ON ENDOTEXTUALITY: LITERARY DYSTOPIAS, TEXTS-WITHIN-TEXTS, AND POST-TRUTH

by

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Abstract

This thesis reconceptualises literary works' additional fictional texts that have long been maligned, dismissed, and overlooked ("endotexts"), devises the theoretical framework that accounts for how they broadly work ("endotextuality"), and explains the specific functions of their different types ("endotextures"). It defines "endotexts" as additional texts that assume the guise of a written document and are only found printed within, alongside, or around a fictional work's larger main narrative, from whose story-world they originate, and whose thematic concerns and central conceits they metafictionally crystallise, subsequently shaping real-world readers' interpretations of those narratives and alerting them to the extratextual presence of comparable issues, thus challenging the assumptions of the world that they hold. This definition also addresses "endotextuality", which brings together transtextuality, the tension between theories of reader-response and the *mise en abyme*, metafiction, and Barthesian bliss to explicate endotexts' general aims. Additionally, it establishes three distinct "endotextures": Written and Read Endotexts, Parallel Endotexts, and Critical Endotexts.

This conceptual work is made in relation to literary dystopias and the phenomenon of post-truth. Twenty-two literary dystopias spanning a one-hundred-and-twelve-year period whose authors represent eleven different nations (Canada, China, the Czech Republic, Egypt, Finland, Germany, Japan, Poland, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America) have their endotexts analysed in this thesis. This long historical frame of reference and broad geographical span evinces that there is a longstanding tradition of endotextuality within the dystopian genre, whereas the selection of classical, canonical, and contemporary works demonstrates the potential for endotextual readings to uncover new meaning. By conducting these endotextual readings in reference to ideas relating to post-truth, this thesis argues that the dystopian genre possesses a transhistorical, transnational preoccupation with the problem of truth, which subsequently challenges the scholarly assumption that literary dystopias relate *only* to their specific geohistorical contexts.

This study considers five groups or institutions that literary dystopias – particularly through their endotexts – warn may be responsible for disregarding, distorting, and abusing truth: political leaders, historical experts, the Fourth Estate, digital and social medias, and laypeople. These first four groups represent different arbiters of truth, whereas the final entity represents those arbiters' typical audience, and so this thesis examines how truth claims are made, by who, and how they are received. Such considerations are therefore peculiarly available to the intensified post-truth condition that has come to characterise the twenty-first century. It sees this thesis propose that dystopian endotexts are uniquely positioned to help readers to resist the pervasiveness and persuasiveness of post-truth, for they challenge the assumptions readers may hold of the world, precisely scrutinise the strategies used to stoke post-truth's flames, and demand that readers exercise the same degree of active criticality when posed with extratextual truth claims as they do when undertaking the complex interpretive processes engendered by endotexts. As such, this thesis highlights the urgency of dystopian endotexts and the necessity of their new reconceptualization.

This thesis is dedicated to Margaret Joan Wilkie,
who always asked whether I wanted to go to university
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Introduction

This thesis has three aims:

1. To conceptualise endotexts (additional, fictional texts that are co-present with their counterpart main narratives), endotextures (the types of endotexts and their specific functions), and endotextuality (the theoretical framework that accounts for how endotexts work).
2. To investigate the longstanding tradition of endotextuality within the dystopian genre.
3. To argue that an analysis of dystopian endotexts reveals that the dystopian genre has long manifested what might today be identified as post-truth anxieties, suggesting that it possesses a transhistorical, transnational preoccupation with the problem of truth.

The purpose of this introduction is therefore to establish the theories, concepts, and arguments necessary to make these aims attainable. In 'Part One: The Dystopian Cliché', I highlight a cliché that has manifested within the field of dystopian studies, i.e., that literary dystopias relate *only* to their specific geohistorical contexts, which the third aim of this thesis seeks to challenge. To further make this third aim possible, I then turn to post-truth scholarship in 'Part Two: Towards an Intensified Post-Truth Condition' to define and exemplify 'post-truth', delineate its pre-history, and identify possible causes for its intensification. Although post-truth is often viewed as being a uniquely post-2016 phenomenon, some scholars and real-world examples indicate otherwise, and so by demonstrating how what we now call 'post-truth' has a plethora of antecedents, I foreground how truth has long been imperilled throughout the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries, constituting a transhistorical, transnational issue to which literary dystopias respond. 'Part Three: Conceptualising the Endotext' lays ground for the first and second aims of this thesis. First, I set out what an "endotext" is and explicate what the different "endotextures" are. Second, I use theories of transtextuality, reader-response, and metafiction, and draw on Lucien Dällenbach's *mise en abyme* and Roland Barthes's 'writerly texts' to account for endotexts' intratextual and extratextual

functions. To illustrate those functions, I then conduct an endotextual reading of 'The Principles of Newspeak' from George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), a prominent endotext from within the dystopian tradition. This introduction then concludes with a thesis outline that revisits the above aims, gives an overview of each chapter's arguments and primary texts, and looks ahead to the thesis conclusion.

Part One: The Dystopian Cliché

In arguing that literary dystopias possess a transhistorical, transnational preoccupation with truth, this thesis challenges a basic assumption that underpins dystopian scholarship: literary dystopias *only* relate to their specific geohistorical contexts. Although I analyse dystopias in relation to their contexts throughout this thesis, *only* reading an interwar text in relation to the interwar period, or *only* reading a Russian novel in reference to Russia is limited. It reduces the dystopian genre to a two-dimensional object, to something ultimately lacking depth. I overcome this by directly and implicitly comparing literary dystopias from throughout the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries, and from across geographical boundaries in this thesis. Doing so allows me to perceive the dystopian genre as a three-dimensional object, which then reveals that it routinely expresses concerns about truth, its fragility, and the consequences of devaluing it, concerns that far exceed any fixed contextual concerns.

The argument that dystopias only relate to their specific contexts has been repeated so often that it has become a cliché. It is found in the work of M. Keith Booker, who claims that the central strategy of dystopian fiction 'involves the depiction of the evils of a fictional dystopian society in order to comment upon social problems in the real world'; Tom Moylan foregrounds it in *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia* when he begins his preface with the claim that '[d]ystopian narrative is largely the product of the terrors of the twentieth century'; so too is it present throughout Raffaella Baccolini's and Moylan's influential *Dark Horizons: Science Fiction and the Dystopian Imagination*, with Baccolini explicitly claiming that all dystopias 'are dependent on their historical context for understanding'; and it is likewise apparent in

Fátima Vieira's collection *Dystopia(n) Matters: On the Page, on Screen, on Stage*, with Krishan Kumar writing that dystopias 'pick out the most distinctive and novel features of the time and […] present them in the form of an imaginatively realised society', and Lucy Sargisson arguing that they 'identify key themes, trends or issues in the present and extrapolate these […] before placing them into less familiar contexts for our examination' in order to 'interrogate the now and offer warnings and sometimes prophecies about the future'.[1] Continuing, Louisa MacKay Demerjian asserts that '[d]ystopian works reflect society's worries', which is echoed by Patricia Stapleton's comment that '[d]ystopian texts and films reflect political and cultural fears of their era', whereas Gregory Claeys argues in his authoritative *Dystopia: A Natural History* that all dystopias 'aim at avoiding the horrors imminent in this present'.[2]

The dystopian genre attests this cliché. Novels such as Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* (1924), H. G. Wells' *The Autocracy of Mr. Parham* (1930), Arthur Koestler's *Darkness At Noon* (1940), Karin Boye's *Kallocain* (1940/1967), and George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* variously dramatize the nightmares of authoritarianism, totalitarianism, and fascism, thus drawing on contemporaneous regimes including Nazi Germany, Soviet Russia, and Franco's Spain. Although written within this period and speculating what may have happened if Adolf Hitler's claim that Nazism would create a Thousand Year Reich came into effect, Katharine Burdekin's *Swastika Night* (1937) acts as a precursor to the dystopias influenced by the development of second-wave feminism, with works including Zoë Fairbairns' *Benefits* (1979), Suzette Haden Elgin's *Native Tongue* (1984),

[1] M. Keith Booker, *Dystopian Literature: A Theory and Research Guide* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994), p. 127; Tom Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. xi; Raffaella Baccolini, '"A useful knowledge of the present is rooted in the past": Memory and Historical Reconciliation in Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Telling*' in *Dark Horizons: Science Fiction and the Dystopian Imagination*, ed. by Raffaella Baccolini and Tom Moylan (New York: Routledge, 2003), pp. 113-134 (p. 114); Krishan Kumar, 'Utopia's Shadow' in *Dystopia(n) Matters: On the Page, on Screen, on Stage*, ed. by Fátima Vieira (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2013), pp. 19-22 (p. 22); Lucy Sargisson, 'Dystopias Do Matter' in *Dystopia(n) Matters: On the Page, on Screen, on Stage*, ed. by Fátima Vieira (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2013), pp. 40-41 (p. 40).

[2] Louisa MacKay Demerjian, 'Introduction' in *The Age of Dystopia: One Genre, Our Fears and Our Future*, ed. by Louisa MacKay Demerjian (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2016), pp. 1-4 (p. 1); Patricia Stapleton, '"The People in the Chaos Cannot Learn": Dystopian Vision in Atwood's *MaddAddam* Trilogy' in *The Age of Dystopia: One Genre, Our Fears and Our Future*, ed. by Louisa MacKay Demerjian (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2016), pp. 19-34 (p. 19); Gregory Claeys, *Dystopia: A Natural History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 283.

and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) centring on women's civil and reproductive rights. Marking a further contextual shift in the genre, Tom Moylan notes how 'in the dystopian turn of the closing decades of the twentieth century, the power of the authoritarian state gives way to the more pervasive tyranny of the corporation', something which he attributes to the dominance of neoliberalism in this period.[3] This shift is evidenced by Kim Stanley Robinson's *The Gold Coast* (1988), Marge Piercy's *He, She and It* (1991), and Octavia E. Butler's *The Parable of the Sower* (1993), each of which decentralise the state and leverage responsibility at large businesses for oppressing humanity through economic means. Overlapping with this contextual development, writes Gregory Claeys, 'is the shift from a concentration on political collectivism to that of the impact of technology, population growth, and environmental degradation' in late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century literary dystopias.[4] These foci are apparent in various works: the role of technology is foregrounded in cyberpunk dystopias such as William Gibson's *Neuromancer* (1984), P. D. James' *The Children of Men* (1992) focuses on a population crisis, and environmental degradation features prominently in the oeuvre of Maggie Gee, whose speculative novels *The Ice People* (1998), *The Flood* (2004), and *The Red People* (2022) each consider the impact of the climate crisis on human civilisation.

Writing in 2019, Adam Stock noted that 'we live in dystopian times', by which he means that dystopian fiction – in the form of novels, video games, television shows, and movies – had attained 'symbolic cultural value in representing fears and anxieties about the future' in the latter half of the 2010s.[5] Stock's claim is doubly prescient insofar as it inadvertently acknowledges that the late 2010s and early 2020s have been characterised by several concurrent crises.[6] A contemporary literary dystopia could, for example,

[3] Tom Moylan, '"The moment is here… and it's important": State, Agency, and Dystopia in Kim Stanley Robison's *Antarctica* and Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Telling*' in *Dark Horizons: Science Fiction and the Dystopian Imagination*, ed. by Raffaella Baccolini and Tom Moylan (New York: Routledge, 2003), pp. 135-153 (p. 135).
[4] Claeys, *Dystopia: A Natural History*, p. 488.
[5] Adam Stock, *Modern Dystopian Fiction and Political Thought: Narratives of World Politics* (London: Routledge, 2019), p. 2.
[6] Stock, *Modern Dystopian Fiction and Political Thought: Narratives of World Politics*, p. 2.

centre on racial injustices following the prominence of the Black Lives Matter movement that emerged after several high-profile incidences of police brutality and racially aggravated violence made against Black people, most notably in the United States. A contemporary dystopia could follow in the same vein as feminist dystopias such as Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, following the #MeToo movement that materialised in 2017 to raise awareness of sexual assault, sexual harassment, and rape culture, whereas the U.S. Supreme Court's 2022 overturning of the precedent set by the Roe v. Wade case has once again brought women's reproductive rights to the forefront of political anxieties. A contemporary dystopia could also focus on climate change, newly reconceived as "the climate crisis" in political, scientific, and journalistic spheres in the late 2010s to emphasise both its present and forecasted catastrophic ramifications.[7] Last, a contemporary literary dystopia could tackle the issue of plagues, viruses, and epidemics, given the unprecedented consequences of the 2019-orginated coronavirus pandemic that are still being felt at the time of writing this introduction, despite the World Health Organisation announcing that COVID-19 was no longer a global health emergency in May 2023.[8]

However, rather than focusing on any of these crises in this thesis, I will take as a central topic another crisis that gained global prominence in late 2010s and early 2020s to challenge the scholarly cliché that literary dystopias are *only* context-specific: post-truth.

Part Two: Towards an Intensified Post-Truth Condition

Philosophies and Theories of Truth

The term "post-truth" clearly relates to "truth", with the "post-" prefix indicating that "post-truth" is somehow outside, after, or a development of "truth". As such, before

[7] See Adeline Johns-Putra, *Climate Change and the Contemporary Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).
[8] UN News, 'WHO chief declares end to COVID-19 as a global health emergency', *United Nations*, 5 May 2023 <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/05/1136367> [accessed 2 July 2023].

discussing what "post-truth" is, it is worth first establishing what "truth" is. Definitively explaining "truth" is notoriously difficult, a task which has challenged philosophers for millennia. What follows is an overview of major theories of truth, their limitations, and how they might relate to other major concepts that are of relevance to this thesis.

One major theory of truth is the correspondence theory, which claims that 'a proposition is true just when it corresponds with reality', a stance that Plato saw as 'intuitively recognizable by humans' and encapsulating truth's 'common-sense notion'.[9] The correspondence theory asserts that propositions (e.g. "The sky is blue") become true when they match with aspects of the 'mind-independent, discourse-independent world', aspects which are taken to be facts insofar as if humans suddenly no longer existed to perceive them, they would still exist.[10] Centring on the so-called facts of observable reality, the correspondence theory of truth relates to epistemic theories of truth, for if, following Bertrand Russell, knowledge is 'nothing less than a mind-independent fact', then the epistemic argument that truth is 'that which can come to be known in the acquisition of knowledge' repackages the essence of the correspondence theory of truth.[11] Innumerable critics have taken issue with the correspondence theory of truth. Among other criticisms, Bruno Latour stressed that facts are 'a poor proxy of experience' because they are 'only ever very partial', each representing only a limited aspect of reality, rather than reality as a whole.[12] Further critics have found fault with the correspondence theory's dependence on facts. Ralph C. S. Walker suggests that the correspondence theory 'has trouble explaining what "facts" are', whereas Colin Wight

[9] Michael P. Lynch, 'Realism and Correspondence Theory: Introduction' in *The Nature of Truth: Classic and Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. by Michael P. Lynch (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2001), pp. 9-15 (p. 9); Plato summarised in Jamil Asghar, 'The Postmodernist Relativization of Truth: A Critique', *Islamic Studies*, 51.3 (2012), 295-312 (p. 296).
[10] Terence Horgan, 'Contextual Semantics and Metaphysical Realism: Truth as Indirect Correspondence' in *The Nature of Truth: Classic and Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. by Michael P. Lynch (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2001), pp. 67-95 (p. 67).
[11] Russell summarised in Peter Sullivan and Colin Johnston, 'Judgments, Facts, and Propositions: Theories of Truth in Russell, Wittgenstein, and Ramsey' in *Oxford Handbook of Truth*, ed. by Michael Glanzberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 150-192 (p. 152); Jan Szaif, 'Plato and Aristotle on Truth and Falsehood' in *Oxford Handbook of Truth*, ed. by Michael Glanzberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 9-49 (p. 12).
[12] Bruno Latour, 'Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern', *Critical Inquiry*, 30 (2004), 225-248 (p. 245); p. 232.

disputes that facts are mind-independent, calling them 'social constructions' because their existence depends on there being humans to conceive of and express them, while he also asserts that facts are 'always contestable' and that '[n]o matter how convinced we are about the facts in front of us, there is always a chance we have something wrong'.[13] On the issue that truth, under the correspondence theory, depends on there being both an aspect of reality and the possibility for a human to make a proposition related to that aspect of reality, William P. Alston asks, 'May there not be states of affairs, or even entire realms or aspects of reality, that are totally inaccessible to human cognition?'[14] If it is the case that there is an aspect of reality – say, the existence of an as-yet undiscovered deep sea creature – that is currently beyond human cognition or knowledge, then it cannot be said to be true, even if it is real. In short, although the correspondence theory of truth is allegedly commonsense and intuitive, its dependence on facts is both its greatest strength but also its most significant weakness.

The coherence theory of truth 'seeks to do away with questions of correspondence between facts and statements' and instead posits that 'a proposition is true if and only if it is part of a coherent system of propositions' held by an individual.[15] For example, if I held the belief that vegetarian food was tasty, and I also held the belief that Japanese cuisine was particularly delicious, then, under the coherence theory of truth, the proposition that a Japanese restaurant serving vegetarian food will lead to an enjoyable eating experience would be true, for the coherence theory stresses that truth 'consists in the coherence, or mutual support, of our beliefs'.[16] However, Michael P. Lynch explains that the coherence theory of truth does not exclusively focus on personal beliefs, for 'the various elements of the relevant system […] also include nonsubjective

[13] Ralph C. S. Walker, 'The Coherence Theory of Truth' in *Oxford Handbook of Truth*, ed. by Michael Glanzberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 219-237 (p. 219); Colin Wight, 'Post-Truth, Postmodernism and Alternative Facts', *New Perspectives*, 26.3 (2018), 17-30 (p. 22); p. 21.
[14] William P. Alston, 'A Realist Conception of Truth' in *The Nature of Truth: Classic and Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. by Michael P. Lynch (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2001), pp. 41-66 (p. 58).
[15] Walker, 'The Coherence Theory of Truth', p. 226; Yael Brahms, *Philosophy of Post-Truth* (Tel-Aviv: Institute for National Security Studies, 2020), p. 6.
[16] Michael P. Lynch, 'Coherence Theories: Introduction' in *The Nature of Truth: Classic and Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. by Michael P. Lynch (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2001), pp. 99-102 (p. 100).

[sic] aspects of lived reality, such as institutional practices, cultural traditions, and the events of our everyday life'.[17] This stance on truth is not without its limitations. Yael Brahms asks that 'if a truth has no ontological foundation in reality, but rather only an epistemological foundation in some knowledge system, then what prevents a person who suffers from hallucinations, for example, from asserting that [their] hallucinations are true', given that their experience of their hallucinations may be coherent.[18] Moreover, the coherence theory's disinterest in the correspondence between propositions and observed reality does not account for how, in situations like checking to see whether a car is approaching before crossing a road, we are reliant on true aspects of reality for our safety or continued existence. The pragmatic theory of truth overcomes some of the coherence theory's limitations. Built on the work of philosophers including Charles S. Peirce, pragmatism suggests that 'truth is determined by agreement among ourselves. But not merely any consensus will do; it must be consensus at the end of exhaustive empirical investigation – scientific inquiry when *complete*'.[19] In emphasising empirical investigation, the pragmatic theory of truth overcomes some of the limitations of the coherence theory by making truth something that is 'linked to experience and practice', something that has 'utility', thus affording it some practical applications in relation to existing within discernible reality.[20] Moreover, although Peirce's argument that truth is 'that which an ideal community of researchers could agree upon' sees him narrow pragmatism to a scientific or academic audience, his emphasis on community suggests that the limitation of coherence theory as outlined by Brahms can be overcome by individuals forming intersubjective groups of the likeminded, groups founded upon the mutual holding of coherent beliefs that may act as checks and balances against an individual's delusions or hallucinations.[21]

[17] Lynch, 'Coherence Theories: Introduction', p. 100.
[18] Brahms, *Philosophy of Post-Truth*, p. 6.
[19] Michael P. Lynch, 'Pragmatism and Verificationism: Introduction', in *The Nature of Truth: Classic and Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. by Michael P. Lynch (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2001), pp. 185-191 (pp. 185-186).
[20] Cheryl Misak, 'The Pragmatist Theory of Truth' in *Oxford Handbook of Truth*, ed. by Michael Glanzberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 283-303 (p. 283); Brahms, *Philosophy of Post-Truth*, p. 7.
[21] Peirce summarised in Asghar, 'The Postmodernist Relativization of Truth: A Critique', p. 297.

Although pragmatism may go some way to overcoming the limitations of the coherence theory of truth, both theories have been criticised for how they generate a degree of relativism.[22] Defined as 'the view that truth and falsity, right and wrong, standards of reasoning, and procedures of justification are products of differing conventions and frameworks of assessment and that their authority is confined to the context giving rise to them', "relativism" encapsulates an array of ideas that refute the claim that truth is objective.[23] Relativism, for example, allows for 'something [to] be true for you or true for me, rather than just true', while it also accounts for differences in aesthetic taste.[24] According to Herman Cappelen and Torfinn Thomesen Huvenes, these differences can be accounted for by contextualism and contemporary relativism.[25] As its name suggests, contextualism suggests that the truth-value of a proposition depends on the contexts in which it was made. If, for example, the temperature is 20°C in the middle of July and I remarked, "It is hot today", this proposition would be true if I was in Helsinki, where the average July temperature is 17°C, whereas the proposition would be false if I was in Khartoum, where temperatures regularly exceed 40°C in the summer months. Cappelen and Huvenes claim that such contextualism is not bound to only statements about observable reality that include 'gradable adjectives' or are formed by 'sentences [that] include a relation to something', but may also account for 'moral

[22] See Linda Martín Alcoff, 'The Case for Coherence' in *The Nature of Truth: Classic and Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. by Michael P. Lynch (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2001), pp. 159-182 (p. 171), 'But a coherence theory of truth must commit one to some degree of relativism, since coherence, like the building of boats, can almost always be realized in more than one way'; see also Brahms, *Philosophy of Post-Truth*, p. 7, 'One of the main criticisms raised against the pragmatic theory of truth is that it generates a relativistic approach to truth – what is utilitarian to one person is not necessarily utilitarian to another person, and consequently something that is considered the truth because of its utility to one person is not the truth for the other person'.

[23] Maria Bagramian and J. Adam Carter, 'Relativism', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Spring 2022, ed. by Edward N. Zalta, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/relativism/> [accessed 2 June 2024].

[24] Michael Glanzberg, 'Introduction' Truth' in *Oxford Handbook of Truth*, ed. by Michael Glanzberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 1-6 (p. 5); for relativism and aesthetic taste, see Sanford Shieh, 'Truth, Objectivity, and Realism' Truth' in *Oxford Handbook of Truth*, ed. by Michael Glanzberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 433-476 (p. 434), 'one answer to the question about aesthetic values is a style of relativism which claims that an object is beautiful or ugly only in virtue of being taken to be so by an individual, or an institution, or a culture'.

[25] See Herman Cappelen and Torfinn Thomesen Huvenes, 'Relative Truth' in *Oxford Handbook of Truth*, ed. by Michael Glanzberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 517-542.

relativism'.[26] Under moral relativism, the propositions "It is wrong to steal" and "It is not wrong to steal" may both be true if the first proposition is made by a speaker who is a member of a community that forbids stealing and if the second proposition is made by a speaker who is a member of a community that sees stealing as being permissible.[27] Cappelen and Huvenes argue that contemporary relativism offers 'a more interesting sense [than contextual differences] in which is truth is relative', for it allows for individuals within the same contexts to make different claims to truth depending on their methods of assessment.[28] To return to the previous example of summer in Helsinki, one person could claim "It is hot" and another could claim "It is cold" and both of these propositions could be true relative to their individual assessments of what is meant by "hot" and "cold": someone who has spent their entire life living in Finland might find a temperature of 20°C in July to be hot, whereas a tourist visiting Finland from Sudan might disagree. Here, the two people share a direct context, but their methods of assessment differ, and so although their propositions are in direct opposition, they are both relativistically true. Both forms of relativism have their merits. Contextualism 'is often invoked to address cross-cultural systems of belief', or is seen a 'harbinger of tolerance', whereas contemporary relativism, in foregrounding that individuals possess different methods of assessment when making truth claims, explains how it can be that 'something [can be] true for you or true for me, rather than just true', even in instances where individuals share contexts.[29] Moreover, the individualistic nature of relativism (i.e. that truth can be specific to individuals) relates to the concept of authenticity insofar as it 'relate[s] to being true to the "inner self" as opposed to being influenced by external expectations and societal norms', thus freeing individuals to freely express their true selves.[30] This is not to say that relativism is without its shortcomings. Ulf Zackariasson

[26] Cappelen and Huvenes, 'Relative Truth', p. 518.
[27] Cappelen and Huvenes, 'Relative Truth', p. 518.
[28] Cappelen and Huvenes, 'Relative Truth', p. 520.
[29] Alcoff, 'The Case for Coherence', p. 173; Bagramian and Carter, 'Relativism'; Michael Glanzberg, 'Introduction', p. 5.
[30] Gunn Enli, 'Populism as "Truth": How Mediated Authenticity Strengthens the Populist Message', *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 0.0 (2024), 1-17 (p. 2).

claims that relativism produces '*(too) many truths*', each of which can claim a limited validity, whereas Jamil Asghar stresses that, at its most extreme, 'relativism collapses into the view that nothing is better than anything else' because each proposition is valued equally if logically produced as per its contexts or in accordance with its producer's methods of assessment.[31] Ultimately, Wight argues, this may lead to a 'relativist morass, where each perspective has its truth rather than functioning as one perspective among many on the objective truth', thus reducing every claim to a matter of debate, a matter of opinion, a matter of belief.[32]

A denial of singularly objective truths is similarly attributed to postmodernism. Jean-François Lyotard defines "postmodernism" as a term that 'designates the state of our culture following the transformations which, since the end of the nineteenth century, have altered the game rules for science, literature, and the arts'.[33] Significantly, postmodernism argues that 'there is no single true scientific theory and no single meta-narrative, but rather a multitude of theories and narratives that are created from a variety of perspectives, none of which take precedence over the other', ultimately postulating that 'reality is in the mind of the beholder', rather than existing objectively, subsequently demanding that 'we should value, and allow a voice to, all opinions'.[34] Postmodernism stands in direct opposition to the correspondence theory of truth, for it 'question[s] the efficacy of language' – the domain from which the correspondence theory's propositions originate – and, in deconstructing metanarratives, stresses that 'factual truth is not always enough to decide between the various theories and narratives, and that other, more subjective types of truth are applied too'.[35] Facts as a form of truth have therefore lost their value as a cultural currency under postmodernism,

[31] Ulf Zackariasson, 'Introduction: Engaging Relativism and Post-Truth' in *Relativism and Post-Truth in Contemporary Society*, ed. by Mickael Stenmark, Steve Fuller, and Ulf Zackariasson (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 1-17 (p. 3); Asghar, 'The Postmodernist Relativization of Truth: A Critique', p. 310.
[32] Wight, 'Post-Truth, Postmodernism and Alternative Facts', p. 24.
[33] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), p. xxiii.
[34] Brahms, *Philosophy of Post-Truth*, p. 11; Asghar, 'The Postmodernist Relativization of Truth: A Critique', p. 298; Wight, 'Post-Truth, Postmodernism and Alternative Facts', p. 25.
[35] Asghar, 'The Postmodernist Relativization of Truth: A Critique', p. 311; Brahms, *Philosophy of Post-Truth*, p. 12.

for although it does not totally dismiss objective factual truth, 'it does lay the foundation for casting doubt on the objectivity and absoluteness of truth' by valorising competing theories, narratives, ideas, and opinions, rendering truth as something subjective or intersubjective.[36]

Theories of truth are particularly relevant to historiography (i.e. the processes by which the past becomes known and understood in the present). Historiography, Stephen Boulter writes, 'is a truth-directed activity', but pinning down its exact relationship with truth, Martin Jay contends, is 'always a challenge', with the relationship traditionally being seen in either ontological (truths about the past exist 'amidst the flux of historical change') or epistemological (truths about the past emerge in the historical accounts we produce of it) terms.[37] The ontological stance on historical truth, also known as historical realism, follows the same principles as the correspondence theory of truth. It views historical research as 'an essentially empirical enterprise based on uncovering "facts" or describing "events" unfiltered through a theoretical or ideological lens', where historical facts can be found in primary sources.[38] As Adrian Kuzminski argues, for a historiographical proposition to be true within this framework, 'either there is or there is not a correspondence between the facts portrayed in the statement and what relevant evidence testifies did or did not happen'.[39] Although this historiographical approach sees historians attempt to uncover the past 'as it actually was', historical realism has been 'dogged by increased concern about the truth claims – often expressed in terms of "objectivity" – it has generated', while scholars have also questioned how audiences can '*decide between two historical narratives that talk about the same occurrences when each of the narratives satisfies the criteria of truth but, nevertheless, portrays*

[36] Brahms, *Philosophy of Post-Truth*, p. 14.
[37] Stephen Boulter, 'On the Very Possibility of Historiography', *Journal of the Philosophy of History*, 11.2 (2017), 196-220 (p. 196); Martin Jay, 'Historical Truth and the Truthfulness of Historians', in *Integrity, Honesty, and Truth Seeking*, ed. by Christian B. Miller and Ryan West (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), pp. 240-273 (p. 240).
[38] Jay, 'Historical Truth and the Truthfulness of Historians', p. 244.
[39] Adrian Kuzminski, 'Defending Historical Realism', *History and Theory*, 18.3 (1979), 316-349 (p. 346).

incongruent views of the past'.[40] Champions of the epistemological approach to the relationship between historiography and truth argue that if truth can be found in historiographical propositions, it is 'more "made" than "matched," "discovered," or "found"', for they see 'the role of the historiographer [as] an interpretive one, synthesizing […] facts in order to produce broader historiographical knowledge'.[41] However, due to the ostensible fallibility of historical sources, which tend to be fragmentary or offer incomplete accounts of the past, the epistemological approach 'displaces the question of the truth about the past to that of the truthfulness of the historian in the present', thereby scrutinising not the supposed facts contained within historical sources, but whether the historian, in their interpretation of said sources, has 'avoid[ed] imposing their own prejudices and interests' so that they may produce as veracious accounts as is reasonably possible.[42] This demands a great deal from historians, who must establish a 'sufficiently strong inferential connection between evidence and the historiographical claim [they wish] to convert from a true belief into knowledge' all the while withholding their innate biases and beliefs and knowledge of subsequent historical events, a challenge which Martin Jay deems 'impossible'.[43] Ultimately, neither ontological nor epistemological approaches to historiography and truth may solely produce incontestable truth claims; both historical evidence and historians alike are fallible. Instead, an intertwined approach is needed, with historians heeding, arranging, and interpreting the partial truth claims glimpsed in historical sources all the while attempting to withhold the biases, views, and knowledge afforded to them by their present-day vantage points. Although this approach may not reach

[40] Jay, 'Historical Truth and the Truthfulness of Historians', p. 244; p. 242; Mariana Imaz-Sheinbaum, 'Beyond truth: an epistemic normativity for historiography', *Rethinking History*, 26.2 (2022), 250-266 (p. 252) (emphasis in original); see also Jouni-Matti Kuukkanen, 'Why We Need To Move From Truth-Functionality To Performativity In Historiography', *History and Theory*, 54.2 (2015), 226-243 (p. 226), 'The central challenge of the philosophy of history and historiography is to find a princi-pled way to rank different interpretations of the past without assuming their truth in termsof correspondence.'

[41] Jay, 'Historical Truth and the Truthfulness of Historians', p. 251; Adam Michael Bricker, 'Postnarrativism, Historiographical Evaluation, and Truth', *Journal of the Philosophy of History*, 15 (2021), 106-124 (p. 107).

[42] Jay, 'Historical Truth and the Truthfulness of Historians', p. 262; p. 267.

[43] Boulter, 'On the Very Possibility of Historiography', p. 196; Jay, 'Historical Truth and the Truthfulness of Historians', p. 248.

definitive, incontestable truth claims, it will allow for 'historical truth [to be] asymptotically approached over time'.[44]

In addition to the relationship between historiography and truth, scholars have long debated the relationship between truth and power. For Michael Foucault, truth is 'linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it', creating what he calls a society's 'régime of truth, its "general politics" of truth'.[45] These regimes, he argues, are 'productive', for they establish

> the types of discourse which [society] accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish between true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true

and, in doing so, dictate the 'rules according to which the true and the false are separated'.[46] In the original French, Foucault's use of *régime* carries a double meaning that carries over into the English translation, for although it is primarily used to mean a system, network, or apparatus by which truth is evoked, legitimised, and reinforced, the term also bears political connotations. Foucault was aware of this, for he writes that truth is 'subject to constant […] political incitement […]; it is produced and transmitted under the control, dominant if not exclusive, of a few great political […] apparatuses […]; lastly, it is the issue of a whole political debate'.[47] As such, Foucault's regimes of truth are both the mechanisms by which truth is determined and legitimised *and also* the political institutions that orchestrate these mechanisms. Subsequently, these regimes

[44] Jay, 'Historical Truth and the Truthfulness of Historians', p. 256.
[45] Michael Foucault, *Power / Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. by Colin Gorden, trans. by Colin Gordon, Leo Marshal, John Mepham, Kate Soper (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), p. 133; p. 131.
[46] Foucault, *Power / Knowledge*, p. 119; p. 131; p. 132.
[47] Foucault, *Power / Knowledge*, pp. 131-132.

are politically normative: they use their power to decide what may be considered truth, ostensible truths which subsequently legitimise a regime's power by according with its actions and discourse, which allows it to continue to decide what is or is not true. Foucault sees this form of power as positive because it 'traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse', rejecting what he calls the 'wholly negative, narrow, skeletal conception of power' as being repressive, for regimes of truth, he argues, make their subjects 'capable of and willing to adhere to norms of sanity, health, sexuality and other forms of propriety'.[48]

Conversely, Hannah Arendt argues that truth is 'against political power' and 'has its source outside the political realm'.[49] Rather than locating the power to determine truths within institutions and regimes, as with Foucault, Arendt argues that institutions are afforded power only by 'the people's support' of them and that they 'petrify and decay as soon as the living power of the people ceases to uphold them'.[50] Under Arendt's argument, groups of individuals (for Arendt argues that power 'is never the property of an individual; it belongs to a group and remains in existence only so long as the group keeps together') exercise their truth-determining capabilities by assessing competing claims to truth when deciding which political party to vote for, which expert or institution to believe, which newspaper to purchase, ultimately lending power to those whose claims they determine – correctly or incorrectly – are true.[51] Arendt's assessment of the relationship between truth and power is liberating. It considers individuals as active agents in the truth-determining game, rather than passive subjects upon whom regimes of truth are forced, agents who are themselves empowered to lend or withdraw power to political, intellectual, economic, and media institutions. Truth, it follows, therefore originates from outside of power structures, but may also be essential in affording such structures power in the first place.

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[48] Foucault, *Power / Knowledge*, p. 119; Steven Lukes, *Power: A Radical View* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2005), p. 91.
[49] Hannah Arendt, *Between Truth and Power* (London: Penguin, 2006), p. 236.
[50] Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (London: Allen Lane, 1970), p. 41.
[51] Arendt, *On Violence*, p. 44.

Despite Foucault's insistence that power is productive and his claim that 'the notion of repression is quite inadequate for capturing what is precisely the productive aspect of power', it is precisely the notion of repression, rather than power being productive, that informs the stance on the relationship between truth and power that underpins this thesis.[52] In *Power: A Radical View*, Steven Lukes takes as a central topic 'power over another or others and, more specifically […], power as domination'.[53] Lukes argues that power is a 'capacity', one which is exercised when 'A affects B in a manner contrary to B's interests' (i.e. one person gets another to do something that they do not want to do), which they may either do directly (i.e. through physical force, threats, direct requests) or by 'influencing, shaping, or determining [the second person's] very wants'.[54] Such domination relates to truth in instances where power 'works against people's interests by misleading them', for by deceiving individuals into believing something false, powerful figures may further entrench their power, thus warping the cyclical relationship between truth and power described by Foucault: rather than the 'effects of power' being induced by truth, the same effects are realised through lies, deceit, and mendacity in domination.[55] This negative conception of power-as-domination is used throughout this thesis because it aligns with the dystopian tendency of dramatizing and extrapolating the very worst of societal possibilities, whereas post-truth, as I will discuss below, is likewise exercised in the name of gaining, maintaining, and exerting control over others. This is not to say that power-as-domination is the only interpretation of the relationship between truth and power evident in this thesis. Arendt's analysis of truth as liberating – something which originates from within groups of individuals and outside of systems of power, something which 'possesses a strength of its own' because those in power may never completely replace it – will be drawn upon in

[52] Foucault, *Power / Knowledge*, p. 119.
[53] Lukes, *Power: A Radical View*, p. 12.
[54] Lukes, *Power: A Radical View*, p. 12; p. 27.
[55] Lukes, *Power: A Radical View*, p. 13; Foucault, *Power / Knowledge*, p. 133.

instances where literary dystopias depict individuals resisting and undermining the dominant regimes and false truth claims of their respective story-worlds.[56]

Despite the differences evident in the above theories, philosophies, and applications of truth, it cannot be avoided that truth *matters*. Whether we align with the correspondence theory and contend that truth can be found in observable facts evident in reality, whether we believe that our beliefs constitute truth where they cohere with one another, whether we hold that something is only true if it is reached at the end of empirical inquiry and possesses utility, or whether our stance on truth is fluid and borrows from these and other philosophies on a case-by-case basis, truth helps us to know, understand, and exist in the world because truth itself is 'a thing of the world'.[57] Truth matters, write Ophelia Benson and Jeremy Stangroom, because it is 'about happiness, flourishing, enthusiasm, about what makes life worth living, why we prefer being awake to being asleep, why it's a privilege to be human', for 'enquiry, curiosity, interest, investigation, [and] explanation-seeking' – impulses, desires, and feelings that impel us towards truth – are 'hugely important components of human happiness'.[58] To be true to one's self, to be authentic, is integral to resisting oppression, which is predicated on forcing subjects to conform to predetermined norms.[59] Truth matters politically because its emergence 'depend[s] on healthy deliberation within our political institutions and in the public sphere', in the open dialogue between the *demos* and political parties and figures, thus rendering it 'an important societal good, one in which a properly functioning democracy must rest'.[60] Without this dialogue and the truths generated therein lies the capacity for totalitarianism to emerge, for the *demos* to be

[56] Arendt, *Between Truth and Power*, p. 255.
[57] Foucault, *Power / Knowledge*, p. 131.
[58] Ophelia Benson and Jeremy Stangroom, *Why Truth Matters* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006), p. 179.
[59] See Andrew J. Pierce, 'Authentic Identities', *Social Theory and Practice*, 41.3 (2015), 435-457.
[60] Allyson Carr and Matthew J. Klaassen, 'Introduction' in *Truth Matters: Knowledge, Politics, Ethics, Religion*, ed. by Lambert Zuidervaart, Allyson Carr, Matthew J. Klaassen, and Ronnie Shuker (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014), pp. 3-19 (p. 12); Darren R. Walhof, 'Exposure and Disclosure: The Risk of Hermeneutical Truth in Democratic Politics' in *Truth Matters: Knowledge, Politics, Ethics, Religion*, ed. by Lambert Zuidervaart, Allyson Carr, Matthew J. Klaassen, and Ronnie Shuker (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014), pp. 103-121 (p. 107).

totally subjugated. Overall, truth in its myriad forms is therefore paramount to happiness, freedom, and the continued upkeep of political fabric of society.

Defining "Post-Truth"

It is important to clarify that, in addition to not being the same as truth, "post-truth" is not the same as lies – a common misconception. Lies are the antithesis to truth. Robin Tolmach Lakoff identifies three characteristics of lies, writing that, '[t]o be a lie, a proposition must: (1) be demonstrably false; (2) be known to the teller to be false; (3) be told to give some advantage to the teller'.[61] If, for example, I looked outside of my office window, observed that there were dark clouds overhead, saw that puddles had formed on the ground and were still rippling and increasing in size, and noticed that the windowpane was being constantly smattered with new raindrops, but then told a colleague that is was perfectly sunny and that we should go for a walk at lunch, this would be a lie. I would have deliberately said something that was verifiably false in the name of taking a break from work, exercising, or socialising. Truths and lies are therefore diametrically opposed, but their binary does not account for post-truth, which possesses an altogether different relationship with facts and verifiable reality.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines "post-truth" as '[r]elating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief'.[62] The term can be used as an abstract noun in its own right, and also as part of compound nouns, as in "post-truth politics". Hereafter, I will also use an adjectival derivative of "post-truth" to describe actions and attitudes that embody the characteristics of post-truth so that I may avoid equivocation and rhetorical messiness. Whereas some critics opt to use "post-truth" interchangeably as a noun and an adjective, a choice which sometimes obfuscates meaning, others tend to

[61] Robin Tolmach Lakoff, 'The hollow man: Donald Trump, populism, and post-truth politics', *Journal of Language and Politics*, 16.4 (2017), 595-606 (p. 600).
[62] 'Post-truth' in *The Oxford English Dictionary* [online], <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/58609044?redirectedFrom=post-truth&> [accessed 12 July 2023].

use "post-factual", a term which encapsulates some of post-truth's essence, but not its entirety.[63] The majority of critics, however, opt to use "post-truthful" as the adjectival form of "post-truth", a convention I shall maintain in this thesis for its clarity and accuracy.

In defining "post-truth", *The Oxford English Dictionary* puts forward a particular stance on truth. Yael Brahms brings to attention how, by foregrounding 'objective facts', this definition emphasises 'that the most prominent characteristic of [post-truth] is the loss of the fact-based objective truth, or at least a decline in its value'.[64] Commentators likewise make fact-based truth central to their discussions of post-truth. In a 2016 interview with Carole Cadwalladr for *The Guardian*, Daniel Dennett stressed that '[t]he real danger that's facing us is we've lost respect for truth and facts'; Lee McIntyre remarks that post-truth is founded upon 'a conviction that facts can always be shaded, selected, and presented within a political context that favors [sic] one interpretation of truth over another', thus devaluing objective truths; and Michael E. Sawyer has remarked that the 'refutation of objective facts' is a core element of post-truth.[65] Indeed, Brahms maintains this trend when she defines "post-truth" as 'a term denoting circumstances in which our ability to clarify the reality in order to understand it and in order to function within it *on the basis of facts* is weakening'.[66] Conceptualisations of post-truth therefore bears particular relevance to the correspondence theory of truth, to the idea that a proposition is true if there is something in the mind-independent, discourse-independent world to which is corresponds. As such, the correspondence

[63] See Kai Horsthemke, '"#FactsMustFall"? – education in a post-truth, post-truthful world', *Ethics and Education*, 12.3 (2017), 273-288 (p. 275): '*Post-truth (or post-factual) politics* denotes a culture in which political debate characteristically assumes the form of appeals to personal feelings detached from policy details'.

[64] 'Post-truth' in *The Oxford English Dictionary*; Brahms, *Philosophy of Post-Truth*, p. 6.

[65] Carole Cadwalladr, 'Daniel Dennett: "I begrudge every hour I have to spend worrying about politics"', *The Guardian*, 12 February 2017 < https://www.theguardian.com/science/2017/feb/12/daniel-dennett-politics-bacteria-bach-back-dawkins-trump-interview> [accessed 7 June 2024]; Lee McIntyre, *Post-Truth* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2018), p. 6; Michael E. Sawyer, 'Post-Truth, Social Media, and the "Real" as Phantasm' in *Relativism and Post-Truth in Contemporary Society*, ed. by Mickael Stenmark, Steve Fuller, and Ulf Zackariasson (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 55-69 (p. 56).

[66] Brahms, *Philosophy of Post-Truth*, p. 17 (emphasis added).

theory of truth will form the basis for all subsequent discussions of post-truth in this thesis.

Since 2016, commentators have identified and theorised two of post-truth's core characteristics. First, they suggest that post-truth is an attitude, mindset, or phenomena delineated by 'an indifference toward truth', whereby 'what is truthfully stated or factually reported can be dismissed as "just words"', and statements can be made that 'are untouched by rational argument, which are held and accepted regardless of (even against) the evidence available', thus empowering individuals to establish 'a worldview and then [refuse] to go back down from it, or accept any evidence that questions its rightness'.[67] Typically regarded as indicating a 'mistrust of authoritative "experts"', this indifference towards verifiable truths and facts ultimately makes the 'distinction between veracity and falsehood […] irrelevant', thus eroding the value of truth as a criterion against which competing claims can be assessed.[68] This therefore distinguishes post-truth from both truths and lies. Post-truth is incompatible with truth because it does not care for the facts upon which truth depends, whereas post-truth is not the same as lying because those who espouse post-truthful claims often do not care to know whether their statements are false.

Commentators tend to argue that post-truth's essential truth-indifference is related to its second core feature. Within the realm of post-truth, 'facts and objective evidence are trumped by *existing beliefs and prejudices*', with 'an increased emphasis on spin and appeal to emotions […] and other factors that are often seen as epistemically unreliable' taking precedent.[69] This heightened importance of personal beliefs and emotions has 'become significant in interpreting data' and in how individuals respond to

[67] Zackariasson, 'Introduction', p. 5; Christopher Schaberg, *The Work of Literature in an Age of Post-Truth* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), p. 1; Horsthemke, '"#FactsMustFall"', pp. 274-275; Stuart Sim, *Post-Truth, Scepticism & Power* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), p. 13.
[68] Jonathan Hopkin and Ben Rosamond, 'Post-truth Politics, Bullshit and Bad Ideas: "Deficit Fetishism" in the UK', *New Political Economy*, 23.6 (2018), 641-655 (p. 641); Ignas Kalpokas, 'Affective Encounters of the Algorithmic Kind: Post-Truth and Posthuman Pleasure', *Social Media + Society*, 5.2 (2019), 1-12 (p. 2).
[69] Stephan Lewandowsky, Ullrich K. H. Ecker, and John Cook, 'Beyond Misinformation: Understanding and Coping with the "Post-Truth" Era', *Journal of Applied Research in Memory and Cognition*, 6 (2017), 353-369 (p. 361) (emphasis added); Zackariasson, 'Introduction', p. 5.

the claims presented to them, thus leading to 'a world in which […] everyone has their own (often incompatible) "facts"', subsequently denying that singularly objective truths may exist.[70] Ultimately, as put by Matthew D'Ancona, post-truth 'is, first and foremost, an emotional phenomenon. It concerns our attitude to truth, rather than truth itself', encouraging individuals to become bored with truths and enabling them to believe the claims that they *wish* to be true simply because they align with their beliefs or because they elicit a desirable emotional response.[71] With these two characteristics in place, post-truth can therefore be defined as:

> *A phenomenon in which individuals relegate facts and expert opinions to a secondary importance relative to appeals to emotion, the reinforcement of existing beliefs, and personal desires when making and assessing truth claims.*

Drawing on the aforementioned criticism, this definition will provide the platform upon which all subsequent discussions of post-truth will be built throughout this thesis.

Given that their theoretical discussions of post-truth veer towards abstraction, critics most often tend to illustrate post-truth in action by drawing upon two notable examples within the political sphere: the successful "Leave" campaign in the United Kingdom's June 2016 Brexit referendum and the electoral success and subsequent American presidency of Donald Trump in and after November 2016. The Brexit referendum's "Leave" campaign was predicated upon the weaponization of 'strategic falsehood[s] employed in the service of persuasion and […] the often intemperate populist rhetoric of change wedded to a nationalist political imaginary steeped in nostalgia', as was exemplified by the campaign's slogan "Take Back Control".[72] This

[70] Horsthemke, '"#FactsMustFall?"', p. 274; Jonathan Rose, 'Brexit, Trump, and Post-Truth Politics', *Public Integrity*, 19.6 (2017), 555-558 (p. 556).
[71] Matthew D'Ancona, *Post-Truth: The New War on Truth and How to Fight Back* (London: Ebury Press, 2017), p. 126.
[72] John Corner, 'Fake news, post-truth and media – political change', *Media, Culture & Society*, 39.7 (2017), 1100-1107 (p. 1104).

slogan not only created the impression that the United Kingdom was somehow enfeebled, overpowered, or bullied by the European Union, but it also evokes a mythic past in which the United Kingdom was both fully autonomous and faultless in its enactment of this autonomy – the United Kingdom was, in other words, implied to once be a free, utopian space. The "Leave" campaign also centred on the promises that a post-Brexit UK would see funding for the National Health Service increased by £350million per week (the amount of money the "Leave" campaign claimed the UK spent on EU membership each week) and that immigration into the UK would decrease.[73] As noted by Will Fish, these promises were 'speedily dropped after the [referendum] votes were counted'.[74] Moreover, the "Leave" campaign was permeated with anti-intellectualist rhetoric. This was best exemplified by Michael Gove's – a key "Leave" campaigner – claim in a television interview that 'the [British] people have had enough of experts' when faced with the proposition that various key political, economic, and commercial figures were decrying the potential negative consequences of the UK's exit from the EU.[75] Continuing, Gove asserted that these figures had failed to predict the 2007-2008 financial crisis, thus reinforcing his request that the public 'trust themselves' and 'take back control' from experts.[76]

The Washington Post reported in May 2017 that Donald Trump made 492 'false or misleading claims' in the first hundred days of his presidency, a number that rises to over 30,000 untruths when considered over the course of his entire political tenure.[77] An

[73] Infamously advertised across the side of a red bus, this claim conveniently overlooks the approximately £100million per week rebate that the UK received from the EU.
[74] Will Fish, '"Post-Truth"' Politics and Illusory Democracy', *Psychotherapy and Politics International*, 14.3 (2016), pp. 211-213 (p. 211).
[75] R. P. Mackey, *Gove: Britons "Have Had Enough of Experts"*, online video recording, YouTube, 21 June 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GGgiGtJk7MA> [accessed 12 July 2023].
[76] Mackey, *Gove: Britons "Have Had Enough of Experts"*.
[77] Glenn Kessler and Michelle Ye Hee Lee, 'President Trump's first 100 days: The fact check tally', *The Washington Post*, 1 May 2017 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/fact-checker/wp/2017/05/01/president-trumps-first-100-days-the-fact-check-tally/> [accessed 29 November 2022]; for analysis regarding Trump's full political tenure, see Glenn Kessler, Salvador Rizzo, and Meg Kelly, 'Trump's false or misleading claims total 30,573 over 4 years', *The Washington Post*, January 24 2021 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/01/24/trumps-false-or-misleading-claims-total-30573-over-four-years/> [accessed 12 July 2023].

oft-cited case used to exemplify the prevalence of post-truth within Trump's tenure regards his and his administration's claims around the size of his inauguration crowd. Trump asserted that this crowd 'looked honestly like a million and a half people, whatever it was, it was, but it went all the way back to the Washington Monument' despite photographic evidence and a *New York Times* estimate indicating that the crowd was approximately a third of the size put forward by Trump.[78] This claim was later reinforced by Sean Spicer, the White House press secretary, who stated that the crowd 'was the largest audience to ever witness an inauguration — period — both in person and around the globe'.[79] When, during an interview with *NBC*, the Trump adviser Kellyanne Conway was pressed to explain Spicer's – and, implicitly, Trump's – falsehoods, Conway defended them, calling them 'alternative facts'.[80] Moreover, while bolstering the claims about his inauguration crowd, both Trump and his administration decried the news media, accusing it of 'us[ing] photographs of "an empty field" to make it seem as if his inauguration did not draw many people' and deliberately minimising 'the enormous support that had gathered on the National Mall'.[81] Within the same press release, Trump expressed that he had 'a running war with the media […] [t]hey are among the most dishonest human beings on earth', thus anticipating the anti-press tirades that would come to characterise his presidency.[82]

These brief but representative glimpses of the "Leave" campaign and Trump's presidency show all the hallmarks of post-truth. Emotional appeals and the affirmation of pre-existing beliefs are evident in both examples. In the case of the "Leave" campaign,

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[78] Donald Trump quoted in Nicholas Fandos, 'White House Pushes "Alternative Facts." Here Are the Real Ones.', *The New York Times*, 22 January 2017 <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/22/us/politics/president-trump-inauguration-crowd-white-house.html> [accessed 4 February 2021].
[79] Sean Spicer quoted in Fandos, 'White House Pushes "Alternative Facts".
[80] NBC News, *Kellyanne Conway: Press Secretary Sean Spicer Gave 'Alternative Facts' | Meet The Press | NBC News* (online video recording), YouTube, 22 January 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VSrEEDQgFc8> [accessed 5 February 2021].
[81] Julie Hirschfeld Davis and Matthew Rosenberg, 'With False Claims, Trump Attacks Media on Turnout and Intelligence Rift', *The New York Times*, 21 January 2017 <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/21/us/politics/trump-white-house-briefing-inauguration-crowd-size.html> [accessed 12 July 2023].
[82] Trump quoted in Hirschfeld Davis and Rosenberg, 'With False Claims, Trump Attacks Media on Turnout and Intelligence Rift'.

the simultaneous evocation of a mythic past together with the denigration of the EU contributed to the campaign's referendum success by appealing to certain segments of the British electorate's anti-EU views, while also creating an emotive crisis that appealed to nationalistic sentiment by presenting the United Kingdom as being imperilled by the EU. Although Trump's tirade against the press in the wake of its inauguration reportage is less explicitly emotive, his framing of the media as an enemy is typical of the 'spectacularized discourses of exclusion, aggression and hate' that pervaded his presidential rhetoric.[83] Trump's contemptuous antagonization of the media thus possesses an implicit attempt at making an emotional appeal because he shifted his discourse away from the facts of what had been reported and instead prioritised his own feelings by framing his issue with the press as a personal attack. By so vehemently expressing this, it is apparent that Trump sought to incite similar rancour against the media within the American populace.

These examples bear a twofold devaluation of truth. First, they exhibit a degree of indifference towards truth through their dissemination of disinformation, which Peter Pomerantsev defines as false information that is 'designed to mislead'.[84] In the case of the "Leave" campaign, the promise to fund the NHS by an additional £350million a week exemplifies disinformation in that it was a false promise – as proven by its swift withdrawal – told in order to sway the British electorate, whereas disinformation is evident in how the Trump administration sought to create the impression that the incoming president was wildly popular. Both examples illustrate how using the tactics of post-truth empowers individuals to claim whatever they wish, irrespective of the veracity of such claims – they do not care what *the* facts *are*; instead, they care most that their

[83] Nina Cvar and Robert Bobnič, 'Truth, Post-truth, Non-truth: New Aestheticized Digital Regime of Truth', in *Post-Truth and the Mediation of Reality: New Conjunctures*, ed. by Rosemary Overell and Brett Nicholls (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), pp. 79-103 (p. 81); for a summation of other forms of exclusion and division incited by Trump's rhetoric, see Maggie Ward, 'Predicting Trump and Presenting Canada in Philip Roth's *The Plot Against America*', *Canadian Review of American Studies*, 48.1 (2018), 17-37 (p. 23): 'Trump's goals explicitly promote racial division of all kinds: he plans to build a wall between Mexico and the United States, ban all Muslims from entering the country, and deport all undocumented immigrants'.
[84] Peter Pomerantsev, *This Is Not Propaganda: Adventures in the War Against Reality* (London: Faber & Faber, 2019), p. 237.

claims possess the *semblance*, the *cadence* of facts. Second, the "Leave" campaign and Trump's presidency devalued truth because, by denigrating experts and the press, their 'propaganda or disinformation efforts were presented as countering official media narratives [that] leveraged on [the] public's mistrust of traditional parties and media' so that they could expound their contentious views.[85] Discussing Trump's later espousal of the term "fake news", Rosemary Overell writes that the phrase 'work[ed] to designate disagreeable content as false, but impl[ied] his own words, his official press releases and so forth [were], thus, *real*'.[86] The same can be said of the Trump administration's earlier, pre-"fake news" denigration of the media, and so too can it apply to the "Leave" campaign's dismissal of experts. By expressing contempt for experts (used here to encapsulate both the press and the political, economic, and commercial figures denounced by Gove), both groups devalued informed opinion to pave way for their own opinions to ascend.

This is not to say that post-truth is unique to the contexts of the United Kingdom and the United States of America, a false impression wrongfully implied by critics' frequent discussion of the Brexit referendum and Donald Trump's presidency. Writing about what is 'generally positioned as a fairly mainstream democracy in Western Europe', David Block argues 'that mendacity was as pervasive as it was perverse in Spanish politics' in and after 2016, a claim which is grounded in his analysis of the *Partido Popular*'s 'discourses about and of corruption'.[87] Block also notes that post-truth is evident in Turkey and Russia, in which Recep Erdoğan and Vladimir Putin have contracted communication specialists to manipulate social media to 'provide "alternative facts", spread malicious gossip about opponents that is more often than not grounded in very little tangible evidence and outright foster the outright propagation of ignorance'.[88]

[85] Gabriele Cosentino, *Social Media and the Post-Truth World Order: The Global Dynamics of Disinformation* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), p. 98.
[86] Rosemary Overell, 'The Reveal of the Real: Fact-Checking and 'Not-Tags' in the Current Conjuncture' in *Post-Truth and the Mediation of Reality: New Conjunctures*, ed. by Rosemary Overell and Brett Nicholls (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), pp. 107-130 (p. 111).
[87] David Block, *Post-Truth and Political Discourse* (London: Palgrave, 2019), p. 5; p. 3; p. 120.
[88] Block, *Post-Truth and Political Discourse*, p. 60.

Davide Cosentino further highlights the Russian state's use of post-truth, writing that 'Russian trolls coordinated by the Internet Research Agency (IRA) […] covertly influence[d] the 2016 presidential elections in the United States' and that, as 'an agent of information warfare in the conflict in Ukraine', the Russian IRA weaponised post-truth.[89] Continuing, Cosentino notes how the Assad regime in Syria mobilised 'rumours, conspiracy theories and other post-truth narratives' against the White Helmets, a search-and-rescue organisation that has operated in Syria's rebel-held areas since 2014, to generate 'a state of disorientation' that obfuscated the atrocities committed by the Assad regime in the Syrian civil war.[90] He also details how 'hate speech and disinformation […] led to widespread violence against the Rohingya Muslim minority in Myanmar' in 2017, and how disinformation was employed 'during the 2018 [Brazilian] presidential elections that brought power to Jair Bolsonaro'.[91] Post-truth's prevalence within Latin America is further elucidated in Jacqueline Fowks's *Mecanismos de la postverdad* (2017), a study that examines how disinformation centred on emotional appeals and the affirmation of beliefs is disseminated through the press and on social media in countries including Colombia, Chile, Mexico, and Peru, which has brought Jessica Retis to remark that '[t]hese Latin American realities are no different from what has been happening in the Global North'.[92] Regarding further geopolitical contexts, Anna Hörter explains how '[d]omestic political actors and external powers are increasingly resorting to disinformation' within the African continent, with large-scale post-truth campaigns 'exercising political influence in countries such as Uganda, Sudan and Mali'; Ross Tapsell clarifies how Rodrigo Duterte used the 'post-truth creation of the "narco state"' to garner electoral success in the Philippines in 2017; Toby Manhire demonstrates

[89] Cosentino, *Social Media and the Post-Truth World Order: The Global Dynamics of Disinformation*, p. 33.
[90] Cosentino, *Social Media and the Post-Truth World Order: The Global Dynamics of Disinformation*, p. 87; p. 88.
[91] Cosentino, *Social Media and the Post-Truth World Order: The Global Dynamics of Disinformation*, p. 113; p. 114.
[92] Jessica Retis, 'The Press and Politics in Peru in the Post-Truth Era', trans. by Bryan Pitts, *UCLA Latin American Institute*, 20 September 2021 <https://www.international.ucla.edu/lai/article/246719> [accessed 29 December 2023].

how the New Zealand National Party's 'attack on [the New Zealand Labour Party] was effective but heavy on post-truth' during the country's 2017 general election; and Katharine Murphy highlights how Peter Dutton, Australia's opposition leader, exhibits flagrant truth-indifference when he 'makes things up regularly, sometimes several times a day, with growing confidence […] fully intent on shaping his own reality'.[93] As I will discuss in Chapter One, the Chinese Communist Party's frequent employment of propaganda and censorship also bears the hallmarks of a post-truth regime in full effect.

It is therefore apparent that post-truth is a global phenomenon, one which has dominated democratic proceedings since 2016. This reaffirms *The Oxford English Dictionary*'s assertion that "post-truth" has 'become associated with a particular noun, in the phrase *post-truth politics*'.[94] Together with the boon of scholarship concerned with post-truth in the years following 2016, this creates the impression that post-truth is a uniquely post-2016 phenomenon. However, to challenge the critical cliché that literary dystopias are only context-specific, it is worth examining this impression – *is post-truth a uniquely post-2016 phenomenon?*

The Pre-History of Post-Truth

Although Donald Trump is the 'example *du jour* of post-truth', he is not the phenomenon's creator – he instead 'merely exploit[ed] it' over the course of his

[93] Anna Hörter, 'Policy Workshop IV: Post-truth. What influence does disinformation have in Africa?', *German Institute for International and Security Affairs*, 19 December 2022 <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/mta-spotlight-19-policy-workshop-iv-1> [accessed 19 November 2023]; Ross Tapsell, 'Post-truth politics in Southeast Asia', *Inside Story*, 17 February 2017 <https://insidestory.org.au/post-truth-politics-in-southeast-asia/> [accessed 19 November 2023]; Toby Manhire, 'Ardern's New Zealand election bid punctured by post-truth politics', *The Guardian*, 23 September 2023 <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/sep/23/arderns-new-zealand-election-bid-punctured-by-post-truth-politics> [accessed 19 November 2023]; Katharine Murphy, 'Peter Dutton is Australia's figurehead of fear and fake news, like Trump but without charisma', *The Guardian*, 13 October 2023 <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/commentisfree/2023/oct/14/peter-dutton-is-australias-figurehead-of-fear-and-fake-news-like-trump-but-without-charisma> [accessed 19 November 2023].

[94] 'Word of the Year 2016', *Oxford Languages*, 2016 <https://languages.oup.com/word-of-the-year/2016/> [accessed 12 July 2023].

presidency.[95] Looking back at the administration of another former US president reveals that post-truth has been entrenched within American politics for longer than the term's 2016 conceptualisation implies. The president in question is George W. Bush, and a 2004 *New York Times* article written by Ron Suskind reveals the extent to which post-truth had infiltrated his administration. In this piece, Suskind recalls a conversation he had with a government aide in which he was derided for belonging to 'the reality-based community'.[96] The aide defined this community as being formed of people who 'believe that solutions emerge from [their] judicious study of discernible reality', i.e., people who trust in facts to help them to discern truths from falsehoods.[97] Here, the Bush aide exhibited the devaluation of truth upon which today's conceptualisation of post-truth is founded, a devaluation that continued when they later expressed:

> That's not the way the world really works anymore […] We're an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality. And while you're studying that reality – judiciously, as you will – we'll act again, creating other new realities, which you can study too, and that's how things will sort out. We're history's actors… and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do.[98]

This assertion bears several characteristics typical of post-truth. In claiming that it had created its 'own reality', the aide demonstrates that the Bush administration exhibited truth-indifference insofar as it was uninterested in what reality *was*, and was instead more concerned with what it *wanted* reality to be, which also implies a second characteristic of post-truth: the prioritisation of personal beliefs over facts. Moreover,

[95] Scott Wilson, 'Pre-truth, Post-truth and the Present: Jacques Lacan and the Real Horror of Contemporary Knowledge', in *Post-Truth and the Mediation of Reality: New Conjunctures*, ed. by Rosemary Overell and Brett Nicholls (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), pp. 153-175 (p. 153); Sim, *Post-Truth, Scepticism & Power*, p. 21.
[96] Ron Suskind, 'Faith, Certainty and the Presidency of George W. Bush', *The New York Times*, 17 October 2004 <https://www.nytimes.com/2004/10/17/magazine/faith-certainty-and-the-presidency-of-george-w-bush.html> [accessed 20 November 2020].
[97] Suskind, 'Faith, Certainty and the Presidency of George W. Bush'.
[98] Quoted in Suskind, 'Faith, Certainty and the Presidency of George W. Bush'.

the aide's derision of Suskind – a renowned Pulitzer-winning journalist – and his judicious study of reality anticipates the contempt for expert opinions that is an essential feature of post-truth.

Further back still, and away from political contexts, the pre-history of post-truth is apparent in climate change denial. Following the general consensus among scientists in the late 1970s that 'global warming was likely to result from increasing greenhouse gases released by burning fossil fuels', climate change denialism emerged from corporate America, in which large businesses with ties to fossil fuels 'began to challenge the growing influence of environmental organizations and other advocacy groups' to protect their activities and profit margins.[99] These corporations challenged belief in climate change by establishing ostensibly independent thinktanks and by hiring and funding scientific experts, the purpose of which was to spread disinformation and to discredit legitimate scientific research. Such activities prompted a 'declining trust in science' that is typical of a state of post-truth.[100] Naomi Oreskes and Erik Conway argue that these strategies came into use almost as soon as the consensus that climate change was at least in part caused by the burning of fossil fuels emerged, but they gained considerable traction in the 1990s.[101] 1989 saw US industry groups (joined by oil and gas giants BP, Exxon, and Shell between 1993 and 1994) establish the Global Climate Commission, a lobbying group that challenged the science on climate change and sought to delay action to reduce carbon emissions.[102] In 1997, Exxon Mobil ran an advert in *The New York Times* that read 'Let's face it: The science of climate change is too uncertain to mandate a plan of action that could plunge economies into turmoil', further casting doubt on the ever-growing corpus of research that supported the existence of fossil-fuel-

[99] Naomi Oreskes and Erik Conway, 'Climate change denial: a history', *New Statesman*, 1 June 2010 <https://www.newstatesman.com/uncategorized/2010/06/climate-scientists-science> [accessed 23 November 2020]; Jean-Daniel Collomb, 'The Ideology of Climate Change Denial in the United States', *European journal of American studies*, 9.1 (2014), 1-20 (p. 2).
[100] Lewandowsky et al, 'Beyond Misinformation', p. 353.
[101] Oreskes and Conway, 'Climate change denial: a history'.
[102] Jonathan Watts, Garry Blight, Lydia McMullan, and Pablo Gutiérrez, 'Half a century of dither and denial – a climate crisis timeline', *The Guardian*, 9 October 2019 <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/ng-interactive/2019/oct/09/half-century-dither-denial-climate-crisis-timeline> [accessed 23 November 2020].

generated climate change.[103] Oreskes and Conway refer to these disinformation campaigns as the 'tobacco strategy', following the corporate-sponsored Tobacco Industry Research Group in 1954 that was established in response to growing public concerns about the correlation between smoking and lung disease.[104] This group 'sought not to win the battle [about whether smoking was responsible for lung disease] outright', writes Matthew D'Ancona, 'but to dispute the existence of a scientific consensus […]. The objective was not academic victory but popular confusion'.[105] The same can be said of the oil and gas corporations' disinformation campaigns, for by forming ostensibly independent thinktanks and puppeteering scientific experts, the oil and gas industry could confuse the general population and stun them into confusion, thus enabling powerful corporations to continue profiting from the burning of fossil fuels.

"Antisemitism" has no settled definition.[106] In 2016, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance put forward a 'working definition of antisemitism' which stated that antisemitism is 'a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews'.[107] Such hatred, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance continued, includes '[c]alling for, aiding, or justifying the killing or harming of Jews in the name of a radical ideology or an extremist view of religion', drawing on mendacious Jewish stereotypes, and Holocaust denial.[108] However, the Jerusalem Declaration on

[103] Quoted in Joe McCarthy, 'Exxon Mobil Knew About Climate Change, But Lied for Years: Report', *Global Citizen*, 23 August 2017 <https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/exxon-mobil-lied-about-climate-change/> [accessed 23 November 2020].
[104] Naomi Oreskes and Erik Conway, *Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), p. 6.
[105] D'Ancona, *Post-Truth*, p. 42.
[106] I cite from sources that both do and do not hyphenate the term "antisemitism" in this thesis and opt to retain their original spellings where I do. Where I write the term myself, I choose to use the unhyphenated variation, following the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, which states that the hyphenated version 'legitimizes a form of pseudo-scientific racial classification that was thoroughly discredited by association with Nazi ideology' and obfuscates meaning by implying that "Semitism" exists. See the International Holocaust Remembrance Association, 'Spelling of antisemitism', *The International Holocaust Remembrance Association*, April 2015 <https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/spelling-antisemitism> [accessed 17 May 2024].
[107] The International Holocaust Remembrance Association, 'Working definition of antisemitism', *The International Holocaust Remembrance Association*, 26 May 2016 <https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definition-antisemitism> [accessed 17 May 2024].
[108] The International Holocaust Remembrance Association, 'Working definition of antisemitism'.

Antisemitism claims that the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition 'blurs the difference between antisemitic speech and legitimate criticism of Israel and Zionism', and thus puts forth its own definition to so that it may 'strengthen the fight against antisemitism by clarifying what it is and how it is manifested'.[109] It defines antisemitism as 'discrimination, prejudice, hostility or violence against Jews as Jews (or Jewish institutions as Jewish)', and states that this applies 'whether Jewish identity is understood as ethnic, biological, religious, cultural, etc. It also applies in cases where a non-Jewish person or institution is either mistaken for being Jewish ("discrimination by perception") or targeted on account of a connection to Jews ("discrimination by association")'.[110] Both definitions acknowledge that antisemitism is partially founded upon 'the myth about a world Jewish conspiracy' in which '"the Jews" possess hidden power that they use to promote their own collective agenda at the expense of other people', a myth centred on the fear that Jewish people were too powerful.[111] This false myth has legitimised structural injustices. Jewish people have been scapegoated since the Middle Ages, in which they were accused by church leaders of being 'in league with Satan and for conspiring against Christians' and were prohibited from 'own[ing] land [and] banned from joining Christian guilds', among many other laws that limited their freedom, restricted their rights, and socially and economically disempowered them.[112] Moreover, in the early twentieth century, Jewish people faced structural discrimination in Poland, for 'obstacles were placed in the way of Jewish students seeking to enter Polish universities, a compulsory Sunday closing law introduced in 1919 damaged the livelihoods of observant Jews who kept their own Sabbath, and demanding

[109] The Jerusalem Declaration On Antisemitism, 'The Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism', *Jerusalem Declaration*, 25 March 2021 <https://jerusalemdeclaration.org/> [accessed 17 May 2024].
[110] The Jerusalem Declaration On Antisemitism, 'The Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism'.
[111] The International Holocaust Remembrance Association, 'Working definition of antisemitism'; The Jerusalem Declaration On Antisemitism, 'The Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism'.
[112] Gerald J. Steinacher, 'The Oldest Post-Truth? The Rise of Antisemitism in the United States and Beyond', in *History in a Post-Truth World: Theory and Praxis*, ed. by Marius Gudonis and Benjamin T. Jones (New York: Routledge, 2021), chap. 7, VitalSource ebook; The Wiener Holocaust Library, 'Medieval antisemitism', *The Holocaust Explained* <https://www.theholocaustexplained.org/anti-semitism/medieval-antisemitism/> [accessed 17 May 2024].

administrative regulations left thousands of Jews stateless'.[113] Although brief, these examples are indicative of how, throughout history, antisemitism has legitimised structural injustices that have disproportionately weakened a group once mistakenly feared to be too powerful. Antisemitism has likewise legitimised and manifested in individual prejudices: underpinning every accusation of Jewish greed, every grotesque caricature of a large-nosed rabbi, every swastika graffitied on a Jewish grave is the harmful, hateful expression of antisemitism.

