled through hunger. The games are at the center of the structure through

which citizens are denied food since the winner gains for his or her district one year of additional food rations. Here, the Capitol feigns the absence of nature since for its population nature is a commodity and nations have no association with nature's crude state. Interestingly, Katniss cannot envision having food in any way other than by gathering it herself. Katniss' specific skill with a bow and arrow, which serves her well in the games, is the result of years of learning to hunt in the forest near her home. Shortages and hardships are material realities to her, determining her personality, and are part of life in Panem.

The most exasperating Capitol relationship with nature is seen in the images of human-animal hybrids that the capitol creates to frighten citizens and discourage rebellious actions (Baker, 2014). Mutts appear at the end of the first film of the trilogy as we see the last three surviving tributes in the Arena faced with what appear as no natural-born animals with unmistakably human eyes. In this scene, these malicious mutts are similar to every one of the tributes executed before the face-off between Katniss and Peeta against their adversary Cato; their reasons to be there are to ridicule and threaten the survivors, finally creating savagery for the viewers. It is because Katniss has the ability to think outside of her natural inclination that she can finally move from individual to universal.

3.1. From Individual to Universal

As Hegel argues, the superior position of the slave in the slave-master bondage relationship means that he is able to move history to a new level since the new

consciousness will not see the world as a place in which someone having various "skills" could call himself a "master over some things." Instead, new consciousness will see the world as a place for human interaction and as a place to respect and appreciate others. The slave subject could feel more freedom than the master since he is more capable of free thinking but this new level of consciousness in not yet a concrete freedom; it is a freedom in level of thought and more developments are needed before a concrete freedom can be achieved (Hyppolite, 1979). This historical development will teach slaves that they should not be satisfied by what they are and should instead look for an ideal situation in which a new consciousness is shaped by the synthesis of being-in-itself and being-for-itself. For Alexandre Kojeve (1980), this concrete utopia can only be realized when both the particular (slave) and the universal (master) merge. This is the moment when an individual is able to not only think of himself or his private and familial concerns but also to be able to think about others. For Hegel, this is the final step to reach the moment of actuality.

Reflection about the other is a central theme of The Hunger Games. When an interviewee asked Collins, the author of the book, "What would you like young readers to ultimately take away from the Hunger Games Trilogy?" Collins replied that "Questions about how elements of the book might be relevant in their own lives… Was there anything in the book that disturbed you because it reflected aspects of your own life, and if there was, what can you do about it?" (Quoted in Childs, 2014:111). Said differently, Collins hopes that her readers are able to identify forms of injustice in *The Hunger Games*, especially

the process of Othering, in their own respective lives, and wishes for readers to find ways of addressing them.

The mistreatment depicted in *The Hunger Games* depends very much upon Othering the less advantaged class, the defiant areas, so that people with significant influence, the controlling Capitol, do not need to view them as completely human but instead as things on an interesting television program. This was part of the logic behind the success of Nazism and other forms of fascism. Nazism deprived the individual of their uniqueness and defined them as mere things that could be removed without any remorse. Hegel could not see the atrocity of dictatorial regimes in the twentieth century but his writings provide the possibility of reflecting upon such issues. As he argues a true process of recognition demands that two confronting subject regard each other as human beings rather than just two things. Humans can only feel pride if they realize that their superiority can be sensed by other humans, which is something that a fascist regime denies.

In *The Hunger Games* Katniss takes several stages before reaching the maturity needed to completely acknowledge the other. The first such step is her endeavor to safeguard her sister. If before she was the de facto provider for her family then with this sacrifice she makes it concretely clear that she is the real leader of the family. As the story advances, her private sympathy toward another person in the family transforms into open sympathy towards other people in public. In spite of the fact that Katnisss participates in the games to spare her sister, once she in the Arena a significant contrast develops between her and

other tributes. Here Katniss represents less threatening hostility to others, showing herself to be hesitant to murder others and only killing when there is no alternative. Her feeling of survival stretches out of her and includes the bigger idea of supporting the community of tributes with her energy becoming ceaselessly connected to her longing for others. Katniss turns into a progressive image the minute she shows that her own particular individual survival is not as essential as that of other tributes like Rue and Peeta.

It could be argued that Katiss decides to help Rue as a direct result of her resemblance to her own sister, especially since Rue endures the destiny that Prim would have endured if Katniss had not volunteered to take her place. Here the decision to help Rue could be better understood as an element to clearly awaken Katniss' political function in relation to others. Katniss recognizes this comprehension when she understands that her pledge to Rue to win the Games is much more critical than the familial promise she made to Prim. The film's editing specifically associates Katniss' alliance with Rue to a scene of an uprising in District 11. In this sense, Katniss is the subject who declines expulsion and who clearly acts against the logic of mere survival that the Capitol plans to impose upon the tributes in the Arena. This political awareness with to respect others eventually helps Katniss to be the motor of revolution against the Capitol and helps her to murder President Snow. Because of this awareness, she also decides to execute the rebel leader President Coin. Katniss understands that Coin is the same as Snow since she wants to impose one last Hunger Game in order to solidify her power. Katniss again makes a move showing that her reliability does not fall inside of partisan divisions but rather that she

stays focused on ending the tyrannical system forever, which leaves no option for her other than to kill both presidents.

Katniss hopes to bring back a sense of community between nations. From a Hegelian perspective, she wants to create harmony between the individual and the universal, clearly being against the process of othering and could not support one tyrannical system being replaced by another. Her decision to end this system can be seen in her decision to choose Peeta over Gala in her love triangle relationships (Jones, 2014). The love triangle in traditional cinema usually leads to conflict and, similar to the case of *The Hunger Games*, offers the chooser two romantic options who are extreme opposites of each other. For Katniss, the choice between Gale and Peeta is a choice between a solidified warrior and a touchy baker. Gale—mysterious yet attractive—is the representative of the swoon-worthy legend of romance while Peeta—with golden hair, soft skin, and blue eyes—resembles the characteristics of the immaculate and honest sentimental champion (Jones, 2014). In this sense, Gale represents Western ideals of dynamic and dangerous manliness while Peeta represents Western ideas of a detached, passive, and supportive femininity. Katniss' inevitable decision to choose Peeta over Gale to be her life companion is related to her desire to be with somebody who can better understand the relationship with the other, who wants to connect nature with culture. She chooses Peeta on the grounds that he represents the delightful, delicate piece of nature, "the dandelion in the spring… rebirth instead of destruction" (Collins, 2014: 388). Katniss recognizes Peeta's difference from her while acknowledging Gale's similarity with his representation of the savage part of nature. Despite the fact that she has been in the wild with Gale more than Peeta, the

latter comprehends nature and mankind (both delicacy and severity) better than Gale and seems to her a better choice.

3.2. The achievements and failures of Hunger Games

In his analysis of Sophocles' *Antigone*, Hegel (1977) discusses a conflict between two valid claims of conscience. The first of these is Antigone's obligation to provide for her brother an appropriate burial and the second one is the law, King Creon's edict, denying to enemies of the state the right to be buried. The two claims define what Hegel sees as essentially justifiable ethical claims. The tragic ending of the story, the death of Antigone and the son of Creon, exemplifies that neither of these two claims could work separately from each other, there is a need for synthesis between these two demands. The initial story of *The Hunger Games* resembles *Antigone* since there is a tragic figure who decides to rebel against the state since she finds the laws of the state interfering with her private concerns. In both cases the ending is sad, Katinas has no choice but to kill the new governor.

This sad ending of *The Hunger Games* also has something to say about utopian demands in our own time. Recent cinema has very rarely shown any optimistic possibility aside from the perpetuation of the capitalist mode of production. What we see in *The Hunger Games* is a very contradictory ending compared to what initially attracted us to the movie. The story of the movie drew the attention of so many individuals because it represents some of the issues that we are facing in the present world. Who among us has

not heard about reality television and constant government surveillance during the neoliberal period? Or who is not aware of the huge divide between the rich and poor in terms of access to resources? Given this, part of what made people so interested in *The Hunger Games* corresponds to our time. However, despite this at the end the movie denies us any image of a better form of governance and it perpetuates the idea that no revolution can bring an end to injustice in the world; it argues that human nature is inherently evil and revolutionary actions can only replace one tyranny with another.

On the other hand, *The Hunger Games* makes very little attempt to investigate the nature of alienation that we observe in the story. For example, we are not sure how the imperialistic economy of Panem functions. The emphasis is on plot development instead of any deep engagement with the sociopolitical issues that shaped the alienation of the subjects in the story. As Artur Blaim and Ludmiła Gruszewska-Blaim point out, dystopia "adopts different principles of text construction: it foregrounds narrativity at the expense of descriptiveness, and favours plot rather than setting" (Blaim and Gruszewska-Blaim 10). Given this, *The Hunger Games* narrative is to a great extent plot driven and it centres on action instead of elaboration and description. Little information is provided to understand the reason behind the socioeconomic injustice between the Capitol and the districts. As Daniel Norford (forthcoming) explains in his analysis of the movie:

> The film opens with a black screen over which direct quotations from the "Treaty of the Treason" fade in and out. The audience learns through these quotations that there are twelve districts which are subservient to a central state called The Capitol; that these districts are annually forced to participate in a public "reaping"

> to select two candidates, called "tributes," who are then forced to fight to the death in a televised contest which serves as the novel's title; that the annual contest is a punishment visited upon the districts for a squashed uprising. Further back-story is provided by a fade-in to Ceaser Flickerman (Stanley Tucci), the emcee of the games, who is interviewing the current "Game Maker," Seneca Crane (Wes Bentley). In addition to the expository function of the text, however, the interview between Flickerman and Crane also serves to demonstrate the symbolic significance of the games: neither character says anything about how the games function as a reminder of the Capitol's hegemonic control over the districts, but instead focus on its "healing" function in the wake of the failed revolution (7).

Through the use of these introductory methods the film briefly hints that the games are a repressive method of social control and a unifying medium to create shared collectivity. We realize that some of the districts only provide one profession, such as the coalminers of District 12, but the movie does not explain the reason behind the creation of this system. We know that the Capitol controls the country but we know very little about its president and his function, only that he is a tyrannical king who makes all of the essential decisions. The exact nature of the state and the mechanisms of its governance seem very stereotypical and cliché: military forces impose the rules and the ritual of the games represses the population. In this way, the film tends to downplay ideological discussions and explanations. Given this, the film throws the viewer into the universe of a catastrophic world without explaining everything. This process of putting the viewer into

the narrative is actualized through an expository introduction that informs us about the events that happened before the action, serving as the equivalent of the introductory parts of classical utopias and demonstrating the contrast between the represented universe of the narrative and the world in which the audience lives (Klonowska, forthcoming). As the movie develops we become aware of the conflict between the individual (his community included) and the opposing dystopian regime. We also become aware of attempts by the individual to disturb the status quo. Finally, through the heroic action of an individual, the fascistic nature of the dystopian setting is broken.

Although there are some elements of cliché involved in the series, there are some positive merits in the plot structure of *The Hunger Games*, such as how it shows nuance in its representation of the privileged and deprived, presenting realistic images of oppressed citizens at every level of the hierarchical system as well as their different degrees of privilege and varying measures of responsibility for the system. Given this, the story did not endeavor to make a binary category of Othering between good and bad. Cinna, in spite of his advantaged position as a Capitol fashion designer, does a form of pennance when he utilizes his craft to create the mockingjay imagery in Katniss' Catching Fire clothes, which is a defiant act of dissident sympathy with less privileged groups. By deciding to turn into a saint for the cause of the regions Cinna's self-sacrifice is both sympathetic to Katniss and also gives the viewers a chance to relate to the nobility. Consequently, *The Hunger Games* is more effective than some of the "more radical" films that clearly deride privileged groups. The problem with more radical films is that their binary structure leaves the audience less capable of comparing the universe of the

story with their surrounding world. If the universe in the movie is so one-sided then the reader will be less interested in reflecting upon other hypothetical social possibilities and will consider what he sees on the screen as being very far from reality. This is not what happens in *The Hunger Games*. As the movie progresses the viewer is able to observe the conflict between the central character and the community, thus having more possibility of extrapolation so that he or she can compares the actual society in which he or she lives with what is on the screen, which is a very positive aspect of *The Hunger Games*.

Chapter 4: For Utopia: The (limits of the) Abstract Utopian Function in Late Capitalist Society: A Critical Reading of *Tomorrowland*

There is a tendency in the current pseudo-critical literature to argue that if people simply think positively about the world then they can do everything and solve any issue. Given this line of thought, it is argued that the origin of a human's misery is that he does not think optimistically and if he does so then he can resolve any issue. This line of thought has been used against Marxists and critical scholars who highlight the flaws of capitalism; it was suggested that these scholars are pessimists who only see a half-empty glass of water. I will elaborate upon some of the shortcomings in this approach, for which I refer to Hegel's writings about romanticism and stoicism. I suggest that this high valorization of optimism is one of the main reasons for the shortcomings of utopian and dystopian movies in the discussion of the problems facing contemporary society since this tendency leads them to touch very briefly upon the real structure of capitalism. In order to do this I will look at *Tomorowland* (2015), a recent science fiction movie that touches upon the question of utopia.

4.1. Hegel in the Face of Romantics and Stoics

Hegel's critique of romanticism is elaborated in his review of Friedrich Schlegel's conception of irony and utopian novels such as Novalis's *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*. In Novalis's *Bildungsroman* the protagonist struggles for the imaginative and structurally unreachable place of his dreams so his works and artistic creations are used to imagine a new world, a utopia. Although Hegel lived during the era of German romantics he did not

share the attitude of those who praised romantics and their endeavour to propose utopia. There are three likely reasons for Hegel's hostility towards such utopian projects. First of all, such endeavours are incompatible with his conceptualization of the task of philosophy; secondly, they underemphasize the importance of human agency in the actualization of dreams; and thirdly, they hardly fit with Hegel's definition of history.

To look more closely at the first point about how romantic ways of defining utopia are incompatible with Hegel's definition of the task of philosophy (1991a), he argued:

> To comprehend what is *is* the task of philosophy, for what *is* is reason. As far as the individual is concerned, each individual is in any case a child of his time; thus philosophy, too, is its own time comprehended in thoughts. It is just as foolish to imagine that any philosophy can transcend its contemporary world, as that an individual can overlap his own time or leap over Rhodes (21-22).

This quote suggests that philosophy cannot break free from the concepts, beliefs, and values of its own time and makes a romantic appeal to some objective, transcendent, and ahistorical standard of right and good. As the quote makes clear, for Hegel human romantic imaginings about the future are not powerful enough to help us think rationally about the world. Humans are the children of their times and cannot think about the future if they have no access to its elements. Because the romantic approaches do not follow this philosophy they relate to what Hegel calls (1977) dogmatic ways of thinking:

> Dogmatism is a way of thinking, whether in ordinary knowing or in the study of philosophy, is nothing else but the opinion that the True consists in a proposition

> which is a fixed result, or which is immediately known. To such questions as, When was Cesar born?, or How many feet were there is a stadium?, etc. a clear-cut answer ought to be given, just as it is definitely true the square on the hypotenuse is equal to the sum of the square on the other two sides of a right-angled triangle. But the nature of a so-called truth of that kind is different from the nature of philosophical truths (23).

This quote shows how a dogmatic thinker already knows the answers before engaging in solving an issue, a position for the subject which is similar to presidential candidates in a television debate. Each politician uses all of his power to outwit the other, knowing how to refute and destroy his adversary (1977: 36), which he does first without even trying to understand what the other has to offer. From Hegel's perspective, "It is reflection into the empty 'I,' the vanity of its own knowing" (1977: 36). The only concern for the individual in such cases is to show that he is much smarter than the other, so knowing replaces thinking. This is what happened for romantics since there is no process of reflection involved in their approach. They only reflect subjectively, propose a vision, and impose it upon society without trying first to make a connection with their vision and society and to understand the other.

When a romantic knows something, he does not see any necessity to think about what he knows since he takes it for granted that his knowledge is perfect and does not need re-examination. He will not accept easily the subordination of his vision to reason because he believes that reason jeopardizes the intuitive nature of his vision. He believes that his

vision comes from a superior, transcendental faculty that is incompatible with the faculty of reason and so it should be treated as it is, without any necessity for examination. This type of knowing has no connection with real-life experiences; it is sterilized, fixed, and closed thought – the eternal moments of being. However, as Hegel argues, philosophical knowledge and speculative thinking are real and lived thoughts which demand submission to the life of the object, to confront and express its inner necessity. It is immersed in the material, absorbed by the other, advanced with its movement, and comes back to itself but passes into higher truth. This form of thought is self-moving and self-differentiating, the form of which is shaped by real sensory factors in which the subject lives, never rejecting the world of senses in favour of romanticism. The romantic approach to thought is a dangerous way of thinking since such ways of proposing a society mystify thought. Hegel was very critical of this attitude and saw in it the potential for dogmatic thinking.

The second reason for Hegel's rejection of romanticism was his belief that romantics are generally not committed enough to realise their dreams. According to Hegel, romantics do not link their ideas to a critical comprehension of the present and the past, thus losing the chance to make their ideals historically effective. For Hegel, concrete action is necessary in order to realize a dream. As he argued:

> The principle of experience contains the infinitely important determination that, for a content to be accepted and held to be true, man must himself be actively involved with it, more precisely, that he must find any such content to be at one

> and in unity with the certainty of his own self. He must himself be involved with it, whether only with his external senses, or with his deeper spirit, with his essential consciousness of self as well (1991b: 31).

This quote makes clear that the issue with the romantic approach to utopia is not related to claims regarding the future of a desirable state but rather the fact that the romantics did not engage enough to achieve their dreams. This meant that they had nothing substantial to contribute to the comprehension of the past and present except for the fact that the current state is miserable compared to the utopia they have proposed. More developed and complex normative theory is needed or else we only flirt with an impotent "ought."

Instead of concretely, critically, and comprehensively questioning reality and showing the real tendencies for the future, the romantics wished for a beyond conceptualized as a mere *possibility*. In this account, actuality and possibility – what society is now and what it could become after the realization of utopia – are defined as two opposites that cannot be connected to each other. With this approach, the agent believes that no possibility of change can be realized through historical actions and wills. For Hegel, a dream that cannot be realized by the actions of agents is not worth wishing for and the impossibility of achieving such a dream means that one could easily succumb to self-pity. When there is no possibility of achieving a goal, one is locked into his own subjective will. This means that there will be no more concrete measurements to evaluate one's aspirations. This provides an excuse for not engaging in practical inquiries about the present since

this abstract and romantic form of utopia "regards the present as vain and looks beyond it in a spirit of superior knowledge, it finds itself in a vain position; and since it has actuality only in the present, it is itself mere vanity" (1991a). From this perspective, to be a romantic is to believe that one can achieve his dreams regardless of historical forces and actual tendencies; it functions as an escape from sociopolitical engagement with the world and history, a form of thought which is pointless and even dangerous. These attempts represent hypocritical endeavours to deny the present, its reality, and its history by engaging in a questionable imagination of the past or a transition to a paradise which is wholly different and detached from the here and now.

Thirdly, Hegel was suspicious of the romantic approach because this mode of thinking emphasized the role of contingencies and chance, which are incompatible with Hegel's conceptualization of history. He argues that reason exists in the progress of history, that history "has constituted the rational necessary course of the World-Spirit," and that the world of "intelligence and conscious volition is not abandoned to chance, but must show itself in the light of the self-cognizant Idea" (2004:10). With this firm belief that history is the development of the spirit in time, Hegel could hardly accept the romantic claim that mere individual dreams and wants or the demands of a particular group are sufficient to shape history.

Hegel makes the argument that history contains reason but when he says this he is not trying to make an ontological statement about the fabric of history. He also does not there

is a great and magnificent mind operating behind the scenes and shaping historical events. Actually instead of mere chance guiding events in the universe Hegel saw reason, God, manifesting itself through both natural and historical events as they unfolded but without there being any need for a conscious subject which observes and understands this process. As Hegel acknowledged, the rationality of history is based on the fact that history hopes to achieve freedom because "all the qualities of Spirit exist only through freedom, that all are but means of attaining freedom; that all seek and produce this and this alone" (2004: 10). This does not mean that Hegel sees no flaws in the progress of history; he knows very well that history can bring horror, injustice, dissatisfaction, and suffering to the lives of particulars, famously arguing that history is a "slaughter bench" on which the desires and happiness of peoples, the wisdom of states, and the virtue of individuals have been denied" (2004:21). However, as Hegel argues, the overarching result of historical progress is increasing societal freedom since history is the development of the spirit in time.

With this in mind, making predictions about the future or changing the course of history with wishful scenarios is incompatible with the way that history unfolds. Proposing normative decisions about the future can only happen after comprehending history and its evolution, and understanding God, rather than through the wishes and dreams of ad hoc individuals. If we based history on individual dreams then we might extrapolate some scenarios regarding future developments but we cannot be sure that they will happen. Based on this, any project focused on creating a different history for the future is possible and future society could be sustainable, feminist, hedonistic, or any other possibility. For

Hegel, this is a great mistake since in his view the condition of the spirit in each stage and its search for freedom will lead to new synthesis in its progress and there is therefore no need for detailed suggestions about the form of future society. Given this, romantics tend to propose scenarios that are not in harmony with Hegel's philosophy.

Given these arguments, Hegel is not very open to imaginary romantic human-derived wishes about the future, asserting that there is a world of fantasy with its own inner logic which is good if people want to think about imaginary republics but this world does not have any use in philosophy since philosophy is about reality. Not only is real philosophy about reality but it is also about how philosophical concepts are actualized in the world. Thus, Hegel's project is very limited to "of that which exists after" and it aims to answer the questions of how history and the spirit are actualized in reality. Given these readings of Hegel, those who discuss philosophy should forget romantic utopianism and limit their focus to what is actually happening around them. This distinction between historical realism and romanticism is a dichotomy that separates one world from another and dismisses the world of the romantics as being useless. Given this, it is wiser to reject such romantic conceptualizations of the future because it is of a larger problem and those who study the ideal society neglect the real, thus losing power. What then could be the usefulness of Hegel's approach in the present day and how can his criticism help us to understand the limitations and potentialities of utopia in cinema? Through the use of Hegel's thoughts on romanticism, I will now analyze *Tomorowland*.

4.2. Reading *Tomorrowland* through a Hegelian Lens

Tomorowland describes a society divided into two worlds; the first one is the Earth and the second is a place called Tomorowland, which is composed of dreamers and visionaries who think positively about the future. Contrary to this, the planet Earth is depicted as being filled with people who mostly look at the dark side of things, discussing global warming, overpopulation, war, and famine. The film has two main characters: Casey Newton and Frank Walker. Casey is a young girl who believes that it is possible to live in a better world. She has the quality of the romantics and from the beginning she appears to strongly believe in the power of imagination, looking at the sky as a child and telling her parents that she hopes someday to go there and investigate the planets. In school, although the professors talk about the real environmental crisis, Casey ask why people do not instead think positively and see the full side of a half-empty glass. She believes that the source of problems for human beings is that they think negatively about the world and that if they change this mentality then a better future is possible. Furthermore, not only is Casey's family name Newton but the story also depicts her as being technologically savvy, showing great promise at solving technical problems. For example, at the beginning of the movie, Casey sneaks into a NASA launch pad and sabotages the machine in order to help prevent her engineer father, Eddie, from losing his job because of an excess of workers. Eventually, she discovers a pin in her personal items that helps her to glimpse Tomorrowland until the pin's battery runs out.

Frank is contrasted with Casey since he is more pessimistic and could be called a critical thinker. The story tells us that during his childhood Frank was an optimistic thinker and tried to impress the organizer of the 1964 New York World's Fair, David Nix, with his jetpack but the device needed more work before it could become a practical vehicle for flying. During his stay at the fair, Frank became acquainted with a young girl named Athena who realized Frank's potential and decided to help him by giving him a pin embossed with the letter T. This eventually helps Frank to access Tomorrowland and he discovers a way to improve his jetpack and got the attention of Nix. We realize that Nix and Athena both come from Tomorrowland and they bring Frank with them there too since they see great potential in him. Frank becomes a successful engineer in Tomorrowland before losing his hope in the potential of new innovations to change the world, thus becoming a pessimistic, critical thinker, and he is eventually asked to leave Tomorrowland.

It is through the intermediary of Athena that Casey and Frank, a romantic and a pessimist, are introduced to each other. Following Casey's escape from a deadly trap, Athena drives her to Frank's home. Frank pushes Casey away at first, but eventually she manages to charm him and enters the house. Once there, she shows more of her interest in technology and the power of imagination by investigating the technological devices in Frank's home; he catches her after returning home through a secret tunnel. Frank discovering Casey's technological brightness is convinced that she can save the world (with this, the story implies that pessimism about the world could be solved if true

technological solutions to current problems were offered). They both have to leave the house as a group of robots attacks and tries to kill them.

Athena joins Frank and Casey after they escape from the house and the trio uses a teleportation device to go to Paris. Once there, they enter the Eiffel Tower and go to a room with mannequins of Jules Verne, Nikola Tesla, Gustave Eiffel, and Thomas Edison. We realize that these men were the founders of a group called Ultra Plus which looks for dreamers and inventors to shape a better future and that eventually discovered Tomorowland. The latent message here is that a society needs smart individuals to solve its problems and with their appearance nothing is impossible; the story emphasizes its ideological dimension by attributing such unique qualities to some of the famous inventors and dreamers of the past. Through the use of a steampunk-esque rocket which is hidden underneath the tower, the trio arrive at Tomorowland, which we see has now lost its original dreamland characteristics and become very desolate. Nix comes and seizes the trio, bringing them to a building linked to a tachyon machine which Frank designed to show images of the past and future. We realize through the images that a catastrophe is going to happen that will ruin the Earth. At first shocked, eventually Casey rejects such a scenario, her reaction slightly changing the future images displayed on the device. Frank realizes this and becomes convinced that Casey can change the future of world, a fact which Nix neglects.

Casey believes that the device has malfunctioned and created a self-fulfilling prophecy about end of the world so she believes that if they destroy it then they can avert the

apocalypse. They manage eventually to fight back against Nix, who wants to kill them. Athena decides to sacrifice her life and tells Frank to push her into the machine so that her self-destruct mechanism will destroy it. The final scene of the movie shows Frank and Casey reorganizing the Tomorrowland recruiting program, now focusing on finding more optimistic people to bring back the quality that was lost in the past.

There are some positive aspects in the *Tomorrowland* story. Very few optimistic representations of the future have been introduced in the cinema in the past since the cinema is almost always more interested in the dark side of utopia with several filmmakers throughout the twentieth century drawing upon More's heritage. As Choay argues, in utopia the passage from critique to project materializes via a spatial model the values of which serve a transformative function (Choay, 1965). Here, the power of cinema to visualise the images of this spatial model help utopians to more effectively propose their ideas since a digital image in three dimensions is more effective at suggesting an imaginary society than even the most excellent description of a society on paper (Ruppert, 1996). Cinema very soon became the most effective tool for representing utopia with Frank Capra's *Lost Horizon* (1937), Cameron Menzies' *Things to Come* (1936), and Grigori Aleksandrov's *Moscow Laughs* (1934) among the few examples of utopia in cinema. These could be described as examples of classical utopian movies.

According to Barbara Klonowska (forthcoming: 3), classical utopias are usually defined by a voyage or journey in which an individual encounters a remote and entirely different social organization through mere chance or following a series of obstacles. When the

protagonist arrives there he or she becomes familiar with various aspects of this society in a sort of "guided tour," usually accepting the premises of the new society. Here, the detailed description of imaginary societies and their practical details serve both persuasive and artistic functions. They not only represent a better world but they also hope to encourage the audience to accept their implied ideology. As Artur Blaim and Ludmiła Gruszewska-Blaim argue, utopian worlds, "embody such desirable general values as happiness, good life, wealth, beauty, equality, freedom, etc., which form the underlying axiological system of the best possible state of the commonwealth" (Blaim and Gruszewska-Blaim 9). These values in the spatial organisation of utopian works are defined as order, beauty, symmetry, and harmony. The well-ordered design of utopias separates them from the usually quite disordered reality.

Although cinema offered some examples of such utopian projects early on, as time has passed this became a very rare practice. Besides the films mentioned above it is very difficult to find examples of optimistic utopias in cinema. There are different reasons for this lack of interest in utopia in cinema. According to Stankomir Nicieja (2008):

> After the humanitarian catastrophes of the 20th century, including two global military conflicts, the Holocaust, ethnic cleansing, and terrorism, the creation of positive utopias became deeply problematic… Not only did the business of creating utopian fantasies look excessively naïve but also dubious. Almost every atrocity and murderous ideology in the 20th century had some utopian fantasy at its root. Numerous grand narratives promising social harmony, stability and

> security for all citizens were in reality only smokescreens for authoritarian ambition. (111)

Kumar attributes the decline of cinematic utopias to the failure of socialism, arguing that utopia lost its political edge in society after the disastrous impact of socialism and its nefarious implementation in Central and Eastern Europe (1993). Furthermore, because of the rise of instrumental thought, and capitalism, society placed more value on rational thinking that produces obvious benefits instead of ambiguous utopian methods with an unclear profit-related future. One could also argue that the relatively static character of traditional utopian narratives also provides less motivation for investigating utopia in cinema. Here, compared to typical mainstream movies which are defined by character and plot, classical utopias are seen as more static and slow, therefore being of a smaller appeal to contemporary audience. This explains why Hollywood became more interested in dystopia, which provides more challenging plots for cinema.

Recent contemporary cinema has abundant dystopian images, especially following the popularity of science fiction, a genre in which some of the best movies depict dystopian societies, such as *Blade Runner* (1982), *Alphaville* (1965), *Brazil* (1985), and *Metropolis* (1927). By showing the potential impacts of a realized utopia in its different forms, ranging from capitalist to socialist utopias, and by showing the absurdity of each type, filmmakers have tried to generate debate and offer people the opportunity to think differently about certain societal problems around them (Shelton, 1993). For example, in *Playtime* (1967) Jacques Tati depicts Paris as a cold city of factory-like buildings where

the entire rhythm of life is controlled by a Taylorist mentality. For Tati, this project is a total realization of a modernist city and dark images of Paris and its reality have been used as a model to create shock in readers in order to let citizens think about the gaps in modern society. Given this historical background, very rarely does a movie discuss the future positively. As Klonowska argues, "in the new cinema, utopia has practically disappeared, preserved either in works nostalgically or ironically commenting on its demise, or in the form of minimal remnants surviving in dystopian worlds, serving as equivalents of 'better times'" (forthcoming, 2).

Politically, the cinematic emphasis on dystopia provides very limited potential for the critical function of utopia in the face of capitalism. Utopia could represent an alternative for capitalism but no alternative can be imagined through cinematic dystopia. With this in mind, *Tomorrowland* provides an opportunity to look at the utopia-dystopia dichotomy through a new lens since the movie provides the possibility of thinking about a better future through the prism of utopia.

What type of alternative society does *Tomorrowland* propose? I want to say that it is a cosmopolitan society in which people live together peacefully regardless of race, sexuality, and economic class. We see people living and walking at peace with each other without any representation of class tension or conflict and no images of homelessness. Tomorrowland's closing sequence and its contrast with the sequences in traditional Hollywood movies, implies that future must bypass white male hegemony. At the end of the movie we realize that, those charged with envisioning Earth's future are female

designrs, non-white community worktes, environmentalists and East Asian musicians. Although Frank is present, it is evident that Casey is in charge, the final image of the movie exemplified this by showing the new recruits who are standing together among golden cornfields and looking up at the city of future. This strong multicultural message offers a contrast to the usual images of white male superhero that is shown at blockbuster science fiction, protagonist who dominate the blockbuster science fiction.

The city of Tomorrowland is obviously very advanced in terms of technology. The architecture is avant-garde and progressive representing styles of buildings totally different compared to what we have in contemporary world. High-rise buildings with glasses and a modern piscine are representatives of city of future. Gustave Eiffel, Jules Verne and Thomas Edison were the creator of the city of Tomorrowland, "somewhere in time and space". Green parks and water cover the ground level and are for public use. Transportation and circulation take place at middle level, with interconnecting bridges and highways surrounding an organic, highly vertical city. The transportation system in Tomorrowland is made up of high-speed devices that transport people easily and constantly.

The contrast of images between Tomorowland and the present showed a sharp contrast between past and present. Frank's memory of going to the World's Fair and visiting Tomorrowland defines the movie's contrast between the present and the past through the film's visual design of its locations. Tomorrowland is emblematic of how American society remembers the post-Second World War era; defined as a time of innocence and confidence; with the belief that technological progress could enhance citizen's horizons.

Such discourses are implied through the use of white surface and gleaming chrome in the design of Tomorrowland. This city is a world of escalating, curved architecture that proposes harmony between machine and man. As Hassan puts it, "when the switching between Frank and Casey settles on the latter, our 'present' contrasts starkly: the first location seen is the side of a dark and empty urban street where a graffitied mushroom cloud adorns the side of a building. These spatial juxtapositions thus set up Tomorrowland's key enigma concerning how, as a society, we have turned away from technology-fuelled optimism to accept the cautious, pessimistic world that Casey inhabits". From Blochain perspective, it could be argued that past has been used as a critical tool to help us reflect upon future. As Bloch argued we could not fully reject the past in favor of the attraction toward future. Bloch does firmly reject the idea that humans are locked into the forms of the past, mesmerized by their power and unable to move beyond them; however, he notes that there are utopian movements which were never realized in the past because they were suppressed by repressive political forces. He encourages readers to be attentive to past experiences, especially to see if they contain the utopian impulse or "cultural surplus" (Geoghegan, 1996). These cultural surpluses contain unsatisfied desires and human wishes for a better world; since they were never fulfilled, tested, or consumed, they might be relevant to a future society. Thus, the present moment is shaped in part by latency and tendency: the unrealized past potentialities that are latent in the present, and the signs and foreshadowing—novums—that indicate the tendency of the direction and movement of the present into the future. It is through an "anticipatory illumination" that the unrealized emancipatory potential of the past, the latencies and tendencies of the present, and the realizable hopes for the future will come

together and form a utopia. Anticipatory illumination can be seen in great works of art; past, present, and future come together through this technique and Bloch believes that only when we define utopia in the light of what is, what has been, and what could be, then we can realize the full potential of utopia.

Following Bloch, it could be argued that Tomorrowland offers a complex attitude towards the past. Without doubt, as a young lady (possibly from a different era, as she is presented wearing a John Lennon shirt), Casey is constantly front oriented and is not in line with the status of the present. This is confirmed through her constantly asking, 'Can we fix it?' when confronted with different problems. The character in this manner exemplifies an attitude of a pragmatic nostalgia: Casey is developed as a person endeavoring to hold the positive, can-do mentality. Instead of invoking the "past" in an exclusively nostalgic way, the description of the sentimentality developed through Casey utilizes the "past" in a way that enables humankind's future to be hopefully open and flexible. This attitude makes an intricate interchange between nostalgic conversations, and how we, as the general public, think about the connection between 'past', 'present' and 'future'. This dynamic makes Tomorrowland an exciting motion picture for researchers of both science fiction and wistfulness. From one viewpoint, the film invites us to consider the effect that lost confidence in innovation and technology can bring; on the other hand, it proposes that these qualities can be used and readjusted for the purposes of defining and creating the 'present'. Furthermore, it reminds the audiences that there were some merits about the vision that the post-world era had offered. The post-war era enforced the idea that human beings could re-create a better society through rebellion, individuality

and the use of progressive technology. These attitudes expressed something more than mere legitimation and apologetics for bourgeois institutions and practices. They are attitudes that emotionally attract human beings; they have been absorbed by capitalists' idealogy and were used for the purpose of domination. As Bloch argued, ideology is "Janus-faced" and has two sides - it contains mystifications, errors, and techniques of domination and manipulation but at the same time it embodies a utopian surplus or residue which is useful for the advancement of progressive politics and social critique. With this in mind, the task of cultural critic is to understand their emancipatory value to use them for a more just project. This is what has been partially achieved in this movie and the way the narrative works.

Having said this, Tomorrowland is still very far from being a perfect cinematic representation of utopia. The story follows the characteristics of classical utopian movies since by "chance", both Casey and Frank encounter a remote and entirely different social organization. They both become familiar with various aspects of this society in a sort of "guided tour," which is clearer in the case of Casey, who follows a predefined route when she enters Tomorrowland. Both Casey and Frank seem to accept at first glance the premises of the new society. Here, utopian worlds present highly praised values of happiness, high quality of life, wealth, beauty, equality, and freedom. Having said this, Tomorrowland represents the problem that Hegel brilliantly discussed in the case of the romantic conceptualization of a utopia. There is no detailed description of the imaginary society, especially not its practicalities, including its ideological functioning and everyday functioning. We are not sure how the society was actualized and functions.

There is a naïve belief in the movie that only optimism and mere dreams are needed for people to change the world and create a society similar to Tomorowland. From a Hegelian perspective, it is difficult to accept such a claim.

The first problem with *Tomorrowland* is that it does not seriously account for the reality of capitalism. Simply put, the structure of capitalist society and its emphasis on fierce competition limits the possibility that mere individual dreams could create an alternative society since such attempts do not understand how capitalism functions. For example, one of Marx's main criticisms of capitalist society is the fact that the value of commodities is determined according to the abstract concept of socially necessary time. Through the implementation of this process, capitalist forces define the value of labour while also disciplining and controlling workers. As Marx shows (1992), these procedures are shaped through universal laws and need to be addressed collectively. Given this, there is a need for individual wishes and fantasies to work together in solidarity or else they will risk competing instead of supporting each other. Unfortunately, *Tomorrowland* does not take this aspect seriously, which is a major flaw in the film, which contains no mention of class unity and solidarity.

The second problem with *Tomorrowland*, which is in continuity with the first, is that these abstract values came into the world by force and will not magically vanish just because of the goodwill of some individuals. As argued above, *Tomorrowland* remains silent about the fact that human action is necessary to achieve a better world. We can say

that the film follows the path of the romantics who rejected all political action and instead wanted to reach their goals through peaceful means and wishful moral arguments. As Marx later argued, more concrete methods of realizing a utopia necessarily include violent revolution. As he puts it, "if money comes into the world with a congenital blood-stain on one cheek… capital comes dripping from head to toe, from every pore, with blood and dirt" (Marx, 1992: 926*)*. *Tomorrowland* neglects the fact that the current class-based society is based on violence and could only be overthrown by action against those forms of violence. Marx would have argued that, "these utopian thinkers want to improve the circumstances of all members of society, even the best placed. Hence they continually appeal to the whole society without distinction, even by preference to the ruling class" (Marx, 1996:27). This neglect of class means that *Tomorrowland* is a romantic utopian film which rejects all political action and instead wants to reach its goals through peaceful means and moral arguments. The designers hope that moral education alone could suddenly give rise to a new society. However, the moral arguments that this project uses are part of the moralities developed in a bourgeois society and are not sophisticated enough to criticize such a structure. The values that this universal moral argument defend were not separated from the values that the existing economic system defines as good. With this, any ethical projections that gain power from this critique could not be defined as a radical alternative. Surely, this is a major flaw of *Tomorrowland* as a utopian project. Despite the flaws in *Tomorrowland*, the aspirations of those involved in the project deserve praise since they were decent and respectful dreamers who should be considered bad politicians and worse revolutionaries since they did not suggest concrete ways to

change the structure of the world; they were naïve intellectuals who did not understand the economic system of capitalism or how morality works in bourgeois society.