Given that it is founded upon narratives of alternative truths, Gerald J. Steinacher claims that antisemitism 'is one of the oldest and continually existing examples of post-truth in history', thus providing another example that disproves the belief that post-truth is a uniquely post-2016 phenomenon.[114] The basic beliefs of antisemitism are so divorced from truth that they are 'almost immune from facts', for a fact cannot disprove an antisemitic claim because the claim itself has no basis in the reality to which the fact belongs.[115] As such, it is near-impossible to debunk antisemitism to an antisemite, thus rendering it an impervious worldview that is not easily backed down from, a circumstance which, qua Sim, post-truth enables. Indeed, this is an instance in which post-truth begets further post-truth, for rather than consider an argument that may challenge their worldview, antisemites are empowered by post-truth thinking to unquestioningly accept an antisemitic claim on the basis that it reaffirms their beliefs, further entrenching their prejudices. Moreover, antisemitism orchestrates a false separation of 'a population into an "us" and a "them"', whereby the minority "them" group (Jewish people) are depicted as threatening, endangering, or otherwise imperilling the majority "us" group (in this case, non-Jewish people).[116] This unfounded vilification of Jewish people is emotive in that it 'manufactur[es] a sense of aggrieved victimization

[113] David Feldman, 'Toward a History of the Term "Anti-Semitism"', *The American Historical Review*, 123.4 (2018), 1139-1150 (p. 1144).
[114] Steinacher, 'The Oldest Post-Truth?', chap. 7.
[115] Steinacher, 'The Oldest Post-Truth?', chap. 7.
[116] Jason Stanley, *How Fascism Works: The Politics of Us and Them* (London: Penguin Random House, 2018), p. xxx.

among the majority population, direct[s] it as a group that is not responsible for it, and promis[es] to alleviate the feeling of victimization by punishing that group'.[117] In other words, antisemitism wrongfully incites rancour, division, and fear through its fabrications so that it may offer solutions and relief from the problems of its own invention. This is what can make antisemitism emotionally appealing, and therefore a precursor to today's conception of post-truth: it offers to save individuals from threats that do not exist.

Although antisemitism bears a unique history that contains structural injustices, individual prejudices, and an atrocity on the scale of the Holocaust, the fight against it is, claims the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism, 'inseparable from the overall fight against all forms of racial, ethnic, cultural, religious, and gender discrimination'.[118] Similarly to antisemitism, these forms of discrimination are post-truthful insofar as the beliefs underpinning them are predicated upon falsely separating populations into "us" and "them" groups, false separations which are impervious to truth. Robert Mejia, Kay Beckermann, and Curtis Sullivan write that 'truth has long been irrelevant to […] racism', for it is founded upon mendacious, affective stereotypes, including that of 'black men as aggressive, unruly predators [who] might rise up and attack [white men] or rape their women', while Achille Mbembe sees race as 'the ever present shadow in Western political thought and practice, especially when it comes to imagining the inhumanity of […] foreign peoples', imaginings that vilify, demean, or otherwise devalue "them" groups and, Mbembe continues, justify their deaths.[119] Misogynistic gender discrimination, on the other hand, has become increasingly reliant on a false narrative which asserts that 'societies operate explicitly in women's favour and discriminate against men who must consequently defend themselves against women and feminism', thus resulting in a 'vitriolic smearing of women in public that includes on- and offline rape and death

[117] Stanley, *How Fascism Works*, p. 101.
[118] The Jerusalem Declaration On Antisemitism, 'The Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism'.
[119] Robert Mejia, Kay Beckermann, and Curtis Sullivan, 'White lies: a racial history of the (post)truth', *Communication and Critical Studies*, 15.2 (2018), 109-126 (p. 116); Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow* (New York: The New Press, 2012), p. 28; Achille Mbembe, 'Necropolitics', trans. by Libby Meintjes, *Public Culture*, 15.1 (2003), 11-40 (p. 17).

threats, hostility from Men's Rights groups and online trolling of […] feminists'.[120] As with antisemitism, such beliefs have evolved into an impenetrable worldview for misogynists, for the claims best placed to dismantle such discriminatory views are precisely the types of claims that misogynists automatically and vehemently dismiss.

Providing a definitive pre-history of post-truth remains out of the scope of this thesis. The above examples, however, begin to illustrate that the truth-indifferent, expert-deriding, emotion-affecting, belief-reaffirming, and desire-prioritising characteristics of post-truth have been in effect since before 2016, and that their influence has long been felt in political, commercial, and identitarian spheres, among others. Moreover, together with the cases of the "Leave" campaign and the Trump administration's inauguration discourse, these examples highlight several ways in which post-truth is communicated and disseminated. As discussed above, disinformation abounded in the rhetoric of the "Leave" campaign and the Trump administration, and so too was it apparent in the examples of the tobacco, oil, and gas industries, for their falsification and conveyance of misleading information was deliberate. However, in the case of antisemitism, misinformation, a related phenomenon, is apparent. Pomerantsev distinguishes misinformation from disinformation by stressing that the former category of false information is 'content that misleads by accident'.[121] Although antisemitism's origins may lie within the territory of disinformation insofar as its originators or disseminators may have been conscious of its falsity (*The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, an antisemitic hoax produced by the Russian secret police in the early 1900s, from which the Jewish world conspiracy has its roots, would fall under this category), many antisemites possess and spread antisemitic views in the genuine belief that they are legitimate – they are not necessarily aware of the falsity of the claims they circulate.

[120] Clare Woodford, 'Refusing post-truth with Butler and Honig', *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 49.2 (2023), 218-229 (p. 219); Adrienne Evans and Sarah Riley, 'The righteous outrage of post-truth antifeminism: An analysis of TubeCrush and feminist research in and of public space', *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 25.1 (2022), 25-42 (26).
[121] Pomerantsev, *This Is Not Propaganda*, p. 237.

Furthermore, the spectre of propaganda haunts many of the above cases. Defined by Stamatis Poulakidakos, Anastasia Veneti, and Christos Fangonikolopoulos as 'publicly disseminated information that serves to influence others with respect to their beliefs and/or actions', post-truth is communicated via propaganda in cases where the disseminator possesses enough political, commercial, or cultural power to convey it on a mass scale – an antisemite informing a neighbour of their views is not propaganda; Exxon Mobil running a *New York Times* advert is.[122] Although I contest Poulakidakos et al.'s conclusion that post-truth 'actually constitutes propaganda' because, as put by Quassim Cassam, 'the propagandist is aware of the possibility of employing true assertions to communicate something false' through the employment of spin and distortion and so does not maintain post-truth's essential blindness to truth, I accept their description of propaganda as 'mak[ing] (intense) use of emotions, drawing on sentimental factors, and seek[ing] to persuade'.[123] Cassam corroborates this delineation, pithily summarising that 'propaganda works by manipulating people's *emotions*', thus rendering propaganda an often suitable vehicle through which post-truth can be conveyed.[124] This suitability is reinforced by considering how certain forms of propaganda appeal 'to a narrative about who "we" are, who "they" are, and what "they" are doing to "us"' to 'sharpen the division between them and us, and [promote] the conception of "them" as "the other" – alien, inferior but a threat to "us"', thus recalling the above description of types of discrimination that fall along identity characteristics as post-truthful, given that propaganda may likewise incite fear and encourage division by preying upon something that all individuals are especially anxious of: threats made to their identities.[125]

[122] Stamatis Poulakidakos, Anastasia Veneti, and Christos Fangonikolopoulos, 'Post-truth, propaganda and the transformation of the spiral of silence', *International Journal of Media & Cultural Politics*, 14.3 (2018), 367-382 (p. 368).
[123] Poulakidakos et al., 'Post-truth, propaganda and the transformation of the spiral of silence', p. 371; Quassim Cassam, 'Bullshit, Post-truth, and Propaganda' in *Political Epistemology*, ed. by Elizabeth Edenberg and Michael Hannon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), pp. 49-63 (p. 59); Poulakidakos et al., 'Post-truth, propaganda and the transformation of the spiral of silence', p. 368.
[124] Cassam, 'Bullshit, Post-truth, and Propaganda', p. 60.
[125] Cassam, 'Bullshit, Post-truth, and Propaganda', p. 60.

Causes of the "Intensified Post-Truth Condition"

Rather than claim that we currently live in a post-truth era, the pre-history of post-truth leads me to propose that we instead live in an era characterised by an *intensified post-truth condition*. This distinction acknowledges both that the mechanisms of post-truth predate their term's coinage, and also that post-truth has become increasingly persuasive, ubiquitous, and dominant since 2016. This is not to say that the degree by which the post-truth condition has intensified has been uniform across the world, but it remains that its intensification has been a global phenomenon, with heightened levels of post-truth apparent in every continent, as discussed above. Post-truth is no longer a fringe attitude commonly employed by the powerful to gain, maintain, or exert control; instead, it can be found throughout the human experience, enacted by all kinds of people who have abandoned their commitment to truthfulness in the name of selecting information based on its emotional appeal, desirability, or support of beliefs. With this being the case, it is worth examining the conditions that may have further entrenched post-truth's pervasiveness.

The internet has engendered 'the ability to access and, if necessary, accumulate unprecedented amounts of information, all of that information being, at least theoretically, equally close and equally available'.[126] Although this may have brought humanity to be more connected and better informed than ever before, it has also generated information overload, a concept which 'capture[s] not only the proliferation of texts but also the inability to decide how to act in relation to them' because there is too much to read and too many competing and conflicting stances, interpretations, and arguments, and that these are all far too readily available and equally visible, so that any given individual is both unable to fully evaluate and make sense of the vast swathes of information available to them and is hyperaware of this fact.[127] Information is no

[126] Ignas Kalpokas, *A Political Theory of Post-Truth* (London: Palgrave, 2019), p. 33.
[127] Steve Fuller, *Post-Truth: Knowledge as a Power Game* (London: Anthem Press, 2018), p. 186.

longer solely sequestered away in libraries and archives, but is readily available at one's fingertips. Instead, individuals who attempt to assess all of the information available to them are left overwhelmed, stunned, and confused. As such, they attempt to avoid information overload by forming their own echo chambers – 'groups that reinforce those groups' chosen visions, [select] what to accept as true, and [amplify] each other's biases' – by consciously selecting the accounts and information sources they follow, pay attention to, and interact with on social media.[128] Alternatively, social media users can evade information overload by unquestioningly slipping into social media companies' algorithmically-determined 'filter bubble[s] where [they are] constantly exposed to one side of the story'.[129] These strategies highlight how the internet enables users to remedy the issue of information overload, for it allows them to retreat 'into bubbles of the like-minded [to] strip out a lot of inconvenient complexities a wider perspective would give, leading to a simpler but therefore also distorted network of belief'.[130] This act of retreat is characteristic of and productive of post-truth in that it sees internet users prioritise comfortable, convenient truths that align with their worldview at the expense of entertaining facts that may disrupt this. In the face of internet-driven information overload, Kathrin Braun conceptualises post-truth as 'an ordering device […] that serves as a means to create order in a complicated world and makes sense of what is going on. Like any ordering device, it is contingent and value-laden and sheds light on some aspects of reality while obscuring others'.[131] Braun's assessment is valuable in that it suggests that post-truth has been ubiquitous since 2016 because digital and social medias have themselves become ubiquitous sources of a near-infinite amount of information.[132]

[128] Andrew Odlyzko, 'The Glorious Promise of the Post-Truth World', *Ubiquity*, 2017 (2017), 1-7 (p. 2).
[129] Kalpokas, *A Political Theory of Post-Truth*, p. 28.
[130] Julian Baggini, *A Short History of Truth: Consolations for a Post-Truth World* (London: Quercus, 2017), p. 102.
[131] Kathrin Braun, 'Unpacking post-truth', *Critical Policy Studies*, 13.4 (2019), 432-436 (p. 432).
[132] For a more developed discussion of the internet's role in intensifying the post-truth condition of the twenty-first century, see Chapter 4.

The resurgence of far-right politics may have also catalysed the post-truth condition. Dissatisfied with the neoliberal response to the 2008 financial crisis and showing greater hostility to the globalised economy, disenfranchised demographics 'began to resist the "regime of truth" enforced by centrist, technocratic politicians and to reject the rhetoric of globalization and neoliberal democracy'.[133] Right-wing parties exploited this discontent by attacking neoliberalism and elites, garnering for themselves electoral success throughout Europe, North America, and South America.[134] Ilan Zvi Baron argues that post-truth has 'become the foundations upon which right-wing populist movements have flourished' in these contexts, to which the right-wing's attack of elites (typically experts) attests, and yet the reverse is also true: the ascendency of far-right politics has provided fertile ground on which post-truth has flowered.[135] Federico Finchelstein identifies 'questioning reality; endorsing myth, rage, and paranoia; and promoting lies' as key strategies used by contemporary far-right political forces as they gain, maintain, or exert their power.[136] In questioning reality and promoting fabrications, far-right figures make truth-indifference the lingua franca of the political realm. Moreover, by endorsing rage and paranoia, far-right politicians decentre facts from their discourse and manipulate how the voting population *feels*, rather than how it *thinks*, placing it in a state of irrationality, anger, and anxiety. Given the ascendency of far-right politics in the twenty-first century, these strategies pave the way for irrationality and emotional appeals to dominate the human experience, thus engendering further manifestations of post-truth.

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[133] Cosentino, *Social Media and the Post-Truth World Order*, p. 12.

[134] For the success of right-wing politics in Europe, see examples such as the UK (in which the UK Independence Party gained the third-most votes in the 2015 general election), France (in which Marine Le Pen's National Rally – formerly the National Front – received the second-most votes in the 2017 and 2022 presidential elections), and Spain (in which the right-wing Vox became the third largest party in the November 2019 general election, less than six years after its inception). Donald Trump's 2017 electoral success attests the popularity of right-wing politics in the United States, whereas Jair Bolsonaro, the 38th president of Brazil, illustrates the popularity of right-wing politics in South America.

[135] Ilan Zvi Baron, *How to save politics in a post-truth era: Thinking through difficult times* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 2018), p. 152.

[136] Federico Finchelstein, *A Brief History of Fascist Lies* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2020), p. 2.

As with the pre-history of post-truth, assessing all possible causes for the intensification of the post-truth condition in the twenty-first century remains out of the scope of this thesis. Regardless, the above discussion illustrates that there exists in the twenty-first century various characteristics that catalyse the post-truth condition. Not only is there more information available to individuals than ever before, but feelings have increasingly become the battleground upon which far-right figures fight political battles. This catalysis, particularly when intentionally stoked, constitutes one of the twenty-first century's most urgent crises. I disagree with Braun's assessment that post-truth is, '[l]ike any ordering device', a purely theoretical 'universalizing meta-narrative that draws a distinction between then and now, right and wrong, truth and power', because it bears tangible negative consequences.[137] The misleading division of populations that post-truth incites on emotive grounds has seen 'women, LGBTQ+ and racialised individuals […] receive unprecedented levels of online abuse'.[138] Post-truthful allegations of vote fraud made by Donald Trump following his loss in the 2020 United States presidential election led to a violent insurrection that injured hundreds, caused more than $2.7 million in damages, and posed a profound threat to the democratic fibres of the United States of America.[139] Moreover, disinformation about the COVID-19 pandemic, which sought to discredit claims made by scientific experts, 'increase[d] vaccine hesitancy, lower[ed] vaccination rates, and cause[d] preventable death[s]'.[140] If, as discussed above, truth matters because it is paramount to happiness, freedom, and the continued upkeep of the political fabric of society, then the devaluation of fact-based

[137] Braun, 'Unpacking post-truth', p. 432.
[138] Charlotte Galpin and Patrick Vernon, 'Post-truth politics as discursive violence: Online abuse, the public sphere and the figure of "the expert"', *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 26.2 (2024), 423-443 (p. 423).
[139] For a report on the number injured by the insurrection, see Hannah Rabinowitz, Holmes Lybrand, and Evan Perez, 'US attorney says untold number of police officers injured while protecting Capitol on January 6', *CNN*, 4 January 2024 <https://edition.cnn.com/2024/01/04/politics/january-6-prosecutions-justice-department/index.html> [accessed 7 June 2024]; for a report on the cost of damages made during the insurrection, see Zachary Snowdon Smith, 'Capitol Riot Costs Go Up: Government Estimates $2.73 Million In Property Damage', *Forbes*, 8 April 2024 <https://www.forbes.com/sites/zacharysmith/2022/04/08/capitol-riot-costs-go-up-government-estimates-273-million-in-property-damage/> [accessed 7 June 2024].
[140] Michael A Gisondi, Rachel Barber, Jemery Samuel Faust, Ali Raja, Matthew C Strehlow, Lauren M Westafer, and Michael Gottlieb, 'A Deadly Infodemic: Social Media and the Power of COVID-19 Misinformation', *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 24.2 (2022), 1-7 (p. 2).

truths that the intensified post-truth condition of the twenty-first century engenders constitutes one of the present moment's most urgent crises, for it brings with it division and abuse (and with it, unhappiness and oppression), violence and democratic instability; and, at its worst, needless deaths.

Part Three: Conceptualising the Endotext

An Introduction to Endotexts

The dystopian genre has long held what we might today recognise as post-truth anxieties. This is especially evident in the genre's use of a particular literary device: one which George McKay calls the 'abysmal realm of books within books', or, as I reimagine it, the endotext.[141] In reimagining books-within-books as endotexts, I have identified four core characteristics. First, endotexts are additional, necessarily smaller, fictional texts that supplement a novel's "main narrative", i.e., its central story or stories. Their relatively smaller size is necessary for them not to subsume and become a novel's "main narrative". Second, endotexts are fictional insofar as they originate from and can only be found within the texts they supplement – a crucial distinction that I shall return to below. Within their story-worlds, however, this fictionality is not mandatory, and an endotext can be a diegetic piece of fiction or non-fiction. Third, as McKay's use of the preposition "within" implies, it is essential that endotexts are embedded within their counterpart main narratives by virtue of being printed inside or around them. This feature is crucial, for without their co-presence, there would be no additional text for a novel's real-world readers, i.e., you and I, to engage with. It is from this essential embeddedness that I have derived the "endo-" prefix (i.e. internal; within). Last, endotexts must be explicitly textual in form, taking on the appearance of a written document. Following McKay, this means that endotexts may take on the appearance of books-within-books, but so too may they assume the guise of poems, manuscripts, and screenplays; frame narratives,

[141] George McKay, 'Metapropaganda: Self-Reading Dystopian Fiction: Burdekin's "Swastika Night" and Orwell's "Nineteen Eighty-Four"', *Science Fiction Studies*, 21.3 (1994), 302-314 (p. 302).

forewords, and afterwords; epigraphs, footnotes, and appendices; letters, notes, emails, and social media posts; and newspaper reports, transcripts of recordings, blogposts, and webpages – in other words, any other type of written text. Under my current conception of endotexts, this would exclude other forms of texts such as television broadcasts, photographs, or speeches (unless transcribed or otherwise transformed to a written textual document). With these characteristics outlined, I propose the following definition for endotexts:

> *Additional, smaller, written texts that originate from and can only be found printed within or alongside a work's main narrative, which they supplement.*

Moreover, three distinct endotextures – types of endotext – have emerged in my analysis of them, which I call "Written and Read Endotexts", "Parallel Endotexts", and "Critical Endotexts", a taxonomy for which is available in Appendix 1.[142] A key distinction between these endotextures is their degree of embeddedness: Written and Read Endotexts are embedded *within* their main narratives, Parallel Endotexts have no hierarchical relationship with their main narratives, and Critical Endotexts *embed* their main narratives. Moreover, each endotexture functions slightly differently. Written and Read Endotexts (e.g., Winston's diary in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*) typically assume the form of a text that a character either produces or receives, such as a letter, newspaper article, or book-within-book.[143] As such, they necessitate that the acts of composition and interpretation are narrativized within their counterpart main narratives, thus dramatizing how truth claims are produced and how audiences choose which truth claims to believe – a vital consideration under an intensified post-truth condition in which emotional appeals, the affirmation of beliefs, and personal desires trump veracity when

[142] I opt to capitalise these categories to better distinguish them from generic description, i.e., a 'Critical Endotext' versus a 'critical endotext'.

[143] Furthermore, I suggest that there is a subcategory of Written and Read Endotexts: the Minor Endotext. Often comprising little more than a sentence fragment (a character writing down an address or a phone number; a label or sign that a character reads), I believe that Minor Endotexts are too brief to convey significant meaning.

making and choosing between truth claims. Parallel Endotexts (e.g., 'Earthseed: The Books of the Living' in *Parable of the Sower*) comprise interstitial texts that sit alongside their counterpart main narratives and, crucially, neither directly comment upon nor are directly commented upon by them. Instead, endotext and main narrative are obliquely connected by virtue of originating within the same story-world. Parallel Endotexts mimic the textual fabric of the real world, often reflecting the newfound prevalence of post-truth or the information overload that has made it so persuasive. Critical Endotexts (e.g., the 'Historical Notes' in *The Handmaid's Tale*) invert the relationship established by Written and Read Endotexts. Usually adopting the form of forewords, footnotes, appendices, or other textual appendages that directly comment upon the characters and occurrences of the main narrative as if they were real, Critical Endotexts dramatize the acts of commentary and criticism, thus foregrounding how authority figures shape, frame, and inform how the masses come to understand past and present world events. This is particularly pertinent to the post-truth condition, under which some academics, experts, and political figures abuse their authority and reputations as arbiters of truth to propagate post-truthful narratives.

With these distinctions in place, I shall now explain which literary theories I have borrowed from to devise endotextuality, i.e., the theory accounting for endotexts and endotextures, so that I may better elucidate how endotexts work and what their purposes are. This will warrant that the above definition for endotexts is revisited and refined, thus resulting in a definitive summation for the concept.

Theorising Endotextuality

McKay's assessment that endotexts belong to an 'abysmal realm' invites two readings. One is that his description alludes to Lucien Dällenbach's *mise en abyme* (discussed below), whereas another is that his assessment is disdainful. I find the latter to be more likely, for endotexts are often derided for being 'the least satisfactorily presented [aspects of a novel] from a literary point of view', have been accused of 'add[ing] little'

to a text, and have been dismissed as 'self-indulgent' and 'busy and overdone'.[144] Indeed, such distaste is apparent in how Gregory Claeys, writing about *Nineteen Eighty-Four*'s endotexts, notes that '[m]any readers initially find [them] perplexing if not irritating'.[145] This irritation, distaste, and disinterest in 'The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism' and 'The Principles of Newspeak' is evident historically and anecdotally. They 'apparently bothered the American Book-of-the-Month Club [– an American publisher that sought to bring Orwell's novel to the United States –] enough for them to demand that [they] be cut […] as a condition of acceptance by the Club', whereas approximately eighty percent of the undergraduate students I taught in a first-year "Dystopia" module at the University of Birmingham confessed that, when first reading Orwell's novel, they skipped over one or both of these endotexts, calling them boring, overlong, or – in the case of 'The Principles of Newspeak' – admitting that they thought it was a scholarly, real-world paratext.[146] Similarly, when I first read *The Handmaid's Tale* in my early twenties, I did not read all of the 'Historical Notes', its major endotext, disinterested by what I believed to be the transcript of a real-world academic conference.

Where endotexts have received more favourable attention, they tend to be considered as expositional devices. Claeys writes that 'The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism' 'fulfils the vital function of offering a much more complex explanation of [Ingsoc's] principles than the plot itself could ever convey'.[147] This argument echoes Miguel Ramalhete Gomes, who, discussing the endotexts used to conclude some chapters in Alan Moore's *Watchmen* (1986-1987) graphic novels, writes that they convey a great amount of contextual information to help 'expand the reader's

[144] Kumar, 'Utopia's Shadow', p. 21; Andrew Milner, 'Introduction' in *Tenses of Imagination: Raymond Williams on Science Fiction, Utopia and Dystopia*, ed. by Andrew Milner (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010), pp. 1-7 (p. 6); Kate Macdonald, 'The Power', *Foundation*, 46 (2017), 116-119 (p. 117); Randy Boyagoda, 'American War by Omar El Akkad – north-south divide', *Financial Times*, 27 October 2017 <https://www.ft.com/content/2d222ae6-b993-11e7-bff8-f9946607a6ba> [accessed 23 July 2023].
[145] Claeys, *Dystopia: A Natural History*, p. 415.
[146] Thomas Pynchon, 'Introduction' in George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, (London: Penguin, 2003), p. xxiii.
[147] Claeys, *Dystopia: A Natural History*, p. 415.

knowledge of this fictional world […] in more or less unobtrusive ways'.[148] Similarly, a *Kirkus* review of Marc-Uwe Kling's *QualityLand* (2017/2020) observes that the novel's endotexts 'give context to [the setting's] odd rules and tics'.[149] Alternatively, critics occasionally look to endotexts to clarify the narrative ambiguities offered by the plots of their counterpart main narratives. Earl Ingersoll's description of *The Handmaid's Tale*'s 'Historical Notes' is characteristic of this trend, for by writing that the endotext 'offers a somewhat brighter future when Gilead and patriarchal repression for a time have come to an end', Ingersoll looks to it to resolve the uncertainties posed by the main narrative's conclusion.[150] Furthermore, although Booker criticises endotexts for 'disrupting any movement toward interpretive closure', such criticism appears rooted in Booker's wish for endotexts to clarify narrative ambiguities, suggesting that he believes this is how they *should* function.[151] Although seeing endotexts as expositional devices or narrative clarifiers is more favourable than the derision they have often received, these arguments are limited insofar as they only consider endotexts in relation to their main narratives' plots or story-worlds. This emphasis on plot and setting suggests that even where endotexts are discussed, they are decentralised and deemed of lesser importance relative to their counterpart main narratives. Doing as such overlooks many of endotexts' more meaningful intratextual and extratextual functions, functions that conceptualising endotextuality by detailing its component theories accounts for.

Given that endotexts form relationships with their main narratives by virtue of their co-presence, endotextuality borrows – and deviates – from Gérard Genette's work on transtextuality, which he defines as being 'all that sets the text in relationship,

[148] Miguel Ramalhete Gomes, '"Nothing Ever Ends": Ending Dystopian History in *Watchmen*' in *Dystopia(n) Matters: On the Page, on Screen, on Stage*, ed. by Fátima Vieira (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2013), pp. 270-280 (p. 277).
[149] Kirkus Reviews, 'QUALITYLAND', *Kirkus Reviews*, 14 October 2019 <https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/marc-uwe-kling/qualityland/> [accessed 20 March 2023].
[150] Earl Ingersoll, 'Margaret Atwood's "The Handmaid's Tale": Echoes of Orwell', *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, 5.4 (1993), 64-72 (p. 72). Moreover, this type of optimistic reading of *The Handmaid's Tale*'s Critical Endotext is not without its limitations, which will be discussed in Chapter Two.
[151] Booker, *Dystopian Literature: A Theory and Research Guide*, p. 119.

whether obvious or concealed, with other texts'.[152] Transtextuality comprises intertextuality, paratextuality, metatextuality, architextuality, and hypertextuality. Of these, intertextuality, paratextuality, and metatextuality appear most applicable to the relationship shared by endotexts and their main narratives. This relationship is intertextual insofar as it is 'a relationship of copresence between two texts […] the actual presence of one text within another', something which is typically achieved through quotation, plagiarism, and allusion.[153] The relationship between endotexts and their main narratives may appear paratextual where endotexts are referred to within, or take the form of, paratexts, i.e. in 'a title, a subtitle, intertitles; prefaces, postfaces, notices, forewords, etc.; marginal, infrapaginal, terminal notes; epigraphs; illustrations; blurbs, book covers, dust jacket, and many other kinds of secondary signals'.[154] Moreover, a metatextual relationship between an endotext and its main narrative may appear to take place where the endotext establishes an act of commentary that 'unites a given text to another, of which it speaks without necessarily citing it', as in instances where an endotext assumes the form of a discursive footnote.[155] Each of these considerations, however, fall flat because endotexts fail to meet a basic assumption that underpins each of Genette's transtextual relationships. For a transtextual relationship to occur, all texts in question must be *real* and exist as discrete artefacts in our world, rather than solely existing within their respective story-worlds. This is because transtextual relationships are akin to literary "in-jokes" that depend on readers having knowledge of all texts within a relationship to be fully understood. The bitter irony of the title of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) is only apparent to a reader who is cognisant of the gleeful naivety with which Miranda says this phrase in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1610-1611); although the erstwhile castaway exclaims this when she encounters newcomers to her island home, marvelling at the richness of humanity, Huxley subverts

[152] Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: literature in the second degree*, trans. by Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), p. 1.
[153] Genette, *Palimpsests*, pp. 1-2.
[154] Genette, *Palimpsests*, p. 3.
[155] Genette, *Palimpsests*, p. 4.

this in his warning of unchecked scientific progress and allowing ruling powers to use it without question. Endotexts sever this connection, for real-world readers cannot be familiar with them or the references they imbue prior to encountering them within their counterpart main narratives, therefore failing to offer the familiarisation effect upon which transtextuality hinges. As such, although Genette's conception of transtextuality is useful in categorising different forms of textual relationship, the endotextual relationship sits outside of Genette's classifications, and so other theories must be borrowed from to account for its purposes.

Endotexts' intratextual purpose lies in how they guide readers' interpretations of the overall works to which they belong, narrowing certain interpretive possibilities while expanding others. Endotextuality is therefore peculiarly available to the debates central to reader-response theory. Paying particular attention to 'the many different ways in which readers respond to literary texts', reader-response theory posits that 'it is the reader who "makes" literature' by 'spontaneously draw[ing] together whatever the novelist presents, scene, gesture, dramatized comment, omniscient judgement, into a single synthesis', ultimately arguing that texts 'only have a meaning when […] read'.[156] Reader-response theory asserts that all readers or 'interpretive communities' (groups of people whose interpretations are informed by a shared background, experience, or characteristic) make equally valuable and valid interpretations – there are no 'right' or 'wrong' readings of a text, simply readings that are different.[157] A consequence of this interpretive multiplicity, however, is that texts are unstable and lack determinate meanings.[158] Endotexts do not address this instability by clarifying aspects of their main narratives' *story-worlds* or *plots*, as Claeys's, Ingersoll's, and Booker's arguments, summarised above, suggest. Instead, endotexts clarify their main narratives' *meanings*

[156] Todd F. Davis and Kenneth Womack, *Formalist Criticism and Reader-Response Theory* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), p. 51; Stanley Fish, *Is There A Text in This Class?: The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), p. 11; Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 53; Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (London: Routledge, 1978), p. 20.
[157] Fish, *Is There A Text in This Class?: The Authority of Interpretive Communities*, p. 14.
[158] Fish, *Is There A Text in This Class?: The Authority of Interpretive Communities*, p. 305.

and *messages* by reworking their key thematic preoccupations and central conceits. This effect is necessitated by endotexts' brevity relative to their counterpart main narratives, for they tend to prioritise communicating essential information and ideas because they do not have the luxury of extraneous details. As such, they cut through the information abundance generated by their main narratives' description of myriad characters, settings, and events; crystalise their central messages; and become microcosms of the texts by which they are contained. In this sense, endotexts function similarly to *mise en abyme*, or 'texts containing one or more doublings which function as mirrors […] of the text', for by reiterating their main narratives' key thematic preoccupations and central conceits, they 'manifest their fear about their own readability' that interpretive multiplicities engender and steer readers away from making certain interpretations.[159] Endotexts therefore challenge reader-response theory, for although their innate anxiety acknowledges the potential for readers to make diverse textual interpretations, their re-emphasis of a work's themes and conceits sees them establish the boundaries of this interpretive landscape.

The inherent metafictionality of endotexts helps to elucidate their extratextual purpose. Metafiction, writes Linda Hutcheon, 'forces the reader to acknowledge the fictiveness of the text', an argument that Patricia Waugh develops by expressing that it 'self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact'.[160] Endotexts lay bare their, and their counterpart main narratives', constructedness by a variety of means. Through transposing a variety of textual forms into a story-world setting, all endotexts take 'writers, writing, and anything else which has to do with the way books and stories are written' as one of their subjects, thus exhibiting a self-conscious preoccupation with textuality.[161] This is especially true of Written Endotexts,

[159] Lucien Dällenbach, 'Reflexivity and Reading', trans. by Annette Tomarken, *New Literary History*, 11.3 (1980), 435-449 (p. 435); p. 441.
[160] Linda Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox* (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1980), p. 7; Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1984), p. 2.
[161] Larry McCaffery, 'The Art of Metafiction', in *Metafiction*, ed. by Mark Currie (London: Longman, 1995), pp. 181-193 (p. 183).

given the dramatization of textual composition that they necessitate. Conversely, Read Endotexts and Critical Endotexts emphatically 'reveal an intense awareness of text as text' through their narrativization of interpretation, commentary, and criticism, for they make the 'creative dimension[s] of reading', i.e. interpreting, ordering, selecting, processing, and making sense of information, hard for a real-world reader to ignore.[162] Moreover, endotexts tend to disrupt their counterpart main narratives, 'mak[ing] it harder for the reader to begin applying [their] disbelief'.[163] This disruption is often sequential, for Written and Read Endotexts and Parallel Endotexts intrude on the progression of their counterpart main narratives, but so too is it visual, for endotexts are typically demarcated by paratextual clues – e.g., titles and subtitles – or typographical differences – e.g., font size, typeface, italicisation – that create a sense of visual disunity within a literary work that 'jolts the reader back to [their] own orientation', re-alerting them to the fact that they are reading a deliberately constructed text.[164] In deliberately highlighting its constructedness, metafiction 'explore[s] the possible fictionality of the world outside the literary fictional text' and queries 'how human beings reflect, construct and mediate their experience of the world'.[165] As such, endotexts' metafictionally reflexive qualities encourage real-world readers to consider how the thematic preoccupations and central conceits crystallised within endotexts may likewise be apparent in reality.

An account of endotexts' extratextual purpose is developed by considering whether they are, following Roland Barthes, *lisible* (readerly) or *scriptible* (writerly) texts. For Barthes, readerly texts plunge readers 'into a kind of idleness', for they are 'left with no more than the poor freedom either to accept or reject the text' and the meanings it plainly presents, while writerly texts 'make the reader no longer a consumer, but the producer of the text' because their complexity defies straightforward

[162] Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox*, p. 100; p. xii.
[163] Robert Scholes, *Fabulation and Metafiction* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1979), p. 33.
[164] Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox*, p. 148.
[165] Waugh, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction*, p. 2; p. 3.

interpretation, and so readers must labour to uncover meaning.[166] Readerly and writerly texts evoke different sensations in readers, Barthes continues. A readerly text generates *plaisir* (pleasure), for it 'contents, fills, grants euphoria; [it] comes from culture and does not break with it, is linked to a *comfortable* practice of reading', while writerly texts evoke a sense of *jouissance*.[167] Although commonly translated into English as "bliss", critics take *jouissance* to mean '*the excess of pleasure*', a 'combination of bliss, pleasure and orgasm', the sensation elicited by doing something transgressive, something 'beyond taboo', for a writerly text is one which:

> imposes a state of loss, the text that discomforts (perhaps to the point of a certain boredom), unsettles the reader's historical, cultural, psychological assumptions, the consistency of [their] tastes, values, memories, brings to a crisis [their] relation with language.[168]

The bliss evoked by writerly texts offers readers liberation, for by disrupting their 'assumptions about the *world*, its culture, and its people, [their] *self*-consistency, and [their] relation to *language*', it constitutes a 'subversion of the name-of-the-father and of the bourgeois order for which it stands', thus bringing about a state of 'disorder within an oppressive or deforming order' that would otherwise engender, in the view of Alain Robbe-Grillet, 'rigidity in thinking and fascism in politics'.[169] Furthermore, such bliss is epiphanic for readers, for by challenging the assumptions and beliefs that they hold of the world, it brings them to face 'the[ir] unconscious or repressed' knowledge, examine

[166] Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. by Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1985), p. 4.
[167] Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. by Richard Miller (New York: Noonday Press, 1989), p. 14.
[168] Robert Miklitsch, 'Difference: Roland Barthes's *Pleasure of the Text, Text of Pleasure*', *boundary 2*, 12.1 (1983), 101-114 (p. 103); Ronald D. Bogue, 'Roland Barthes, Alain Robbe-Grillet, and the Paradise of the Writerly Text', *Criticism*, 22.2 (1980), 156-171 (p. 157); Ben Stolzfus, 'Toward Bliss: Barthes, Lacan, and Robbe-Grillet', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 35.4 (1989), 699-706 (p. 704); Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, p. 14.
[169] Mary Bittner Wiseman, 'Texts of Pleasure, Texts of Bliss', *The Bucknell Review*, 29.2 (1985), 47-62 (pp. 49-50); Stolzfus, 'Toward Bliss: Barthes, Lacan, and Robbe-Grillet', p. 702; p. 705; Alain Robbe-Grillet paraphrased in Stolzfus, 'Toward Bliss: Barthes, Lacan, and Robbe-Grillet', p. 705.

how their assumptions and beliefs were formed, and question the 'external causations' and power structures that shape how they come to know and understand the world.[170]

Endotexts grant readers 'access to bliss by the cohabitations of languages *working side by side*', which I take here to include the co-presence of endotexts and their main narratives, and as such, they are writerly texts.[171] This impression is reinforced by how they evade straightforward interpretation, demand that readers engage with texts on multiple narratological levels, and often necessitate several concurrent acts of reading, for by 'placing their readers in a situation once removed from the usual fictional stance by presenting and discussing the fictional work of an imaginary character', endotexts, especially Written and Read Endotexts, cause real-world readers to read a text's main narrative, its endotexts, and a story-world reader's reading of the endotext, all in the name of uncovering meaning.[172] Moreover, the erotic undertone of Barthesian bliss, although subtle, is evident in how endotexts are 'flirtatious' insofar as they titillate readers by posing a sense-making riddle for them to solve, all the while flattering readers by affording them a privileged vantage point in the interpretive game.[173] This privilege is apparent in how, regardless of whether they encounter a Written and Read Endotext, Parallel Endotext, or Critical Endotext, and all of the story-world acts of interpretation or composition contained therein, a real reader is alone in having access to the entirety of the novel, main narrative and endotext(s) alike, a luxury that enables them to make sense of a text, albeit laboriously, and subsequently revel in the bliss this generates.

Drawing on the works of Jacques Lacan and Serge Leclaire, Barthes claims that bliss 'is unspeakable, inter-dicted'.[174] Criticism, he contends, '*always deals with the texts of pleasure, never the texts of bliss*' because bliss transcends language, the very thing upon which criticism depends upon for communication, whereas pleasure is safely

[170] Elżbieta Kołdrzak, '*Plaisir* and *jouissance*: The case of potential and textual reading of Barthes' theory', *Argument*, 5.1 (2015), 51-58 (p. 53); p. 53.
[171] Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, p. 4.
[172] McCaffery, 'The Art of Metafiction', p. 183.
[173] Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, p. 6.
[174] Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, p. 21.

couched within the realm of language.[175] Continuing, Barthes opines that a writerly text and the bliss it evokes is 'outside pleasure, outside criticism, *unless it is reached through another text of bliss*: you cannot speak "on" such a text, you can only speak "in" it, *in its fashion*'.[176] It is in this remark where the two theories accounting for endotexts' extratextual purpose intersect. As John Barth notes, metafiction 'disturb[s] us metaphysically: […] we're reminded of the fictitious aspect of our own existence', a remark which recalls Barthes's description of the effect of bliss as being one that 'discomforts' and 'unsettles the reader's […] assumptions', 'bring[ing] to a crisis [their] relation with language'.[177] Endotexts are therefore doubly writerly, and through discussing their inherent metafictionality, their bliss can be articulated. This bliss is found not merely in how endotexts orient readers to the real-world prevalence of the ideas and issues they crystallise, but in how such orientation can destabilise readers' subconscious assumptions about the world, assumptions that they have repressed or that the power structures acting upon them have suppressed, ultimately bringing them to a new – or newly uncovered – understanding of the world.

In *The Work of Literature in an Age of Post-Truth*, Christopher Schaberg articulates the value of literature at a time when 'truth has been jettisoned for something so much more entertaining— and even more persuasive'.[178] He characterises the intensified post-truth condition of the twenty-first century as having a 'haphazard speed' that 'privileges viral storytelling, constant updating of narratives (self and otherwise), and snap judgments regarding things big and small, local and global'.[179] Literature, he argues, counteracts this because it is 'a slow enterprise', it 'slows us down', a slowness that allows us to 'carefully consider how narratives are fabricated, produced, disseminated, and consumed – and the weight […] that people give these

[175] Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, p. 21.
[176] Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, p. 22.
[177] John Barth, 'The Literature of Exhaustion', in *Metafiction*, ed. by Mark Currie (London: Longman, 1995), pp. 161-171 (p. 169); Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, p. 14.
[178] Schaberg, *The Work of Literature in an Age of Post-Truth*, p. 3.
[179] Schaberg, *The Work of Literature in an Age of Post-Truth*, p. 26; p. 3.

narratives, for however long or quickly'.[180] Second, because 'literary characters, scenes, and stories can lead us into other possible lives', literature encourages its readers to become more receptive to alternative points of view, thus 'spur[ring] empathy with respect to others', a crucial consideration in an era where reinforcing one's beliefs and refusing to accept alternative viewpoints is ascendant.[181] Last, Schaberg contends that reading literature serves as training in critical thinking, the 'disciplined process of actively and skillfully [sic] conceptualizing, applying, analyzing [sic], synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action', the result of which is that readers of literature become 'actively engaged in life'.[182] Critical thinking, he continues, 'is a matter of survival' in an age of post-truth, for the distinction between true and false is blurred, new narratives rapidly take hold, and actors of post-truth seek to exert dominance over passive audiences who are disinterested in truth.[183]

Schaberg does not directly engage with Barthes's *The Pleasure of the Text* in *The Work of Literature in an Age of Post-Truth*. However, in writing that literature is valuable in an era of heightened levels of post-truth because 'it is critically grounding – *even as it ungrounds long held assumptions and common sense*', Schaberg evokes the idea of Barthesian bliss.[184] It therefore follows that endotextual bliss is crucial to resisting the intensified post-truth condition of the twenty-first century. If the slowness of reading literature counteracts the frenetic pace of the post-truth era, then the laboured pace necessitated by endotexts as they evoke bliss particularly unpicks the tendency to automatically and unthinkingly respond to truth claims. If literature combats post-truth by bringing readers to engage with alternative viewpoints, then endotexts' blissful disruption of readers' 'historical, cultural, [and] psychological assumptions' by

[180] Schaberg, *The Work of Literature in an Age of Post-Truth*, p. 3; p. 7; p. 143.
[181] Schaberg, *The Work of Literature in an Age of Post-Truth*, p. 11.
[182] Schaberg, *The Work of Literature in an Age of Post-Truth*, p. 73; Stephen Brookfield, *Developing Critical Thinkers: Challenging Adults to Explore Alternative Ways of Thinking and Acting* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1987), p. 2.
[183] Schaberg, *The Work of Literature in an Age of Post-Truth*, p. 74.
[184] Schaberg, *The Work of Literature in an Age of Post-Truth*, p. 141 (emphasis added).

reorienting them to how their assumptions and beliefs were formed and forcing them to consider different assumptions and beliefs particularly unpicks the narrow-mindedness of post-truth's emphasis of affirming one's beliefs above all else.[185] Endotextual bliss, in other words, trains readers to be more openminded, more empathetic, more willing to accept difference. If literature develops readers' critical thinking skills, which prepare readers to find meaning and truth in a world characterised by information overload, then because endotexts grant 'access to bliss by the cohabitations of languages *working side by side*', cohabitations that demand navigating several narratological levels and undertaking several concurrent acts of reading, they are particularly adept at readying readers to navigate the informational maelstrom, identify unveracious claims, and make active, informed, critically astute choices when picking between opposing narratives.[186] Ultimately, if, following Schaberg, literature has particular value in counteracting newly heightened levels of post-truth, then the bliss granted by endotexts makes them uniquely suited to inoculating readers against the pervasiveness and persuasiveness of post-truth.

Endotexts' purposes can therefore be summarised as thus: intratextually, they shape a readers' interpretation of a text by crystallising its thematic preoccupations and central conceits; extratextually, they evoke in readers a sense of bliss by orienting them to how those themes and conceits are apparent in reality, an epiphanic orientation that may unearth the assumptions about the world that they have repressed, suppressed, or taken for granted. These purposes have been accounted for by bringing together theories of transtextuality, reader-response, and metafiction, as well as Lucien Dällenbach's *mise en abyme* and Barthesian bliss, all of which will re-emerge silently, implicitly, and explicitly throughout this thesis. By means of conclusion, I put forward the following revised definition for "endotexts":

[185] Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, p. 14.
[186] Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, p. 4.

Additional texts that assume the guise of a written document and are only found printed within, alongside, or around a fictional work's larger main narrative, from whose story-world they originate, and whose thematic concerns and central conceits they metafictionally crystallise, subsequently shaping real-world readers' interpretations of those narratives and alerting them to the extratextual presence of comparable issues, thus challenging the assumptions of the world that they hold.

'The Principles of Newspeak': an Endotextual Reading[187]

Nineteen Eighty-Four's 'The Principles of Newspeak' is a Critical Endotext.[188] It possesses an air of authoritativeness by embedding the novel's main narrative within its own interpretive frame, commenting on an aspect of the story-world (Newspeak – the language designed by the Party to exert control over the citizens of Oceania), and directly referring to 'the Records Department, in which Winston Smith worked', all the while the very form it assumes – that of an appendix – reinforces its authority.[189] As a Critical Endotext, it provides fertile ground from which a case study of endotextuality can be drawn. To begin, I shall analyse how 'The Principles of Newspeak' clarifies *Nineteen Eighty-Four*'s thematic preoccupations and central conceits, thus achieving endotexts' intratextual effect. Second, I will discuss how the appendix metafictionally alerts readers to the possibility that the issues it crystallises are present in reality and how the bliss its writerliness evokes may disrupt readers' subconscious assumptions about the credibility of the written word, thus executing endotexts' extratextual function.[190] In concluding, I

[187] Versions of this section were presented at the 'Critical Orwell' conference in April 2022 and at the 'Current Research in Speculative Fiction Conference 2022' in June of the same year. My thanks to the conference organisers for giving me the opportunity to test-drive endotextuality, and my thanks also to the conference attendees for their engagement, patience, and thoughtful questions.

[188] Where writing the titles of endotexts, I opt to place them within single quotation marks, following the MHRA convention for the titles of short works (i.e., poems, short stories, essays) that form part of a larger whole. Where no title for an endotext is given within a novel, I choose to create a short, descriptive title myself for the sake of clarity.

[189] George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 350.

[190] Where conducting endotextual readings, I opt to consider their intratextual function first and their extratextual function second. This is so I may identify which themes, conceits, and ideas endotexts crystallise before discussing how they impel readers to act upon them.

will summarise how this endotextual reading sheds light on both 'The Principles of Newspeak' and Orwell's novel at large.

Where critics have considered the intratextual function of 'The Principles of Newspeak', they usually focus on how it does – or does not – resolve the bleak ending of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*'s main narrative. Some argue that 'The Principles of Newspeak' constitutes a hopeful ending to the novel. Highlighting that the appendix is written in standard English, in the third person, and in the past tense, rather than in Newspeak, they argue that its story-world author writes in a time in which 'the world of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is over' because 'Big Brother was eventually defeated', a reality implied by the fact that the appendix's grammar implies that '[Newspeak's] replacement of language never fully took place'.[191] Conversely, others argue that it is 'indefensible to assume a deeper plot that would add […] a collective happy ending in [the story-world's] future', or that hopeful readings are insufficient because 'there are no specific references in the appendix to any historical events concerning the purported demise of Ingsoc' and that it may represent 'the Party […] writing the future history of its own language', thus rendering it a fraudulent text.[192] This 'hope debate' remains fiercely contested and is ultimately unresolved. Rather than seek to definitively settle this conundrum, an endotextual reading of 'The Principles of Newspeak' proposes that its intratextual function lies not in how it offers or denies hope, but in its stimulation of this debate in the first place.

[191] Margaret Atwood, *In Other Worlds: SF and the Human Imagination* (London: Virago, 2011), p. 146; Laura Frost, 'You probably didn't read the most telling part of Orwell's "1984" – the appendix', *Quartz*, 19 June 2013 <https://qz.com/95696/you-probably-didnt-read-the-most-telling-part-of-orwells-1984-the-appendix/> [accessed April 7 2021]; Diletta De Cristofaro, 'The Politics of the Archive in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*' in *The Cambridge Companion to Nineteen Eighty-Four*, ed. by Nathan Waddell (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2020), pp. 51-63 (p. 55).

[192] Darko Suvin, 'Orwell and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* Today: Genius and Tunnel Vision', *Historical Materialism*, 28.3 (2020), 167-195 (pp. 180-181); Barnaby Page, 'Abandon Hope: Some Readers Detect A Note Of Optimism In Orwell's Dystopian "Nineteen Eighty-Four". They're Wrong', *London Literary Review*, 25 January 2020 <https://medium.com/london-literary-review/abandon-all-hope-some-people-see-an-optimistic-note-in-orwells-nineteen-eighty-four-9a7e159e24f8> [accessed 7 April 2021]; Theo Finigan, '"Into the Memory Hole": Totalitarianism and Mal d'Archive in Nineteen Eighty-Four and The Handmaid's Tale', *Science Fiction Studies*, 38.3 (2011), 435-459 (p. 451).

'The Principles of Newspeak' announces itself as an 'APPENDIX', an inherently authoritative form of paratext that 'provide[s] the text with a (variable) setting and sometimes a commentary' by virtue of offering additional information that contextualises or explains the text to which it is appended.[193] At face value, 'The Principles of Newspeak' achieves this function. It begins with a paratextual title and subtitle, excerpts such as 'Newspeak was the official language of Oceania and had been devised to meet the ideological needs of Ingsoc' are indicative of its adoption of a scholarly register, and its thorough, systematic discussion of Newspeak's '*A vocabulary*', '*B vocabulary*', and '*C vocabulary*' see it explicate the language's grammatical particularities, thus ostensibly shedding new light on Orwell's story-world.[194] The endotext, in other words, calls itself an appendix, looks like an appendix, and sounds like an appendix. However, 'The Principles of Newspeak' does not function as an appendix ought to. Given that it only exists as a textual appendage to *Nineteen Eighty-Four*'s main narrative, the information the endotext contains is not only fictional, but it is not real, thus bringing the authoritativeness of the Critical Endotext into question. Subsequently, it can neither be verified nor disproved, for there is no further frame of reference that can be used to validate it. This argument marks a significant departure from previous readings of 'The Principles of Newspeak'. Whereas Barnaby Page dismisses optimistic interpretations of the appendix because it does not contain sufficient amounts of information about Big Brother's demise, I contend that even if 'The Principles of Newspeak' chronicled the defeat of Ingsoc in minute detail, this information could not be trusted with complete certainty because it exists in an informational vacuum.[195] As such, 'The Principles of Newspeak' intentionally misappropriates the appendix form, thus rendering it an untrustworthy text (real-world readers cannot know for certain whether it provides an accurate account of a post-Ingsoc world) that, as a Critical Endotext, subsequently problematises the relationship between authority, writing, and truthfulness.

[193] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 343; Genette, *Palimpsests: literature in the second degree*, p. 3.
[194] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 343; p. 344; p. 347; p. 352.
[195] Page, 'Abandon Hope: Some Readers Detect A Note Of Optimism In Orwell's Dystopian "Nineteen Eighty-Four". They're Wrong'.

The endotext's untrustworthiness is central to its intratextual purpose, for it recalls the untrustworthiness of other texts within Orwell's main narrative. The Party's continual rewriting of the past, for example, destabilises the veracity of Oceania's newspapers. 'The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism', or 'Goldstein's Book', is likewise untrustworthy, for regardless of whether O'Brien's claim to have 'collaborated in writing it' is legitimate, the tome is used to lure and ensnare political dissidents in Oceania, and so rather than coming to represent rebellion and freedom, it comes to represent entrapment and the perpetuation of the Party's power.[196] Even Winston's diary may be considered one of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*'s untrustworthy texts. Although Winston intends to be truthful in his personal reflections (as discussed in Chapter Five of this thesis), he begins his first diary entry with a date, 'April 4th, 1984', even though 'he did not know with any certainty that this *was* 1984', which thus raises questions around the accuracy of Winston's memory and the veracity of the information he records – as much as Winston may aim for an honest representation of the past, its trustworthiness cannot be taken for granted.[197] As such, 'The Principles of Newspeak', as a Critical Endotext appended to the *end* of Orwell's main narrative, crystallises the conceit of untrustworthy texts that permeates *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by itself being an ostensibly authoritative text whose authoritativeness ought not be taken for granted. In doing so, it cuts through the information abundance generated by the novel's establishment of a fictional setting and multifaceted plot, ultimately impressing that Orwell's novel is concerned with the trustworthiness of texts and warns against blindly accepting as true the written word simply because it possesses the semblance of authoritativeness.

The extratextual purpose of 'The Principles of Newspeak' lies in the endotext's metafictionality. Several aspects of the appendix foreground this. In beginning with a heading ('APPENDIX') and subheading ('*The Principles of Newspeak*') that are uniquely formatted by virtue of being capitalised or italicised, 'The Principles of Newspeak' disrupts the visual uniformity of much of Orwell's novel, thus explicitly bringing attention

[196] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 300.
[197] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 9.

to its status as a written artefact.[198] This visual disruption is likewise achieved by the appendix's typeface, which is incrementally smaller than that of the main narrative.[199] Moreover, so too does the endotext disrupt the stylistic uniformity of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*'s main narrative. Gone is Winston's story, intimate in the sense that it is told via a third-person narrator whose perspective is limited to the experiences of Orwell's protagonist, and in its place is a detached piece of diegetic non-fiction whose in-world author possesses a degree of omniscience afforded to them by their ostensible futurity. Likewise, this stylistic disruption marks a shift in content; rather than continuing Winston's story, 'The Principles of Newspeak' turns attention to Newspeak's grammar. Subsequently, the endotext's disruptiveness is characteristically metafictional in that it reminds readers that they are reading a novel. In particular, by exercising this metafictional turn within a Critical Endotext that intentionally draws attention to its own untrustworthiness, 'The Principles of Newspeak' reminds real-world readers of the possibility that the seemingly authoritative real-world texts they encounter may also be duplicitous, a vital consideration in an age characterised by heightened levels of post-truth, in which the veracity of newspapers, online reportage, and academic publications have been heavily scrutinised.

This realisation is likewise prompted by the writerliness of 'The Principles of Newspeak'. The endotext complicates readers' interpretive processes because its crystallisation of the novel's central conceit demands they re-assess *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a whole and pay attention to the potential for many different kinds of text to be untrustworthy. In labouring to uncover meaning, 'The Principles of Newspeak' encourages readers to confront the possibility that ostensibly veracious real-world texts may in fact deceive them, leading to an evocation of bliss that 'unsettles the reader's […]

[198] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 343.

[199] 'The Principles of Newspeak' is not present in the manuscript facsimile of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and so whether Orwell intended for this visual disunity remains unclear. The decrease in size, however, is evident in the authoritative *The Complete Works of George Orwell*, from which Penguin editions of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (including the 2003 Penguin Classics edition of the novel cited throughout this thesis) are derived. *The Complete Works* represents the closest known source to Orwell's vision for the appendix, and so the visual disunity evident in it justifies the above point. See *The Complete Works of George Orwell – Vol. 9: Nineteen Eighty-Four*, ed. by Peter Davison, Ian Angus, and Sheila Davison, rev. edn (London: Secker & Warburg, 2001)

cultural […] assumptions' about the credibility and trustworthiness of the written word.[200] The Critical Endotext's elicitation of such a potentially uncomfortable epiphany is no accident, for Orwell was especially cognizant of the possibility that texts may deceive. Reflecting on his time serving in the Spanish Civil War, he wrote that he noticed 'newspaper reports which did not bear any relation to the facts[…]. [He] saw, in fact, history being written not in terms of what happened but of what ought to have happened according to various "party lines"'.[201] 'The Principles of Newspeak' prepares real-world readers to respond to this. Through its metafictional disunity, the Critical Endotext 'jolts the reader back to [their] own orientation', jars the reading process, and insists that readers engage with it in a measured, deliberate, non-automatic fashion, whereas its writerliness shakes readers free of the 'kind of idleness' permitted by readerly texts, instead demanding that they become active, critical participants in the interpretive game. Subsequently, it may prepare readers to better see through where ostensible authoritativeness can be used to conceal deceptiveness. With this in place, 'The Principles of Newspeak' instructs readers to not blindly accept as true all texts they read outside of the story-world, thus marking one way in which Orwell's novel attempts to prevent readers from being so easily persuaded by false reportage and misleading histories.

Rather than contribute to the oft-regurgitated 'hope debate', this endotextual reading of 'The Principles of Newspeak' has argued that the Critical Endotext stimulates this debate through its misappropriation of the appendix form so that it may dramatize the potential for seemingly authoritative texts to be untrustworthy. Indeed, this reading has demonstrated that endotexts may clarify their counterpart main narratives' thematic preoccupations and central conceits not only through their content, but their form, and in the case of 'The Principles of Newspeak', this intratextual function stresses that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is about the potential untrustworthiness of texts above all else.

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[200] Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, p. 14.
[201] George Orwell, 'Looking Back on the Spanish War', in *The Complete Works of George Orwell – Vol. 13: All Propaganda is Lies, 1941-1942*, ed. by Peter Davison, Ian Angus, and Sheila Davison, rev. edn (London: Secker & Warburg, 2001), pp. 497-511 (p. 503).

This intratextual move works in conjunction with its extratextual mechanisms, for the appendix's metafictional qualities alert readers to the possibility that real-world texts may be similarly misleading, whereas its writerliness generates a sense of bliss that challenges readers' assumptions about the written word's trustworthiness. Moreover, because this blissful unsettling of readers' assumptions is realised through the interplay of Orwell's main narrative and Critical Endotext and the complex reading process that this necessitates, 'The Principles of Newspeak' develops readers' critical thinking skills by demanding that they synthesise and evaluate multiple sources of information, thus better preparing them to avoid being deceived by the things they read extratextually that they may otherwise be more inclined to automatically assume are veracious. Empowering readers in this way is a utopian move. As discussed above, Orwell was all too aware of the presence of misleading texts in the real world, but through endotextually dramatizing this problem in a less informationally dense setting, he increases the potential for there to exist a future in which such misleading texts are far less persuasive. Readers need only to consider 'The Principles of Newspeak' in a certain way: endotextually.

Thesis Outline

To reiterate, this thesis has three aims:

1. To conceptualise endotexts (additional, fictional texts that are co-present with their counterpart main narratives), endotextures (the types of endotexts and their specific functions), and endotextuality (the theoretical framework that accounts for how endotexts work).
2. To investigate the longstanding tradition of endotextuality within the dystopian genre.
3. To argue that an analysis of dystopian endotexts reveals that the dystopian genre has long manifested what might today be identified as post-truth anxieties, suggesting that it possesses a transhistorical, transnational preoccupation with the problem of truth.

This introduction has made a thorough attempt at achieving the first aim of this thesis. Subsequent analysis will further refine the concept of endotextuality and better explicate how endotextures differ. So too have small steps been taken towards realising the second and third aims in the introduction, for the above discussion of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* outlines the general presence of endotexts within the novel, whereas the analysis of 'The Principles of Newspeak', in centring on the untrustworthiness of texts, silently evokes ideas relating to post-truth, for the Critical Endotext's misappropriation of the appendix form brings an ostensibly authoritative text to mislead, thus situating it in the same territory as misinformation and disinformation. These two aims will be fully realised throughout this thesis, in which more than twenty literary dystopias will be analysed. This selection includes canonical dystopias, novels that are critically overlooked, and contemporary works, a decision made to demonstrate the extent to which a preoccupation with truth pervades the genre. These novels' historical span lies across the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries, with Jack London's *The Iron Heel* (1908) the earliest text placed under direct scrutiny and Marc-Uwe Kling's *QualityLand* (2017/2020) the most recent, whereas their geographical spread includes North America, the United Kingdom, Russia, Central and Eastern Europe, Scandinavia, Egypt, China, and Japan. Further brief references to other literary dystopias will develop the historical and geographical breadth of this thesis, thus reinforcing the argument that the dystopian genre possesses a transhistorical, transnational preoccupation with truth, its importance, power, and fragility, and the perils of allowing it to be abused, distorted, and disregarded by bad faith actors who seek to gain, maintain, or exert control.

In achieving the above, this thesis will not offer a conclusive, final conceptualisation of endotexts, endotextures, or endotextuality. The work I undertake here is intended to provide a thorough starting point that future scholars may develop by incorporating additional analytical frameworks, interpretive lenses, or theories to discussions centring around endotexts, endotextures, and endotextuality. Moreover, this thesis does not aim to account for every instance of dystopian endotext. The selection of novels under discussion here approximates a good representation of the tradition of

dystopian endotextuality in terms of its historical and geographical spread, endotextures used, and the ways in which endotexts are used. Last, this thesis will not offer a definitive solution to the problem posed by the intensified post-truth condition of the twenty-first century. Instead, I seek to draw attention to how the post-truth condition has been catalysed in the twenty-first century, how this is often deliberate and nefarious, and how the further depreciation of facts and truth as cultural currencies may be prevented.

To achieve the above aims, I will conduct a series of endotextual readings throughout this thesis. At times, these readings will consider dystopian endotexts in relation to only their specific contexts – a 'two-dimensional' reading – whereas others will examine dystopian endotexts outside of their specific contexts – a 'three-dimensional' reading. Together, these readings perceive the dystopian genre as a multifaceted object, revealing its transhistorical, transnational preoccupation with truth. The readings I make will be grouped according to which arbiters of truth they examine, an arranging mechanism that has emerged over the course of my research. These arbiters are 'authorit[ies] on truth', individuals or institutions that bear responsibility for 'determining what is true or false, issue by issue, or [act as] deciders of which voices and stories find their way' to societal prominence.[202] Dystopian endotexts express anxiety that these arbiters of truth may in fact further entrench post-truth's pervasiveness, anxieties that corroborate with post-truth scholarship. In particular, they lodge these concerns against political leaders, experts, the press, social media, and laypeople. The chapters of this thesis focus on each figure or institution in turn.

'Chapter One: Political Leaders and the Post-Truth Condition' examines how political leaders catalyse the post-truth condition in the endotexts of Sinclair Lewis's *It Can't Happen Here* (1935), Vladimir Nabokov's *Bend Sinister* (1947), Philip Roth's *The Plot Against America* (2004), Jasper Fforde's *Shades of Grey* (2009), Chan Koonchung's

[202] Baggini, *A Short History of Truth: Consolations for a Post-Truth World*, p. 22; Vincent F. Hendricks and Camilla Mehlsen, *The Ministry of Truth: BigTech's Influence on Facts, Feelings and Fictions*, trans. by Andre Amtoft and Anja Amtoft (London: Springer, 2022), p. 137.

The Fat Years (2009/2011), and Ma Jian's *China Dream* (2018). These endotexts demonstrate that such catalysis is engendered by an anti-intellectual, anti-press rhetoric, the incitement of division and rancour, and the employment of censorship and propaganda. As such, they challenge the assertion that the post-truth condition 'marks a triumph of democracy' by framing it as the antithesis to democratic proceedings, thus demanding that readers hold political figures to higher standards of veracity, lest they wish to be complicit in ushering in despotism and tyranny.[203]

'Chapter Two: Historical Experts, Critical Endotexts, and Misleading Histories' considers how historical experts are presented in the Critical Endotexts of Jack London's *The Iron Heel*, R. C. Sherriff's *The Hopkins Manuscript* (1939), Stanisław Lem's *Memoirs Found in a Bathtub* (1961/1973), Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Testaments* (2019), and Naomi Alderman's *The Power* (2016). Drawing on narrativist theories of history, the 'found manuscript' device, and Marius Gudonis's and Benjamin T. Jones's conception of 'post-truth history', I analyse how dystopias' Critical Endotexts suggest that historians may intentionally or accidentally inflame the post-truth condition despite the professional expectations placed upon them.[204] Atwood's and Alderman's dystopias, however, demonstrate how historians may resist and overcome post-truth's temptations to put forward veracious historical accounts. In total, these Critical Endotexts foreground the relationship between power, writing, and the past, thus unsettling readers' assumptions about how the past is recorded and understood, and by whom it is recorded, ultimately demanding that they more critically engage with experts' claims.

'Chapter Three: Fake News, the Fourth Estate, and Capitalistic Pressures' examines how Rose Macaulay's *What Not* (1918), Karel Čapek's *War With the Newts* (1936/1937), Johanna Sinisalo's *The Core of the Sun* (2013/2016), and Omar El Akkad's *American War* (2017) endotextually depict print media publications producing fake news,

[203] Fuller, *Post-Truth: Knowledge as a Power Game*, p. 181.
[204] Marius Gudonis and Benjamin T. Jones, 'Who Controls the Past?' in *History in a Post-Truth World: Theory and Praxis*, ed. by Marius Gudonis and Benjamin T. Jones (New York: Routledge, 2021), chap. 1, VitalSource ebook.

something which has led to the belief that they are 'villain[s] that ha[ve] featured prominently in post-truth worlds'.[205] This analysis foregrounds three characteristics of fake news in particular: biased reportage, sensationalism, and native advertising. However, these endotexts orient readers to the capitalistic pressures upon which the Fourth Estate and its production of fake news is predicated, thus reframing it as a post-truth victim, a blissful manoeuvre that seeks to restore the faith readers place in the newspapers, magazines, and journalists.

'Chapter Four: Social Media as a Post-Truth Playground' centres on Marc-Uwe Kling's *QualityLand*, Dave Eggers' *The Circle* (2013), and Sam Byers' *Perfidious Albion* (2018). Drawing on Jean Baudrillard's conception of hyperreality, I argue that these dystopias' endotexts present social media as a playground upon which malicious bots, social media avatars, and anonymous trolls may run amok, blur the real and not real, and ultimately heighten the post-truth condition. Crucially, these endotexts highlight that although digital and social medias contain tools that ostensibly catalyse today's post-truth condition, such catalysis only occurs when individuals choose to actively use and play with these hyperreal apparatuses – a potentially uncomfortable yet bliss evoking revelation that demands readers reflect on their online behaviours.

'Chapter Five: Laypeople, Post-Truthful Collusion, and Relativism' centres on George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Yōko Ogawa's *The Memory Police* (1994/2019), and Luke Kennard's *The Transition* (2017). Drawing on Ignas Kalpokas's conception of post-truth as collusion and Jacques Derrida's 'archive fever', I examine how these dystopian endotexts suggest that laypeople may bear some culpability for the intensification of the post-truth condition through their empowerment of post-truth regimes and employment of self-deception, while also suggesting that laypeople may also possess the ability to diminish the post-truth condition by remaining steadfast to their commitment to truthfulness, even if this means opposing the official truths put forth by dominant forces. These endotexts subsequently evoke extratextual bliss, for

[205] Johan Farkas and Jannick Schou, *Post-Truth, Fake News and Democracy: Mapping the Politics of Falsehood* (London: Routledge, 2020), p. 58.

they counter the belief that post-truth is solely enacted by the powerful upon the powerless, while simultaneously dismissing the argument that laypeople are powerless to resist post-truth's entrenchment.

I conclude this thesis with a brief coda that, in the spirit of endotexts, crystallises its central arguments by reviewing how it has achieved the above three aims. Literary dystopias, I will argue, have always been about truth, its importance, power, and fragility, and the perils of allowing it to be abused, distorted, and disregarded by bad faith actors who seek to gain, maintain, or exert control. This finding is only made possible by conceptualising, accounting for, and paying attention to dystopian endotexts, a textual phenomenon that has been previously overlooked, undervalued, and misinterpreted. May this thesis serve as a corrective. Dystopian endotexts serve to inoculate readers against the persuasiveness and pervasiveness of post-truth, one of the twenty-first century's most urgent crises, but only by paying attention to them will we be better prepared to learn from the lessons posed by nightmarish visions and steer ourselves away from a dystopian future in which truth ceases to matter at all.

Chapter One: Political Leaders and the Post-Truth Condition

Chapter Introduction

Given that 'dystopian narratives are a form of *political* and *politicised* writing', it is unsurprising that dictators, leaders of government, party members, and other political figures abound in dystopian imaginings, such as The Benefactor in *We* (1924), Mustapha Mond in *Brave New World* (1932), and President Coriolanus Snow in *The Hunger Games* series (2008-2010; 2020).[206] Likewise, political figures occupy a prominent position within the intensified post-truth condition of the twenty-first century, in which they are notable not for their lying (which is 'nothing new') but for how they 'seem to be making a thing out of showing that they don't care about whether they tell the truth or not'.[207] Indeed, when asked whether he and other members of the UK Conservative Party had breached Covid restrictions, Boris Johnson asserted that 'all guidance was followed completely in No. 10', despite video evidence to the contrary; Jair Bolsonaro, the 38th president of Brazil, claimed at the 2021 United Nations general assembly that the Brazilian government had not had 'a single concrete case of corruption for [the] two years and eight months' that had comprised his political tenure at that point, 'neglecting to mention a series of scandals dogging his family and government, including over the purchase of Covid vaccines'; and Donald Trump, *The Washington Post* reports, made 492 'false or misleading claims' in the first 100 days of his presidency alone.[208] These two trends – the prevalence of political figures in literary dystopias and political figures' brazen indifference toward the truth – intersect in Sinclair Lewis's *It Can't Happen Here* (1935), Vladimir Nabokov's *Bend Sinister* (1947), Philip Roth's *The Plot Against America*

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[206] Stock, *Modern Dystopian Fiction and Political Thought: Narratives of World Politics*, p. 2.
[207] Pomerantsev, *This Is Not Propaganda*, p. 153.
[208] Johnson quoted in Adam Forrest, 'Partygate: All the excuses and denials by Boris Johnson and Rishi Sunak for law-breaking events', *The Independent*, 12 April 2022 <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/boris-johnson-fines-parties-police-b2056372.html> [accessed 29 November 2022]; Bolsonaro quoted in Tom Phillips, 'Bolsonaro vowed to show a new Brazil but "lie-filled" UN speech cuts little ice', *The Guardian*, 21 September 2021 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/sep/21/jair-bolsonaro-brazil-un-speech> [accessed 29 November 2022]; Phillips, 'Bolsonaro vowed to show a new Brazil but "lie-filled" UN speech cuts little ice'; Kessler and Lee, 'President Trump's first 100 days: The fact check tally'.

(2004), Jasper Fforde's *Shades of Grey* (2009), Chan Koonchung's *The Fat Years* (2009/2011), and Ma Jian's *China Dream* (2018), the novels analysed in this chapter.