We could suggest that *Tomorrowland* fits into the category of abstract utopia that Ernst Bloch defines when he distinguishes between abstract and concrete utopias. An abstract utopia is fantastical and compensatory, providing a detailed representation of a better world, especially its sociopolitical organization, but here there is a *wish* to change things rather than a *will*. Thus, an abstract utopia is not accompanied by a will to change something; it simply conceptualizes a transformed future in which the position of everything in the world remains as it is except for that of the dreamer, which will somehow change, perhaps through a large lottery win or other stroke of luck. Even if this form of utopia is characterized by a wish to transform the future, it is a future that will never be realized in fulfillment of this wish due to the lack of political engagement. Thomas More offers a good example of an abstract utopia since although he describes a comprehensive picture of a new world, his utopia is not based on a deep understanding of the reality of England at the time but rather was an abstract portrayal.

Unlike abstract utopia, concrete utopia is anticipatory rather than compensatory with the goal of moving towards an ideal and yet possible future; it is not only wishful thinking but also willful thinking. Concrete utopias embody an essential utopian function since they simultaneously anticipate and influence the future. Bloch claims that Marx's political project is an example of a concrete utopia because his description of a utopian society is based on a deep understanding of the historical problems of his time.

Furthermore, according to Bloch, Marx suggested concrete ways of changing the world by combining these changes with a concrete will in order to realize his dream. For Bloch, an abstract utopia may express desire but a concrete utopia also carries hope. As Bloch notes, what people need to do is to free the core of concrete utopia from the shackles of the abstract elements which could pin it down. Because it is an abstract utopia, the romantic project in *Tomorrowland* cannot be called a good aspirational project from a Hegelian perspective since Hegel is critical of romantic utopia but a supporter of concrete utopia. I will elaborate upon this argument in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: *The Giver*: Adolescent Literature and Utopia

The Giver tells the story of Jonas, a boy on the verge of adolescence in a society where everyone's future is firmly defined (Hintz 2002, Gross 1999). This controlled society aims to remove all personal inclinations that could cause conflict and pain in the hope of making sure that all members live quietly, there are no family bonds, citizens use pills to suppress sexual urges, and if people become old and weak then they are "released" into death. This is society in which nothing is unexpected, unusual, or inconvenient.

Citizens of this society live a life without pain and without a past. Everybody is equal and in order to express that equality color has no meaning in this society so everything is represented in black and white. The Committee of Elders carefully watches children's growth over the years and defines their futures, assigning to them life roles in front of the community in a ceremony in which the expression "thank you for your childhood" is used. This rite is less of an announcement of youth's end than it is an acknowledgment that whatever genuine adolescence the children may have had was yielded at the community's request.

The society of *The Giver* is based on the formal regime of sameness, which is a state of universal order under which all citizens must behave according to the notion that they will have a perfect life once they accept their assigned roles in the community (Hintz 2002). This form of life mitigates anxiety but comes at a horrifying cost since, according

to the regulations, discomfort created by aging or birth defects should be removed through a system of secret but continuous murder. An unclear mythology and set of euphemisms are used to explain the disappearance of a citizen, such as when a murdered child is announced as having been "released," which suggests that the "Elsewhere" to which people supposedly go after release is a very serene place, which brings to mind the idea of Heaven (Wend-Walker, 2013).

From the beginning, Jonas is very curious about his role in society since he is not sure what best defines him. The trope of self-discovery functions to give a kind of *telos* to the young adult (Hintz 2002). Jonas finally discovers that he has a unique vocation, defined as the Receiver of Memory. Those who created the society felt that it is necessary that at least one member remember the past and know how life was before its current status. Although such a figure lives in isolation from the community, he acts occasionally as an advisor and arbiter of judgment for the community. The one who now acts as the Receiver of Memory is aging and needs to transfer his knowledge to a successor. Jonas is seen as a good candidate for this job and the Giver begins transferring his memories to him. Jonas captures the knowledge of the past through a quasi-spiritual laying-on of hands by the Giver. This gives Jonas the ability to understand the meaning of sunlight, pleasure, weather, as colors as well as realize what genuine emotion is for the first time. At the same time, he becomes able to understand the sad reality of life, including war, pain, and loss.

If Jonas can capture these past memories then he must live apart from the community and his friends, which is not an easy process for him. Because of the unexpectedness of the experience, he simultaneously feels enjoyment and anxiousness, encounters unfamiliar memories, and feels frightened by apprehension and pain, all of which means that he feels conflicted, both happy and resistant about the change. Because of these experiences he once more becomes interested in his childhood and memories of childhood games. Although these memories are not pleasant, he prefers them to the possibility of ignorance, finding time to reflect upon the memories, including the fact that in the past there was love between humans and deep bonds between human and animals. This eventually changes his perspective about the world in which he lives.

At the beginning, Jonas does not seem to be very interested in changing the status quo, especially as he encounters brutal memories of humans, including war (Hintz 2002). However, as he becomes acquainted with other memories, including those of watching the discharge of the twins and the realization of the community's plan to kill the newborn child Gabriel, he become more interested in the rights of individual human lives and esteems difference over the sameness that defines the essence of his community. He talks with the Giver about this and they devise a plot to unleash the memories and transfer them to others, realizing that this could provide a possibility for the society to change. Another receiver of memory experienced the same feelings in the past but instead of trying to change society she decided to die, an incident which had very bad consequences for society and produced unfamiliar and shocking memories. The fact that Jonas could escape will exaggerate this sad experience and could create the possibility for change.

After rescuing the baby Gabriel from Release, Jonas escapes into the forest and the movie ends with him and Gabriel using a sled in the middle of a snowstorm, passing through a gate and seeing that color is returning to the society.

5.1. On Memory, Language, and Child Killing

Jonas lives in a world of utopian rationalism in which reason prevails over emotion. There are positive aspects to such a world, such as its lack of hunger, pain, and war, but such a society also comes with horrible costs. There is no diversity and the rights of marginalized groups are neglected. This tyrannical regime works through the suppression of memory, limitation of language, and the control and killing of children.

1: Suppression of Memory: The crucial method applied to create sameness in the society of *The Giver* is the suppression of cultural memory (Wend-Walker, 2013; Gross, 1999). It is suggested that memory increases the likelihood of acknowledging difference in regard to both time and place so its suppression functions as a method to universalize the ruling ideology about what defines a good society. With this in mind, the receiver of memory contains difference within the boundaries of the same and he provides a possibility for the community to have knowledge of the past in order to not repeat the same errors that led to catastrophic collapse, war, and starvation. This represents the aspect of the society's ideological apparatus that attempts to contain difference within the terms of the same.

Interestingly, the same qualities that define Jonas and his role in society also enable him

to raise questions about it. Because of his assigned role, he becomes capable of seeing beyond and his access to cultural memory stirs in him the capacity to see differences. Because of this access to the layers of ideology, he becomes an agent of radical change (Gross, 1999). By leaving his community, he finds the possibility of exposing the citizenry to difference and disrupting the perpetuation of the structure of the sameness.

In order to understand the significance of memory, we could refer to Benjamin and what he calls "history-writing." According to Benjamin (1968), the writing of history is a critical undertaking exercised "at a moment of danger" (255). History-writing is the endeavor to protect the past while also battling for the recovery of the mistreated past. As he argues (1968), there is a difference between historicism and historical materialism in relation to the past. Historicism gives an "everlasting" image of the past while historical materialism provides "a unique experience with the past" (262). Historicism is a technique which take an additive and accumulative approach to gathering a mass of information which fills the homogeneous, empty time (Benzaquén, 1998). On the other hand, historical materialism is dependent upon a constructive guideline rather than dispassionately uncovering a past with a continuous record of existence. Instead, historical materialism is an intervention which influences human connection to the past, which then consequently influences our comprehension of the present. Instead of being focused upon filling up recorded accounts of every single minute of the past, historical materialism examines the past and stops in what Benjamin calls a "monad" - "a configuration pregnant with tensions" (262). Historical materialists perceive within the monad an indication of the messianic suspension of happening as well as progressive possibility in a battle over the

oppressed past. In this articulation, Benjamin likens the "Messianic cessation of happening" to insurgency. Coming back to *The Giver*, Benjamin would argue that the dominant ideology understands very well the revolutionary potential of the past and attempts to supress its emergence.

2: On Language: One of the essential elements for the control of this society is "precision of language" training. This technique is used to remove from the consciousness of citizens all potentially disruptive and critical emotions and ideas. For example, after Jonas asks his supposed parents whether they "love" him, he is rebuked because he has used a very generalized word that has no meaning in this society (Wend-Walker, 2013). This is a society that does not encourage critical thinking or any form of expression that cannot be quantified, which is why we never see citizens discuss literature or poetry. As Graeme Wend-Walker argued (2013), this society may be defined as a dystopian realization of the Western philosophical tradition's pursuit of clarity with the emphasis on removing any potential source of danger from it. Adorno and Horkheimer's critique of the Enlightenment severely criticizes identity thinking and reminds readers that identity thinking using different tools, including the use of language, destroys externality by limiting it to an identical substratum. As they argue, both the precision and abstraction involved in language can understand the concrete only insofar as it can limit it to identity by denying the otherness of the other. Language in this sense is a tool of domination. Adorno and Horkheimer remain positive that their critique of the Enlightenment might nonetheless bring to light the utopian principle of nonidentitary logic as a rapprochement of otherness (Benhabib, 1989).

Language plays also a significant role in in the struggle against hegemony. As Antonio Gramsci argues, it is the dominant class which defines what types of words we should use and for what purpose. This hegemony simultaneously limits our understanding of other ways of thinking about the world (1988). In Gramsci's writings language became a dominant factor through which to implement and exercise the hegemonic agenda of the powerful class. Language not only has significant value for the creation of hegemony but it also helps subaltern forces to become intellectually autonomous. Gramsci often encourages members of the working class to educate themselves and to raise their awareness of the problems around them, arguing that if this happens then these groups no longer need to let their decisions be influenced by "career intellectuals." He argues that "The children of proletarians too should have all possibilities open to them; they should be able to develop their own individuality in the optimal way, and hence in the most productive way for both themselves and society" (1988: 64). According to Gramsci, this will help them to be capable of behaving and thinking as a ruling class, saying that "every revolution has been preceded by an intense labour of criticism, by the diffusion of culture and the spread of ideas amongst masses of men who are at first resistant, and think only of solving their own immediate economic and political problems for themselves, who have no ties of solidarity with others in the same condition" (1988: 58). As Gramsci argues, eventually such criticism will lead to new standards, a new form of psychology, and a new possibility of feeling, living, and thinking that needs to be shaped by and unique to the working class. This new form of life will become "dominant" as soon as the working class finds its dominant position in society (1988: 70). To summarize, the result of this societal shift will be the establishment of a proletarian civilization without class

distinctions, which differs completely from the current bourgeois society. Given this, and in order to raise the level of intellectualism among workers, promoting cultural tools and developing methods of using language more critically play a significant role in the progress towards emancipation, which has been denied in the society of *The Giver*.

As Tom Moylan and Rafaella Baccolini remind us, "this structural strategy of narrative and counter-narrative most often plays out by way of the social, and anti-social, use of language" (2003: 5). Given the fact that language is a means of exercising power, confrontation by the protagonist usually happens through the reappropriation of memory, representation, and language (6).

3: Child Killing: Human history has seen a few reasons for the child killing or abandonment with one of the most common being economic hardship as children are eliminated because of poverty and the inability of their parents to care for them (Gross, 1999). Children can also be killed for religious reasons, such as in the case of human sacrifice. Superstition may also inspire such violence, such as in cases of sick or deformed babies, multiple births (e.g. twins), and other events relating to the killing of newborn children. Sickness or deformity may also be used to dismiss a criminal conviction if it is believed that an adolescent will die anyway in light of the fact that the community is unable to care for him or her. Newborn children can also be endangered due to societal preference for a specific gender, such as in some societies with an inclination for young men that leads them to kill girls. There have also been societies,

however less common, in which an inclination for young girls has brought about the killing of newborn boys. Another reason that is often given for child killing relates to a child's parentage since they may be executed if they are illegitimate or the result of a forbidden relationship. In myth, a child may be endangered by some form of supernatural catastrophe and child murder might be seen as a way to avoid some predicted event. It is usually the mother who does such killing and these women experience a combination of maladjustment and psychosocial stress (Gross, 1999).

The Giver depicts a society in which all newborn children are taken away from their mothers at the time of birth in order to be raised in nurturing centres for their first year of life. At the age of one they are given to parents who are permitted to raise them in light of the fact that their marriage has worked for at least three years and on the grounds that their application for a child has passed investigation by a relevant committee. The critical moment of this story happens when Jonas watches a tape of his father releasing a kid who has a twin brother. Jonas feels repulsed as his father injects a chemical into the child's head and watches it die, after which he tosses the infant into the refuse (Wend-Walker, 2013); the child was killed on the grounds that identical twins are not permitted. Jonas's infant foster sibling Gabriel is also in danger of release for his failure to stay asleep through the night.

Citizens who do not fit with the rules are discharged in an exceptionally formalized ceremony that is seen as purifying society by removing people who do not fit in or who

express a craving to be sent "somewhere else." Release is executed as a perfunctory piece of an allotted obligation without agony, blame, or remorse (Wend-Walker, 2013). If an individual is being lost because of unacceptable action then the entire group discharges their memory of him or her by performing a "ceremony of loss." Everyone speaks his name for the duration of the day until it appears that the person has just faded away. In contrast with the way of life that created him, Jonas has the capacity to feel and react to both life and memory. This is how he perceives death when he sees it and is able to transfer his emotion as a force to create change. While in customary stories the assigned killer yields and permits the young to live, in *The Giver* the child killers are proficient and murder without inner guilt (Gross 1999). These grown-up partners have identity imperfections and motivations that prevent them from thinking about what they do. It is left to the hero to think and act beyond his own needs in order to create a future that will be suitable for everybody.

5.2. Ideological Message of the Movie

According to Kumar (1991), the value of utopia "lies not in its relation to present practice but in relation to a possible future" (3). Alternatively, as far as the imagined future reflects the outcome of the author's present, utopia calls into question the "dominant ideology, offering to its readers an imaginary or fictive solution to the social contradictions of its own time" (Bruce, 2008: xv). With this in mind, we could ask how this movie reacts to ideology.

As argued in the previous section, a cultural commodity in capitalism needs to justify the value of the system from which it stems**.** It is through culture that a hegemonic bloc could spread its message to the population. In fact, with new instruments of power, including cultural products, government aims to "act on the social which respect the freedom and autonomy of individuals (or communities), seeking to govern them at a distance, and indirectly, by involving them as active agents in the processes of their own transformation and self-regulation" (Bennett, 2000: 1416). To this Gramscian understanding of the relationship between culture and politics, I would also add that the state of anarchy and unregulated development in culture and politics has generally been used to justify the discourse of cultural policy (McGuigan, 2004). Similar to the Hobbesian state of nature, it was argued that in the uncivilized world, people could become like wolves who want to attack and kill each other. If Hobbes could justify monarchy by referring to the necessity of the king's tyranny then why can others not justify their cultural politics through the use of presumably less coercive measures? Thus, a discourse emerged that the modern nation-state is obligated to intervene in the whole of society not only in times of economic trouble but also when it finds it necessary to "cultivate" appropriate individuals. With such a shift, states decided to support arts and culture because of their implicit and explicit impact on the creation of good citizens, who need to be connected with culture and art since these are the essential elements of a worthy life (Cummings, 1987). With this in mind we could agree with Toby Miller and George Yudice, who argue that "this idea of fitness to perform expanded to include education and hence culture" (2002:5). In sum, the rise of the use of consensus-based government led to a new definition of culture as a central aspect of power.

The use of culture as an instrument for creating hegemony is very clear in *The Giver* and there are several reasons for this. First of all, by emphasizing that in the normal society war and violence are common, the underlying message of the movie is that humans are inherently bad, and given this it is very common for them to engage in violence and war. Furthermore, because of the same approach towards human's nature, it argues that famine is a very common issue in the world, since human economic resources are limited. These two facts fit perfectly with capitalism since it justifies its ideological assumption that humans are inherently greedy and want to possess things. The troubling impacts of these ideological messages can be seen clearly in some of the reactions that Angela Beumer et al (2002), gathered from her students, Carly, Teresa, Carmen after reading the novel.

While reading the book Carly states "The book was horrifying… I do realize that they didn't have things like war… pain or famine. However, with taking the bad out they didn't leave much good either" (Quoted in Beumer et al, 15). Similarly, Teresa states that "Reading *The Giver* was a little frightening because it seemed at first to be the kind of world that some people would like to achieve… Jonas' world was safe from terrorists and war" (Quoted in Beumer et al, 17). Teresa continues saying that "It's ironic that in the end, Jonas was escaping his perfect world in exchange for a world where he would experience pain, starvation, and possible death. But he was willing to risk that in order to have love, emotional connection with people, the colors of the world, or to hear music - all the little things that make life in a crazy, sometimes painful world, worth living" (Quoted in Beumer et al, 18). So here the child assumes that the cost of living in a world

without famine and war is too much if it involves the loss of individual freedom and means a society without color, love, or accounts of history and memories.

Carmen, another student, continues this line of thought by saying that sameness was at first engaging yet was eventually rejected. As she argues:

> While hearing about discrimination, racism, and slavery, I have many times thought of how nice it would be if everyone disregarded differences and appearances and accepted people for who they are. This idea is portrayed in an old anti-racism commercial where everyone wears paper bags over their heads to hide their faces. These people get along because they are blinded from each other's differences. The community in *The Giver* represents this blindness through rules that make everyone the same (Quoted in Beumer et al: 18).

Given this, the movie could lead adolescents to believe that a life without socio-political conflict is an illusion. Jonas is confronted by the memories of war and elephant poaching, which bring him to experience despair and horror. However, as Carol states, "My heart ached for Jonas as he discovered the pain of receiving memories, and it hurt even more when he discovered [...] that the life he had come to believe in, a life that was predictable and painless, was just an illusion" (Quoted in Beumer et al, 16). She further argued that:

> Jonas… understands the advantages and freedoms of diversity and choice making. This change is seen when Jonas begins to see colors, thus symbolizing his loss of innocence. He no longer lives in a black and white world where everything is the

> same and choices are made for him. His world becomes colorful and confusing and allows him to experience history, pain, and love (Quoted in Beumer et al: 16).

In summary, because of the way the story of *the Giver* unfolds, young adults might be tempted to value freedom of choice and individuality over any other issues in life and think that anything jeopardizing these values is an illusion that does not merit a fight. In this way, the movie could be seen in harmony with what the United States offered to its citizens, which is very beautifully argued by Beumer et al (2002). While reflecting on *The Giver*, Beumer argued (2002) that living in the United States has left a significant portion of people sufficiently unappreciative of the uniqueness and possibility of choice that living in an open society like ours provides. As the authors continue, while we are sympathetically aware that not all individuals in this nation enjoy the same benefits, *The Giver* helps students to appreciate the crucial value of a fair and democratic society even if those freedoms are not shared in complete equality.

And this is how an ideology could become a dominant force. Jonas's struggle to dismantle sameness reaffirms North American neoliberal culture's preoccupation with diversity and freedom of choice. Although it appears that Jonas's actions are quite transgressive, these acts are shaped in continuity with the preoccupations of our current society about what is good and bad. This is in line with Kylie Message's arguments (2007) which also claims that neoliberalism, with its emphasis on individuality through cultural rights and the valorization of diversity, found the possibility to control more citizens instead of providing the possibility for emancipation. In order to substantiate this

claim, we can refer to the work of Message (2007) on aboriginal museums, through which he realized that in most cases the state renounces its duty of positive intervention in the local community and instead uses the claim of diversity to encourage aboriginal self-governance. Message argues that because of such strategies, the ethnic communities consider themselves to be fully responsible for the success or failure of a given project. This is an ideological approach by the state. By creating the fantasy that a community or ethnic group is capable of doing anything if only they want to, the state found the possibility of blaming communities for the results of their decisions or possible failures. Of course, in reality, an individual or community could never achieve their dreams and aspirations through isolated actions. As Hegel argues (1991), in order to be truly free and to be a complete individual, we need to think of freedom as an Idea, as a concrete potentiality, and this can only happen if we overcome "particularity" and act "universally" or "objectively." He states that in order to act universally, we need to live in a rational society and in such a society individuals must see institutions as rational if they are to feel at home in them. How can institutions be seen as rational and how can one feel at home in them? This could happen if the institutions help us to achieve freedom in concrete terms (Wood, 1991; Rose, 2007). This means that, for example, if we wish to exercise our freedom in court then we need to have access to different mechanisms that will help us to perform such actions, which cannot happen without the political or economic intervention of the state. To expand upon this example, if there were a lawsuit between Bill Gates and a poor gay citizen over an accusation that Microsoft is homophobic, it is ridiculous to think that the latter individual will have a better chance of winning. Given this, Hegel thinks that the state has an important role to

play in the structure of society and helping its citizens to achieve freedom; when the state exercises its role effectively then one feels at home in society. In the lawsuit example, Hegel sees the state as having to provide financial resources for the marginalized gay individual so that that he can defend himself more effectively. It is not enough for the state to merely recognize the fact that different identities exist in society, it also needs to create enforceable regulatory mechanisms to effectively assist minorities in fulfilling their needs. However, according *to The Giver* there is an unresolvable tension between social cohesion and individualism and diversity so it is not possible to have democracy in a society that is based on collectivism. This line of logic neglects the fact that diversity could stifle any hope for the creation of alternative or utopian thinking. As Mannheim (1979) once argued, utopia is discussed less in contemporary society because "all the mutually conflicting forms of utopia pass through the same life-cycle, they become in the realm of science, as the realm of parliamentary practice, less and less mutually conflicting articles of faith, and more and more competing parties, or possible hypotheses for research" (226). In order to respect the demands of the politics of diversity and multiculturalism, regardless of its merits, everything is read as "possible points of view" so, as Ranciere (2004) argues, this logic implies that it is possible to think productively and correctly from any point of view. Thus there is conservatism and adherence to a neoliberal agenda involved behind *The Giver*'s surface of radicalism.

5.2.1. Ideology not Always bad

As Jameson argued, "Works of mass culture cannot be ideological without at one and the

same time being implicitly or explicitly Utopian as well: they cannot manipulate unless they offer some genuine shred of content as a fantasy bribe to the public about to be manipulated" (Jameson, 1979:144). *The Giver* is not only about imposing ideology; it can also work responding to some of the utopian demands by citizens. *The Giver* reminds us that we have to confront and take risk in order to have freedom. There are many different types of injustice that happen around us and there are many individuals who prefer to keep themselves busy instead of reflecting upon these. Such individuals are very similar to the ones in *The Giver* who, instead of fighting against injustice and the problems of society, prefer to hide and escape behind a façade of denial. They are like robots or drones who uncritically follow the rules, essentially knowing nothing. However, like Jonas, we must realize that this position can't do us any favour. We must accept the "overwhelming task of bearing the memories [our]selves" (Lowry, 2006: 161). Jonas contrives to leave the group and in so doing he chooses an alternate life for not only himself but also Gabe and the other members. His plan was also accelerated and set in motion earlier than planned after the discovery that Gabe will be released the following day. In making this decision, Jonas effectively declares his vital right to take control of his own life and make his own decisions. As Ashley, another students remarked, "I was glad when Jonas chose to make the decision to leave their community and take Gabriel with him because he made the decision not to let anyone play God for him" (Quoted in Beumer et al, 19). This means that if we want to comprehend the joy of life, during the worst moments of life, we should reflect deeply upon its meanings.

Furthermore, the nature of politics in *The Giver* drove us to consider the way that government is organized in our own time. As Beumer et al argue in their report, for a few students, contemplating Jonas's world and its contrast with their own time gave them a possibility to consider the benefits and shortcomings of living in an open society. For example, Erica commented that "I particularly like novels like this one that challenge our social construct and question our beliefs as a whole yet individually" (Quoted in Beumer et al, 17). Saying differently, the movie helps individuals to consider the repressive components of society as well as how we lead our own lives.

There is also educational value in *The Giver*, which we see when two students in the class, Erica and Renee, argue about the different costs imposed by living in both open and closed societies. Jonas and Gabe's lives at the end of the film have come to be very different from those that they had under the totalitarian society, when they enjoyed more material comforts Carmen agreed with this position, saying that "By vividly expressing inadequacies of the community of Sameness, Lowry makes me sympathize for oppressed and controlled societies in the world and appreciate the opportunity and the freedom I have and often take for granted" (Quoted in Beumer et al: 18).

One can see reminiscences in this line of thought of Berlin's argument that the most likely outcomes of any attempt at creating perfect solutions to human problems, especially those which are behavioural, will usually fail while causing disillusionment and suffering (Davis, 2000). As Berlin (1991) states:

> All the Utopias known to us are based upon the discoverability and harmony of objectively true ends, true for all men, at all times and places. This holds for every ideal city, from Plato's Republic and his Laws, and Zeno's anarchist world community, and the City of the Sun of Iambulus, to the Utopias of Thomas More and Campanella, Bacon and Harrington and Fenelon. The communist societies of Mably and Morelly, the state capitalism of Saint-Simon, the Phalansteres of Fourier, the various combinations of anarchism and collectivism of Owen and Godwin, Cabet, William Morris and Chernyshevsky, Bellamy, Hertzka and others... rest on the three pillars of social optimism in the west of which I have spoken: that the central problems... of men are, in the end, the same throughout history; that they are in principle soluble; and that the solutions form a harmonious whole (211-12.).

5.3. What we can learn from The Giver?

The Giver is an example of the conventional Hollywood approach to making utopian movies: it presents a sophisticated planned community, a charismatic leader, a system which controls human life, and prioritizes collectivism over individual rights. The story then tells of a confrontation between the hero and this society.

As I have discussed above, the plot of *The Giver* is shaped by some features of dominant ideology but the film actually spends a lot of time investigating individual self-sufficiency and development. It treats these themes not only as tropes of the young adult

genre but rather as a means through which to examine the necessity of political activity and the exercise of political will within a law-based democratic society (Beumer et al, 2002). This is seen in the way that the young adults in the story come to question the political nature of the society in which they find themselves and which provides the possibility for them to scrutinize the logic behind the hero's actions as well as the relationship between their decisions and the structure of the society. Seeing the hero's troubles and awkwardness compared to the rest of society, the reader will ask himself or herself "What is wrong with her? Why is she the only one who can't fit in with the regular convention?" Readers here find themselves in brutal situations or in circumstances where they must make troublesome decisions.

We can conclude that *The Giver* is a prism that can help us to look at our own society. The vision of utopia that it presents will seem accurate to many readers who will relate to the experience of abandonment by a parent or society. They will likewise relate to the fantasy of thinking of a better world than that of their parents in the hope of having a better family life. In this regard, *The Giver* elaborates on the question of freedom through a political lens: Should we allow our individuality and freedom of choice to be controlled by a rigid system? This demand for freedom of choice is supposed to help adolescent readers think about the difficult social and political ideas within the context in which they live; it attempts to make them think about their own narrative of growth. Here, good citizenship is defined as a process of achieving autonomy in adulthood while simultaneously preserving the clarity of vision and perspective of a child.

Chapter 6: *Snowpiercer* and the Possibility of Hope for a Better Future

South Korean director Bong Joon-ho's first English film, *Snowpiercer* (2013), which is a remake of Jacques Lob and Jean-Marc Rochette's comic *Le Transperceneige* (1982), tells the story of Earth in the year 2031, by which time the planet has become completely frozen. Diegetic news clips provide context to understand how this situation developed when 79 nations consented in 2014 to disseminate the artificial cooling substance CW-7 in order to end global warming. However, this plan went wrong and the released substance first destabilized the atmosphere by making it dangerously hotter, then drastically colder, killing all life on Earth except for a few wealthy citizens who found asylum on a train called Snowpiercer which circumnavigates the globe in a gigantic, nonstop circle connecting what were once separate railroads in Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas. The constant movement of the train creates warmth and provides the possibility of survival. Later on, a few individuals join the inhabitants of the train but are made to live in the rear section since they boarded without permission. A class system develops on the train with the individuals from the front area abusing those in the rear. The film takes place after seventeen years of this very harsh situation, which has seen a few revolts, every one of which has failed.

The movie begins when the people in the rear of the train once again gather to discuss the possibility of a new revolt. The circumstances are aggravated after soldiers seize a boy named Tommy and separate him from his parents. There is a social order established on board the train but this is disrupted when starving people who live in the tail section rebel

against the wealthier people who live in the first and second class cars. It is the hero of the film, Curtis, who helps to lead the revolt with advice from Gilliam, a wise old man. Curtis and his comrades are waiting for the right moment to rise up and when it arrives, they first seize the jail section and save Namgoong Minsu, who is capable of opening the entryways separating the train segments so the revolutionaries can take over the train. After a series of violent attacks, and although he loses several of his partners, Curtis finally arrives at the engine.

At the head of engine Curtis meets Wilford, who is the designer of the train and responsible for the creation of this tyranny. It appears that Curtis is going to kill Wilford but very soon he realizes how naïve he has been since the whole revolution was designed from the beginning by Wilford. Curtis discovers that the uprisings of the tail area were created in order to kill off excess population and that Gilliam was plotting against him while working with Wilford from the beginning. After informing Curtis of this, Wilford tells him that nothing would be changed by his death and that Curtis should assume the leadership of the train as he becomes old. Curtis at the first appears to accept this role but when he realizes that the missing child from the tale section is being used as a tool to preserve the movement of the motor he changes his position. A drug addict named Namgoong offers Curtis an exit plan. Namgoong is by all accounts ready to join in the revolution insofar as he can be paid with the drugs but the same drugs finally turn out to be an explosive and Namgoong uses them to open the exit doors of Snowpiercer. Namgoong argues that life outside of the train is possible and that the temperature is becoming warmer. Curtis at first rejects the proposal to escape the train but changes his

mind after discovering the terrible fate of children in this system and that changing the ruler would not have any effect since the structure itself is what is dangerous. He then helps Namgoong to destroy the engine.

Curtis and Namgoong create an explosion which causes a gigantic avalanche that wrecks the train. This disaster kills nearly every single person on board, leaving just two survivors: Namgoong's girl and Timmy, the tail segment kid who Curtis saved from the engine. The final scene of the film shows the two survivors moving out of the train wreck and looking at the new world before them, now seeing that Namgoong seemed to be right. The world before them is icy but fortunately does not freeze them immediately. In fact, in what could be interpreted as a sign of hope that some kind of life is possible beyond the train, they see a polar bear nearby, though this could also be threatening. The film ends with the presentation of uncertain nonwhite future, as an Asian woman and a black young man venture out to start a new, non-white, non-Western future.

6.1. Circulation and Capitalism

Life on board Snowpiercer is to some degree an allegory for modern capitalist society. What are the problematic aspects of our society? Could they be changed? How would that be done? *Snowpiercer* helps us to reflect upon such questions. The first crucial idea discussed by the movie is the centrality of circulation in the capitalist economy. The term circulation is a dominant metaphor for the current economy (Swyngedouw, 2004). As

Erik Swyngedouw argues, Karl Marx and Adam Smith inspired the critical concept of circulation when they conceptualized capitalist economies as metabolic systems which functions largely through the essential circulation of commodities and money. For them, accumulation depends on the ease with which money circulates through an environment. From this perspective, devaluation and chaos happens when the constant movement and circulation of commodities stops so the capitalist economy is always interested in knowing how it can avoid such a crisis and maintain a stable flow.

A good example to support this argument comes from the renovation of Paris during a time of crisis in the eighteenth century. Baron Hussmann, who led the renovation, was in fact interested in reviving the city's economy. Of course, he was also interested in facilitating military domination with the establishment of the famous boulevards (Hall, 2002) but, as David Harvey argues, military domination was not a significant feature of what the new boulevards of Paris were supposed to do. Most of Haussmann's works were "public investments designed to prime the pump of private profit in the wake of the serious economic recession of 1847" (Harvey, 2005:20). Haussmann clearly sought to expand industrial activities as well as to "orchestrate the private and public spaces of Paris in mutually supportive ways" (Harvey, 2005: 20). In order to do this, the concept of mobility was important for Haussmann. By creating large boulevards, he tried to facilitate freer circulation of money, commodities, and people; in short, he tried to simulate growth. Philippe Panerai et al (2004), also argues that Haussmann's methods were intended to simulate growth. For them, Haussmann's works were part of a new enterprising fervour which promised rapid profits. The technical challenge was that of

modernization and, more importantly, the improvement of living conditions, especially transportation infrastructure. To do this, the organization of the long visual axes which Haussmann proposed for Paris, was intended to improve circulation (Panerai et al., 2004) but this meant that the poor, like the tail inhabitants of Snowpiercer, were excluded from privileged areas of the city such as bars and cafes.

Applying this concept of economic circulation to *Snowpiercer*, we could argue that the train is a metaphor for circulation and its importance in the capitalist economy. The train needs to be in constant movement and it is suggested that if it stops then all life will end. Given this, the whole structure and even the lives of innocent children have been sacrificed to facilitate the constant movement of the train. Of course, this constant movement cannot happen without a class-based system. As Haussmann's work in Paris demonstrates, the creation of such a massive structure will eventually leads to social segregation; there should be gates that separate rich from poor since movement can only function through force and by denying certain human beings proper lives. This argument helps us to understand why the train is so central to the movie. One could argue that the whole movie is the story of the train and the centrality of movement in human life.

6.1.2. On Space

It can be said that beyond being the story of two groups of people in a confrontation at the end of the world, *Snowpiercer* is even more a story about the train itself, the space

within it, and the way that it functions (Ye Dam, 2015). The train is far from providing a sense of place for its habitants and we could say that it is simply a space but not a place. There is a difference between space and place. As Yi-Fu Tuan argues, *"Space and place require each other for definition. From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom and threat of space, and vice versa. Furthermore, if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place" (Tuan, 1977, p. 6)*. For example, as the plot of *Snowpiercer* unfolds we realize that Curtis is the only one who is able to move from the tail section to the engine. By this movement and by realizing the dimensions of the train, Curtis is able to crtically assess the value and meaning attributed to the train as space and reject them in favour of a more secure definition of place. He observes the train and its mechanisms on different occasions and little by little sharpens his understanding of its function (Ye Dam, 2015). At the beginning of the film he lived only in the tail section and his knowledge of the train was limited. As he moves forward, his knowledge of the space increases and he can see how different people in different sections live and how they use it as a place. In this process, slowly and with careful observation, Curtis becomes aware of the superficial meaning of the train.

The power of observation is evident in the movement of Curtis and how he attributes the quality of place to it. The movie defines him as a leader with the power of seeing and gaining knowledge, such as when we see him at the beginning of the movie standing up during a head count and trying to look at a series of gates in the front section (Ye Dam, 2015). He wants to count the time necessary for each gate to open and close. Through the

whole process, he was able to see human suffering as they fight and plot against each other. What is problematic in his relationship with the train is the fact that Curtis only looks forward and cannot think sideways and beyond. This is why when Wilford tells him that he could be the next leader Curtis hesitates about what to do. Given the fact that he thinks inside the box, he cannot imagine the possibility of leaving the train and its structure, which are the box that has shaped his freedom of thought. Curtis needs the help of his friends to be able to think outside of this enclosing space. It is with Namgoong's help that Curtis can eventually think of an alternative place to live. Although this drug addict considered the train to be a secure place to live at the beginning of the film, as the time passes he becomes more reflective about the train and actually realizes that it is actually a space that inhibits a proper life. It is in this way that Curtis follows Hegel, particularly how Hegel's philosophy of identity sees the whole of something not only as the one but rather as a combination of the one and the many. Since a whole is composed of several parts, any violation of the independence and integrity of those parts sees the many reduced to one, at which point holism becomes identity or sameness. It is necessary to have genuine difference, otherness, transcendence, and immanence. If not there is no whole or system of relations and instead of spiralling into novelty there is only the eternal repetition of the same. Finally, in contrast to Curtis, who only moves forward, Namgoong sometimes looks outside the window, where he see the snow starting to melt, and becomes convinced it is possible to live outside. This gives him an opportunity to appreciate the outside and fantasize about having a life there.

Namgoong transfers his knowledge to Curtis and encourages him to go outside of the train instead of trying to go forward and kill Wilford though at first Curtis does not accept this wisdom and continues to go forward. In fact, in order to understand the possibility, one must share the vision and only telling is insufficient (Ye Dam, 2015). However, Curtis fundamentally changes his mind when he sees the young child in the engine, realizing that Namgoong was right and that he needs to go outside of this space in the hope of finding a secure place to live. His attempts to destroy the train are the direct consequence of this wisdom and his movement in the space fundamentally changes the lives of the people he encounters. Before this movement, Curtis's life consisted of a repetitive routine that saw him waking up early in the morning, working in his section at the end of the train, checking the gate, looking for an opportunity to revolt, fetching a can of food, and finally sitting down with people and discussing how to achieve freedom. However, after Curtis has moved through the train, faced dangers, and taken risks, he finds that he has the ability and confidence to engage in new adventures, which leads him to become more active in his life. Eventually, this leads him to try saving his society through an act of self-sacrifice.

Curtis's movement and final sacrifice remind us that place and space are not just natural phenomena but are environments that have political meanings. For example, through its secure structure and gates, the engine is able to dominate the rest of the train. As Harvey would argue, through his adventure Curtis realizes that place is a social construct (Harvey, 1996). When one says that a place is a social construct by implication this means that the place is not natural and that it derives its meaning from human forces.

Therefore, if it is humans who give meaning to a place then this means that humans also have the ability to undo this process and take away that meaning. Such a situation includes profound political implications since it means that humans have the ability to change the future. As Harvey (1996) argues, capitalist forces have mostly used the discourse of place in order to create exclusionary safe havens from which they are able to continue dominating other humans. Harvey mentions that place discourse is actually a process used to establish a separation between "us," which are the people defined as belonging in a place, and "them," which are the people who do not belong. The end result is that a certain group is excluded from the defined space based upon various factors which can include (but are not limited to) race, class, or sexuality in place-based environments. This argument can be very well observed in *Snowpiercer* and at the end of the journey we realize that the capitalist structure which defines the space in the train is not a natural project but rather was designed by someone and is a historical product; someone laid the tracks, built the train, and is stoking the engine. It is in this sense that the audience can understand the radical constructedness of a system which pretends to actually be naturally occurring and autonomous. Once people have realized this they will also come to the conclusion that if someone has created a system then someone else could just as well propose a new model for living. This is radical knowledge that transcends the closed structure which dominates our thought in relation to utopia and its representation in cinema.

6.1.3. Anti-utopia

What is unique in *Snowpiercer* is that the film rejects the common pattern of blasé

attitudes prevalent in dystopian movies. Most of the dystopian movies that I have analyzed do not provide any alternative to capitalism and simply argue that capitalism is the best regime imaginable. As Fredric Jameson argues, it has become easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism (Jameson, 1994). Regular dystopian movies propose some criticism in regard to capitalism but usually argue that it is better to continue with this structure or else we will have a much worse society in which to live. Capitalism's own horrors have essentially been used to justify the system and its necessity so that we prefer to continue in such a life in order to prevent ourselves from living a much worse one. This is what Mark Fisher calls *capitalist realism*: "the widespread sense that not only is capitalism the only viable political and economic system, but also that it is now impossible even to *imagine* a coherent alternative to it" (2). This tendency is confronted with two contrasting positions. The first is the belief that (1) capitalism works. As Žižek argues (2009):

> Capitalism itself is presented in technical terms, not even as a science but simply as something that works: it needs no ideological justification, because its success itself is its sufficient justification... Capitalism is a system which has no philosophical pretensions, which is not in search of happiness. The only thing it says is: 'Well, this functions.' And if people want to live better, it is preferable to use this mechanism, because it functions. The only criterion is efficiency (25).