If, following Pomerantsev, politicians' brazen indifference towards the truth marks a development in civic affairs, it begs the question: why have certain political figures now appeared to abandon the truth altogether? For Steve Fuller, the answer lies in how the post-truth condition is a 'knowledge-and-power game' in which players attempt to 'gain competitive advantage in some more or less well-defined field of play'.[209] The key to winning this game, Fuller continues, is 'going *meta*': players 'jockey for position in the current game, while at the same time they try to change the rules so as to maximize their own overall advantage'.[210] As such, when Trump, Johnson, Bolsonaro, and countless other political figures display a blatant disregard for truth and truthfulness, they are not conceding defeat in a truth game, but are instead pivoting to an entirely new game. For Fuller, the post-truth condition 'marks a triumph of democracy over elitism' because of its 'disrespect for established authority' – by which he means experts and academics – and its 'conceptual openness to previously ignored people and their ideas'.[211] Though persuasive, Fuller's celebration of the post-truth condition as a power game with ostensible democratic virtues overlooks how the power game is chiefly orchestrated by already powerful individuals, including political figures, who use it to advance their authority. Rather than constituting a new game entirely in which all participants have an equal say in the co-construction of rules, the post-truth condition is perhaps better conceived as a suburban kickabout between schoolchildren, for although everyone is playing the same game, it is the child who owns the football – here representing political figures and other already powerful groups – who determines which game is played, how long it is played for, and who is on their team.[212]

[209] Fuller, *Post-Truth: Knowledge as a Power Game*, p. 1.
[210] Fuller, *Post-Truth: Knowledge as a Power Game*, p. 3; p. 182.
[211] Fuller, *Post-Truth: Knowledge as a Power Game*, p. 181.
[212] The metaphor of political-figure-as-petulant-child is particularly apt. Both Donald Trump and Boris Johnson, two of the post-truth game's most notable players, have been caricatured as babies and toddlers. For Trump, this is seen in the Trump Baby balloon that was first flown in London in July 2018 in protest to his official visit to the United Kingdom, whereas a Yorkshire Post cartoon by Graeme Bandeira depicts Johnson as a toddler in

Fuller's conception of the post-truth condition as a democratic leveller is further challenged by Stuart Sim, who notes that its purposeful exploitation is 'designed to mislead and confuse' its audiences, is focused on 'exerting power and control over others' to the extent of closing off debate entirely, if possible, and – given that it seeks to impose 'a desirable mental attitude upon the citizenship at large', i.e., complicity – both appeals to and resembles the strategies historically used by authoritarian and totalitarian regimes.[213] Moreover, political institutions – including democracy itself – 'presuppose truth for their viability and efficacy', while the *demos* simultaneously places trust in these institutions to behave truthfully.[214] This trust depends 'not on occasional truth-telling, not on the appearance of truth sold in shrewd public relations ploys, but on a reputation derived from the telling of truth even in situations in which it is neither profitable nor safe to do so', thus highlighting the necessity of truth to democratic practices.[215] Consequently, political leaders' intentional catalysation of the post-truth condition constitutes a profound threat to democracy. Therein lies ripe territory for dystopian imaginings.

Subsequently, this chapter will examine the dramatization of political figures' intentional amplification of the post-truth condition in literary dystopias, noting how it is shown to both empower these individuals and erode democratic virtues. The first half of the chapter will focus on political figures' dissemination of anti-intellectualism, an anti-press rhetoric, and a divisive '"us" versus "them"' narrative, which is shown in *It Can't Happen Here*, *Bend Sinister*, *The Plot Against America*, and *Shades of Grey* to both strengthen political leaders and have profound – and often deadly – ramifications for its targets.[216] The second half of this chapter focuses on *The Fat Years* and *China Dream*. Through interpreting these novels as responses to the Tiananmen Square Massacre and

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the House of Commons – see Graeme Bandeira, 'Babies in Commons' [online] <https://graemebandeira.co.uk/work-category/politics/> [accessed 12 November 2023].

[213] Sim, *Post-Truth, Scepticism & Power*, p. 3; p. 14; p. 53.

[214] Theodore R. Weber, 'Truth and Political Leadership', *The Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics*, 9 (1989), 3-19 (p. 4).

[215] Weber, 'Truth and Political Leadership', p. 4.

[216] Stanley, *How Fascism Works*, p. xxx.

the Chinese Communist Party's control over China at large, I argue that they warn not of China's potentially dystopian future, but of China's actually dystopian present. Ultimately, this analysis demonstrates that literary dystopias possess a transhistorical, transnational preoccupation with political leaders' disregard for, distortion of, and abuse of truth in their quest for ever-increasing amounts of power. Despite the nightmares they depict, these novels generate extratextual Barthesian bliss through their endotexts. By insisting that their readers work through complex interpretive processes to make sense of the relationships between endotexts and main narratives, these novels may discomfort readers by alerting them to the potentially deadly consequences of the post-truth claims made by political figures and democratically elected leaders, and they force readers also to confront the intensified post-truth condition that underpins one of the twenty-first century's most powerful totalitarian states and the crises that this entails. Having laboured to reach these realisations by engaging with the writerliness of dystopian endotexts, readers are subsequently trained to see through real-world political figures' often deliberate and usually nefarious catalysis of the post-truth condition so that they may not be so readily persuaded by their truth-indifferent claims.

Part One: Dramatizing Aspects of Post-Truth Politics

Introduction

This half of the chapter will demonstrate that twentieth- and twenty-first-century literary dystopias have long manifested concerns about political figures' catalysation of the post-truth condition, anxieties that are particularly expressed endotextually. Four novels will form the basis of this discussion: Lewis's *It Can't Happen Here*, Nabokov's *Bend Sinister*, Roth's *The Plot Against America*, and Fforde's *Shades of Grey*.

Imagined political leaders feature prominently in these novels. *It Can't Happen Here*'s main narrative is set against the backdrop of Berzelius 'Buzz' Windrip's political ascendancy, charting his rise from U.S. senator, to his 1936 presidential election success following a populist campaign, to his eventual imposition of totalitarian rule. Drawing

parallels with Adolf Hitler and Huey Long Jr., Windrip ostensibly authors the autobiographical manifesto 'Zero Hour: Over The Top', excerpts of which are co-present within *It Can't Happen Here* as Parallel Endotexts that take the form of chapter epigraphs.[217] *Bend Sinister*'s chief political figure is Paduk, the dictator of the story-world setting of Padukgrad. Leader of the 'Party of the Average Man', Paduk gains power following his popularisation of 'Ekwilism', a philosophy promoting the complete standardisation of all people.[218] The famed American aviator Charles Lindbergh becomes the president of the United States in the alternate-history-cum-dystopia *The Plot Against America*. After defeating Franklin D. Roosevelt in the 1940 presidential election, the imagined Lindbergh's antisemitic views inform his political decisions, resulting in a dystopian society for the novel's Jewish characters. Fforde's *Shades of Grey* is the exception to the rule established by the preceding novels. Although its dystopian and apparently post-apocalyptic setting of Chromatacia is built upon a rigid hierarchy, the painter Albert Munsell – supposedly Chromatacia's revered founder – is absent from *Shades of Grey*'s main narrative.[219] Instead, Munsell's presence is felt through 'The Rulebook' he has allegedly authored, which governs all laws and permissible behaviours in Chromatacia. Ranging from the sensible ('[a]ny resident who has been even indirectly exposed to Mildew [an infectious, life-threatening virus] *must* follow quarantine procedures') to the absurd ('on the first Tuesday of the month a chicken is officially a vegetable'), excerpts from 'The Rulebook' are, as with 'Zero Hour' in *It Can't Happen Here*, co-present alongside *Shades of Grey*'s main narrative as Parallel Endotexts that take the form of chapter epigraphs.[220]

[217] 'Zero Hour: Over The Top' is hereafter shortened to 'Zero Hour'.
[218] Vladimir Nabokov, *Bend Sinister* (London: Penguin, 2016), p. 56; p. 55.
[219] Chromatacia's hierarchy is structured around individuals' perception of colour, which is often limited to varying amounts of one or two colours (with everything else appearing as a shade of grey). Following the visible spectrum of light, 'Reds' (people who can only perceive shades of red) occupy the second-lowest position in the hierarchy, whereas 'Purples' occupy the highest. Only 'Greys', people who cannot perceive colour at all, rank lower than 'Reds'. Individuals belonging to the same colour are then hierarchised by virtue of the amount of their colour they can perceive, with more perceptive individuals occupying higher positions within society relative to other members of their group.
[220] Jasper Fforde, *Shades of Grey* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2011), p. 167; p. 51.

Three methods used by political figures to inflame the post-truth condition will come under particular scrutiny in the following analysis. The first two are the political mobilisation of anti-intellectualism and an anti-press rhetoric. Anti-intellectualism is here used to mean a 'generalized distrust of experts and intellectuals' that prompts a 'social attitude that systematically undermines […] academic and institutional authorities, and the pursuit of theory and knowledge'.[221] Anti-press rhetoric achieves a similar effect for journalists. Given that intellectuals and the press alike are often regarded as arbiters of truth, casting doubt upon them empowers political figures to claim a monopoly on truth-claim production for themselves. I analyse these qualities in relation to *It Can't Happen Here* and *Bend Sinister*, in which intellectuals and the press are first dismissed, and then have their voices appropriated by political figures who seek to erode their reputations as arbiters of truth. This erosion, I argue, marks a metaphorical death of intellect and the free press, thus suggesting that Lewis and Nabokov – themselves intellectuals and members of the press – feared the possibility that they would die if they lived under a totalitarian regime. The final method used by political figures to catalyse the post-truth condition is the fascistic vilification of the other. Jason Stanley sees the separation of a population into 'an "us" and a "them"' as a symptom of fascist politics.[222] Following Stanley, I analyse how racist and antisemitic ideologies are apparent in the politics of *It Can't Happen Here*'s, *The Plot Against America*'s, and *Shades of Grey*'s leaders. The interplay between these novels' additional texts and their main narratives begins to correct political figures' vilification of 'them' groups by humanising the targets of such antagonism. In total, the chiefly endotextual exploration of political figures' deliberate stoking of the post-truth condition offered by these novels not only draws attention to some of the strategies used by would-be tyrants to gain or assert power; it also serves to disrupt readers' inattentiveness to political figures' words by foregrounding that there

[221] Eric Merkley and Peter John Loewen, 'Anti-intellectualism and the mass public's response to the COVID-19 pandemic', *Nature Human Behaviour*, 5 (2021), 706-715 (p. 706); Edric Huang, Jenny Dorsey, Claire Mosteller, and Emily Chen, 'Understanding Anti-Intellectualism in the U.S.', *Studio ATAO*, 4 September 2020 <https://www.studioatao.org/post/understanding-anti-intellectualism-in-the-u-s> [accessed 13 September 2022].

[222] Stanley, *How Fascism Works*, p. xxx.

are very real, and often deadly, ramifications to the caustic things said and written by them – consequences only made possible by the *demos*' electoral support of such figures. This realisation doubly shields readers against post-truth politics. First, the interplay between endotexts and main narratives exercises readers' critical thinking capabilities, thus training readers to apply greater scrutiny to the things written and said by political figures, identify the potentially dangerous aspects of their utterances, and be less readily persuaded by them. Second, the endotexts' emphasis of marginalised groups' experiences and vilification brings readers to empathise with 'other possible lives, alternative points of view', a blissful manoeuvre insofar as it 'unsettles the reader's […] cultural […] assumptions' and leads to the epiphanic realisation that the divisive rhetoric that abounds in post-truth politics is intentionally misleading.[223]

Versus the Intellectual; Versus the Press

For the politician who seeks to exacerbate the post-truth condition, intellectuals and the free press are the enemy. Because expertise is a 'common [validator] of epistemological authority', intellectuals are viewed as arbiters of the truth claims to which their expertise relates, whereas legitimate journalists are professional arbiters of truth because it 'is their *literal job* to corroborate facts and relay what they know to be true, by virtue of corroborating those facts', a truth-uncovering process to which 'editors, fact-checkers, and lawyers […] provide additional layers of verification'.[224] Intellectuals and the free press are therefore barriers to the truth-indifferent politician who seeks to claim a monopoly on truth-claim production in their quest for power and control. Jair Bolsonaro and Donald Trump are examples par excellence of this antagonism in twenty-first-century politics, with Bolsonaro's derision of the '"left-wing domination" of education in Brazil (by feminists, cultural Marxists, and other "subversives" intent on undermining Brazilian family values)' and Trump's proclamation that the media is the 'enemy of the

[223] Schaberg, *The Work of Literature in an Age of Post-Truth*, p. 11; Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, p. 14.
[224] Baggini, *A Short History of Truth: Consolations for a Post-Truth World*, p. 22; Elizabeth Spiers, 'Arbiters of Truth', *medium*, 9 February 2022 <https://espiers.medium.com/arbiters-of-truth-687242cfb871> [accessed 3 November 2022].

people' exemplifying the anti-intellectualism and anti-press rhetoric that characterised their respective tenures as the presidents of Brazil and the United States of America.[225] However, as the ensuing analysis will demonstrate, fears about the political mobilisation of anti-intellectual and anti-press ideologies predate the era of post-truth politics that ostensibly began in 2016, for they are apparent in Sinclair Lewis's *It Can't Happen Here* and Vladimir Nabokov's *Bend Sinister*. These fears chiefly manifest in two forms: in the dramatization of the dismissal of intellectuals and the press, and in the depiction of political leaders' appropriation of intellectuals' voices and the free press.

A crucial distinction within anti-intellectualism is the difference between intelligence and intellect. For the anti-intellectualist, 'intelligence is utilizing ideas in a practical way, while intellect is about developing, challenging, and evolving the ideas themselves'.[226] It is this second concept of knowledge – intellect – that the anti-intellectualist attacks, as is dramatized by *It Can't Happen Here*. Buzz Windrip's political ascendancy is founded on a populist campaign that appeals to a supposedly forgotten demographic of voters, i.e., white, working-class men. Underpinning Windrip's popularity is 'Zero Hour', which becomes viewed as 'the Bible of his followers' within the main narrative, for the epigraphic Parallel Endotexts 'illustrate Windrip's attempt to be seen as "just folks"'.[227] In 'Zero Hour', Windrip is presented as a family man, a good Christian, a proud American, and a self-effacing man of the people, but permeating this constructed persona are anti-intellectual views.[228] When Windrip insists that he '[doesn't] pretend to

[225] Gianpaolo Baiocchi and Marcelo K. Silva, 'Bolsonaro's War Against Reason', *Boston Review*, 9 November 2020 <https://www.bostonreview.net/articles/gianpaolo-baiocchi-marcelo-k-silva-bolsonaros-war-against-reason/> [accessed 3 November 2022]; Donald Trump quoted in David Smith, '"Enemy of the people": Trump's war on the media is a page from Nixon's playbook', *The Guardian*, 7 September 2019 <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/sep/07/donald-trump-war-on-the-media-oppo-research> [accessed 3 November 2022].

[226] Huang et. al, 'Understanding Anti-Intellectualism in the U.S.'.

[227] Sinclair Lewis, *It Can't Happen Here* (London: Penguin, 2017), p. 29; Martin J. Jacobi, 'Rhetoric and Fascism in Jack London's The Iron Heel, Sinclair Lewis's It Can't Happen Here, and Philip Roth's The Plot Against America', *Philip Roth Studies*, 6.1 (2010), 85-102 (p. 94).

[228] Re: Windrip as a family man, see Lewis, *It Can't Happen Here*, p. 49, 'When I am protestingly dragged from my study and the family hearthside'; re: Windrip as a good Christian, see Lewis, *It Can't Happen Here*, p. 149, 'the words of the Good Book stick by you in perplexity and tribulation'; re: Windrip as a proud American, see Lewis, *It Can't Happen Here*, p. 102, 'when I get ready to retire I'm going to build me an up-to-date bungalow in some lovely resort, not in Como[…], but in somewheres like Florida, California, Santa Fe, & etc.'; and re:

be a very educated man' and recounts how he once 'had an old-maid teacher that used to tell me, "Buzz, you're the thickest-headed dunce in the school"', the pride apparent in his declarations see him suggest that intellect is undesirable.[229] This impression develops when he asserts that he 'hate[s] befogging [his] pages with scientific technicalities and even neologies' and that he loves the peace of American small towns precisely because it 'can never be disturbed by even the noisiest Smart Alecks', for these comments see Windrip actively vilify intellect, its outcomes, and the individuals who embody it.[230]

Critics frequently suggest that Lewis's construction of Windrip is a response to Huey Long Jr., the United States senator who had 'become virtual dictator of his state' upon being elected as the governor of Louisiana in 1928.[231] Windrip and Long share several similarities: both were Democrats, both 'preached the comforting gospel of […] redistributing wealth', and both published autobiographies that laid out their political agendas, for Windrip's 'Zero Hour' serves as a fictional counterpart to Long's *Every Man a King* (1933) and *My First Days in the White House* (1935).[232] Moreover, both men carefully constructed or had constructed for them specific political personas; Long presented himself as 'a backwater hick with extraordinary talents' – an unsophisticated, unrefined, and comic identity that 'seemed genuinely rustic', an apparent precursor to Windrip's 'folksy' persona in 'Zero Hour'.[233] Long's performative rusticity is exemplified by his ungrammatical complaint made about the American college system in 1935: 'It don't [sic] make any difference how brilliant a boy or girl may be, that don't [sic] give them the right to a college education in America today'.[234] Much like Windrip's folksiness in 'Zero Hour', Long's speech indicates the 'denigrat[ion] [of] intellect and the

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Windrip as a self-effacing man of the people, see Lewis, *It Can't Happen Here*, p. 129, 'Usually I'm pretty mild, in fact many of my friends are kind enough to call it "Folksy"'.

[229] Lewis, *It Can't Happen Here*, p. 60; p. 83.

[230] Lewis, *It Can't Happen Here*, p. 77; p. 162.

[231] Fredrick Betz and Jörg Thunecke, 'Sinclair Lewis's Cautionary Tale It Can't Happen Here (1935)', *Orbis Litterarum*, 52.1 (1997), 35-53 (p. 36).

[232] Lewis, *It Can't Happen Here*, p. 27.

[233] J. Michael Hogan and Glen Williams, 'The Rusticity and Religiosity of Huey P. Long', *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*, 7.2 (2004), 149-171 (p. 152); p. 158; Lewis, *It Can't Happen Here*, p. 129.

[234] Huey Long, *Our Blundering Government* (Washington, DC: The United States Senate, 1935) in Congress.gov <https://www.congress.gov/bound-congressional-record/1935/03/12/senate-section> [Accessed 19 October 2022].

intellectual' that can be found throughout his rhetoric.[235] His intentional ungrammaticality implies that he does not consider intellectualism to be a desirable trait, whereas his criticism of the American college system gives the impression that he disparages an institution responsible for producing intellectuals. That Lewis extrapolated this characteristic of Long's into Windrip is no accident. Having seen the perils of fascism in war-torn Europe, Lewis developed a fear of 'populism in the wrong hands', and so had taken notice of Long's use of 'irrational demagoguery' to 'mobilize a public still suffering from the Great Depression' in the United States.[236] As such, Lewis's endotextual dramatization of a politician employing anti-intellectualist rhetoric to garner public support sees him warn his contemporary readers of what he considered to be a caustic element of American politics, thus affording his Parallel Endotexts a typically dystopian cautionary characteristic.

Together with *Bend Sinister*, *It Can't Happen Here* dramatizes the political mobilisation of an anti-press rhetoric, another caustic characteristic apparent in certain political landscapes of the early twentieth century, including in parts of the United States of America and in Russia. Such dramatizations occur endotextually in both novels. Windrip writes in 'Zero Hour' that '[a]lmost all editors hide away in spider-dens[…], plotting how they can put over their lies, and advance their own positions and fill their greedy pocketbooks', whereas a state-issued 'mimeographed circular' co-present within *Bend Sinister* as a Read Endotext dramatizes how political regimes can advance their own truth claims, for it decries the foreign press, asserting that its newspapers are 'purely business ventures, firms that sell their printed wares to the public (and therefore do their best to attract the public by means of lurid headlines and naughty stories)'.[237] Accusations of avarice are apparent in these endotexts, with each novel's political figure

[235] Ragan Updegraff, 'Freedom in Dialogue: Huey Long, Father Coughlin, and Anti-Intellectualism in the Public Sphere' (unpublished senior thesis, Trinity University, 2005), p. 86.
[236] Christopher Vials, 'What Can Happen Here? Philip Roth, Sinclair Lewis, and the Lessons of Fascism in the American Liberal Imagination', *Philip Roth Studies*, 7.1 (2011), 9-26 (p. 16); Stephen L. Tanner, 'Sinclair Lewis and Fascism', *Studies in the Novel*, 22.1 (1990), 57-66 (p. 57); Ellen Strenski, '*It Can't Happen Here*, or Has It? Sinclair Lewis's Fascist America', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 29.3 (2017), 425-436 (p. 425).
[237] Lewis, *It Can't Happen Here*, p. 34; Nabokov, *Bend Sinister*, p. 121.

– Windrip in *It Can't Happen Here* and the Paduk-led Ekwilist regime in *Bend Sinister* – claiming that the press lies to and manipulates their audiences in order to amass capital. This argument is more developed in *Bend Sinister*'s mimeographed circular than it is in the anti-press excerpt of 'Zero Hour'. The Ekwilist regime makes repeated references to money in its criticism of the foreign press, dismissing its ostensible freedom (i.e., the *free* press) because 'a lack of funds does not allow one the use of the printed word' and so the press favours 'capitalists who either have their own organs or acquire columns in other papers'.[238] The consequence of such capitalistic interference, the Read Endotext argues, is political; '[e]ven the advertisements in a capitalistic newspaper can influence its political trend'.[239] Together with Windrip's accusations of greed, the state-issued circular therefore suggests that the foreign press seeks to amass capital so that it may advance its own political agenda. By alleging that the press is anything less than impartial, Windrip and the Ekwilist regime begin to prohibit its 'claim to any form of social authority' and erode its reputation as an arbiter of truth, thus paving the way for their own truth claims to dominate.[240]

Despite being unified in their anti-press ideologies, there are significant differences in the specific targets of Windrip's and the Ekwilist regime's tirades against the press. For Windrip, it is the press in its entirety that is the enemy. This is apparent in how he avers that journalists make their capitalistic gains by 'calumniating Statesmen who have given their all for the common good', for this accusation suggests that journalists especially oppose politicians.[241] This impression is reinforced by Windrip's claim that newspaper editors are 'men without thought of Family or Public Interest', given his proclamation that statesmen work for the common good, whereas his assertion that newspaper editors are not family men presents them as being specifically contrary

[238] Nabokov, *Bend Sinister*, p. 122.
[239] Nabokov, *Bend Sinister*, p. 122.
[240] Christina A. Georgacopoulos, 'How "Lyingnewspapers" Made Huey Long the Ruler of his State: A Model of Press-Populist Dynamics' (unpublished Masters thesis, Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, 2021), p. 78.
[241] Lewis, *It Can't Happen Here*, p. 34.

to himself.[242] By framing the press as his personal enemy in his writings, Windrip continues to draw parallels with Huey Long. Following attempts made by Louisiana's newspapers to impeach him in 1929, Long began 'attacking and undermining their message and mission' by frequently employing the phrase '"lyingnewspapers" to discredit [the] negative publicity' he received, with such accusations of falsity evoking Windrip's vilification of the press in 'Zero Hour'.[243] Moreover, it is not only Long's message, but the vehicle for his message that Windrip draws parallels with, for Long proclaimed in *Every Man a King*, his autobiography, that '[t]he truth was not to be had from the daily newspapers. They made all manner of displays, distorting every kind of fact'.[244] As such, Lewis's Parallel Endotexts pay attention to not just the textual fabric of society, but in how political figures' memoirs, manifestos, and biographies contribute to this fabric, espousing post-truthful claims as a precursor to the political tenures they desire.

Bend Sinister's state-issued mimeographed circular likewise reflects the Bolshevik regime's mobilisation of an anti-press discourse. Rather than vilify the press in its entirety, however, the Bolshevik regime specifically denigrated the free press, which *Bend Sinister* dramatizes. As discussed above, the Ekwilist regime criticises the ostensibly self-serving interests of the commercial press, thus evoking the Bolsheviks' far-left ideology. Furthermore, the circular's disparagement of the 'enormous number of competing organs' that comprise the free press and produce 'complete confusion in the mind of the man in the street' sees Nabokov reflect an attitude that underpinned a regime whose 'newspapers were […] one of the only sources of information', given its closure of rival presses – much like the Ekwilist regime's erasure of individualism, the Bolsheviks sought a uniformity of thought and opinion.[245] Moreover, Nabokov's endotext

[242] Lewis, *It Can't Happen Here*, p. 34.
[243] Alecia P. Long, 'Huey Long vs. The Media', *64 Parishes*, Summer 2018 <https://64parishes.org/huey-long-vs-the-media> [accessed 1 November 2022]; Georgacopoulos, 'How "Lyingnewspapers" Made Huey Long the Ruler of his State: A Model of Press-Populist Dynamics', p. v.
[244] Huey Long, *Every Man A King* (New Orleans, LA: National Book Company, 1933), p. 146.
[245] Nabokov, *Bend Sinister*, p. 121; Laura Sumner, '"Enemies of the people": Fake news and Bolshevik manipulation of the press in early Soviet Sormovo', *The Language of 'Authoritarian' Regimes*, 8 March 2017

reimagines what Rachel Margolis identifies as the Bolsheviks' honing of 'their critical portrayal of "freedom of the press" in the party news organs, transforming the phrase itself into a linguistic device with which to discredit their enemies as agents of the bourgeoisie'.[246] As a Read Endotext, the mimeographed circular dramatizes how the Bolshevik regime appropriated the press to disseminate its own truth claims. It mimics how 'the phrase "freedom of the press" […] increasingly appeared in mocking quotation marks' in Bolshevik newspapers, arguing that the '"freedoms" [extolled by foreign countries' constitutions] are extremely restricted', listing paper shortage as an example of a false freedom proclaimed by other nations.[247] For the Bolshevik and Ekwilist regimes alike, the very phrase 'free press' is a lie. Because economic and political factors would deny individuals a universal ability to publish, these regimes argue that the free press was anything but free. By highlighting the supposed hypocrisy of so-called 'press freedom', the real and imagined regimes alike discredit 'the liberal alternative other nations represented' and their attempts at producing truth-claims.[248] Consequently, the Bolshevik and Ekwilist regimes assume a monopoly on truth-claim production for their respective presses, thus paving the way for totalitarian control to come into fruition.

Irrespective of the precise targets of their imagined leaders' anti-press discourse, *It Can't Happen Here* and *Bend Sinister* suggest intratextually that there are consequences to political figures' vilification of the press. Following an off-record meeting with A. G. Sulzberger, publisher of the *New York Times*, Donald Trump tweeted that they had a 'very good and interesting meeting' in which they discussed 'the vast amounts of Fake News being put out by the media & how that Fake News has morphed into phrase [sic], "Enemy of the People"'.[249] In response to Trump's tweet, Sulzberger issued a

<https://thelanguageofauthoritarianregimes.wordpress.com/2017/03/08/enemies-of-the-people-fake-news-and-bolshevik-manipulation-of-the-press-in-early-soviet-sormovo/> [accessed 1 November 2022].

[246] Rachel Margolis, 'Revolution, Civil War, and the Formation of Bolshevik Anti-Free Press Discourse, 1917-1922', *geohistory*, 28 September 2016 <https://geohistory.today/bolshevik-anti-free-press-discourse/> [accessed 1 November 2022].

[247] Margolis, 'Revolution, Civil War, and the Formation of Bolshevik Anti-Free Press Discourse, 1917-1922'; Nabokov, *Bend Sinister*, p. 122.

[248] Margolis, 'Revolution, Civil War, and the Formation of Bolshevik Anti-Free Press Discourse, 1917-1922'.

[249] Donald J. Trump, 'Had a very good and interesting meeting at the White House with A.G. Sulzberger, Publisher of the New York Times. Spent much time talking about the vast amounts of Fake News being put out

statement in which he stressed that Trump's 'inflammatory language is contributing to a rise in threats against journalists and will lead to violence'.[250] It is this consequence to anti-press rhetoric that *It Can't Happen Here*'s main narrative dramatizes. Once elected, Windrip outlaws dissent, intimidates and assaults noncompliant press members through his SS-esque Minute Men, and ultimately incarcerates opposition journalists – including Doremus Jessup, the novel's protagonist – in concentration camps. These violent measures amount to a literal silencing of the press, thus affording Windrip a greater sense of authority because he has reduced in number and diminished in volume the voices that seek to undermine him. Consequently, Lewis's Parallel Endotexts highlight the dangerous potential of a politically mobilised anti-press ideology, for although Windrip's denigration of the press may appear to be an offhand comment that ostensibly features only once in 'Zero Hour', the prevalence of a post-truth mindset that it evinces acts as a precursor to totalitarian violence.

Conversely, Nabokov's novel is more ambivalent about the consequences of the Ekwilist regime's vilification of the free press. After reading the mimeographed circular, Adam Krug, the novel's protagonist, bemusedly remarks that he will 'have it treated by some special process which will make it endure far into the future to the eternal delight of free humorists [sic]', thus suggesting that he does not take the Read Endotext's disparagement of the free press particularly seriously.[251] This itself constitutes a warning in how to *not* read, for although Krug mocks the circular, in doing so he underestimates the totalitarian power behind it – a totalitarian power that ultimately kidnaps Krug's young son. Despite Krug's bemusement at the circular, it still remains that the endotext serves as intratextual propaganda. Every disparagement of the free press is accompanied with praise for the Ekwilist regime's press: the singular viewpoint it

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by the media & how that Fake News has morphed into phrase, "Enemy of the People." Sad!' (tweet @realDonaldTrump, 29 July 2018).

[250] A. G. Sulzberger, 'Statement of A.G. Sulzberger, Publisher, The New York Times, in Response to President Trump's Tweet About Their Meeting', *The New York Times*, 29 July 2018 <https://www.nytco.com/press/statement-of-a-g-sulzberger-publisher-the-new-york-times-in-response-to-president-trumps-tweet-about-their-meeting/> [accessed 4 November 2022].

[251] Nabokov, *Bend Sinister*, p. 123.

expresses 'give[s] every citizen a clear perception of the knotty problems presented by civic and international affairs'; its homogeneity creates a carefully curated message that is 'responsible before the nation for the correctness of the political education which it provides'; and it is 'absolutely independent of individual, private and commercial interests' because the regime's newspapers are published by governmental and public organisations.[252] Not only do these comments celebrate the Ekwilist press; they also align with Ekwilist doctrine, given that they extoll singularity of thought and the abandonment of individualistic behaviours. In total, these comments therefore amount to a coherent pro-Ekwilist narrative that seeks to orient its story-world readers toward the regime's version of reality. After all, if the free press is so problematic and the Ekwilist press is so virtuous, why would story-world readers choose anything other than regime's newspapers?

Extratextually, Lewis's and Nabokov's dramatizations of political figures mobilising an anti-press rhetoric, together with Lewis's depiction of Windrip's anti-intellectual ideology, constitute intellectual acts. Through translating contemporary concerns about elements of post-truth politics into dystopian imaginings, Lewis's and Nabokov's novels feature the 'developing, challenging, and evolving' of ideas that underpins intellectual activity.[253] The particular outcome of the authors' intellectual work is that their dystopian imaginings provide warnings about political figures' dismissal of experts and the press. Such dismissal, *It Can't Happen Here* and *Bend Sinister* suggest, enables political figures to more successfully put forward their own illegitimate truth claims, for without two arbiters of truth to 'play a critical role in establishing fact from fiction', there are fewer checks and measures in place to uphold them to standards of truthfulness.[254] Therein lies the capacity for post-truth politics to gather pace: nefarious political figures may be emboldened to put forward whichever truth claims they desire to solidify the power they

[252] Nabokov, *Bend Sinister*, p. 121; p. 122.
[253] Huang et. al, 'Understanding Anti-Intellectualism in the U.S.'.
[254] Davin O'Dwyer, 'As newspapers reach tipping point, who else can be our arbiters of truth?', *The Irish Times*, 11 June 2017 <https://www.irishtimes.com/business/media-and-marketing/as-newspapers-reach-tipping-point-who-else-can-be-our-arbiters-of-truth-1.3149879> [accessed 1 November 2022].

possess. Through presenting these warnings endotextually, *It Can't Happen Here* and *Bend Sinister* may evoke a sense of Barthesian bliss in their real readers. These novels' endotexts bring them to face 'the[ir] unconscious or repressed knowledge' about how 'régime[s] of truth' – with Foucault's double meaning of *régime* in play here: *régime* as network; *régime* as political institution – shape how they come to know and understand the world, an uncomfortable realisation that asserts that readers are never epistemologically autonomous.[255] The endotexts suggest that a politician deriding expertise or accusing journalists of lying may not necessarily be true, and may instead serve as a canary in a coal mine that warns of an impending attempt at securing a totalitarian monopoly on truth-claim production. Such a realisation is brought about by conducting a complex interpretive process across multiple narratological levels, a process that therefore makes readers active participants in the interpretive game, thus enhancing their critical thinking abilities. As such, these endotexts train readers to resist being persuaded by political figures' anti-intellectualism and denigration of the press, thus inoculating them against further post-truth claims and ultimately preparing them to become resistors to would-be tyrants.

Erika Gottlieb argues that, rather than reflecting contemporary sociopolitical concerns at large, literary dystopias are more intimately connected to their authors, for 'in dystopia the writer projects *his* worst fear of an evil society' by 'focus[ing] on a different trend *he* finds threatening'.[256] Lewis's Long-esque demagogue attests this. So too do the reflections offered by *Bend Sinister*, given that Nabokov was 'forced into exile by the Bolsheviks and lament[ed] the establishment of a totalitarian regime in Russia'.[257] Moreover, Lewis's and Nabokov's depictions of the dismissal of intellectuals and the press reflect more personal concerns. As novelists, they are intellectuals, whereas they also possessed a vested interest in the defence of the press; Lewis edited the *Yale*

[255] Kołdrzak, '*Plaisir* and *jouissance*: The case of potential and textual reading of Barthes' theory', p. 53; Foucault, *Power / Knowledge*, p. 131.
[256] Erika Gottlieb, *Dystopian Fiction East and West: Universe of Terror and Trial* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), p. 271 (emphasis added); p. 15 (emphasis added).
[257] Priscilla Meyer, 'Nabokov's short fiction' in *The Cambridge Companion to Nabokov*, ed. by Julian W. Connolly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 119-134 (p. 127).

Literary Magazine and wrote for other newspapers before finding commercial success as a novelist, and Nabokov published fiction and non-fiction alike in the Russian émigré newspapers of Berlin and Paris. Moreover, both men were closely related to journalists: Lewis's second wife, to whom he was married when he wrote and published *It Can't Happen Here*, was Dorothy Thompson, the foreign correspondent famed for her 'expert analys[is] of European fascism'; Nabokov's father, Vladimir Dmitrievich Nabokov, established the émigré newspaper *Rul'* in Berlin after the Bolshevik uprising saw the end of his 'outstanding political and journalistic life in Russia'.[258] Subsequently, Lewis's and Nabokov's depictions of political figures' dismissal of intellectuals and the press see the authors express concerns about the fate of their professional identities – and those of their loved ones – in the face of totalitarianism. This impression is reinforced by their novels' dramatizations not of the *dismissal* of intellectuals and the press, which sees these groups silenced, but of the *appropriation* of these arbiters of truth, which sees their voices used for totalitarian ends.

Paduk's attempt at appropriating an intellectual is evident in how he offers to appoint Krug – a professional academic, philosopher, and the Ekwilist dictator's erstwhile classmate – as the college president of his university. For Krug, this would both amount to a promotion and prevent his incarceration – a fate that befalls many of his academic allies. In exchange for this promotion, Krug is to 'kindly deliver a speech' written by Paduk at the university's public opening and republish his works 'in new editions, revised in light of political events'.[259] Implied in this second condition is that Krug's republished materials would align with Ekwilist thought, and so Paduk's thinly-veiled act of blackmail evinces his bid to coerce an intellectual into supporting the regime. Paduk's attempted appropriation of Krug, however, is most evident in the proposed speech itself. It takes the form of a Read Endotext, apparent in which – and in the surrounding narration it necessitates – are several instances of anti-intellectualist thought. Paduk's anti-

[258] Tanner, 'Sinclair Lewis and Fascism', p. 59; Zoran Kuzmanovich, 'Strong opinions and nerve points: Nabokov's life and art' in *The Cambridge Companion to Nabokov*, ed. by Julian W. Connolly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 11-30 (p. 18).
[259] Nabokov, *Bend Sinister*, p. 109; p. 110.

intellectualist appropriation of Krug's musings that 'no matter to whom they belong, two pairs of eyes looking at a boot see the same boot since it is identically reflected in both' is evident when Krug remarks that the paraphrasing is a 'garbled passage from one of [his] works'.[260] Paduk interrupts Krug when the philosopher attempts to clarify his work, urging him to continue reading the speech, which suggests that the dictator is disinterested in what Krug's argument actually is, and instead is only interested in it insofar as it *sounds* like it aligns with Ekwilist philosophy, given that it argues for the universality of experience. The influence of Ekwilism is apparent also in how the Read Endotext celebrates the 'unbounded heroism of the oppressed and exploited masses' and thus espouses party propaganda.[261] Moreover, anti-intellectualist sentiment is apparent in the Read Endotext itself, not just the narration surrounding it, for the speech denigrates 'the rosy spectacles which used to adorn the long nose of so-called Thought', champions a 'great and beautiful simplification [that] will replace the evil refinements of a degenerate past', and derides 'the working of the mind [as] a kind of garbling'.[262] Although such devaluation of intellect is antithetical to the intellectualism Krug upholds professionally, this tension sees Nabokov express concerns about the fate of intellectuals such as himself in totalitarian regimes. As a speech written by a government that expects one of its academics to simply regurgitate it, the Read Endotext demonstrates how the Party of the Average Man attempts to use intellectuals to advance its truth claims by disseminating propaganda. This constitutes a double threat to their role as arbiters of truth, for not only does the act of regurgitation begin to erode intellectuals' intellect by preventing their critical faculties from being exercised; the parroting of propaganda sees them concede their epistemic authority to a political regime.

Rather than depict a political leader appropriating intellectuals' voices, *It Can't Happen Here* dramatizes the political appropriation of universities – institutions that bear some responsibility for fostering the development of intellect. Given the influence of

[260] Nabokov, *Bend Sinister*, p. 111.
[261] Nabokov, *Bend Sinister*, p. 110.
[262] Nabokov, *Bend Sinister*, p. 111.

Thompson on the 'period of concern with fascism on Lewis's part', it follows that the parallels apparent between *It Can't Happen Here*'s dramatization of the political appropriation of universities and the educational developments of Nazi Germany enabled Lewis to voice his anxieties about the capacity for totalitarian states to erode intellect.[263] Upon being elected, Windrip seizes many of America's higher education institutions, turning them into 'central Corpo universities', so named after Windrip's administration, as part of his 'New American Education' policy.[264] Windrip's subsumption of these universities sees him enforce a new curriculum that both reinforces the disdain for intellect he shows in 'Zero Hour' and erodes intellectualism at large. Echoing Hitler's extolling of 'the virtues of physical prowess and character over formal learning which he termed mere pumping of useless knowledge', the curriculum imposed by Windrip's educational policy is 'entirely practical and modern, free of all snobbish tradition', with taught subjects (e.g., accountancy, fruit canning, and road construction) venerating the usefulness of everyday knowledge to the American population above all else.[265] The prioritisation of these subjects sees the Corpo university curriculum omit pure science because 'it was realized that only too much and too confusing research had already been done', only teach English literature to 'supply quotations for political speeches', and reduce courses that encourage the development and challenging of ideas – including philosophy, psychology, and anthropology – to being taught from new textbooks 'prepared by able young scholars under the direction of' Windrip's Secretary of Education and Propaganda.[266] This last development constitutes a metaphorical book burning, thus recalling the burning of anti-Nazi books enforced by the Third Reich. Moreover, the marked militarisation of the Corpo university curriculum, which empowers students to gain one third of their academic credits in military drills, sees Lewis draw upon the 'militaristic curricul[um] and methodological innovations' offered by Nazi educational

[263] Tanner, 'Sinclair Lewis and Fascism', p. 59.
[264] Lewis, *It Can't Happen Here*, p. 206.
[265] Daniel Horn, 'The Hitler Youth and Educational Decline in the Third Reich', *History of Education Quarterly*, 16.4 (1976), 425-447 (p. 426); Lewis, *It Can't Happen Here*, p. 207.
[266] Lewis, *It Can't Happen Here*, p. 207.

reform.[267] In total, the Third Reich's educational developments amounted to 'an attempt to create a "new man" for the totalitarian regime through adoption of its ideology in […] schools', and this is precisely the case with Windrip's New American Education policy.[268] By controlling the nation's universities, Windrip denies America's youth the chance to become independent, intellectually-curious thinkers who might challenge him. Instead, the Corpo universities create a 'new man' for Windrip's regime, one who is compliant, command-following, and whose education teaches them only to protect and serve their country. *It Can't Happen Here* therefore enables Lewis to voice concern about the ease with which would-be dictators can erode academic institutions, reducing them from places of learning and debate to factories that churn out citizens who are not only politically orthodox, but who also lack the intellectual capability to question, challenge, or advance ideas qua ideas.

Similar to how the anti-intellectualist views it contains anticipate Windrip's seizure of the American education system, the vilification of journalists in 'Zero Hour' foreshadows his eventual appropriation of the press. Windrip achieves this by appointing 'Director[s] of Education' at a district level who are instructed to 'work with and through the newspaper editors in the great task of spreading correct Corporate ideals and combating false theories'.[269] The insinuation that the free press disseminates falsehoods recalls Windrip's Machiavellian portrayal of newspaper editors in 'Zero Hour'. Moreover, the political interference of the press sees Lewis continue to express the 'concern with fascism' that drew him to pay attention to Huey Long's political ascendancy, given that Long established the *Louisiana Progress* in 1930 to 'flood [Louisiana] with a constant stream of propaganda'.[270] Rather than have his demagogue 'control the content of […] one press outlet entirely', however, Lewis extrapolates Long's usurpation of the press to

[267] See Lewis, *It Can't Happen Here*, p. 208: 'All the more familiar games were earnestly taught, and to them were added the most absorbing speed contexts in infantry drill, aviation, bombing, and operation of tanks, armored cars, and machine guns'; Horn, 'The Hitler Youth and Educational Decline in the Third Reich', p. 425.
[268] Horn, 'The Hitler Youth and Educational Decline in the Third Reich', p. 425.
[269] Lewis, *It Can't Happen Here*, p. 164.
[270] Tanner, 'Sinclair Lewis and Fascism', p. 57.

totalitarian ends in his creation of Windrip.[271] This extrapolation also extends to Long's dissemination of propaganda through the press, for Windrip achieves the same goal by ensuring that newspapers spread 'correct Corporate ideals' on a nationwide scale. By appropriating the free press in this manner, Windrip short-circuits the journalistic processes by which truth is uncovered. Rather than rely on journalists, editors, fact-checkers, and lawyers to corroborate facts, verify sources, and uncover truths, the Windrip regime denies the press its journalistic autonomy by dictating which truth claims it may express, thus eroding its status as an arbiter of truth by doing away with the professional obligations that afford it this reputation in the first place.

The shadow of propaganda also looms large in the Party of the Average Man's commandeering of the press, for the government-controlled newspapers advance Ekwilist philosophy. The fact that one such newspaper is named 'the *Ekwilist*' begins to suggest as such, but this impression is reinforced by two Read Endotexts – one an editorial; the other an article – that dramatize how totalitarian forces may appropriate the press's reputation as an arbiter of truth to espouse their own propagandistic truth claims.[272] The assertions in the editorial that '[w]e love the corporate body we belong to better than ourselves' and '[w]e are for an absolute community of interests among fellow citizens' sees it celebrate the collective over the individual, a central Ekwilist tenet, whereas the article's declaration that '[a] person who has never belonged to a Masonic Lodge or to a fraternity, union, or the like, is an abnormal and dangerous person' correspondingly espouses Ekwilist virtues.[273] This dissemination of pro-Ekwilist propaganda is characteristic of Padukgrad's newspapers, for Krug remarks that in terms of news stories, 'there was practically none in the […] government-controlled dailies'.[274] This abandonment of news stories sees the Ekwilist press neglect to uncover legitimate truth claims through the journalistic process, truth claims that may challenge or disrupt

[271] Alecia P. Long, 'Huey Long vs. The Media'.
[272] Nabokov, *Bend Sinister*, p. 123.
[273] Nabokov, *Bend Sinister*, p. 123.
[274] Nabokov, *Bend Sinister*, p. 123.

the political status quo, thus reducing the press to a state organ that purely distributes material designed to reinforce support for the Party of the Average Man.

For both Windrip and the Ekwilist regime, the appropriation of the press is about perpetuating control. On the topic of Windrip's manipulation of newspapers, *It Can't Happen Here*'s main narrative reveals that he had, 'like Hitler and Mussolini, discovered that a modern state can, by […] controlling every item in the press[…], dominate the complex contemporary population'.[275] The same is perhaps true for Paduk in *Bend Sinister*, for the Ekwilist regime's reduction of the press to a vehicle for party propaganda enables Paduk to restrict his citizens to a limited, Ekwilism-aligned understanding of the world. Given that the citizens of Padukgrad are not exposed to alternative ways of thinking, Ekwilist thought becomes the norm, thus ensuring political conformity and, subsequently, the continued dominance of the Party of the Average Man.

Together, *It Can't Happen Here* and *Bend Sinister* allow Lewis and Nabokov to express fears about the state of intellectuals and the free press in totalitarian states. As these novels attest, totalitarianism poses an enormous threat to intellectuals and the press as arbiters of truth, given that a marketplace of truth-claim production runs counter to the aims of totalitarianism. As such, *It Can't Happen Here* and *Bend Sinister* suggest that totalitarian forces may seek to displace competing arbiters of truth so that they may monopolise truth-claim production. As *Bend Sinister* shows, political regimes may coerce intellectuals into spreading pre-produced propaganda, thus curtailing the intellectual capabilities used to produce legitimate truth claims, whereas *Bend Sinister* and *It Can't Happen Here* jointly demonstrate that political regimes' manipulation of the press results in the abandonment of the journalistic processes used to uncover truth. Producing legitimate truth claims depends on a great deal of intellectual or journalistic work, but *It Can't Happen Here* and *Bend Sinister* suggest that totalitarian forces seek to

[275] Lewis, *It Can't Happen Here*, p. 258.

do away with this so that they can instead propose desirable truth claims, thus simultaneously perpetuating their power while catalysing the post-truth condition.

Given that the political appropriation of intellectuals and the press results in an abandonment of intellectual and journalistic ideals that erodes their statuses as arbiters of the truth, the political appropriation of these figures amounts to a metaphorical death of intellect and journalism. This point is evidenced most strongly by *It Can't Happen Here*, in which Windrip's New American Education policy culls the development of intellect among America's youth. However, these metaphorical deaths possess more literal counterparts in Lewis's and Nabokov's dystopias – Krug is shot twice as he attempts to attack Paduk at *Bend Sinister*'s conclusion, and although Doremus Jessup is fortunate enough to escape the same fate in *It Can't Happen Here*, the same cannot be said of the multitude of journalists incarcerated in Windrip's concentration camps. It is here that Lewis's and Nabokov's precise fears are expressed. With the spectre of totalitarianism rearing its head in Europe and, to a lesser extent, America, and with each novelist possessing first- or second-hand knowledge of the exact conditions of such governments, they knew the fate that was likely to befall themselves and their fellow intellectuals and journalists should they find themselves in – and not complying with – a totalitarian regime: death.

Dystopian Ramifications of 'Us' Versus 'Them'

For Jason Stanley, separating a population into 'an "us" and a "them"' is the most telling symptom of fascist politics, for the weaponization of such divisions ushers in a 'state of unreality, in which conspiracy theories and fake news replace reasoned debate', thus 'mak[ing] room for dangerous and false beliefs to take root'.[276] This strategy has been employed by various political figures in the twenty-first century. An ideology that established a distinction between a British 'us' versus a European 'them' underpinned the Leave campaign in the 2016 Brexit referendum. Hungary's prime minister, Viktor Orbán,

[276] Stanley, *How Fascism Works*, p. xxx; p. xxxi.

asserted that '[w]ir betrachten diese Menschen nicht als muslimische Flüchtlinge. Wir betrachten sie als muslimische Invasoren [we do not see these people as Muslim refugees. We consider them to be Muslim invaders]' when asked about Hungary's refusal to home two thousand refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq following their homelands' devastation in the mid-2010s.[277] India's Bharatiya Janata Party, led by Narenda Modi, has championed a 'fabricated version of a mythic Indian past with a pure nation of Hindus', which it has used to deny its Muslim population Indian citizenship.[278] Such rhetoric enables political figures to consolidate their power. It sees them support a majority in-group (for the 'us' is almost always a majority group) and tap into prejudices, all the while evoking fear by fabricating a threat from which they will defend the 'us' group.[279] Therein lies an increased chance of electoral success, as the Brexit referendum result attests.

Given that these divisions tend to hinge upon 'ethnic, religious, or racial distinctions', Stanley's description of fascist politics also fits post-truth politics, for its focus on, championing of, and vilification of certain identity characteristics is inherently emotional – individuals will always seek to defend their identities if they feel that they are under attack, after all.[280] Moreover, the evocation of such identity politics 'demands that [individuals] see group loyalty as taking priority over facts', and so when this is deliberately and misleadingly evoked by figures who aim to secure political gain, it is antithetical to veracity, for it encourages individuals to regard belonging to an 'us' group as being more important than whether the basis for the us-them division is rooted in objectively true statements.[281] Last, the overlap between post-truth politics and

[277] Viktor Orbán quoted in Nikolaus Blome, Christian Stenzel, and Daniel Biskup, '"Ihr wolltet die Migranten, wir nicht!"', *BILD*, 7 January 2018 <https://www.bild.de/politik/ausland/viktor-orban/orban-interview-54403736.bild.html> [accessed 18 November 2020] (translation mine).
[278] Stanley, *How Fascism Works*, p. 14.
[279] The Orbán example is a particularly salient illustration of this latter characteristic, for by calling the two thousand refugees Hungary was asked to rehome an 'invasion', Orbán frames the refugees as an urgent threat to his nation, despite the fact that they would have been dwarfed by Hungary's population of almost ten million people. Accepting the refugees would have almost certainly not amounted to an invasion in any sense.
[280] Stanley, *How Fascism Works*, p. xxx.
[281] Wight, 'Post-Truth, Postmodernism and Alternative Facts', p. 20.

Stanley's conception of fascist politics is further reinforced by the truth-indifferent narratives that these divisions generate.

The following analysis considers the depiction of divisive post-truth politics in *It Can't Happen Here*, Philip Roth's *The Plot Against America*, and Jasper Fforde's *Shades of Grey*. Considering each novel in turn, I will identify the instances in which racism and antisemitism are apparent in the additional texts produced by each novel's political leader. The understanding that antisemitism is 'discrimination, prejudice, hostility or violence against Jews as Jews (or Jewish institutions as Jewish)' that is founded upon falsehoods and manifests in structural injustices and individual prejudices, as outlined in the thesis introduction, will be central to this analysis, given it examines the beliefs personally held by political figures and how they enact these in their policies.[282] A similar conceptualisation of racism (i.e., that it is discrimination founded upon affective falsehoods) will also be drawn upon. Following this, I will examine the broad, societal consequences and the personal ramifications of the espousal of such divisive politics in the novels' main narratives. Following this, I will draw attention to how these novels suggest that inciting division variously empowers nefarious political leaders. In concluding, I will argue that the Barthesian bliss entailed by these novels' endotexts reorients readers to a truth suppressed by such figures by humanising oft-vilified 'thems' and demanding that readers understand their experiences and perspectives, thus offering a corrective to the harmful, divisive, post-truthful narratives espoused by would-be tyrants.

As discussed above, 'Zero Hour' constructs a folksy, 'man of the people' persona for Buzz Windrip, in which he hides his insidious anti-intellectualism and his anti-press ideology. So too are Windrip's racist and antisemitic views espoused within the 'Zero Hour' excerpts. Although his claim that his 'one ambition is to get all Americans to realize that they are […] the greatest Race on the face of this old Earth' could be interpreted as harmless patriotism, this impression is challenged by his later amendment

[282] The Jerusalem Declaration On Antisemitism, 'The Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism'.

that this 'does not apply to people who are *racially* different from us'.[283] The italicisation of 'racially' in the endotext emphasises Windrip's desire to stoke division among the American people; there are those like him – i.e. White Christians – and there are those who are not. This impression is reinforced when, as he discusses his plan to distribute thousands of dollars to every family, Windrip adds as an aside 'that is, I mean every real American family'.[284] For Windrip, only White Christians may be considered 'real' Americans. Windrip's antisemitism is perhaps more explicit still, for he proclaims in 'Zero Hour' that '[t]he real problem with the Jews is that they are cruel'.[285] Windrip rationalises his hostility towards Jewish people by claiming that '[a]nybody with a knowledge of history knows how they tortured poor debtors in secret catacombs, all through the Middle Ages', which implies that his antisemitism is characteristically post-truthful, given that it is founded upon an emotive false narrative he finds desirable.[286] It is significant that Windrip's racist and antisemitic views are expressed in Parallel Endotexts. As relatively brief comments made in additional texts that are themselves relatively brief, the 'Zero Hour' excerpts represent the subtlety with which hateful rhetoric permeates the textual fabric of society. Indeed, the permeation of racism and antisemitism is further mirrored by the epigraphic form of Lewis's Parallel Endotexts. The 'Zero Hour' excerpts punctuate *It Can't Happen Here*'s main narrative, thus dramatizing how racism and antisemitism do not solely manifest in loud, aggressive slurs, or in explicit hate crimes, but that they infiltrate individuals' attitudes and worldviews, emerging in their supposedly uncommon, uncharacteristic, or offhand comments. In this sense, harmful prejudice abounds throughout society, something which Windrip, as a nefarious political figure, is cognisant of and seeks to exploit in his quest for power.

It Can't Happen Here's main narrative dramatizes the consequences of electing a figure who champions division. During his electoral campaign, Windrip puts forward 'The Fifteen Points of Victory for the Forgotten Men', a manifesto that outlines his stance on

[283] Lewis, *It Can't Happen Here*, p. 68.
[284] Lewis, *It Can't Happen Here*, p. 90.
[285] Lewis, *It Can't Happen Here*, p. 196.
[286] Lewis, *It Can't Happen Here*, p. 196.

economic, labour, military, and legal matters.[287] Of these fifteen points, those preoccupied with 'eliminating the Negroes and patronizing the Jews' are 'vigorously respected' upon Windrip's electoral success.[288] These groups are similarly prohibited from 'holding public office, practicing law, medicine, or teaching in any class above the grade of grammar school' (this final prohibition is intensified for Jewish people, who are barred from teaching altogether), whereas all people 'with at least one sixteenth colored [sic] blood' uniquely face harsher taxes.[289] Moreover, Windrip asserts in his manifesto that '[w]e cannot too strongly condemn the un-Christian attitude of certain otherwise progressive nations in their discriminations against the Jews', which subsequently sees the demagogue show support for antisemitism through his refusal to criticise it.[290] This aligns with Windrip's critique of the financial sector elsewhere in the novel, which he racializes 'by making the word "Jewish" an inseparable prefix of the word "banker"', for this sees the demagogue propagate harmful antisemitic stereotypes that are founded upon a false narrative, thus further rationalizing hostility towards Jewish people.[291] The ultimate consequences of Windrip's divisive politics are mentioned briefly at the main narrative's mid-point, in which it implies that Windrip's Minute Men have massacred great swathes of the African-American population, and details how a once-prosperous Jewish man is now 'selling frankfurters by the road' and whose wife has died 'from pneumonia caught in the one-room tar-paper shack into which they had moved' from their upmarket bungalow.[292] Windrip's divisive politics, then, do not simply amount to discrimination for the 'them' groups that it vilifies; they instead amount to their death.

Kenneth Burke describes *Mein Kampf* as 'the well of Nazi magic; crude magic, but effective [magic]' in which Adolf Hitler 'showed his hand' by not only vilifying Jewish

[287] Lewis, *It Can't Happen Here*, p. 61.
[288] Lewis, *It Can't Happen Here*, p. 157.
[289] Lewis, *It Can't Happen Here*, p. 63.
[290] Lewis, *It Can't Happen Here*, p. 62.
[291] Vials, 'What Can Happen Here? Philip Roth, Sinclair Lewis, and the Lessons of Fascism in the American Liberal Imagination', p. 16.
[292] Lewis, *It Can't Happen Here*, p. 158; the brevity of these references is perhaps explained by the fact that Doremus Jessup exists in predominantly Caucasian, protestant circles, or in how, as suggested above, Lewis's novel is more dominantly concerned with the fate of intellectuals and the press – identity characteristics he possessed – in the face of totalitarianism, rather than that of a racialised, religious 'other'.

people, but by rationalising his hostility to them.[293] In other words, Burke suggests that *Mein Kampf* essentially foreshadows Hitler's persecution of Jewish people. A similar logic applies to the interplay between endotext and main narrative in *It Can't Happen Here*. As with *Mein Kampf*, the story-world publication of 'Zero Hour' occurred prior to Windrip's political ascendance, and as such, it anticipates the harmful divisiveness that his policies incite. Crucially, 'Zero Hour' does not foreshadow Windrip's divisiveness from a narratological perspective. The 'Fifteen Points of Victory for the Forgotten Men' occur earlier in the novel than the racist and antisemitic 'Zero Hour' excerpts do. Presuming that they read *It Can't Happen Here* sequentially, this means that real readers first encounter Windrip's enactment of discriminatory policies and only later engage with his pre-election espousal of racist and antisemitic views when reading the Parallel Endotexts. As such, readers are alerted to the fact that Windrip is elected despite the warning signs of division apparent in 'Zero Hour', thus bringing into question how he was elected at all.

Antisemitism is first dramatized not through *The Plot Against America*'s main narrative or an endotext, but through an intertext, for Roth incorporates early in the main narrative Lindbergh's real-world oration of the "Des Moines Speech" made on September 11, 1941. Roth's use of an intertext, rather than an endotext, is a result of his novel's hybrid genre. Although *The Plot Against America*'s story-world descends into dystopian territory, it begins as an alternative history, a genre which depends on the dramatization of real historical moments whose real trajectories are then necessarily deviated from. In the real-world "Des Moines Speech", Lindbergh claimed that '[t]he three most important groups who have been pressing this country toward war are the British, the Jewish and the Roosevelt administration', yet when quoted in *The Plot Against America*, only Lindbergh's allegation against Jewish people remains.[294] This is

[293] Kenneth Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action* (New York: Vintage, 1957), p. 165; Jacobi, 'Rhetoric and Fascism in Jack London's *The Iron Heel*, Sinclair Lewis's *It Can't Happen Here*, and Philip Roth's *The Plot Against America*', p. 99.
[294] Charles Lindbergh, *Des Moines Speech* (Des Moines, IA: 1941) in Charles Augustus Lindbergh Home Page <http://www.charleslindbergh.com/americanfirst/speech.asp> [accessed 18 November 2022].

likewise apparent in Roth's subsequent quotations from the "Des Moines Speech" intertext, for although he includes Lindbergh's divisive assertion that '[n]o person of honesty and vision […] can look on [the Jewish] pro-war policy here today without seeing the dangers involved in such a policy both for us and for them', Roth omits the muted sympathy apparent in his preceding claim that '[n]o person with a sense of the dignity of mankind can condone the persecution of the Jewish race in Germany'.[295] Furthermore, the story-world Lindbergh's '[w]e cannot blame them for looking out for what they believe to be their own interests, but we must also look out for ours', in which the accusation's referent is implied to be Jewish people, sees Roth omit the fact that the real-world Lindbergh leveraged this charge against 'the leaders of both the British and the Jewish races'.[296] These deviations from the real-world "Des Moines Speech" therefore see Roth depart from the true course of history by distorting the inherent divisiveness of Lindbergh's real-world politics to something exclusively antisemitic. Here, *The Plot Against America*'s hybrid genre enables Roth to 'use fascism as a way of addressing specifically Jewish concerns', for the story-world Lindbergh's rampant antisemitism not only sees Roth accentuate the prominence of 'actual historical personages with distinctly anti-Semitic agendas' in the interwar period, including Father Coughlin, Henry Ford, and the union leader John. L. Lewis, but it allows him to reflect 'liberal fears of a Christian fascist America' that emerged in the early 2000s following the political prominence of the religious right during George W. Bush's presidency.[297] As such, *The Plot Against America* constitutes a response to transhistorical concerns about the political mobilisation of antisemitism, thus lending weight to the argument that 'antisemitism is one of the oldest and continually existing examples of post-truth in history'.[298]

[295] Philip Roth, *The Plot Against America* (London: Vintage, 2004), p. 13; Lindbergh, *Des Moines Speech*.
[296] Roth, *The Plot Against America*, p. 13; Lindbergh, *Des Moines Speech*.
[297] Vials, 'What Can Happen Here? Philip Roth, Sinclair Lewis, and the Lessons of Fascism in the American Liberal Imagination', p. 9; Andrew S. Gross, 'It Might Have Happened Here: Real Anti-Semitism, Fake History, and Remembering the Present', *Amerikastudien / American Studies*, 55.3 (2010), 409-427 (p. 419); Vials, 'What Can Happen Here? Philip Roth, Sinclair Lewis, and the Lessons of Fascism in the American Liberal Imagination', p. 18.
[298] Steinacher, 'The Oldest Post-Truth?', chap. 7.

Contrary to *It Can't Happen Here*'s Parallel Endotexts, *The Plot Against America*'s intertext foreshadows the subsequent pervasiveness of antisemitism in Roth's story-world. In broad terms, *The Plot Against America*'s main narrative dramatizes how electing as president a figure who espouses division 'leaves [Jewish people] exposed to anti-Semitic mob violence'.[299] Shortly after Lindbergh's election, the fictionalised Roth family take a trip to Washington in which a man calls Herman – father to Philip, the novel's protagonist – a 'loudmouth Jew', an elderly woman expresses she would 'give anything to slap [Herman's] face', and the family's hotel reservation is not honoured because not all 'hotel reservations are created equal', with the family's Jewish identity implied to be the cause of their booking's devaluation.[300] As noted by Jason Siegel, 'Lindbergh's nomination does not so much alter the nation as tap into anti-Semitic sentiments that already exist[ed]', for the main narrative details several antisemitic practices that predated Lindbergh's political ascendancy, including 'unchallenged discrimination that denied Jews significant promotions in the big corporations'.[301] Subsequently, Lindbergh's election does not generate antisemitic attitudes, but instead legitimises and encourages them to come crawling out the woodwork of American society.

The Lindbergh administration continues to legitimise antisemitism through its enforcement of antisemitic policies. A letter received by Herman at the mid-point of the main narrative illustrates this. Co-present within the novel as a Read Endotext, the letter, sent by Herman's employers, explains how the Roths are to be relocated to the American West as part of the Homestead 42 programme, which will 'provide a challenging environment steeped in our country's oldest traditions where parents and children can enrich their Americanness over the generations'.[302] In this Read Endotext, the Roths are congratulated for being 'among the company's first pioneering

[299] Vials, 'What Can Happen Here? Philip Roth, Sinclair Lewis, and the Lessons of Fascism in the American Liberal Imagination', p. 18.
[300] Roth, *The Plot Against America*, p. 65; p. 70.
[301] Jason Siegel, '"The Plot Against America": Philip Roth's Counter-Plot to American History', *MELUS*, 37.1 (2012), 131-154 (p. 139); Roth, *The Plot Against America*, p. 11.
[302] Roth, *The Plot Against America*, pp. 204-5.

"homesteaders" of 1942', promised 'exciting new opportunities to expand their horizons and to strengthen their country', and are told that the initiative marks a 'once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to move their households, at government expense, in order to strike roots in an inspiring region of America previously inaccessible to them'.[303] Despite being 'couched in the language of tolerance and inclusion', the implicit goal of Homestead 42 is to 'destroy the communities and neighborhoods [sic] that nurture Jewish cultural difference', thus suggesting not only that divisive politics underpin the programme, but also that the Read Endotext propagates post-truthful claims, for it spins an emotionally appealing narrative that conceals its insidiousness.[304]

Between the widespread discrimination in society that Lindbergh legitimises and his enforcement of divisive policy, *The Plot Against America* suggests that antisemitism socially displaces Jewish people. As highlighted by Siegel, 'Jewish immigrants have been living in the United States for three generations, and they feel secure in their adopted country' at the start of the novel, and so the pervasive discrimination faced by the Roths begins to sever their connection to their adopted home.[305] Likewise, Lindbergh's Homestead 42 initiative, through transferring Jewish families 'from established urban centers [sic] to more rural townships' not only 'disintegrate[s] the strength of Jewish communities' by breaking them up, but attempts to erode Jewish culture altogether by placing Jewish families in implicitly Christian settlements that will 'enrich their Americanness'.[306] In other words, *The Plot Against America* suggests that politically mobilised and legitimised antisemitism unmoors Jewish people from their dual senses of nationhood and culture, effectively making them homeless. Subsequently, Roth's dramatization of antisemitism's ramifications begins to humanise an oft-vilified 'them' group that tends to be abstracted by artificial divisions, for by demonstrating how Jewish

[303] Roth, *The Plot Against America*, p. 205; p. 204.
[304] Vials, 'What Can Happen Here? Philip Roth, Sinclair Lewis, and the Lessons of Fascism in the American Liberal Imagination', p. 19; Christopher Douglas, '"Something That Has Already Happened": Recapitulation and Religious Indifference in "The Plot Against America"', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 59.4 (2013), 784-810 (p. 789).
[305] Siegel, '"The Plot Against America": Philip Roth's Counter-Plot to American History', p. 139.
[306] Douglas, '"Something That Has Already Happened": Recapitulation and Religious Indifference in "The Plot Against America"', p. 789; Ward, 'Predicting Trump and Presenting Canada in Philip Roth's *The Plot Against America*', p. 23; Roth, *The Plot Against America*, p. 205.

people are socially displaced by the hostility shown to them, the novel brings readers to the realisation that antisemitic claims espoused by nefarious political figures have profound consequences for the people they target.

Moreover, *The Plot Against America* suggests that antisemitism not only severs Jewish people's connections to their senses of nationhood and culture, but that it also obliterates their familial ties. The increasing fragmentation of the Roth family over the course of Lindbergh's presidency illustrates this. First, Lindbergh's 'Just Folks' programme fractures the young Philip's relationship with his beloved older brother, Sandy. Although promoted as 'a volunteer work program introducing city youth to the traditional ways of heartland life', Just Folks specifically targets Jewish youths so that it may 'introduce a generation gap between Jewish adults and their children', thus preventing Jewish parents from passing their culture to their children.[307] The programme radicalises Sandy, already a Lindbergh fanatic at the start of the novel, who increasingly distances himself from his parents and brother as their differing political stances become more apparent. This prompts the young Philip to fear that his brother would 'change his name to Sandy Mawhinney [– after the family whose farm he was placed at –] and we'd never see him again'.[308] Second, Lindbergh's alliance with Hitler, partially caused by their shared antisemitism, doubly ruptures Philip's relationship with his cousin Alvin. Incensed by Lindbergh's refusal to have America take part in the Second World War, Alvin enlists in the Canadian army, leaving the Roth family home behind. This departure marks the first rupture in Philip's and Alvin's relationship, for the Roths necessarily lose contact with Alvin as he serves in the war. Indeed, the Roths are first updated about Alvin's involvement in the war from the Canadian War Department, which informs them that he has been wounded in action and is hospitalised in England. A letter from a senior nurse explains that 'Cpl. Roth is not communicative. He lost his left leg below the knee and was seriously wounded in his right foot'.[309] Alvin's resultant 'psychological difficulties'

[307] Roth, *The Plot Against America*, p. 84; Douglas, '"Something That Has Already Happened": Recapitulation and Religious Indifference in "The Plot Against America"', p. 789.
[308] Roth, *The Plot Against America*, p. 196.
[309] Roth, *The Plot Against America*, p. 90.

constitute the second rupturing in his relationship with Philip, for the older cousin grows distant and embittered because of his trauma, whereas Philip becomes simultaneously repulsed and fascinated with Alvin's stump – itself a metaphor for the destructiveness of Lindbergh's antisemitism.[310] Last, Roth dramatizes how Lindbergh's divisive politics cause the dissolution of Herman's relationship with Philip's Aunt Evelyn following her marriage to Rabbi Bengelsdorf, the Jewish apologist who '[k]osher[s] Lindbergh for the goyim'.[311] As Siegel notes, Bengelsdorf 'stands for everything Herman Roth is against', and so Aunt Evelyn's marriage to him causes a rift within the Roth household that culminates in Herman 'slam[ming] the door' on her as he insists that he 'never want[s] to see [her] in this house again', thus suggesting that the 'us' versus 'them' tribalism established by the incitement of division overcomes familial bonds.[312]

Roth's depiction of the ramifications of Lindbergh's incitement of division on a familial level further develops the humanisation of antisemitism's targets evident in *The Plot Against America*. Jewish people are no longer a demonised 'other', and nor are they reduced to an amorphous, abstracted community that is variously displaced. Instead, by presenting the story-world Roth family and their fears, traumas, and arguments, Roth presents Jewish people as precisely that: people. Although the conditions that prompt their tensions are uniquely Jewish, the tensions themselves are not – families worry, suffer, and argue irrespective of the faiths, cultures, and countries to which they belong. As such, *The Plot Against America* begins to remedy the post-truthful narratives by which antisemitism is motivated. Although the prejudice asserts that there are profound differences between Jewish people and Gentiles that are a cause for hostility and vilification, Roth's novel foregrounds the artificiality of many of these supposed distinctions by orienting readers to 'other possible lives [and] alternative points of view', a process that 'spur[s] empathy with respect to others'.[313] This realisation evokes

[310] Roth, *The Plot Against America*, p. 90.
[311] Roth, *The Plot Against America*, p. 40.
[312] Siegel, '"The Plot Against America": Philip Roth's Counter-Plot to American History', p. 146; Roth, *The Plot Against America*, p. 187.
[313] Schaberg, *The Work of Literature in an Age of Post-Truth*, p. 11.

Barthesian bliss insofar as it may unsettle readers' cultural assumptions about religious difference and insist that they see through and resist the falsehoods that underpin 'one of the oldest and continually existing examples of post-truth in history', so that, extratextually, Jewish people may face less oppression and, overall, society may be protected from the crisis of post-truth that is built upon false divisions and rancour.[314]

Shades of Grey's endotextual espousal of a racist ideology is oblique. Among the whimsy and irreverence of 'The Rulebook' is the decree that '[i]n order to maintain the quality of breeding stock and public decency, complementary colours are *absolutely forbidden* from marrying. *(Example: Orange/Blue, Red/Green, Yellow/Purple.)*', which demands that 'citizens must seek a mate with whom they can produce offspring to continue their color [sic], or to move the family up the Chromatic hierarchy', an inescapable demand that informs life in Chromatacia.[315] Commentators have broadly interpreted these rules as constructing a 'dystopia in which people's social statuses are governed by their degrees of colour perception', thus 'enabl[ing] some mild satire about class relations'.[316] Reading *Shades of Grey* in this manner suggests that Fforde's novel marks a natural development from Huxley's *Brave New World*, in which the colour of a person's clothes indicates their hierarchical position.[317] However, given that individuals are grouped and hierarchised according to the colours they *perceive*, and given also that the terms denoting this identity characteristic are typically capitalised and pluralised (e.g., 'Greys', 'Reds', and 'Greens'), Fforde's dystopia racializes social class.[318] With this being the case, 'The Rulebook' harbours anxieties related to racial purity and the erasure

[314] Steinacher, 'The Oldest Post-Truth?', chap. 7.
[315] Fforde, *Shades of Grey*, p. 27; Krista Williams, 'Shades of Grey: An Interview with Jasper Fforde', *Munsell Colour* <https://munsell.com/color-blog/shades-of-grey-interview-jasper-fforde/> [accessed 19 October 2022].
[316] Janet Martin, 'Fforde, Jasper. Shades of Grey: The Road to High Saffron', *Library Journal*, 135.8 (2010), 44-44 (p. 44); Adam Roberts, 'Shades of Grey by Jasper Fforde', *The Guardian*, 2 January 2010 <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2010/jan/02/shades-grey-jasper-fforde-review> [accessed 20 October 2022].
[317] Although not explicitly in relation to the hierarchical bearings of the colour of clothes, Fforde has acknowledged the influence of Huxley's novel on *Shades of Grey*. See 'Shades of Grey Reader's Guide', *Penguin Random House* <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/303273/shades-of-grey-by-jasper-fforde/9780143118589/readers-guide/> [accessed 20 October 2022]: '*1984* and *Brave New World*, to go back to primary sources [were the literary influences upon the work].'
[318] Fforde, *Shades of Grey*, p. 27.

of undesirable traits (e.g., low colour perceptiveness and the perception of lower-ranking colours), thus suggesting that 'scientifically erroneous and immoral' eugenicist values, themselves founded upon 'scientific racism', underpin Chromatacia's social order.[319] Indeed, the fact that such values are espoused in 'The Rulebook' upon which Chromatacian order is founded is central to *Shades of Grey*'s satirical elements. It allows Fforde to satirise the banality of the laws on which social norms are founded, claiming that some of his rules are 'not half as daft as the ones we have on the statute-books'.[320] Moreover, given that 'The Rulebook' frames scientific racism as a fundamental aspect of Chromatacia, the epigraphic Parallel Endotexts constitute a writerly manoeuvre that may orient readers to the realisation that harmful prejudices are both deeply and ridiculously ingrained in society. The epigraphic Parallel Endotexts necessarily disrupt the act of reading, forcing readers to jump between different narratological levels as they progress through *Shades of Grey*. Doing so forces readers to read slowly, intentionally, attentively, working as active participants in the interpretive game, the result of which is that they are brought to 'carefully consider how narratives are fabricated, produced, disseminated, and consumed – and the weight […] that people give these narratives'.[321] Such considerations bring to the forefront the racism that permeates the society of Chromatacia and, given the satirical aspects of these endotexts, that such racism is also ridiculous. However, since these considerations are generated by an inherently metafictional narratological device, these also bear relevance extratextually: harmful prejudices likewise abound across society in reality, *Shades of Grey*'s Parallel Endotexts stress. This emphasis may be uncomfortable for readers insofar as it may disrupt their 'assumptions about the *world*, its culture, and its people' or orient them to the possibility that they may be complicit in the perpetuation of prejudice.[322] Such discomfort,

[319] National Human Genome Research Institute, 'Eugenics and Scientific Reasoning', *National Human Genome Research Institute* <https://www.genome.gov/about-genomics/fact-sheets/Eugenics-and-Scientific-Racism> [accessed 21 November 2022]; John P. Jackson Jr., and Nadine M. Weidman, 'The Origins of Scientific Racism', *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, 50 (2005/2006), 66-79 (p. 66).
[320] Jasper Fforde, 'Ramblings', *Jasper Fforde*, 29 December 2009.
[321] Schaberg, *The Work of Literature in an Age of Post-Truth*, p. 3.
[322] Bittner Wiseman, 'Texts of Pleasure, Texts of Bliss', pp. 49-50.

however, is key, for it compels readers to resist the persuasiveness of divisive rhetoric that contributes to the crisis of post-truth, lest they wish to usher in a deeply ridiculous state of affairs akin to the society of Chromatacia.