The second belief is that "CAPITALISM DOES NOT WORK." As Fisher argues, "far from being the only viable political-economic system, capitalism is in fact primed to

destroy the entire human environment... capitalism is by its very nature opposed to any notion of sustainability" (18–9).

What is unique about *Snowpiercer* is that it combines these two visions (Canavan, 2014). We are very well aware from the beginning that the capitalist mode of production produced the ecological crisis which destroyed life on Earth. Capitalism has created a world of misery and squeezed out all hope. Although this happened in the recent past, humanity still decides to live in a capitalist system based on class distinction, which Wilford hopes to keep intact. In his discussion with Curtis he argues that this is the only way to preserve human life and presents some evidence to support his claim such as how without the constant creation of heat by the train's perpetual motion, all of its inhabitants would instantly freeze. For example, we see in the movie that as a punishment a man's hand is put outside of the train and in a couple of minutes it is completely frozen. Apparently there is no alternative to the system; the preservation of Snowpiercer's social structure is the *only* method to keep the humanity. Although capitalism created severe problems for the maintenance of life in the past, its faulty structure must be preserved in an unhappy post-capitalist context. Rejecting this idea is to act against a law of nature.

Snowpiercer rejects this mentality that capitalism is the only viable way of life and ultimately suggests that the central issue is no longer who rules but rather the way that power is exercised in society. Thus, if at first Curtis was intended to replace Wilford and become the ruler, he decides to change the whole structure after entering the engine

section and discovering the horrible price of living in such a society, which is the fact that capitalism can work only by cannibalism. This is when Curtis decides to follow the third way suggested by Namgoong because he realizes that if he accepts Wilford's plan and assumes leadership of the train then the system and the way of life will not change. This is contrary to his promise to his friend, Edgar, whom he told at the beginning of the movie that they will succeed in their revolt since no more compromise is possible. In order to realize this, Curtis passes the match to Yona to blow up the gate and rescue Timmy from the hard work imposed upon him.

Curtis himself is not able to see the outcome of his rebellious act and although to some extent he can be considered a hero since he sacrifices his life in order to save the world. Curtis helps the audience to realize that the whole engine, capitalism, and its structure must be changed and that simply transferring power from seemingly bad rulers to good ones is not enough to have a true revolution (Canavan, 2014). Thus, the heroic valorization of the hero is not the goal of *Snowpiercer* and the movie hopes instead to awaken the audience from ignorance, to help them understand that it is the train itself that should be stopped. In this sense, Curtis is like Hegel's Moses who helped the enslaved Israelites to escape from Egypt to Palestine, where they could feel freedom. However, like Moses, Curtis himself cannot go to Palestine and must die in the process. In this sense, the movie represents Yona and Timmy as the new Adam and Eve, though right from the beginning it is clear that they are not innocent children (Young, 2015). Yona certainly demonstrates her devilish nature the moment she fired a revolver at people; instead; she could be described as a descendant of Cain. Their life in a new world will

surely not be an easy one and the polar bears that appear at the end of the movie will certainly be a danger to the two children who have never been off the train and do not know how to survive. This context shows how the movie corresponds to Hegel's argument that the historical state of humans is determined by countless determinate negations which constitute an unending quest. In reality, there is actually not a shortcut for avoiding the wealth and detail of determinacy and difference. In fact, the attempt of consciousness to understand itself is self-shaping - every time that a given consciousness thinks it has finally glimpsed itself as its own object, it is inexorably driven to take on a new shape (Hegel, 1977).

6.1.4. Propaganda

As Gramsci argues (1998) in his theory of hegemony, the dominant group needs to make its own version of life appear to be the most appealing one and promote the idea that this is the only possibility. One method for achieving this goal is through the use of propaganda, which enables the ruling class to shape the mentality of citizens without using force upon them. This is necessary for capitalism since persuasion is more important than force for the survival of this system. *Snowpiercer* clearly depicts the use of propaganda in several scenes, the clearest example of which is the classroom scene where the teacher instructs the students to worship Wilford as a godly figure who saved the world by his heroic actions (Vroome, 2015). The teacher tells the students a story about how Wilford knew that CW-7 would backfire and wanted to help privileged citizens survive the resulting catastrophe, which is why he built the Snowpiercer. This

same scene depicts the students watching the corpses of some passengers who died in the extremely cold weather while trying to escape the train. After showing these images the teacher tells them that the same will happen to them if they go outside, also explaining that if the engine stops running then they will all die. Arguably, the propaganda is successful since the children then sing with the teacher and praise Wilford as a divine and benevolent provider.

The vision presented in the classroom scene is very similar to the culture of blasé-attitude since it is based on the argument that any deviation from the existing form of government and economy will be lead to catastrophe and death. Referring to Mannheim may help one to better understand this logic. As he argues, utopia is a contested term that could be used by an adherent of the status quo to justify the actual status of their own society by labeling everything that transcends the given order as utopian and consequently not realizable in any order (Mannheim, 1979). By calling other alternatives utopian, one puts to rest the anxiety that could emerge from other tendencies that might be realized in another order. This is the logic behind Margaret Thatcher when she said that there is no alternative to capitalism; this claim justifies the fact that those who are in power continue doing what they do regardless of their terrible impact upon collective life (Harvey, 2000). It helps them to define this as the best way of life for the world. However, the use of propaganda is not limited to the front section of the train in *Snowpiercer* and we see a painter in the tail-section drawing some of the past events that negatively impacted the citizens, such as the children who are stolen from their parents and images of a father who was humiliated while attempting to save his child. These images constantly remind

the citizens of the tail-section what Wilford's brutal forces will do to them but at the same time, the images eventually inspire this group to rebel. Here, the same pain gave them hope of overcoming injustice.

Another argument that passengers on Snowpiercer constantly hear is that they deserve to be in the section where they are currently located (Vroome 2015, Young 2015). This is based on the argument that some of the passengers on the train bought their tickets while other entered without this right. Given this, the people at the front of the train believe that they deserve to be there while the rest have no such claim. This message has been transferred to the children as well and the children in the front section have a very low opinion of the people at the rear of the train since they have been raised with the idea that everyone should occupy a position according to his or her preordained status. These methods are used on Snowpiercer to ensure that everyone stays in their proper places and that balance will be maintained. It is a tyrannical regime in which the ruler attempts to persuade others that what they do is proper without necessarily using force.

A Hobbesian state of nature is used to justify the mentality on board Snowpiercer and it is constantly argued that life outside of the train is impossible and doomed to failure. This knowledge is supported by scientific observation and we see images of dead frozen people outside. This knowledge determines all people's behavior and thoughts without exception; not even Wilford feels exempt from it. This knowledge also determines the actions of Curtis, who from the beginning wants to become the leader of the train without

actually questioning the ecosystem within the train since the scientific knowledge and terminology available to the inhabitants of Snowpiercer limits their mentality and choices.[7] As Gerry Canavan argues (2014, 13), "the word 'extinct' is repeatedly used to describe anything that has vanished, typically objects rather than living things: 'Cigarettes have been extinct for more than 10 years now;' They've used up all their bullets 4 years ago on the last revolt. Bullets are extinct." As he concludes, "the future is a space of universal extinction and contraction, rather than vibrancy or life" (Canavan 2014: 13). The inhabitants live in the world of limitation and extinction mentality, which defines their way of life.

This is the sense in which Hegel argued that science can be defined as knowledge which is claimed to originate in experience but which is actually self-contradictory in this respect because of the manner in which it seeks out and establishes the truth. Science is not interested in sensuous matters as such; instead, science is interested in the concept that resides within the sensuous. It is in this sense that science differs greatly from reason, the latter of which is not passive in its approach to understanding reality; instead, reason questions experience. It is by questioning nature that reason uses experience to discover a concept which is in fact the presence of reason itself in the midst of the content (Hyppolite, 1979). Hegel has this in mind when he reminds his reader that science is not in fact natural but has actually been created by someone and is controlled by them.

Despite the fact that all knowledge is controlled by Wilford, the people presenting this

knowledge on Snowpiercer pretend to be neutral. As Choi argues (2015):

> What has been concealed is that the power has operated in the tail section not only through physical regulation and oppression over them, but through the knowledge of truths. Gilliam, the spiritual leader of the tail section, has voluntarily cooperated with Wilford for a long time. Gilliam agreed with the fact that it is necessary to maintain the balance of the ecosystem in the train to survive since he knew that no one can live outside the train (3).

Wilford created this whole process of controlling knowledge and he decides what scientific discourse can take place and for what purposes, thus combining truth and power for the purpose of one group dominating another. This propaganda machine somehow involves everybody in the creation of tyranny, such as how Curtis discovers at the end of his journey that from the beginning he was intended to become the leader of the train; the whole process was designed as a trick to control the numbers in the train and to balance the sustainability of its ecosystem. Even Curtis's beloved mentor, Gilliam, was a part of this since he takes orders directly from Wilford. At this point Curtis realizes that he must stop attacking the system and instead has to lead it. We understand in the movie that Curtis is not morally suitable to be a leader since he was a very active Cannibalist during the first days following the cooling of the Earth and once planned to eat Edgar, only refusing to do this because Gilliam offered him his limbs to eat instead. As Gilliam told Namgoong, he knows what people taste like, even admitting that he knows babies best. This theme of cannibalism reveals that everybody on the train is complicit in the system;

nobody realizes that what they do is wrong because the evil is considered very banal and their survival depends upon the deaths of others (Arendt, 1973). I would argue that this passage to evil, this cleavage is necessary to consciousness, to being-for-self. As Hegel argued, if evil has its "seat" in separation and in consciousness then while it may not be existentially distinguishable from consciousness as such it is at least logically distinguishable. Evil then occurs when consciousness becomes focused upon "being-for-myself" in opposition to the ultimate universal truth. Essentially, this "singularizing" of the self over and against other living beings gives birth to evil. However, the progression of being-for-self is always accompanied by this opposition and singularization. This is why there is a need for the subject to understand evil before it can appreciate progress. The tragic element, therefore, is that the misuse of freedom is the cost of having freedom itself (Hodgson, 2005).

Snowpiercer depicts a society in which there is no mutual understanding of the other as the people in the front section are constantly "othering" the people in the rear section in order to enforce the separation and opposition between the classes. Othering usually happens in order to make a distinction between people based on gender, race, and sex; it negatively distinguishes the other from the self. This strategy is used to make humans forget the human qualities of other people and so makes it easy for the dominant class to impose their will upon the rest of society. When it become naturalized then each group becomes incapable of defining itself without defining the other; given this, if one belongs to the dominant group then he should be able to name the characteristics that distinguish him from members of the non-dominant group. As we hear in the movie, this strategy

works perfectly on Snowpiercer since the children in the front section think that people in the rear are not human enough and so do not deserve to live properly.

Surely, anyone looking at this strategy of sameness from the Hegelian perspective will criticize it since, as mentioned previously, for Hegel in his philosophy of identity the whole is not simply the one but rather the one and the many. Since a whole is composed of parts any violation of the independence and integrity of those parts, such as reducing the many down to just one, will see holism take over and become the new identity or sameness. It is necessary to have genuine qualities of difference, otherness, transcendence, and immanence because without these there is no whole or system of relations. Furthermore, there would be no spiralling into novelty but rather just an eternal repetition of the same things and qualities. This whole embodies the Hegelian spirit since it is within the whole that everything finite comes into being and passes out of being. Time and history themselves transpire within this whole and the spirit becomes concretely self-determined. This approach forms the basis upon which a total system can be construed holistically rather than totalistically. This is significant because there is no reduction of the other to the same within a holistic system but at the same time the same and the other are not viewed as atoms existing in mutual exclusivity. Recognition preserves both identity and difference while also constituting a community of freedom, sometimes referred to as a "kingdom" of freedom. Thus, it is clear that Hegel's holism tends towards neither atomism or monism but rather seeks to establish a middle ground between these two extremes (Hodgson, 2005). Hegel's view is that every concrete thing and every living thing contains within itself some form of contradiction; only the dead

understanding is identical with itself. Living things and in fact life itself have drives and needs which bring about a distinction within life itself. Life is the process of resolving this contradiction and giving it peace, though this happens in such a way that the contradiction emerges again. Said differently, life maintains itself by differentiating itself and finding itself within that differentiation before moving on and shifting into new forms. Life therefore appears as a continuous process of diversification and unification (Hodgson, 2005).

6.1.5. On Sexuality and Gender

As mentioned above, *Snowpiercer* opens by depicting a conflict between private citizens and the state following the seizure of an innocent child which inspires the citizens to take control of the situation and to exact revenge. At first this might seem like a very conventional approach to the question of gender and family and we could read it as an attempt to re-establish family and its traditional structure. In Hegel's discussion of family he argued that there is tension between family and society in the sense that individuals need to leave their families at some point in order to join the public realm, which is a transition that cannot happen easily. However, the sacrifice is necessary for the progress of the individual or else he will always remain within the realm of the family. *Snowpiecer* seems to be conservative in relation to tradition and argues for the preservation of a clear-cut family structure. In his discussion of family and its role in cinema Robin Wood sharply criticized this vision of family and argued for a more liberal approach (Wood, 1998). However, this does not express the whole complexity of *Snowpiercer* behind the

question of gender and family relations. The movie's utopian quality in the matter of gender representation came into fruition through Tilda Swinton; her character Minister Mason is central to the film.

Swinton has been active in filmmaking for about four decades and it is impossible to attribute a single meaning to her work. Jackie Stacy says the following about Swinton:

> As a performer, actor, producer, activist, model, patron advocate and general style icon, she has appeared in around 70 films, 40 plays and numerous live performances and organized nearly 50 impromptu rural film screenings; perhaps as a consequence Stacey asserts that "flux and mutability have become her signature qualities," with androgyny one of her defining features (Stacey, 2015: 245, 243).

In fact, Swinton is inherently multifaceted and transforms each time that she embarks upon a new adventure in cinema. Her (de)feminised presence problematizes the meaning that is conventionally attributed to responsibility, family, and politics. This is certainly also true of her role in *Snowpiercer*.

It is very difficult to say exactly to which gender Minister Mason belongs. During an interview Swinton explained that the role was primarily written for a man and she did not expect to collaborate with Bong Joon-ho. It came as a surprise to her when the director suddenly suggested that they could change the character so that she play the role. The

result is what appears to be a hybrid gender, a character who is asexual and difficult to categorize according to a specific definition. Mason represents the unknown, in-between, unspecific gender which is moving between different identities; she sometimes acts like a man and sometimes a women. Given the fact that the train is composed of people from different racial backgrounds, Mason could be seen as a global identity shaped by the effects of globalization. In a sense, such a person is not very well aware of his or her race and gender and only attempts to make the circulation of capital possible. The characteristics that define Mason fit perfectly well with what is attributed to Swinton's cinematic features. Mason has a variety of binary oppositions: gay and straight, asexual and sexual. This certainly proves to be a very progressive and even utopian quality in the character but at the same time Mason is tainted with comic features that problematize who he or she is since she also serves the tyrannical regime and feels comfortable with doing this. She is certainly not a character with whom we can identify and we easily forget about her after her death. In this sense, the fluidity in her gender says nothing about her political position in the world. It seems to be a characteristic that has been added to her only to make her more fashionable to watch. The utopian qualities that we have seen in Swinton's previous works are not rationalized here and they remain at the level of the particular and the finite.

6.2. Contribution of Snowepiercer to Utopian Studies

As argued above, what distinguishes *Snowpiercer* from other dystopian movies is that it challenges the blasé-attitude of late capitalism and suggests seeking alternatives to

capitalism. This film questions the death vision of the future and opens the minds of its audience to possibilities for an alternative future. *Snowpiercer* reveals that the internal social and economic structure of the train was designed by someone. In this sense it is very Hegelian; we are all born into a world shaped by institutions which means that an alternative future is also imaginable by other human beings.

Snowpiercer reminds us that the specific spatial configuration of capitalism might prevent us from thinking differently and that sometimes instead of following the common path we need to look outside. Thus, the movie suggests that there might be a future for both animals and humans outside of the self-defeating structure of capitalism and proposes a future that is not totally Western, white, or based on class structure. In this sense, the movie recognizes difference and proposes a more egalitarian society, a future which might at first appear difficult to live but the difficulty which emerges only from its newness and the fact that we need time to adapt to it. It is a future that in the long term might help us to live a better human life with less misery.

Hegel might very well have praised such a future society since he believed that mutually ethical relations could only be attained when each party renounces coercion and accepts the existence of the other, allowing it to be. In his view, an element of not only self-renunciation but also self-sacrifice is necessary for any mutual relationship between two parties to exist. This two-way relationship stands in contrast to a one-way relationship in which a single party utilizes the other in order to achieve its own ends. An example of

this is the relationship between a master and a slave, which actually demonstrates that it is no relationship at all. Being in a relationship of mutuality requires one to give primacy to the other by sacrificing one's own interests; of course, this also means that the other must do the same in equal measure. Every relationship has an element of this asymmetry. As Hudson argued, "Hegelian love sees God as a person involved in a relationship such that the consciousness of the one can only be had in the consciousness of the other. God is conscious of himself . . . only in the other, in absolute externalization. This is spiritual unity in the form of feeling. In the relationship of friendship, of love, of the family, this identity of one with the other is also to be found. . . . [This is] the substantial, universal ethical relationship as such" (x). Looking at this from the Hegelian perspective, love distinguishes two people who are actually not distinguished from one another. Love is in fact the conscious perception or feeling of a common identity made up of two human beings, essentially one being outside of his or her self and being in the other. One has self-consciousness not in the self but rather in the other. This other likewise exists outside of itself and so has its self-consciousness only in its counterpart. Both parties in such a relationship feels as though they exist outside of themselves within a greater common identity; they are in effect one and the same as this intuition, feeling, and knowledge of unity. This is love and one can only speak of it emptily without truly understanding that love is both a distinguishing feature but also the sublation of distinction (Hodgson, 2005). As Hegel argued, this is the process through which the personality is accomplished, particularly when persons maintain themselves in love and friendship, achieving their own subjectivity through love for each other. Hegel argued that instead of standing by themselves persons actually surrender their isolation and separateness. For Hegel, "A life,

love, means precisely the giving up of particularity, of particular personality, and its extension to universality—so, too, with friendship. In friendship and love I give up my abstract personality and thereby win it back as concrete. The truth of personality is found precisely in winning it back through this immersion, this being immersed in the other (Hodgson, 2005: 234)."

Chapter 7: Reading *Elysium* Through a Utopian Lens

Neill Blomkamp, a 36-year-old director from South Africa, has directed three long features, the first of which, *District 9*, promised great potentiality for the future of dystopian cinema. *District 9*, which was nominated for four Oscars, is reminiscent of the events that lead to the uprising against apartheid in South Africa with a plot centered on the story of some inhabitants fighting against a form of apartheid regime. In *Elysium*, Blomkamp has continued showing the same awareness regarding the social and political conditions around him. The film depicts a dystopian scenario in the year 2154, a time when the world is sharply divided between the haves and the have nots. This is a world in which the rich enjoy everything, living in a paradise-like environment where they do not need to work, speaking French as their official language, and enjoying the benefits of machines that can cure every type of disease. In contrast, the poor mostly speak Spanish, lack decent living facilities, and suffer through severe poverty and unemployment. *Elysium* depicts a confrontation between these two classes with Max, played by Matt Damon, being the hero who represents the poor class in their fight. The rich are led by a character named Delacourt, played by Jodie Foster. Ultimately, this story of struggle leads to the creation of a more egalitarian and humanistic society.

The story of class struggle depicted in Elysium evokes Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927), with the difference being that in Lang's masterpiece the rich class lived on the upper floors of a city, and the poor inhabited the underground as where Blomkamp's story the affluent class left the Earth and live in a separate planet orbiting the Earth while the poor

stayed on Earth. If in *Metropolis* the people are able to access very developed and far superior technology and can build high-rise, avant-garde towers, in *Elysium* the images of the future are not as strange and despite the movie's beautiful cinematography everything looks very familiar and down to earth. The city in which the poor class lives is very similar to the slums of Mexico City and the opulent where the rich live brings to mind the gated suburban areas of Vancouver and Miami. The legendary artist Syd Mead designed the images of the future places where the rich class lives in *Elysium*. Blomkamp argued (2013) that he tried to get "someone who was an icon of mine" to collaborate with him on the movie. Blomkamp sees Mead as more than just a significant futurist designer; he is also a type of designer that no longer exists in the age of Photoshop, which is perhaps why Mead's down-to-earth imagination of the future was particularly inspiring for Blomkamp. Following the addition of Mead to the project, the whole design of *Elysium* and its look changed. In order to achieve the image of the space station that we see in the film Mead started by taking aerial photos of Beverly Hills which he then resized down to the size of tennis courts before embedding these within a down-to-earth Beverly Hills-style layout. As Blomkamp acknowledges (2013), Mead is the one who presented the idea of incorporating naturalistic features such as lakes and rivers into Elysium in order to "balance the higher ring" since water will "find its own zero, it'll always balance out."

These down-to-earth images made the movie very relatable and although it is a fictional movie one can very well see his own surroundings in the images. Since *Elysium* tells a story of class warfare and focuses on the issue of equal access to health benefits as well as the status of illegal immigrants, some film critics have argued that the movie is

ideological and defends Barack Obama's public policy in the United States, especially his efforts to create the Obamacare healthcare system. For example, according to James Hirsen (2013), it is "sci-fi socialism" and "a heavy handed political propaganda flick." However, this attitude demonstrates a shallow interpretation of socialism and does not help us to fully comprehend the complexity of the movie and especially its relation of dystopian movies.

7.1. Is *Elysium* Socialist Propaganda?

It is difficult to see *Elysium* as a socialist movie since its depiction of a socialist society is very shortsighted. First of all, the humans in the movie are depicted as eogtistical and self-driven characters ready to do anything in order to satisfy their demands. In this regard, the movie hardly criticizes the inherent contradiction embedded in capitalism. Max, who becomes terminally ill following a work-related event, has only five days to live and he enters the war for emancipation only for his own survival since he hopes to go to Elysium to be cured by its sophisticated technology. Through this process he encounters a past lover who has a sick daughter, which eventually leads him to sacrifice his life for her and society. What he finally achieves is driven by his egoistic, individual, and romantic concerns; his initial motivation was not the creation of a socialist society and he never mentions such an idea in the film. On the other hand, Delacourt exemplifies the dark character of the movie and her selfishness has caused the war between the classes. In fact, there are a couple of good people amongst the wealthy characters and they oppose her actions, which they do not regard as being humanitarian. Given this, the movie represents the confrontation between the two classes as the consequence of some

bad individual decisions and their evil nature. In the movie, nothing explains why this clash happened between the two classes and we never understand how the system of capitalist exploitation imposed itself on the world. Does this world really represent capitalism with its deficiencies? There is no way to make such a connection. Karl Marx (1992) does not believe that only human evilness created capitalism and he sees humans more as victims of a system that is shaped by the capitalist mentality. For him, even the rich class is the victim of the system since they need to define their lifestyle according to capitalist mentality. In fact, one of Marx's criticisms of capitalism is that the regime does not respect the individuality of human beings but rather reifies human relationships and reduces humans to mere things with purchasable value. It is actually Hobbes who sees humans as savage wolves that want to eat each other but for Marx humans are social beings and it is historical forces that influence the specific nature of human beings. Thus, for Marx there is positive hope about human nature; if the structure of society changes and a more egalitarian society develops then new types of humans can be created. *Elysium* offers a vision according to which humans kill each other like animals, which is far from Marx's thinking as a serious critic of capitalism. If we read the movie from this perspective then it is very difficult to argue that the film is socialist propaganda. Instead, the movie is an amalgam of extreme individualism, liberalism, and pluralism with some crude ideas about the socialism.

Such one-sided stereotypical reading of *Elysium* that sees it as socialist propaganda shows the weakness of the popular critics who use double standards to judge the movie. As Robin Wood argues (2003), the problem with popular journalists is that these critics

very rarely discuss the relationship between Hollywood and its system of production, reception, and capitalist ideology. They prefer to read movies as simple artistic methods developed to create moments of joy for people so they rarely elaborate upon, for example, the relationship between race and sexuality and Hollywood movies (Wood, 1998). Their descriptions and criticisms of movies mostly remain at a very crude level and they barely read the ideological assumptions behind most blockbusters. From the Hegelian perspective, we could argue that their analysis remains at the level of the particular, individual, and finite without having a connection with the universal and infinite. Their criticism has the quality that Hegel attributed to the dogmatic way of thinking in the sense that from the beginning the critic knows what he is looking for; he has some pre-understanding of the phenomena and attempts to attribute them to what he is studying. With this in mind, the question to ask is, why have such critics suddenly become interested in the issue of ideology and its representation in movies? My guess is that for them anything that could show the failure of the American political system is an ideology and everything else that justifies this system deserves praise or no mention of elaboration. In this way, popular critics unconsciously act as cultural agents for the creation of hegemony in the way that Gramsci understood the concept.

As Gramsci argues, culture plays a significant role in the creation of hegemony since in the most advanced stage of capitalism hegemony can no longer work only through coercion but instead needs to create popular consensus among the population that the existing system is the best possible regime; it needs to represent itself as the end of the world, the utopia realized, the dream achieved (Gramsci, 1988). It is through culture that

a hegemonic bloc could spread such a message to the population. In fact, with new instruments of power, including cultural products, the government aims to…

> …act on the social which respect the freedom and autonomy of individuals (or communities), seeking to govern them at a distance, and indirectly, by involving them as active agents in the processes of their own transformation and self-regulation. The construction of art as a means of self-reform has provided government with a means of intervening in the regulation of social life while also keeping its distance from it (Bennett, 2000: 1416).

From this understanding, when a critic closes his eyes to the ideological structure of culture in capitalism, and when he applies such labels to criticize only those political systems that do not conform with capitalism then he could be described as an agent in the creation of cultural hegemony. With this mindset, the critic loses the possibility of becoming a revolutionary or utopian force in society. According to Gramsci, culture not only has a significant value for the creation of hegemony but also helps subaltern forces to become intellectually autonomous. Gramsci often encourages members of the working class to educate themselves and raise their awareness of the problems around them; he argues that if this happens then these groups no longer need to let their decisions be influenced by "career intellectuals" and that "the children of proletarians too should have all possibilities open to them; they should be able to develop their own individuality in the optimal way, and hence in the most productive way for both themselves and society" (1988: 64). According to Gramsci, this will help the working class to become capable of behaving and thinking as a ruling class, saying that "every revolution has been preceded

by an intense labor of criticism, by the diffusion of culture and the spread of ideas amongst masses of men who are at first resistant, and think only of solving their own immediate economic and political problems for themselves, who have no ties of solidarity with others in the same condition" (1988: 58). Gramsci argues that such criticism will, with time, eventually lead to a new horizon of standards and a new form of psychology. These developments will, in turn, lead further to new possibilities of feeling, living, and thinking which will need to be shaped by and unique to the working class. As soon as the working class comes to occupy its new and dominant position in society (1988: 70) this new form of life will also become "dominant." The resulting proletarian civilization with class distinctions removed will be totally different from the bourgeois one that preceded it. Given this, and in order to raise the level of intellectualism among workers, Gramsci repeatedly argues in favor of promoting cultural tools to help subaltern groups solve their issues. For this purpose, he encourages intellectuals to spread the useful message among the population and increase their awareness. Popular critics have missed such an opportunity and instead in the case of *Elysium* they act as cultural agents in the service of hegemony. Now that I have debunked the argument that the movie is socialist propaganda, we can try to see in what senses the movie is a good utopian project and in what areas it is limited.

7.1.2. The Missed Opportunities in *Elysium*

(1) Elysium could not escape the ethos of individualism so dear for capitalism**:** After the movie's opening, which demonstrates various future issues for the Earth – overpopulation, destitution, disease, ecological contamination, and class isolation –

Elysium turns rapidly into an action film with its second part being defined mostly by battle scenes and the spectacular raids of advanced vehicles and droids. The narrative of the world is divided into the elitist rich, who appreciate living serenely in an untainted environment with access to the best medications, and the underprivileged who live in destitution and dirt and are treated like slaves. Here the subtle elements of neither *Elyisum* nor the lives of the poor are sufficiently explained to help us understand why the struggle happened in the first place. The social and ecological issues of the film are soon subordinated to the tale of a person who battles for equality and access to a superior life, here fighting only for himself. With this, the film somehow reflects the ethos of individualism in the American political system. Individuals see themselves capable of doing everything and they do not know any limit to their demands. However, as Mannheim (1979) argues:

> An effective utopia cannot in the long run be the work of an individual since the individual cannot by himself tear asunder from the historical-social situation. Only when the utopian conception of the individual seizes upon currents already present in society and gives expression to them, when in this form it flows back into the outlook of the whole group, and is translated into action by it, only then can the existing order be challenged by the striving for another order of existence (187).

This quote from Mannheim indicates that the dystopian prediction in *Elysium* only serves as a tool for creating the setting for an action movie. When looking at this from a

Hegelian perspective, there is clearly no deep understanding of existing society forming the basis of the descriptions of a concrete project. Similarly, many such proposals for future improvements fail to consider the realities of the currently existing world. Simply put, the potential for independent heroism is significantly limited by the structure of capitalist society, which emphasizes greed and fierce competition rather than selflessness and self-sacrifice for the benefit of broader society. This is the reason why individuals need to cooperate and establish solidarity. If they do not do this then they risk falling into competition instead of mutual support. *Elysium* fails to offer a comprehensive view on the relationship between the political structure and individual. The neglect of social and communal aspects and their reduction to an interesting setting for the movie reflects the deep ideological structure of the movie.

(2) The restoration of classical binary regarding manhood and femininity: The second shortcoming of the movies is in relation to the performances by the actors. The actors did not deliver the potentiality of their cinematic icons. As Hegel argued, actuality is shaped in relation with the "impulses of perfectibility" in each historical stage. What are the impulses of perfectibility? In the *Philosophy of History*, Hegel argued that:

> The mutations which history presents have been long characterized in the general, as an advance to something better, more perfect. The changes that take place in nature—how infinitely manifold so ever they may be—exhibit only a perpetually self-repeating cycle; in nature there happens "nothing new under the sun," and the multiform play of its phenomena so far induces a feeling of ennui; only in those changes which take place in the region of spirit does anything new arise. This

> peculiarity in the world of mind has indicated in the case of man an altogether different destiny from that of merely natural objects – in which we find always one and the same stable character, to which all change reverts—namely, a real capacity for change, and that for better—an impulse for perfectibility (2004*:* 54).

Hegel clearly argues here that the mutations in history—in other words, historical actuality—are driven by utopian impulses. That being said, once the actual is reified it immediately loses its utopian quality since, in Hegel's words, "indeed immediate actuality bears the seed of something totally different in itself. This difference is initially only something possible whose form is then changed and translated into actuality" (Hegel, quoted in Wenning, 2009). Given this as well as historical conditions and the motivations of historical actors, actuals have always been shaped imperfectly. As Bloch later argued, there are always utopian moments or revolutions that were not noticed in history and never received credit so we need to detect these historical moments and rediscover them (Geoghegan, 2008).

The possibility of radicalism according to Hegel lies in the tension between how reason is supposed to manifest and what it now is. Here the function of the philosopher is to detect the manifestation of reason in one's time, to clearly detect whether any moments for the realization of utopia have failed in the past, and to search for rational (actual) tendencies which point towards a "totally different" state of affairs. These rational tendencies are the mediating connection between the past and a sustainable future. This methodology does not mean that one needs to neglect what is but it provides the possibility of

comprehending the phenomenon as an appearance looking beyond itself. Eleni Varikas sees the same potentiality in the past when she (2002) argues the following:

> The meanings and the uniqueness of a historical moment cannot be reduced to its subsequent crystallization - to the meanings it acquired later - unless we consider what actually came later to be the only possible outcome. Indeed, if there is a sense in studying the past, other than to compile sequences of facts, it is in as much as we may consider it as a field of possibilities and try to understand why some of them were realized in the exclusion of all others (101).

Based on this understanding of Hegel's views of utopia and the past, it is safe to argue that the utopian impulses and opportunities for a different kind of acting are missing from *Elysium*. Because of the success of his previous work, the Blomkamp had the ability to work with two superstars of the American system - Matt Damon and Jodie Foster. They both showed utopian and aspirational qualities in their past performances that were not realized by the director.

In crime comedies like *Ocean's Eleven* (2001), *Ocean's Twelve* (2004), and *Ocean's Thirteen* (2007), and his personification of a tough, treacherous guy in crime thrillers like *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (1999) and *The Departed*, Damon's characters are frequently shown as weak young men who are socially or physically capable of overcoming their problems; in this movie he is shown as an emotionally precious guy who needs semi-

parental direction. For example, in relation to the Jason Bourne character that Damon has played in several movies, Dominic Lennard argues that "he is a creature of overt functionality: perpetually in flight (or fight), or getting ready for it. But that isn't all he does, nor all he is: the role is grounded, elusively humanized, by the implication that as inscrutable as Bourne is to us, he is (forlornly) to himself as well" (Loc 197). Given this, the character shows his vulnerability. In the words of Louis Keller (2002), Matt Damon's Bourne "is gruff and tough and yet vulnerably likeable." He is a killing machine and also paradoxically, tenderly childlike and in need of guidance. Bourne could be seen wanting to return back to a happy childhood paradise, wanting to escape from his adult identity. We can see the same type of character in Martin Scorsese's *The Departed*, where Damon plays against the aghast, immature atmosphere of his previous films and does so with terrible force. Here his personification of Sullivan is manifold and in constant change, the character unevenly appealing, intolerably two-faced, and once again dazzlingly vulnerable. This is a character that we can observe with little difference in his subsequent movies *The Informant!* (2009) and *Invictus* (2009).

With this argument in mind, one may effectively see Damon's characters as the one who wants to return to the archetypical images of an ideal man and manliness and the one who shows brilliantly how this unification with an ideal image is impossible in the current state of history and spiritual development. Utopia here is not shaped by future impulses but rather by an idealized image of the past. I would suggest that such aspects of Damon's performances should be taken seriously since they represent what Bloch described as utopian impulses shaped by non-contemporaneous contradiction of a way of

life (Geoghegan, 2008). Part of Bloch's understanding of utopia as an open-ended and fluid procedure is his conviction that people may be contemporaries in a physical sense without fundamentally being so regarding their types of lives and awareness. He notes that "Not all people exist in the same Now. They do so only externally, through the fact that they can be seen today. But they are thereby not yet living at the same time with the others" (Bloch, 1991*:* 97). This quote means that some people live in contradiction of the present, adhering to a lifestyle that might be seen as conflicting with the forces of history and its development. For Bloch, this group might express anger and rage against the present and its way of life. As he argued, it is essential to take the demands of these groups into consideration and not be blind to the subversive and utopian elements in their non-contemporary way of life since they could be easily coopted and distorted by those who adhere to a fascist ideology, taking into account the fact that the fascist mentality is very quick to absorb the regressive elements in the development of history and provide fertile ground for their developments.

I want to read Matt Damon's personification of characters through the same lens and not neglect its utopian and subversive dimensions. Relying on my previous comments about Damon characters, it is obvious to conclude that the same quality also worked in *Elysium*. Max is a tough guy who wants to become mature but unlike characters like Superman or Batman he is not always effective and in many cases is defeated and captured; it is very rare to see a hero as weak as him. He needs guidance and cannot make decisions for himself so it is others who shape his desires and dreams. Finally, he constantly refers

back to his childhood memories, which secure for him a heavenly place in the past. For example, the film begins and ends with him remembering a promise to his mother.

Damon plays a tough guy who obviously did not have a good family relationship in the past. His memories show him alone with his mother and there is no image of his father. He feels emasculated since despite the fact that he could be a fighter he has only become a worker in a system that does not let him express his manly anger and rage. He does not appear to be happy with society and looks for a way to change its structure. His natural instincts and sexual impulses were being manipulated and transformed into the telos of working, which leaves him feeling alienated (Marcuse, 1974). He needs a motivation to fight against this system, which is provided after his deadly injury in the workplace.

I am able to conclude my analysis of Damon's character in *Elysium* by suggesting that the movie provided for him the possibility of expressing his utopian manly urges, the qualities that are denied to him by the society in which he lives. However, the same is difficult to say about Jodie Foster's character, whose role is a refutation of the utopic quality that we witnessed in her previous works. Foster's essential and utopian quality is related by the fact that she is beyond any characterization in the Hollywood star system, which tends to objectify women's bodies and turn them into spectacles for the enjoyment of others. Foster has been able to resist this process. As Christina Lane (1995) demonstrated in her analysis:

> Foster has shied away from playing traditional female characters, instead projecting a very complicated image. Even as a child, she always played stoic,

> distanced characters on screen. Like the tomboy daughter in *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore* and the 13-year-old prostitute in *Taxi Driver*, her characters are tough and precocious, having lived in a rough world. While most female child actresses were playing up their girlish sweetness, Foster appeared to be nonfeminine (150). Even when Foster participated in a couple of romantic movies, most of her films conclude atypically for Hollywood. In *Little Man Tate*, the first script that Foster chose to direct herself, her character never finds herself confronted with a love interest, but instead concentrates on her relationship with her son (152).

To add more to this, in her performances Foster appears to have a very ambiguous character and she seems to be small and unhappy; you decide to defend her. Then suddenly you discover that she is an intelligent woman who knows very well how to defend herself. In this process, she calls into question the dualism of victim and heroine in her work. For example, as Lane argued:

> …in *Taxi Driver*, the young prostitute played by Foster is a victim of circumstances - a runaway who seems forced into prostitution for survival. Similarly, in *The Accused* (1988), Foster plays a working-class woman who is gang raped and then consequently blamed for her "loose" behavior. These characters look like typical victims on the surface, however, they usually preserve past the violence and trauma they experience, revealing a heroic quality (151).

It is because of this quality that Foster came to portray a utopian character striving in resistance to both the artifices of glamor as well as the siren song of artificial femininity. Against this, she tried to define feminine sexuality in a new way. As Foster herself argues, "Most movies use sexuality as a symbol. It's all about poses and postures, and that's not what my generation is about. I'm waiting to see a movie that explores the dynamics of why that other person completes you, why you're together. I'd like to explore female sexuality in a way that people don't get to see on screen" (Foster quoted in Lane, 153). Thus, as Lane argues, Foster hopes to propose a Hollywood cinema that is "women-centered, and even borders on the latest developments in feminist film theory." For Lane, Foster was set to "radicalize the current masculinist and heterosexist symbolism of women's sexuality in mainstream texts" and to "define sexuality as a fluid category - not merely a rigid and confining projection of what men want, but instead as an orchestration of female fantasy and desire" (153). I would call these qualities the utopian impulses in Foster's cinematic persona.

Foster's performance as Delacourt in *Elysium* contains far fewer radical and utopian qualities than her past works. The major problem with her character in this movie is that she is presented as a very stereotypical villain without showing any complexity in the character. She is certainly a strong female character in the film but she does not represent any of the sensitivity that we have seen in Foster's previous works, such as *The Silence of Lambs*. Because of our familiarity with previous characters that Foster has played, the viewer hopes that eventually she will realize her mistake but that does not happen in *Elysium*. The best that one can do is to regard her as a female monster of the type seen in

horror films which exist only to kill. This is certainly not a very useful depiction of femininity, especially in a film in which the restoration of manhood is an implied theme.