Fforde's satire of harmful, socially ingrained prejudices extends to *Shades of Grey*'s main narrative. This is evident in how Greys are 'despised', treated as an underclass, and are depicted standing at a café's door, 'waiting patiently for an empty table, even though there were places available' at the beginning of the novel.[323] Moreover, Fforde's satire of such prejudices also arises in the romantic subplot that permeates *Shades of Grey*. This subplot centres on Eddie Russett, the novel's Red protagonist who '*might* be able to see a goodly amount of red'.[324] Eddie spends much of the main narrative preoccupied with winning the affections of Constance Oxblood, the daughter of an 'old-colour' Red family who look down on him because he is 'three generations from Grey'.[325] Subsequently, Eddie is concerned with the topic of his dowry, a common marriage practice in Chromatacia that enables parents to enhance either their family's chromatic ranking or their finances. Knowing that his father 'would have to cough up a fair bit of cash to see [him] married into the Oxbloods', Eddie sets to accruing merits – Chromatacia's currency – and trying to behave in a way according to 'The Rulebook' so as to avoid fines.[326] Eddie's romantic endeavours are complicated when he is sent to the town of East Carmine. He falls in love with Jane G23, a violent, foul-mouthed Grey with rebellious tendencies who repeatedly rejects his affection, and receives romantic attention from Violet deMauve, the Blue-leaning Purple daughter of East Carmine's Head Prefect and so-called 'most poisonous female in the village', following rumours of Eddie's supposedly Prefect-level (i.e. 'of 70% and above') red perceptiveness.[327] Violet insists that she and Eddie marry and have children to solidify

[323] Roberts, 'Shades of Grey by Jasper Fforde'; Fforde, *Shades of Grey*, p. 3.
[324] Fforde, *Shades of Grey*, p. 4. In *Shades of Grey*, individuals' colour perceptiveness is estimated (e.g., based on their parents' perceptiveness) until they take their Ishihara test, which assesses the true extent of their vision, in their twentieth year.
[325] Fforde, *Shades of Grey*, p. 4.
[326] Fforde, *Shades of Grey*, p. 37.
[327] Fforde, *Shades of Grey*, p. 130; p. 68.

their position as a high-ranking Purple family, ignoring his protestations ('Hush! […] You're a passenger now, my dove.') and citing social advancement as a reason for his compliance ('How many people get to trade their surname up five steps in one hit?').[328] Violet pushes through with the marital arrangements, coerces Eddie into impregnating her, and ultimately attempts to murder him when he refuses to marry her and instead expresses his desire to marry Jane – who, by the climax of the narrative, concedes that she does love Eddie after all. These plans are scuppered when Eddie, Jane, and Violet take the Ishihara test that measures their perceptiveness levels. Although the suspicions about Eddie's high perceptiveness are confirmed when he is assessed to be '[e]ighty-six point seven per cent Red', Jane's test reveals that she is nominally a Green.[329] Consequently, they are forbidden from marrying, and Eddie has '*nothing* to stop [his] father from insisting on a union with Violet'.[330]

Throughout the romantic subplot, the eugenicist values espoused by 'The Rulebook' render Eddie a powerless figure. In the case of Constance, the Russetts' Grey ancestry prompts the Oxbloods to look unfavourably upon Eddie as a potential son-in-law despite the fact that Constance 'needs the Red' he would offer her.[331] As such, the Russetts are disadvantaged by virtue of their lineal proximity to Greys. In the case of Violet, the racialised social order of Chromatacia silences Eddie's voice. Given the social disparity between them, Eddie's protestations about marrying Violet are ignored, and once Jane's Ishihara results are confirmed, Eddie and Violet enter a sham marriage. That this occurs in spite of Violet's attempted murder of Eddie suggests that the decree established in 'The Rulebook' that '[t]he hierarchy shall be respected at all times' is unchallengeable, and that Eddie – born a Red – will forever be unquestioningly subjected to the whims of his ostensible superiors.[332] Subsequently, Eddie is trapped in a potentially violent marriage, which acts as a metaphor for the vulnerability experienced

[328] Fforde, *Shades of Grey*, p. 300; p. 299.
[329] Fforde, *Shades of Grey*, p. 424.
[330] Fforde, *Shades of Grey*, p. 425 (emphasis in original).
[331] Fforde, *Shades of Grey*, p. 221.
[332] Fforde, *Shades of Grey*, p. 396.

by the targets of scientific racism. Last, Eddie's inability to marry Jane demonstrates that a consequence of founding a society on eugenicist principles denies individuals the autonomy to freely love whoever they desire, thus constituting a powerlessness that is not social or economic, but is instead spiritual and emotional. As such, *Shades of Grey*'s romantic subplot dramatizes the consequences of implementing ostensibly banal yet deeply prejudiced rules: the 'them' groups constructed and targeted by divisive politics are forced to continually compromise on their desires and needs in order to exist within society. That Fforde focalises his dramatization of these consequences specifically through Eddie's romantic plights highlights that 'them' groups are not only socially disempowered by politically enforced division, but also – given that their emotions and desires are supressed and dismissed – that they are unjustly dehumanised.

Together, Lewis's, Roth's, and Fforde's novels dramatize another consequence of the incitement of division: it grants power to the political figures who espouse it. Divisive politics appeal to voters' desires 'to think of [them]selves as better or smarter than the other', and so Windrip's messianic following among America's 'Poor White Trash' is likely prompted by the racist views evident in 'Zero Hour'.[333] Similarly, Lindbergh's "Des Moines Speech" generates 'roars of approval' from the American First Committee – the audience of the speech – because it vindicates the group's anti-war stance and rampant antisemitism.[334] Furthermore, his subsequent electoral success is founded by his pledge to 'keep America out of the European war' and his accompanying 'malicious vilification of the Jews', which see Lindbergh simultaneously exploit America's fears of war during the interwar period and the hostility towards Jews that likewise abounded at this time.[335] Moreover, the espousal of divisive politics allows political leaders to distract their subjects. The widespread antisemitism that Lindbergh legitimises largely minimises serious opposition to the allegiances he forms with Axis powers, whereas the 'Marriage

[333] Madeleine Albright, '"Us vs. Them" Thinking Is Tearing America Apart. But Here's Why I'm Still Hopeful About the Future', *Time*, 15 January 2021 <https://time.com/5929843/madeleine-albright-us-vs-them-thinking/> [accessed 14 November 2022]; Lewis, *It Can't Happen Here*, p. 65.
[334] Roth, *The Plot Against America*, p. 13; hereafter, the American First Committee is abbreviated as AFC.
[335] Roth, *The Plot Against America*, p. 16.

Market' encouraged by the eugenicist values that underpin 'The Rulebook' in *Shades of Grey*, in which 'enterprising individuals […] can make quite a nice profit negotiating dowries on behalf of families', forms one of the ways in which the people of Chromatacia are not only distracted from questioning the rules, but instead become the perpetuators of them.[336] Last, the espousal of divisive politics affords their disseminators power by virtue of weakening their opposition, i.e., the very people vilified by the incited divisions. Windrip hinders Jewish people and African-Americans economically through his discriminatory policies, Lindbergh splits up Jewish communities and families to erase their culture, and 'The Rulebook' attempts to maintain the social hierarchy of Chromatacia by supressing groups it deems racially inferior and elevating those it deems superior. In total, *It Can't Happen Here*, *The Plot Against America*, and *Shades of Grey* therefore suggest that the political incitement of division is not enacted for the sake of division alone, but that it is orchestrated so that nefarious political figures may gain, retain, or exert their power.

Lewis's, Roth's, and Fforde's endotextual depictions of political figures succeeding at mobilising division for the sake of power seek to evoke bliss in real readers. They lay bare the strategies used by nefarious political figures to conveniently target oft-vilified 'them' groups while simultaneously undermining these false and harmful narratives by humanising the subjects of such vilification. In doing so, these endotexts unsettle 'the reader's […] cultural […] assumptions', revealing a truth that political figures seek to suppress as they divide humanity into 'us' and 'them' groups: the 'them' groups are people too, people whose communities, families, desires, and – ultimately – lives are unjustly threatened, damaged, and destroyed in the selfish pursuit of power.[337] Alerted to this possibility intratextually through the plights experienced by characters such as the Roths and Eddie Russett, readers may be reminded that despite the differences between people that political figures seek to highlight, intensify, and fabricate, these

[336] Fforde, *Shades of Grey*, p. 126; The Captive Reader, 'Shades of Grey – Jasper Fforde', *The Captive Reader*, 1 March 2020 <https://thecaptivereader.com/2010/03/01/shades-of-grey-jasper-fforde/> [accessed 16 November 2022].
[337] Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, p. 14.

ought not to be a cause for hatred and hostility, a blissful realisation that safeguards readers against falling for the rancour and division post-truthfully incited for the sake of political gain.

Conclusion to Part One

Political leaders' deliberate heightening of the post-truth condition entails severe ramifications. The preceding analysis attests as such. In the first half of Part One, I argued that political leaders' mobilisation of anti-intellectual and anti-press ideologies constitute a metaphorical death for the arbiters of truth that offer alternatives to the truth claims advanced by would-be dictators. In the latter half of Part One, I foregrounded the consequences of divisive politics for oft-vilified 'them' groups, including their social, economic, and emotional disempowerment. Together, these ramifications are brought about in the name of political leaders gaining power; through the metaphorical assassination of potentially oppositional arbiters of truth, political leaders may claim for themselves a monopoly on truth-claim production, whereas their demonisation of 'them' groups engenders electoral success or maintains the status quo they desire. Catalysing the post-truth condition therefore begets power, and power begets the catalysis of the post-truth condition, for tyrannical figures, once empowered, continue to advance narratives that are emotionally affective, align with their political beliefs, or are otherwise desirable for them to disseminate.

Analysing *It Can't Happen Here*'s, *Bend Sinister*'s, *The Plot Against America*'s, and *Shades of Grey*'s endotexts is key to reaching this conclusion. As metafictional devices, they bring attention to the 'artificial fabrication or constructedness' of narrative and model 'how the reality we live day by day is similarly constructed, similarly "written"'.[338] Subsequently, they assert that the things written and said by political figures in the real world are likewise carefully and deliberately assembled for the acquisition of or solidification of power. In particular, the aforementioned novels' Read Endotexts

[338] Michael Toolan, *Narrative: a critical linguistic introduction* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 4; Waugh, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction*, p. 18.

particularly dramatize how political figures construct post-truthful claims and how these are disseminated to a general populace who either do not take them particularly seriously, or who fall for their deceptiveness. Subsequently, these Read Endotexts warn that real readers ought to scrutinise politician's truth claims so that they may avoid the fates that dystopian protagonists are subjected to. Additionally, the novels' Parallel Endotexts mimic the ubiquity of post-truth claims within the textual fabric of the political realm, for the divisive rhetoric that 'Zero Hour' and 'The Rulebook' espouse permeate their respective story-worlds, either foreshadowing or representing the totalitarian states with which they are concerned. Both endotextures seek to instil a sense of Barthesian bliss within real readers, for by disrupting the interpretive processes associated with reading realist fiction and unsettling their societal presuppositions, they bring readers to the difficult, yet euphoric, realisation of how and why political figures may denigrate intellectuals, the press, and 'them' groups, both intratextually and extratextually. Such strategies are subsequently viewed *as* strategies, rather than being inherently true, thus preparing readers to critically see through their use. As such, they may lose their potency within the political realm, thereby steering democratic proceedings to slightly more veracious territory, further safeguarding the *demos* from future outbursts of post-truth.

Part Two: The Dystopian Post-Truth Regime of the Chinese Communist Party

Introduction

Following the focus on how North American, British, and European literary dystopias manifest concerns about post-truth politics in the first half of this chapter, attention shall now be paid to how similar anxieties are located in two Chinese novels: Chan Koonchung's *The Fat Years* (2009/2011) and Ma Jian's *China Dream* (2018). This geographical reorientation highlights the global nature of the post-truth problem. Chinese novels will be the particular focus on this section for three reasons. First, the Chinese Communist Party employs various strategies – including propaganda and

censorship, as will be discussed – to further entrench post-truth's prevalence in China.[339] Second, the CCP's rule of China bears five of the six traits developed by Carl Friedrich and Zbignew Brzezinski to identity totalitarian regimes: it possesses 'an official […] ideology; [features] a single political party [led by one person]; [the] party [has] control of mass communications; [the] party [has] control of the military; and [it uses] a secret police'.[340] Given that '[p]olitical questions are clearly central to utopian and dystopian fiction', novels written in response to the CCP fit with this chapter's focus on dystopian depictions of political regimes.[341] Last, there is a rich dystopian tradition within Chinese literature. Critics tend to locate the beginning of this tradition in Lao She's *Cat Country* (1933), a novel that 'portrays in the most devastating terms the China of the 1920s'.[342] Koon-ki Tommy Ho remarked in 1987 that Lao's novel was 'the most eminent and significant dystopian novel in the history of Chinese literature', but reasons to contest this claim would emerge only two years later, following the Tiananmen Square massacre in June 1989.[343] Mingwei Song has argued that this event caused a 'collapse of idealism and optimism as well as a pervasive disillusionment with communism' that subsequently prompted a new wave of Chinese literature that 'contain[ed] a self-conscious effort to energise the utopian/dystopian variations rather than a simple denial of utopianism or a total embrace of dystopian disillusionment': in other words, the tragedy of the Tiananmen Square massacre, one of the darkest moments in the history of modern China, inspired a wave of dystopian imaginings among Chinese writers.[344]

Both Chan Koonchung's *The Fat Years* and Ma Jian's *China Dream* respond to the Tiananmen Square massacre. Chan's novel is set in the second year of China's 'Golden Age of Ascendancy', an era of economic dominance following a diegetic financial crash in

[339] Hereafter, the Chinese Communist Party is abbreviated as CCP.
[340] Carl Friedrich and Zbignew Brzezinski quoted in Louis Menard, 'The Devil's Disciples', *The New Yorker*, 20 July 2003 <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2003/07/28/the-devils-disciples> [accessed 12 May 2024].
[341] Stock, *Modern Dystopian Fiction and Political Thought: Narratives of World Politics*, p. ix.
[342] Lisa Raphals, 'Alterity and Alien Contact in Lao She's Martian Dystopia, Cat Country', *Science Fiction Studies*, 40.1 (2013), 73-85 (p. 73).
[343] Koon-ki Tommy Ho, 'Cat Country: A Dystopian Satire', *Modern Chinese Literature*, 3.1/2 (1987), 71-89 (p. 71).
[344] Mingwei Song, 'After 1989: The New Wave of Chinese Science Fiction', *China Perspectives*, 101 (2015), 7-13 (p. 8); p. 7.

2011 that brought the Western world to its knees.[345] Although people in Chan's China are happy, a small group of dissidents notice that the month of February 2011 – the month between the start of the economic crisis and the dawn of China's Golden Age of Ascendancy – has ostensibly vanished. They remember how the economic crisis plunged China into a 'state of anarchy' in which factories closed, supply issues for essential goods arose, and criminals terrorised the population.[346] They remember also how this disarray was ultimately resolved by a violent crackdown enforced by the People's Liberation Army. Despite the enormity of this event, it cannot be found in official records in Chan's story-world, and the happy majority, experiencing a sort of collective amnesia, believe instead that the 2011 financial crisis and China's Golden Age of Ascendancy started concurrently. This missing month, critics have noted, 'is pretty clearly an allegory for June 1989', and the novel's main narrative is centred on the dissidents' efforts to resolve the mystery of its disappearance.[347] The novel's amnesiac writer protagonist, Old Chen, becomes embroiled in this investigation as he attempts to win the affections of the dissident Little Xi, his old friend.

Whereas Chan's novel depicts its protagonist's attempts to uncover the CCP's post-truthful machinations, Ma's features a protagonist who is complicit in constructing them. Set during the early stages of a fictionalised version of Xi Jinping's presidency, *China Dream* follows Ma Daode, the 'director of the newly created China Dream Bureau'.[348] A corrupt and debauched party official, Director Ma proposes that his Bureau develops a 'China Dream Device' that will be inserted into the head of all Chinese people and allow Xi's China Dream to 'fully impregnate' their minds, overriding their memories and personal dreams.[349] As he suggests this, Director Ma's own painful memories of China's Cultural Revolution begin to influence his mind, threaten his professional duties,

[345] Chan Koonchung, *The Fat Years*, trans. by Michael S. Duke (London: Black Swan, 2012), p. 46.
[346] Chan, *The Fat Years*, p. 219.
[347] Jon Petre, 'Review – "The Fat Years", Chan Koonchung', *entertainingmrpetre*, 11 July 2019 <https://entertainingmrpetre.wordpress.com/2019/07/11/review-the-fat-years-chan-koonchung/> [accessed 11 May 2022].
[348] Ma Jian, *China Dream*, trans. by Flora Drew (London: Vintage, 2019), p. 1.
[349] Ma, *China Dream*, p. 3.

and challenge his sanity. Although *China Dream* is not as overt a response to the Tiananmen Square massacre as *The Fat Years* is, Ma notes in his foreword that 'China's post-1949 history is cleansed of darkness and reduced to an anodyne, joyful fairy tale'.[350] Ma explicitly includes 'the 1989 massacre of peaceful pro-democracy protestors in the streets around Tiananmen Square' within this cleansing, thus suggesting that his novel's exploration of memory, propaganda, and censorship, and the tensions contained therein, was written as an indirect response to the events of June 1989.[351]

The following analysis of *The Fat Years* and *China Dream* will consist of two parts. First, I will examine how Chan and Ma dramatize in their novels the CCP's use of propaganda and censorship in both its immediate and long-term responses to the Tiananmen Square massacre. Such dramatizations see Chan and Ma alert readers to the nightmarish conditions that underpin modern China, an inconvenient truth that the CCP seeks to suppress. Second, I will consider how the novels' endotexts not only rework these warnings, but advance them by suggesting that the CCP's intentional amplification of post-truth isolates individuals or makes them apathetic to truth. The Parallel Endotexts that comprise *The Fat Years*'s second chapter and the text messages sent and received by Ma Daode in *China Dream* – examples of the novel's Written and Read Endotexts – will form the basis of this discussion. In total, this analysis will show that Chan's and Ma's novels reflect the dystopian conditions of contemporary China, something that they achieve through dramatizing the CCP's routine abuse, distortion, and outright suppression of truth. By couching these reflections endotextually, Chan's and Ma's novels elicit bliss by disrupting Western readers' cultural assumptions and indifference about China, raise empathy by bringing their attention to experiences and perspectives typically beyond their reach, and ultimately force them to take the CCP's totalitarianism seriously.

[350] Ma, *China Dream*, p. x.
[351] Ma, *China Dream*, p. x.

Dramatizations of the Chinese Communist Party's Post-Truthful Responses to the Tiananmen Square Massacre

Following the death of the former CCP General Secretary Hu Yaobang on April 15th, students calling for democratic reform protested in Tiananmen Square. After weeks of demonstrations that attracted hundreds of thousands of supporters, the Chinese government declared martial law on May 20th and deployed tanks and armed soldiers at the beginning of June. This culminated in a bloody crackdown between the evening of June 3rd and the morning of June 4th in which the tanks and soldiers 'randomly fir[ed] on unarmed protesters', restoring order.[352] To this day, the true extent of the bloodshed is unknown, given that the CCP has never released an official death toll. However, as noted by Cate Cadell, 'estimates from human rights groups and witnesses range from several hundred to several thousand', with even the more conservative end of these estimates highlighting the degree of brutality used by the Chinese government on its own people.[353]

The CCP's immediate and long-term responses to the Tiananmen Square massacre have depended upon different strategies to downplay or outright erase the atrocities for which it was responsible. In the immediate aftermath of the tragedy, the CCP's response was inherently propagandistic because it drew 'on sentimental factors, and [sought] to persuade in order to serve the aims of the propagandist through disseminating a certain ideology or doctrine'.[354] This is apparent in how it claimed that 'the military simply defended itself – and the country – against violent counterrevolutionary elements', and in how the only deaths it acknowledged were those of the People's Liberation Army soldiers, who were declared martyrs.[355] Not only does

[352] On This Day, '1989: Massacre in Tiananmen Square', *BBC News* <http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/june/4/newsid_2496000/2496277.stm> [accessed 13 May 2022].
[353] Cate Cadell, 'China's robot censors crank up as Tiananmen anniversary nears', *Reuters*, 26 May 2019 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-tiananmen-censorship/chinas-robot-censors-crank-up-as-tiananmen-anniversary-nears-idUSKCN1SW03Y> [accessed 13 May 2022].
[354] Poulakidakos et al., 'Post-truth, propaganda and the transformation of the spiral of silence', p. 368.
[355] Christopher Beam, 'Tussle in Tiananmen Square', *Slate*, 3 June 2009 <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2009/06/what-does-the-chinese-government-say-happened-at-tiananmen-square.html> [accessed 17 May 2022].

this narrative appeal to the Chinese public's emotions and sentimentality by evoking their sense of national pride, but it also implicitly disseminates an ideology that suggests that China's political status quo in 1989 was worth defending and that any deviations from this were unwanted or unnecessary. More recently, the CCP has enforced mass censorship to deny that the Tiananmen Square massacre happened at all. This strategy is apparent in how all references to the tragedy have been wiped from China's history books, or in how the CCP activates what John Sudworth calls 'the world's biggest censorship machine' in the weeks leading up to the incident's anniversary to expunge from the internet any allusions to it.[356] The pervasiveness of the CCP's censorship machine is so thorough that 'there is little awareness about what happened' among the younger generation that did not live through the protests.[357] Given that the Cyberspace Administration of China – the nation's central internet regulator and censor – made 'falsifying the history of the Communist Party' on the internet a punishable offence in November 2018, it is likely that such ignorance will continue to proliferate among China's younger population who, without any reliable and permanent sources to consult, cannot know for certain what – if anything – happened in June 1989.[358]

The CCP's use of propaganda and censorship in its responses to the Tiananmen Square incident has enabled it to reinforce the stranglehold it has on China. As noted by Michael C. Wenderoth, many of China's previous leaders were brought down by social instability, and so the CCP may fear 'opening Pandora's box [and] unleash[ing] opposition voices' by acknowledging and apologising for the tragedy entailed by the massacre.[359] In other words, the CCP's initial distortion and later erasure of the incident allow it to retain social stability because this provides would-be dissenters with less

[356] John Sudworth, 'Tiananmen 30 years on – China's great act of "forgettance"', *BBC News*, 1 June 2019 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/blogs-china-blog-48455582> [accessed 13 May 2022].
[357] BBC News, 'Tiananmen Square: What happened in the protests of 1989?', *BBC News*, 23 December 2021 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-48445934> [accessed 25 July 2022].
[358] Cadell, 'China's robot censors crank up as Tiananmen anniversary nears'.
[359] Michael C. Wenderoth, 'Why China Won't Apologize For Tiananmen Square, And Why That Might Be A Good Thing', *Forbes*, 3 June 2019 <https://www.forbes.com/sites/michaelcwenderoth/2019/06/03/why-china-wont-apologize-for-tiananmen-square-and-why-that-might-be-a-good-thing/?sh=20c203de69e2> [accessed 26 July 2022].

material to challenge the nation's political status quo. This attempt at retaining social stability sees the CCP catalyse China's post-truth condition: propaganda 'works by manipulating people's *emotions*', and censorship 'restrict[s] or distort[s]' inconvenient information through covert denialism.[360] Together, these strategies see the CCP produce intentionally misleading accounts that relegate facts to a secondary importance relative to emotional appeal and personal belief, thus intensifying the post-truth condition within China.

The CCP's use of propaganda in its initial response to the events of June 1989 is dramatized in Chan Koonchung's *The Fat Years*. Mirroring the claims made by the real-world CCP following the Tiananmen Square massacre, propaganda in Chan's novel conceals the disarray of February 2011 by appealing to nationalistic sentiment, for the story-world CCP asserts that the country has uniquely entered a 'Golden Age of Ascendancy'.[361] The emotional appeal of this narrative is highlighted throughout Chan's novel: the dissident Zhang Dou mentions how 'everyone [he] met was extremely happy' since the start of this era; a tarot card reader remarks that 'China has [suddenly] ranked as number-one [in the National Happiness Index]'; and the non-amnesiac Little Xi comments that '[e]veryone seems to be perennially happy'.[362] Such happiness is achieved despite the narrative's misleadingness. He Dongsheng, a story-world government official, concedes late in the main narrative that 'China's per capita income is very far behind that of developed countries', but that the CCP relies on state-controlled media to 'frequently report that in *this* area China is number one in the world, or in *that* area China is in the first rank', thus employing information overload to confuse Chinese citizens into 'believ[ing] that China leads the world in everything'.[363]

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[360] Cassam, 'Bullshit, Post-truth, and Propaganda', p. 60; Sarah Cook, 'Analysis: The Clubhouse Affair: A Stark Reminder of China's Information Isolation', *Freedom House*, February 2021 <https://freedomhouse.org/report/china-media-bulletin/2021/chinas-information-isolation-new-censorship-rules-transnational> [accessed 13 May 2022].

[361] In *The Fat Years*, China did in fact – despite the story-world CCP's claims to the contrary – suffer the consequences of the 2011 economic crash: factories closed down, supply and demand issues emerged as people stockpiled goods and panic-bought essentials, and a general state of anarchy emerged.

[362] Chan, *The Fat Years*, p. 79; p. 141; p. 261.

[363] Chan, *The Fat Years*, p. 261; p. 262.

Moreover, the CCP's use of censorship in its long-term response to the Tiananmen Square massacre is reimagined in Chan's novel. As with the real-world CCP, literal censorship has taken place in Chan's story-world, for the dissident Fang Caodi can find 'no books that mention that lost month' of February 2011.[364] An answer to this mystery is provided by He Dongsheng, who explains that the previous CCP leadership group 'totally rewrote the history of those twenty-eight days' because, 'having the blood of those twenty-eight days on their hands, [it] was very eager for everyone to forget the events of that month'.[365] By ensuring that this month is forgotten, the story-world CCP absolves itself of the guilt caused by the violent crackdown it issued, thus drawing a parallel between it and the real-world CCP, which has likewise washed its hands clean of the Tiananmen Square massacre by refusing to acknowledge that such an event took place.

Perhaps more poignant still is the second – and much less literal – manifestation of censorship in *The Fat Years*. As his interrogation concludes, He Dongsheng reveals that the story-world CCP has been adding a low dosage of MDMA to all of China's drinking supplies since the final day of the February 2011 crackdown. The 'small-small high' that this causes the majority of China's population to experience, He explains, allowed the CCP to 'properly calibrate the people's emotions' and make them more receptive to the 'Golden Age of Ascendancy' narrative, which the CCP feared would be unenthusiastically received by the public following the violent crackdown.[366] The mass-spiking enacted by Chan's CCP therefore constitutes censorship not because it prevents the Chinese public from *knowing* facts that the CCP regard as being inconvenient, but because it prevents them from *feeling* certain emotions that would be inconvenient for the CCP, i.e. ones that might cause dissent, noncompliance, or political unorthodoxy. Sim writes that post-truth is 'about exerting power and control over others, and closing off debate – to the point of silencing the opposition altogether if that is at all possible',

[364] Chan, *The Fat Years*, p. 155
[365] Chan, *The Fat Years*, p. 297; p. 296.
[366] Chan, *The Fat Years*, p. 291; p. 293.

and this is precisely the case with the story-world CCP's censorship of emotions, for by pacifying the Chinese public, the CCP is able to 'improve [their] national stability', or, as put by Little Xi, achieve their goal of 'get[ting] away with everything'.[367] Given that it enables them to perpetuate their power over China, the story-world CCP's censorship of emotions satirises the real-world CCP's response to the Tiananmen Square massacre. Although the real-world CCP may have fallen short of chemically placating the Chinese public, by covertly denying inconvenient facts and preventing the public from accessing them, it likewise reduces the opportunities they have to feel disillusioned, sad, or angry – emotions that could lead to nonconformity. In other words, by denying people the chance to *know* inconvenient facts, the real-world CCP denies them the chance to *feel* negatively about those facts, thus minimising the chance that the CCP's power might be challenged.

China Dream likewise satirises the CCP's use of censorship and propaganda in its real-world, post-truthful response to the Tiananmen Square massacre. *China Dream*'s author, Ma Jian, argues that these strategies have been frequently employed by the CCP to erase from history the 'catastrophes inflicted by Chairman Mao and his successors'.[368] Continuing, Ma argues that Xi Jinping has 'strengthened his grip on power [in China] by suppressing information about the hell that Communism has caused and promising a future paradise', thus highlighting the ongoing importance of the catalysis of the post-truth condition to the CCP's governance of China.[369] Ma satirises this in *China Dream* through the 'China Dream Device' neural implant invented by Ma Daode's China Dream Bureau, which has the purpose of both censoring and propagandizing the story-world's Chinese population. As with *The Fat Years*'s depiction of emotional censorship, censorship in Ma's novel is atypical. The China Dream Device seeks not to censor written text, but 'all private remembrances and dreams' so that the story-world CCP may 'eradicate the past', the consequence of which is that Ma Daode may expunge from his

[367] Sim, *Post-Truth, Scepticism & Power*, p. 14; Chan, *The Fat Years*, 290; p. 291.
[368] Ma, *China Dream*, p. x.
[369] Ma, *China Dream*, p. x.

memory the 'bloody nightmares' of the Cultural Revolution that frequently haunt him.[370] The emotive connotations of 'bloody nightmares' suggests that fear motivates the story-world CCP's censorship of the past, thus – following Wenderoth's argument that it was inspired by a fear of triggering social unrest – drawing broad parallels with the real-world CCP's suppression of the Tiananmen Square massacre. However, the CCP does not only suppress *information* it deems inconvenient within *China Dream*'s story-world. As summarised by a minor political figure in the main narrative, '[r]eplacing personal dreams with the communal China Dream is our Party's main objective', thus suggesting that the memorial and imaginative censorship of the Chinese public is enacted so that their minds are reduced to blank slates upon which propaganda may be imprinted.[371] The 'communal China Dream' that this figure refers to is Xi Jinping's 'China Dream of national rejuvenation', a political ideology that 'promis[es] that continued Communist rule would lead to even greater economic wealth and restore China to its past glory'.[372] Disseminating this propagandistic message through a neural implant serves as a metaphor for the real-world CCP's use of state-owned media to perpetuate its power. The influence of such media is pervasive in China, with many of the nation's major newspapers and news agencies falling under the remit of the CCP, whereas ostensibly independent publications have – since an update made to China's code of ethics for journalists in 2019 – been instructed to 'persist in arming the mind with Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era'.[373] The key difference between the real- and story-world CCPs' dissemination of propaganda is their ubiquity; in the real-world, China's frequent imprisonment of journalists suggests alternative viewpoints are expressed, whereas Ma's neural implant enforces a monopoly of thought. Subsequently, the China Dream Device constitutes a nightmarish projection of the CCP's use of propaganda that allows Ma to imagine a more totalitarian future for China.

[370] Ma, *China Dream*, p. 3; p. 115; p. 48.
[371] Ma, *China Dream*, p. 29.
[372] Ma, *China Dream*, p. x.
[373] Quoted in Ben Westcott, 'Beijing calls for Chinese journalists to 'arm their minds' with Xi Jinping Thought', *CNN*, 17 December 2019 <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/12/17/asia/china-journalist-code-intl-hnk/index.html> [accessed 29 July 2021].

Indeed, the fact that the China Dream Device is a neural implant is perhaps the most speculative extrapolation Ma makes in *China Dream*.[374] As such, it is the novel's *novum*, for it is a 'totalizing phenomenon or relationship deviating from the author's and implied reader's norm of reality'.[375] Interpreting the China Dream Device in this way draws attention to how Ma employs cognitive estrangement – a strategy whereby the familiar is rendered defamiliar to readers – in his novel. The purpose of such estrangement is to '[compel] us to imagine a different way of conceiving our world', for the China Dream Device establishes a 'reflecting *of* but also *on* reality' that offers a 'dynamic transformation […] of the author's environment'.[376] In other words, because Ma presents a familiar strategy (the dissemination of propaganda) being achieved through unfamiliar means (a neural implant), he lays bare to his readers a condition underpinning the CCP's governance of China that they may have taken for granted, and highlights the nightmarishness of this reality. Suvin argues that using cognitive estrangement allows science fiction to be an 'educational literature […] irreversibly shaped by the pathos of preaching the good word of human curiosity, fear, and hope'.[377] This quality is apparent in *China Dream*'s dystopian depiction of the CCP's use of propaganda in modern China, for Ma's use of cognitive estrangement educates – or re-educates, perhaps – readers about its prevalence within the country. Such didacticism is deliberate on Ma's part. In *China Dream*'s foreword, he writes that he considers it his job as a writer to 'probe the darkness and, above all, to tell the truth'.[378] Continuing, he states that this inspired him to write *China Dream* 'out of rage against the false utopias that have enslaved and infantilised China since 1949, and to reclaim the most brutal

[374] This may not be a particularly far-reaching extrapolation, either, given that South African business magnate Elon Musk co-founded the 'Neuralink Corporation', a company that develops implantable brain-machine interfaces, in 2016.
[375] Darko Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 64.
[376] 'Cognitive Estrangement', in *A Dictionary of Critical Theory*, ed. by Ian Buchanan, 2nd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), np.; Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, p. 10.
[377] Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, p. 36. Although Suvin writes explicitly about science fiction, his analysis also applies to literary dystopias, given that some critics – including Suvin himself – tend to conflate these terms or consider the latter a subcategory of the former.
[378] Ma, *China Dream*, p. xii.

period of its recent history […] from a regime that continues to repress it', thus revealing the centrality of the anti-propaganda message to *China Dream*.[379]

Didacticism is therefore central to both *The Fat Years* and *China Dream*. In particular, these novels teach readers about the propaganda and censorship that not only informed the CCP's immediate and long-term responses to the Tiananmen Square massacre, but continue to characterise its totalitarian rule over China. The novels achieve this by dramatizing conditions in China as they *are* today to demonstrate that the nation is permeated by a crisis of truth that has 'left the Chinese people so numb and confused, they have lost the ability to tell fact from fiction'.[380] As if to illustrate the point, neither *The Fat Years* nor *China Dream* are legitimately published within the country, given their criticism of the CCP: Chan's novel is only available by mail order from Hong Kong or 'through underground publishers and booksellers', whereas the entirety of Ma's oeuvre has been completely 'erased […] from [China's] literary history', mentioning his name in the press is expressly forbidden, and the author himself has been exiled from the country of his birth.[381] *The Fat Years* and *China Dream* are therefore emblematic of the CCP's amplification of China's post-truth condition; not only do they dramatize its methods intratextually, they are also subject to them extratextually.

Endotextual Didacticism in *The Fat Years* and *China Dream*

The above analysis demonstrates that *The Fat Years* and *China Dream* possess a didactic intent. Central to their didacticism is the cognitive estrangement apparent in each novel. In *China Dream*, this is achieved by the China Dream Device, which serves as the novel's *novum*. A similar effect is accomplished in *The Fat Years* by the story-world

[379] Ma, *China Dream*, p. xii.
[380] Ma, *China Dream*, p. xi.
[381] Michael Schaub, '"The Fat Years": China's Brave New World', *npr*, 12 January 2012 <https://www.npr.org/2012/01/12/145041609/the-fat-years-chinas-brave-new-world?t=1652269267330> [accessed 11 May 2022]; Alice Stephens, 'China Dream: A Novel', *Washington Independent Review of Books*, 5 June 2019 <https://www.washingtonindependentreviewofbooks.com/index.php/bookreview/china-dream-a-novel> [accessed 11 May 2022].

disappearance of the month of February 2011, which may be considered Chan's *novum* in that it serves as a significant point of departure from the empirical world, displacing a familiar occurrence (the CCP's use of propaganda and censorship to obfuscate and erase atrocities it deems unfavourable) into an unfamiliar context (the erasure of February 2011). Through presenting story-worlds that are simultaneously familiar and strange, *China Dream* and *The Fat Years* compel readers to 'see [their] own conditions of life in a new and potentially revolutionary perspective', particularly seeking to alert or remind them of how the CCP sharpens the post-truth condition to 'mislead and confuse' the Chinese populace and subsequently strengthen its totalitarian grip over the nation.[382]

However, critics have argued that, as a generic feature of speculative fictions, Darko Suvin's conception of cognitive estrangement is not without its limitations.[383] For Simon Spiegel, there are 'inconsistencies within Suvin's own definition' for cognitive estrangement, which has led to a conceptual muddling from subsequent scholars, whereas Perry Nodelman finds Suvin's concept flawed because it is coloured by his Marxist views.[384] Notwithstanding these ostensible conceptual deficiencies, Patrick Parrinder has highlighted the cognitive workload interpreting *nova* demands of readers, which includes 'relating the objects and figures in the text to the world of the text as a whole; relating the objects and figures to their corresponding or opposing elements in the author's empirical world; and relating the world of the text as a whole to the author's empirical world'.[385] Given that it requires various thought processes, prerequisite

[382] Patrick Parrinder, 'Introduction: Learning from Other Worlds' in *Learning from Other Worlds: Estrangement, Cognition, and the Politics of Science Fiction and Utopia*, ed. by Patrick Parrinder (Liverpool: University of Liverpool Press), pp. 1-16 (p. 4); Sim, *Post-Truth, Scepticism & Power*, p. 3.

[383] Here, I have used the term 'speculative fictions' in its plural form to encapsulate science fiction and all forms of utopian and dystopian literatures (therefore including paratopian fiction). Although Suvin tends to specifically associate cognitive estrangement with 'science fiction', it is apparent throughout his scholarship that he subsumes utopian and dystopian literatures within this term, an assessment that I do not agree with. By using 'speculative fictions' here, I hope to offer a corrective to what I view to be a mislabelling on Suvin's part.

[384] Simon Spiegel, 'Things Made Strange: On the Concept of "Estrangement" in Science Fiction Theory', *Science Fiction Studies*, 35 (2008), 369-385 (p. 369); see Perry Nodelman, 'The Cognitive Estrangement of Darko Suvin', *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, 5.4 (1981), 24-27.

[385] Patrick Parrinder, 'Revisiting Suvin's Poetics of Science Fiction' in *Learning from Other Worlds: Estrangement, Cognition, and the Politics of Science Fiction and Utopia*, ed. by Patrick Parrinder (Liverpool: University of Liverpool Press), pp. 36-50 (p. 47).

knowledge, and relational understandings from readers, it is apparent that the successful evocation of cognitive estrangement by a work of fiction is by no means a certainty. This uncertainty is deepened in cases where *nova* are so outlandish, unfamiliar, or extreme that they 'distract us from the worst brutalities of our own reality at the same time as [they] fully [exploit] them', as argued by Stephen Zepke in his analysis of science fiction cinema.[386] Zepke also suggests that in instances where *nova* take the form of unfamiliar problems, they tend to have 'unrealistic […] solutions', thus denying audiences tangible means of addressing their real-world counterparts.[387] As such, the didacticism of cognitive estrangement exists within a delicate balance.

China Dream and *The Fat Years* appear particularly anxious about the precarity of cognitive estrangement's didacticism, for by containing endotexts, these novels 'manifest their fears about their own readability'.[388] Lucien Dällenbach claims that such fears are caused 'either because the need for readability so obsesses [texts] that they forbid the reader to fill in the gaps as [they wish]', or because 'the reader might risk being unable to fill in the gaps'.[389] Both fears are relevant in the case of cognitively estranging texts, which are not only anxious that readers learn from the particular lessons that they offer, but that they do so in spite of the complex interpretive processes that learning from such lessons entails. Given that they 'function as mirrors or microcosms of the text', endotexts attempt to overcome cognitively estranging texts' fears about their own readability by reimparting their didactic messages via a second literary device, essentially attempting to ensure that a given text's lessons or warnings are more successfully communicated because they are doubly expressed.[390] With regards to *China Dream* and *The Fat Years*, their endotexts therefore reinforce the dramatizations of the CCP's catalysis of the post-truth condition that are evoked by each novel's *novum*, thus

[386] Stephen Zepke, 'Beyond cognitive estrangement – The future of science fiction cinema', *NECSUS. European Journal of Media Studies*, 1.2 (2012), 91-113 (p. 99).
[387] Zepke, 'Beyond cognitive estrangement', p 98.
[388] Dällenbach, 'Reflexivity and Reading', p. 441.
[389] Dällenbach, 'Reflexivity and Reading', p. 441.
[390] Dällenbach, 'Reflexivity and Reading', p. 435.

eliciting bliss for real readers as they uncover truths that the CCP seeks to suppress about the circumstances that underpin China in reality.

For *China Dream*, endotextual didacticism manifests in the text messages sent and received by Ma Daode, which are examples of the novel's Written and Read Endotexts. Early in the main narrative, a Read Endotext illustrates the extent to which the story-world CCP's amplification of the post-truth condition influences its officials' professional duties. An unnamed party member sends Director Ma a text message that details something that had 'JUST APPEARED IN THE COMMENT SECTION OF THE CHINA DREAM WEBSITE', a 'DIG AT CORRUPT OFFICIALS' that accuses them of laziness and ineptitude, illicit behaviour, and committing domestic violence.[391] The party member concludes their text message by asking, 'SHOULD I DELETE IT? PLEASE ADVISE'.[392] Here, the Read Endotext directly dramatizes how party officials collude in the CCP's entrenchment of post-truth's prevalence by suppressing inconvenient truth claims, an effect that is similarly achieved when, late in the novel, Ma Daode signs off on a report about internet censorship, recommending that it is 'SUBMIT[TED] TO THE PROPAGANDA DEPARTMENT FOR APPROVAL'.[393] Together, these Read Endotexts refigure the main narrative's preoccupation with post-truth, situating it not within an abstract *novum* but within the concrete actions of its characters who produce and suppress truth claims. Subsequently, by dramatizing the same issue through abstract and concrete means, Ma's warning of the CCP's stoking of the post-truth condition saturates his novel, thus – following Dällenbach – limiting readers' opportunities to fill in the gaps of meaning according to their wishes as they interpret the novel because *China Dream*'s didactic message is inescapable.

The Fat Years's second chapter, 'Never Forget', reworks the warnings about the CCP's use of propaganda and censorship that are evoked by the novel's *novum*.[394] Although at first glance this chapter follows the narrative mode of the rest of the novel,

[391] Ma, *China Dream*, p. 9; p. 10.
[392] Ma, *China Dream*, p. 10.
[393] Ma, *China Dream*, p. 116.
[394] Chan, *The Fat Years*, pp. 63-109.

albeit told from multiple perspectives (spanning the viewpoints of the dissidents Little Xi, Zhang Dou, and Fang Caodi, as well as the amnesiac Old Chen, and Little Xi's politically orthodox son, Wei Guo), each subchapter's title reveals that they are excerpts from autobiographies, transcript recordings, and a notebook, thus reframing them as Parallel Endotexts. The 'Golden Age of Ascendancy' narrative permeates these endotexts: Little Xi notes in her autobiography that 'not only has everybody stopped criticizing the government [since it began], but they have all become extremely satisfied with the current state of affairs'; Zhang Dou relays in his writings how he and Fang Caodi first bonded over their mutual remembrance of how the Golden Age of Ascendancy did not occur simultaneously with the global economic crash of 2011; and Fang Caodi's transcript recordings, 'Searching for a lost month', detail the dissident's attempts at locating evidence that counters the dominant narrative.[395] Together, these Parallel Endotexts ensure that *The Fat Years*'s *novum* – and the warnings contained therein – never drift too far from the reader's consciousness, for they draw attention to the ubiquity of experience engendered by the story-world CCP's dominant post-truth narrative. Moreover, these endotexts not only reassert *The Fat Year*'s *novum*; they refigure its abstract dramatization of the CCP's catalysis of the post-truth condition in more concrete terms. This is apparent in Little Xi's and Zhang Dou's autobiographies, in which the characters reveal that they have been subjected to censorship. Little Xi reports that her politically critical postings on internet forums 'are very quickly deleted by the internet police', whereas Zhang Dou recounts how an article he wrote about his time as a slave labourer in an illegal brick kiln would not be published by the mainstream press 'because it would damage the nation's image', and how after it was published online by an independent liberal website, it 'was "harmonized" off the net by the web police'.[396] These dramatizations of the CCP's deepening of the post-truth condition differ from that of the novel's *novum* not only in that they are more familiar, but because they are localised in direct opposition to specific characters, rather than the entire population of

[395] Chan, *The Fat Years*, p. 73; pp. 93-98.
[396] Chan, *The Fat Years*, pp. 74-75; p. 76.

China. Real readers may more easily digest the consequences of the CCP's deliberate inflammation of the post-truth condition when it is localised on this smaller scale – it is easier, after all, to relate to an individual character than it is to an amorphous population. Consequently, Chan's Parallel Endotexts overcome the novel's fear that readers may be unable to make sense of its cognitively estranging elements, thus allowing *The Fat Years*'s didactic message to be more successfully communicated.

However, *China Dream*'s and *The Fat Years*'s endotexts achieve more than simply restating the issues evoked by their main narratives' *nova*. Rather than warn that the real-world CCP's use of censorship and propaganda is problematic, *China Dream*'s and *The Fat Year*'s endotexts advance these warnings by depicting the negative impact the CCP's catalysis of the post-truth condition has on the people of China, thus concretizing the issues raised by their abstract *nova*. In particular, they suggest that such catalysis is especially caustic because it either isolates the people of China or makes them apathetic to truth. The isolation caused by the CCP's stoking of the post-truth condition is most evidently dramatized by *The Fat Years*'s endotexts, namely the autobiographies ostensibly authored by the dissidents Little Xi and Zhang Dou. In the case of Little Xi, it is apparent that she has been gaslit by the story-world CCP's use of propaganda and censorship, for she 'doubt[s] [her] own judgment, perception, and sense of reality' – traits characteristic of victims of gaslighting.[397] Throughout her endotext, she explains that she writes it because she is 'afraid that many things may be forgotten later', expresses that she 'suspect[s] that the anti-depressants the hospital had given [her] were having serious side-effects', and questions if 'something [was] wrong with [her]' because she remembers the atrocities of China's past that the blissfully ignorant majority have forgotten.[398] Natascha Rietdijk writes that '[i]n an effort to epistemically isolate their victim, gaslighters will often recruit accomplices', and this is certainly the case for the story-world CCP, which – through its use of propaganda and literal and emotional censorship – makes China's amnesiac majority ignorant collaborators in its

[397] Natascha Rietdijk, 'Post-truth Politics and Collective Gaslighting', *Episteme* (2021), 1-17 (p. 1).
[398] Chan, *The Fat Years*, p. 63; p. 74.

catalysis of the post-truth condition.[399] Subsequently, Little Xi is othered, ostracised, and isolated, writing, 'I feel very lonely. I don't trust anyone'.[400]

Similar feelings are apparent in Zhang Dou's autobiography, for the story-world CCP's amplification of the post-truth condition triggers a seismic shift in his relationship with his journalist girlfriend, Miaomiao. Prior to the violent crackdown of February 2011, they lived an idyllic rural existence. Following the dawn of China's Golden Age of Ascendancy, however, Zhang Dou noticed that 'something hard to understand [had] happened to Miaomiao', who had become unable to recognise people, could no longer write, and had grown mute.[401] Miaomiao's inexplicable transformation is isolating for Zhang Dou, who remarks that 'she no longer discussed anything with [him]' and admits also that he started secretly 'sell[ing] off [their] cats and dogs' to sustain their shared lifestyle.[402] The couple's lack of communication and Zhang Dou's resultant secrecy reveals that the mutual support that previously characterised their relationship is severed by the CCP's use of censorship and propaganda, and that although they are still physically together, Zhang Dou is emotionally alone. Indeed, his feelings of isolation are highlighted by how he frequently addresses Miaomiao in his autobiography, mentioning how he 'master[ed] all the [guitar] chords and techniques you taught me, Miaomiao', and how he was primarily worried about 'who's going to take care of you? And what will happen to our cats and dogs?' as he was being attacked by a gang one night, fearing that he might die.[403] Because Zhang Dou addresses Miaomiao in this way through his writing, the endotext suggests that he is unable to communicate with her by any other means, thus highlighting the isolation he feels because Miaomiao has fallen victim to the CCP's catalysis of the post-truth condition.

For Hannah Arendt, such feelings of isolation have political ramifications. The evocation of isolation, she writes, is 'one of the primary concerns of all tyrannical

[399] Rietdijk, 'Post-truth Politics and Collective Gaslighting', p. 13.
[400] Chan, *The Fat Years*, p. 75.
[401] Chan, *The Fat Years*, p. 78.
[402] Chan, *The Fat Years*, p. 78.
[403] Chan, *The Fat Years*, p. 79; p 80.

government[s]' because it enables them to rule absolutely.[404] Continuing, she states that 'power always comes from men acting together', and so when people are deprived of human companionship, they become politically impotent, unable to resist the pressures of totalitarianism.[405] This is true for Little Xi and Zhang Dou who, as discussed above, cannot prevent the CCP from censoring their writings. Subsequently, the advancement made by *The Fat Years*'s endotexts to the main narrative's *novum* is twofold. First, they warn that the CCP's catalysis of the post-truth condition is isolating, and that this isolation is unpleasant; the desperation apparent in Little Xi's 'longing for someone that [she] can talk to' suggests as much.[406] Second, these endotexts warn of the caustic possibilities entangled in the isolation engendered by the deliberate intensification of the post-truth condition, for by rendering individuals politically impotent, political regimes may perpetuate their power to totalitarian ends.

Another advancement made by *The Fat Years*'s and *China Dream*'s endotexts to the warnings entangled in the novels' *nova* is that they may orient readers to how the CCP's use of propaganda and censorship cause the people of China to grow apathetic to truth, thus challenging the belief that post-truth is harmless. Such apathy sees individuals abandon objective truths in favour of more desirable truth claims, or sees them abandon objective truths entirely because it is simply easier and more comfortable. In *The Fat Years*, this is most apparent in the endotext titled 'Old Chen's notebook on Fang Caodi'.[407] This Parallel Endotext sees Old Chen recall how he came to know Fang Caodi and the history of their relationship. Upon reaching the conclusion of his notebook, Old Chen reflects that he now 'only wanted to write stories about contemporary China's Golden Age of Ascendancy' and that he 'didn't even want to *look* at the historical materials' pertaining to the atrocities of China's past, including the KMT-CCP Civil War, the Great Leap Forward, and the Tiananmen Square Massacre.[408] Indeed, Old Chen is

[404] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (London: Penguin, 2017), p. 623.
[405] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 623.
[406] Chan, *The Fat Years*, p. 75.
[407] Chan, *The Fat Years*, pp. 98-109.
[408] Chan, *The Fat Years*, p. 108.

not only apathetic to these aspects of China's past, but he likewise 'didn't believe that the new generation of Chinese readers wanted to read about all the wounds and scars of the past sixty years' either.[409] Much like how two decades of strong economic growth and the resultant materialism this prompted has caused many of China's younger generations to be indifferent towards the nation's historical atrocities in reality, the endotext demonstrates that people's commitment to objective truth has been placated by supposed economic prosperity in Chan's story-world.[410]

An apathy towards the truth is likewise evident in *China Dream*'s endotexts, for the endotexts related to Ma Daode's professional duties as a CCP official see him and his colleagues become unfeelingly complicit in the CCP's suppression of truth. Rather than only depict individuals being apathetic when *engaging* with the truth, these Written and Read Endotexts also present individuals being indifferent about the veracity of the truth claims they *produce*, thus suggesting that the disinterest in truth that the CCP demands of its officials' professional obligations likewise influences their personal behaviour. This is most apparent in the text messages that pertain to the series of affairs Ma Daode has with his 'top twelve mistresses'.[411] After receiving a text message from an unspecified mistress that reads, 'RAINDROPS ARE THE CLOUDS WEEPING. MY TEXTS ARE ME YEARNING FOR YOU', Director Ma realises he 'forwarded the very same couplet to his oldest mistress […] last week', acknowledging to himself that he has a habit of 'stealing love poems from the Internet'.[412] The fact that Director Ma passes off stolen poetry as his own begins to reveal the truth indifference that informs his personal behaviour. First, by covertly stealing love poetry and sending it to his mistresses, Director Ma is implied to make false truth claims about his writerly talents. Second, because his response to

[409] Chan, *The Fat Years*, p. 109.
[410] See Didi Tang, 'Why Chinese youth are ignorance of Tiananmen Square protest', *The Christian Science Monitor*, 2 June 2014 <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Latest-News-Wires/2014/0602/Why-Chinese-youth-are-ignorant-of-Tiananmen-Square-protest> [accessed 14 September 2022]; see also Ma, *China Dream*, p. xi: 'The rabid consumerism encouraged in the last thirty years and which, along with inflated nationalism, lies at the heart of the China Dream is turning the Chinese into overgrown children who are fed, clothed and entertained, but have no right to remember the past or ask questions'.
[411] Ma, *China Dream*, p. 9.
[412] Ma, *China Dream*, pp. 30-31; p. 31.

the Read Endotext reveals his sending of stolen *love* poetry is habitual, the truth claims imbued in his sending of those poems about his feelings for his mistresses – i.e. that he loves them – are likewise implied to be unveracious, for Ma Daode barely likes his twelve mistresses, let alone love them. Instead, the official forgoes a commitment to truthfulness in order to disseminate affective messages that are desirable for him to make because they enable him to continue sleeping with his mistresses. The fact that Director Ma's messages share these characteristics with CCP propaganda is not insignificant, for it begins to highlight the extent to which the government official has internalised the CCP's catalysis of the post-truth condition.

This impression is reinforced by a series of Written and Read Endotexts embedded later in *China Dream*'s main narrative. Following a fraught conversation with his wife in which she repeatedly accuses him of infidelity, Ma Daode uses a neighbour's sudden arrival to excuse himself 'to the bathroom to check his texts'.[413] Here, he finds a message from a mistress who asks him what he is doing, to which he replies, 'PREPARING FOR TOMORROW'S MEETING. AND YOU?'[414] Given that he does not acknowledge that he is at home, has been deflecting his wife's accusations, and is currently hiding from her in his bathroom, this Written Endotext suggests that Director Ma does not care about telling the truth. Instead, he advances a claim that is not only desirable because it ignores his domestic turmoil, but is also mildly propagandistic insofar as it mobilizes political ideals for a political purpose, given that Ma Daode's claim presents him as a diligent government official rather than a corrupt adulterer. These Written Endotexts continue to imbue propagandistic qualities as the exchange between Ma Daode and his mistress progresses. After she threatens to expose their affair, he replies, 'STOP THIS MAD TALK! YOU'RE UPSETTING ME', 'YOU'RE LOSING YOUR MIND! DON'T BE ANGRY WITH ME, I BEG YOU', and 'MY BLOOD PRESSURE'S RISING, DARLING. I MUST TAKE MY MEDICINE. SPEAK LATER'.[415] These Written Endotexts possess the

[413] Ma, *China Dream*, p. 44.
[414] Ma, *China Dream*, p. 44.
[415] Ma, *China Dream*, p. 45.

emotionally manipulative quality highlighted in Quassim Cassam's assessment of propaganda, for by telling his lover of his distress, adopting a pleading tone, and mentioning a medical condition, Ma Daode attempts to silence her argument by evoking in her feelings of guilt, pity, and fear for his health, thus recalling Steve Fuller's conceptualisation of post-truth as a power game. Consequently, the government official's text messages allegorise the CCP's use of propaganda, for they dismiss veracity in favour of emotional affect and political mobility. Herein lies the specific warning made by *China Dream*'s endotexts: the CCP's entrenchment of the post-truth condition may be so persuasive and successful that it causes individuals to forego their own commitment to truthfulness and instead make whichever claims they find to be desirable and beneficial.

Together, 'Old Chen's Notebook on Fang Caodi' and Ma Daode's adulterous text messages warn that the CCP's catalysis of the post-truth condition may bring individuals to become apathetic about truth. In the case of *The Fat Years*'s Parallel Endotext, such apathy relates to the truth claims Old Chen chooses to engage with, whereas in *China Dream*'s endotexts, Ma Daode is depicted as being indifferent about the veracity of the truth claims he produces. Consequently, Chan and Ma present story-worlds in which objective truth and factitude are relegated to a secondary importance in relation to the emotional appeal and desirability of truth claims. The ramifications of such apathy are severe. 'Truth', write Alison MacKenzie and Ibrar Bhatt, 'is important to […] the proper functioning of democracy'.[416] As such, a widespread indifference to truth is perilous because – without an opposition that cares enough about truth and truthfulness to insist that it is upheld – it allows political leaders and would-be tyrants to disseminate whichever beneficial narratives they desire, regardless of their relation to the truth. For Armando Medeiros, the most likely outcomes of such apathy are 'increasing intolerance and [the] stimulation of totalitarianism', and so it therefore follows that *The Fat Years*'s and *China Dream*'s endotexts advance the warnings offered by their novels' *nova* by suggesting that the CCP's use of propaganda and censorship evokes a sense of apathy

[416] Alison MacKenzie and Ibrar Bhatt, 'Opposing the Power of Lies, Bullshit and Fake News: the Value of Truth', *Postdigital Science and Education*, 2 (2020), 217-232 (p. 219).

among the Chinese people, which in turn reinforces the CCP's totalitarian stranglehold over the country.[417] Maintaining a commitment to truthfulness, these endotexts suggest, is therefore key to resisting totalitarian forces.

Overall, this section has demonstrated that *The Fat Years*'s and *China Dream*'s endotexts reiterate and advance the dystopian warnings offered by their main narratives' *nova*. In doing so, they compensate for the limitations of cognitive estrangement's didacticism by localising the impact of the story-world CCPs' catalysis of the post-truth condition within the experiences of specific individuals, rather than framing it as an abstract, intangible, nationwide issue. *The Fat Years*'s and *China Dream*'s endotexts particularly advance the warnings offered by their main narratives' nova by suggesting that the CCP's inflammation of the post-truth condition is caustic because it isolates individuals or makes them apathetic to truth. As discussed above, making individuals isolated bears political ramifications because it renders them politically impotent, whereas making them indifferent to truth enables political leaders and their regimes to advance whichever claims they desire because there is no opposition voice to insist that they maintain a commitment to truthfulness. Together, these advancements warn that post-truth is a power game and that the political mobilization of it enables leaders to perpetuate their power by decimating or obliterating entirely opposition voices, thus pushing their political rule into the realm of totalitarianism. That *China Dream* and *The Fat Years* are explicitly about modern-day China is an important consideration here. As discussed above, China is a totalitarian state by many measures. It therefore follows that by using endotexts in their novels, Chan and Ma seek to warn readers of the CCP's totalitarian rule over China and how its intensification of the post-truth condition has facilitated this. These warnings are likely to go unheeded in China. Not only are they perhaps too late, but given the censorship Chan and Ma have been subjected to, reading their novels in China is a challenge in itself. Instead, the endotextual didacticism evoked by Chan's and Ma's novels is perhaps most beneficial for readers outside of China. "Look

[417] Armando Medeiros, 'The danger of indifference to truth', *UNO*, March 2017 <https://www.uno-magazine.com/number-27/danger-indifference-truth/> [accessed 16 September 2022].

at what has happened – is continuing to happen – in China," these endotexts warn. "Look at what the consequences of an intensified post-truth condition have been. Don't let it happen where you are."

Conclusion to Part Two

Since 2017, the CCP has detained and imprisoned more than one million Uyghur Muslims, a minority group hailing from the autonomous Xinjiang territory in northwest China, for no 'crime' other than practicing their faith. Experts and the international press have frequently criticised the CCP for this act, calling the detainment facilities 'concentration camps' and reporting on the 'physical and psychological torture', sexual violence, and forced sterilisation and abortion suffered by the Uyghurs.[418] The CCP has variously evoked the post-truth condition in its responses to these criticisms. To begin, '[g]overnment officials first denied the camps' existence', thus showing a blatant disregard for objective truth, which was followed by state-run media exhibiting an anti-press sentiment when it 'dismissed the reports of detention camps as Western media "baselessly criticizing China's human rights"'.[419] By late 2018, however, the CCP started 'acknowledging that there were "vocational education and training centers [sic]" in Xinjiang. They publicly stated that the camps had two purposes: to teach Mandarin, Chinese laws, and vocational skills, and to prevent citizens from becoming influenced by extremist ideas'.[420] This favourable narrative paints the CCP as a benevolent educator, rather than a perpetrator of genocide, whereas its evocation of nationalistic sentiment affords it propagandistic qualities through its emotional appeal.

[418] Lindsay Maizland, 'China's Repression of Uyghurs in Xinjiang', *Council on Foreign Relations*, 22 September 2022 <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/china-xinjiang-uyghurs-muslims-repression-genocide-human-rights> [accessed 27 September 2022]; Joel Gunter, 'China has created a dystopian hellscape in Xinjiang, Amnesty report says', *BBC News*, 10 June 2021 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-57386625> [accessed 27 September 2022].

[419] Maizland, 'China's Repression of Uyghurs in Xinjiang'; Jen Kirby, 'Concentration camps and forced labor: China's repression of the Uighurs, explained', *Vox*, 25 September 2020 <https://www.vox.com/2020/7/28/21333345/uighurs-china-internment-camps-forced-labor-xinjiang> [accessed 27 September 2022].

[420] Maizland, 'China's Repression of Uyghurs in Xinjiang'.

Steve Wood has noted how, following the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in late 2019, the CCP has 'aimed to conceal, minimise, or fabricate information on the virus and its own incompetence or deceit' both domestically and internationally.[421] This was seen in how CCP officials 'repeatedly spread disinformation and conspiracy theories regarding the origin of the virus that causes COVID-19' and in how the party constructed a desirable narrative that 'praised medical personnel, the nation, and itself for proficiency in tackling the challenge' posed by the virus.[422] Throughout its assertions about the COVID-19 pandemic, the CCP has drawn on appeals to nationalism, 'us[ing] the abstract "people" or "nation" as a prop and a justification for policies' in an attempt to 'mask a loss of face and status, divert attention to iniquitous foreign enemies, and assert the CCP domestically'.[423] Altogether, this highlights that the CCP's commitment to truth-indifference and the retention of power remained steadfast in the face of a virus whose dire consequences were felt globally.

More recently still, a report from the U.S. Department of State's Global Engagement Center demonstrates that officials from the CCP's Ministry of Foreign Affairs have 'routinely amplif[ied] Kremlin propaganda, conspiracy theories, and disinformation' related to Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine.[424] This is apparent in how CCP media presents as facts 'unverified information and claims sourced from Russia's state-run media and officials', heavily censors international coverage that does not support Russia's position, and is intentionally selective regarding which non-Russian content related to the invasion it reposts and broadcasts.[425] These strategies demonstrate the CCP's support of the Kremlin, which strengthens diplomatic relations between two regimes who share a complicated relationship with the truth.

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[421] Steve Wood, 'The Chinese Communist Party and the COVID-19 Pandemic: Face Loss, Status Anxiety, Resentment', *Global Society*, 37.2 (2023), 245-265 (p. 246).
[422] U.S. Department of State, *PRC Efforts to Manipulate Global Opinion on Xinjiang* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of State, 2022); Wood, 'The Chinese Communist Party and the COVID-19 Pandemic', p. 2.
[423] Wood, 'The Chinese Communist Party and the COVID-19 Pandemic', p. 12; p. 13.
[424] U.S. Department of State, *People's Republic of China Efforts to Amplify the Kremlin's Voice on Ukraine* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of State, 2022) <https://www.state.gov/disarming-disinformation/prc-efforts-to-amplify-the-kremlins-voice-on-ukraine/> [accessed 29 September 2022].
[425] U.S. Department of State, *People's Republic of China Efforts to Amplify the Kremlin's Voice on Ukraine*.

All of which is to say that since the 2009 and 2018 publications of *The Fat Years* and *China Dream*, respectively, the CCP has plunged China further into an ocean of post-truth. As such, the warnings imbued by *The Fat Years* and *China Dream* remain ever relevant. From a Western perspective, China is routinely othered; its cultures, languages, and values appear so unfamiliar that the totalitarianism the CCP subjects it to may not necessarily always be taken seriously, or it is presented within scare quotes in Trumpian soundbites. The Barthesian bliss engendered by *The Fat Years*'s and *China Dream*'s endotexts serves as a corrective to this. Through necessitating that readers undergo complex interpretive processes to make sense of them, they disrupt Western readers' cultural assumptions and indifference about China, 'spur empathy' by bringing their attention to experiences and perspectives typically beyond their reach, and force them to take the CCP's totalitarianism seriously.[426] Moreover, these novels bring readers to become hyperaware of the propaganda and censorship that characterise the intensified post-truth condition of China, vehicles of post-truth that are similarly present within Western politics. As such, these novels' endotextual warnings extend to beyond the Chinese context; the ubiquity of propaganda and censorship dramatized by *The Fat Years*'s Parallel Endotexts may apply to an array of political settings, whereas so too may the narrativization of political figures' construction of post-truth claims situated in *China Dream*'s Written and Read Endotexts be pertinent across the world, given that the post-truth condition of the twenty-first century is in effect globally.

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has shown that literary dystopias possess a transhistorical, transnational preoccupation with political leaders' disregard for, distortion of, and abuse of truth in their quest for ever-increasing amounts of power. This impression has been reached by analysing an array of dystopian endotexts, which suggest that political figures deliberately catalyse the post-truth condition by disseminating anti-intellectualism and

[426] Schaberg, *The Work of Literature in an Age of Post-Truth*, p. 11.

an anti-press rhetoric to create for themselves a monopoly on truth-claim production; by inciting division by spreading false narratives that draw on identity politics, thus 'generating a toxic atmosphere in the public realm' that prioritizes feelings over facts; and by employing censorship and propaganda to suppress inconvenient truths and replace them with desirable claims, subsequently altering the rules of the 'power-and-knowledge game' so that only so-called facts that align with the dominant regime's are permitted to publicly exist.[427] Given that democratic proceedings hinge upon the faith that political figures commit to 'the telling of truth even in situations in which it is neither profitable nor safe to do so', their espousal of falsehoods that invariably exacerbate the post-truth condition constitutes a threat to democracy.[428] Indeed, this threat is underscored by the prevalence of totalitarian regimes in the aforementioned novels' story-worlds: Windrip, Paduk, and Lindbergh alike are dictators, the CCP dominates in Chan's and Ma's novels, and although *Shades of Grey*'s government is less visible in the main narrative, its forces are 'no less oppressive'.[429] Rather than function as a democratic equaliser, these dystopian dramatizations therefore offer the blissful realisation that the knowledge-and-power game of the post-truth condition is antithetical to the very fibres of democracy. Therein lies a shared warning for these novels: once they abandon truthfulness entirely, political figures are emboldened to do anything, and so these endotexts demand that, as members of the *demos*, readers must be prepared to identify where political figures devalue truth, hold them accountable for such behaviours, and deliberately punish such truth-indifference by withholding their democratic support from political candidates who exhibit it. In other words, because dystopian endotexts develop readers' critical thinking skills and thus encourage them to become 'actively engaged in life', and, in the case of these novels, their *political* lives in particular, dystopian endotexts compel their readers to become active participants within

[427] Sim, *Post-Truth, Scepticism & Power*, p. 2; Fuller, *Post-Truth: Knowledge as a Power Game*, p. 1.
[428] Weber, 'Truth and Political Leadership', p. 4.
[429] Fforde quoted in 'Shades of Grey Reader's Guide'.

the democratic fibre of society, individuals trained to resist despotism and tyranny.[430] Herein lies the way in which dystopian endotexts serve to inoculate readers against the pervasiveness and persuasiveness of post-truth politics, ultimately steering readers toward more veracious territory.

As a knowledge-and-power game, the post-truth condition relates to how individuals access and evaluate different pieces of information and their sources – rather than selecting information that is objectively true, individuals select information that they feel *should* be true. For the nefarious political figure who seeks to deliberately catalyse the post-truth condition for their own advantage, the key to winning the knowledge-and-power game of post-truth lies in promoting desirable truth claims while simultaneously weakening potential competitors in the truth-claim market. As this chapter attests, these competitors can be intellectuals, experts, and the press, oft-vilified 'them' groups, or even the public en masse. It is this first competitor in the truth-claim market – intellectuals and experts – that will be examined in the following chapter. Although the preceding analysis suggests that experts are the enemies of the nefarious political figure who seeks to intensify the post-truth condition, the following chapter will argue that they may also bear some responsibility for precisely the same effect, thus reinforcing my claim that literary dystopias possess a transhistorical preoccupation with truth, something which is especially apparent in their endotexts.

[430] Brookfield, *Developing Critical Thinkers: Challenging Adults to Explore Alternative Ways of Thinking and Acting*, p. 2.

Chapter Two: Historical Experts, Critical Endotexts, and Misleading Histories

Chapter Introduction

This chapter focuses on the figure of the historical expert. There is a rich tradition of historical experts appearing in literary dystopias, including the narrator of Kurt Vonnegut's *Cat's Cradle* (1963), Clark Thompson, curator of the Museum of Civilization in Emily St. John Mandel's *Station Eleven* (2014), and Benjamin Chestnut in Omar El Akkad's *American War* (2017), while experts more generally occupy a precarious position within the intensified post-truth condition of the twenty-first century. On one hand, 'experts are derided as untrustworthy or elitist whenever their reported facts threaten the rule of the well-financed or the prejudices of the uninformed', whereas on the other hand they are, claims Julian Baggini, 'authorit[ies] of truth'.[431] As such, experts are simultaneously trusted and mistrusted under an amplified post-truth condition. This chapter will navigate this tension by examining how historical experts are presented in the Critical Endotexts of Jack London's *The Iron Heel* (1908), R. C. Sherriff's *The Hopkins Manuscript* (1939), Stanisław Lem's *Memoirs Found in a Bathtub* (1961/1973), Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) and *The Testaments* (2019), and Naomi Alderman's *The Power* (2016), and how these depictions metafictionally alert real readers to the strategies used by real world historical experts to produce distorted accounts of the past.