Because of such characterizations of the main male and female roles, *Elysium* offers a very biased argument on the question of gender. The movie centers primarily on a male character who is involved in a quest for personal survival and rescuing loved ones in the form of a female character and her daughter. Jodie Foster who played the role of the villain, here showed a very stereotypical image. Given the centrality of these two characters in the development of the story as well as the fact that the father was missing and the male hero attempts to regain his manhood, one could argue that the real culprit behind the problems presented in the story is not the capitalism but rather women's liberation that had "feminized" Elysium's men. As argued above, the issue of regaining manhood is very essential for Damon's character. In the face of such deprivation what matters to him is restoring the illusion of a mythic manhood in which women need men's protection and men succeed in providing it. In this way, the movie becomes part of the category of generic Hollywood films that victimize women because of their struggle for emancipation (Wood, 1998). The movie values a woman who is dependent and undemanding, a victim who must be saved by strong, powerful men. Hence, the film ends with an image of a happy mother, the traditional nuclear family reinstated as the pillar of the post-Elysium society in which love, friendship, and family are all that counts. The movie apparently supports the patriarchal notion that during moments of crisis what means the most is a retreat into "safer times" represented by traditional patriarchal values.

7.1.3. When *Elysium* Achieves the Possibility of Being Radical

Elysium is significant for presenting a more nuanced representation of technology than is often seen in Hollywood films. Hollywood has made a significant numbers of dystopian movies which discuss the nature of technology and its role in human life. Examples include *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), *Blade Runner* (1982) and *Wall-E* (2008). Technology is also a significant motif in contemporary dystopian films. According to Francisco Martínez Mesa:

> Usually dystopian movies are calling our attention to the disastrous consequences stemming from the profound gap between the dramatic development of scientific and technological advances on the one hand, and the lack thereof in the field of social sciences, especially in areas of equality and emancipation, and which has had the effect of inducing a growing lack of confidence in the ideology of progress (forthcoming: 10).

As he continues:

> Films such as *The Hunger Games* present settings that are highly technical, and in which the system's stability rests upon criteria of uniformity and functionality, at the expense of such legitimate human aspirations as individual initiative, creativity and self-determination, sacrificed on the altar of a utopian project that never presents itself as a space for liberty, but rather as an area in which chaos and the incongruencies of the modern world are minimised, and in which imperfection is rendered invisible (10).

In these films, technology is usually portrayed as the cause of evil in the world and it imposes its devil structure upon human lives without human approval. For example, in *Wall-E* computers control human life inside a spaceship and human dependence upon them causes a high degree of obesity. In order to preserve their power the machines even interfere with human plans to return to Earth. In *2001: A Space Odyssey*, HAL, the central computer on a spaceship, rebels against the human crew. Thus, these movies argue that technology has its own logic and is not shaped by human decisions. This view is not very different from those of a technological determinist, which is someone who believes that technology operates according to an inexorable logic inherent in the technology itself. Technology here is seen as a part of the natural evolution towards a better world and the view that the effects of technology are imposed by the technology itself rather than through human decisions about how it is employed. From this perspective, human control over the exact direction of technological development is minimal; the technology, in a sense, has a life of its own. This is why after watching such movies we feel disappointed that technology has not delivered its promise in the real world. However, this view is not true and the idea that technology in itself could change people's perception of time is naïve. Technology is a human product and without humans there would be no technology.

The conditions of the era during which Hegel lived did not provide him the ability to reflect in detail upon technology and its significance. Instead, Hegel used the concept of work to introduce his discussion of lordship and bondage through which one can come to understand his view of technology. A well-known passage from his work *The*

Phenomenology of Spirit teaches us about both the importance of recognition in the creation of identity and how Hegel employs the logic of means in order to explain the work of the bondsman. One can see how this paradigm is potentially useful for understanding Hegel's position on technology. The bondsman represents a self-consciousness which has chosen life over the risk of death and who is obliged to work for the lord, producing things for the latter's consumption while the bondsman himself takes the attitude of keeping in check his desires towards the products of his own efforts. As Hegel argued,

"The lord relates himself mediately to the thing through he bondsman; the bondsman, qua self-consciousness in general, also relates himself negatively to the thing, and takes away its independence; but at the same time the thing is independent vis-á-vis the bondsman, whose negating of it, therefore, cannot go the length of being altogether done with it to the point of annihilation; in other words, he only works on it. For the lord, on the other hand, the immediate relation becomes through this mediation the sheer negation of the thing, or the enjoyment of it" (Hegel 1977:116).

Clearly, the bondsman's work is that of a means because he himself is just a tool being used in the fulfillment of needs. Man together with his own skills or physical abilities is actually the first product of technological thinking. It is only after the bondsman discovers freedom within the activity of work itself that he changes the status of human creation and starts to act as an artisan of reality.

Hegel saw work as an individual activity which nevertheless has a social aspect to it, particularly when others take on the role of mediating it. The work does not exist only by itself but rather it exists as part of the participatory world. As Hegel argued,

"The ways and means by which the animal can satisfy its needs are limited in scope, and its needs are likewise limited. Though sharing this dependence, the human being is at the same time able to transcend it and to show his universality, first by multiplying his needs and the means [of satisfying them], and secondly by dividing and differentiating the concrete need into individual parts and aspects which then become different needs, particularized and hence more abstract (1991a: 228)."

Technology is also shaped by human political decisions and any concrete reflection upon technology must begin with the prevailing structure of the capitalist enterprise and demonstrate in practical terms how this system shapes the use of technology though class conflict, prevailing legal structures that support current human relationships, transnational corporate power, neoliberal ideology, and existing political systems of national, state, and local government.

As Susan Sontag describes, "Science Fiction films invite a dispassionate, aesthetic view of destruction and violence—a technological view" in which "things, objects, machinery play a major role." Whereas in horror texts humans are inevitably threatened by the dark animalistic side of their nature, the "danger" in a science fiction film is instead "understood as residing in man's ability to be turned into a machine" (Sontag, 1965: 47).

Given this, what is very new in the treatment of technology in *Elysium* is that here the technology in itself is not good or bad. Instead, it is the economic structure of the society that caused the evil related to technology. Technology in another sense is meaningless without humans. In this sense *Elysium* defines technology as a social product, which means that the rich people who live on another planet manipulate technology for their own happiness and domination of others. They live in luxury and abundance by using technology abusively while destroying everybody who wants to question their egoistic happiness. However, the same technology becomes a tool to help poor citizens after the transfer of its control from the rich to the poor. The robots at the beginning of the film killed anyone who came close to the rich planet or got them exiled to the earth but at the end of the film the same robots are taking care of the Earth after Max reboots their control system. Thus, the movie's position on technology and its nature is different and more humanistic and arguably utopian compared to common dystopian movies.

Chapter 8: Research Conclusion

My argument throughout this work has been that cinema has been associated with entertainment, escapism, and "wish fulfillment" (Dyer, 1981) ever since its very earliest origins. For audiences, engagement with cinema provides an opportunity to experience a different world which shows them the possibility of something better than the world in which they live, a reality which might otherwise seem to be unassailable. Thus, cinema creates a space for envisioning alternatives and harboring hopes and desires. At the fundamental level, this happens because the audience partakes in the experiences and struggles of the characters and so is stirred by a series of feelings and emotions which are both intense and uncommon in real life; thus, the viewer is transported to a fictional yet gratifying realm of distraction.

Cinematic settings also have spatial dimensions. In the case of utopia this relates to the transition from being a critique into a project which is materialized via a spatial model, the values of which perform a transformative function. Thus, the spatial model played a significant role in the transmission of utopian demands and it generally encourages dreams about improved social structures and hope for a better world. In contrast to the time dimension of utopia, space does not allow for probabilities or conjectures and instead confronts us with our current reality, which is the territory of uncertainty and contingency in which recurrent problems and challenges necessitate decisions (Tietgen, 2006: 128).

As I argued here, utopia and dystopia are not contrasting and mutually dependent concepts but instead are related and intertwined. Dystopia has definitely become a dominant concept in recent decades, where dystopian visions clearly dominate the scene with utopian themes neglected.

There are several reasons for the decline of utopia in culture generally and cinema specifically. Utopia is a form of social dreaming which people can use as a method to not only imagine a better future but also to work towards a better life, certainly at the individual level but primarily at the communal level. However, as my work demonstrated, this use of imaginative thinking seems to be too elusive and difficult for artists and filmmakers so it does not inspire them to propose utopia (only in the case of Tomorowland), a situation exacerbated by the political, economic, and ecological conditions currently shaping the world. Utopias have vanished from both literature and cinema in a spectacular way that may be explained in various ways but is usually connected with the considerable prevailing skepticism which contemporary culture has towards utopian possibilities combined with diminishing hope for a better future. Numerous political and social programs have failed and many of these seemingly utopian efforts have in the end actually proved lethal rather than perfect, thus further fueling the negative contemporary reputation of utopia.

Stankomir Nicieja (2008) has analyzed spectacular developments in recent dystopias and

observes that:

> After the humanitarian catastrophes of the 20th century, including two global military conflicts, the Holocaust, ethnic cleansing and terrorism, the creation of positive utopias became deeply problematic. [...] Not only did the business of creating utopian fantasies look excessively naïve but also dubious. Almost every atrocity and murderous ideology in the 20th century had some utopian fantasy at its root. Numerous grand narratives promising social harmony, stability and security for all citizens were in reality only smokescreens for authoritarian ambition (111).

Within the cinematic context one may also add artistic factors onto the historical reasons for the disappearance of utopian narratives in film. In particular, traditional utopian narratives have tended to have a relatively static character since they generally concentrate upon exposition of the setting rather than telling stories with plot-driven action. Similarly, these films tend to focus on communities and communal heroes instead of individual heroes and their fates. This relative lack of interest in the individual combined with a slow pace of events in the story may seem to be anachronistic, thus providing another reason for the diminished appeal of traditional utopias in films. Simply put, in comparison to the majority of contemporary mainstream movies, which focus on character and plot, utopias may seem slow and static, therefore holding less interest for the contemporary public which comprises movie audiences.

This evolution in the cinema can be seen in two shifts; first, the hard-boiled political movies of the 1960s and 1970s have given way to entertainment for young adults; second, there is an increasing cultural emphasis upon individualism rather than collective values.

8.1.The Prevalence of Utopia in the Young Adult Genre

Successful books in the young adult genre have inspired many contemporary dystopian screen productions. Such literature is written in order to attract readers from several generations and the interest given to recent big-screen adaptations is also linked to changes in children's literature over recent decades. These changes seem to be the results of disruptions experienced during the time period starting in the late 1980s and continuing to the end of the twentieth century, such as the end of the Cold War, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the conflict attending the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the Gulf War, and the end of Apartheid in South Africa as well as the simultaneous development of vast and advanced state surveillance systems. Together, all of these changes in the dynamics of power and control relate to the rhetoric of the *New World Order* and the *War on Terror*, and the appearance of new and transformative social, political, and environmental agents (Bradford 2008).

It is worth mentioning that the generally high quality of contemporary young adult literature has influenced the cinematic adaptation of these books. Several authors have

shown how the vast majority of children's literature during recent decades has focused on the formation of teenage subjectivity through the development of individualized identities. The concern that authors and their characters show for questions linked to personal growth and the process of maturing into adults, particularly issues relating to family and interpersonal relationships, has inspired the development of stories set in conditions demanding that the young protagonist reassert his or her identity and develop some degree of rebellious attitudes and activities (Bradford 2008).

Given this, political and social issues are quite often joined with a depiction of individual issues experienced for a young adult during puberty. Sometimes an adolescent who feels alienated must endeavor for social integration inside of an ideal world. It is usually during crucial moments that the decision needs to be taken. As Artur Claeys and Ludmiła Gruszewska-Blaim note about this narrative process (2015), "the awakening of the protagonist and his/her recognition of the dystopian lie, typically ignited by some blatantly counterfactual or emotionally cataclysmic event, come as an epiphany rather than a methodical accumulation of information [and] the awakening sets in motion the counter-narrative" (11). Here the heroic figure finds his true essence and role in the world in the course of the action and this moves him from being an observer to a participant, a rebel. For example, in *The Hunger Games* the plot's trigger element is the moment when Katniss finds it difficult to adapt her personality to the rigid state machinery after the selection of her sister as a tribute. Or in in both *The Giver* and *Divergent* this happens when the society organizes a ceremony in which every young person is assigned his or her occupation, a custom that happens in an open gathering and which creates a lot of

tension. In this way the plot signals a critical moment in which the main character decides not to accept the norm of her society. The collision between individual aspirations and the larger societal system within which people live has had a twofold result. On one hand, the protagonist's identity is reasserted over the course of the plot and ultimately results in a sense of his or her destiny being revealed. However, on the other hand, the individual's rebellious actions cause apparently solid social systems to fray, thus exposing serious contradictions that only worsen as the plot unfolds, eventually reaching the point of no return.

Through what happens, youngsters examine their activities and the physical agony or sexual turmoil that is aroused within them by this specific social order. The components of theoretical science fiction take into consideration how the adolescent fits into an imperfect society; the idealistic setting turns out to be right route for the youthful grown-up to discover his or her voice, which is seen having a profound impact on the development of the child. Here, the adolescents have a clearer point of view than their adult partners and this helps the hero in his eventual decisions. In order to achieve his goal, the hero must forget his personal ties with his family and friends and accept personal risks. However, the older generation resists any demands for change. Usually these movies end with the heroism of the adolescent.

In the movies that I analysed, it is through love that the protagonist challenges the structure of inequality. The fact that the protagonist is a young adult plays a decisive role

here. She(he) needs to decide whether she wants to accept the outside reality to which she is subjugated or to challenge a society in which she has not yet fully participated and so is not its true subject. Love appears to be the most important motivation for a rebellion against dystopian worlds and leads the rebel to overthrow the tyrant. This fits with Klonowska's argument:

> The utopian ideals, then, of many dystopian films are in essence very romantic: they seem to profess the values of individuality, freedom and equality on the communal level, and those of love and friendship on the personal one. No wonder, then, that formally many dystopias are romances, i.e. adventure stories with love plot, with the "adventure" redefined as a rebellion against an unjust and oppressive social organisation, and love as a last post of humanity. (Klonowska, p10, forthcoming).

The tendency for dystopian stories to include romantic subplots results either from demands to extend generic possibilities or as a consideration of commercial factors since audiences often enjoy seeing romantic elements.

On the other hand, one should not neglect the political value of love and romance and Alain Badiou's perspective on love is quite instructive (2012) in this regard. As Badiou argues, love has emancipatory political dimensions since when people are in love they are

trying to discover the universe through the magic of two; love creates a new perspective from which they can look at the world. Love is an event which helps us to experience things and to see them through the lens of this created world, through the lens of the other. Love in this sense means the moment when one is watching the world with a lover, such as during a sunset, and its meaning is modified by the experience being shared; the ordinary loses its meaning and becomes utopian. These experiences, which Badiou calls moments of love, help the individual to develop tactics for freeing himself from the restraints of oppressive powers. This was clearly the case, for example, with the romantic relationship that Katniss had in *The Hunger Games*.

This combination enables the dystopian genre to appeal to a larger and more diverse audience while also providing flexibility in marketing the genre and preserving the political message. Thus, while some of these films certainly do foster a degree of relative uncertainty for their endings, in most cases they are designed to leave open the possibility prequels or sequels by maintaining spectator interest in both preceding and future events. While dystopian literature has generally used open endings in order to generate uncertainty and ambiguity as well as hope, these devices have now become devices which are used more for eliciting audience loyalty in many recent cinematic dystopias.

One of the goals of this research was to examine the setting and mise-en-scene in these movies so it is necessary to ask "What types of settings are prevalent in the utopias presented to young adults?"

8.2. Setting of Utopias in Young Adult Movies

Utopian movies emphasize plot and action, factors which are so decisive that they frequently overshadow the role of the setting which is normally essential to any narrative in literature. Nonetheless, the impact of scene setting cannot be underestimated in utopian movies. As Blaim et al. (2015) point out, "the worlds of both artistic and non-fictional utopias 'reveal a high degree of semioticity' and their well-designed order implicitly opposes the reality, which is usually quite disordered" (8). Scene setting has always been the author's most effective tool for taking the reader or audience member out of the context of their ordinary lives and taking them to a radically different place. The general stylistic approach used in the movies that I analyzed was to present utopian movies as a sophisticated planned community, a charismatic leader, a system which controls human life, and prioritizes collectivism over individual rights. The story then tells of a confrontation between the hero and this society.

Most utopian movies open in the setting of post-apocalyptic world that already exists, built upon the ruins of a civilization which must be rebuilt through the efforts of the protagonist and their allies. These new societies which result from the reform of the dystopian society reflect survivor responses to the past events which caused the original pre-apocalyptic world to collapse in the first place. Most dystopian productions in recent years have told stories about societies which seek to stifle inherent human impulses and inclinations, such as passion, violence, desire, and pain, through institutionalized sanctioned vehicles. In some of the new films, the aftermath of tragic past experiences such as an apocalyptic war or an environmental catastrophe, brings societies that rest on

monotony and the lack of pain and emotional drive through the elimination of all memories (*The Giver*, 2014*)*. Others *(Divergent,* 2014*)* sort Earth's population into five big factions so as to eradicate the big evils: aggressiveness, ignorance, deceit, selfishness and cowardice, which caused its previous demise. This imposition of order creates a new beginning intended to eradicate the types of human behavior that caused the disaster.

Such films acquaint us with a perfectly balanced unified social fabric right from the outset, depicting a world seemingly free of conflict and dissent. Such a world is presented as one in which people conform to societal restrictions but this conformity is the result of reason and agreement rather than coercion. Nonetheless, these films slowly but imperceptibly use the *mise-en-scène* as a counterpoint to the apparent placidity of their utopian societies in order to plant hints of dissonance which is apparently harmless and meaningless but which is strongly anchored to the spectator's cultural and historical context. The goal of the subtle and gradual suggestion seems to be for the filmmakers to awaken in the audience a growing sense of unease and dissatisfaction with the setting (Dyer 1992:27). Therefore, another world emerges in parallel with the on-screen utopia; this parallel world is unseen and implicit, resulting from audience desires which are induced by the film and denouncing the inadequacies of the utopian deception. Such dissatisfaction enables positioning, which is the encouragement for spectators to participate in the utopia which they are watching and to face the decisions made within it, thus contributing to the restoration of hope in the possibility of recovering that agency and prominence in the real-world present (Fitting, 1987: 26-29). Thus, as Burcu Kayisci argues, many dystopias "carry a strong utopian vein and even the grimmest visions

depicted in them might be considered to serve a utopian purpose in essence" (Kayisci, 2012: 177). Such enclaves of hope break through the closure of oppressive dystopian worlds and enable the protagonists to oppose the system within which they live and to destroy or at least temporarily suspend it through their resistance.

Having said this, these gradually realized inadequacies relate to ideals or principles such as liberty, creativity, and personal fulfillment that are accepted in modern Western social ideology inscribed in the consciousness of individual audience members as the norm in our current world. Thus, as Dyer argues, these categories of sensibility have a scope which is bounded by the range of insufficiencies that the capitalist system can redress, and which are generally derived from the capitalist culture which emphasizes personal effort, individualism, transparency, freedom of expression and consumerism (Dyer, 1981).

In almost all of these more or less homogenous settings, we witness an exaltation of communitarian values at the expense of the individual as well as the traits that create distinct individualities, including blood ties. From their births, members of these societies are educated and trained to submit to the community and its decisions. They are not individuals that freely choose their occupations and statuses, but rather perpetuators of a system who comply with criteria that reflect its principles of rationality and functionality (*Divergent, The Giver*). The visually black-and-white recreation of a world such as that depicted in *The Giver* is an extremely effective resource for evoking the qualities of

repression and control which lurk beneath utopian rhetoric (Fitting 1993). Monochromatic images become essential elements in telling the story and serve as a non-representative symbol with a considerable ability to arouse a distressing sense of monotony and uniformity in the audience, a situation which is initially disconcerting and then actively opposes that model of society.