Given that endotextuality is a narratological phenomenon, this chapter will employ a narrativist theory of history and its resultant expectation that historians will not tell purposefully misleading accounts of the past. Following the narrativist argument, what we today know as history is 'made up of events and entities which once existed but no longer do', facts that are 'incomplete, ambiguous, contradictory, and confusing', which historians arrange into 'an interesting, coherent and useful narrative' that 'neutralize[s] [the] ideological distortions of the past', i.e. cultural and political biases, so

[431] R. P. Mackey, *Gove: Britons "Have Had Enough of Experts"*; Lewandowsky et al, 'Beyond Misinformation', p. 354; Baggini, *A Short History of Truth: Consolations for a Post-Truth World*, p. 22.

that things that once happened can be understood now.[432] As such, historians are trusted to 'find and assemble evidence and present a coherent narrative' that re-presents the past as accurately as is reasonably possible, rather than inventing stories about it.[433] Such invention would see historians flout the 'obligations of truthfulness and objectivity in the accounts they provide' and violate the principle that they must not '"lie," "distort," or "misrepresent," or deny, leave out, negate, or disavow those "facts" which have been established with regard to some aspect of past "reality"'.[434] An examination of fictional instances of post-truth history, historical misinformation, and historical disinformation will therefore shed greater light on how and why historians might violate the basic principles of their profession that afford them the status of arbiters of truth.

Literary dystopias tend to dramatize historians' narrativizations of their story-world pasts by implementing the 'found manuscript' device. This device sees a character from a temporal location after the end of the novel's main narrative discover, receive, or otherwise access and comment on the main narrative, which exists within their future story-world as the diary or personal writings of a character from the main narrative. London's, Sherriff's, Lem's, Atwood's, and Alderman's novels, listed above, each feature this device, but it is also used in literary dystopias as varied as Owen Gregory's *Meccania: The Super State* (1918), Karin Boye's *Kallocain* (1940), and William Luther Pierce's *The Turner Diaries* (1978). Ultimately, the 'found manuscript' device and the Critical Endotexts that it necessitates dramatize how, as discussed in the thesis introduction, professional historians may approach 'historical truth asymptotically' by heeding the truths partially glimpsed in historical sources while simultaneously 'finding […] patterns and meanings and stories from the maelstrom' and withholding their biases

[432] Hayden White, *The Practical Past* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2014), p. xiii; Daniel Little, 'Philosophy of History', *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 24 November 2020 <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/history/> [accessed 7 June 2021]; John H. Arnold, *History: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 13; White, *The Practical Past*, p. xiv.
[433] Jacqueline Jones, 'History in a "Post-Truth" Era', *Not Even Past*, 18 January 2017 <https://notevenpast.org/history-in-a-post-truth-era/> [accessed 7 June 2021].
[434] Little, 'Philosophy of History'; White, *The Practical Past*, p. 29.

from influencing these interpretations.[435] However, as will be discussed below, these novels' Critical Endotexts suggest that approaching veracity while completing this task is difficult to achieve. Appearing either as prefatory texts, conclusory texts, or texts interwoven throughout and alongside their main narratives, these Critical Endotexts typically describe the discovery of the found manuscript that comprises the main narrative, discuss its significance – or lack thereof – in the future story-world, or explain the outdated references that it contains, thus dramatizing how the past comes to be understood.

The Critical Endotexts necessitated by the 'found manuscript' device create history in two senses. First, by being temporally located at a point future to the end of the main narrative, they create distance between the 'past' of the main narrative and their own 'present'. Second, by making the story-world's 'past' accessible to people in the story-world's 'present' by virtue of presenting and commenting on it, these Critical Endotexts shape and order historical events, thus completing the basic historiographical processes that underpin the narrativization of the past. Typically written from the viewpoint of a historical expert, it could be assumed that the histories told in the Critical Endotexts of literary dystopias are veracious, given the obligations that professional historians are expected to meet. Critical Endotexts challenge this assumption by emphasising 'the problematic relationship between text, language, and the past' and highlighting 'the extent to which any text, or work of language, fails to represent the past objectively or completely', for many of the historical accounts they contain are, within their respective story-worlds, misleading or outright post-truthful.[436] By dramatizing how the past can intentionally or accidentally be distorted by historical experts, these endotexts may metafictionally disrupt the trust that real readers place in them, for they expose problems with status and truth associated with the unthinking acceptance of experts' claims.

[435] Jay, 'Historical Truth and the Truthfulness of Historians', p. 256; Arnold, *History: A Very Short Introduction*, p. 13.
[436] Timothy C. Baker, *Contemporary Scottish Gothic: Mourning, Authenticity, and Tradition* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2014), p. 55.

This chapter therefore brings together an analysis of the 'found manuscript' device and the Critical Endotexts it necessitates, a narrativist understanding of history and the expectations placed upon historians, and the interrelated concepts of misinformation, disinformation, and post-truth. First, I will examine the Critical Endotexts that begin R. C. Sherriff's *The Hopkins Manuscript* and Stanisław Lem's *Memoirs Found in a Bathtub*, arguing that they demonstrate how historical experts can intentionally or accidentally distort the past in spite of their apparent commitment to historical evidence. This sees Sherriff and Lem both anticipate and orient real readers towards the 'information abundance' on which the post-truth condition depends. Second, I will draw upon Marius Gudonis's and Benjamin T. Jones's conception of 'post-truth history' to highlight that, in *The Iron Heel*, Anthony Meredith's editorial footnotes are misleadingly affective, imply an occasional indifference to historicity, and are made in support of an underlying ideological objective, thus bringing into doubt the suitability of the figure of the historical expert as an arbiter of truth. Third, I will argue that Margaret Atwood's *The Testaments* and Naomi Alderman's *The Power* suggest different strategies that historians can use to resist or combat post-truth histories. Although Professor James Darcy Pieixoto constructs a post-truth history in *The Handmaid's Tale*, *The Testaments* depicts him presenting a more veracious historical account because he behaves as a conduit between the past and the present, rather than imprinting his own ideology upon it. Alderman's endotext instead suggests that historians can combat post-truth histories by counterintuitively employing the same strategies that make post-truth histories so persuasive. Ultimately, I will argue that, through dramatizing the relationship between expertise, power, and history, and by particularly highlighting the strategies used by historical experts who produce distorted accounts of the past, these Critical Endotexts may unsettle 'the reader's historical […] assumptions' about how the past is recorded and understood, and by whom it is recorded, thus evoking a sense of Barthesian bliss

which demands that readers critically engage with experts' claims, rather than blindly accept them as true.[437]

Part One: Disinformation and Misinformation in Far-Future Prologues

Introduction

This section will examine two twentieth-century literary dystopias that employ the 'found manuscript' device: Sherriff's *The Hopkins Manuscript* and Lem's *Memoirs Found in a Bathtub*. The main narrative of Sherriff's novel takes the form of Edgar Hopkins's written account – labelled 'The Hopkins Manuscript' in the endotextual frame – as he recalls the build-up to, horrors of, and aftermath following the Moon crashing into the surface of the Earth. In Lem's novel, the main narrative is the 'Notes from the Neogene', an unnamed protagonist's memoirs that record their experiences performing acts of nonsensical espionage within an absurdly bureaucratic underground community. Each novel begins with a Critical Endotext. In *The Hopkins Manuscript*, the 'Foreword' explains how Hopkins's writings were discovered and situates them within the broader historical context of the collapse of Western Europe, calling it 'the only personal day-by-day record […] that gives us the feelings of an Englishman during the days of the Cataclysm'.[438] Likewise, *Memoirs Found in a Bathtub*'s 'Introduction' details the discovery of the 'Notes from the Neogene' and valorises it as an important archaeological find, stating that it is 'unquestionably one of the most precious relics of Earth's ancient past'.[439]

Several factors suggest that the historical accounts contained by the 'Foreword' and 'Introduction' are truthful within the contexts of their story-worlds. The story-world authors of these Critical Endotexts possess institutional affiliations, are part of academic networks, and have access to rare texts, qualities that imply a level of status and

[437] Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, p. 14.
[438] R. C. Sherriff, *The Hopkins Manuscript* (London: Penguin, 2018), p. 1.
[439] Stanisław Lem, *Memoirs Found in a Bathtub*, trans. by Michael Kandel and Christine Rose (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1973), p. 1.

expertise.[440] Following Julian Baggini's claim that experts are 'authorit[ies] of truth', Sherriff and Lem create the impression that their endotexts' story-world authors are writing veracious historical accounts.[441] Likewise, they show a commitment to facts that affords their accounts a semblance of truthfulness by undertaking the historiographical practice of 'combin[ing] a certain amount of "data," theoretical concepts for "explaining" these data, and [putting it all into] a narrative structure'.[442] Furthermore, the 'found manuscript' device affords the historical accounts a greater sense of verisimilitude. Tomasz Sawczuk argues that the 'found manuscript' device behaves as '[a]n authenticator of the story and a well-tested enhancer of immersion' because the Critical Endotexts it necessitates comment on main narratives as if they actually happened.[443] I contend also that the 'found manuscript' device validates Critical Endotexts, for the critiques put forward within them are substantiated by non-fiction manuscripts which prove that the things they critique happened within their story-worlds. As such, Critical Endotexts and main narratives, when situated within the framework of the 'found manuscript' device, operate in a cycle of validation.

Although they appear to be legitimate, *The Hopkins Manuscript*'s 'Foreword' and *Memoirs Found in a Bathtub*'s 'Introduction' in fact include misleading information about their pasts. First, the misleading qualities of *The Hopkins Manuscript*'s 'Foreword' constitute disinformation because its story-world author intentionally puts forward a distorted account of the past that is 'designed to mislead'.[444] Second, the misleading aspects of *Memoirs Found in a Bathtub*'s 'Introduction' amount to genuine mistakes made by its historical expect, thus rendering it misinformation because it 'misleads by

[440] See Sherriff, *The Hopkins Manuscript*, p. 1, in which Sherriff's story-world author begins their 'Foreword' by stating that they are employed by the 'Imperial Research Press, Addis Ababa', and p. 3, in which they suggest that the 'brilliant scholar of English, Dr Shangul of Aduwa University' is their peer. See also Lem, *Memoirs Found in a Bathtub*, p. 4, in which Lem's story-world author of the 'Introduction' suggests they are affiliated with the 'Bernard Historical School', and p. 9, which implies they have a strong connection with 'Prognostor Wid-Wiss'.
[441] Baggini, *A Short History of Truth: Consolations for a Post-Truth World*, p. 22.
[442] Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore, MA: The John Hopkins University Press, 1973), p. ix.
[443] Tomasz Sawczuk, 'Taking Horror as You Find It: From Found Manuscripts to Found Footage Aesthetics', *Text Matters*, 10 (2020), 223-235 (p. 223).
[444] Pomerantsev, *This Is Not Propaganda*, p. 237.

accident'.[445] Although intentionality marks a key distinction between these Critical Endotexts' historical accounts, Sherriff's and Lem's novels dramatize how historical experts may exacerbate the post-truth condition by purposefully or accidentally contributing to the 'information abundance' on which it depends.

Disinformation in *The Hopkins Manuscript*'s 'Foreword'

When discussing *The Hopkins Manuscript*'s 'Foreword', critics tend to describe how it is 'one of those forewords where the writer explains that he himself merely found the manuscript' or observe that it simply prefaces 'the only surviving document by an ordinary man about what turns out to be the fall of Western civilization', thus overlooking its dramatization of a historical expert disseminating disinformation about the past.[446] Paul McAuley offers an exception to this, for in noting how the unnamed historian 'sets the tone' in the 'Foreword' by claiming the found manuscript is 'almost valueless to the scientist and historian', he draws attention to the unabashed scorn that characterises the endotext, thus drawing attention to its misleading properties: the historian's use of evaluative language and their intentional selectivity of evidence.[447] These properties relate to how the 'Foreword' author creates a deliberately distorted historical account about the novel's main narrative, its story-world author, and English people more generally. Roland Wales explains that Sherriff's depiction 'of the petty tyrants who seek to exploit the passions of their people' late in the main narrative – in which various European and North American countries go to war over the resource-rich remnants of the Moon – is 'clearly based on the rhetoric [Sherriff] observed, especially

[445] Pomerantsev, *This Is Not Propaganda*, p. 237.
[446] Corinna Keefe, 'The Hopkins Manuscript – RC Sherriff (Review)', *Inconsistent Pacing*, 16 June 2018 <https://inconsistentpacing.com/2018/06/16/the-hopkins-manuscript-rc-sherriff-review/> [accessed 20 August 2021]; kaggysbookishramblings, 'Persephone Pleasures: The Hopkins Manuscript by R. C. Sherriff', *Kaggy's Bookish Ramblings*, 14 November 2013 <https://kaggsysbookishramblings.wordpress.com/2013/11/14/persephone-pleasures-the-hopkins-manuscript-by-r-c-sherriff/> [accessed 20 August 2021].
[447] Paul McAuley, 'Science Fiction That Isn't Science Fiction (9)', *Unlikely Worlds*, 22 December 2010 <https://unlikelyworlds.blogspot.com/2010_12_19_archive.html> [accessed 20 August 2021]; Sherriff, *The Hopkins Manuscript*, p. 1.

from Germany and Italy' in the late 1930s as the threat of war grew.[448] Such anxieties around nationalistic rhetoric are also evident in *The Hopkins Manuscript*'s Critical Endotext, for by denigrating the English, the historian establishes an 'us versus them' dichotomy in which a minority group is vilified so that a majority group – non-English people – is given an implicitly superior collective identity. Consequently, *The Hopkins Manuscript*'s 'Foreword' sees Sherriff extrapolate pre-war nationalistic rhetoric into a far-future historian's discourse, highlighting the threat of allowing such attitudes to dominate how the world is understood.

Evaluative language permeates the 'Foreword'. The historian describes Hopkins's manuscript as a 'thin, lonely cry of anguish', denigrates Hopkins as 'a man of […] unquenchable self-esteem and limited vision' whose writings are 'infinitely pathetic in the pitiful little conceits and self-esteem of its author', and asserts that the English were the 'last *wretched* inhabitants' of Britain.[449] This anti-English rhetoric is prevalent in the 'Foreword', for the historian presents the English as primitive, claiming that 'their inscriptions upon metal and stone are of the poorest quality', and suggests that they were self-interested when remarking that a tablet commemorating the opening of a swimming bath is 'an example of urban vain-glory that appals the modern mind' because it lists the names of the councillors, architect, and engineer involved in its construction, but not 'the ruling monarch and Prime Minister' of the time.[450] Evidence from 'The Hopkins Manuscript' contradicts these impressions: The British Lunar Society's ability to discern that 'on the 12th of February this year the moon had drawn nearer to the earth by 3,583 miles' and predict that it would crash into the Earth within a couple of years disproves the assertion that the English were primitive, whereas the Parliamentary decree that every community was to 'set up its "Dugout Committee"' that would

[448] Roland Wales, *From Journey's End to The Dam Busters: The Life of R.C. Sherriff, Playwright of the Trenches* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Military, 2016), p. 296; p. 297.
[449] Sherriff, *The Hopkins Manuscript*, p. 3; p. 1; p. 3; p. 2 (emphasis added).
[450] Sherriff, *The Hopkins Manuscript*, p. 2; p. 3; pp. 2-3. Curiously, the future historian appears to use 'English' as a synonym for 'British'. Nowhere do they mention Welsh, Scottish, or Northern Irish people, despite their reference to Britain and not England. As a result, my discussion of *The Hopkins Manuscript* will use 'English' as if it is synonymous with 'British' to keep within the parameters set out by the Critical Endotext.

collaborate in the construction of a bunker-like structure indicates a communal spirit that suggests the English possess a degree of social consciousness.[451] Consequently, the historian's evaluative language – which, contained within the trappings of a scholarly introduction, is presented as objective information – misleads because it is the result of the historian's intentional selectivity regarding which evidence from 'The Hopkins Manuscript' they draw from and which they ignore. Counterintuitively, this sees the historian dissuade their audience from reading 'The Hopkins Manuscript'; it is, they claim, a worthless manuscript written by a pathetic man who belonged to an abhorrent people. This impression sees the historian perpetuate their anti-English views, for if they are successful in convincing their audience of the valuelessness of 'The Hopkins Manuscript', people in the far future may not learn that the English were inquisitive, thoughtful, and caring, ultimately reinforcing nationalistic attitudes that time and time again have prompted fear, mistrust, and war.

Although Wales posits that *The Hopkins Manuscript* was written in response to growing fears about nationalistic rhetoric prior to the dawn of the Second World War, the novel's Critical Endotext suggests that it is the dangers of all forms of imperialism that Sherriff was drawing attention to in his novel. The novelist highlights the injustices enacted in England's colonial past when his historian observes that 'the peoples of the reborn nations of the East indulged in an orgy of senseless destruction of everything that existed in their own countries to remind them of the days when they lived in servitude to the "white man"' following the 'collapse of "Western Civilisation"'.[452] Here, Sherriff suggests that the atrocities undertaken in the name of imperialism were so severe that only the complete obliteration of all of their reminders could mitigate them. In this sense, Sherriff literally dramatizes how imperialism leads to the destruction of history, an exaggeration of how conquering nations attempt to override the histories of the peoples and places they invade. Furthermore, the historian's description of the total destruction of all artefacts pertaining to Western civilization suggests that anti-English

[451] Sherriff, *The Hopkins Manuscript*, p. 27; p. 63.
[452] Sherriff, *The Hopkins Manuscript*, p. 1.

sentiment abounds in their future world. Recognising that the historian holds biased views is central to understanding why their narrativization of the past constitutes disinformation. It reveals that their selective use of evidence when presenting the English is the result of confirmation bias, the tendency to 'believe in sources which support one's assumptions and dismiss those which provide evidences [sic] to the opposite'.[453] However, the historian takes this tendency one step further, for they not only pay attention to aspects of 'The Hopkins Manuscript' that reinforce their prejudiced views, they perpetuate this ostensibly legitimised bias through the creation and dissemination of a historical narrative that, given the historian's implied professional status, appears to be veracious within the contexts of their story-world. This sees the historian engage in the very same imperialistic behaviours that spawned their anti-English beliefs – perhaps unsurprising, given they are employed by the '*Imperial* Research Press, Addis Ababa' – because they are likewise responsible for overriding the past with their own account of it.[454] This dramatization sees Sherriff suggest that imperialistic behaviours will beget imperialistic behaviours *ad infinitum* and that histories will continue to be replaced by disinformation if nations continue to vie for more and more power.

Ultimately, Sherriff's Critical Endotext problematises the relationship between authority and truth, for by depicting a historical account inflected by nationalistic bias, it examines the ease with which the past may become distorted by experts who are unable to divorce their personal beliefs from their professional duties. The writerliness of the 'Foreword' and the laboured interpretive acts it demands see it orient readers to the possibility that professionally authored narratives of the past may be far from neutral, thus challenging the status experts have as arbiters of truth and insisting that readers critically engage with their truth claims, lest they wish to contribute to the perpetuation of nationalistic biases that may warp how the past is come to be known and understood.

[453] Jędrzej Czerep, 'Post-Truth as Crisis of Trust and Critical Source Assessment' in *History in a Post-Truth World: Theory and Praxis*, ed. by Marius Gudonis and Benjamin T. Jones (New York: Routledge, 2021), chap. 2, VitalSource ebook.
[454] Sherriff, *The Hopkins Manuscript*, p. 1 (emphasis added).

Sherriff's Critical Endotext, in other words, demands that readers scrutinise historical accounts in greater detail. Although the 'majority of historians and philosophers of history alike have awakened from the "noble dream" of objectivity' in historical accounts, they valorise 'the role of the historiographer [as] an interpretive one, synthesizing […] facts in order to produce broader knowledge', contending that truthfulness can be found in this interpretive role.[455] This truthfulness, however, cannot be taken for granted, for historians should 'do all they can to avoid imposing their own prejudices and interests on to the people who came before them', otherwise they run the risk of producing misleading accounts of the past, as Sherriff's Critical Endotext dramatizes.[456] As such, readers must utilise their critical thinking capabilities when engaging with historical accounts, capabilities that endotexts help them to develop, so that they may discern between accounts that asymptotically approach truth and those that do not. Applied more broadly, this skill may not only inoculate readers against post-truth histories, but the crisis of post-truth at large, for they will better understand how narratives are shaped, why they are shaped, and how dominant narratives are produced by – and cyclically produce – power.

Misinformation in *Memoirs Found in a Bathtub*'s 'Introduction'

Stanisław Lem's fictional oeuvre is characterised by two thematic preoccupations. The first, writes Caleb Crain, is that the author's fiction is 'haunted by the idea that losses can overwhelm the human capacity to apprehend them', a concern that Mikołaj Gliński suggests indicates the 'buried traces of [Lem's] traumatic past' as a man of Jewish descent living in Nazi-occupied Poland.[457] The second is a 'meta-theme of incomplete as well as overabundant information', which sees Lem respond to what he views as the

[455] Jay, 'Historical Truth and the Truthfulness of Historians', p. 245; Bricker, 'Postnarrativism, Historiographical Evaluation, and Truth', p. 107.
[456] Jay, 'Historical Truth and the Truthfulness of Historians', p. 267.
[457] Caleb Crain, 'A Holocaust Survivor's Hardboiled Science Fiction', *The New Yorker*, 10 January 2022 <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2022/01/17/a-holocaust-survivors-hardboiled-science-fiction> [accessed 14 January 2022]; Mikołaj Gliński, 'Stanisław Lem: Did the Holocaust Shape His Sci-Fi World?', *Culture.pl*, 19 September 2017 <https://culture.pl/en/article/stanislaw-lem-did-the-holocaust-shape-his-sci-fi-world> [accessed 14 January 2022].

problem of 'informational deluge in the scientific – and humanistic – disciplines'.[458] These themes intersect in *Memoirs Found in a Bathtub*'s Critical Endotext. The 'Introduction' presents an unnamed historian explaining how the 'Notes from the Neogene' – the found manuscript that constitutes the novel's main narrative – were discovered, situating this within the broader context of the near-total loss of recorded history related to the twentieth century following the 'papyralysis epidemic'.[459] This obliteration of recorded history acts as a metaphor for the Third Reich's attempts to eradicate the Jewish people, their culture, and their past. Furthermore, the Critical Endotext depicts its story-world author struggle to adequately comprehend the past as they draw upon insufficient and incomplete information to narrativize it. As such, the historian's account amounts to misinformation because it is unintentionally misleading. Three aspects of the 'Introduction' suggest that this is the case: the historian's alternative spelling of words, their interpretive inaccuracies, and their seemingly erroneous use of dates.

Alternative spellings for words commonly found in twentieth-century discourse abound throughout the 'Introduction', including 'papyr' (paper) 'nashens' (nations), and 'Ammer-Ka' (America).[460] For Barry Gillam, these alternative spellings amount to 'satiric, phoneticized versions of words', the cause of which is the 'Introduction' author only having access to the past via its 'fragmentary relics'.[461] In marking these alternative spellings as satiric, Gillam locates Lem's novel within the dystopian mode and suggests that the consequence of the historian's society becoming so advanced that it has mastered '[g]ravitronics, cybereconomics, and synthephysics' is that it has become estranged from the past.[462] The spellings 'Ammer-ka' and 'papyr' in particular evoke a sense of ancient Egypt more strongly than they do of twentieth-century America, an

[458] Edward J. Valauskas, 'Lem on Earth, just in time: a review of Stanisław Lem at MIT Press', *First Monday*, 25.8 (2020) <https://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/10911/9590> [accessed 14 January 2022]; Stanisław Lem and Peter Swirski, *A Stanislaw Lem Reader* (Evanston, IL.: Northwestern University Press, 1997), p. 51.
[459] Lem, *Memoirs Found in a Bathtub*, pp. 1-2.
[460] Lem, *Memoirs Found in a Bathtub*, p. 1; p. 2.
[461] Barry Gillam, 'Lem, Stanislaw. Memoirs Found in a Bathtub (Book Review)', *Foundation*, 6 (1974), 92-95 (p. 93).
[462] Lem, *Memoirs Found in a Bathtub*, p. 2.

Egyptianization that is typical of the alternative spellings found throughout the 'Introduction'.[463] The Critical Endotext states that people in the far-future are more familiar with 'the protocultures of Assyria, Egypt and Greece' than they are with the cultures of the twentieth century, and so the Egyptianizations see the historian compensate for the near-unknowability of twentieth-century-American history by applying their comparably more secure knowledge of ancient Egypt.[464] Here, Lem dramatizes the interpretive act of historians 'us[ing] assumptions […] to build up hypotheses and theories' about the past that Basabi Khan Banerjee and Georg Stöber identify as belonging to modern historiographical practice.[465] Despite their attempts at maintaining what might today be recognised as good historiographical practice, Lem's historian disseminates misinformation because their alternative spellings create the false impression that the people of ancient Egypt and twentieth-century America are culturally alike because their languages, when Romanised, are similar. As such, Lem suggests that despite historians' best intentions, they will fail to accurately narrativize the past if they have access to incomplete or insufficient information.

That is not to say that the story-world author of the 'Introduction' is responsible for the creation of misinformation solely because of their alternative spellings, for the stories that they tell of the people of the twentieth century likewise constitute misinformation. In discussing the history of the Neogene (the story-world term for the era that included the twentieth century), the historian remarks that '[w]orship of the deity Kap-Eh-Taahl […] became one of the dominant cults of the time' and that this belief had spread 'throughout Ammer-Ka and […] Australindia and parts of the European Peninsula'.[466] Continuing, the historian states that it was 'forbidden to utter the name itself, "Kap-Eh-Taahl"' and so 'in Ammer-Ka the deity was generally called "Almighty Da-

[463] Lem, *Memoirs Found in a Bathtub*, p. 2; p. 1.
[464] Lem, *Memoirs Found in a Bathtub*, p. 1.
[465] Basabi Khan Banerjee and Georg Stöber, 'The Post-Truth Environment: Indian Politics and History Education', in *History in a Post-Truth World: Theory and Praxis*, ed. by Marius Gudonis and Benjamin T. Jones (New York: Routledge, 2021), chap. 9, VitalSource ebook.
[466] Lem, *Memoirs Found in a Bathtub*, p. 7.

Laahr"^.[467] The consequence of this interpretive error is two-fold. Extratextually, it enables Lem to satirise twentieth-century-American culture by suggesting that a future historian's objective analysis of data and sources will lead them to interpret capitalism ('Kap-Eh-Taahl') as America's primary religion, due to the influence it exerts across society. Intratextually, it sees the historian continue to disseminate misinformation in their account of the past, for the impression that capitalism was *literally* a religion in the twentieth century is erroneous. The historian's unintentional conflation of twentieth-century America's economic and religious practices therefore erases the nuances of various aspects of the past, thus perpetuating the very same loss of history that they are attempting to resist in their narrativization of it.

Misinformation is also evident in the 'Introduction' author's use of dates, that key domain of the historian. Late in their 'Introduction', the historian states that the 'Notes from the Neogene' were discovered in the year 3146, some 'one thousand six hundred and eighty years' after they had been written.[468] Commenting on these dates, Peter Swirski remarks that they give 'the absurd date of 1466 A.D. for the events of the memoir proper', an absurd date for a number of reasons, not least because the Pentagon was constructed between the years 1941 and 1943 and so presumably the 'Third Pentagon' of the main narrative's setting was built at some point future to this.[469] Although the aforementioned misleading qualities of the 'Introduction' possess a satirical edge, this element constitutes a serious concern about the capacity for the discipline of history to reach factual truths about the past, for in only having access to limited sources, the Critical Endotext's story-world author makes an interpretive error that is blatant to the novel's real readers. Subsequently, the legitimacy of the 'Introduction' and its historical account are brought into doubt, for the glaring interpretive error suggests that the impact of the papyralysis epidemic and the resultant eradication of historical sources was so profound that professional historians cannot be reliably trusted to

[467] Lem, *Memoirs Found in a Bathtub*, p. 7.
[468] Lem, *Memoirs Found in a Bathtub*, p. 11.
[469] Peter Swirski, 'Game Theory in the Third Pentagon: A Study in Strategy and Rationality', *Criticism*, 38.2 (1996), 303-330 (p. 325); Lem, *Memoirs Found in a Bathtub*, p. 11.

accurately undertake basic historiographical tasks, even if they intend on creating veracious historical accounts. Lem's Critical Endotext therefore dramatizes the author's concerns about inadequate amounts of information and insurmountable, incomprehensible loss, for the historian's inability to accurately date their sources suggests that not only has the past's connection with the present been severed in *Memoirs Found in a Bathtub*'s post-'Great Collapse' future, but that the discipline of history as might be recognised today has likewise been irretrievably lost.

Memoirs Found in a Bathtub's 'Introduction' grants real readers a privileged position within the interpretive game. Not only are they afforded full access to both the Critical Endotext and its counterpart main narrative, but they are able to draw upon their full knowledge of twentieth-century history and society as they uncover meaning within the novel, something which the 'Introduction' author is evidently unable to do. This privileged position enables real readers to identify the misinformation in the story-world historian's account, thus evoking a sense of Barthesian bliss that may impose 'a state of loss' upon them, for they are oriented to the possibility that real-world experts, even when acting in good faith, may mislead.[470] Given that this realisation is triggered by a writerly text that demands that readers actively and critically engage with how the past is recorded and narrativized, *Memoirs Found in a Bathtub*'s 'Introduction' subsequently insists that readers apply a similar degree of criticality when faced with historical accounts extratextually, scrutinising the claims made by experts so that inaccuracies may less readily pass into public knowledge.

Conclusion to Part One

Through their novels' Critical Endotexts, Sherriff and Lem dramatize how historical experts may mislead their audiences about the past. In the case of *The Hopkins Manuscript*, the 'Foreword' author intentionally draws upon their nationalistic biases as they distort the past and disseminate intentionally misleading disinformation, whereas in

[470] Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, p. 14.

Memoirs Found in a Bathtub's 'Introduction', the historian spreads accidentally deceptive misinformation about twentieth-century America due to there being a lack of adequate information about it. Importantly, Sherriff and Lem do not dramatize historians engaging in post-truth practices; rather than showing an indifference towards truth that characterises such attitudes, their historians exhibit an interest in the truth. Although their account of the past is ultimately an intentional distortion, the 'Foreword' author anchors their distortions in truth by making selective use of evidence present in 'The Hopkins Manuscript'. Similarly, the 'Introduction' author's account is rooted in historical evidence, but their accidental misapplication of this causes their account to mislead. As such, these examples suggest that an interest in truth may not be sufficient if historians wish to convey historical accounts that are as objectively true as is possible. Instead, they imply that historians must acknowledge all evidence available to them and show a relentless desire to continue to unearth evidence that may fill in the gaps vacated by the passing of time.

Although they do not directly dramatize historians engaging in post-truth practices, Sherriff's and Lem's Critical Endotexts do anticipate the conditions that make post-truth so persuasive in the twenty-first century. The historians' authoritative dissemination of disinformation and misinformation sees them add to the overall informational landscape of their respective story-worlds, thus contributing to the development of 'information abundance' within them. Presented with more information than they can make sense of, information abundance stifles individuals, rendering them 'less capable of deliberation' than they otherwise would be.[471] This stifling effect is particularly the case with the historians' accounts, for their misleading qualities add noise to their respective informational landscapes, thus deflecting attention away from information that is true. Lem was aware of this stifling quality. When explaining why he decided to cancel his subscription to the magazine *New Science*, he stated that he was 'simply unable to keep up. Paradoxically, an excess of information can paralyze as

[471] Pomerantsev, *This Is Not Propaganda*, pp. 4-5.

effectively as its absence'.[472] His suggested solution to this paralysis was to 'employ dozens of experts as a kind of "information filter"', but under today's newly heightened state of post-truth, individuals are less inclined to listen to experts and instead pick between competing information sources on the basis of which they *feel* ought to be true.[473]

The import of Sherriff's and Lem's anticipations of the conditions that have made post-truth so persuasive in the twenty-first century is two-fold. First, their anticipations suggest that concerns about the volume, quality, and legitimacy of information have been long-standing. This is useful insofar as it questions why information abundance has only now contributed to an intensification of the post-truth condition, thus inviting an examination of the particular state of information in the twenty-first century and how this has rendered individuals and societies so susceptible to feeling stifled. Second, Sherriff's and Lem's anticipations of the information-abundance-enforced exacerbation of the post-truth condition is useful in that they occur within relatively simple dramatizations. Ironically, Sherriff and Lem provide dramatizations of how experts can contribute to information abundance by each providing only one example of an expert behaving as such – in other words, their dramatizations of information abundance are informationally adequate. Largely divorced from competing truth claims, the Critical Endotexts provide straightforward examples of how experts can produce misleading accounts that act as the noise on which information abundance depends. This simplification is heightened by the Critical Endotexts being situated within dystopian projections. Displaced in unfamiliar and fantastical settings, real readers are less able to draw upon their worldly knowledge to make sense of the fiction they are reading. Leaving their informational baggage behind, real readers may therefore more clearly see the methods purposefully or accidentally used by experts in creating misleading accounts. Situated within Critical Endotexts, these dramatizations metafictionally reflect outwards to the real world. More aware of how experts might produce misleading

[472] Lem and Swirski, *A Stanislaw Lem Reader*, p. 41.
[473] Lem and Swirski, *A Stanislaw Lem Reader*, p. 41.

information, real readers will be better equipped to see through the noise of information abundance and be less readily persuaded by post-truth tactics.

Part Two: Post-Truth History and Anthony Meredith's Editorial Footnotes

Introduction

London's *The Iron Heel* is another example of a literary dystopia that is structured around the 'found manuscript' device. Within the story-world, its main narrative is written by Avis Everhard, the wife of socialist revolutionary Ernest Everhard. It chronicles their attempts to resist and overthrow the Oligarchy – a capitalist dictatorship that has emerged in the United States – in the early twentieth century. This narrative becomes the 'Everhard Manuscript', the discovered writings that are criticised by and in the endotexts that the 'found manuscript' device necessitates. In London's novel, these Critical Endotexts take two forms: appended prior to the main narrative is a 'Foreword', whereas editorial footnotes that 'explain, qualify, or even correct' the main narrative repeatedly embed it within their own frame of reference and thus comprise the novel's second Critical Endotext.[474] Both endotexts are authored within the story-world by Anthony Meredith, a professional historian writing from the twenty-seventh century, some four hundred years after the demise of the Oligarchy and subsequent birth of the 'Brotherhood of Man', an ostensibly socialist utopia.

It is *The Iron Heel*'s second Critical Endotext that will be under scrutiny in this section. The footnotes depict Meredith explaining archaic terms such as '[p]roletariat', 'ramshackle', and 'tamales' to his contemporary readers, and they also show how he draws upon real-world sources to contextualise the 'Everhard Manuscript', such as when he cites John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* (1859) to elucidate Avis's remark that two capitalists she meets possess 'the aristocratic ethic or the master ethic'.[475] Together,

[474] Aaron Shaheen, 'The Competing Narratives of Modernity in Jack London's "The Iron Heel"', *American Literary Realism*, 41.1 (2008), 35-51 (p. 36).
[475] Jack London, *The Iron Heel* (London: Penguin, 2006), p. 30; p. 37; p. 146; p. 53.

these qualities suggest that Meredith helps his contemporary readers to understand the past by neutrally presenting it 'as it was'. However, upon closer inspection, Meredith's editorial footnotes dramatize how experts can employ post-truth strategies to construct historical accounts that bear little relation to the past. To demonstrate that this is the case, I will read Meredith's footnotes in conjunction with Marius Gudonis's and Benjamin T. Jones's framework of 'post-truth history', which they define as:

> the communication of false information on a historical phenomenon that appeals to emotion and personal belief, where both the purveyor and recipient are indifferent to historicity and contemptuous of expert opinion that contradicts it, and where the underlying objective is ideological, especially in support of a collective identity or a political programme.[476]

In particular, Gudonis's and Jones's framework will be used to highlight the emotional appeal of Meredith's false information, his occasional implied indifference to historicity, and the underlying ideological objective that distorts his narrativization of the past. Consequently, London's novel may unsettle readers' historical assumptions, for by dramatizing a historical expert constructing what might today be recognised as post-truth history, it brings into doubt the suitability of experts as arbiters of truth and problematises their role in shaping how the past is understood.

Meredith's Account as Misleadingly Affective

Meredith's footnotes dramatize how authors of historical accounts can prioritise appealing to their readers' emotions over making veracious claims, thus pushing those accounts towards the realm of post-truth history. This is evident in how the footnotes contain affective language that describes aspects of the Everhards' time. For example, a footnote accompanying the term 'whistle-blow' states that 'laborers were called to work

[476] Gudonis and Jones, 'Who Controls the Past?', chap. 1.

and dismissed by savage, screaming, nerve-wracking steam-whistles'.[477] When 'insurance' is mentioned in the main narrative, Meredith writes that the capitalistic era was a 'terrible wolf-struggle' in which 'no man was permanently safe', thus prompting them to devise insurance '[o]ut of fear for the welfare of their families'.[478] Later in the novel, an explanatory footnote elucidating the term 'lap-dog' sees Meredith lambast the 'heartless conduct of the masters' in the time of the Everhards, for '[w]hile people starved, lap-dogs were waited upon by maids'.[479] These examples make it clear that Meredith holds negative feelings about the past; his characterisation of steam-whistles implies that he fears or dislikes them; 'terrible wolf-struggle' suggests that he pities the people of the Everhards' time; and his use of the adjective 'heartless' makes it clear that he detests the class inequality of the early twentieth century, a detestation that London himself was known to share.[480] These negative impressions are chiefly manifested by Meredith's employment of figurative and subjective language, which is likely to evoke emotional responses from his story-world readers. Given that experts are 'perceived as more likely to present information that is valid, compelling, or otherwise "correct"', Meredith's story-world readers would likely be swept along by his negative presentation of the conditions of the past: if a professional historian, with their research and expertise, concludes that the conditions of the past are something to be feared or despised, how can a layperson effectively disagree with them?[481]

Vitally, this negative presentation of the past is rooted less in evidence and more in its affectiveness, for although the steam-whistles of the early twentieth century may have been loud, whether they were as intimidating and oppressive as Meredith's language suggests is questionable. Insurance may have been devised to safeguard

[477] London, *The Iron Heel*, p. 38.
[478] London, *The Iron Heel*, p. 46.
[479] London, *The Iron Heel*, p. 189.
[480] London, *The Iron Heel*, p. 46; p. 189; see Rebecca Stefoff, *Jack London: An American Original* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 36, 'London was dismayed and disgusted by a world in which the owners of industries grew wealthy while workers slaved away in conditions that broke their spirits and bodies'.
[481] Jason K. Clark, Duane T. Wegener, Meara M. Habashi, and Abigail T. Evans, 'Source Expertise and Persuasion: The Effects of Perceived Opposition or Support on Message Scrutiny', *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 38.1 (2011), 90-100 (p. 90).

people's families and livelihoods, but whether this was solely motivated by fear is debatable. Moreover, class inequality may have abounded during the time of the Oligarchy, but a degree of scepticism ought to be exercised regarding the implication that the entirety of the ruling class was unfeeling. Historian Henry Rousso argues that the primacy of emotional appeal over reason in historical accounts constitutes a 'return to the time when historiography was subject to the dogma of faith and the constraints of power', a regression that sees purveyors of misleadingly affective historical accounts revert to, Rousso continues, pre-eighteenth-century historiographical standards.[482] As such, the affective qualities of Meredith's twenty-seventh-century editorial footnotes mark an almost millennium-long reversion in historiographical practice.

Meredith's Account as Indifferent to Historicity

Many of Meredith's editorial footnotes evince his commitment to constructing a historically authentic narrative, for he draws upon various real-world sources as he explains the conditions and events of the 'Everhard Manuscript' to his readers. These range from voting statistics, statements issued by religious institutions, and speeches made by political figures. Indeed, Meredith draws upon figures including Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, and Lord Avebury to demonstrate that Ernest Everhard was not alone in fearing the unchecked rise of capitalism.[483] These intertextual references give Meredith's footnotes an added sense of authority, for they create the impression that his narrativization of the past is informed by thorough research. Within the real-world, London's use of intertextual references allowed him to demonstrate that anxieties about capitalism are not unique to the story-world of *The Iron Heel*, and that as much as his novel features an imaginative projection of contemporary issues, it is still very much rooted in those contemporary issues. Indeed, London frequently argued in his early writings that 'capitalism created a social environment that supported avarice and

[482] Henry Rousso, 'Foreword' in *History in a Post-Truth World: Theory and Praxis*, ed. by Marius Gudonis and Benjamin T. Jones (New York: Routledge, 2021), foreword, VitalSource ebook.
[483] See London, *The Iron Heel*, p. 78; p. 107; p. 151.

exploitation', a viewpoint, he explains in the essay 'How I Became A Socialist', informed by how he encountered many 'sailor-men, soldier-men, labor-men, all wrenched and distorted and twisted out of shape by toil and hardship and accident, and cast adrift by their masters like so many old horses' during a period of so-called tramping he undertook in 1894.[484]

Despite Meredith's ostensible commitment to historicity, certain instances of his editorial footnotes suggest that this commitment is far from steadfast. Two pertinent examples of this are his explanations of the phrases 'prize-fighter' and '[h]e took no quarter'.[485] For the first phrase, Meredith explains that '[i]n that day it was the custom of men to compete for purses of money. They fought with their hands. When one was beaten into insensibility or killed, the survivor took the money', whereas for the second, he writes, '[t]his figure [of speech] arises from the customs of the times. When, among men fighting to the death in their wild-animal way, a beaten man threw down his weapons, it was at the option of the victor to slay him or spare him'.[486] Together, these Critical Endotexts see Meredith suggest that – in addition to the many examples of organised military violence that took place around the turn of the twentieth century – it was commonplace for men to engage in acts of unregulated violence and murder during the first decade of the twentieth century. However, these endotexts are marked by how they are devoid of intertextual references. As discussed above, Meredith often makes intertextual references to verify the explanations he makes in his footnotes, a historiographical technique he uses with such consistency that its absence implies that there is no supporting evidence for these claims. This may appear jarring for the real reader, given that if Meredith's assertion that random acts of violence were commonplace at the turn of the twentieth century is true, it follows that there should be a wealth of evidence to verify this claim. Here, London disrupts his real readers' trust

[484] Kenneth K. Brandt, *Jack London* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2018), p. 60; Jack London, 'How I Became A Socialist' in *War of the Classes* (New York: The Regent Press, 1912) in Project Gutenberg <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1187/1187-h/1187-h.htm> [accessed 10 January 2022].
[485] London, *The Iron Heel*, p. 11; p. 21.
[486] London, *The Iron Heel*, p. 11; p. 21.

that historical experts will provide truthful accounts of the past by demonstrating that they can make and disseminate unsubstantiated claims, therefore necessitating that experts' assertions are not uncritically accepted by their intended audiences, but should in fact have their truth claims scrutinised.

Furthermore, Meredith's footnotes explaining the phrases 'prize-fighter' and '[h]e took no quarter' are not only intentionally misleading in how they are devoid of supportive evidence, but in how they purposefully overlook contradictory evidence. In creating the impression that the turn of the twentieth century was characterised by acts of random violence and murder in the name of capitalistic gain, Meredith ignores the fact that the final bare-knuckle championship fight – a style of fighting that bears some resemblance to his description of fighting in a 'wild-animal way' – took place in Mississippi in 1889, some two decades before the events of *The Iron Heel*'s main narrative.[487] Furthermore, Meredith overlooks the fact that the turn of the twentieth century saw the 'demise of bare-knuckle bouts and the rise of gloved contests', the result of which was that prize-fighting became increasingly professionalised, regulated, and safe.[488] London, himself a keen boxer, wrote often on the subject in both his fiction and reportage, pulling, writes Rebecca Stefoff, 'no punches when describing the brutality of the sport', and so he would have been familiar with the conditions of boxing and developments that took place in the sport.[489] As such, when creating Meredith and his historical account, London did not construct a character who was simply ignorant to the reality of the sport. Instead, London created a fictional historian who, given that his previous intertextual references imply that he has access to a wealth of historical sources, purposefully overlooks aspects of boxing that contradict his overall narrativization of the past. This intentional overlooking of contradictory evidence constitutes an indifference to historicity, for Meredith pays no attention to the authenticity of things that can be said to have actually happened in the past. As such, by

[487] London, *The Iron Heel*, p. 21.
[488] J. Lawrence Mitchell, 'Jack London and Boxing', *American Literary Realism*, 36.3 (2004), 225-242 (p. 225).
[489] Stefoff, *Jack London: An American Original*, p. 92.

having his fictional expert put forward a hyperbolic account of the past that not only demonstrates a clear indifference toward historicity, but is easily disprovable, London suggests that Meredith is not to be taken seriously as a professional historian. Rather than encouraging his real readers to accept that Meredith's future history is true within the context of *The Iron Heel*'s story-world, London continues to challenge their trust in experts as arbiters of truth, for Meredith's flouting of basic historiographical principles is so jarring that it acts as a metafictional device, suspending the suspension of disbelief that underpins the act of reading realist fiction. In other words, Meredith's indifference toward historicity is so blatant that real readers cannot avoid the possibility that real-world historical experts may likewise intentionally distort the past as they narrativize it.

Meredith's Account as Ideologically Inflected

Anthony Meredith's anti-capitalist, pro-socialist views underpin his narrativization of the past in *The Iron Heel*'s Critical Endotexts, therefore cementing his account's status as an example of post-truth history. Both Meredith's misleadingly affective explanations of 'steam-whistles', 'insurance', and the 'heartless conduct of the masters' and his conflation of random acts of extreme violence with the pursuit of financial gain – a conflation he makes when stating that customary extreme violence was carried out for the sake of 'purses of money' – cast capitalism in a negative light.[490] Conversely, Meredith's editorial footnotes are biased in favour of the Brotherhood of Man, a society that scholars have long interpreted as a socialist utopia.[491] This is illustrated in several of Meredith's footnotes, in which he calls his contemporary moment 'this intelligent age' and remarks that the labour troubles and 'quarrel[s] over the division of the joint-product' between labour and capital are 'a ludicrous spectacle' to his story-world

[490] London, *The Iron Heel*, p. 38; p. 47; p. 189; p. 11.

[491] See Gorman Beauchamp, '"The Iron Heel" and "Looking Backward": Two Paths to Utopia', *American Literary Realism, 1870-1910*, 9.4 (1976), 307-314 (p. 307): '[*The Iron Heel*] is a utopia, a vision of the socialist millennium when humanity lives at least in harmony and justice', and Jonathan Auerbach, 'Introduction' in Jack London, *The Iron Heel* (London: Penguin, 2006), p. ix, who writes that the novel's endotexts are written 'from the vantage point of a future society already assumed to have attained a perfect socialist Brotherhood of Man'.

readers.[492] These remarks imply that Meredith believes that the age in which he lives is morally and intellectually superior to the early twentieth century, a pro-socialist bias that is reinforced by the novel's 'Foreword', in which Meredith calls the Brotherhood of Man 'that flower of the ages'.[493] Here, London's personal disdain 'for a social, political, and economic system that could permit large-scale poverty and corruption', i.e. capitalism, bleeds into his fiction, and his belief that society must change 'either toward industrial oligarchies or socialism' is extrapolated some seven centuries into the future by his dramatization of a dystopian United States dominated by big business that is eventually toppled by a socialist utopia.[494]

However, London's construction of Meredith does not straightforwardly present socialism in a positive light. Despite the praise critics tend to afford Meredith for how he 'seeks to undermine some of the flattering claims testifying to [Ernest] Everhard's greatness' made by Avis in the 'Everhard Manuscript', an act that sees him 'neutralize ideological distortions of the past', *The Iron Heel*'s Critical Endotexts reveal the extent to which the historian's narrativization of the past has been written in support of a political programme.[495] This constitutes an affront on historiographical practice, for it sees Meredith neutralize Avis's biases so that he may imprint his own onto the found manuscript. Subsequently, this brings into doubt not only the accuracy of his account of the early twentieth century, but the impressions he creates about the age of the Brotherhood of Man – if Meredith's political ideology leads him to distort the past, then so too may it lead him to distort his present. In casting doubt on his fellow socialist, London expresses his own frustrations with the political ideology. Aaron Shaheen notes that London wrote *The Iron Heel* following the 1905 Russian Revolution and the formation of the International Workers of the World, events which 'energized his

[492] London, *The Iron Heel*, p. 46; p. 105.
[493] London, *The Iron Heel*, p. 7.
[494] Stefoff, *Jack London: An American Original*, p. 78; Jack London, 'The Question of the Maximum' in *War of the Classes* (New York: The Regent Press, 1912) in Project Gutenberg <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1187/1187-h/1187-h.htm> [accessed 10 January 2022].
[495] Auerbach, 'Introduction', p. ix; see also Shaheen, ''The Competing Narratives of Modernity in Jack London's "The Iron Heel"', p. 39, 'His first task in the foreword is to debunk the irrationally romantic image that Avis held of her husband.'; White, *The Practical Past*, p. xiv.

militarism and fueled [sic] his disgust with "respectable" American socialists' whereas Darko Suvin and David Douglas suggest that London's 'socialism was distorted by middle-class ambitions for wealth and success which led to frustration and disillusionment'.[496] In other words, London saw popular forms of socialism as imperfect and was himself an imperfect socialist, a tension that saw him ultimately resign from the Socialist Party in 1916, the year of his death. Such imperfection characterises Meredith's narrativization of the past in *The Iron Heel*'s Critical Endotexts, for in writing a historical account distorted by pro-socialist views, Meredith fails to even attempt to produce a narrative that strives to be historically objective. Subsequently, London's Critical Endotexts problematise the relationship between power, authority, and history, for Meredith misappropriates his expertise and the authority that this grants him so that he may perpetuate an account of the past that is post-truthful insofar as it prioritises aligning with his political beliefs over remaining committed to truthfulness.

Conclusion to Part Two

In this section, I have demonstrated that the editorial footnotes written by Anthony Meredith in the future story-world of *The Iron Heel* and the historical account contained therein constitute a dramatization of post-truth history. This is because Meredith's footnotes are misleadingly affective, display an occasional indifference toward historicity, and have been produced in support of an underlying ideological objective, key traits of post-truth history identified by Marius Gudonis and Benjamin T. Jones. Written in the first decade of the twentieth century, London's depiction of Anthony Meredith's politically-motivated post-truth history anticipates real-world instances of experts misleading their audiences as they narrativize the past. These strategies were utilised to devastating effect in Nazi Germany, in which 'educationalists specifically sought emotional, irrational, and anti-intellectual content' as they constructed fallacious

[496] Shaheen, ''The Competing Narratives of Modernity in Jack London's "The Iron Heel"', p. 39; Darko Suvin and David Douglas, 'Jack London and His Science Fiction: An Annotated Chronological Select Bibliography', *Science Fiction Studies*, 3.2 (1976), 181-187 (p. 184).

historical accounts that ultimately made the atrocities of the Holocaust thinkable, feasible, and permissible.[497] They were used to create Indian National Council of Education Research and Training history textbooks published between 1986 and 1999 that 'clearly privileged a leftist interpretation' of the past'.[498] They have been used by certain politicians, cultural commentators, and historians in Australia since the 1990s, who have denied that 'thousands of Indigenous children […] were removed from their families by the government between 1910 and […] 1969', as such denialism sees them protect Australian national identity.[499] Together, London's dramatization of Anthony Meredith and these real-world examples of intentionally misleading experts problematise Julian Baggini's assertion that experts are authorities of truth. They illustrate how historical experts can abuse their reputation as people who are perceived as being trustworthy, knowledgeable, and 'correct' in order to put forward advantageous and politically-motivated truth claims that are indifferent towards the actual happenings of the past.

As the real-world examples discussed above show, post-truth histories are not a distinctly twenty-first-century problem. They instead seem to have infected each culture that has had an interest in narrating its past. Because of this, it is not always easy to discern which accounts of the past are true and which are truth-indifferent. *The Iron Heel*'s Critical Endotexts appear to offer a solution to this particular post-truth problem. They more transparently reveal an expert's implementation of the tactics of post-truth history, thanks to their fictionality and relative informational simplicity. Although potentially uncomfortable, for readers are oriented to how they may have been deceived by the experts in whom they have placed trust, this revelation is blissful, for it is reached by engaging with a writerly text that both demands they actively scrutinise a historian's truth claims all while it metafictionally reflects beyond *The Iron Heel*'s story-world.

[497] Gudonis and Jones, 'Who Controls the Past?', chap. 1.
[498] Basabi Khan Banerjee and Georg Stöber, 'The Post-Truth Environment: Indian Politics and History Education', chap. 9.
[499] Benjamin T. Jones, 'Denying the Stolen Generations: What Happens to Indigenous History in a Post-Truth World?' in *History in a Post-Truth World: Theory and Praxis*, ed. by Marius Gudonis and Benjamin T. Jones (New York: Routledge, 2021), chap. 6, VitalSource ebook.

Engaging with a writerly text in this manner may empower real readers, for they have been forced to become active participants in the uncovering of meaning, and now, oriented towards the possibility that Anthony Meredith may have real-world counterparts, they are better prepared to fend off misleading historical accounts and understand, undermine, and ultimately unpick the amplification of post-truth.

Part Three: Curing the Post-Truth Problem – Historical Experts in *The Handmaid's Tale*, *The Testaments*, and *The Power*

Introduction

Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, its sequel *The Testaments*, and Alderman's *The Power* share a key thematic focus: the main narrative of each literary dystopia is preoccupied with how gender and power intersect. Atwood's novels are set in Gilead, an oppressive theocracy set in what used to be the United States of America. Under this regime, women's economic, educational, and reproductive rights have been largely removed and fertile woman have been reduced to 'two-legged wombs', also known as Handmaids.[500] In Alderman's novel, it is men who have become oppressed after women develop 'skeins', muscles along their collarbones that allow them to generate electricity. This sees women come to dominate political, religious, and militaristic spheres, ultimately ushering in a matriarchy that subjugates, sexualises, and routinely abuses men.

These novels also share a significant formal similarity: they feature Critical Endotexts that reflect on which histories are told, how they are told, and who gets to tell them, thus foregrounding the relationship between history and power.[501] Both of Atwood's novels belong to the tradition of literary dystopias employing the 'found manuscript' device, which Atwood herself has attributed to the influence of George

[500] Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale* (London: Vintage, 1996), p. 146.
[501] This similarity is likely to have been informed by Atwood's mentorship of Alderman in 2012 as part of the Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative.

Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) on her writing.[502] The found manuscripts that comprise Atwood's main narratives are made up of audio transcriptions, after which Critical Endotexts are appended.[503] These take the form of conference proceeding transcripts that take place in an ostensibly post-Gileadean world: *The Handmaid's Tale*'s relates to the 'Twelfth Symposium on Gileadean Studies' in the year 2195, whereas *The Testaments*' is set at the 'Thirteenth Symposium on Gileadean Studies' two years later.[504] Alderman's novel deviates from the 'found manuscript' device; its main narrative appears instead as a work of historical fiction and its Critical Endotext consists of an exchange of letters held between two writers.[505] Vitally, each novel's Critical Endotext prominently features a historical expert: Atwood's novels present Professor James Darcy Pieixoto, Director of the 'Twentieth and Twenty-First Century Archives, Cambridge University, England', while Alderman's dystopia includes Neil Adam Armon, the story-world author of the work of historical fiction and writer of four previous 'dry volume[s] of history'.[506]

It is these Critical Endotexts and the historical experts they depict that will be this section's primary focus. In the first half, I will compare the presentation of Professor James Darcy Pieixoto in *The Handmaid's Tale*'s 'Historical Notes' and *The Testaments*' 'The Thirteenth Symposium', paying particular attention to the strategies used by Atwood's historical expert as he narrativizes the past in his keynote talks. Revisiting Marius Gudonis's and Benjamin T. Jones's framework of post-truth history, I will demonstrate that whereas Pieixoto distorts and undermines Offred's account of her experiences in the 'Historical Notes', his treatment of Agnes's, Nicole's, and Aunt Lydia's narratives in 'The Thirteenth Symposium' sees him put forward an account that is

[502] See Atwood, *In Other Worlds: SF and the Human Imagination*, p. 147: 'At the end of *The Handmaid's Tale*, there's a section that owes much to *Nineteen Eighty-Four*[…]. The parallels with Orwell's essay on Newspeak should be evident.' Atwood's confession directly relates only to *The Handmaid's Tale*, but given that *The Testaments* is its sequel, the same influence applies.
[503] Although these audio recordings originate from one source in *The Handmaid's Tale*, transcriptions of two sources, 'Witness Testimony 369A' and 'Witness Testimony 369B', feature in *The Testaments*, and are accompanied by a written document, 'The Ardua Hall Holograph'.
[504] Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*, p. 311; Margaret Atwood, *The Testaments* (London: Vintage, 2019), p. 407.
[505] Naomi Alderman, *The Power* (London: Penguin, 2017), p. ix.
[506] Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*, p. 311; Atwood, *The Testaments*, p. 407; Alderman, *The Power*, p. ix.

ultimately much more veracious. In the second half of this section, I will consider the strategies used by Neil Adam Armon in *The Power*'s Critical Endotext as he attempts to dismantle the narrative of post-truth history that has come to dominate his world. Ultimately, I will demonstrate that Alderman's Critical Endotext counterintuitively suggests that adopting certain strategies that are characteristic of post-truth when constructing veracious historical accounts, such as presenting his claims so that they are emotionally appealing, may be key to combatting fallacious post-truth histories. Overall, *The Handmaid's Tale*'s, *The Testaments*', and *The Power*'s Critical Endotexts orient readers toward the strategies used by story-world experts to combat post-truth histories. By achieving this through writerly texts which demand that readers actively engage with how the past is narrativized both intratextually and extratextually, these novels evoke Barthesian bliss by challenging the 'growing distrust of authoritative experts', an assumption that characterises the intensified post-truth condition of the twenty-first century.[507] Historical experts who depend upon both facts and their interpretive faculties to approach 'historical truth asymptotically' ought to be trusted, these novels stress, and represents one way that readers may shield themselves against further onslaughts of post-truth.[508]

Pieixoto and Post-Truth History: The 'Historical Notes' versus 'The Thirteenth Symposium'

The Handmaid's Tale's 'Historical Notes' and *The Testaments*' 'The Thirteenth Symposium' consist of Professor James Darcy Pieixoto's keynote talks made during academic conferences held in an ostensibly post-Gileadean world. In these talks, Pieixoto describes how the documents that comprise each novel's main narrative were discovered, debates the authenticity of those documents, and questions the identities of several figures present in each narrative. Despite these thematic similarities, Pieixoto's

[507] Daniel W. Drezner, 'Why the post-truth political era might be around for a while', *The Washington Post*, 16 June 2016 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2016/06/16/why-the-post-truth-political-era-might-be-around-for-a-while/> [accessed 2 January 2024].
[508] Jay, 'Historical Truth and the Truthfulness of Historians', p. 256.

talks differ in terms of the commitment to truthfulness: in the 'Historical Notes', he employs strategies that are characteristic of post-truth history, whereas these strategies are reduced or absent in 'The Thirteenth Symposium'.

Purveyors of post-truth histories, write Marius Gudonis and Benjamin T. Jones, are 'contemptuous of expert opinion', a quality evident in Pieixoto's talk in the 'Historical Notes'.[509] In particular, he shows contempt for Offred's expertise relating to the conditions of Gilead. In remarking that her recordings were not 'a manuscript at all when first discovered, and bore no title' and that he 'hesitate[s] to use the word *document*' when referring to them, Pieixoto denies Offred an authorial status.[510] Although true that she is not an author in the traditional sense, Pieixoto disregards Offred's account precisely because it is not professionally presented, implying that he has a narrow, elitist set of parameters for what does and does not constitute expertise. Furthermore, when Pieixoto opines 'we must be cautious about passing moral judgement upon the Gileadeans', he implies that Offred's account, which details the atrocities she endured under the Gileadean regime, is sensationalist and emotion-laden, and therefore of less use to the professional historian concerned with facts.[511] Here, Atwood dramatizes how 'scholars construct models of history rather than describe or empathize with past events'.[512] The rule that she would not include in *The Handmaid's Tale* 'anything that humankind had not already done, somewhere, sometime, or for which it did not already have the tools' is well documented, although this is often read in relation to the novel's treatment of women.[513] However, she has elsewhere stated that the discipline of history frustrates her because it 'is more than willing to tell you who won the Battle of Trafalgar and which world leader signed this or that treaty, but it is frequently reluctant about the now-obscure details of daily life', suggesting that Atwood finds historical experts' treatment of the past problematic if their preoccupation with constructing grand

[509] Gudonis and Jones, 'Who Controls the Past?', chap. 1.
[510] Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*, p. 313.
[511] Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*, p. 318; p. 314.
[512] Danita J. Dodson, '"We lived in the blank white spaces": Rewriting the Paradigm of Denial in Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale', *Utopian Studies*, 8.2 (1997), 66-86 (p. 83).
[513] Atwood, *In Other Worlds*, p. 88.

narratives comes at the expense of disregarding the quotidian: its conditions, its details, and how everyday people responded to them.[514] That this is dramatized in *The Handmaid's Tale*'s Critical Endotext suggests that Atwood did not intend for her readers to accept Pieixoto's account of Offred's narrative; instead, his contempt for her expertise behaves as an example of how individuals should not respond to first-hand accounts of the past.

Such contempt for seemingly 'unprofessional' expert opinions is seemingly absent from Pieixoto's talk in 'The Thirteenth Symposium'. Rather than show contempt for the opinions of the 'Ardua Hall Holograph' author and the 'Witness Testimony 369A' and 'Witness Testimony 369B' speakers, Pieixoto accepts and celebrates their accounts, calling their discoveries 'spectacular finds', quickly 'inclin[ing] to the view that [the 'Ardua Hall Holograph'] is authentic', and determining that the witness testimonies are 'almost certainly authentic'.[515] Indeed, Pieixoto takes the speakers of the verbal testimonies at their word, noting that 'from their own accounts' they discovered they were 'half-sisters'.[516] This acceptance of the manuscript author's and testimony speakers' expertise (something that they have gained through their lived experiences, much like Offred in *The Handmaid's Tale*) demonstrates that Pieixoto no longer employs a strategy characteristic of post-truth history. Indeed, rather than ending his talk by asking his audience if they have 'any questions', a question symbolic of his dismissal of Offred's voice and celebration of his own expertise, Pieixoto concludes his talk in 'The Thirteenth Symposium' by presenting his audience with the inscription made upon the statue of 'BECKA, AUNT IMMORTELLE', a friend of Agnes's and Nicole's.[517] Presented without further comment, the strong emotions imbued within the memorial's inscription remain undiluted and untampered, signifying Pieixoto's newfound commitment to presenting an uninflected account of the past. Here, Atwood dramatizes how historical

[514] Margaret Atwood, 'In Search of Alias Grace: On Writing Canadian Historical Fiction', *The American Historical Review*, 103.5 (1998), 1503-1516 (p. 1504).
[515] Atwood, *The Testaments*, p. 409; p. 410; p. 411.
[516] Atwood, *The Testaments*, p. 411.
[517] Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*, p. 324; Atwood, *The Testaments*, p. 415.

experts must behave if they wish to create truthful historical accounts: rather than dismissing the voices of the past so that they may put forward their own narratives, historical experts must act as a conduit between the past and the present and allow authentic voices to emerge.

Pieixoto's account of the past in the 'Historical Notes' demonstrates support for an 'underlying objective [that] is ideological'.[518] He shows support for a misogynistic ideology in his talk, which is evident in how he refuses to criticise the atrocities committed against women under the Gileadean regime ('Our job is not to censure but to understand'), celebrates some of the men responsible for orchestrating those atrocities (calling them men 'of considerable ingenuity'), and uses sexist humour (highlighting the 'archaic vulgar signification of the word *tail*' in the manuscript's story-world title 'The Handmaid's Tale').[519] This misogynistic ideology characterises his general demeanour, for, outside of his prepared talk, he quips that he and his audience are 'enjoying an equally charming Arctic Chair', a pun about the sexual appeal of Professor Maryann Crescent Moon, the conference chair – she is allegedly 'good enough to eat'.[520] Pieixoto's sexism has been frequently highlighted by commentators on *The Handmaid's Tale*, who suggest that he 'engages in textual interpretation much like that of Gilead's ruling elite' because he 'reflects the rhetoric that [they] used to underwrite their reduction of women to reproductive parts', thus suggesting that 'the conditions that led to the founding of Gilead in the first place still exist in the world of 2195'.[521] As Atwood herself has noted, 'most totalitarianisms we know about have attempted to control reproduction in one way or another' and therefore subsequently objectify women, revealing an inherently misogynistic ideology.[522] Atwood extrapolates this totalitarian trend into the figure of

[518] Marius Gudonis and Benjamin T. Jones, 'Who Controls the Past?', chap. 1.
[519] Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*, p. 315; p. 321; p. 313.
[520] Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*, p. 312; Dominick M. Grace, '"The Handmaid's Tale": "Historical Notes" and Documentary Subversion', *Science Fiction Studies*, 25.3 (1998), 481-494 (p. 486).
[521] David S. Hogsette, 'Margaret Atwood's Rhetorical Epilogue in *The Handmaid's Tale*: The Reader's Role in Empowering Offred's Speech Act', *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, 38.4 (1997), 262-278 (p. 270); Lauren A. Rule, 'Not Fading Into Another Landscape: Specters of American Empire in Margaret Atwood's Fiction', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 54.4 (2008), 627-653 (p. 630); Grace, '"The Handmaid's Tale": "Historical Notes" and Documentary Subversion', p. 481.
[522] Atwood, *In Other Worlds*, p. 87.

Pieixoto by having him hold the same attitude towards women, suggesting that it is not only political, religious, and military leaders who are responsible for ushering in totalitarian regimes, but that experts may likewise be culpable for this.

In various interviews, Atwood has stated that she had long resisted calls for her to write a sequel to *The Handmaid's Tale*, but that she reconsidered this position 'as we started moving towards Gilead instead of away from it – particularly in the United States'.[523] Here, Atwood alludes to Donald Trump, the 'pussy-grabbing' 45th president of the United States, the misogynistic attitudes that contributed to his election success, and the 'very peculiar understanding of the female anatomy and physiology' shown by Republicans when they claimed that there was a distinction between real rape and not-real rape.[524] Likewise, critics have noted that there are 'shadows of Weinstein and Epstein' in *The Testaments*, and traces of the conditions that prompted the #MeToo movement can be found in *The Testaments*' main narrative given that its multiple perspectives better demonstrate the systemic abuse of women in Gilead perpetuated by men than *The Handmaid's Tale* does.[525] In other words, the United States of the late 2010s was characterised by a deep-rooted cultural misogyny that prompted Atwood to return to the world of *The Handmaid's Tale*.

Rather than dramatize these conditions in *The Testaments*' Critical Endotext, Atwood creates the impression that Pieixoto's misogynistic ideology has been diminished. Men are mentioned far less prominently by the historian in 'The Thirteenth Symposium' than they are in the 'Historical Notes', and in his 2197 talk, Pieixoto neither celebrates

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[523] Quoted in Sam Parker, 'Is The Testaments a dystopia? Let's hope so…', *Penguin*, 10 September 2019 <https://www.penguin.co.uk/articles/2019/sep/margaret-atwood-testaments-interview.html> [accessed 2 December 2021]; see also Lisa Allardice, 'Margaret Atwood: "For a long time we were moving away from Gilead. Then we started going back towards it", *The Guardian*, 20 September 2019 <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/sep/20/margaret-atwood-moving-away-from-gilead-testaments> [accessed 2 December 2021], and Brian Bethune, 'Margaret Atwood's urgent new tale of Gilead', *Macleans*, 6 September 2019 <https://www.macleans.ca/culture/books/margaret-atwoods-urgent-new-tale-of-gilead/> [accessed 2 December 2021].

[524] Margaret Atwood quoted in Tessa Stuart, '"We've Seen This Before": Margaret Atwood on "The Handmaid's Tale" and How History Repeats Itself', *RollingStone*, 19 May 2021 <https://www.rollingstone.com/tv/tv-features/margaret-atwood-interview-season-4-handmaids-tale-1171567/> [accessed 2 December 2021]; Stuart, '"We've Seen This Before"'.

[525] Allardice, '"For a long time we were moving away from Gilead. Then we started going back towards it"'.

nor mentions their achievements. Instead, he promotes women's achievements, including a graduate student by the name of Mia Smith, who came across the mislabelled 'Annals of the *Nellie J. Banks*: Two Adventurers', the document that contained Agnes's and Nicole's testimonies.[526] Furthermore, Pieixoto celebrates his own women contemporaries, congratulating Professor Maryann Crescent Moon on becoming the President of 'Anishinaabe University, Cobalt, Ontario', rather than openly sexualising her.[527] Piexoto's celebration of Crescent Moon's promotion is not comfortably made; he remarks that 'women are usurping leadership positions to […] a terrifying extent' in his own time and confesses that he '[took] to heart [Crescent Moon's] comments about [his] little jokes at the Twelfth Symposium'.[528] The awkwardness of Pieixoto's asides implies that he still holds a misogynistic ideology, but that he vitally does not allow these views to warp his presentation of the past in 'The Thirteenth Symposium'. Consequently, his narrativization of the past is more veracious in *The Testaments*, for he no longer belittles, diminishes, or ignores women's voices, in spite of his own beliefs. By having Pieixoto accept the accounts of Aunt Lydia, Agnes, and Nicole, Atwood provides an example of how real readers should respond to women's voices. Rather than ignore women's accounts, the expert listens to and amplifies them, even if this means he must confront some uncomfortable truths. In doing so, not only does Atwood create in 'The Thirteenth Symposium' a post-Gileadean world in which women's claims are taken seriously, but also a story-world that exhibits a commitment to historical truth, even if it might be more convenient to look the other way.

In *The Handmaid's Tale*'s and *The Testaments*' Critical Endotexts, Atwood depicts a story-world historical expert using different strategies to narrativize the Gileadean era. In the 'Historical Notes', Pieixoto employs post-truth strategies to create an account of the past that belittles Offred's voice. His commitment to historical truth appears stronger in 'The Thirteenth Symposium'. Rather than belittle women's voices, he produces a

[526] Atwood, *The Testaments*, p. 412.
[527] Atwood, *The Testaments*, p. 407.
[528] Atwood, *The Testaments*, p. 408.

historical account that validates and amplifies women's experiences and is altogether more truthfully responsive to the actualities of the Gileadean regime. This increased commitment to historical truth is remarkable, given that Pieixoto ostensibly still holds misogynistic views that make confronting the truth of the Gileadean regime uncomfortable for him. As such, the contrast between Pieixoto's treatment of the past in *The Handmaid's Tale*'s and *The Testaments*' Critical Endotexts sees Atwood provide a blueprint for what experts should and should not do if they wish to create truthful historical accounts: they should not ignore the voices of the past, abandon their commitment to historicity, or allow their own ideologies to inflect their work, even if this means confronting uncomfortable truths.

Fighting Fire with Fire: Using Post-Truth Strategies to Combat Post-Truth History in Naomi Alderman's *The Power*

In *The Power*'s acknowledgements, Naomi Alderman reveals what she considers to be her novel's key focus. Commenting on the illustrations of archaeological findings made in her story-world that comprise the novel's Parallel Endotext, she writes:

> [t]he illustrations are by Marsh Davies. Two of them – the 'Serving Boy' and 'Priestess Queen' – are based on actual archaeological finds from the ancient city of Mohenjo-Daro in the Indus Valley[…]. We don't know much about the culture of Mohenjo-Daro[…]. But despite the lack of context, the archaeologists who unearthed them called the [clearly male] soapstone head […] 'Priest King', while they named the bronze female figure […] 'Dancing Girl'. They're still called by those names. Sometimes, I think the whole of this book could be communicated with just this set of facts and illustrations.[529]

[529] Alderman, *The Power*, p. 341.

As such, although *The Power*'s main narrative may be about the intersections between gender and political, sexual, and physical power, the novel at large is preoccupied with how biological sex and power overlap to determine which stories are told and who gets to tell them. This preoccupation is crystallised by the novel's Critical Endotext, in which Neil Adam Armon, a historian, and a fictional version of Alderman, an author, use a series of letters to debate the history of their world. Armon argues that his 'sort of "novelization" of what archaeologists agree is the most plausible' account of the past is true, and that men were dominant before women developed their electricity-generating skeins.[530] The story-world Alderman disagrees, questioning whether history 'really support[s] the idea that women didn't have skeins much before the Cataclysm'.[531] Ultimately, she resists Armon's claims, arguing that women have always been dominant because she 'feel[s]' that it is true, suggesting that her belief is founded on emotional appeal.[532] Moreover, the story-world Alderman shows contempt for expert opinion when she argues that Armon's depiction of male warriors might instead indicate 'just *isolated* civilizations', and displays an indifference toward historicity when she asserts that 'the occasional statues we find of women without skeins from before the Cataclysm […] could just be artistic licence'.[533] Alderman is not alone in believing the false account of the past: her comment that Armon's patriarchal account of the past 'contradicts so many of the history books we all read as children' suggests that the post-Cataclysmic age of *The Power*'s Critical Endotext – which takes place 5000 years after the events of the main narrative – is founded on the belief that women have always been dominant.[534] Post-truth history, it transpires, is not just present in the post-Cataclysmic age; it runs rampant.

Armon shows an awareness of the dominance of this post-truth history when he writes to the fictional Alderman that '[p]eople don't believe [that there were warrior-

[530] Alderman, *The Power*, p. ix; Given that the male dominance that Armon reports is consistent with the conditions of the real world, his account of the past is implied to be veracious.
[531] Alderman, *The Power*, p. 333.
[532] Alderman, *The Power*, p. 333
[533] Alderman, *The Power*, p. 332; p. 333.
[534] Alderman, *The Power*, p. 335.

men] because it doesn't fit with what they already think'.[535] Equipped with this understanding, he employs several strategies to combat post-truth history. First, he depends upon a 'consistent and relentless bombardment of facts'.[536] Armon states that his manuscript 'includes some illustrations of archaeological finds that [he] hope[s] are suggestive', notes that he possesses 'images of *hundreds* of partial or full statues of male soldiers', and asserts that he included a 'huge raft of archaeological evidence […] in [his] previous history books' that proves that women have not always had skeins.[537] Given that Armon foregrounds historical truths throughout his letters, he makes them unavoidable. Purveyors of post-truth tend to ignore inconvenient truths as they put forward their own accounts; by persistently expressing those inconvenient truths, Armon subverts the rules of the post-truth game and forces the story-world Alderman to confront the truths she would rather overlook, thus beginning to combat the post-truth history that dominates his world.

Post-truth, argues Ignas Kalpokas, 'is exactly about narratives—escapist fictions that allow people to suddenly feel good about themselves and the world in which they live', and so when Armon employs a narrative structure to his rebuttal of post-truth history, he adopts a strategy central to post-truth discourse.[538] By responding to the dominant post-truth history with not 'another dry volume of history' but a 'sort of "novelization"' of the past, Armon combats the strategy that makes post-truth so persuasive precisely by using it. Armon explains in the Critical Endotext that by using prose fiction to convey historical information, he hopes to counteract the fact that 'no general reader can be bothered to wade through endless mounds of evidence' and the tendency for his 'audiences' eyes [to] go blank as [he tries] to explain [his] research'.[539] In other words, Armon attempts to combat the dominant post-truth history by meeting

[535] Alderman, *The Power*, p. 334.
[536] Marius Gudonis and Benjamin T. Jones, 'Essence of Post-Truth History and Ways to Respond' in *History in a Post-Truth World: Theory and Praxis*, ed. by Marius Gudonis and Benjamin T. Jones (New York: Routledge, 2021), chap. 16, VitalSource ebook.
[537] Alderman, *The Power*, p. ix; p. 334; p. 335.
[538] Kalpokas, *A Political Theory of Post-Truth*, p. 16; Alderman, *The Power*, p. ix.
[539] Alderman, *The Power*, p. ix.

his audience where they are: rather than expecting them to care about 'the technicalities of dating finds and strata comparison', he communicates historical information by dressing it up as a story, something that is altogether more engaging and accessible, so that he may reach a wider audience and subsequently convince them of the historical truth that his world was formerly patriarchal.[540]

Armon also 'couch[es] [his] own factual arguments in similar emotional terms' to post-truth rhetoric whilst attempting to combat post-truth history.[541] This is glimpsed when Armon uses the emphatic adjective 'obliterated' to describe the remains of archaeological evidence that supports his argument that there were solder-men in the pre-Cataclysm era.[542] Armon's use of emotional terms comes across more strongly when he writes about '[s]ome of the worst excesses against men', including the historical practice of 'cull[ing] nine in ten boy babies'.[543] When Armon writes '[f]uck, there are still places today where boy babies are routinely aborted, or have their dicks "curbed"', his expletives convey the outrage directed at the fictional Alderman, which ultimately sees him trying to persuade her that 'it's not "natural" to us to live like this' and that women must not have always been dominant.[544] When the fictional Alderman writes that she 'feel[s] instinctively […] that a world run by men would be more kind', she reveals that emotional appeal is the quality she prioritises when determining which accounts to accept as true.[545] As such, the emotional inflection of Armon's rhetoric sees him communicate to his audience in a familiar and appealing way, thus increasing the likelihood of his argument steering them away from the dominant post-truth history of his time and the oppressive matriarchy that it justifies.

Whether or not Armon successfully persuades the story-world Alderman that his historical account is true is something that the real-world Alderman leaves unresolved by the end of *The Power*'s Critical Endotext. In her letters, the story-world Alderman first

[540] Alderman, *The Power*, p. ix.
[541] Gudonis and Jones, 'Essence of Post-Truth History and Ways to Respond', chap. 16.
[542] Alderman, *The Power*, p. 334.
[543] Alderman, *The Power*, p. 337.
[544] Alderman, *The Power*, p. 337; p. 338.
[545] Alderman, *The Power*, p. 333.

refutes the facts with which Armon bombards her, and then does not respond to them at all. Although she is full of praise for Armon's novelization of the past, writing that she 'like[d] [his] contortionist Mother Eve', and reassures him that she supports his book and 'want[s] to make sure it reaches the widest possible audience', the story-world Alderman in fact treats Armon's writing as cheap pornography, confessing that his presentation of 'gangs of men locking up women for sex [is something that] some of us have had fantasies' about.[546] As such, it appears that the fictional Alderman does not take seriously Armon's novel as a historical account. It is unclear also whether the emotional expression of Armon's argument has persuaded the story-world Alderman, but given that she responds to this with '[t]here's a lot to think about and discuss, and I think it's best if we meet to talk it over', the real-world Alderman implies that her story-world counterpart wishes to hear more about Armon's ideas, indicating that they may have taken hold and started to dismantle a post-truth history that has prevailed for five millennia.[547] Given that Armon's novel and letters appear to have succeeded where his four previous tomes of non-fiction had failed, *The Power*'s Critical Endotext creates the counterintuitive impression that using post-truth strategies to tell truthful historical accounts may in fact be key to combatting post-truth histories that, if left unchecked and allowed to proliferate, will come to warp how the past is known and understood.

Conclusion to Part Three

In this section, I have discussed how Atwood and Alderman endotextually dramatize historical experts combatting the post-truth condition of their respective story-worlds. Although Professor James Darcy Pieixoto employs what Marius Gudonis and Benjamin T. Jones would identify as strategies of post-truth history to belittle Offred the Handmaid and promote his own historical account in the 'Historical Notes', he constructs a more veracious historical account in 'The Thirteenth Symposium' because he acts as a conduit between the past and the present, not allowing his misogynistic ideology to interfere

[546] Alderman, *The Power*, p. 332; p. 338; p. 332.
[547] Alderman, *The Power*, p. 338.

with his narrativization of the past. Furthermore, by presenting the same academic constructing both post-truthful and veracious historical accounts, Atwood's novels suggest that experts can deliberately resist post-truth's temptations – they need only remain steadfast in their commitment to their professional obligations. In the latter part of this section, I discussed *The Power*'s Critical Endotext, in which Neil Adam Armon bombards his audience with facts and employs two post-truth strategies – an appeal to emotions and an engaging narrative structure – as he tells a truthful account of the past that challenges the post-truth history that has dominated his world. This mimetic strategy poses a moral dilemma, write Gudonis and Jones, who ask if '[b]y resorting to the tactics of post-truth, are we not legitimising it?'[548] A resolution to this dilemma remains outside of the scope of this analysis, although if we do indeed live in 'the Experience Age, whereby affective relations with the world increasingly dominate', as has been posited by Ignas Kalpokas, then perhaps the issue does not lie in legitimising post-truth, but in devising a way of making the truth more appealing to audiences who choose between competing truth claims based on the emotions or feelings they evoke.[549] Through entertaining this conundrum, *The Handmaid's Tale*'s, *The Testaments*', and *The Power*'s Critical Endotexts elicit bliss. As writerly texts, they inherently complicate the interpretive act by insisting that readers consider the relationship between the events of their counterpart main narratives and how these are later narrativized by historians endotextually. As metafiction, they demand that readers likewise reflect on the role experts have in retelling the past extratextually. Given that *The Testaments*' and *The Power*'s Critical Endotexts depict historians producing accounts that are not only truthful, but actively resist and undermine post-truth narratives, the bliss they evoke specifically relates to how they challenge the declining trust in experts upon which the intensified post-truth condition of the twenty-first century depends. Experts, they assert, ought not be viewed as the enemy – they are in fact uniquely positioned to offer a cure to post-truth's newfound pervasiveness and persuasiveness.

[548] Gudonis and Jones, 'Essence of Post-Truth History and Ways to Respond', chap. 16.
[549] Kalpokas, *A Political Theory of Post-Truth*, pp. 5-6.

Chapter Conclusion

The Iron Heel's, *The Hopkins Manuscript*'s, *Memoirs Found in a Bathtub*'s, *The Handmaid's Tale*'s, *The Power*'s, and *The Testaments*' Critical Endotexts reveal that literary dystopias possess a genre-wide concern about the fragility of history as a professional discipline. This is because they dramatize how 'historians, like everyone else, can misread, misremember, misinterpret, or misunderstand things' and thus create accidentally misleading historical accounts, or because they depict historians imprinting their nationalistic, political, or gendered biases onto their work, flouting a basic obligation of narrativist historiography and creating historical accounts that are intentionally misleading or post-truthful.[550] Given that the present is always to some extent understood through the past, and that the past is understood through historical experts, this is particularly problematic, for warping the past sees historians distort their present, perpetuate biases and inaccuracies, and abuse their reputation as arbiters of truth. Ultimately, the discipline of history depends on its experts possessing an unyielding commitment to truth, the desire to assemble as reasonably as possible the past via its fragmentary and disparate remains, and the ability to withhold potentially distorting ideologies from their work, thereby approaching 'historical truth asymptotically'.[551] Literary dystopias suggest that these three conditions are challenging to fully satisfy.

This is not to say that literary dystopias suggest that the claims made by historical experts ought to be universally dismissed, an insinuation that would display a degree of anti-intellectualism that characterises today's heightened state of post-truth. Instead, their Critical Endotexts problematise the relationship between power, writing, and history by offering nightmarish extrapolations of experts acting in bad faith that highlight the problem of correlating expertise with truthfulness. Rather than blindly accept experts' claims because of their ostensible authority, *The Iron Heel*'s, *The Hopkins*

[550] Arnold, *History: A Very Short Introduction*, p. 13.
[551] Jay, 'Historical Truth and the Truthfulness of Historians', p. 256.

Manuscript's, *Memoirs Found in a Bathtub*'s, *The Handmaid's Tale*'s, *The Power*'s, and *The Testaments*' Critical Endotexts encourage their real readers to critically engage with those claims, questioning how and why they have been made and which evidence they draw upon, dismiss, or outright ignore. This process doubly protects readers against post-truth, for it not only builds their critical thinking skills, it forces them to read *slowly*, a slowness that flies in the face of the 'haphazard speed' post-truth demands and brings readers to 'carefully consider how narratives are fabricated, produced, disseminated, and consumed'.[552] Furthermore, some literary dystopias do in fact endotextually depict historians producing accounts of the past that are as truthful as is reasonably possible: Pieixoto withholds his misogynistic views and behaves as a conduit between the past and the present in 'The Thirteenth Symposium', and Neil Adam Armon uses strategies typical of post-truth history to produce a veracious historical account that combats the misleading narrative that has dominated *The Power*'s future story-world. As such, literary dystopias provide examples of how historical experts ought to behave if they wish to disseminate truthful historical accounts, further suggesting that the genre possesses a concern about the fragility of history as a professional discipline. If post-truth's heightened prevalence is in part caused by historical experts possessing a vested interest in disseminating intentionally misleading or outright post-truthful accounts of the past, then *The Power* and *The Testaments* suggest that other historians should combat this by maintaining a vested interest in the truth, even if this means confronting things that they or their peers may find uncomfortable to acknowledge. With this in place, the past may be more clearly understood, its lessons more easily learned, and its errors more successfully avoided.

Historians draw upon evidence – real, distorted, or fabricated – regardless of whether they produce accounts of the past that are post-truthful, intentionally misleading, or accidentally misleading. The literary dystopias discussed in this chapter suggest that this evidence can take various forms. Although found manuscripts are the

[552] Schaberg, *The Work of Literature in an Age of Post-Truth*, p. 26; p. 143.

most common type of evidence used by future historians in these novels, audio recordings (as seen *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Testaments*), archaeological findings (as seen in *The Power*'s Parallel Endotexts and in *The Hopkins Manuscript*), and articles, speeches, and newspaper clippings (as seen in *The Iron Heel*) also inform their narrativizations of their story-world pasts. It is this final originator of evidence – newspaper clippings, and the institution it represents, i.e. the press – that will be examined in the next chapter to continue my demonstration that anxieties relating to what we might today call post-truth have long been present throughout the dystopian tradition.

Chapter Three: Fake News, the Fourth Estate, and Capitalistic Pressures

Chapter Introduction

Newspapers, magazines, and journalists – collectively the Fourth Estate – occupy a fraught position within the intensified post-truth condition of the twenty-first century. On one hand, journalists are regarded as professional arbiters of truth, for it 'is their *literal job* to corroborate facts and relay what they know to be true, by virtue of corroborating those facts', a truth-uncovering process to which 'editors, fact-checkers, and lawyers […] provide additional layers of verification', whereas on the other hand, newly heightened levels of post-truth are characterised by how 'people trust the press – and increasingly in the premise of an objective press – less than they once did'.[553] This mistrust is rooted in how the Fourth Estate is frequently accused of *being* or *being responsible for* so-called "fake news". Donald Trump's presidency was characterised by his use of the term. He frequently took to Twitter to 'call out so-called fake news media for either reporting inaccurately, flat out lying or falling [sic] to recognize the greatness of the results he claim[ed] to achieve'.[554] Similarly, the French President Emmanuel Macron asserted in 2018 that '[w]e are going to develop our legal means of protecting democracy against fake news', thereby framing fake news as being antithetical to democratic proceedings.[555] Subsequently, the Fourth Estate has been deemed a 'villain that has featured prominently in post-truth worlds' because of its alleged production of fake news, an assumption that has come to underpin post-truth's newfound prevalence and persuasiveness.[556]

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[553] Spiers, 'Arbiters of Truth'; Spiers, 'Arbiters of Truth'; Melissa Zimdars, 'Introduction' in *Fake News: Understanding Media and Misinformation in the Digital Age*, ed. by Melissa Zimdars and Kembrew McLeod (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2020), pp. 1-11 (p. 5).
[554] Farkas and Schou, *Post-Truth, Fake News and Democracy*, p. 74.
[555] Macron quoted in James McAuley, 'France weighs a law to rein in "fake news," raising fears for freedom of speech', *The Washington Post*, 10 January 2018 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/france-weighs-a-law-to-rein-in-fake-news-raising-fears-for-freedom-of-speech/2018/01/10/78256962-f558-11e7-9af7-a50bc3300042_story.html> [accessed 13 February 2023].
[556] Farkas and Schou, *Post-Truth, Fake News and Democracy*, p. 58.

Various scholars and cultural commentators alike have offered definitions for "fake news". Hunt Allcott and Matthew Gentzkow write that fake news is 'news articles that are intentionally and verifiably false, and could mislead readers', although Johan Farkas and Jannick Schou have questioned if 'the production of fake news [has] to be an intentional act'.[557] The notion of falsity occurs in many proposed definitions for fake news; Dorje C. Brody and David M. Meier describe it as 'information that is inconsistent with factual reality', whereas Farkas and Schou note that it overlaps conceptually with 'deception, manipulation, propaganda, falsification, misinformation, disinformation, bias and hoax'.[558] Farkas and Schou are not alone in highlighting the relevance of bias to definitions of fake news, for media scholar Brian McNair notes that the term 'fake news' is a 'discourse about journalistic bias as much as it is about the fabrication of facts', although he goes to great pains to explain that perceived bias alone is not enough to frame something as fake news, given that 'everyone thinks that journalism they disagree with is biased'.[559] Bowman and Cohen propose an alternative defining characteristic for fake news, arguing that it is misleadingly affective, thus capitalizing on how 'people are more drawn to news and information if it packs an emotional punch', whereas Edson C. Tandoc Jr., Zheng Wei Lim and Richard Ling claim that advertising may be considered a form of fake news in instances where it 'takes advantage of the news format […] to confer more legitimacy to its one-sided claims'.[560] Despite the differences in their definitions for fake news, critics tend to broadly align with regards to its purpose. McNair asserts that fake news is '[i]ntentional disinformation […] for political and/or commercial purposes, presented as real news', which is echoed by Vincent F. Hendricks and Camilla

[557] Hunt Allcott and Matthew Gentzkow, 'Social Media and Fake News in the 2016 Election', *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 31.2 (2017), 211-236 (p. 213); Farkas and Schou, *Post-Truth, Fake News and Democracy*, p. 54.
[558] Dorje C. Brody and David M. Meier, 'How to model fake news', *Arxiv*, (2023), 1-17 (p. 2); Farkas and Schou, *Post-Truth, Fake News and Democracy*, p. 54.
[559] Brian McNair, *Fake News: Falsehood, Fabrication and Fantasy in Journalism* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021), p. 25; p. 37.
[560] Nicholas David Bowman and Elizabeth Cohen, 'Mental Shortcuts, Emotion, and Social Rewards: The Challenges of Detecting and Resisting Fake News' in *Fake News: Understanding Media and Misinformation in the Digital Age*, ed. by Melissa Zimdars and Kembrew McLeod (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2020), pp. 223-233 (p. 225); Edson C. Tandoc Jr., Zheng Wei Lim, and Richard Ling, 'Defining "Fake News": A typology of scholarly definitions', *Digital Journalism*, 6.2 (2018), 137-153 (p. 146).

Mehlsen, who argue that fake news may be used to 'drive political polarization forward and at the same time drive the lucrative business of advertisement sales'.[561] Financial implications in particular reoccur in several definitions for fake news; Elle Hunt, commentator for *The Guardian*, writes that its deception is made in the name of 'maximis[ing] traffic and profit'; *Buzzfeed* editor Craig Silverman claims that it is 'created for financial gain'; and Melissa Zimdars avers that purveyors of fake news are primarily concerned with 'generating profit through the social media circulation of false information mimicking the style of contemporary news'.[562]

As such, this chapter will take the term "fake news" to mean verifiably false news – of which biased reportage, misleading sensationalism, and native advertising may be indicative – that assumes the guise of legitimate news so that it may mislead readers in the name of political or commercial gain. Although not all newspapers and magazines may produce fake news, the fact that *some* publications *might* brings the Fourth Estate's role as an arbiter of truth into question, for the deceptiveness of fake news is antithetical to the obligation towards truthfulness that arbiters of truth are expected to uphold. As will be discussed below, fake news is closely related to the concept of post-truth, for through its generation of information abundance, denial of singularly objective truths, and relegation of facts and expert opinion to a secondary importance relative to appeals to emotions and personal beliefs, it further entrenches post-truth's pervasiveness today.

Drawing from the above conceptualisation, this chapter examines how Rose Macaulay's *What Not* (1918), Karel Čapek's *War With the Newts* (1936/1937), Johanna Sinisalo's *The Core of the Sun* (2013/2016), and Omar El Akkad's *American War* (2017) offer dystopian dramatizations of print media publications entrenching post-truth's pervasiveness by producing fake news. This subsequently demonstrates that anxieties

[561] McNair, *Fake News: Falsehood, Fabrication and Fantasy in Journalism*, p. 38; Hendricks and Mehlsen, *The Ministry of Truth*, p. 52.
[562] Elle Hunt, 'What is fake news? How to spot it and what you can do to stop it', *The Guardian*, 17 December 2016 <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2016/dec/18/what-is-fake-news-pizzagate> [accessed 13 February 2023]; Craig Silverman, 'What exactly is fake news?', *The Fake Newsletter*, 26 February 2017 <https://us2.campaign-archive.com/?u=657b595bbd3c63e045787f019&id=e0b2b9eaf0&e=> [accessed 13 February 2023]; Zimdars, 'Introduction', p. 2.

around the Fourth Estate's role as an arbiter of truth and shaper of knowledge have long appeared throughout the dystopian genre. These anxieties particularly manifest in the endotexts of Macaulay's, Čapek's, Sinisalo's, and El Akkad's novels, which broadly assume the form of newspaper and magazine extracts. In *What Not*, newspapers variously promote, support, or challenge the eugenicist measures enforced by the British government's 'Ministry of Brains' to increase the nation's average intelligence and hopefully prevent a second Great War.[563] Co-present within the main narrative as Read Endotexts, the print media's response to the government's eugenicist policies manifest in its advertisements, articles, and headlines. Newspapers likewise abound in Čapek's endotextually rich *War With the Newts*, in which a species of intelligent newt is discovered, exploited, and commodified, culminating in a Newt uprising and the novel's eponymous war. Together with magazine articles, Čapek employs fictional headlines and newspaper articles co-present as Read Endotexts to chronicle the evolving place of Newts within – and outside of – human society. Using Read Endotexts allows both Macaulay and Čapek to dramatize the ease with which the Fourth Estate's truth claims may catalyse the post-truth condition of their respective story-worlds. Rather than contain diegetic newspapers, Sinisalo's *The Core of the Sun* emphasises the role of magazines in disseminating truth claims, for excerpts of the Eusistocratic Republic of Finland's '*Femigirl*' magazine are interspersed alongside the main narrative as Parallel Endotexts.[564] The magazine functions as a form of social conditioning, for it reinforces the strict gender roles, restricted reproductive rights, and eugenicist policies enacted by the Finnish eusistocracy under the façade of wellness, the ubiquity of which the Parallel Endotexts mirror through their repeated interruption of *The Core of the Sun*'s main narrative. El Akkad uses Parallel Endotexts comprising interviews, memoirs, and – most relevantly – journalistic accounts to problematise how conflicts are narrativized and understood in *American War*. This effect is particularly evoked by the interplay between the novel's endotexts and main narrative, for the inconsistencies, incongruences, and

[563] Rose Macaulay, *What Not* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2022), p. 4.
[564] Johanna Sinisalo, *The Core of the Sun*, trans. by Lola Rogers (London: Grove Press, 2016), p. 39.

disagreements between the endotextual accounts of the novel's titular civil war and the main narrative's version of the same events create the impression that the realities of war are never as straightforward as reportage suggests.

The novels dramatize three characteristics of fake news in particular: biased reportage, sensationalism, and native advertising, each of which will be discussed in turn. *What Not* and *American War* endotextually portray biased reportage in response to the Ministry of Brains' eugenicist measures and the near-future American civil war, respectively. Such dramatizations of biased reportage, I will argue, suggest that fake news doubly catalyses the post-truth condition, for it not only prioritises personal belief over facts; it also denies that there are singularly objective factual truths in a postmodern fashion, as discussed in the thesis introduction. Together with *War With the Newts*, *American War* also foregrounds the sensationalist quality of fake news, for the prominence of misleadingly affective news stories in these novels evokes the '[i]f it bleeds, it leads' adage that informs much of the real-world Fourth Estate.[565] Such sensationalism, I will argue, sees print media publications contribute to their respective story-world's post-truth conditions by valuing emotional appeal over veracity. Last, *The Core of the Sun* brings to attention the relationship between the Fourth Estate and advertising by depicting an instance of native advertising in its *Femigirl* magazine. This dramatizes how purveyors of fake news may adopt the guise of credible print media publications for a purpose 'other than sound journalism and informing the public': bringing in money and – in the context of the Eusistocratic Republic of Finland – perpetuating institutionally-desired beliefs, thus exhibiting a truth-indifference that is characteristic of the post-truth condition.[566] In concluding, I will argue that although these novels dramatize print media publications' production of fake news, they do not frame the Fourth Estate as a post-truth villain, but rather frame it as a victim of the capitalistic pressures upon which it is predicated, thus challenging a basic assumption

[565] Alan Rusbridger, *News and How to Use It: What to believe in a Fake News world* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2020), p. 53.
[566] Hendricks and Mehlsen, *The Ministry of Truth*, p. 42.

that underpins the intensified post-truth condition of the twenty-first century in a blissful manoeuvre that seeks to restore the faith readers place in the newspapers, magazines, and journalists.

Part One: Biased Reportage in *What Not* and *American War*

Rose Macaulay anticipates in *What Not* how the Fourth Estate, through its dissemination of biased reportage, contributes to post-truth's pervasiveness today. This is chiefly illustrated by print media publications' responses to the Ministry of Brains' introduction of its 'Mind Training Course', a programme designed to supplement the broadly eugenicist measures made by the British government to improve the overall intelligence of the nation.[567] Among the publications that support the cause 'in their varying degrees and characteristic voices' are women's periodicals, whose articles instruct women to '[t]ake care of your mind and your complexion will take care of itself', the *Cambridge Magazine*, which publishes an article advocating for increasing the nation's intelligence by 'dispos[ing], firmly but not kindly, of the old and the middle-aged, and to let the young have their day', and *The Times*, which calls upon the government to 'act, and act quickly' to make the Mind Training Course compulsory.[568] Conversely, the *New Witness* rejects the Mind Training Course on the grounds that it is antithetical to Englishness, asserting that 'it was the fine old Christian Gentile quality of stupidity which had made Old England what it was', whereas the *Herald* writes that '[i]f the Government tries this on [i.e. forcing through the Mind Training Course], let it look to itself', a snide rebuttal that implies that the *Herald*'s editors believe that the Ministry of Brains' measures are idiotic.[569] Here, the post-truth condition of *What Not*'s story-world is not intensified because the biased reportage is underscored by a degree of truth indifference, but rather because it evokes an intrinsic postmodern quality of post-truth, which asserts that 'we should value, and allow a voice to, all opinions'.[570] Through using Read Endotexts that

[567] Macaulay, *What Not*, p. 60.
[568] Macaulay, *What Not*, p. 62; p. 61; p. 62; p. 64.
[569] Macaulay, *What Not*, p. 62; p. 64.
[570] Wight, 'Post-Truth, Postmodernism and Alternative Facts', p. 25.

dramatize how competing truth claims, each of which posses a semblance of truthfulness given their origins in the Fourth Estate, are made, Macaulay anticipates how the Fourth Estate may, through 'focusing on perspectives, discourses, and alternative ways of reading the world', generate '[a]n environment of information overload [that] makes it harder to secure a dominant narrative'.[571] In other words, the Fourth Estate's various responses to the Mind Training Course collectively exhibit a postmodern destabilisation of the notion of objective truth that complicates how its audiences may 'decide what is true and what is not', ultimately paving the way for emotional appeal and personal belief to supersede facts and expert opinion.[572] Macaulay herself was expressly concerned with the stability of truth. Following 'direct professional experience of Britain's secret propaganda operation during the First World War', she remarked in *What Not*'s paratextual 'Apology' that truth 'seems to be one of the things […] which has to be sacrificed on the altar of this all-taking war', an anxiety that her endotextual dramatization of print media bias reflects.[573] *What Not* therefore demonstrates that anxieties regarding the Fourth Estate's reputation as an arbiter of truth predates today's conceptions of fake news and post-truth, given that its longstanding dissemination of biased reportage sees it regard objective truth as a sacrificial lamb.

Whereas Macaulay uses Read Endotexts to dramatize how the production of competing truth claims may see the Fourth Estate exacerbate her story-world's post-truth condition, El Akkad instead opts to use Parallel Endotexts to evince how bias permeates reportage, resulting in a widespread prioritisation of personal beliefs over facts that likewise contributes to post-truth's ascendancy. Together with the main narrative, two Parallel Endotext illustrate this point: 'Witness to Disunion: Early

[571] Adrian Wesołowski, 'Pinkersonian Post-Truth: History, Ideology, and Postmodernism' in *History in a Post-Truth World: Theory and Praxis*, ed. by Marius Gudonis and Benjamin T. Jones (New York: Routledge, 2021), chap. 5, VitalSource ebook; Mark Andrejevic, 'The Political Function of Fake News' in *Fake News: Understanding Media and Misinformation in the Digital Age*, ed. by Melissa Zimdars and Kembrew McLeod (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2020), pp. 19-28 (p. 22).
[572] Mark Brewin, '"The Intel on This Wasn't 100 Percent": Fake news and Concerns over the Modern Democratic Project' in *Fake News: Understanding Media and Misinformation in the Digital Age*, ed. by Melissa Zimdars and Kembrew McLeod (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2020), pp. 283-292 (p. 285).
[573] James Purdon, 'Rose Macaulay and Propaganda', *Modernist Cultures*, 16.4 (2021), 449-468 (p. 449); Macaulay, *What Not*, p. xxxi.

Journalistic Accounts of the Second Civil War' and 'These the Calls of our Blood: Dispatches from the Rebel South'.[574] Crucially, these endotexts originate from opposing sides of the eponymous civil war. 'Witness to Disunion' comprises an article that runs with the headline 'FIRST SHOTS OF CIVIL WAR' published in March 2074 by *The Charleston Feed*, and as such originates from within 'The Free Southern State', a secessionist superstate consisting of Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina whose people are colloquially known as 'Reds'.[575] Conversely, 'These the Calls of our Blood' is implicitly produced by a writer in 'Blue' territory – i.e., what is left of the United States – because of the connotations of dissidence and political nonconformity evident in its description of the southern states as the 'Rebel South'.[576]

As its headline indicates, the article found in 'Witness to Disunion' is primarily concerned with how and why the Red versus Blue civil war began, which its subheading asserts in typically clipped language was caused by an event in which 'At Least 59 [were] Killed, [and] More Than 200 [were] Injured as [the] Fort Jackson Protests Erupt in Bloodshed'.[577] As the Parallel Endotext goes on to reveal, the article focuses on how Red citizens protesting against the Sustainable Future Act outside the Fort Jackson military base in March 2074 were shot and killed by a cadre of Blue Marines stationed there, which the article uses to pin the blame of the civil war on the Blues. Quoting a Red governor, the article propagates the claim that the killings marked 'a massacre of South Carolinians, a massacre of Southerners, and a massacre of all who dare raise their voice in protest' against the Sustainable Future Act.[578] It paraphrases a statement made by the Free Southern State's Council, in which governors 'called the killings "outright cold-blooded murder" and an act of tyranny for which federal [i.e., Blue] president Martin Henley himself should stand trial'.[579] Moreover, the article justifies the resultant 'violence [that] quickly erupted' throughout South Carolina when it quotes a

[574] Omar El Akkad, *American War* (London: Picador 2017), p. 47; p. 32.
[575] El Akkad, *American War*, p. 47.
[576] El Akkad, *American War*, p. 32.
[577] El Akkad, *American War*, p. 47.
[578] El Akkad, *American War*, p. 47.
[579] El Akkad, *American War*, pp. 48-49.

representative of a South Carolina citizens' group who claims that the backlash – which included burning Northern-headquartered businesses and murdering alleged Blue spies – was inspired by 'avenging [their] dead'.[580] Subsequently, it is apparent that 'Witness to Disunion' exhibits a strong anti-Blue (and, given the binary nature of the civil war, pro-Red) bias, for by one-sidedly amplifying voices that frame the killings as a tyrannical massacre, it villainises the Blues, whereas its neutral depiction of Red violence sees it exercise double standards – murder is unacceptable when committed by Blues, but acceptable when undertaken by Reds in the name of revenge. That 'Witness to Disunion' uses an anti-Blue bias to conceptualise the Fort Jackson deaths as the Blue government's 'first assault in an all-out war on the opposition states' – and therefore the beginning of the civil war – should come as no surprise, given that the article originates from within Red territory and thus aligns with a Red ideology.[581] Although unsubtle, El Akkad's Parallel Endotext is beneficial precisely because of its lack of subtlety, for through its depiction of the Fourth Estate one-sidedly amplifying certain voices, exercising double standards, and implicitly aligning with regional belief, 'Witness to Disunion' lays bare the ways in which bias may infect and inflect how news events are reported on.

Moreover, the cause for the civil war put forward by 'Witness to Disunion' is contradicted by 'These the Calls of our Blood'. This Parallel Endotext centres on the figure of Julia Templestowe, 'the rebel South's first martyr' who assassinates Daniel Ki, the American president, in an act of suicide bombing in December 2073 – months before the Fort Jackson deaths.[582] Although Templestowe's assassination of President Ki – a fact which 'Witness to Disunion' conveniently overlooks – is acknowledged in *American War*'s main narrative and elsewhere in its Parallel Endotexts, 'These the Calls of our Blood' particularly challenges 'Witness to Disunion' through its narrativization of Templestowe's

[580] El Akkad, *American War*, p. 49.
[581] El Akkad, *American War*, p. 47.
[582] El Akkad, *American War*, p. 32.

recruitment by Red rebels.[583] The endotext reveals how, shortly after she was discharged from hospital following a suicide attempt, Red rebels took advantage of Templestowe being 'drunk and alone once again with the terrible illness in her brain', promised her that people would 'remember [her] forever [and] build cities in [her] name', and 'outfitted her for death' by concealing a dirty bomb within the cavity of a false pregnancy.[584] Subsequently, the endotext portrays the Red rebels, the true instigators of Ki's assassination, in a predatory light, an effect particularly achieved by verb constructions such as 'they drove Julia to an abandoned farmhouse', which suggest that the Red rebels objectified Julia and denied her her autonomy as they radicalised her.[585] As mentioned above, 'These the Calls of Our Blood' is implicitly a Blue-originating text, and so it is entirely plausible that its negative depiction of Reds is biased, thus mirroring 'Witness to Disunion'. However, this interpretation is tempered by *American War*'s main narrative, in which protagonist Sarat Chestnut – who originates from neutral 'Purple' territory but is displaced in Red territory following her father's death – is similarly radicalised against the Blues by Albert Gaines, an opportunistic ideologue who teaches her '[a]bout all the things [the Blues have] done to us over the years. All the times they've put what's good for them ahead of what's good for us', which brings Sarat to 'loathe the enemy nation beyond the Tennessee line'.[586] Subsequently, the implicitly anti-Red account put forward by 'These the Calls of our Blood' appears plausible, at least to the extent that they bear some responsibility for the commencement of the civil war through their insidious radicalisation of vulnerable young women.

That an alternative version of events to those put forward by 'Witness to Disunion' is available in documentary evidence and – given its acknowledgement in *American War*'s main narrative – is seemingly common knowledge in *American War*'s

[583] See El Akkad, *American War*, p. 22, in which a Parallel Endotext named 'Federal Syllabus Guidelines – History, Module Eight: The Second Civil War' lists 'the assassination of President Ki by secessionist suicide Julia Templestowe in Jackson, Mississippi, in December of 2073', and El Akkad, *American War*, p. 101, in which Sarat Chestnut, the main narrative's protagonist, inspects 'McCoy Auditorium – the place where Julia Templestowe spit in the Northerners' eyes all those years ago' drawn on the back of a piece of currency.
[584] El Akkad, *American War*, p. 32.
[585] El Akkad, *American War*, p. 32.
[586] El Akkad, *American War*, p. 134; p. 154.

story-world suggests that the newspaper article present in 'Witness to Disunion' is not only biased, but that it is intentionally so. Rather than acknowledge that tensions were first exacerbated by Red rebels orchestrating the assassination of the Blue president, the article entirely blames the Blues for commencing the civil war. In this sense, El Akkad's presentation of biased reportage differs from that offered by Macaulay, for whereas bias sees the Fourth Estate catalyse the post-truth condition by generating information abundance in *What Not*, *American War* dramatizes the Fourth Estate prioritising an appeal to personal belief – i.e. by tying into the anti-Blue ideology native to its Red origins – over its obligation to remain committed to truthfulness and produce factual reportage, an approach that is characteristic of so-called fake news and the intensified post-truth condition of the twenty-first century. As a professional journalist, El Akkad has shown an acute awareness of issues surrounding the press, bias, truth, and fake news. Although he champions journalism as a 'very rational and fact-based' discipline that 'doesn't really tell you what to think, it tells you what to think about', this does not translate into *American War*, as 'Witness to Disunion' attests.[587] Instead, El Akkad's dramatization of biased reportage sees him draw upon the 'incredibly polarised world we live in' and his personal fears around fake news, which he deems doubly terrifying because it indicates 'this shift to where people […] have started to have a serious problem differentiating between the truth and what they would like to be true' and, given the Trump administration's frequent lambasting of the Fourth Estate, acts as a 'precursor for whatever is coming next'.[588] The interplay between *American War*'s Parallel Endotexts and main narrative suggest that, for El Akkad, what comes next is not a world in which the Fourth Estate is uniformly vilified, but one in which it abandons its

[587] El Akkad quoted in Rachel Crawford, 'Interview: "American War" author Omar El Akkad – Literature as "weaponized empathy"', *Rochester City Newspaper*, 19 March 2019 <https://www.rochestercitynewspaper.com/rochester/interview-american-war-author-omar-el-akkad/Content?oid=9837840> [accessed 31 January 2023].

[588] El Akkad quoted in Laura Miller, 'American War by Omar El Akkad review – terrorism in a future US', *The Guardian*, 4 Oct 2017 <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/oct/04/american-war-omar-el-akkad-review> [accessed 31 January 2023]; Book Break, *Omar El Akkad on Changing Attitudes to the News*, online video recording, YouTube, 10 July 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XnMzhxvekLQ> [accessed 22 February 2023].

commitment to factualness and joins the masses in disseminating claims that its writers, editors, and owners wish to be true.

'[W]e all', write Bowman and Cohen, 'possess a confirmation bias that tends to make us less critical of and more likely to believe news and information that support or confirms our preexisting [sic] opinions and beliefs'.[589] For the Fourth Estate, this means that despite the commonplace accusations of print media bias, audiences lap up reportage that aligns with their views and buy the newspapers that corroborate with them.[590] Subsequently, biased reportage is an inherently capitalistic aspect of the Fourth Estate: audiences buy what they think will confirm their opinions, and so the press may be inclined to publish reportage that it predicts will appeal to audiences and therefore generate revenue. Such capitalistic considerations are implicitly the cause of such biased reportage in *What Not* and *American War*. Kate Macdonald notes that *What Not* was written at a time in which 'British journalism changed radically […], with a population growing in literacy demanding more and more newspapers to read', which brought with it the promise of – and pressure of securing – greater profits for the press.[591] Macaulay reflects this in her story-world, for the sheer quantity of print media publications it contains evinces the post-war demand for newspapers, whereas the diversity of the viewpoints they express – which divide along the lines of gender, faith, and politics – suggest that print media publications appeal to increasingly specific audiences as they vie for attention and a slice of the profits that are to be made. A similar case is apparent in *American War*. As discussed above, El Akkad's *The Charleston Feed* originates from Red territory and exhibits a strong pro-Red bias, a necessity for its continued existence due to the intensely divided politics of El Akkad's story-world – a pro-Blue newspaper would not survive long in the Free Southern State. Together, *What Not* and *American War* therefore present dystopian visions in which they imply that print media bias is a

[589] Bowman and Cohen, 'Mental Shortcuts, Emotion, and Social Rewards: The Challenges of Detecting and Resisting Fake News', p. 224.
[590] Rusbridger, *News and How to Use It: What to believe in a Fake News world*, p. 8.
[591] Kate Macdonald, 'Rose Macaulay's Potterism', *Kate Macdonald*, 8 January 2015 <https://katemacdonald.net/2015/01/08/rose-macaulays-potterism/> [accessed 1 February 2023].

capitalistic problem that has been exacerbated by audiences' reading habits, an implication which begins to soften the accusations made against the Fourth Estate that underpin post-truth's newfound prevalence and persuasiveness.

Part Two: Sensationalism and Affect in *War With the Newts*

American War's 'Witness to Disunion' likewise possesses a second characteristic of fake news, for the newspaper article it contains is misleadingly affective. This impression is particularly evoked by the article's characterisation of the Red murders as a 'massacre', given that it connotes a degree of ruthless intentionality and therefore portrays the Blue soldiers as vicious, wicked monsters who ought to be detested, while simultaneously evoking sympathy for the Red protestors, who are painted as innocent victims.[592] This impression is contradicted elsewhere in *American War*. Although immediately dismissive of their account, the Parallel Endotext itself ostensibly quotes from an interview with an anonymised Blue soldier who claims that 'at least one of the protesters […] fired a pistol', which triggered the ensuing disarray.[593] Together with a comment made in the future history frame narrative, in which historian Benjamin Chestnut – Sarat's nephew – observes that his contemporaries have questioned 'whether the Massacre at Such-and-Such really was as bad as the Southern propagandists claim', El Akkad brings into doubt not only the authenticity of the *narrative* put forward in 'Witness to Disunion', but the legitimacy of the *emotional response* its sensationalism generates.[594]

Here, *American War* recalls *War With the Newts*, in which Karel Čapek likewise variously dramatizes the Fourth Estate using misleadingly affective sensationalism in its reportage. In particular, El Akkad's Parallel Endotext resembles a Read Endotext of Čapek's titled 'French Cruiser Torpedoed by Newts'. Taken from the final third of Čapek's main narrative, this Read Endotext, which takes the form of a newspaper article, encapsulates the mounting tensions between man and Newt that ultimately lead to the

[592] El Akkad, *American War*, p. 47.
[593] El Akkad, *American War*, p. 48.
[594] El Akkad, *American War*, p. 4.

novel's eponymous war. It centres on the sinking of the *Jules Flambeau* – a French naval vessel – on the coast of Normandy after the ostensible detonation of an explosive. As with the Blues in El Akkad's endotext, the Newts are vilified in 'French Cruiser Torpedoed by Newts': they are blamed for 'kill[ing] French farmers and innocent children at play', and are described as 'sea monsters' and the 'scum of the sea'.[595] Feelings of hatred, disgust, and fear are evoked by such vilification of the Newts, and a sense of terror is particularly generated by the article's subheading 'NEWTS REVOLT!', for the conflictful connotations of 'revolt', together with the subheading's capitalisation and exclamation mark, suggest that the Newts pose a genuine threat to mankind.[596] Although a piece of affective reportage, it is crucial that 'official reports […] stated that "the old cruiser *Jules Flambeau* […] ran on the rocks while sailing at night, and on account of an explosion in the boiler-room she sank"', for the contradiction between the official reports and Fourth Estate reportage reveal that 'French Cruiser Torpedoed by Newts' is in fact *misleadingly* affective, thus seeing the Read Endotext foreground the ease with which the Fourth Estate may disseminate deceptive truth claims.[597]

These conflict-adjacent dramatizations of deceptive sensationalism in the Fourth Estate see El Akkad and Čapek draw on a longstanding tradition of fake news. As noted by Cherian George, such strategies were employed by the American patriots during the American Revolution, as seen in how 'a 1770 skirmish in which British soldiers killed half a dozen civilians while under physical attack by a mob was transformed into the "Boston Massacre" by radical pamphleteers and lithographers to whip up public outrage'.[598] Indeed, the elicitation of negative emotions, Hendricks and Mehlsen note, 'animate and motivate us to express our opinions, click, share and care and maybe even act, depending on what is at stake', and so in the examples of the American Revolution and Čapek's and El Akkad's story-worlds, misleadingly affective reportage is implicitly used to

[595] Karel Čapek, *War With the Newts*, trans. by M. and R. Weatherall (London: Penguin, 2010), p. 258; p. 259.
[596] Čapek, *War With the Newts*, p. 258.
[597] Čapek, *War With the Newts*, p. 258.
[598] Cherian George, 'The Scourge of Disinformation-Assisted Hate Propaganda' in *Fake News: Understanding Media and Misinformation in the Digital Age*, ed. by Melissa Zimdars and Kembrew McLeod (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2020), pp. 145-152 (p. 147).

intensify division, justify hatred, and reinforce nationalistic – or, in the case of *War With the Newts*, speciesistic – ideologies.[599] As such, Čapek's and El Akkad's depictions of misleadingly affective reportage see them dramatize the Fourth Estate's role in the amplification of the post-truth condition in two senses: not only has the press embraced the post-truth mindset by prioritising emotional appeal and personal belief over objective impartiality, but, given the Fourth Estate's reputation as an arbiter of truth, its devaluation of truthfulness makes it permissible for its audiences to behave in a similar manner, thus devaluing the cultural relevance of truth at large.

Indeed, Čapek's literary dystopia dramatizes not only the Fourth Estate's responsibility for producing misleadingly affective sensationalism, but its reputation for doing so. Following a chance encounter with the Newts in which they showered a young woman with pearls, a group of characters conclude that they '*must* get [the story of their encounter] into the papers', and so begin to compose article headlines, co-present in their dialogue as Written Endotexts.[600] Suggestions that are too objective or scientific are dismissed as 'rot', whereas those that overemphasise the encounter's combative elements – i.e., 'Baseball Fred contends with monsters', which overstates the violent characteristics of the meeting – or centre on the younger characters – i.e., 'Tritons Sprinkle Pearls over White Lily', which refers to Lily Valley, the seventeen-year-old woman showered with pearls – are excitedly discussed.[601] As noted by Alan Rusbridger, '[n]ewspapers thrive on human interest', with stories focusing on 'attractive young wom[e]n' being the pinnacle of emotiveness, and so the final headline suggested by the characters, 'film star assaulted by sea monster! Sex appeal of a modern woman defeats ancient Lizards! Fossil reptiles prefer blondes', particularly highlights the misleadingly affective sensationalism apparent in the Fourth Estate: not only is the assertion that Lily is assaulted a misrepresentation of her encounter with the Newts, but her ostensible

[599] Hendricks and Mehlsen, *The Ministry of Truth*, p. 57.
[600] Čapek, *War With the Newts*, p. 90.
[601] Čapek, *War With the Newts*, p. 92; p. 91; p. 92.

allure is foregrounded in order to create a scandalous narrative.[602] Given that these headlines are first composed in characters' dialogue, labelling them as Written Endotexts may appear erroneous. Perhaps it may be more accurate to describe them as Hypothetical Written Endotexts – as endotexts that do not exist, but might. However, the main narrative later reveals that 'almost all of [the headlines] were made use of […] in hundreds and hundreds of the American and world journals, weeklies, and magazines', which thus justifies their being labelled Written Endotexts.[603] That the characters' sensationalist headlines are appropriated by the Fourth Estate is of crucial importance. It reinforces the impression that newspapers in Čapek's story-world prioritise emotional appeal and personal belief over objective impartiality, whereas it also suggests that the inhabitants of the story-world embrace the Fourth Estate's tendency to disseminate fake news. Subsequently, the post-truth condition of Čapek's story-world is amplified because a cycle of misleadingly affective sensationalism is constructed: the Fourth estate abandons its obligation to objectivity, which – as an arbiter of truth – permits its audiences to behave in a similar manner, whereas the audience's truth-indifference and willingness to scandalise and distort news events sees them fail to hold the press accountable and demand it remains committed to truthfulness, thus validating the Fourth Estate's own indifference to the truth. In other words, because neither the Fourth Estate nor its audiences care about objective reportage, the appeals to emotion evident in misleadingly sensationalist reportage run rampant, thus creating a story-world in which truth is on the decline and appeals to emotion are in the ascendancy.

Although it is apparent that Čapek endotextually dramatizes misleadingly affective Fourth Estate sensationalism in his literary dystopia, questions around the cause for such sensationalism and the cause for Čapek's dramatization of it remain. The answers to these questions are intertwined. Sensationalism, *War With the Newts* suggests, is an inherent characteristic of the Fourth Estate. Journalists, writes Brian

[602] Rusbridger, *News and How to Use It: What to believe in a Fake News world*, p. 110; Čapek, *War With the Newts*, p. 92.
[603] Čapek, *War With the Newts*, p. 94.

McNair, possess a strong 'desire for a scoop', which is precisely what Čapek dramatizes in his main narrative.[604] On a particularly slow news day, newspaper editors bemoan that 'in the whole paper there won't be Anything to Read', which prompts some of them to suggest fabricating news stories ('"If only something happened" […] "Or to have… some… interesting report"'), while also encouraging Valenta and Golombeck – two of the editors – to meet with Captain van Toch, who is rumoured to have recently fished for pearls out at sea.[605] In their meeting with van Toch, Valenta and Golombeck stress that stories of a Czech sea captain exploring distant lands will be 'very interesting for the people to read', and they repeatedly ask about his 'many adventures [,] shipwreck[s] [and] the natives [of far-off lands]', ignoring the business propositions the captain makes.[606] Valenta's and Golombeck's persistent line of questioning, together with their colleagues' willingness to invent news stories, suggests that the Fourth Estate desires scoops so as to avoid having its audiences 'crumple up the papers and peevishly declare that there's nothing in the papers […] and on the whole they're not worth reading, and they won't take them any longer', which would thus constitute a death of newspapers.[607] Sensationalism, *War With the Newts* suggests, is therefore essential to the continuation of the Fourth Estate. This impression is reinforced when Čapek depicts a strong opposition to non-sensationalist reportage in his story-world. This is evident in the example of Professor Uher, who drafts an article on the evolution and future of the Newts following his interaction with a hitherto overlooked Read Endotext, 'On Men-Lizards'.[608] Despite the 'intellectual enthusiasm of a pioneer' that characterises Uher's article, the editorial staff of the *Lidové Noviny* – a Prague daily – reject it outright, remarking, 'These [N]ewts again! I think *myself* that our readers are already tired to death of those [N]ewts. It's time to start on something fresh. And besides, such a learned discussion isn't suitable for the papers'.[609] Boredom, writes Rusbridger, 'is the

[604] McNair, *Fake News: Falsehood, Fabrication and Fantasy in Journalism*, p. 20.
[605] Čapek, *War With the Newts*, p. 22.
[606] Čapek, *War With the Newts*, p. 25; p. 28.
[607] Čapek, *War With the Newts*, p. 21.
[608] See Čapek, *War With the Newts*, pp. 125-126.
[609] Čapek, *War With the Newts*, p. 129.

editorial kiss of death', and in the case of Uher's article, this is doubly the case, for the *Lidové Noviny* editors reject it on the grounds of both its content and – given the reference to 'learned discussion' – its style.[610]

Between its dramatizations of the journalistic desire for a scoop and the compulsion not to bore audiences, *War With the Newts* argues that misleadingly affective Fourth Estate sensationalism is intentional, the rationale for which is the continued survival of the press. Not only is this implied by Čapek's depiction of the journalistic need for a scoop, but so too is it apparent in *Lidové Noviny*'s rejection of Uher's article on the grounds of boredom, for boredom 'means fewer sales, which means less revenue and the whiff of failure', and therefore the death of print publications.[611] Capitalistic pressures influence other instances of Fourth Estate sensationalism in Čapek's novel, for by looking to fabricate interesting news stories and employing misleadingly affective headlines, the story-world's newspaper editors employ tactics that '[sell] newspapers and [draw] eyeballs', given that 'people are more drawn to news and information if it packs an emotional punch'.[612] Subsequently, *War With the Newts* reframes the Fourth Estate's use of misleadingly affective sensationalism not as being the product of truth-indifference, a lack of care, or some other Machiavellian machination, but rather that its commitment to truthfulness is sacrificed as the Fourth Estate succumbs to the demands of capitalism. As much as it is an arbiter of truth, it is also unique in that it is one whose existence depends on the generation of revenue – sensationalism is simply a means of securing this. Paradoxically, then, the Fourth Estate's use of misleadingly affective sensationalism allows the arbiter of truth to continue existing in an economic sense, while also marking its death in a spiritual sense, for it reneges on the very thing it seeks to defend and – as the case of the headline composers in *War With the Newts* attests – encourages its audiences to likewise devalue truth.

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[610] Rusbridger, *News and How to Use It: What to believe in a Fake News world*, p. 12; Čapek, *War With the Newts*, p. 129.
[611] Rusbridger, *News and How to Use It: What to believe in a Fake News world*, p. 12.
[612] Rusbridger, *News and How to Use It: What to believe in a Fake News world*, p. 19; Bowman and Cohen, 'Mental Shortcuts, Emotion, and Social Rewards: The Challenges of Detecting and Resisting Fake News', p. 225.

If capitalistic pressures clarify the cause for misleadingly affective Fourth Estate sensationalism, a question still remains around Čapek's decision to dramatize it in his literary dystopia. By all accounts, he was devoted to the Czechoslovakian press, contributing literary and theatrical criticism to *Lidové Noviny* and 'filling in for vacationing staff members and writing just about any kind of column, feuilleton, editorial, or article' for the same paper, and so although he would have been intimately familiar with the Fourth Estate's potentially complex relationship with truth, it does not appear to have been something that particularly troubled him.[613] Instead, it is Čapek's anxieties about modernity that prompted his depiction of capitalistically-motivated Fourth Estate sensationalism. Karel Hlaváček interprets *War With the Newts* as Čapek's 'central work about the modern age', reading the Newts as a symbol for modernity that 'represent a rupture in the relationship between people and the world' and emphasise the role of capitalism in Čapek's contemporary world through their commodification and enslavement.[614] Following Hlaváček, *War With the Newts*' main narrative sees Čapek frame capitalistic pressures as something he 'considered dangerous about the modern age', for the Newts' economic indispensability – they borrow money, buy crops, and require the manufacture of all manner of goods – sees mankind continue to support and depend on them, even as the Newts destroy and alter global ecosystems in order to suit their requirements, a self-destructive choice explained by how '[i]nstitutions defined in terms of profit cannot abandon profit'.[615]

Hlaváček's reading of *War With the Newts*' main narrative suggests that it fulfils a generic characteristic of literary dystopias in that it sees Čapek focus 'on a different trend he finds threatening'.[616] So too is this true of the novel's endotexts, which Hlaváček overlooks. By endotextually dramatizing the Fourth Estate succumbing to

[613] Andrea Orzoff, '"The Literary Organ of Politics": Tomáš Masaryk and Political Journalism, 1925-1929', *Slavic Review*, 63.2 (2004), 275-300 (p. 287).
[614] Karel Hlaváček, 'A Literary Piece as a Sociological Work: The Concept of Modernity in Karel Čapek's *War With the Newts*', *Adeptus*, 17 (2021), 1-13 (p. 6).
[615] Hlaváček, 'A Literary Piece as a Sociological Work: The Concept of Modernity in Karel Čapek's *War With the Newts*', p. 6.
[616] Gottlieb, *Dystopian Fiction East and West: Universe of Terror and Trial*, p. 15.

capitalistic pressures and therefore deliberately producing misleadingly affective sensationalism, Čapek not only airs his concerns about modernity at large, but specifically expresses a fear that the conditions of his contemporary age may influence, inflect, and corrupt an industry in which he was so passionately involved. To be clear, Čapek may not have necessarily been concerned about the Fourth Estate's ability to publish misleading reportage – his own articles, which he would frequently publish under an array of different names, attest that he took no issue with deceiving his audiences as a journalist – but rather that he was anxious about capitalist pressures forcing it to do so in order to guarantee its continued existence. Herein lies the 'insistent "message"' of Čapek's dystopian parable.[617] Read today, it alerts readers to the possibility that the Fourth Estate does not intentionally produce misleadingly affective sensationalism, but rather that it is coerced by marketplace dictates to intensify the post-truth condition of the twenty-first century, which thus offers a corrective to the accusation that it is a villain of post-truth. Reframing the Fourth Estate as a victim is an essential consideration in an age characterised by new levels of post-truth, for it may deescalate the habitual mistrust in the press that causes audiences to dismiss the truth claims they find undesirable, thus allowing the arbiter of truth to more securely produce veracious truth claims, however uncomfortable they may be for its audiences.

Part Three: Native Advertising in *The Core of the Sun*

Johanna Sinisalo's endotextual refiguration of the Fourth Estate's exacerbation of the post-truth condition as a capitalistic issue differs from those offered by Macaulay, Čapek, and El Akkad. First, Sinisalo situates the heightened state of post-truth within extracts from *The Core of the Sun*'s *Femigirl* magazine, rather than in newspaper reportage. The magazine form sees *Femigirl* 'combine information and entertainment' and uphold the Fourth Estate's conveyance of truth claims while also prioritising that they are packaged

[617] George Gibian, 'Karel Capek's Apocrypha and Franz Kafka's Parables', *The American Slavic and East European Review*, 18.2 (1959), 238-247 (p. 239).

in a way that its audience are likely to find amusing or enjoyable.[618] Executing this second aim sees *Femigirl* draw on both non-fiction and fiction text types, the latter of which is of especial relevance to the following analysis, which centres on the 'Love Story' Parallel Endotext, a short story published in *Femigirl*.[619] Second, Sinisalo's capitalistic reimagining of the Fourth Estate's catalysation of the post-truth condition is preoccupied with native advertising. As with a cuckoo's egg in another bird's nest, native advertising hides in plain sight by disguising itself as an authentic piece of reportage, with advertisers paying print media publications to host – or even write for them – these pieces. 'Women Inmates: Why the Male Model Doesn't Work', a 2014 article published by *The New York Times* is a salient example of native advertising. Although it appears to be a genuine news article about female incarceration that contains all the trappings of legitimate reportage, its advertisement for the television series *Orange is the New Black* is revealed 'only by examining the presentation' of the piece, for it contains a small, easily missed banner that features the logos for Netflix and the television series, whereas a disclaimer at the very bottom of the article discloses that '[t]he news and editorial staffs of *The New York Times* had no role in this post's creation'.[620] 'Women Inmates' is therefore a characteristic example of native advertising, for it 'tries to fool the public […] by pretending to be authentic', blurs journalism's core boundary of 'the separation between editorial and advertising', and evokes in readers 'a state of constant confusion over […] what is editorial, what is sponsored, and what is just outright fake', all in the name of 'advanc[ing] the commercial interests of the advertiser'.[621] Native

[618] Frances Bonner and Susan McKay, 'Magazine Features and Infotainment Values', *Media International Australia incorporating Culture and Policy*, 107 (2003), 117-133 (p. 119).
[619] Sinisalo, *The Core of the Sun*, pp. 60-61.
[620] Tandoc et al, 'Defining "Fake News": A typology of scholarly definitions', p. 146; Melanie Deziel, 'Women Inmates: Why the Male Model Doesn't Work', *The New York Times*, 12 June 2014 <https://www.nytimes.com/paidpost/netflix/women-inmates-separate-but-not-equal.html> [accessed 8 March 2023].
[621] Theodore L. Glassner, Sheng Zhou, and Anita Varma, 'Native Advertising as Counterfeit News' in *Fake News: Understanding Media and Misinformation in the Digital Age*, ed. by Melissa Zimdars and Kembrew McLeod (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2020), pp. 87-93 (p. 87); Erin E. Schauster, Patrick Ferrucci, and Marlene S. Neill, 'Native Advertising Is the new Journalism: How Deception Affects Social Responsibility', *American Behavioral Scientist*, 60.12 (2016), 1408-1424 (p. 1408); Kat J. McAlpine, 'In the Fake News Era, Native Ads Are Muddying the Waters', *The Brink*, 18 March 2019 <https://www.bu.edu/articles/2019/native-ads-in-the-fake-news-era/> [accessed 6 March 2023]; Glassner et al, ''Native Advertising as Counterfeit News', p. 88.

advertising therefore constitutes another way in which the Fourth Estate's commitment to truthfulness is threatened by capitalistic pressures, for 'declining revenue from traditional display advertising and classified ads' has increasingly brought print media publications to disseminate inauthentic news stories with hidden – i.e. advertorial – intentions in the twenty-first century, which *The Core of the Sun* extrapolates to dystopian extremes.[622]

The Eusistocratic Republic of Finland's *Femigirl* magazine is sent to all elois – the class of hyper-feminine, docile women who are permitted to reproduce – from the moment they turn six in Sinisalo's dystopia, a ubiquitousness that is reflected in the Parallel Endotext's frequent intrusions on Sinisalo's main narrative.[623] In addition to 'pictures of elegant weddings and instructions on ladylike behavior [sic] and proper dress', *Femigirl* contains 'romantic stories, written in the simplest sentences, about elois competing for the same masco, and one girl would always get him in the end through feminine wiles'.[624] 'Love Story' is one such example of *Femigirl*'s stories. It features a masco – a man who is permitted to reproduce – called Torsti and an eloi named Nanna, who discuss Nanna's romantic rival Elanna. In the one-page narrative, Torsti tells Nanna that he prefers her to Elanna (importantly noting 'how wonderful' she smells in comparison), kisses her, and then proposes to her, which Nanna accepts.[625] At a first reading, Sinisalo's endotext sees her satirise 'mass market consumer [magazines] targeting female readerships', for Torsti's assessment that Nanna is 'much nicer and prettier' and better smelling than Elanna sees the narrative provide 'direct information and advice targeted to the assumed readership': an eloi must be compliant ('much nicer'), attractive, and take care of her personal hygiene if she is to find a husband.[626]

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[622] Michelle A. Amazeen, 'Researchers looked at nearly 3,000 native ads across five years. Here's what they found', *NiemanLab*, 7 February 2022 <https://www.niemanlab.org/2022/02/researchers-looked-at-nearly-3000-native-ads-across-five-years-heres-what-they-found/> [accessed 6 March 2023].

[623] The allusion to Wells is intentional. See Sinisalo, *The Core of the Sun*, p. 21: 'The word ["elois"] has its roots in the works of *H. G. Wells*, an author who predicted that humanity would be evolutionarily divided into distinct sub-races, some dedicated to serving the social structure and others meant to enjoy themselves'.

[624] Sinisalo, *The Core of the Sun*, p. 39.

[625] Sinisalo, *The Core of the Sun*, p. 60.

[626] Bonner and McKay, 'Magazine Features and Infotainment Values', p. 132; Sinisalo, *The Core of the Sun*, p. 60; Bonner and McKay, 'Magazine Features and Infotainment Values', p. 117.

'Love Story' therefore reinforces the strict gender roles and eugenicist values upon which the Finnish eusistocracy is founded, thus affording it a propagandistic quality. Indeed, given its valorisation of the eusistocracy's central ideologies above facts, 'Love Story' may be considered post-truthful, similarly to *American War*'s 'Witness to Disunion', which likewise sees adherence to a regional ideology informing how a narrative is shaped.

However, 'Love Story' more explicitly foregrounds the influence of capitalistic pressures on the intensification of the post-truth condition, given that the narrative is in fact an instance of native advertising. Torsti's and Nanna's references to smelling pleasant eventually see them mention 'Fresh Scent', which the second half of 'Love Story' explains through a short poem and marketing copy is a cosmetic product sold as the 'First Choice in Femi-Freshness'.[627] This revelation reframes the entirety of 'Love Story', for not only is its espousal of state ideology propagandistic, but it suggests that the sole purpose of its narrative is not one of entertaining, nor of providing genuine information, but is instead preoccupied with garnering sales for a product that it helpfully informs is '[a]vailable from all well-stocked chemists'.[628] Defenders of native advertising argue that the act of 'disclosure mitigates [the] deception' entailed by appropriating the semblance of a genuine article or feature while in fact being an advert in disguise – and yet such a disclosure is absent in the *Femigirl* excerpt.[629] Although it clearly promotes Fresh Scent, it does not acknowledge that the product's parent company paid for such promotion, thus affording the narrative an air of post-truthful deception because it claims to be something that it is not. The deceptiveness of 'Love Story' is compounded by the educative context of Sinisalo's dystopia. Aside from the *Femigirl* magazine, elois are conditioned to dislike reading by the Finnish eusistocracy, subsequently stifling the development of their critical thinking skills, whereas their schooling comprises cooking, cleaning, and childcare – skills developed so that they may become good wives for their

[627] Sinisalo, *The Core of the Sun*, p. 60; p. 61.
[628] Sinisalo, *The Core of the Sun*, p. 61.
[629] Glassner et al, ''Native Advertising as Counterfeit News', p. 89.

eventual husbands. Given that a low level of education is a key predictor for the inability to recognise native advertising *as* native advertising, it follows that elois will continue to be deceived by *Femigirl*'s native advertising, buying products like Fresh Scent in the belief that a masco will likewise propose to them.[630]

Two attributions imply that Sinisalo's endotextual depiction of native advertising is one taken to dystopian extremes. The first is a paratext that states that *Femigirl* is produced by 'National Publishing', whereas the second is a piece of legalese inserted at the end of the Fresh Scent marketing copy, which states that the product is 'a registered trademark of the State Cosmetics Corporation'.[631] As the closest things to a native advertising disclosure in the 'Love Story' excerpt, these attributions create the impression that the continued existence of *Femigirl* is predicated on state funding; the State Cosmetics Corporation implicitly pays for its product to be advertised, whereas the magazine's production by National Publishing suggests that it is an arm of the Finnish eusistocracy. This impression is likewise evoked by the tale of 'Little Redianna', another of Sinisalo's Parallel Endotexts, published by National Publishing in the collection *Eloi Girls' Best-Loved Stories*.[632] As a corruption of the classical Little Red Riding Hood story, 'Little Redianna' ends with the titular character 'never, ever [getting] married' because she disobeys the antagonistic wolf, who turns out to be a handsome prince in disguise.[633] Although not a dramatization of the Fourth Estate, *Eloi Girls' Best-Loved Stories*' production by National Publishing underscores the extent to which the Finnish eusistocracy's funding of publications enables it to propagandize, for the fable's warning of female disobedience aligns with the state's dominant ideology. As such, Sinisalo's dystopian regime achieves what Krug and Windrip aim for in *Bend Sinister* (1947) and *It Can't Happen Here* (1935) – transforming the Fourth Estate into a political mouthpiece.

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[630] See Michelle A. Amazeen and Bartosz W. Wojdynski, 'Reducing Native Advertising Deception: Revisiting the Antecedents and Consequences of Persuasion Knowledge in Digital News Contexts', *Mass Communication and Society*, 22 (2019), 222-247 (p. 225): 'Even though native advertising literacy is not yet very widespread, we believe that two individual differences may serve as key predictors of native advertising recognition in digital news contexts: age and education'.
[631] Sinisalo, *The Core of the Sun*, p. 60; p. 61.
[632] Sinisalo, *The Core of the Sun*, pp. 41-42.
[633] Sinisalo, *The Core of the Sun*, p. 42.

However, rather than using the blunt force of totalitarianism to achieve this aim, the Finnish eusistocracy preys upon the Fourth Estate's capitalistic vulnerabilities to weaken its professional commitment to truthfulness and authenticity, thus bringing it to amplify post-truth in Sinisalo's story-world by publishing whatever may conveniently guarantee its continued existence.

Chapter Conclusion

Together, the endotextual dramatizations of fake news in *What Not*, *War With the Newts*, *The Core of the Sun*, and *American War* challenge the assumption that the Fourth Estate is a 'villain that has featured prominently in post-truth worlds' by proposing that capitalism is a post-truth villain that makes the Fourth Estate its victim.[634] They suggest that biased reportage and sensationalism prioritise beliefs and emotional appeals over facts while garnering further sales, whereas native advertising deceives audiences that it is genuine, credible reportage while generating profit. '[U]nsettl[ing] the reader's […] cultural […] assumptions' about the print media's role in catalysing the post-truth condition in this way is by no means straightforward, for it is contingent on readers making sense of endotexts, the relationship between endotexts and their counterpart main narratives, and also the relationship shared between distinct endotexts from within the same novel.[635] *What Not*'s demonstration of how the Fourth Estate's cacophony of truth claims is caused by increasing market demands would not be apparent if it only contained one Read Endotext; newspapers' rationale for routinely producing misleadingly affective reportage would not have been so strongly evoked in *War With the Newts* if Čapek had not dramatized this both narratively and endotextually; the revenue-generating bias of 'Witness to Disunion' would not have been apparent without 'These the Calls of Our Blood' or *American War*'s main narrative. Forcing readers to labour to uncover these messages evokes extratextual bliss, for by being made to read slowly, the exact way in which the 'haphazard speed' of post-truth that 'privileges viral storytelling'

[634] Farkas and Schou, *Post-Truth, Fake News and Democracy*, p. 58.
[635] Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, p. 14.

discourages, they reach the epiphanic realisation that fake news is engendered by capitalistic pressures, a revelation that seeks to restore faith in the Fourth Estate.[636] It enables readers to better discern which instances of reportage are veracious and which are not so that they may pay attention to an institution that often behaves as an arbiter of truth, rather than falling in the trap set out by bad faith actors of tarring all members of the Fourth Estate with the same 'fake news' brush. Once more, dystopian endotexts seek to develop readers' critical thinking capabilities so that, in this case, they are less readily persuaded by a dominant narrative that underpins the crisis of post-truth.

An attempt at restoring faith in print media publications and their status as arbiters of truth is particularly evoked by *What Not* and *War With the Newts*, for in addition to their capitalistic refiguration of fake news, they dramatize the Fourth Estate opposing the convenient truths put forward by their story-worlds' political regimes. Although understated in *War With the Newts*, in which a brief aside acknowledges that 'newspapers, especially the German ones, published accounts of a revolution in Normandy' following a clash with Newts, information of which the French government seeks to deny or outright supress, *What Not* offers an altogether more thorough depiction of the Fourth Estate's opposition to 'official' truths.[637] Elements of the Fourth Estate oppose the Brain Ministry's increasingly totalitarian enforcement of its Mind Training Course: Labour newspapers 'objected to compulsion', the *Nation* 'objected to […] Prussianism', and *New Witness* 'objected to interference with the happy stupidity of merry Gentiles'.[638] Together, these objections see the Fourth Estate highlight and challenge what it sees as undemocratic proceedings, which is also apparent in how members of the Fourth Estate later start to turn attention to Nicholas Chester, the Brains Minister, implying 'that new blood might perhaps be desirable', or asserting that he 'is played out' or 'MUST GO'.[639] Of the challenges posed to Chester by the Fourth Estate, it is the *Patriot* that offers the fiercest opposition. In a scene late in the main narrative,

[636] Schaberg, *The Work of Literature in an Age of Post-Truth*, p. 26; p. 3.
[637] Čapek, *War With the Newts*, p. 257.
[638] Macaulay, *What Not*, p. 180; pp. 180-1; p. 181.
[639] Macaulay, *What Not*, p. 181.