Thus, despite the idyllic surface appearance of the societies portrayed by utopian films, their *raison d'être* eventually becomes their source of weakness and gives the audience an opening to question them. Thus, what has been presented as a utopia up until that point ends up losing its initially attractive characteristics and becomes unpalatable. This is the context in which utopia becomes dystopia, a model of society considerably worse than the present real-world society in which the audience lives (Sargent 1994:27). However, it goes even further to the point where it becomes an anti-utopia since the aim is to persuade spectators of films like *The Giver* or *Divergent* that any experiment or project intent on creating a perfect society which is organized around centralized planning or controlling people and their interests inevitably leads to the loss of individual rights liberties, ultimately replacing the intended utopia with total and universal unhappiness. These films enable us to bear witness to a celebration of the present while being given the message that our actual lives in the real-world present are already unfolding in the best of all possible worlds. Thus, the films imply that any attempt to alter reality is likely to render our imperfect world even more imperfect. This anti-utopian discourse is governed by a series of longstanding, non-original arguments and was first proposed at the end of the Second World War by intellectuals such as K. Popper, F. Hayek, and J. Talmon. The

main shortcoming of this school of thought is, according to specialists on the subject, the way in which they identify utopianism as equating with perfection (Sargent, 1994). Nevertheless, not all of these films follow the same blueprint. *Snowpiercer*, which I analyzed, is an example of an exception to this established pattern and such films are perfectly suitable for inclusion in the category of what Moylan (2000) and others call "critical dystopias" since they seek other spaces of contestation and reject the present's faux utopianism. Instead, they present to the audience recognizable settings that address the dominant conformism of contemporary societies and the blatant lack of alternatives. As Levitas argued,

> The utopian experiment disrupts the taken-for-granted nature of the present. It creates a space in which the reader may, temporarily, experience an alternative configuration of needs, wants and satisfactions. [...] Utopia works towards an understanding of what is necessary for human fulfilment and towards a broadening, deepening and raising of aspirations in terms different from those dominating the mundane present. (Levitas 2013: 4).

Pursuant to the utopian genre's traditions, technology figures prominently in the latest generation of dystopian films, particularly turning our attention to the disastrous consequences of the wide gap between rapid and dramatic scientific and technological breakthroughs and the slower-moving social sciences which are more concerned with matters relating to equality and emancipation. This gap results in declining confidence in the ideology of progress, which is why films such as *The Hunger Games* have highly

technical settings emphasizing the gap between technological advancement and social regression.

Since the conditions presented in dystopian films are very different from those in real life they force spectators to take on another perspective while contemplating reality. These cinematic experiences are subjected to virtual limitations when it comes to providing exhaustive information about every detail of the universes in which they exist. These limitations are resolved by encouraging audience members to use their imaginations in order to fill in such gaps, thereby both adding further detail to the setting as well as infusing it with a real and particular logic that was previously absent (Moylan, 2000).

The limitations upon what is possible for providing context for the story means that attention is focused on the actions of the characters with whom the audience increasingly identifies. Paradoxically, rather than actively engaging the audience in the story, this process actually places spectators in a subsidiary, passive position which hinders their evolution and real participation in the story. The transition from dystopia to utopia very clearly demonstrates the impact of this limitation.

8.3. Transition from Dystopia to Utopia: Emphasis of Heroic Struggles over Collectivism

The movies I analyzed usually depict a transition from dystopia to utopia and at the end of the movie, we see the creation of a more egalitarian society which provides equal opportunities for the citizens (e.g. *Elysium*, *The Giver*). This transformation happens mostly because of the heroic struggle of an individual who manages to change the world (See for example *The Hunger Games*). There is no mass uprising in the achievement of the goal and, as we can see in *The Hunger Games*, the plot provides minimum information regarding the political structure of the society.

Serious political discussions may be removed from this type of films for various reasons, such as determining that they may be tedious for the audience, or because contemporary audiences are already knowledgeable about them thanks to their familiarity with dystopian conventions and therefore do not require elaborate explanations; this means that it may suffice for filmmakers to simply signal the existence of a dystopia within a given film. Essentially, the audience has been trained to interpret these signals accurately since they belong to a well-known convention. This means that the reduction of the political and social layers of contemporary dystopias could be interpreted as a positive sign that this type of movies has been successfully absorbed into cinema culture, thus being incorporated into the repertoire of familiar cinematographic conventions. On the other hand, the move towards dystopian adventure at the expense of 'heavy' political content may be seen as yet another manifestation of 'aesthetic mainstreaming', which

Robert Stam describes as a combination of a drive for making the movie simplified and economically viable and which tends to eliminate 'moral ambiguity, narrative interruption, and reflexive meditation' from films (2005: 43). The reduction of political discussions and lengthy expositions of political and social intricacies in dystopias may be thus interpreted as a reduction of unnecessary complication, plot interruption and potential controversy (Klonowska, forthcoming). Finally, the evolution of dystopian movies into adventure stories that take place within dystopian settings could be interpreted as the result of a broader and more general cultural phenomenon which increasingly emphasizes individual and private themes rather than social and political issues (Klonowska , forthcoming).

Hudson (1982) defines four ways through which the good now might happen: present (something better exists here and now), developmental (something better will come out of what exists here and now), recusive (something better has come to be elsewhere or elsewhen), and eschatological (a radically new order, which Benjamin called messianic). As we can see in *Snowpiercer* and *Elysium*, the process of arriving at utopia, a better world set against a dystopic environment, is more eschathological, à la Benjamin, who argued that there is a possibility of revolution through the intervention of a messianic figure at every moment in history. In "Theses on the Philosophy of History," Benjamin (1968) contrasts two perspectives on history: historicism, which combines such obviously contrasting groups as fascism, social democracy, and vulgar Marxism; and historical materialism. Historicism, for which history equals advancement and progress, assumes control and domination and leads to the ascent of Fascism. Historical materialism is an

attempt to arrive at a "conception of history that avoids any complicity with the thinking to which these politicians [who betrayed the cause against Fascism] continue to adhere" (258). The function of historical materialism is "to brush history against the grain" (257) and to define the correct conception of history with the goal of changing the world.

According to Benjamin (1968), the historicist idea of progress relies on conceptualizing time as homogeneous and empty: "The concept of the historical progress of mankind cannot be sundered from the concept of its progression through a homogeneous, empty time. A critique of the concept of such a progression must be the basis of any criticism of progress itself" (261). Historical materialism rejects the historicist perspective on history as "a chain of events" associated with connected moments. According to historicist, advancement as "progression through homogeneous, empty time" is defined as a necessity; which cannot be deducted from a foreordained course. Faith in progress, Benjamin cautions, hinders the acknowledgment of the existence of different temporality while also putting a stop to chance and action: "Nothing has corrupted the German working class so much as the notion that it was moving with the current" (258). The historical materialist defines time as "time filled with the presence of the now" (261). Messianic time is an end or termination of progressive history. Its model is the present, which "comprises the entire history of mankind in an enormous abridgement" (263).[2]

[2] The reader might question the usefulness of bringing theology into this conversation considering Marx's hostility towards religion. I think that nobody explains this better than Benzaquen (1998) when he writes that "In Benjamin's understanding, theology and materialism fundamentally juxtapose - which is not to state that this makes the overlap less demanding to appreciate or acknowledge by everyone else. Benjamin argued that the Jewish restriction from exploring the future does not infer that for the Jews the future transformed into homogeneous, empty time, the time of advancement as the reiteration of the same; despite what might be

Based on my analysis of these movies, the process of arriving at utopia, a better world set against a dystopic environment, is more eschathological. The problem with this messianic utopian impulse to change the world is that it remains at the abstract level and is not sufficiently concrete. Hegel raises this issue in relation to the utopian aspirations of the French revolutionaries who wanted to change their society. According to Hegel, a revolution could only be actualized through the political will and action of the people. With this in mind, the French Revolution was unsuccessful since the participants were not sufficiently committed to realizing their dreams. This happened because they did not link their ideas to a critical universal comprehension of the past and present so the revolutionary spirits were based on the idea that mere individual wants are enough to change the world; given this, the French lost their chance to make their ideals historically effective.

The issue with the revolutionary/messianic forces that these movies depict is that they lack anything substantial to contribute to the comprehension of the past and present except for the fact that the current state is miserable compared to the post-apocalyptic society that they propose. A more developed and complex normative theory with a

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expected, each moment of time was the strait entryway through which the Messiah may enter. Expectation here implies opening up a space for the unforeseen. A thought that looks to the future, put into question the acting of history in the present. Thoughts of progress, improvement, progressive change, evolution, reproduced things as they are; for thinking about future, we need to think about breaks, burst, revolution. Considering the future, better society sways between two poles: a discerning, describable ideal world (the evolutionary pole), and a mystical, fundamentally 'other' ideal world (the revolutionary pole). The oddity in utopian speculation is that the more the idealistic future gets to be distinctly describable, the more it (inevitably) looks like the present. The only way for a thought to define the radicality is to think its probability; to define it would be an act of defeat. Ideal world is at that point considered as a blank space, a moment of redemption without a God. Utopian thinking verges on supernatural quality, a common enchantment, a mysticism without a God" (157).

utopian impulse needs to be worked out or else we only flirt with an impotent "ought." As Manheim (1979) puts it, "Not all things in general and each thing in particular are possible at every moment and in every historical community. The inner form of historical individuality which exists at any given time - be it that of an individual personality or of a folk spirit - and the external conditions together with the past that lies behind it, determine the shape of things that are to be. It is for this reason that the historical configuration existing at any given time cannot be artificially constructed but rather grows like a plant from its seed (210). This means that these types of films seriously need to take into account the reality of capitalism and the way that this system works in order to present a valuable alternative.

Because of the emphasis on individuality for changing the world, the utopian impulses in these movies fall into a trap according to which everything is possible. This means that there will no longer be concrete measurements for evaluating one's aspirations, which is a false and shallow approach to utopianism since it provides an excuse for not engaging in practical inquiries with the present. This abstract and romantic form of utopia "regards the present as vain and looks beyond it in a spirit of superior knowledge, it finds itself in a vain position; and since it has actuality only in the present, it is itself mere vanity" (Hegel, 1991b). From this perspective, to be a utopian is to believe that one can achieve his dreams regardless of historical forces and actual tendencies; it functions as an escape from socio-political engagement with the world and history, a form of thought which is pointless and even dangerous. These attempts represent hypocritical endeavours to deny the present, its reality, and its history by engaging in a questionable imagination of the

past or a transition towards a paradise wholly different and detached from the here and now. As the French Revolution example demonstrated, in the case that such a utopian spirit unleashes itself in the form of political action, the consequences would be the blind fury of terror, annihilation, and destruction. In this sense, escapism and political radicalism are not mutually exclusive; they evaluate a society by tools that are foreign and incompatible with its normative framework.

There is a world of fantasy with its own inner logic which is good if people want to think about imaginary republics but, as Hegel argues, this world does not have any use in philosophy since philosophy is about reality. Not only is real philosophy about reality, it is also about how philosophical concepts are actualized in the world. Thus, a utopian project is very limited to the world of is and it aims to answer the questions of how in reality, where history and the spirit are actualized; it is not about who *should* shape history. It is meaningless in the struggle towards utopia to praise a hero for his heroic forces to shape the history.

As can be seen in *The Giver*, dystopian films usually make the story into a subtle evasive instrument by privileging the role played by the protagonists and emphasizing the heroic ways in which they challenge the system. The films take the initial signs of unease and transform them into a feeling of relief so that their endings, which are closed and without alternatives, portray a happy resolution through the demise of the system and the restoration of lost liberty and individuality. The resulting message to the spectator

encourages demobilization and complacency since there are apparently no reasons for anxiety about potential threats to people's lives and fortunes. The conclusion appears to be that everything is still following its natural course and that here too the invisible hand renders human actions and societal interventions redundant.

8.4. What Could be the Usefulness of Utopian Impulses?

If it is true that the films examined above present utopias which are more abstract than concrete then the question must be asked - what are their contributions to real politics? As argued above, on the one hand concrete utopias may be the most useful form of utopias for people engaged in utopian thinking. However, abstract utopias are actually superior to pessimism and bourgeois nihilism, which is the core belief that sets apart Dyer and Bloch from the majority of cultural critics. In fact, anyone who intends to seriously discuss Dyer and Bloch's ideas needs to take this into account. This way of thinking demonstrates the power of imagination, human desire, and everyday actions, which is where its importance undoubtedly lies.

First of all, these utopian projects portray the future world extrapolated to its logical extreme; they let us reflect upon issues such as whether technology is tearing us further apart, if global warming will put an end to the planet, or if income inequality is leading to a world of those who have and those who have not. Secondly, these utopian projects play with our desires and impulses. They bring to the fore some of the human drives which are incompatible with current society, such as the sadistic tendencies to dominate others (e.g.

The Hunger Games), or anti-feminist movements in society (e.g. *Elysium*). With this in mind, they play with our emotions.

There is a negative reaction to the use of emotion in political discourse but, as Bloch argues, people cannot be convinced to take to the streets and demonstrate using only logic; they must also be emotionally incited to act. For Bloch, Marxists can only achieve their goals if they combine both reason and passion, which he calls the "cold current" and "warm current" respectively. As Douglas Kellner and Harry O'Harra (1976) put it, the cold current of Marxism involves "the detective glance at history." This means rigorous scientific analysis of the present situation, hard-headed evaluation of the possibilities and openings for radical change, and a ruthless critique of everything in existence. The warm current - the heating up of which Bloch dedicated his life - contains the liberating intention as well as the materialist-human and humane-materialist tendencies. These are the living, pulsating passion to change the world, burning desire for socialism, and active participation in the struggle (30). Therefore, for Bloch, political activism should take into account both rational and non-rational elements. In this view, practicing real politics is not like teaching a course in philosophy or writing an academic paper in which we judge the strength or weakness of the arguments (Kohn, 2004). In fact, political activism is not just the art of creating a sound case but is also about the art of creating passion in the listener's mind. For example, how did Martin Luther King Jr manage to persuade black people in the United States to demand their rights? It was not just because of his arguments; it was also because of his ability to play upon people's emotions. "King recognizes that audiences judge claims to justice not only by their rationality, but also because of their ability to touch the listener's soul" (Triadafilopoulos, 1999: 753).

Granted, passion can be used by a demagogue like Benito Mussolini to gather support with dramatic and negative consequences but at a time when the forces of capitalism are working hard to stifle human subjectivity, a good political activist should be able to effectively combine passion with reason. He should not always produce, but sometimes must also disrupt production, leading listeners astray. Utopia in both Bloch's and Dyer's terms is one of the major tools which political activists can use when appealing to the emotions of their listeners. Utopia here provides opportunities to fantasize about what an individual is missing in the real world; utopia helps him to think about his needs, desires, and wants. Following Peter Benson and Edward Fischer (2007), the emphasis here will be more on the side of popular desires than simply a commodity circuit. This could lead to an experience similar to that of the Adivais (indigenous people) of Gudalur, Tamil Nadu, who decided to listen to their hearts and reduce the price of their tea in order to make it accessible to low-income consumers (Coombe and Alwin, 2011). Through this action, they acted against globalized forces which place value on commodities and set prices based upon the abstract concept of socially necessary time. These projects could enable citizens to dream about what they do not have and hope for. Even if this is a dream, even if it is momentary, even if it is subjective, even if the dreams could not be fulfilled, they could show the negative aspects of the status quo and business as usual and could lead many citizens to rethink their relationships with the world. Once they can read such dream moments critically, citizens will be able to think about the alternatives or imaginary scenarios presented by film study. Here, a movie could help them to fantasize and dream about a different world. As in the example of *Snowpiercer*, it would enable them to make critical decisions in relation to the forces of capitalism.

Thirdly, utopia could be read as a tool for investigating the future. As Levitas argued,

> The utopian experiment disrupts the taken-for-granted nature of the present. It creates a space in which the reader may, temporarily, experience an alternative configuration of needs, wants and satisfactions. […] Utopia works towards an understanding of what is necessary for human fulfilment and towards a broadening, deepening and raising of aspirations in terms different from those dominating the mundane present (Levitas 2013: 4).

Based on these arguments, utopia could be read as an investigatory tool for the future and its relation with the past. Real, open, and uncontrollable settings in utopia provoke insecurity in the audience and enable them to think differently about the situation. Most importantly, the potentially unlimited space and freedom of perspective in storytelling decisively fosters a diverse array of new channels and alternatives, thereby restoring to individuals their capacity to alter their surroundings and proving that change is possible (Harvey 2000:178). Thus, utopias create the moment for critical thinking.

While we study these utopias, we will know that the current conception of the "political" projected onto society should be deconstructed daily and a new political horizon should also be sought every day. It is through such flux of the political that a movie theatre can be redefined as a place where citizens actively engage in thinking about the future. This conception is the encapsulation of Aristotelian ideas about the relationship between

citizen and politics and the arguments that humans are political animals. The underlying assumption is that, as in the time of the ancient Greeks, the city and especially its public spaces, including the cinema, will once again be a political space for all citizens, who will feel honored to participate in the process of political decision making. Although capitalist and economic forces disturb the ancient relationship between citizens and their city and have tarnished the positive values of that relationship, this new way of defining utopia will produce a disruptive, transgressive urban mentality which is different from the current consensus-seeking form of urban politics. Through this construct, citizens will know that if they were to grant their own power to the juridical, administrative, or regulative tasks of stabilizing urban issues then they would no longer be part of agonistic, plural, and active lives which are actualized in classical public spaces. The result of the current managerial public space is a passive, apathetic form of the urban decision-making process in which citizens can only master the "real" and close the space of the political. This new means of interpreting utopia means that traditional notions of the political that have been shaped by instrumental and legislative modes of thought will now be defined as authoritative and will be considered as causing the closure of creativity in urban design politics.

Finally, because of the centrality of hope in its configuration, utopia could be a powerful psychological tool to change the world in the face of postmodernism and its significant devaluation of utopian thinking, which has been substituted with a blasé attitude. Based on this blasé attitude, nothing better than capitalism is conceivable. It is better to have a dog's life in current society and be happy about it than to make any attempt to change the

political structure which has shaped this system. As Bloch argues, this is not acceptable when a person engages deeply with the concept of hope. Hope for Bloch (1986),

> "…is in love with success rather than failure. Hope, superior to fear, is neither passive like the latter, nor locked into nothingness. The emotion of hope goes out of itself, makes people broad instead of confining them, cannot know nearly enough of what it is that makes them inwardly aimed, of what may be allied to them outwardly. The work of this emotion requires people who throw themselves actively into what is becoming, to which they themselves belong. It will not tolerate a dog's life which feels itself only passively thrown into What Is, which is not seen through, even wretchedly recognized. The work against anxiety about life and the machinations of fear is that against its creators, who are for the most part easy to identify, and it looks in the world itself for what can help the world; this can be found. How richly people have always dreamed of this, dreamed of the better life that might be possible. Everybody's life is pervaded by daydreams: one part of this is just stale, even enervating escapism, even booty for swindlers, but another part is provocative, is not content just to accept the bad which exists, does not accept renunciation. This other part has hoping at its core, and is teachable (3)."

With this in mind, and because of the centrality of the concept of hope in utopia, engaging with utopia in the cinema can lead people to be more positive about the future

of the world. It can create hope for a better future, which is essential psychological capacity in the current moment when capitalist forces deny the possibility of thinking beyond this system of thought which jeopardizes opportunities for Western society to renew its views on the contemporary city (Harvey, 2000). As Mumford (1921) once beautifully stated, a map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at.

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