Chester accedes to the relentless requests made by Mr Jenkins, editor of the *Patriot*, for an interview. Here, Jenkins enquires about the rumour that Chester has been 'seen a great deal in the company of a certain lady' – referring to his affair with and subsequent marriage to Kitty Grammont, *What Not*'s protagonist – in spite of him being 'uncertified for matrimony and parentage' because of 'actual [mental] deficiency in [his] near family'.[640] Chester's refusal to comment on this rumour prompts Jenkins to publish an open letter to him in the *Patriot*. In this Read Endotext, Jenkins quotes various sayings and maxims that highlight Chester's hypocrisy (e.g., 'Can the blind lead the blind? Shall they not both fall into the ditch?'), which triggers rampant speculation among *Patriot*'s readership and Chester's eventual ousting from office.[641] As with the other instances of the press's opposition to the British government in *What Not*, this episode sees Macaulay generate extratextual hope by depicting the Fourth Estate challenging undemocratic proceedings, i.e. Chester breaking the very rules he seeks to enforce as Brains Minister, central to which is its relentless commitment to the pursuit of truth. The Fourth Estate, *What Not* and – to a lesser extent – *War With the Newts* suggest, is therefore vital to the continuation of democratic proceedings, for it is able to expose the inconvenient truths that political regimes would rather supress in a post-truthful fashion. Herein lies a way in which dystopian endotexts work to inoculate readers against post-truth, for by emphasising that the Fourth Estate has *the potential* to disseminate fact-based truths, or to at least make truth claims that challenge dominant powers, these novels reorient readers to a tool they may rely on – if judiciously scrutinised first – in the fight against post-truth.

Conversely, *The Core of the Sun* and *American War* do not attempt to restore faith in the Fourth Estate so profoundly. Each of Sinisalo's endotextual dramatizations of the Fourth Estate are produced by National Publishing, whereas all instances of the press in El Akkad's novel are inseparable from their civil war biases, thus suggesting that the Fourth Estate is so vulnerable to capitalistic pressures in Sinisalo's and El Akkad's story-

[640] Macaulay, *What Not*, p. 184; p. 185; p. 11.
[641] Macaulay, *What Not*, p. 186.

worlds that they are unable to exhibit a relentless commitment to truthfulness that would reliably expose undemocratic proceedings. Fredric Jameson has postulated that it is 'easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism'.[642] This sentiment is echoed in *American War*, for as Sarat meets with her former rebel allies in a dilapidated corner of war-ravaged Atlanta, she notices 'ancient posters that urged: "Have a Coke"' – capitalism persists even in the most fragmented, disordered, dystopian world.[643] Together with this enduring image of the Coca-Cola advertisement amidst the ruins of America, the Fourth Estate's susceptibility to monetary pressures in Sinisalo's and El Akkad's story-worlds suggests that it is no longer possible to imagine a free press that is immune to capitalistic demands in the twenty-first century. This thus marks a distinction between the literary dystopias of the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries; whereas earlier texts are hopeful of the Fourth Estate's capacity for uncovering and producing truth claims in spite of the pressures it faces, more recent novels are less optimistic. This difference reflects the new context in which the Fourth Estate operates in the twenty-first century. Sales of newspapers have long been on the decline, print media publications garner a lesser share of the attention economy, and younger audiences in particular look elsewhere for their news sources, all of which threatens the continued existence of the Fourth Estate by decimating its revenue. Instead, audiences are increasingly drawn towards the playground of post-truth for their source of news: the internet.

[642] Fredric Jameson, 'Future City', *New Left Review*, 21 (2003), 65-79 (p. 76).
[643] El Akkad, *American War*, p. 309.

Chapter Four: Social Media as a Post-Truth Playground

Introduction

This chapter examines literary dystopias that explore how the Fifth Estate – which, following William H. Dutton, refers to both digital media (e.g., websites and blogs) and social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) – contributes to the intensified post-truth condition of the twenty-first century.[644] Given the genre's proclivity for reflecting contemporaneous society, it is unsurprising that depictions of digital and social medias occur throughout twenty-first-century literary dystopias: Gary Shteyngart's *Super Sad True Love Story* (2010) reflects how social media messages are used to maintain relationships; Tim Maughan's *Infinite Detail* (2019) imagines the digital post-apocalypse; and Hanna Bervoets' *We Had To Remove This Post* (2021/2022) and Samit Basu's *The City Inside* (2020/2022) foreground the sheer quantity of content on social media and the measures taken by social media companies to moderate it. Three literary dystopias that likewise reflect the ubiquity of digital and social medias in the twenty-first century, while also examining the role of the Fifth Estate in entrenching post-truth's pervasiveness, are Dave Eggers' *The Circle* (2013), Sam Byers' *Perfidious Albion* (2018), and Marc-Uwe Kling's *QualityLand* (2017/2020), this chapter's central texts.

Digital and social medias bear a complex relationship with truth. They 'control the facts, feelings, narratives and fictions of our time in such a comprehensive manner that [they] are *de facto* arbiters of truth', a status that is especially pertinent to younger audiences who rely 'on platforms such as Reddit and Instagram to get their news', despite digital and social media companies 'routinely announc[ing] their disinterest' in having such a responsibility.[645] Indeed, digital and social medias possess direct

[644] William H. Dutton, 'The Fifth Estate Emerging through the Network of Networks', *Prometheus*, 27.1 (2009), 1-15.
[645] Hendricks and Mehlsen, *The Ministry of Truth*, p. xiv; Rusbridger, *News and How to Use It: What to believe in a Fake News world*, p. 283; Henricks and Mehlsen, *The Ministry of Truth: BigTech's Influence on Facts, Feelings and Fictions*, p. xiv.

responsibility for inflaming today's post-truth condition. By providing all individuals with an internet connection a voice with which they 'can claim authority', the Fifth Estate empowers 'so-called malicious actors and misinformed citizens […] to spread their own lies, deception, hate, propaganda and fake information on a previously unseen scale', which sees them intentionally or accidentally drown out truth on online spaces.[646] Furthermore, digital and social medias enable state actors 'all over the world to disseminate with relative ease and impunity information which presents as true, *fact*-based content but is actually invented and known to be invented by those who originated or have disseminated it'.[647] This is evident in how Russian bots interfered with the 2016 US presidential election on Twitter, in how Buddhist ultranationalists used Facebook to 'stoke fear, normalize hateful views, and facilitate acts of violence against Muslims in Myanmar' within the context of the Rohingya genocide, and in how the Bolsonaro campaign used WhatsApp to disseminate 'myriads of memes and fake news' that discredited his political rivals in the 2018 Brazilian general election.[648]

As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, the digital age has ushered in an era of information overload that makes the act of evaluating competing truth claims far more complex, a problem to which the empowerment of bad-faith actors contributes. Rather than be overwhelmed by the sheer amount of information available to them, individuals may resort to two strategies made possible by digital and social medias. On one hand, they may form echo chambers – 'groups that reinforce those groups' chosen visions, [select] what to accept as true, and [amplify] each other's biases' – by selectively choosing which accounts and information sources they follow, pay attention to, and interact with on social media.[649] Additionally, individuals may accept the algorithmically-determined filter bubbles that social media companies place them into.

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[646] Farkas and Schou, *Post-Truth, Fake News and Democracy*, p. 2.
[647] McNair, *Fake News: Falsehood, Fabrication and Fantasy in Journalism*, p. 89.
[648] Jon Swaine, 'Twitter admits far more Russian bots posted on election than it had disclosed', *The Guardian*, 20 January 2018 <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2018/jan/19/twitter-admits-far-more-russian-bots-posted-on-election-than-it-had-disclosed> [accessed 9 September 2023]; Christina Fink, 'Dangerous Speech, Anti-Muslim Violence, and Facebook in Myanmar', *Journal of International Affairs*, 71.1 (2018), 43-51 (p. 43); Cosentino, *Social Media and the Post-Truth World Order*, p. 129.
[649] Odlyzko, 'The Glorious Promise of the Post-Truth World', p. 2.

Here, individuals are 'constantly exposed to one side of the story', one which their previous social media activity suggests they align with, thus minimising the information overload they experience because alternative viewpoints are less visible.[650] Either way, these strategies highlight how the Fifth Estate further entrenches post-truth's pervasiveness because it makes it easy for individuals to prioritise truth claims that align with their beliefs and biases, rather than forcing them to face inconvenient facts that may cause them discomfort or challenge their views.

Subsequently, this chapter examines dystopian depictions of how digital and social medias contribute to the post-truth conditions of their respective story-worlds by allowing internet users to prioritise emotions, beliefs, and desirability over facts and veracity when online. First, I turn attention to *QualityLand*, in which Kling endotextually dramatizes malicious social media bot activity. I contend that this dramatization is primarily evident in the character Melissa Sex-Worker, whose social media posts resemble those made by social media bots. This resemblance brings into doubt the authenticity of all social media postings found within *QualityLand*'s endotexts, resulting in a blurring of fact and fiction that imperils truth online. Second, I analyse the presentation of social media avatars in *The Circle*. I demonstrate how Ty Gospodinov's "Kalden" persona and Mae Holland's performance as a perfect Circle employee are avataristic. In each case, characters supress inconvenient true facts – their identities – so that desirable fabrications that elicit positive emotions for them – their avatars – can take hold. These avatars bring into doubt the veracity of Ty's and Mae's claims, which reflects the destabilisation of truth on digital and social medias that paves way for emotional appeal to be prioritised as a criterion for assessing truth claims. *Perfidious Albion* will be examined third. My analysis of Byers' novel focuses on its presentation of anonymous trolling, which is focalised through the character of Jess. By focusing on the endotextual depiction of the trolling she first receives and later disseminates, I highlight how internet anonymity facilitates trolling's truth-indifferent and emotive qualities, while

[650] Kalpokas, *A Political Theory of Post-Truth*, p. 28.

also claiming that *Perfidious Albion* suggests that humankind is naturally inclined towards post-truthful behaviours. Through navigating these novels' endotexts and the interpretive complexities they entail, readers are oriented to how the Fifth Estate may be conceived as a post-truth playground in which 'the dualism between true and false' has collapsed.[651] Under this metaphor, readers are brought to the realisation that although digital and social medias contain tools and toys such as bots, avatars, and anonymity, all of which ostensibly catalyse today's post-truth condition, this in fact only occurs when individuals choose to actively use and play with these hyperreal apparatuses – a revelation that may evoke Barthesian bliss for readers insofar as it brings them to face 'the[ir] unconscious or repressed' knowledge about how their online behaviours may contribute to post-truth's intensification.[652]

Part One: 'I'm an opinion maker': Malicious Bot Activity in *QualityLand*[653]

Kling endotextually dramatizes malicious social media robot activity in *QualityLand*, a dystopian satire in which every aspect of residents' lives – including their choice of romantic partner, voting tendencies, and social standing – are algorithmically determined. Social media robots, or 'bots', are computer algorithms and automated programs that populate social media platforms and simulate the behaviour of human users by 'posting information, following accounts or communicating with real users'.[654] As put by Emilio Ferrara, Onur Varol, Clayton Davis, Filippo Menczer, and Alessandro Flammini, bots 'are often benign, or even useful' – the Twitter account @MagicalRealismBot, for example, generates 'a magical story every 4 hours' that is often interesting or humorous, but is ultimately harmless, whereas chat bots are frequently

[651] Jon Doyle, 'Hysterical Realism: A review of Perfidious Albion by Sam Byers', *3:AM Magazine*, 21 September 2018 <https://www.3ammagazine.com/3am/hysterical-realism-a-review-of-perfidious-albion-by-sam-byers/> [accessed 4 September 2023].
[652] Kołdrzak, '*Plaisir* and *jouissance*: The case of potential and textual reading of Barthes' theory', p. 53.
[653] Marc-Uwe Kling, *QualityLand*, trans. by Jamie Lee Searle (London: Orion, 2020), p. 77.
[654] Trisha Raha, 'Influence of Bots in Politics: Considering the Threats to Human Security', *Dois Níveis*, 13 March 2023 <https://www.doisniveis.com/instituicoes/influence-of-bots-in-politics-considering-the-threats-to-human-security/> [accessed 20 March 2023].

used by businesses to provide and augment customer support.[655] However, some bots 'initiate or drive the dissemination of malicious content'.[656] They 'amplify false content in the early stages of dissemination, prior to achieving organic spread', thus 'quickly pollut[ing]' social media with misinformation; their widespread promotion of partisan views sees bots 'provide their own digital echo chamber and manufacture the prevalence of a certain kind of thinking'; and their often politically-skewed activity 'drive[s] political polarization forward' and subsequently influences democratic proceedings.[657] Such activity therefore sees malicious bots contribute to the intensification of the post-truth condition, for their rampant spreading of misinformation adds to the information abundance that brings individuals to prioritise emotions over facts, an effect that is likewise brought about by bots' generation of echo chambers and political polarization, which tend to prey upon individuals' feelings and pre-existing beliefs. *QualityLand* reflects the extratextual prevalence of social media bots through its use of Parallel Endotexts. Assuming the form of online news articles that are subsequently commented on by an array of figures, included in which are comments that resemble bot-like behaviour, these Parallel Endotexts' frequent interruption of Kling's main narrative create the impression that social media bot activity is ever-present in *QualityLand*'s story-world. Ultimately, this sees Kling warn of what may happen to truth in an increasingly digital, algorithmically driven, bot-populated world.

Kling's warning about the impact of malicious bots on truth is focalised through the work of Melissa Sex-Worker, who protagonist Peter Jobless briefly dates in *QualityLand*'s main narrative. When they first meet, Melissa explains her work to Peter, expressing that she is an 'opinion maker' for hire who 'write[s] comments under videos,

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[655] Emilio Ferrara, Onur Varol, Clayton Davis, Filippo Menczer, and Alessandro Flammini, 'The Rise of Social Bots', *Communications of the ACM*, 59.7 (2016), 96-104 (p. 96); Magical Realism Bot (@MagicalRealismBot) <https://twitter.com/MagicRealismBot> [accessed 22 March 2023].

[656] Farkas and Schou, *Post-Truth, Fake News and Democracy*, p. 57.

[657] Andrew M. Guess and Benjamin A. Lyons, 'Misinformation, Disinformation, and Online Propaganda' in *Social Media and Democracy: The State of the Field, Prospects for Reform*, ed. by Nathaniel Persily and Joshua A. Tucker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp. 10-33 (p. 21); Hendricks and Mehlsen, *The Ministry of Truth*, p. 52; Jeffrey Layne Blevins and James Jaehoon Lee, *Social Media, Social Justice and the Political Economy of Online Networks* (Cincinnati, OH: University of Cincinnati Press, 2022), chap. 7, University of Cincinnati Press ebook; Hendricks and Mehlsen, *The Ministry of Truth*, p. 52.

photos, blog posts, announcements, that kind of thing' and prefers to produce commentary in favour of 'the campaigns of right-wing extremist clients' because the lack of sophistication and grammatical accuracy required of such commentary makes it quicker to write.[658] Examples of Melissa's comments appear throughout *QualityLand*'s Parallel Endotexts. Melissa's commentary is particularly characterised by racist overtones. A report that celebrates a white woman for birthing her hundredth child in order to make a stand 'against the insidious takeover of QualityLand by headscarf-wearing girls and their quantitative proliferation methods' sees Melissa comment 'I'm not racist or anything, but Shirley-Anne is an example to us all!'; an article about the president's condemnation of a fatal drone attack prompts Melissa to write 'I'm not racist or anything, but the traiter [sic] at the tip of this lobbyist government is […] guilty, because it was her who let all the terrorists into the country in the first place'; whereas a piece detailing the resurgent popularity of films featuring Jennifer Aniston causes Melissa to incongruously remark '[b]ut the ones who are really to blame are the foreign criminals'.[659]

Melissa's racist commentary sees her embody many of the characteristics of malicious social media bots. First, it aligns with (and is presumably paid for by) the electoral campaign of the far-right figure Conrad Cook, which seeks to exploit QualityLand's citizens' alleged concerns 'about the flood of foreigners threatening to overrun [their] beautiful country' to ensure his political success.[660] The political skew of Melissa's messaging sees Kling draw upon contemporaneous anxieties about the capability of bots to interfere in democratic proceedings in both the United States and his native Germany, for US officials alleged in 2017 that the Russian government 'made substantive use of bots to spread disinformation and inflame polarization during the 2016 US presidential election', whereas German Chancellor Angela Merkel expressed in 2016 that bots may 'manipulate public opinion' and interfere in the next German

[658] Kling, *QualityLand*, p. 77; p. 76; p. 77.
[659] Kling, *QualityLand*, p. 50; p. 51; p. 97; p. 239.
[660] Kling, *QualityLand*, p. 100.

election.[661] Second, Melissa spreads disinformation through her commentary. Neither *QualityLand*'s main narrative nor its endotexts corroborate her claim that the incumbent president of QualityLand welcomed terrorists into the country; likewise, there is no evidence that supports her non-sequitur that 'foreign criminals' are responsible for the renewed popularity of Aniston's filmography.[662] The ridiculousness of this last claim sees Kling emphatically frame it as a piece of disinformation that pollutes the digital information space and contributes to information abundance in a fashion typical of malicious bots. Last, Melissa's espousal of racist commentary sees her manufacture the prevalence of such views in the digital space. As discussed elsewhere in this thesis, racist opinions are particularly post-truthful, and so by falsely manufacturing prevalence for racism through her commentary, Melissa legitimises harmful opinions and makes it permissible for others to express them, thus adding to the post-truth condition's amplification in a manner akin to malicious bots. Indeed, because Melissa embodies so many of the characteristics of malicious social media bots, she herself becomes a malicious *human* bot, producing commentary that 'giv[es] the appearance of representing a real person interacting and engaging on social media', irrespective of its veracity or of its consequences.[663]

The consequences of Melissa becoming a malicious human bot are twofold. First, it brings into question the authenticity – i.e., if she honestly means what she says – of everything she writes online, or indeed says in-person. This is particularly the case for her writings about or interactions with Peter Jobless, given that their brief relationship is something in which she has a personal interest. Peter obtains celebrity status in *QualityLand*'s main narrative after he hijacks a television broadcast and criticises the algorithms that dictate the lives of everyone living in QualityLand. Engaging in an online

[661] Samuel C. Woolley, 'Bots and Computational Propaganda: Automation for Communication and Control', in Nathaniel Persily and Joshua A. Tucker, eds., *Social Media and Democracy: The State of the Field, Prospects for Reform* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp. 89-110 (p. 89); Caroline Copley, 'Merkel fears social bots may manipulate German election', *Reuters*, 24 November 2016 <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-germany-merkel-socialbots-idUKKBN13J1V2> [accessed 28 March 2023].
[662] Kling, *QualityLand*, p. 239.
[663] Blevins and Lee, *Social Media, Social Justice and the Political Economy of Online Networks*, chap. 7.

discussion seemingly detached from a specific piece of reportage, Melissa writes that the issues around the algorithms, which Peter argues are faulty, are 'the criminal foreigners' fault. They're hacking the profiles of us QualityPeople'.[664] Co-present within the main narrative as a Read Endotext, it is unclear whether Melissa's truth claim is made in a professional capacity, given that it resembles her commentary as an 'opinion maker', or in a personal capacity, given her relationship with Peter. The authenticity of Melissa's writings is again brought into question when, for a news article centring on Peter's successful call for a boycott against TheShop, she comments that Peter is 'nothing but a contract-breaking limpdick!'.[665] The contract in question is a 'Pre-Sexual Intercourse Agreement', which entitles contractual partners 'for the duration of 2 hours, the exclusive right to copulate with one another'.[666] Although Peter signs the contract, he leaves Melissa before they can honour its agreement, and so the vitriol apparent in her comment may be interpreted as Melissa expressing her genuine feelings of frustration. However, given Melissa's habitual posting of commentary that benefits her financially, it is entirely possible that TheShop paid Melissa to write something that would smear his reputation, thus discrediting their discreditor and deflecting the criticism leveraged against them. Ultimately, Kling does not resolve whether all of Melissa's writings and utterances are inauthentic – her endotextual writings are necessarily brief, whereas her presence in *QualityLand*'s main narrative is likewise limited, and so real readers are left with little evidence with which they may discern how genuine she and her writings are. Instead, through this irresolvable tension, Kling presents truth as being imperilled by malicious bots, for social media users can rarely be certain if the comments they read online are authentically written by a human user, maliciously disseminated by a social media bot, or are in fact produced by a user who – much like Melissa – straddles these two identities.

[664] Kling, *QualityLand*, p. 269.
[665] Kling, *QualityLand*, p. 318. An analogue for Amazon, Peter calls for a boycott against TheShop after its owner, Hendryk Engineer, refuses to accept his attempts to return a pink dolphin vibrator that TheShop's algorithm erroneously and automatically delivered to him.
[666] Kling, *QualityLand*, p. 86.

The second consequence of Melissa's behaviour as a malicious human bot is obliquely observed early in *QualityLand*'s main narrative, in which the narrator remarks that humans are more typically employed in menial jobs instead of artificially intelligent machines because they 'are cheaper; they don't have any acquisition of maintenance costs'.[667] This condition of *QualityLand*'s story-world, together with Melissa's aforementioned impoverishment, brings into question whether anything anyone writes online in *QualityLand* is authentic – if Melissa operates akin to a malicious bot because she is poor, then so too may other people in Kling's story-world. This possibility is particularly entertained by further instances digital media comments found in *QualityLand*'s Parallel Endotexts. For example, Amy Customer-Account-Manager's comment on an article detailing a drone attack that a Valkyrie drone '[t]akes really good photos […] [a]nd right now it's 16 per cent off', and Mascha Organic-Shop-Owner's remark on an account of a terrorist attack at a fast-food restaurant that 'Fastest Food really is [their] favourite burger chain. You should all go to Fastest Food', resemble bot activity insofar as their tone deaf observations constitute attempts at 'driv[ing] the lucrative business of advertising sales'.[668] Moreover, when Udo Hairdresser comments 'I don't like it at all' on a piece of reportage related to an android capable of replicating repetitive manual tasks, or when Brandy Cleaner writes '[a]nyone who brings one of those power guzzlers into their home has it coming, IMHO' under a news story in which members of a family are implied to have been killed after 'receiving a combat robot instead of an all-purpose household robot', it is unclear whether these individuals are expressing their genuine opinions on these stories, or if they have been paid by the Machine Breakers (a terrorist anti-machine group) to post these comments.[669] The essential brevity of the Parallel Endotexts, and especially of the comments found therein, decontextualises Udo's and Brandy's remarks and makes their authenticity questionable, thus reiterating the preoccupation with the uncertain genuineness of social media posts

[667] Kling, *QualityLand*, p. 5.
[668] Kling, *QualityLand*, p. 98; p. 172; Hendricks and Mehlsen, *The Ministry of Truth*, p. 52.
[669] Kling, *QualityLand*, p. 41; p. 72; p. 71.

evoked by Melissa's professional commentary. Kling explicitly foregrounds the role social media bots have in obfuscating authenticity online in a later Parallel Endotext. It depicts comments appended to a news story about the implementation of bots on Everybody – the novel's analogue to Facebook – to create accounts for unregistered individuals, post as them, and engage with their social contacts. These comments initially discuss the content of the article, but they later become meta-discursive, for Natalie Dancer questions if a fellow commenter is 'really you or a bot?', to which Katrina English-Teacher replies '[h]ere's a little tip: Correct orthography, correct punctuation, correct grammar = bot'.[670] Here, Kling not only presents his characters as being broadly aware of social media bots, but dramatizes the uncertainty that their existence generates, as is evidenced by Natalie's question and Katrina's attempt at answering it.

These Parallel Endotexts are underpinned by a broader anxiety about social media hyperreality. Following Jean Baudrillard, hyperreality is a state in which the 'distinctions between real and unreal become blurred' following the breakdown of the boundary between reality and the images that seek to represent it, to which social media, as 'a tsunami that [has] sucked up the socio-cultural experience of billions', contributes because it 'provide[s] experiences more intense and involving than the scenes of banal everyday life'.[671] Such hyperreal anxieties are thus generated by *QualityLand* through its depiction of social media activity that blurs the distinctions between the real and unreal, fact and fiction, truth and fabrication. By manifesting these anxieties within *QualityLand*'s endotexts, Kling encourages his real reader to consider the implications of social media bots extratextually. The comments that appear on social media, these Parallel Endotexts suggest, cannot have their authenticities taken for granted, for their veracity – whether they are made in good faith, whether they contain disinformation,

[670] Kling, *QualityLand*, p. 160.
[671] Neal Saye, 'No "Survivors," No "American Idol," No "Road Rules" in "The Real World" of "Big Brother": Consumer/reality, Hyper/reality, and Post/reality in "Reality" TV', *Studies in Popular Culture*, 27.2 (2004), 9-15 (p. 13); Robert Hassan, *The Condition of Digitality: A Post-Modern Maxim for the Practice of Digital Life* (Winchester: University of Winchester Press, 2020), p. 184; Douglas M. Kellner, 'Introduction: Jean Baudrillard in the Fin-de-Millennium' in *Baudrillard: A Critical Reader*, ed. by Douglas M. Kellner (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), pp. 1-24 (p. 8).

whether the user posting them is in fact who they claim to be – cannot be easily discerned. Truth, *QualityLand* therefore warns, is particularly imperilled on social media by bot activity. As the exchange between Natalie Dancer and Katrina English-Teacher metafictionally insists, social media users ought to be more sceptical of the commentary they encounter online and question its origin. Although this may prove difficult, for the distinctions between the real and unreal are profoundly blurred online, carrying out this task will enable social media users to see through the information abundance, echo chambers, and political polarisation brought about by malicious bot activity, thus better safeguarding themselves against manipulation.

Part Two: Social Media Avatars and *The Circle*

A second hyperreal aspect of the Fifth Estate that literary dystopias show to lead to new levels of post-truth is the social media avatar. Taken to mean 'a virtual representation of a user on a network, typically in textual or graphic form', social media avatars tend to possess 'an oblique relationship to their real-world counterparts', representing 'an alter[-]ego or pretend persona' or simply construing a selective version of their users' actual identities.[672] By enabling users to suppress facts about their true identities in favour of promoting desired personae, social media avatars prioritise the emotional appeal upon which post-truth hinges, whereas they are also characteristically hyperreal in their blurring of the real and not real.

The post-truthful, hyperreal qualities of the social media avatar is something that is particularly explored in Dave Eggers' *The Circle*. Centring on protagonist Mae Holland's employment at the Circle, a powerful technology company that 'subsumed Facebook, Twitter, Google, and finally Alacrity, Zoopa, Jefe, and Quan', Eggers' novel has been read as a warning of how 'social media might produce a form of populist totalitarianism', and

[672] Jolene Blais and Job Ippolito, *At the Edge of Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2006), p. 250; Christine L. Liao, 'Avatars, Second Life®, and New Media Art: The Challenge for Contemporary Art Education', *Art Education*, 61.2 (2008), 87-91 (p. 89).

as a 'dystopia of non-stop rating, tweeting, and surveillance'.[673] In addition to these readings, I propose that *The Circle* dramatizes how truth is destabilised on social media by avatars that enable users to advance desirable truth claims about their selves while suppressing inconvenient aspects of their identities. To illustrate this, the following analysis will focus on two figures from Eggers' novel. The first is Ty Gospodinov, co-founder of the Circle, who masquerades as the mysterious Kalden in the shadows of the Circle's extensive campus. His dual identity attests *The Circle*'s main narrative's preoccupation with social media avatars' destabilisation of truth. The second is Mae, whose employment at the Circle and concurrent engagement with its TruYou platform sees her first subconsciously employ an avatar-like quality, then intentionally make use of an avatar for personal and professional gain, before she ultimately *becomes* her avatar and abandons her true self by the novel's close. This transformation is made apparent by the Read Endotexts that represent Mae's social media posts, for they dramatize her efforts in constructing a desirable personae. Neither Ty nor Mae use social media avatars in the literal sense, for their alter-ego and selective presentation of self are not graphical representations of their desired selves on a purely online space. However, these representations occur on the Circle's campus, which operates as a social media platform due to the corporation's expectation that its employees uphold good social media etiquette while at work, thus rendering Ty's and Mae's desired personae as metaphors for social media avatars. Through analysing these wishful personae, I will argue that the interpretive complexities brought about by the interplay between *The Circle*'s main narrative and Written and Read Endotexts orient readers towards a warning that social media avatars constitute a post-truth self that threaten the stability of truth on digital platforms, thus demanding that they reflect on their own online behaviours.

Ty Gospodinov's adoption of the Kalden avatar is a significant component to *The Circle*'s main narrative. This adoption occurs despite him founding the Circle's TruYou

[673] Dave Eggers, *The Circle* (London: Penguin, 2014), p. 23; Roger F. Cook, 'From *Triumph of the Will* to Twitter: Modern Media and the Evolution of Tribalism', *Colloquia Germanica*, 50.3/4 (2017), 315-326 (p. 321); Peter C. Herman, 'More, Huxley, Eggers, and the Utopian/Dystopian Tradition', *Renaissance and Reformation*, 41.3 (2018), 165-193 (p. 193).

social media platform on the principle that there would be 'one account, one identity, one password, one payment system, per person', which in turn would see him bring the 'era of false identities' to an end.[674] Adopting the Kalden avatar is therefore hypocritical, for the second identity embodies everything that Ty is not. While Ty is 'the Circle's boy-wonder visionary', stereotypically nerdy with his 'nondescript glasses and enormous hoodie', beanie hat, and 'dark unkempt hair [and] unlined face', a man in his mid-twenties who is 'at best, socially awkward, and at worst an utter interpersonal disaster', Kalden is captivating, classically beautiful ('[h]is eyebrows were Roman arches'), and sexually assured ('[h]is right hand was on the small of [Mae's] back, bringing her into him, where she felt him hard and pressing against her stomach').[675] These differences begin to imply that Ty's adoption of the Kalden avatar is post-truthful insofar as it allows him to shrug off his reputation as a socially inept wunderkind and instead vainly assume an altogether more desirable identity in the pursuit of sexual gratification.

However, as *The Circle*'s main narrative progresses, the Kalden avatar empowers Ty to overlook an aspect of his personality that he finds inconvenient so that he may work towards a goal it would otherwise forbid; although he is the Circle's founder, he seeks to intentionally sabotage it. The company works towards 'Completion' late in the main narrative, a process by which registration to TruYou would become compulsory and all government services would become channelled through the Circle. This worries Ty, who uses the Kalden avatar to warn Mae that the Circle 'has to be reined in. Or broken up' because Completion will 'create the world's first tyrannical monopoly'.[676] This warning is echoed later in the main narrative, in which it is hypothesised that compulsory registration to TruYou would usher in 'a totalitarian nightmare' that constitutes a corruption of the streamlined, more socially enterprising version of the social media landscape that Ty had hoped his company would create.[677] Crucially, this latter warning of technocentric totalitarianism occurs at a point in the main narrative after which it has

[674] Eggers, *The Circle*, p. 21.
[675] Eggers, *The Circle*, p. 19; p. 20; p. 166; p. 223.
[676] Eggers. *The Circle*, p. 401.
[677] Eggers, *The Circle*, p. 481.

been revealed that Ty and Kalden are the same person – up until this reveal, the two are presented as discrete characters – and is a warning that is made not by Ty, nor by Kalden, but by 'the combination of the two men […] in one figure', for the man who speaks to Mae possesses Kalden's grey-white hair and wears Ty's hoodie.[678] Here, Eggers invites readers to question which entity most closely resembles the true, authentic Ty in his novel. Is it the socially inept business founder; is it the alluring, socially conscionable saboteur; or is it a hybrid of these two figures, of the man Ty is known to be in *The Circle*'s story-world at large and the man he specifically behaves as on the Circle's campus, that literalisation of the social media landscape? Ultimately, Eggers does not resolve this tension, and in its unresolvedness this tension highlights how social media avatars problematise the notion of authentic selves online, for it is difficult to discern whether social media avatars depict their users as they truly are or if they instead constitute post-truthful representations of desired selves.

Ty's adoption of the Kalden avatar confuses and frustrates Mae, who sees Kalden as the Circle's antithesis. Founded on the principle that its users must act 'as [their selves], as [their] actual [selves], as [their] TruYou' when using its services, the Circle is centred on the free exchange of data, user authenticity, and transparency.[679] Indeed, this latter principle informs the glass-dominated architecture of the Circle's campus, in which diners appear as if they are 'eating in mid-air' when using the nine-levelled glass cafeteria, visible from all angles.[680] As such, Kalden's elusiveness, equivocality, and the fact that he ostensibly does not have a TruYou account stand out to Mae, who initially suspects that he is 'some kind of corporate spy'.[681] The Kalden avatar subsequently generates three feelings in Mae, the first of which is a feeling of curiousness. Mid-way through *The Circle*'s main narrative, she views him as an enigma, 'trusting him, though knowing how wrong [that is], trusting […] a man she couldn't find, whose full name she didn't know', and, in noting that 'total non-communication in a place like the Circle was

[678] Eggers, *The Circle*, p. 478.
[679] Eggers, *The Circle*, p. 21.
[680] Eggers, *The Circle*, p. 15.
[681] Eggers, *The Circle*, p. 92.

so difficult', expresses that Kalden's frequent silences make him an anomaly within the context of the company's campus, a puzzle to be solved.[682] Later in *The Circle*'s main narrative, his incongruousness and mysteriousness instil in Mae a sense of obsessiveness. This first becomes apparent in how she and Annie – her friend and fellow Circle employee – often exchange messages that focus on locating Kalden, and it culminates in an episode in which Mae, intoxicated from drinking sake, spends forty-five minutes late one evening 'look[ing] again for Kalden [online], spelling his name in new and irrational ways, scanning […] the company directory by face, [and] finding no one like him at all'.[683] Here, Mae's fruitless persistence attests her feelings of obsessiveness, whereas her uncharacteristic late-night drunkenness highlights the disruption that the Kalden avatar has placed on Mae's behaviour. Bookending these feelings of curiosity and obsessiveness, however, is frustration, for Mae reflects that Kalden's elusiveness 'was approaching annoying by [the] Wednesday [after she had last seen him] and exasperating by [the] Thursday', whereas she also remarks that '[h]e had no right to disappear' from her life in such a flippant fashion.[684] Eggers encapsulates Mae's feelings using a metaphor or '[a] black rip, [a] black tear' through which she hears 'the screams of millions of invisible souls'.[685] It is precisely the Kalden avatar's hyperreality that is the source of Mae's distress, for although it represents a real, physical entity, the entity's identity cannot be fully nor reliably discerned. Here, Eggers therefore dramatizes how social media avatars pose a threat to truth through their blurring of the real and the unreal, a blurring which disorients other social media users to the point that they cannot effectively judge for certain whether the claims they encounter online are veracious or not, thus paving the way for alternative means of evaluation, including a statement's emotional appeal or its confirmation of beliefs, to take hold.

Despite the discomfort that the Kalden avatar elicits in her, Mae likewise utilises a social media avatar throughout *The Circle*. From the outset of the narrative, she

[682] Eggers, *The Circle*, p. 223; p. 234.
[683] Eggers, *The Circle*, p. 334.
[684] Eggers, *The Circle*, p. 172; p. 195.
[685] Eggers, *The Circle*, p. 195; p. 196.

embodies what Abigail De Kosnik identifies as the intrinsic performativity of social media use.[686] This is apparent in *The Circle*'s opening pages, in which she walks through the Circle's campus on her first day working for the company, 'trying to look as if she belonged', and reminds herself to '[*s*]*mile*' at a new colleague.[687] Although these reactions may be read as Mae simply feeling nervous about starting a new job, they reveal that as soon as she enters a campus that acts as a metaphor for the social media landscape, Mae automatically projects a desired representation of herself, an avatar that depicts her as a good Circle employee. The manifestation of this avatar, however, is not something that Mae consistently employs early in her time with the Circle. Following a digital message from her manager requesting a quick chat, Mae replies with '[*h*]*ow about in fifteen? I* […] *haven't peed since noon*', a comment which the main narrative attests 'was the truth'.[688] Following her manager's curt reply, '*Thank you Mae*', Mae questions whether he was 'thanking her for being available in fifteen minutes, or thanking her, grimly, for an unwanted level of hygienic intimacy', thus indicating that Mae is starting to realise that being her authentic self may not be advantageous nor desired within the confines of the Circle.[689]

This moment of revelation is a turning point for Mae, who later intentionally employs an avatar-like persona for professional and personal gain. When Gina, a member of the 'CircleSocial' department, mildly reprimands Mae for not maintaining a strong social media presence since starting at the Circle, activity on which is seen 'as integral to [her] participation here', Mae consciously employs a desired presentation of herself.[690] Initially, Mae's response to Gina's reprimanding is authentic, claiming that she has 'been pretty overwhelmed so far' by her new job.[691] When this brings Gina to frown, however, Mae 'backtrack[s], masking her miscalculation with a laugh', and claims that

[686] Abigail De Kosnik, 'Is Twitter a Stage?: Theories of Social Media Platforms as Performance Spaces', in *#identity: Hashtagging Race, Gender, Sexuality, and Nation*, ed. by Abigail De Kosnik and Keith P. Feldman (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2019), pp. 20-35.
[687] Eggers, *The Circle*, p. 1; p. 7.
[688] Eggers, *The Circle*, p. 90.
[689] Eggers, *The Circle*, p. 90.
[690] Eggers, *The Circle*, p. 94.
[691] Eggers, *The Circle*, p. 94.

she has been too busy to do 'extracurricular stuff', a warped version of the truth that presents Mae as a diligent worker rather than somebody struggling with the demands of a new job.[692] This does not appease Gina, who asserts that social media use is 'certainly not extracurricular', which brings Mae to apologise twice, first because she alleges that she 'didn't mean to imply that [social media use] was extracurricular. I actually think it's central', and second because she 'misstated [her] feelings'.[693] In this short exchange, Mae abandons her authentic self in favour of a self that is desired insofar as it presents her as a compliant employee whose sensibilities align with those of the Circle. Although inauthentic, the employment of this avatar is advantageous for Mae. Not only does it enable her to successfully navigate her conversation with Gina and evade further admonishment, but, as noted by Jennifer Gouck, given that 'participation in [social media] influences an employee's job performance and position of esteem within the office' at the Circle, it generates professional success for Mae.[694] This success is measured by Mae's 'Participation Rank', an algorithm that gamifies and rewards her social media activity, with each 'zing' (a social media posting akin to a tweet), comment, and photo posted garnering her more and more acclaim.[695] Kian Bahktari argues that the hyperreality of digital media brings people to 'derive equal meaning and value from the simulated world' as they do from the physical world.[696] Eggers' novel extrapolates from this, for Mae's Participation Rank brings her to derive a greater sense of value from the digital world than she does from the physical one, as seen in how she heeds comments made by strangers online over those made by her parents or ex-boyfriend, Mercer, in the analogue world. The personal and professional success that Mae's avatar brings her consequently sees her engage with social media in an obsessive manner, often zinging, commenting, and smiling (the equivalent of a Facebook like) late into the evening and

[692] Eggers, *The Circle*, p. 94.
[693] Eggers, *The Circle*, p. 94; p. 95.
[694] Jennifer Gouck, 'The Viewer Society: "New Panopticism", Surveillance, and the Body in Dave Eggers' *The Circle*', *IJAS Online*, 7 (2018), 57-64 (p. 59).
[695] Eggers, *The Circle*, p. 100.
[696] Kian Bahktari, 'Welcome To Hyperreality: Where The Physical And Virtual Worlds Converge', *Forbes*, 30 Dec 2020 <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kianbakhtiari/2021/12/30/welcome-to-hyperreality-where-the-physical-and-virtual-worlds-converge/?sh=6f81411b5028> [accessed 6 May 2023].

bringing herself to 'a near-complete sense of exhaustion'.[697] A sense of performativity pervades this social media activity; not only does Mae zing for the sake of zinging so that her Participation Rank increases, but she vapidly signs a petition denouncing a Guatemalan paramilitary group because she 'needed to make a stand', while in full knowledge that 'untold thousands of SeeChange watchers were seeing her do it'.[698] Mae's political involvement is of course feckless; although she is 'the 19,282nd [person] to send a frown to the paramilitaries', the petition organiser had not yet figured out a way to send her disapproval to them.[699] This does not matter to Mae. She quickly dismisses the possibility that she has 'made a group of powerful enemies in Guatemala' and instead revels in the 'self-awareness and […] sense of power she could wield' by virtue of having her social media activity watched.[700] This is characteristically post-truthful, for Mae's use of a social media avatar sees her prioritise the acclaim it receives and the positive feelings this elicits in her while relegating the facts it generates – the consequences of her actions – to a secondary importance.

As a consequence of her successful employment of a social media avatar, Mae goes 'transparent' in the main narrative's final third, a process by which almost all of her waking moments are live-streamed via a small, wearable camera.[701] Following this, she lives a carefully curated existence to give unseen millions an insight into the inner workings of the Circle, an offering augmented by 'occasional directions' made via a tiny earpiece by the company's 'Additional Guidance' team.[702] As such, Mae completely embodies her social media avatar outside of the social media landscape, thus inverting what Sherry Turkle identifies as the reconstruction of users' 'identities on the other side of the looking glass' when taking part in virtual communities: whereas social media avatars typically empower users to redefine their identities in a digital space, Mae's

[697] Eggers, *The Circle*, p. 191.
[698] Eggers, *The Circle*, p. 243.
[699] Eggers, *The Circle*, p. 243.
[700] Eggers, *The Circle*, p. 243.
[701] Eggers, *The Circle*, p. 307.
[702] Eggers, *The Circle*, p. 308.

social media avatar brings her to reshape her identity in the analogue world.[703] This performativity is evident throughout *The Circle*'s conclusion. In one scene, Mae pauses to observe some of her colleagues playing croquet, smiling in full knowledge of her digital visibility even though 'in her skull, all was chaos'; in another, she continues working at her Customer Experience job for a few hours a week in spite of the stardom being transparent affords her because it is 'a very moving act of humility'; and in another still she 'become[s] practiced in waiting before speaking – transparency had taught her to measure every word', a skill that she exercises when having a fraught conversation with Annie.[704] These instances illustrate Mae's total embodiment of her social media avatar, which dramatizes the finding made by Gunwoo Yoon and Patrick T. Vargas that '[i]dentification with an avatar is correlated with avatar-consistent behaviour in the real world' and thus characterises Eggers' novel as typically dystopian in that extrapolates contemporaneous trends to extreme ends.[705] Indeed, whereas Yoon and Vargas found that identifying with avatars influences users' real-world behaviours, *The Circle* presents a scenario in which identification with an avatar completely displaces a user's authentic behaviour and brings into question whether anything they do can be said to represent their true identity or not.

As summarised above, *The Circle* is most commonly interpreted as a warning of social media's potential empowerment of totalitarianism or of the threat social media poses to privacy, trends which suggest that Eggers' warning of social media avatars' destabilisation of truth has been largely overlooked. *The Circle*'s Written and Read Endotexts offer a corrective to this, for those that take the form of the social media messages that Mae sends and receives highlight her avataristic performance as a perfect Circle employee, thus crystallising the novel's thematic preoccupation with social media avatars' blurring of the real and not real. This is apparent in an exchange held between Mae and Annie that centres around the former's fling with Kalden. After Mae tells Annie

[703] Sherry Turkle, *Life on Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), p. 177.
[704] Eggers, *The Circle*, p. 322; p. 324; p. 407.
[705] Gunwoo Yoon and Patrick T. Vargas, 'Know Thy Avatar: The Unintended Effect of Virtual-Self Representation on Behavior', *Psychological Science*, 25.4 (2014), 1043-1045 (p. 1043).

about her latest liaison with him, Annie, who is consistently anxious about the threat Kalden's elusiveness poses to Mae's safety and the Circle's security, asks her friend if she '*got his last name this time?*' and insists that she '[*s*]*end*[*s*] [*her*] *a picture*' of him.[706] In response to the question, Mae answers '[*y*]*es*. *I know all*', but expresses that she '[*c*]*an't tell*' Annie what it is.[707] Eggers' Written Endotext foregrounds the impact avataristic behaviour has on truth claim production, for Mae does not know Kalden's surname, thus refiguring her response as a convenient fabrication that presents her as a responsible Circle employee insofar as she alleges to have gained credible information that may allay the concern that Kalden is a corporate spy. Mae maintains this desirable presentation of her self in her response to Annie's demand, replying '[*n*]*o* [*I won't send you a picture of him*]*. But I have one* […]*. I did a facial-rec and it all connects* [*to his TruYou account*]'.[708] This Written Endotext likewise emphasises the truth-indifference that embodying a social media avatar may cause. Although Mae's claim to have a photo of Kalden is true, it is 'only [of] his right arm, from the elbow to his fingertips', and so her assertion that she was able to conduct a facial recognition scan is intentionally misleading.[709] For Mae, this fabrication is doubly convenient, for it not only presents her as a responsible Circle employee, but she also believes it will 'buy her more time – more time to rise and fall on Kalden'.[710] As such, Mae's embodiment of a social media avatar sees her consciously blur real and not real information that constructs a desirable representation of her identity that intentionally, covertly, deceives her close friend.

A later sequence of Written and Read Endotexts foregrounds how the performativity of adopting a social media avatar can bring individuals to present as natural behaviours that for them are unnatural. The sequence of Written and Read Endotexts in question relates to the messages sent by Mae, her Australian client Edward, and his daughter Helena. After resolving a customer experience query for Edward, Mae

[706] Eggers, *The Circle*, p. 248; p. 249.
[707] Eggers, *The Circle*, p. 248; p. 249.
[708] Eggers, *The Circle*, p. 249.
[709] Eggers, *The Circle*, p. 246; p. 249.
[710] Eggers, *The Circle*, p. 246; p. 249.

signs up to his professional mailing list and becomes friends with his personal Circle profile, therefore upholding the company's stance on digital openness and, following a brief exchange with him, wraps up by expressing '*say hello to all in Melbourne*'.[711] Mae's friendliness and overfamiliarity belies that she and Edward are essentially strangers, suggesting that her upholding of the Circle's values brings her to behave inauthentically. Such inauthenticity, however, generates subsequent pressure for Mae, for Edward and Helena pester her over a couple of hours for her continued support and engagement, asking her to sign a petition, to '*put in a good word*' for Helena at the Circle's recruitment offices, and to '*look at* [*Helena's*] *site sometime soon*' because it contains essays the would-be Circle employee hopes would help her to secure a job at the company.[712] Only once Edward messages that Helena is '*a bit upset now*' and brings Mae's character into question when he reassures her that she '*wouldn't intentionally mess with* [*Helena's*] *head, you know, promising to help and then ignoring her*' does she yield and seek to preserve her avatar's constructed identity.[713] Mae's response is as follows:

> Mae went to Helena's site, read one of the essays, congratulated her, told her it was brilliant, and sent out a zing telling everyone that Helena from Melbourne/New Mexico was a voice to be reckoned with, and that they should support her work in any way they could.[714]

Notwithstanding the fact that it follows a direct challenge to Mae's desired representation of her self, several aspects of her response and how it is narrated suggest that it is performative. First, the summation of Mae's reply, the fact that it is reported and not co-present endotextually despite responding to a sequence of endotexts, establishes a sense of emotional disconnect that suggests it is a perfunctory reply

[711] Eggers, *The Circle*, p. 373.
[712] Eggers, *The Circle*, p. 373; p. 375.
[713] Eggers, *The Circle*, p. 375; p. 376.
[714] Eggers, *The Circle*, p. 376.

instead of one that is genuinely meant. Second, the syndetic list that comprises Mae's reply creates the impression that engaging with and supporting Helena is not something that she naturally wants to do, but that it is instead a laborious task she feels compelled to complete in order to keep her avatar intact. Last, the escalatory structure of Mae's reply evinces its performativity. She begins with a small gesture – visiting Helena's account – and concludes with a hyperbolic call to arms – imploring her mass following to likewise help Helena – with each successive step in between increasing in size. Here, Mae does not simply support Helena; she makes a public show of doing so, thus presenting to the social media landscape at large that she is a friendly, philanthropic individual despite her genuine reluctance to be as such. Mae is not intrinsically a generous, supportive character, but she finds it advantageous for the world at large to think she is, which necessitates the construction of a social media avatar whose actions run counter to the natural behaviour of the figure it represents. With this being the case, Eggers obfuscates Mae's true identity. Given that this obfuscation is made apparent by *The Circle*'s endotexts, Eggers' novel cuts through its own competing emphases to suggest that its chief warning lies not in social media's capacity to empower totalitarianism, nor in its encroachment of privacy, but how in, extratextually, everyday users of social media may destabilise truth by opting to present themselves in desirable fashions.

The Circle demonstrates that social media avatars empower users to behave or be perceived in ways that they find desirable. For Ty, adopting the Kalden persona allows him to covertly stifle the Circle's progression so that he may avoid the guilt of founding a totalitarian force, whereas for Mae, the guise of a perfect Circle employee garners her professional gain the more she dons it, ultimately 'allow[ing] [her] to feel that she matters' as she attempts to suppress the 'black tear' that torments her.[715] These emotions are prioritised over the presentation of authentic selves, which subsequently frames the social media avatar as a post-truth self that destabilises truth

[715] Herman, 'More, Huxley, Eggers, and the Utopian/Dystopian Tradition', p. 192; Eggers, *The Circle*, p. 195.

on social media. If, after all, one cannot ascertain for certain whether an entity on social media is a totally faithful representation of its user, a complete fabrication that bears no resemblance to its user, or is something between these two possibilities, then one cannot ascertain for certain whether the claims made by these entities are true insofar as they accurately represent their users' genuine beliefs and identities, or if they are simply claims made in order to present those entities in ways that their users desire. This conundrum may be 'shocking [and] ego-disruptive' for readers who, given that the metafictionality of *The Circle*'s endotexts 'explore[s] the possible fictionality of the world outside the literary fictional text', are alerted to the possibility that the truth claims they encounter online may similarly blur the real and the not real.[716] This unsettling, bliss-evoking reorientation is elicited by *The Circle*'s writerliness, for its inclusion of endotexts requires that readers must navigate a myriad of texts, each operating at different levels of embeddedness, in order to uncover meaning. Once they have done so, they are alerted to how the hyperreal blurring of the real and not real that is brought about by the social media landscape at large and the social media avatar in particular denies users stable footing from which they can assess truth claims online. With truth so profoundly destabilised, social media users are instead encouraged to use the next best criteria when it comes to judging a claim's veracity: its emotional appeal. This is why the social media avatar especially contributes to the intensified post-truth condition of the twenty-first century, for it not only empowers individual users to engage in post-truthful behaviours as they present themselves online, but it also destabilises truth to the extent that other social media users will – rather than complete the arduous task of sifting through the real and not real to evaluate claims – prioritise emotional appeal, thus relegating the importance of an already destabilised characteristic, veracity, further. By evoking an '*excess of pleasure*' through insisting that readers become active participants in the interpretive process, Eggers' novel instructs them to retain and exercise their criticality when faced with truth claims online, be not so easily persuaded by appeals to

[716] Jane Gallop, 'Beyond the Jouissance Principle', *Representations*, 7 (1984), 110-115 (p. 111); Waugh, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction*, p. 2.

emotion, and ultimate see through the prevalence of post-truth that characterises the hyperreal landscape that is social media.[717]

Part Three: Digital Dualism and Anonymous Trolling in *Perfidious Albion*

Byers' *Perfidious Albion* constitutes a twofold response to the newly heightened state of post-truth. Set in Edmundsbury, a fictional town in eastern England that is of particular interest to a technological corporation named Green, *Perfidious Albion* paints a 'portrait of a post-Brexit England in turmoil'.[718] Here, Byers satirises through Hugo Bennington – a 'vocal rising member of [the far-right] England Always' Party – the misleadingly affective and ultimately divisive rhetoric that characterised the post-truthful qualities of the Brexit "Leave" campaign.[719] Second, Byers responds to the newly heightened state of post-truth by dramatizing the prevalence of post-truth on digital and social medias. Much of the novel's main narrative details the blogposts and comments that characters write, the emails they send, and the tweets they make, emphasising how these texts respond to, encourage, or are made by anonymous trolls. Defined as 'the act of posting inflammatory, derogatory or provocative messages in public forums', anonymous trolling is a doubly post-truthful act.[720] First, it sees its actors – trolls – deprioritise communicating truthfully in both the sense that their messages may not be rooted in facts and also in the sense that their messages may not genuinely reflect their beliefs. Instead, trolls communicate with the intention of targeting other internet users' emotions and drawing them into debate. Second, the anonymity – or pseudoanonymity, in instances where they communicate via a consistent persona – afforded to trolls allows them to disseminate desirable claims (i.e., because they enjoy antagonising or offending others) because they can shrug off an inconvenient truth that would otherwise force

[717] Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, p. 14.
[718] Seán Hewitt, 'Perfidious Albion review: satire on post-Brexit Britain bristles with energy', *The Irish Times*, 4 August 2018 <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/perfidious-albion-review-satire-on-post-brexit-britain-bristles-with-energy-1.3580977> [accessed 20 August 2023].
[719] Sam Byers, *Perfidious Albion* (London: Faber & Faber, 2018), p. 24.
[720] Julie Zhuo, 'Where Anonymity Breeds Contempt', *The New York Times*, 29 November 2010 <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/30/opinion/30zhuo.html> [accessed 27 August 2023].

them to face the repercussions of their actions: their identity. Trolling is therefore post-truthful because it sees internet users relegate facts to a secondary importance relative to the affectiveness and desirability of their claims.

Perfidious Albion's dramatization of anonymous internet trolling will be examined in this section. This will centre on the character of Jess, a researcher whose work focuses on how gender identities manifest in online spaces. To begin, I will analyse how Jess becomes a victim to anonymous trolling. Characterised by intense misogyny and threats of sexual and physical violence, I draw on John Suler's work on the online disinhibition effect to argue that *Perfidious Albion* dramatizes how anonymity permits trolls to behave post-truthfully. Second, I will turn attention to how Jess later becomes a pseudonymous internet troll as she seeks to enact revenge on men. Here, I will claim that Byers highlights the truth-indifferent and affective qualities of trolling, for Jess's trollish claims are made according to the emotions she can inflict upon her victims, or according to the emotions they bring her to feel. In concluding, I will draw on Nathan Jurgenson's 'digital dualism' fallacy, which I identify as an extension of Baudrillard's hyperreality, to claim that *Perfidious Albion* suggests that humankind is naturally inclined towards behaving post-truthfully and that social and digital medias merely facilitate these tendencies, a blissful intervention which requires a re-examination of the assumption that '[s]ocial media companies [are] discursive villains' under today's new levels of post-truth.[721]

Early in *Perfidious Albion*'s main narrative, Jess recalls how she fell victim to internet trolling after she had 'published a piece of research on masculine identity within online gaming culture'.[722] The attack was led by Stefan Ziegler, a so-called thinker with a reputation for publishing 'thinly veiled troll-pieces masquerading as mathematical insights' and abusing the 'trendy garbs of big data' to put forward inflammatory claims.[723] Ziegler, Jess recalls, rebutted her research, arguing that 'the hyper-

[721] Nathan Jurgenson, 'Digital Dualism versus Augmented Reality', *Cyborgology*, 24 February 2011 <https://thesocietypages.org/cyborgology/2011/02/24/digital-dualism-versus-augmented-reality/> [accessed 27 August 2023]; Farkas and Schou, *Post-Truth, Fake News and Democracy*, p. 99.
[722] Byers, *Perfidious Albion*, p. 56.
[723] Byers, *Perfidious Albion*, p. 56.

masculinised and essentially misogynistic culture of online gaming' was proof that society 'should in fact strive towards *less* equality in the name of productivity', an argument that offensively misappropriated Jess's work.[724] Cognizant of trolls' 'rhetorical strategy of drawing people into an argument and then accusing them of becoming "emotional"', Jess subsequently published a counter-article that deconstructed Ziegler's misuse of her research, coolly couching her argument in data.[725] Here, Byers draws attention to a key technique used by internet trolls, for although Jess is careful to avoid arguing in emotional terms, she invites further trolling by engaging in debate with Ziegler at all, for he decontextualises and distorts Jess's counter-article on his blog. Debate, *Perfidious Albion* suggests, is precisely what trolls desire – engaging with them in any form only stokes their malicious flames.

It is Ziegler's second misappropriation of Jess's research that is especially harmful for her. This deconstruction of her work received attention from 'raging gamer man-children and men's rights activists who'd read in Ziegler's earlier piece a long-awaited anti-feminist rallying cry'.[726] Afterwards, Jess receives a deluge of abuse online, including tweets threatening her with 'everything from professional disgrace to rape and death', her mobile number and email and home addresses being exposed, and anonymised men posting across the internet photos of themselves 'standing on her street or even outside her house'.[727] Byers presents instances of this anonymous trolling via Read Endotexts that Jess reads out to her partner, Robert. '*I've got a crowbar I'm gonna bring round your house and shove up your fucking cunt you fenimist* [sic] *bitch*', reads one.[728] '*Good luck getting raped you ugly fat whore*', reads another.[729] '*Enjoy your last hours alive, cunt*', reads a third.[730] These vile messages are suffused with rampant misogyny, threats of physical and sexual violence, and expletives, which in tandem affords the messages

[724] Byers, *Perfidious Albion*, p. 56; p. 57.
[725] Byers, *Perfidious Albion*, p. 57.
[726] Byers, *Perfidious Albion*, p. 57.
[727] Byers, *Perfidious Albion*, p. 57.
[728] Byers, *Perfidious Albion*, p. 58.
[729] Byers, *Perfidious Albion*, p. 58.
[730] Byers, *Perfidious Albion*, p. 58.

with a heightened affectiveness that seeks to cause Jess distress by targeting her gender. These endotexts, I contend, see Byers begin to highlight how internet anonymity permits users to behave post-truthfully, for there is no evidence that the sender of the first message possesses a crowbar, let alone that they will sexually assault Jess with it; there is little evidence to support the second message's claim that Jess is unattractive and overweight; there is nothing that suggests that Jess will imminently die. Instead, these truth-indifferent threats seek to elicit a negative emotional response from Jess that their senders wish to inflict upon her, thus characterising them as post-truthful. Although misogynistic hatred also occurs offline, the sheer quantity and intensity of abuse Jess receives is unique to online settings. John Suler claims that internet anonymity is a cause for this, arguing that anonymity brings internet users to dissociate from their typical behaviours, resulting in an online disinhibition effect that causes them to behave in radical, extreme ways.[731] Julie Zhuo echoes Suler's finding, explaining that where social media users post under their own names, 'the knowledge that what [they] say may be seen by the people [they] know is a big deterrent to trollish behavior [sic]' and so in instances where users' social media posts are divorced from their identities, this inhibiting factor is removed.[732] As such, the examples of the trolling Jess receives begins to suggest that it is precisely because the trolls are anonymous that they feel able to act post-truthfully, freed from their offline identities and the pressures of behaving in socially permissible ways.

Jess's subsequent trollish behaviour reinforces the point that internet anonymity stimulates acting post-truthfully. Desperate to retaliate against Ziegler, she creates 'a blank Twitter account from which she called [him] a cunt', an act which provides her with 'an initial thrill' that fades to a 'sense of shame, a suspicion that she had […] *been* reduced by a situation she should have resisted or evaded', thus dramatizing both Suler's online disinhibition effect and Zhuo's argument that social pressures – which Jess's sense of shame suggests she has internalised – act as a barrier to trollish

[731] John Suler, 'The Online Disinhibition Effect', *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, 7.3 (2004), 321-326.
[732] Zhuo, 'Where Anonymity Breeds Contempt'.

behaviours.[733] Ziegler, however, responds in a way that Jess does not expect, opting to block her, 'rendering [her] new anonymous Twitter account effectively useless', which brings Jess to realise that '[o]nline violence […] was a more sophisticated endeavour than she had initially envisaged'.[734] This realisation prompts Jess to create various internet personae in her quest to enact revenge against internet misogynists, the most notable of which are named Byron Stroud and Julia Benjamin.

Byron Stroud – a persona whose very initials evoke the term "bullshit" – is regarded as 'the man you needed to know if you wanted to give the impression of knowing the right people', a reputation afforded to him by his 'rise through the opinion-sphere', the rapidity of which was triggered by his online commentary that almost exclusively focuses on the opinion-sphere.[735] Naturally, Stroud refuses to make public appearances and does not reply to emails from admirers and would-be collaborators, thus affording the persona an elusiveness that elevates its reputation and renders Stroud a symbol of exclusivity, a position that many of the narrative's commentators desire. This symbolism is evident in the emails – co-present as Read Endotexts – that the Stroud persona receives from male commentators: one asks for '[*a*] *drink soon*', another suggests '[*l*]*et us meet soon*', and a third, written by Jess's partner Robert, expresses in a particularly self-deprecating email '*how nice it would be to meet up sometime*'.[736] A sense of desperation permeates each message, which begins to refigure the creation of the Stroud persona as an act of trolling. In establishing an elusive, desirable persona who has no offline referent, Jess targets male commentators' emotions and fragile egos simply for the sake of targeting their emotions and fragile egos. This point is underscored by a later email sent to Stroud by Robert. In this Read Endotext, Robert begs Stroud to offer '*all successful and notable male commentators*' his public support in the face of Julia Benjamin's hostility (discussed below).[737] Jess revels in the thought of

[733] Byers, *Perfidious Albion*, p. 60.
[734] Byers, *Perfidious Albion*, p. 60.
[735] Byers, *Perfidious Albion*, p. 7.
[736] Byers, *Perfidious Albion*, p. 35.
[737] Byers, *Perfidious Albion*, p. 245.

'[those] frightened little men' whose 'biggest fear was insignificance itself', thus suggesting that the Stroud persona's inactivity in spite of its illustrious reputation is designed to instil further fear and insecurity in Julia Benjamin's targets, thus achieving the core aim of trolling through unconventional means – malicious inactivity rather than malicious activity.[738] Endotextually dramatized, this depiction of trolling starts to raise questions around identity and reputation, asking real-world readers whether online personalities – especially those with a minimal offline presence – ought to believed and trusted.

Byers more clearly illustrates the online disinhibition effect engendered by internet anonymity through Jess's Julia Benjamin persona. Primarily manifesting in online articles' comments sections, Benjamin's trolling is typified by *ad hominem* attacks that target male commentators, including Jess's partner, Robert. Co-present within the main narrative as a Minor Read Endotext, Benjamin's commentary typically lambasts Robert for 'his baffled, ageing technophobia; his dewy-eyed romanticisation of a rose-tinted working class; and his determination […] to make himself the heart and focus of every cause', a thorough character assassination that Robert describes as a 'bloodbath'.[739] By eliciting this emotive response, Byers' Minor Read Endotext foregrounds how trolls' truth claims draw their targets into a realm of irrationality that decentres their logical and critical faculties, for Robert is unable to deconstruct Benjamin's assault. Such contempt for Robert, Jess reflects, is warranted by how he dismissed the trolling she received from Ziegler's followers by asserting that '[e]veryone gets hate on the internet', and also in how 'his success had its roots in her harrassment', for Robert achieves prominence as a commentator after he writes an article about the misogynistic abuse she had received.[740] Curiously, Jess and Robert's offline relationship is permeated with a sense of precarious serenity, for although the 'opportunity for an

[738] Byers, *Perfidious Albion*, p. 245.
[739] Byers, *Perfidious Albion*, p. 20. This example of Benjamin's trolling pushes the limits of endotextuality's fundamental co-presence, for although Robert quotes from her writing, it exists only as this quotation and does not appear in its full, unmediated form.
[740] Byers, *Perfidious Albion*, p. 58; p. 63.

argument would present itself' often within their household, the couple would 'weigh up the extent' to which they want to fight before opting to 'simply move on'.[741] As such, the vitriol Jess publishes under the Julia Benjamin persona highlights the freeing, disinhibiting qualities brought about by internet anonymity, for it permits her to behave in ways she feels she cannot offline. Furthermore, it also suggests that trolling may function as a 'safety valve' that offers Jess a sense of relief from her overwhelming negative emotions, thus foregrounding the affective qualities of trolling: Jess anonymously trolls her partner, causes him anguish, and – even though he had 'quite demonstrably, been there for her when she needed him' – enacts revenge on him purely because it makes her feel good.[742]

Later in the main narrative, Julia Benjamin's trolling of Robert departs from his articles' comments section and finds a new home in Benjamin's own website, '*Mapping the Morons: An Ecosystem of Masculine Opinion*' – a name which exemplifies the ad hominem attacks that typify the Benjamin persona's trolling.[743] Moreover, its introduction reveals that 'she would be *mapping* (her term) the connections between apparently disparate expressions of self-serving white male opinion and then extrapolating what she called an *ecosystem*' that would include everyone from Robert, to 'Stefan Ziegler to Jacques DeCoverley [– the editor of the website Robert writes articles for –] to Rogue Statement [– a group of anonymous male wannabe theorists –] and back again', thus illustrating how Jess uses the Julia Benjamin persona to not only enact revenge on the men who have specifically wronged her, but on all men within her offline and online networks.[744] For Robert, who had previously prided himself on being 'broadly left-of-centre', being associated with right-wing intellectuals is particularly troublesome, for '[m]uch of the noise in [his] head concerned Julia Benjamin', who had become 'a full-tilt roar, a near-symphonic distraction'.[745] Byers' aural metaphor particularly evokes a

[741] Byers, *Perfidious Albion*, p. 55.
[742] Byers, *Perfidious Albion*, p. 63.
[743] Byers, *Perfidious Albion*, p. 200.
[744] Byers, *Perfidious Albion*, p. 223; p. 224.
[745] Byers, *Perfidious Albion*, p. 224; p. 223.

post-truthful aspect of internet trolling, for it demonstrates how trolls' truth-indifferent, inflammatory claims produce noise that contributes to the digital landscape's information abundance while simultaneously targeting individuals' emotions, thus evoking a sense of overwhelm that brings targets to respond in similarly emotional terms. In other words, *Perfidious Albion* dramatizes how internet trolling amplifies the post-truth condition because it plays a game played according to the rules of affect, rather than facticity.

In an interview with *LSE Review of Books*, Byers claims that he 'was very inspired by Nathan Jurgenson's idea of digital duality' while writing *Perfidious Albion*.[746] For Jurgenson, digital dualism – summarised by Byers as 'the way we kid ourselves that our online and offline lives are separate' – is a fallacy, for 'the digital and physical are increasingly meshed' in the twenty-first century, resulting in an 'augmented reality' comprising both offline and online experiences.[747] In rejecting the distinction between real, physical experiences and unreal, digital experiences, Jurgenson's digital dualism fallacy marks an extension to Baudrillard's hyperreality, thus suggesting that the distinctions between online and offline, real and not real, true and false have been particularly collapsed by social and digital medias in the twenty-first century. *Perfidious Albion*'s main narrative reflects this erosion of barriers. As Jess plans to create Julia Benjamin's website, she remarks that although her trollish personae 'had felt like an expansion' of her own identity, the Julia Benjamin persona was 'increasingly […] dominat[ing]'.[748] Eventually, Julia Benjamin grows strong enough that she 'was no longer [Jess's] outlet. Instead, Jess was merely what remained in Julia's aftermath'.[749] This role-reversal illustrates how the distinction between offline person and online

[746] LSE RB Editor, 'Are We Heading Towards A Digital Dystopia? Q&A with Sam Byers, author of Perfidious Albion', *LSE Review of Books*, 20 February 2019 <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/lsereviewofbooks/2019/02/20/are-we-heading-towards-a-digital-dystopia-qa-with-sam-byers-author-of-perfidious-albion/> [accessed 4 September 2023].
[747] The Quietus, 'Punched Through The Digital Wall: Sam Byers' Perfidious Albion Playlist', *The Quietus*, 27 July 2018 <https://thequietus.com/articles/25044-sam-byers-perfidious-albion-playlist> [accessed 4 September 2023]; Jurgenson, 'Digital Dualism versus Augmented Reality'.
[748] Byers, *Perfidious Albion*, p. 193.
[749] Byers, *Perfidious Albion*, p. 262.

persona has been dismantled, for Jess is Julia and Julia is Jess, the two identities comprising a singular augmented reality.

This enmeshing of online and offline identities is crucial, for it sees Byers suggest that humans are naturally inclined towards behaving post-truthfully. As an internet troll, Jess exhibits a truth-indifferent attitude that prioritises targeting her victims' emotions for the sake of eliciting desirable feelings for herself. This is made possible precisely by the pseudonymity afforded to her by her online personae, for this creates an online disinhibition effect that permits her to behave in extreme ways because she is freed of social pressures and obligations that demand she acts cordially. However, given that Byers rejects the digital dualism fallacy, Jess *is* her online self. Her trolling and the post-truthful behaviours contained therein are not a deviation from who she really is; they instead reflect her true self, a self that the tools of digital and social medias allow her to be without repercussion or consequence. As metafictional devices that reflect outside of the story-world, *Perfidious Albion*'s endotexts offer a blissful intervention that undermines the assumption that '[s]ocial media companies [are] discursive villains' under today's new levels of post-truth.[750] They orient readers to the fact that social media companies do not exacerbate the post-truth condition of the twenty-first century on their own, but rather that they grant internet trolls the tools with which they can get away with further destabilising truth, an intensification brought about by people simply behaving as their true, disinhibited selves. In other words, *Perfidious Albion* suggests that blame for post-truth's entrenchment ought not be placed against social media companies, but should instead be directed to the users of such platforms.

Chapter Conclusion

QualityLand, *The Circle*, and *Perfidious Albion* variously dramatize how digital and social medias further entrench the post-truth condition. Kling's novel demonstrates how social media bots may spread disinformation and legitimise hateful discourses, all the while

[750] Farkas and Schou, *Post-Truth, Fake News and Democracy*, p. 99.

problematising the authenticity of social media users' posts. *The Circle* highlights how social media avatars enable internet users to supress inconvenient aspects of their identities so that they may put forward desirable personae that elicit positive emotional responses for themselves. *Perfidious Albion* brings attention to how internet trolling is predicated upon the deprioritisation of facts and an increased emphasis on making emotive attacks, all of which trolls' anonymity – the post-truthful suppression of their identities – makes possible. Together, these novels present the Fifth Estate as a hyperreal space in which the distinction between offline and online, physical and digital, and true and false are blurred – it is unclear whether Melissa Sex-Worker's social media activity or in-person opinions authentically reflect her; if Ty Gospodinov is a socially inept wunderkind or a sexually assured enigma; or if Jess is more accurately reflected by her domestic placidity or her online aggression. The answer to these ambiguities lies somewhere within their unresolvedness, for therein lies hyperreal blurring and Jurgensonian enmeshment, the result of post-truth run rampant within digital and social media spaces. As such, *QualityLand*, *The Circle*, and *Perfidious Albion* present the Fifth Estate as a post-truth playground. Under this metaphor, bots, avatars, and anonymity become slides, swings, and roundabouts – toys and tools that are ready to be frivolously played with, but that also only catalyse the post-truth condition of the twenty-first century once they *are* played with. Much like how a roundabout will not intentionally rotate unless someone applies force to it, social media avatars do not put forward post-truthful versions of internet users if internet users do not use them. This is why the Fifth-Estate-as-post-truth-playground metaphor is valuable: it suggests that although the tools and capabilities of digital and social medias make post-truth possible, post-truth only manifests online if an internet user enacts it.

The realisation that internet users, rather than the internet itself, bear some responsibility for the intensified post-truth condition of the twenty-first century is by no means straightforward. It depends on real-world readers navigating the interpretive complexities brought about by endotexts, evaluating how these endotexts cut through the various emphases of their main narratives to crystallise their thematic concerns, and

paying attention to how the endotexts encourage extratextual reflection through their inherent metafictionality. Once achieved, however, this realisation generates extratextual bliss. Rather than accepting the assumption that digital and social medias are 'villains in contemporary post-truth worlds', real-world readers are encouraged to see that behind every bot, social media avatar, and anonymous troll is a person whose implementation of these digital tools to spread disinformation, supress desirable truths, and target emotions is every bit as deliberately constructed as the literary dystopias they have read.[751] Although they may not have access to the real-world internet users responsible for heightening the post-truth condition of the twenty-first century in these ways, nor may they know for certain why they do so, simply being aware of how post-truth perpetuates within the Fifth Estate is of benefit to real-world readers. It allows them to better identify which social media activity may be made by bots; it allows them to be more wary of how internet users present themselves online; it allows them to more easily avoid being drawn in to debate with trolls; it allows them, ultimately, to be less readily deceived by the hyperreal blurring of true and false while using digital and social medias, so that they may better recognise the difference between what is true and what others *want* them to *think* is true, an important distinction that better enables readers to navigate the current moment's crisis of post-truth.

Crucially, the extratextual bliss generated by literary dystopias' endotextual dramatizations of the strategies used online to further entrench post-truth's pervasiveness may also bring real-world readers to reflect on their own behaviours. How, these endotexts ask, might they likewise be responsible for post-truth's increased prevalence and persuasiveness? This is a question that is repeatedly asked by the literary dystopias – and their endotexts – that are under discussion in the next chapter, which turns attention to how laypeople may bear responsibility for the intensification of, and possible diminishing of, the post-truth condition of the twenty-first century.

[751] Farkas and Schou, *Post-Truth, Fake News and Democracy*, p. 57.

Chapter Five: Laypeople, Post-Truthful Collusion, and Relativism

Introduction

The deliberate intensification of the post-truth condition is typically regarded as a strategy enacted by the powerful upon the powerless, the purpose of which is to gain, maintain, or exert control. This assumption underpins arguments made by Gabriele Cosentino, who remarks that post-truth 'can be observed in […] the political communication and influence strategies based on manipulation and deception by State and non-State actors'; Stuart Sim, who notes that 'authoritarian regimes in general have made extensive use of post-truth to maintain their grip on power, as can be seen in the various fascist and communist governments that held sway over the course of much of the twentieth century'; and David Block, who discusses how misinformation campaigns have been 'organised by tobacco companies in the United States, which aimed to obfuscate debate and befuddle the general public with regard to the well-established links between cigarette smoking and lung disease'.[752] The preceding chapters of this thesis broadly align with this assumption, for they examine how literary dystopias manifest anxieties about how different arbiters of truth – the political leader, the expert, and the Fourth and Fifth Estates – may mislead, misinform, or manipulate their audiences, subsequently heightening the state of post-truth in their respective story-worlds.

This chapter departs from this assumption by examining how literary dystopias present laypeople – i.e., non-elite audience members, proletariats, the *demos* – not as victims or targets within the post-truth condition, but as agents who possess the capacity to either deliberately amplify the post-truth condition or to decrease its persuasiveness and pervasiveness. As such, the following analysis will draw on two concepts: post-truth as collusion and relativism. The first concept borrows from the work of Ignas Kalpokas, who argues that '[p]ost-truth is not manipulation of some sort – it is

[752] Cosentino, *Social Media and the Post-Truth World Order*, p. 3; Sim, *Post-Truth, Scepticism & Power*, p. 50; Block, *Post-Truth and Political Discourse*, p. 35.

collusion', a conclusion that he reaches by considering how members of society present, create, or select information.[753] Kalpokas asserts that contemporary society can be characterised by a competitiveness – citing the job market as a salient example – that demands that ordinary individuals are 'immersed in a series of post-truth games that involve weaving narratives out of statements and (re)presentations that are made in order to induce a desired result rather than due to their relation to verifiable facts' so that they may gain an advantage over their peers.[754] For Kalpokas, post-truthful collusion hinges upon 'aspirational narratives' that empower laypeople to select information based on 'whether one would (or would not) *like* something to be true' and to offer desirable presentations of their selves online.[755]

While post-truthful collusion catalyses the post-truth condition because it sees laypeople prioritise desirability over veracity when assessing and producing truth claims, relativism achieves the same effect through its rejection of objective truths. Ulf Zackariasson summarises relativism as 'say[ing] that there are actually *(too) many truths*, many different local perspectives and approaches that all can claim a limited validity', a summary he calls 'frustrating to many', given the apparent limited validity of numerous competing truth claims.[756] Julian Baggini echoes this, stating that '[t]he relativist argues that there are no *bare facts* only *interpretations of facts*, mediated through culture', before adding that 'ideas concerning what is often called relativism […] are used to question established versions of the truth and [the] power structures' that create them.[757] Relativism is therefore liberating within the context of totalitarian post-truth regimes, for it enables individuals to conceive truths outside of those officially set out by the state and therefore begin to deconstruct the post-truth condition of such regimes.

[753] Kalpokas, *A Political Theory of Post-Truth*, p. 18.
[754] Kalpokas, *A Political Theory of Post-Truth*, p. 15.
[755] Kalpokas, *A Political Theory of Post-Truth*, p. 9; p. 18.
[756] Zackariasson, 'Introduction', p. 3; p. 5.
[757] Baggini, *A Short History of Truth: Consolations for a Post-Truth World*, p. 70; p. 71.

George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), Luke Kennard's *The Transition* (2017), and Yōko Ogawa's *The Memory Police* (1994/2019) are the focal texts for the following examination of how literary dystopias – and, in particular, their endotexts – present laypeople as having the potential to either deliberately intensify or undermine the post-truth conditions of their respective story-worlds. To begin, I examine how Winston Smith, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*'s everyman protagonist, colludes with the Big Brother regime's maintenance of Oceania's post-truth condition through his professional duties at the Ministry of Truth, in which he erases the identity of Comrade Withers and fabricates the existence of Comrade Ogilvy. Drawing on the work of Ignas Kalpokas, I argue that Winston acts as a propagandist, thus collaborating in the co-construction of the very post-truth regime he attempts to rebel against throughout *Nineteen Eighty-Four*'s main narrative. Second, I compare how Orwell and Kennard use Read Endotexts to deceive and ensnare their protagonists. This deception and ensnarement is only possible, however, because the protagonists deceive *themselves* first. This self-deception is evident in how the characters respond to the Read Endotexts' truth claims, for they opt to believe desirable truth claims despite their own professional expertise, thus internalising the post-truth condition. Last, I compare Winston Smith's diary and the unnamed narrator's unnamed manuscript in *The Memory Police* in reference to Jacques Derrida's conception of 'archive fever'. These Written Endotexts, I contend, see their diegetic authors put forward their own truth claims despite the apparent monopolies over truth production that the totalitarian regimes of their story-worlds hold. The creation of these private archives therefore sees characters make truth claims that differ from the 'official' truths of dominant forces, thus suggesting extratextually that relativism offers a means of resisting new levels of post-truth. In total, the interplay between Orwell's, Kennard's, and Ogawa's main narratives and endotexts generate extratextual bliss, for after undertaking the complex interpretive act necessitated by these endotexts, real-world readers are faced with the realisation that they too may bear responsibility for the intensified post-truth condition of the twenty-first century, but that they may also undermine post-truth, de-escalate it, and ultimately safeguard truth.

Part One: Winston's Work as Post-Factual Collusion

Perhaps above all other literary dystopias, George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is the most clearly preoccupied with truth and the danger of affording totalitarian forces an ostensible monopoly over truth-claim production. Through continually rewriting the past as per the regime's needs, the Party's truth-indifferent claims '[pass] into history' and become 'truth'; it tortures dissidents who refuse to accept the truths they fabricate to the extent that they believe that '[a]nything could be true'; and it demands that Oceania's residents practise doublethink, the act of 'be[ing] conscious of complete truthfulness while telling carefully-constructed lies, to hold simultaneously two opinions which cancelled out, knowing them to be contradictory and believing in both of them', thus devaluing truthfulness.[758] Subsequently, it is unsurprising that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* reappeared on bestseller lists following Kellyanne Conway's 'alternative facts' speech in 2017.[759] This section examines one way in particular in which Orwell's novel relates to post-truth's newfound prevalence: Winston Smith's work at the Ministry of Truth, the ministry that serves as the nexus of the Party's post-truth activities in Orwell's story-world. To begin, I will outline the characteristics of the Ministry of Truth that typify its activities as post-truthful, which Orwell underscores through his use of a Read Endotext – a message Winston receives at the Records Department, his place of work within the Ministry of Truth. Second, I will examine Winston's response to this work order by analysing his fabrication of Comrade Ogilvy, a fabrication that sees Winston collude in the Party's maintenance of Oceania's post-truth condition by making him a propagandist. Last, I shall turn attention to Winston's emotional response to his act of collusion, which suggests that he has internalised Oceania's post-truth condition. In concluding, I highlight how the metafictional qualities and writerliness of the Comrade Ogilvy episode evoke bliss by 'unsettl[ing] the reader's […] cultural […] assumptions' about who is

[758] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 40; p. 319; pp. 40-41.
[759] See Kimiko de Freytas-Tamura, 'George Orwell's '1984' Is Suddenly a Best-Seller', *The New York Times*, 25 January 2017 <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/25/books/1984-george-orwell-donald-trump.html> [accessed 24 September 2023].

accountable for catalysing the post-truth condition, for it asks readers to consider the extent to which they may likewise be responsible for colluding in its intensification.[760]

The Ministry of Truth oversees the continuous alteration of 'every kind of literature or documentation which might conceivably hold any political or ideological significance' and the routine deletion of any items that contradict the Party's official stance on any topic, acts which see it supress inconvenient facts and fabricate desirable truth claims.[761] Such wholesale documentary alteration bears three post-truthful characteristics. First, its fabrication of truth claims see it relegate facts to a secondary importance relative to these claims' desirability, i.e., because they present the Party in a positive light. This is evident in how Winston is ordered with altering a document to suggest that the Party's Ministry of Plenty had forecast the production of fifty-seven million pairs of boots, rather than the one hundred and forty-five million it had previously stated, following the supposed production of sixty-two million pairs. Although Winston remarks that this fabrication is 'merely the substitution of one piece of nonsense for another', for it is impossible for anyone to discern how many pairs of boots – if any at all – the Ministry of Plenty had actually produced, it remains that the Ministry of Plenty's ostensible slight overachievement, rather than its enormous underachievement, constitutes a desirable truth claim.[762] Second, the Ministry of Truth's meticulous modification of documents results in 'all records [telling] the same tale', thus establishing what Michael E. Sawyer calls 'an archive […] of self-referential data'.[763] A common tactic used by those who deliberately intensify the post-truth condition, archives of self-referential data create 'network[s] of agreement' that make it more challenging to refute post-truthful claims, for doing so requires would-be dissenters to 'undermine the entire system of knowing rather than questioning a discrete statement', thus affording post-truthful claims a degree of invulnerability.[764] Within the context of

[760] Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, p. 14.
[761] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 47.
[762] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 48.
[763] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 40; Sawyer, 'Post-Truth, Social Media, and the "Real" as Phantasm', p. 56.
[764] Sawyer, 'Post-Truth, Social Media, and the "Real" as Phantasm', p. 56.

Orwell's novel, the Ministry of Truth's thorough rewriting of documents therefore makes it difficult for would-be dissenters to contest the Party's claims, for all official documents support the same fabrications. Finally, post-truth is, at its very core, 'about exerting power and control over others', and this is precisely the case in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.[765] Through the Ministry of Truth's post-truthful activities, the Party has claimed for itself a monopoly on delineating what is and is not true, which in turn affords it ultimate control of Oceania. The Party is all too aware of this, as their slogan '[w]ho controls the past […] controls the future: who controls the present controls the past' makes evident.[766] In Oceania's totalitarian present, the creation of a desirable, alternative past makes anti-Party dissent near-impossible, for there is no way of securely knowing that the Party is fallible, which not only secures their power in the present, but perpetuates it far into the future.

Orwell crystallises the main narrative's preoccupation with the danger of totalitarian forces gaining an ostensible monopoly over truth-claim production through a Read Endotext that takes the form a work message sent to Winston that outlines a job he is to undertake within the Records Department. Written in Newspeak, the message runs:

> *times 3.12.83 reporting bb dayorder doubleplusun-*
> *good refs unpersons rewrite fullwise upsub antefiling*.[767]

Nineteen Eighty-Four's narrator translates the above into Standard English as:

> *The reporting of Big Brother's Order for the Day in the* Times *of December 3rd 1983 is extremely unsatisfactory and makes references to non-existent persons. Re-write it in full and submit your draft to higher authority before filing*.[768]

[765] Sim, *Post-Truth, Scepticism & Power*, p. 14.
[766] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 40.
[767] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 51.
[768] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 51.

The Read Endotext evinces the Party's post-truthful tendencies. By ordering Winston to rewrite a *Times* article that is '*extremely unsatisfactory*' because it '*makes references to non-existent persons*', a degree of truth-indifference is apparent because the Party seeks to supress a seemingly inconvenient fact, namely the existence of Comrade Withers, a formerly 'prominent member of the Inner Party' who had been awarded 'the Order of Conspicuous Merit, Second Class' for his support of Oceania's naval forces.[769] Winston assumes that 'Withers and his associates were now in disgrace', although he 'd[oes] not know why', concluding only that his reference as an '*unperson*' means that '[h]e did not exist: he had never existed'.[770] The demand that Withers's existence is obliterated therefore sees the Party attempt to establish an archive of self-referential data, for it corroborates with how 'there had been no report of [his disgrace] in the press or on the telescreen'.[771] Together, these absent data points suggest not only that there had been no digressions, but that there was nobody who could have digressed in the first place – Withers's existence and subsequent disappearance would have otherwise been at odds with the lack of reportage surrounding his alleged disgrace. Supressing Withers's existence ultimately sees the Party exert and maintain its power over Oceania. In vanquishing documentary evidence of his existence, the Party not only attempts to conceal the atrocities imbued in its vaporisation of dissidents, heretics, and 'too-popular subordinate[s]'; it hides the fact that political unorthodoxy, corruption, or incompetence are possible within the Inner Party, let alone Oceania at large.[772] In suppressing these possibilities, the Party affords itself a sense of unconquerability – if there are no records of the Party's evils or fallibility, then the Party must not be evil or fallible, thus dissuading would-be dissidents from even attempting to resist it.

Through Winston's response to his work orders, Orwell dramatizes post-truthful collusion by taking it to its logical extreme. Winston does not accidentally nor casually

[769] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 51; p. 52.
[770] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 52; p. 53; p. 51; p. 53.
[771] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 52.
[772] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 53.

collaborate in maintaining Oceania's post-truth condition, as individuals might extratextually. Instead, he deliberately and professionally participates in its upkeep by erasing documentary evidence of Comrade Withers and, with space in the *Times* issue to fill, invents Comrade Ogilvy, a citizen of Oceania 'who had recently died in battle, in heroic circumstances'.[773] As noted by Michael Yeo, '[i]n addition to being subject to censorship and propaganda, [Winston] is himself a censor and a propagandist' when he fabricates Comrade Ogilvy's existence.[774] The details included by Winston within his professional fabrication support Yeo's claim. As summarised within the main narrative, Winston explains how Ogilvy 'refused all toys except a drum, a sub-machine gun and a model helicopter' at the age of three, denounced his uncle to the Thought Police 'after overhearing a conversation which appeared to him to have criminal tendencies' at the age of eleven, and had taken a vow of celibacy in adulthood, 'believing marriage and the care of a family to be incompatible with a twenty-four-hour-a-day devotion to duty'.[775] Ogilvy's supposed rejection of all toys bar those relating to warfare is in line with the values of a regime that oversees a seemingly perpetual war. His betrayal of his uncle befits a society in which family bonds have been replaced by loyalty to Big Brother, a society in which a father can be proud of his daughter for denouncing him because it 'shows [he] brought her up in the right spirit'.[776] His celibacy is apt for a regime that seeks to 'abolish the orgasm', reduce procreation to a mere formality, and 'prevent men and women from forming loyalties which it might not be able to control'.[777] By including these details in his invention, Winston therefore not only propagates a 'values message', he 'furthers the perverse values of the [Big Brother] regime' by venerating a figure who appears as a paragon of Oceanian virtues.[778] As such, Winston not only takes part in supressing inconvenient truths, forming an archive of self-referential data, and

[773] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 53.
[774] Michael Yeo, 'Propaganda and Surveillance in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*: Two Sides of the Same Coin', *Global Media Journal – Canada Edition*, 3.2 (2010), 49-66 (p. 51).
[775] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 54; p. 55.
[776] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 268.
[777] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 306; p. 75.
[778] Yeo, 'Propaganda and Surveillance in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*', p. 52; Malcolm Pittock, 'The Hell of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*', *Essays in Criticism*, 47.2 (1997), 143-164 (p. 158).

ultimately affording the Party power, but he produces propaganda that targets *Times* readers' emotions by drawing upon Oceanian nationalism, rather than prioritising writing veracious reportage. Winston's work within the Ministry of Truth therefore constitutes a doubled co-construction of the Party's continuation of Oceania's post-truth condition, ultimately suggesting that despite the rebelliousness he shows elsewhere, he is complicit in the Party's post-truthful machinations.

However, that is not to say that Winston's collusion in the Party's reinforcement of Oceania's post-truth condition is a purely professional endeavour; the work also elicits in him positive emotions. As noted within the main narrative, a 'faint feeling of satisfaction' fills him when he receives the order to delete the evidence of Comrade Withers's existence, which is later echoed by the observation that 'Winston's greatest pleasure in life was in his work' because the difficulty and intricacy of some of his tasks necessitate 'delicate pieces of forgery in which [he has] nothing to guide him except [his] knowledge of the principles of Ingsoc and [his] estimate of what the Party want[s him] to say'.[779] Winston's pleasure in colluding therefore lies in the fact that it allows him to legitimately exercise his creative capabilities by applying his knowledge of the Party to the puzzle of fabricating an entire existence. This creativity would have otherwise been an impossibility for Winston to express, given the orthodoxy that the Party demands of Oceania's citizens. Although Winston's fabrication of Ogilvy is brought about by his professional commitments, the neglect of which would likely result in severe ramifications for him, the pleasure his work elicits for him ought not be overlooked. Winston's enjoyment of his work suggests that he has internalised Oceania's post-truth condition, for he values feeling creatively fulfilled, professionally stimulated, or – given the likely ramifications of refusing to undertake his work – safe over his commitment towards truthfulness. This internalisation marks an additional way in which Winston colludes in the Party's maintenance of Oceania's post-truth condition, for by embodying the post-truth condition – albeit under the duress posed by the Party's totalitarian power

[779] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p.45; p. 51.

– he makes the Party's upkeep of it permissible. This reinforces the above conclusion, for although Winston displays politically unorthodox desires later in the main narrative, his embodiment of Oceania's post-truth condition sees him behave as little more than a cog within the Party's post-truth machine.

The Comrade Ogilvy episode is inherently metafictional. The visual disruption afforded by the Read Endotext containing Winston's work orders alerts real-world readers to the artifice of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, whereas the summary of Winston's fabrication of Comrade Ogilvy brings attention to the constructedness of written texts extratextually. That such a fabrication is made by Orwell's everyman protagonist is particularly significant extratextually. Although *Nineteen Eighty-Four*'s real-world readers were drawn back to the novel in 2017 after having 'made a connection between Ms. [Kellyanne] Conway's comments [about how the White House reported on the size of Donald Trump's inauguration crowd] and Orwell's language [i.e. "newspeak" and "doublethink"]', the interpretive complexities brought about by the Comrade Ogilvy episode ought to have challenged their belief that post-truth's intensification is solely enacted by the powerful, for it dramatizes Orwell's everyman protagonist engaging in post-truthful activities.[780] Metafictionally, this ought to have brought readers to the blissful realisation that laypeople may likewise be culpable for colluding in the newfound prevalence of post-truth in the twenty-first century, thus disrupting the belief that post-truth is solely something that is *done* to them. As argued by Ignas Kalpokas, laypeople resort to post-truth tactics whenever they weave a desirable, misleading narrative about themselves in job interviews, or in how they misleadingly present themselves on social media, and in how they encourage post-truth by 'expect[ing] their innermost drives to satisfied regardless of the substance of the message' communicated when choosing between competing truth claims.[781] Taken to extreme ends, Orwell's endotextual dramatization of a layperson's collusion in the continuation of their world's post-truth condition should therefore bring *Nineteen Eighty-Four*'s readers to reflect on their own

[780] de Freytas-Tamura, 'George Orwell's '1984' Is Suddenly a Best-Seller'.
[781] Kalpokas, *A Political Theory of Post-Truth*, p. 18.

behaviours, inviting them to question the extent to which they employ the very same tactics that they criticise political figures, big businesses, or other arbiters of truth for using.

Part Two: Read Endotexts and Self-Deception

This section centres on the Read Endotexts that ensnare and deceive the characters who read them in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and in Kennard's *The Transition*, namely 'The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism' (hereafter 'Goldstein's Book') in Orwell's novel and Kennard's 'The Transition: Mentor's Edition' (hereafter 'The Mentor's Edition') and 'The Trapeze'. After introducing each Read Endotext, I will examine how they ensnare Winston Smith and Karl Temperley – *The Transition*'s protagonist – by tempting them to commit rebellious acts while simultaneously deceiving these characters by deliberately offering them no answers, no clear conclusions, no new knowledge – the very things they implicitly promise. Following this, I will draw upon ideas relating to self-deception – in particular, how self-deception involves 'holding inconsistent beliefs' – to directly compare how Winston and Karl are shown to be deceived by these Read Endotexts' truth claims precisely because they have internalised the post-truth condition of their respective story-worlds by deprioritising their own professional expertise for the sake of selecting desirable truth claims.[782] In concluding, I will note how the interplay between *Nineteen Eighty-Four*'s and *The Transition*'s Read Endotexts and main narratives therefore outwardly suggest that laypeople collude with authority figures' inflammation of the post-truth condition through their own self-deception. Possessing a greater commitment to being truthful with oneself – even if this means confronting uncomfortable or undesirable facts – may therefore impede such figures in their deliberate amplification of the post-truth condition.

Within *Nineteen Eighty-Four*'s story-world, 'Goldstein's Book' exists as a forbidden non-fiction tome that is alleged to have been written by Emmanuel Goldstein – nemesis

[782] Mike W. Martin, 'Demystifying Doublethink: Self-Deception, Truth, and Freedom in *1984*', *Social Theory and Practice*, 10.3 (1984), 319-331 (p. 320).

to Big Brother – and is purported to reveal 'the true nature of the society [Winston, Julia, and O'Brien] live in, and the strategy by which [they] shall destroy it'.[783] Late in the main narrative, once Winston obtains a copy, both protagonist and real reader alike ostensibly learn how, among other socioeconomic analyses, the 'three super-states' that shape the world of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* came to be, that the purpose of Oceania's never-ending war efforts is to 'use up the products of the machine without raising the general standard of living', and that the pyramidal structure of Oceanian society – with an individual, Big Brother, at its apex, and the proles, who account for 'perhaps eighty-five per cent of the population', at its base – is little more than an extreme version of the 'High, the Middle and the Low' classes that have characterised societal hierarchies '[t]hroughout recorded time'.[784]

Kennard's 'The Mentor's Edition' is a 'bible-thick volume' that contains 'nothing but inscrutable prose poems' that allegedly relate to the lessons spread by The Transition, the eponymous life-skills scheme that seeks to educate young couples into making better life choices.[785] This includes Karl and his wife Genevieve, who are placed under the stewardship of an older couple, Stu and Janna, after Karl unwittingly commits fraud. Many of 'parables' found in 'The Mentor's Edition' are co-present as Read Endotexts within *The Transition*'s main narrative.[786] Although many of these parables are inscrutable, with topics as disparate as a begging dog, a dying writer, and the burial of a cherished teddy bear, some of its passages directly relate to The Transition's functions. 'The Popular Teacher', for example, instructs mentors to behave like 'the popular teacher who mocks the education system but gets everyone straight As in their exams' in order to overcome their protégés' cynicism about the programme, whereas 'The Salvage Yard' reminds mentors that the 'vast majority of couples have come to [them] through the

[783] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 201.
[784] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 214; p. 218; p. 238; p. 231.
[785] Luke Kennard, *The Transition* (London: 4th Estate, 2017), p. 155; p. 157.
[786] Kennard, *The Transition*, p. 79.

malpractice of one, not both', and encourages them to test their protégés' 'commitment to one another', hinting that The Transition's aim is one of social engineering.[787]

'The Trapeze', a piece of fiction in Kennard's story-world, is the text upon which the 'basic principles of The Transition' are rumoured to be founded.[788] Kennard acknowledges that the endotextual presence of 'The Trapeze' is 'very limited' within *The Transition*'s main narrative.[789] Aside from a dozen-word extract, 'Bilyana Cvetkova could feel the cobbles through the worn soles of her…', which is included when a hungover Karl eventually obtains a copy of 'The Trapeze', only one other excerpt is made available to both Karl and reader alike.[790] Interposed on a piece of digital artwork that Karl happens upon by chance, the excerpt consists of a conversation between a character called Katya, a portly gentleman, and a dark shape known as The Entity. The portly gentleman marvels at how capping the world's population to half a billion people would result in:

> [a] farewell to misery of every category, to poverty, to war and violence. Disease eradicated, famine and hunger a distant memory. The free migration across every border and the celebration of every culture for their distinct qualities, and all shall have a plenitude! A surfeit of land and wealth.[791]

Centring on population reduction, 'The Trapeze' – if it does indeed provide the basis upon which The Transition's principles are founded – reinforces the impression that The Transition's central aim is that of social engineering, the very thing that Karl fears, believing that the scheme wishes to tear apart his relationship with Genevieve.

'Goldstein's Book', 'The Mentor's Edition', and 'The Trapeze' each possess a reputation that entice Winston and Karl. Reportedly 'a terrible book, a compendium of all the heresies, of which Goldstein was the author', 'Goldstein's Book' appeals to Winston

[787] Kennard, *The Transition*, p. 158.
[788] Kennard, *The Transition*, p. 204.
[789] See Appendix 2: Transcript: Interview with Luke Kennard, Author of The Transition, 7th December 2022'.
[790] Kennard, *The Transition*, p. 205.
[791] Kennard, *The Transition*, p. 243.

Smith, who is politically unorthodox within the context of the Party and who seeks to gain 'intellectual enlightenment' by reading the tome, for although he 'understand[s] HOW [the Party exerts power]: [he] do[es] not understand WHY [they exert it]', an answer for which 'Goldstein's Book' is rumoured to offer.[792] *The Transition*'s two Read Endotexts likewise possess a reputation that suggest that they will shed light on the eponymous scheme's true intentions, an implication that interests Karl, who is suspicious of the programme. For 'The Mentor's Edition', this is afforded by its name (in particular, the mention of 'Mentor' in its title), supposed function as 'the Transition's handbook', and quasi-religious aura (Stu calls its contents 'parables', and Karl later observes that it is 'bible-thick'), all of which suggest that 'The Mentor's Edition' is in some way authoritative.[793] For 'The Trapeze', this reputation is brought about by rumours that circulate which state that individuals 'need to read ['The Trapeze'] if [they] want to understand what [The Transition is] about'.[794] Moreover, Orwell's and Kennard's Read Endotexts possess illicit, mysterious reputations within their story-worlds; 'Goldstein's Book' is associated with The Brotherhood, 'an underground network of conspirators dedicated to overthrow the State', whereas 'The Trapeze' is said to be 'a notorious hoax in the occult book world', something so mysterious that Karl struggles to verify it even exists for much of *The Transition*'s main narrative.[795] Such illicit mysteriousness only piques Winston's and Karl's interest further, drawing them to seek out their respective Read Endotexts.

Nineteen Eighty-Four and *The Transition* dramatize their protagonists being ensnared into committing rebellious acts by the Read Endotexts that entice them. In order to access 'Goldstein's Book', Winston and Julia must first meet O'Brien, who they believe to be a fellow anti-Party conspirator, at his flat – itself a transgressive act – and confess that they are 'enemies of the Party [who] disbelieve in the principles of Ingsoc

[792] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 16; Natasha Periyan, 'Teaching and Learning in and beyond *Nineteen Eighty-Four*' in *The Cambridge Companion to Nineteen Eighty-Four*, ed. by Nathan Waddell (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2020), pp. 23-36 (p. 28); Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 91.
[793] Kennard, *The Transition*, p. 79; p. 155.
[794] Kennard, *The Transition*, p. 98.
[795] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 16; Kennard, *The Transition*, p. 118.

[and] are thought-criminals [and] adulterers' before promising that they are prepared to 'do anything which is likely to cause demoralisation and weaken the power of the Party'.[796] In doing so, the reputation of 'Goldstein's Book' not only prompts Winston and Julia to confess to their previous crimes and to promise to continue to undermine the Party, but they crucially make these confessions to O'Brien, the Inner Party member who is ultimately responsible for their eventual capture and torture. Here, the ensnarement of 'Goldstein's Book' is twofold, for it not only brings Winston and Julia to rebel against the Party; it lures them into a trap of the Party's creation.

Both 'The Mentor's Edition' and 'The Trapeze' ensnare Karl into committing transgressive acts. Although he is never explicitly forbidden from reading 'The Mentor's Edition', acting on the temptation to read it is implied to challenge The Transition's programme because Karl discovers that 'Janna or Stu had moved' their copy of it out of the kitchen – its usual place – when he attempts to read it for a second time, suggesting that 'The Mentor's Edition' is off-limits for protégés.[797] Kennard argues that organisations and schemes from which The Transition draws inspiration, such as twelve-step programmes, depend on participants 'work[ing] the programme [and accepting that although] a lot of it is going to sound like spiritualist gobbledegook [they must] trust it and keep working at it', and so Karl's decision to search for 'The Mentor's Edition' a second time is ultimately transgressive as it is indicative of an attitude that does *not* inherently trust The Transition's programme.[798] By searching for The Transition's answers, rather than blindly trusting that they will eventually be revealed to him, Karl falls into the trap of demonstrating his incompatibility with the programme, which is the very thing used to drive him and the perfectly compliant Genevieve apart.

Karl's passing interest in 'The Trapeze' similarly highlights his incompatibility with The Transition. As with 'The Mentor's Edition', Karl is denied a second reading of 'The Trapeze', which is taken from him as he sleeps by Stu or Janna, who confess that they

[796] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 197; p. 199.
[797] Kennard, *The Transition*, p. 181.
[798] See Appendix 2.

did not want him to fall in with the 'disgruntled former protégés who use ['The Trapeze'] as a calling card' at the main narrative's conclusion.[799] Their fears are well-founded, for Karl is only included in an anti-Transition plot late in the novel's main narrative once he has shown an interest in the elusive endotext. Although Karl's transgressive tendencies are evident throughout the main narrative – he fails to meet many of The Transition's obligations, hacks the tablet provided to him by the scheme and siphons money from it, and throws lukewarm coffee over Janna after she makes a snide personal remark – his actions constitute small moments of rebellion. It is only after becoming ensnared by how the reputation of 'The Trapeze' allegedly promises to reveal The Transition's motives that Karl becomes embroiled in a data-hacking plot that seeks to dismantle the scheme. This is where the danger of the endotext lies; as much as Karl transgresses when he reads 'The Mentor's Edition', this act is merely brought about by feelings of curiosity and cynicism, whereas his reading and pursuit of 'The Trapeze' see him become radicalised, ensnaring him in a rebellion that only pushes him further away from The Transition, its lessons, and his wife.

Orwell's and Kennard's Read Endotexts ultimately deceive the protagonists that read them because, in spite of their reputations and the temptation to rebel they inspire, they offer no answers, no clear conclusions, and no new knowledge to the characters who read them. This is clearest in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. As he reads 'Goldstein's Book', Winston often remarks that it 'told him nothing that was new' and that it 'merely systematised the knowledge that he possessed already'; rather seeing this as a cause for despondence, Winston sees this as a source of satisfaction, as it reassures him that 'he was not mad' and that he is not alone, for it 'was the product of a mind similar to his own'.[800] Such feelings of satisfaction lead Winston to think that '[t]he best books […] are those that tell you what you know already', despite the fact it is solutions, answers, new methods – in essence *new* knowledge – that draws him to acquire 'Goldstein's Book' in

[799] Kennard, *The Transition*, p. 317.
[800] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 229; p. 247; p. 229.

the first place.[801] The deceptive extent of 'Goldstein's Book' is foregrounded in the final third of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*'s main narrative, in which O'Brien – who has tortured the imprisoned Winston inside the Ministry of Love – claims that he 'collaborated in writing it' alongside other Inner Party members.[802] This revelation unveils two of the deceptive elements of 'Goldstein's Book'.[803] First, it ostensibly reveals that the tome is Party-manufactured, something carefully fabricated in order to draw out and trap would-be dissenters like Winston. Slavoj Žižek sees this as a 'regular tactic of a totalitarian Party in power', explaining that totalitarian regimes invent external and internal enemies so that they may maintain total unity among their dominated populace and perpetuate a state of emergency in the face of this fabricated threat.[804] Applying this to *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, this means that the Party fabricated 'Goldstein's Book' not only so it could ensnare would-be dissenters, but so that it could maintain a constant state of terror and paranoia in Oceania in order to ensure that its compliant majority remain compliant. Second, O'Brien's claim to have co-authored 'Goldstein's Book' brings into doubt the truth claims made within the tome. A written work's attribution is one of its core truths, one of its most basic and fundamental facts, and so O'Brien's claim to have co-authored 'Goldstein's Book' subverts this truth claim to the extent that Goldstein's very existence is in question. This subsequently problematises all purported truth claims made by the book: if the 'fact' that Goldstein wrote the book can be easily fabricated, then so too could the geopolitical descriptions, historical allusions, and explanations of the Party's central mottoes contained therein be likewise fabricated. This interpretation is further supported by O'Brien's assertion that 'Goldstein's Book' is true '[a]s description' but that '[t]he programme it sets forth is nonsense', given that the oxymoronic conflation of

[801] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 229.
[802] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 213; p. 300.
[803] Of course, this revelation may not be trustworthy. Both Winston and reader alike only have O'Brien's word that he co-authored 'Goldstein's Book', a claim that should be treated with a degree of scepticism, given that the Inner Party member also fantastically asserts that he could 'could 'float off [the] floor like a soap bubble if [he] wished to' (Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 303). The co-authorship claim could be likewise fantastical. Despite the uncertainty regarding the truthfulness of O'Brien's claims, the below discussion will work on the assumption that his claim to have co-authored 'Goldstein's Book' is truthful, given his apparent senior position within the Inner Party, and also because it neatly explains how he might have access to such an illicit tome.
[804] Slavoj Žižek, 'The Totalitarian Invitation to Enjoyment', *Qui Parle*, 5.1 (1991), 73-100 (p. 96).

'truth' and 'nonsense' obfuscates meaning and makes it unclear whether anything written in the book should be taken as true.[805] This concern regarding the endotext's veracity echoes Richard K. Sanderson, who suggests that 'the real horror of ['Goldstein's Book'] is not that it verifies the world of the novel but that it fails to verify any world'.[806] Following Sanderson, I suggest that the horror of the deceptiveness of 'Goldstein's Book' does not lie solely in the fact that it fails to verify any world, but that it can also be found in the fact that Winston risks and ultimately loses his individualism for a tome that not only teaches him nothing new, but for a tome that may not teach him anything true at all.

Similar to how Winston is deceived into reading a book that teaches him 'nothing that is new', Karl learns nothing at all about The Transition's aims upon reading 'The Mentor's Edition', given the inscrutability of the parables it contains.[807] For Kennard, these parables are 'parodies' of the wisdom put forward by popular psychologists and self-help organisations, which have the tendency to produce 'deliberately ambiguous parables that are supposed to be instructive, but actually aren't', suggesting that the apparent meaninglessness of 'The Mentor's Edition' is intentional.[808] Although he bemoans the parables' inscrutability, Karl spends time throughout the main narrative trying to locate 'The Mentor's Edition', before sending a copy of it to his anti-Transition co-conspirator at the main narrative's close. Karl attaches a note to this copy of 'The Mentor's Edition', writing, 'I wonder if the enclosed might be of interest to you. Make of it what you will'.[809] This Written Endotext foregrounds Karl's belief that meaning, particularly with regards to illuminating The Transition's aims, can be located within 'The Mentor's Edition', while the tentativeness of his language suggests that he cannot decipher it, thus suggesting that Karl *wants* the book to teach him something even though his efforts at gleaning new knowledge from it fail. Likewise, 'The Trapeze'

[805] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 300.
[806] Richard K. Sanderson, 'The Two Narrators and Happy Ending of "Nineteen Eighty-Four"', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 34.4 (1998), 587-595 (p. 593).
[807] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 229.
[808] See Appendix 2.
[809] Kennard, *The Transition*, p. 323.

deceives Karl because it does not adequately explain The Transition's aims, objectives, or underlying philosophy, despite its reputation for doing so. Throughout the main narrative, characters find interpreting 'The Trapeze' difficult; Pavel and Sumita – a couple also on The Transition – have 'both read it and […] don't think [they] underst[an]d a word', whereas a hungover Karl feels as if 'he was breathing out a part of himself, as if a part of his soul could leave through his nose' as he fails to make sense of the endotext.[810] Mr Roderick, Karl's chief co-conspirator, offers a corrective to this, asserting that 'The Trapeze' is about 'a radical reduction in the world's population', but that it is also 'paranoid conspiracy-theory guff'.[811] This recalls O'Brien's claim in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* that 'Goldstein's Book' is true '[a]s description' but that '[t]he programme it sets forth is nonsense', for Mr Roderick confirms that describing 'The Trapeze' as being about social engineering would be true, but he also flippantly dismisses this programme, with 'guff' equating 'nonsense'.[812] Much like with 'Goldstein's Book', meaning is obfuscated by Mr Roderick's simultaneous acceptance and dismissal of 'The Trapeze', ultimately making it unclear whether Karl should take it as true that The Transition aims to oversee a form of population control. Sanderson's analysis of 'Goldstein's Book' can therefore be applied to 'The Trapeze', for it not only fails to verify The Transition's aims, but – due its limitedness – it fails to verify anything at all. This is where the deceptiveness of 'The Trapeze' lies, for it ensnares Karl into committing acts of rebellion despite failing to deliver on the promises its reputation sees it implicitly makes. Karl's rebelliousness, in other words, is ultimately for nought.

Writing about Winston falling prey to the deceptiveness of 'Goldstein's Book', Nathan Waddell argues that 'the fact that it is a piece of writing in the first place […] should set Winston's alarm bells ringing, but it does not'.[813] This, Waddell continues, is because Winston acknowledges that 'anything that might throw light upon the past had

[810] Kennard, *The Transition*, p. 204; p. 205.
[811] Kennard, *The Transition*, p. 245.
[812] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 300.
[813] Nathan Waddell, 'Introduction: Orwell's Book' in *The Cambridge Companion to Nineteen Eighty-Four*, ed. by Nathan Waddell (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2020), pp. 1-20 (p. 17).

been systematically altered', suggesting that he is indeed aware that all historical records in Oceania are in some way deceptive.[814] Further to this, Winston ought to have known better than to completely trust 'Goldstein's Book' because he is directly involved in the falsification of documents through his work at the Ministry of Truth. Similar comments can be made about Karl being deceived by 'The Mentor's Edition' and 'The Trapeze' in *The Transition*, as he blindly trusts that these written documents will provide him with answers despite the fact that he is a fraudulent writer himself, producing 'consumer reviews for products he had never used and bespoke school and undergraduate essays as "study aids" for ten pence a word' that he secretly knows will be passed off as original work.[815] Given that both protagonists are professional textual fraudsters who are cognizant of the potential for texts to deceive, the ease with which they are fooled by the endotexts they encounter appears incongruous, for it runs counter to their expertise. As such, I contend that Winston and Karl *allow* themselves to be fooled by these Read Endotexts; as much as they are deceived by them, Winston and Karl first deceive *themselves*.

Self-deception, writes Mike W. Martin, is 'the refusal to acknowledge the truth to ourselves, whether the refusal involves persuading ourselves into false beliefs, holding inconsistent beliefs, being willfully [sic] ignorant, having phony attitudes or emotions, or engaging in inauthentic self-pretense [sic]', a list which also encapsulates evading inconvenient truths about ourselves or the world in which we live.[816] The belief Winston and Karl place in the truth claims made by the Read Endotexts they encounter is therefore characteristically self-deceptive because despite being familiar with the written word's capacity for mendacity, they blindly trust the works they read and do not exert scepticism towards them, thus exhibiting inconsistent beliefs – they know that texts can mislead, but they refuse to consider that these ones can. Moreover, both Winston and Karl are wilfully ignorant, ignoring the written word's potential to mislead because they

[814] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 112.
[815] Kennard, *The Transition*, p. 1.
[816] Martin, 'Demystifying Doublethink: Self-Deception, Truth, and Freedom in *1984*', p. 320.

want the Read Endotexts' truth claims to be veracious. Politically unorthodox and preoccupied with concerns relating to truth, history, and his own memories, Winston is desperate to find an account of the past that is untampered with by the Party so that he may cling on to the hope that the true past – the version of events that actually happened – can still be said to exist. Therefore, when he is presented with a tome that promises to offer him exactly this, Winston believes it to be true because he *wants* it to be true. Likewise, Karl is sceptical about The Transition's intentions and holds the paranoid belief that the scheme has been designed to split couples up, and so when he stumbles upon a rumour that suggests that The Transition is based on 'The Trapeze', a novel that holds social engineering as one of its central motifs, he believes it to be true because he *wants* it to be true.

Such self-deception evinces Winston's and Karl's internalisation of their respective story-worlds' post-truth condition. In believing deceptive Read Endotexts whose truth claims align with their desires and beliefs, Orwell and Kennard depict how internalising the post-truth condition can bring laypeople to rely upon confirmation bias. Summarised by S. I. Strong as 'the unconscious but pervasive human propensity to filter out information that contradicts an existing belief and instead retain only information that confirms that belief', confirmation bias sees Winston and Karl ignore inconvenient truths – i.e., that the written word can mislead – in favour of upholding convenient, desirable truths – the aims of the Party and The Transition have been reliably explained – that befit the beliefs crafted by each character.[817] Moreover, through employing wilful ignorance, Winston and Karl supress their expertise as professional textual fraudsters, demonstrating a dismissal of expert opinions that is characteristic of the post-truth condition. This impression is reinforced by how such dismissal is made for the sake of prioritising how the false truth claims disseminated by the Read Endotexts make Winston and Karl feel – Winston is pleased that 'Goldstein's Book' 'told him nothing that was new', and despite the implied frustration Karl feels when discovering that 'The Mentor's

[817] S. I. Strong, 'Alternative Facts and the Post-Truth Society: Meeting the Challenge', *University of Pennsylvania Law Review Online*, 165.1 (2017), 137-146 (p. 140).

Edition' contained 'nothing but inscrutable prose poems', he still seeks to read it a second time, suggesting that his attempts at uncovering meaning within it elicits positive emotions within him.[818] Winston's and Karl's self-deception is therefore doubly post-truthful, for it sees them both accept the Read Endotexts' truth claims that accord with their beliefs while simultaneously relegating their own expert opinions to a secondary importance relative to these truth claims' emotional appeals and desirability.

Winston's and Karl's post-truthful self-deception recalls Ignas Kalpokas's conception of post-truthful collusion. As discussed above, the ways in which individuals present, create, or select information sees them entrench post-truth's prevalence alongside actors (i.e. political bodies, authority figures, and economic bodies) who adapt their truth claims in order to appeal to those same individuals, thus catalysing the post-truth condition. Kalpokas notes that within the post-truth condition, 'the key criterion used [by individuals] to make a choice between competing truth claims is whether one would (or would not) *like* something to be true', and while this is beneficial in explaining why they might choose one actor's truth claim over another's, such an argument is reductive as it only considers individuals within the role of a consumer who makes a choice within a marketplace of truth claims.[819] Following this argument, individuals are denied the agency to construct their own truth claims. Self-deception proves that this is not the case. As Winston and Karl have shown, it is entirely possible for individuals to select between competing truth claims of their own creation, and to the same extent, it is entirely possible for them to choose a truth claim that is truth-indifferent. In the interview found in Appendix 2, Kennard discusses precisely this. Karl's self-deception, he claims, is akin to how 'we all have smartphones and try not to think about the fact that the chips within them are causing mass deforestation and killing gorillas and that they are made under essentially slave conditions', for by choosing to supress these inconvenient truths, laypeople may 'just carry on living an adult life […] inevitably full of [the] compromise' between believing what is true and believing what is convenient,

[818] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 229; Kennard, *The Transition*, p. 157.
[819] Kalpokas, *A Political Theory of Post-Truth*, p. 18.

comfortable, or conducive to leading a life that is not completely ridden by guilt.[820] Kalpokas's assertion that an individual's choice when selecting between truth claims is contingent on whether one of them is *preferable* is therefore directly applicable to the truth claims individuals themselves create, and is not merely restricted to the truth claims put forward by external actors. However, by foregoing their commitment to remaining truthful to themselves, individuals make it permissible for actors to likewise forego any commitment to truthfulness when communicating with them, and so individuals implicitly collude in the intensification of the post-truth condition by delineating what is and is not 'fair play' when it comes to attitudes regarding truth. That such a possibility is presented within *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *The Transition*, literary dystopias in which characters' self-deception contributes to their ultimate downfall, serves to 'fix the position of the real reader' by warning them of the ramifications of colluding in the post-truth condition's entrenchment, insisting that they ought to uphold their commitment to being truthful with themselves so that it becomes less permissible for external actors to deceive them with post-truthful claims.[821]

Part Three: Writing, the Private Archive, and Relativism

This section compares how laypersons' acts of writing undermine the post-truth regimes of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*'s and Ogawa's *The Memory Police*'s story-worlds, a comparison which centres on two Written Endotexts: Winston's diary in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and the narrator's novel manuscript (hereafter 'The Typist's Tale') in *The Memory Police*.[822] First, I will consider how Winston's act of diary writing in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* allows him to define his self and thus enable him to put forward truth claims about who he is. Moreover, producing this Written Endotext sees Winston create a 'private archive' that is importantly free from state mediation. Second, I will examine how the narrator's drafting of 'The Typist's Tale' constitutes an indirect expression of truths relating to the

[820] See Appendix 2.
[821] Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*, p. 153.
[822] The narrator's novel manuscript is never named in *The Memory Police*. To avoid inelegant expression, I hereafter refer to it as 'The Typist's Tale'.

conditions of the main narrative's story-world and her experience of them. This, I argue, chiefly manifests in the Written Endotext's preoccupation with loss. Last, I will conclude that the post-truth regimes of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *The Memory Police* force Winston and the unnamed writer-narrator into the position of relativists. This suggestion is vital, for although it acknowledges the dominance of each story-world's post-truth regime, the fact that relativistic views are at all possible demonstrates that each regime's power is far from total. Subsequently, these novels' Written Endotexts orient readers to the possibility that, through maintaining a steadfast commitment to truthfulness in the face of 'official' post-truth claims, they are key to resisting and deconstructing heightened levels of post-truth.

In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Winston opposes the Party by obtaining and writing a diary, an act which many scholars have noted is rebellious.[823] Winston similarly acknowledges the rebelliousness of diary writing; he reflects that whereas beginning a diary is not an illegal act, he is 'reasonably certain that it would be punished by death, or at least by twenty-five years in a forced-labour camp', a fear that appears to inform the surreptitiousness with which he 'sit[s] in the alcove [of his flat], and keep[s] well back' so as to not be seen by the telescreen when writing.[824] Little scholarly attention, however, has been paid to the diaristic form of Winston's private writings. Diaries impose on their writers 'a certain obligation of truthfulness […] since there will be little point in disguising sources or camouflaging identities', given that diary writing is principally 'an act of intimate communication the diarist is having with him/herself': diary writers know who or what they are referring to in their writings, and because they are their own *guaranteed* audience, there is little point in obfuscation.[825] As such, the bearings on truth

[823] See Marcus Smith, 'The Walls of Blackness: A Psychological Approach to 1984', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 14.4 (1968-1969), 423-433 (p. 424), 'when Winston starts his diary, ostensibly his first act of overt political rebellion'; Carl Freedman, 'Antinomies of "Nineteen Eighty-Four"', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 30.4 (1984), 601-620 (p. 615), 'Winston's rebellion is primarily a series of individual gestures: thought crime, writing a diary, the affair with Julia'; and Lillian Feder, 'Selfhood, Language, and Reality: George Orwell's "Nineteen Eighty-Four"', *The Georgia Review*, 37.2 (1983), 392-409 (pp. 401-402), 'The act of writing releases his feelings and defines the extent of his commitment to rebellion'.
[824] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 9; p. 8.
[825] Bruce Merry, 'The Literary Diary as a Genre', *The Maynooth Review*, 5.1 (1979), 3-19 (p. 14); Irina Paperno, 'What Can Be Done with Diaries?', *The Russian Review*, 63.4 (2004), 561-573 (p. 564).

entailed within the diary form see the Written Endotext inherently crystallise *Nineteen Eighty-Four*'s preoccupation with truth, an effect that is particularly achieved by how Winston records within his diary his thoughts, feelings, and fears to try figure out and express what he believes to be true in a story-world in which truth is otherwise systematically abused by the state.

Winston's commitment to truthfulness and his determination to tell and locate truths that are not corrupted by the Party are apparent in his decision to write in his diary about his encounter with the prole prostitute. Not only does retelling this episode clearly cause Winston a great deal of discomfort, for he 'shut[s] his eyes and […] tr[ies] to squeeze out the vision that kept recurring', but he also notes that '[c]onsorting with prostitutes was forbidden'.[826] Winston knows that this confession is dangerous for him and that it 'might mean five years in a forced-labour camp', but he nonetheless feels compelled to make it, as evidenced by his repeated insistence that the story 'had got to be written down'.[827] In concluding his diary entry with the confession that he 'went ahead and did it just the same', Winston resists Oceania's post-truth condition, for the Written Endotext demonstrates how he confronts an emotionally undesirable and ultimately inconvenient truth that may lead to his incarceration. While Tony E. Jackson describes Winston's diary writing as a 'means of individual self-exploration', I contend instead that the Written Endotext extends beyond exploring Winston's self and that it amounts to him attempting to define and make sense of his self and thus make truth claims about who he is.[828] Here, I draw upon the work of Lilian Feder, who claims that memories are 'elements of the self [that Winston] tries to define and maintain' throughout the novel and that they provide him with a 'frame of reference for his perceptions', allowing him to 'maintain the lens of selfhood, however cloudy and partial, to [an] external reality' that is amorphous and obfuscated, given the Party's continuous

[826] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 73; p. 74.
[827] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 75; p. 78.
[828] Tony E. Jackson, 'Oceania's Totalitarian Technology: Writing in Nineteen Eighty-Four', *Criticism*, 59.3 (2017), 375-393 (p. 389).

interference with the past and present.[829] Considering the Written Endotext in this light subsequently foregrounds the capacity for laypeople to assert their own truth claims through acts of private writings – Winston presents himself as politically unorthodox as he attempts to define his self and his position in the world, a presentation that is in concordance with his behaviour across much of the main narrative. The fact that Winston presents himself this way is almost inconsequential. Rather, it is his ability to make truth claims *at all* that is significant, for it exists outside of the Party's tightly manufactured archive, ultimately suggesting that the power to self-determinate and express what is or is not true is not solely held by Oceania's dominant political force.

As discussed above, the Party appears to have a monopoly over truth-determination in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, an ostensible monopoly partially of their own creation and partially afforded to them by citizens like Winston Smith who professionally or personally collude in the upkeep of the post-truth condition. This apparent monopoly manifests in how the Party oversees the manipulation and deletion of historical records to maintain power, an idea that anticipates Jacques Derrida's conception of 'archive fever' by almost half a century. For Derrida, archives are inherently politicised spaces, an argument he makes by considering the etymological roots of the term 'archive'. First, Derrida observes that 'archive' has its roots in the ancient Greek *arkhē*, which he interprets as 'the originary, the first, the principial, the primitive', indicating a degree of primacy about the items contained within an archive, for they are comprised of unmediated knowledge regarding a particular subject's origins.[830] Secondly, Derrida considers the *arkheion*, which is 'a house, a domicile, an address'; together with his first etymological unpicking, this renders an archive a location that contains primary knowledge about a given topic.[831] Derrida develops his conception of the archive further by noting that *arkheion* can also be translated as the place where *archons*, the 'superior magistrates […] who commanded' resided, and that such residence designates them the

[829] Feder, 'Selfhood, Language, and Reality', p. 399; p. 409.
[830] Jacques Derrida, 'Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression', trans. by Eric Prenowitz, *Diacritics*, 25.2 (1995), 9-63 (p. 9).
[831] Derrida, 'Archive Fever', p. 9.

role of 'the documents' guardians' and affords them 'the power to interpret the archives', a luxury denied to other citizens.[832] For Derrida, this archival access is political, as it gives *archons* the power 'to make or to represent the law', which leads him to conclude that '*[t]here is no political power without control of the archive, if not of memory*'.[833]

Such conceptual considerations are immediately relevant to *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, as the Party's complete control of the archive, which is comprised of every document constantly scrutinised by the Ministry of Truth, ensures its totalitarian grip over the people of Oceania. The Party acknowledges this fact in its slogan '[w]ho controls the past […] controls the future: who controls the present controls the past'.[834] Scholars have already applied Derrida's concept to their readings of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, with Theo Finigan bringing it in dialogue with Hannah Arendt's idea that totalitarian regimes commit 'monstrous forgeries in historiography' to argue that the Party 'dominat[es] their subjects through the control of their experience of time, memory, and history', which is primarily achieved by the manipulation or deletion of historical documents, or, the public archive.[835] Likewise, Diletta De Cristofaro argues that the Ministry of Truth 'embodies the nexus of political power and the public archive in the world imagined by Orwell'.[836] Both scholars, however, see Winston's diary as a 'private archive' that acts as a 'historiographic corrective that […] counter[s] the totalitarian manipulation of history' put forward by the Party.[837] For Finigan, this is because, free from state mediation, Winston's diary offers a 'supposedly more accurate—and thus anti-totalitarian—record of authentic individual experience', whereas for De Cristofaro, it is proof of 'the Party's not entirely successful control of the individual archive', for Winston's fragmentary memories are politically unorthodox: he thinks he remembers things that allegedly never existed.[838] Both conclusions are compelling, and befit arguments chiefly preoccupied with

[832] Derrida, 'Archive Fever', p. 9; p. 10.
[833] Derrida, 'Archive Fever', p. 10; p. 11.
[834] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 40.
[835] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 436; Finigan, 'Into the Memory Hole', p. 435.
[836] De Cristofaro, 'The Politics of the Archive', p. 52.
[837] De Cristofaro, 'The Politics of the Archive', p. 59; Finigan, 'Into the Memory Hole', p. 436.
[838] Finigan, 'Into the Memory Hole', p. 436; De Cristofaro, 'The Politics of the Archive', p. 59.

memory and time, but because of these emphases they do not necessarily explain the ramifications of Winston's diary on the *post-truth* regime of the Party. As acknowledged by Finigan, the Party's manipulation of history is indeed totalitarian, but it is also post-truthful, and it is in response to this that further value can be found in Winston's diary. Rather than considering Winston's private writings as a historiographic corrective, I view his diary as the antithesis to the Party's post-truth regime. The Party's public archive constitutes the only version of events that are officially permissible in Oceania; despite this, Winston's act of diary writing enables him to put forward his own truth claims that exist *outside* of the Party's public archive by virtue of residing within his own private archive. Wrapped up within Winston's diary, therefore, is the *possibility* of an alternative source of truth that runs counter to the Party's post-truth regime. That it is at all possible for him to make his own truth claims is a vital consideration; it suggests that as long as individuals have the ability, resources, and desire to write privately, post-truth regimes can never claim for themselves total authority. Winston's diary therefore comes to crystallise the thematic preoccupation with truth found in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*'s main narrative, for amid vast swathes of state-disseminated post-truth claims, the Written Endotext stands as a source of information that is uncomfortable, inconvenient, and that runs counter to the Party – a source of truth.

Yōko Ogawa's *The Memory Police* is another literary dystopia that similarly features a Written Endotext that undermines its story-world's post-truth regime. However, there are two key distinctions between Ogawa's and Orwell's novels. First, the post-truth regime of *The Memory Police* is enshrouded in considerably more mystery than Orwell's Party. Set on an unnamed island that is plagued by 'an epidemic of forgetting', the main narrative's characters undergo instances of communal amnesia that see them lose all memories pertaining to particular objects, i.e. '*[r]ibbon[s], bell[s], emerald[s], stamp[s]*', following which the community gathers and destroys all traces of the items from which they are now estranged.[839] After these 'disappearances' are

[839] Jia Tolentino, 'How "The Memory Police" Makes You See', *The New Yorker*, 6 November 2019 <https://www.newyorker.com/books/under-review/how-the-memory-police-makes-you-see> [accessed 16

visitations from the eponymous Memory Police, who ransack people's properties with unchallengeable authority and confiscate any remaining traces of the disappeared objects.[840] Their purpose is clear; they are to ensure that forgotten objects remain forgotten, which also means abducting any individual who is immune to the island's communal amnesia, a minority group within the novel's main narrative. What is less clear, however, is *why* the Memory Police do this: the totalitarian regime to which they belong is barely glimpsed, and the mechanisms of the disappearances – i.e., why objects must be forgotten, and who, if anyone, is responsible for this – are barely explained. For Orwell, the Party's post-truth regime is about exerting and maintaining power, but for Ogawa, the regime's purpose is left ambiguous. Regardless, the regime to which the Memory Police belong is one of post-truth, for it enforces a truth-indifferent version of history upon the island's residents by systematically obliterating all traces of the forgotten objects – not only do they no longer exist in the sense that they are concepts that the majority of the island's population can no longer understand; they appear to have never existed at all.

The second key difference between Orwell's novel and Ogawa's is the form of the Written Endotexts in which laypeople assert their own truth claims. Whereas *Nineteen Eighty-Four* sees Winston write a diary, a piece of diegetic non-fiction, Ogawa's novel features a piece of diegetic fiction: the unnamed novel manuscript written by *The Memory Police*'s unnamed narrator. 'The Typist's Tale' tells the story of a mute young woman who takes up typing lessons and falls in love with her instructor. One day, her typewriter malfunctions, and her teacher – now her lover – takes her to a room at the top of the church in which he teaches, promising to repair her machine. Once there, the typist is incarcerated by her lover, who reveals that her voice is 'trapped inside' her typewriter, never to be freed.[841] Much like how Winston's diary allows him to make truth claims via the construction of a private archive, Ogawa's Written Endotext allows *The*

February 2021]; Yōko Ogawa, *The Memory Police*, trans. by Stephen Snyder (London: Harvill Secker, 2019), p. 5.

[840] Ogawa, *The Memory Police*, p. 64.

[841] Ogawa, *The Memory Police*, p. 130.

Memory Police's writer-narrator to make truth claims about the world in which she lives and her experiences of it, albeit indirectly. The endotext is not explicitly about the writer-narrator's world, but clearly draws upon it, given the many parallels between the main narrative and endotext. The most immediate parallel is that disappearances are present in both the main narrative and the endotext – the writer-narrator experiences the disappearance of birds, roses, and her mother, whereas the typist experiences the disappearance of her voice. Here, 'The Typist's Tale' begins to clarify and crystallise *The Memory Police*'s central thematic preoccupation. Rather than claiming that Ogawa's novel is purely about disappearances, however, I look to Jia Tolentino's *New Yorker* review of it to clarify what *The Memory Police* is, in essence, about. Noting the parallels between the writer-narrator's experience and the manuscript she writes, Tolentino argues that the manuscript is her way of 'processing reality through a metaphorical device', an argument that I develop by considering 'The Typist's Tale' not only as the writer-narrator's means of *understanding* her world, but as her way of indirectly *expressing* the realities of living under the totalitarian conditions of her world.[842] In other words, the Written Endotext allows the writer-narrator to make truth claims relating to her worldly experiences, truth claims that are secreted away in her private writings and away from the island's totalitarian regime. Three parallels between *The Memory Police*'s main narrative and 'The Typist's Tale' will be discussed below to demonstrate how the writer-narrator attempts to express these truth claims. In turn, the parallels I focus on are those pertaining to disappearances, oppression, and bodily degradation, each of which see the writer-narrator create a private archive of information that challenges the public archive developed by the island's post-truth regime.

The Memory Police's main narrative is littered with references to disappearances. The writer-narrator remarks that she 'think[s] it's fortunate that the birds were not disappeared until after [her] father died', given his career as an ornithologist; she recalls how the arrival of a 'coarse pale purple envelope' – summons from the Memory Police –

[842] Tolentino, 'How "The Memory Police" Makes You See'.

resulted in her mother's disappearance; and one morning she reflects that '[i]t's always sad when a food disappears'.[843] As such, it is unsurprising to learn that her three published novels universally tell 'the story of something that had disappeared', with people, limbs, and chromosomes disappearing in those works.[844] This preoccupation with disappearance also manifests in 'The Typist's Tale', whose narrator matter-of-factly expresses her newfound muteness through the use of the declarative sentence '[i]t will soon be three months since I lost my voice' early in the manuscript, and for whom metaphorically regaining her voice by learning to type remains a key aim.[845] Such a thematic concern clearly designates 'The Typist's Tale' as belonging to the story-world of *The Memory Police*, for disappearances are so integral to the writer-narrator's experience of this world that she is unable to contemplate existences that are disappearance-less when writing fiction. The typist's unemotive response to her voice disappearing – she realises that forcing herself to try to speak again is 'just a waste of energy' – and resourcefulness in finding an alternative method of communication – 'I took to relying on the typewriter' – also reflects how the island's residents react to disappearances; rather than lamenting profusely and refusing to adapt to their new lives, they are generally compliant in disposing of forgotten items, and if a disappearance affects their job, they find 'some other line of work quickly'.[846] That these disappearances are uncritically engaged with in the writer-narrator's fiction indicates that they are an unavoidable and basic condition of the world, much like the processes of breathing, aging, and dying. As such, this aspect of 'The Typist's Tale' sees Ogawa begin to crystallise *The Memory Police*'s essential message, suggesting that it is fundamentally about the state and nature of existence, and of the truths that come to underpin it.

As the main narrative progresses, the story-world of *The Memory Police* is increasingly characterised by oppression: the Memory Police become 'more and more brutal', conducting investigations and raids 'by surprise', sometimes 'in the middle of the

[843] Ogawa, *The Memory Police*, p. 9; p. 32; p. 45.
[844] Ogawa, *The Memory Police*, p. 15.
[845] Ogawa, *The Memory Police*, p. 55.
[846] Ogawa, *The Memory Police*, p. 55; p. 9.

night', carrying with them 'heavy battering rams capable of breaking down any door'.[847] As this sense of oppression emerges in the main narrative, so too does it manifest in the Written Endotext. Rather than being neutrally presented, as with the endotextual disappearances, this newfound truth of the writer-narrator's worldly experiences is demonised, something that is achieved primarily through the figure of the typing instructor. Under his unwavering gaze, the typist makes mistake after mistake in her lessons, leading her to feel 'increasingly oppressed, as though [she was] being backed into a corner by a powerful force'.[848] As the endotext develops, these feelings of oppression are elevated to oppressive actions, for the instructor incarcerates the typist in a room at the top of the church under the false pretence of taking her there to repair her typewriter, where he abuses her. The presentation of the typist as powerless and the instructor as inexplicably cruel has bearings on the main narrative's post-truth regime, for the Written Endotext's characters respectively behave as metaphors for the writer-narrator and the Memory Police – who are universally depicted as male – by mirroring the oppressor-oppressed relationship they share. The presentation of oppression in 'The Typist's Tale' not only allows *The Memory Police*'s writer-narrator to assert another truth claim about the basic conditions that underpin her existence, but also – given the negative portrayal of the typing instructor – allows her to voice dissent against those conditions. In this sense, 'The Typist's Tale' constitutes a twofold expression of power for the writer-narrator, for she is able to assert a truth claim that exists outside of the state's public archive while simultaneously challenging the regime under which she lives. Subsequently, Ogawa's novel suggests that acts of private writing may empower laypeople who are faced with totalitarian forces, for so long as an individual is able to express themselves, no matter how privately, a regime's power and monopoly over truth determination can never in fact be total.

The writer-narrator's challenge to the main narrative's post-truth regime reaches a crescendo at the conclusion of 'The Typist's Tale', for she acknowledges truths in her

[847] Ogawa, *The Memory Police*, p. 64; p. 97; p. 64.
[848] Ogawa, *The Memory Police*, p. 91.

writing that the Memory Police demand she forgets. The endotext's conclusion is co-present with the close of the main narrative, in which the writer-narrator and her fellow islanders have experienced the ostensible disappearance of their left legs. The mass of flesh formerly understood to be one's left leg is still attached to the writer-narrator's body, but she regards it as an unknown 'something' that makes movement cumbersome.[849] As Jill Dobson notes, the writer-narrator's disembodiment is '[l]ike the protagonist of her novel', for the typist remarks that her 'eyes and ears bec[o]me weaker and weaker' the longer she is confined in the church steeple, which eventually leads to total bodily detachment, with the typist asking '[w]ere those really my hands? My feet? My breasts?' as she examines her anatomy.[850] Here, the plural form of 'feet', together with the typist's remark that her '*legs* seemed to be floating in the air, and [she] was no longer able to recalled how it had felt when they had been real', is crucial to the writer-narrator's ability to assert truth claims.[851] In narrativizing bodily degradation and estrangement in her manuscript, the writer-narrator indirectly expresses that the condition of her own body has changed, thus asserting that a disappearance has occurred, whereas her construction of a bipedal character sees her acknowledge that humans typically have two legs, demonstrating that she has not in fact totally forgotten what the mass of flesh connected to her left hip is. Although subtly conveyed, this truth claim stares in the face of the Memory Police and the post-truth regime they represent. Ogawa's writer-narrator does not succeed in dismantling the island's totalitarian forces – she herself ultimately 'disappear[s]' into nonexistence at the main narrative's end, as with her fellow amnesiacs.[852] 'The Typist's Tale' does succeed, however, in undermining the island's post-truth regime, for by acknowledging both that disappearances occur *and* by acknowledging what those disappeared items are, it

[849] Ogawa, *The Memory Police*, p. 246.
[850] Jill Dobson, 'The Memory Police', *The Japan Society Review*, 14.6 (2019), 6-7 (p. 7); Ogawa, *The Memory Police*, p. 266.
[851] Ogawa, *The Memory Police*, p. 266 (emphasis added).
[852] Ogawa, *The Memory Police*, p. 274.

records truths that the regime, for whatever unspoken reason, finds undesirable, inconvenient, or necessary to suppress.

At its very heart, 'The Typist's Tale' constitutes the writer-narrator's very own private archive, for she continues to construct her manuscript in secret in spite of how 'another disappearance occur[s]': the vanishment of novels.[853] This very fact underscores the writer-narrator's assertion of truth claims in her manuscript; not only does she note the basic conditions of her worldly experience, demonise the oppression she faces, and subtly safeguard the memory of ostensibly forgotten things, but its very existence is a truth claim that undermines the post-truth regime enforced by the Memory Police. Novels exist, the manuscript asserts, no matter what the island's totalitarian forces might claim. Following Theo Finigan's analysis of Winston's diary in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 'The Typist's Tale' posits a creative response to the writer-narrator's authentic individual experience. Imbued in this creative response are several truth claims that accord with facts that the regime seeks to supress through the Memory Police's obliteration of all traces of forgotten things. This act sees the regime attempt to gain, maintain, and exert political power by controlling the public archive and the population's memories, thus evoking a sense of archive fever. The Written Endotext's contents and very existence counteract this, thus corroborating with Dylan Brown's claim that 'art's natural state is one of resistance or is somehow inherently anti-authoritarian'.[854] Subsequently, 'The Typist's Tale' suggests that laypeople possess the capability to resist dominant post-truth regimes by being themselves continually committed to reflecting on, telling, and recording truths that may otherwise be abused, distorted, or outright suppressed.

In *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *The Memory Police*, each story-world's dominant totalitarian force creates a public archive of information that establishes a singular, 'official' truth that is ultimately indifferent towards facts and excludes information that is

[853] Ogawa, *The Memory Police*, p. 175.
[854] Dylan Brown, 'The Curse of Memory: Yoko Ogawa's "The Memory Police"', *LA Review of Books*, 20 October 2019 <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/the-curse-of-memory-yoko-ogawas-the-memory-police/> [accessed 16 February 2021].

somehow inconvenient or undesirable from the perspective of those regimes. Given this, the private archives that Winston and Ogawa's writer-narrator establish, which express truths that are alternative to their story-worlds' dominant ideologies, position each character as a relativist. In particular, they become what Herman Cappelen and Torfinn Thomesen Huvenes see as 'Contemporary Relativists' to whom 'it matters what truth is relative to'.[855] While each story-world's dominant regime contends that truth is relative to the public archive of information that it constructs, meaning that a claim is only true if it aligns with the regime's singular, 'official' truth, Winston and Ogawa's writer-narrator seem to hold the belief that truth is relative to discernible aspects of reality, essentially upholding the correspondence theory of truth. Winston grapples with dates, the past, and things he remembers in his diary, while Ogawa's writer-narrator, through writing about bodily degradation, acknowledges the fact that humans once had more than one leg. Moreover, this kind of relativism allows Winston to defy the Party because it gives him the power to make true statements about his self and thus challenge their apparent monopoly on truth-determination. For Ogawa's writer-narrator, expressing truths via fiction undermines the story-world's post-truth regime precisely because it uses a variety of means to ensure that those truths are unacknowledgeable; if those truths can still be expressed, the regime has failed. As such, contemporary relativism is empowering in the context of totalitarian post-truth regimes, as it enables individuals to conceive truths outside of those officially set out by the state, thus suggesting that the power afforded to them by their regimes of truth is far from total.

The relationship between post-truth and relativism is complex. As noted by Zackariasson, they:

> both spring out of and feed off an increasing skepticism [sic] about human beings' abilities and even preparedness to attempt to acquire knowledge that would be untainted by the local conditions, standpoints, ideologies, concepts,

[855] Cappelen and Huvenes, 'Relative Truth', p. 521.

> theories, power relations, and so on that they represent and that permeate any form of inquiry, be it individual or collective, undertaken by scientists or laymen, and so on.[856]

Zackariasson's discussion of post-truth and relativism recalls what Cappelen and Huvenes see as contextualism, a type of relativism which asserts that the truth-value of a proposition is relative to the contexts (e.g. the local conditions, ideologies, power relations, and so on) in which it is made.[857] Whereas Cappelen and Huvenes see contextualism as a way of accounting for competing truth claims, Zackariasson's assessment suggests that contextualism may bear post-truthful qualities in instances where individuals refuse to accept truth claims that are inconvenient, uncomfortable, or do not conform to their beliefs for they originate from contexts in which those beliefs bear less significance. Contextualism gone wrong therefore sees individuals establish 'a worldview and then [refuse] to go back down from it, or accept any evidence that questions its rightness', thus contributing to the intensified post-truth condition of the twenty-first century in which they may deprioritise facts in favour of truth claims that align with their pre-existing beliefs and biases, or may valorise perspectives that instil in them an affective response.[858]

However, both *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *The Memory Police* suggest that certain kinds of relativism could, counter-intuitively, remedy today's heightened levels of post-truth. Post-truth dominates the story-world of each novel, and yet this domination is not total, for there remain politically unorthodox individuals who have the desire and ability to express non-official truths that dilute the presiding narratives precisely because the hold different methods of assessment to determine what is true. Of course, it is vital that Winston's and Ogawa's writer-narrator's non-official truths are intended to be authentic and veracious; they are not expressed in order to avoid undesirable facts, and nor do

[856] Zackariasson, 'Introduction', p. 2.
[857] See Cappelen and Huvenes, 'Relative Truth'.
[858] Sim, *Post-Truth, Scepticism & Power*, p. 13.

they avoid evoking discomfort. As discussed above, Winston's recounting of his experience with the prole prostitute is uncomfortable for him, whereas 'The Typist's Tale' sees Ogawa's writer-narrator confront the brutalities to which she is subjected. Moreover, it is dangerous for each character to challenge official truths. Winston knows that he may be punished for writing a diary, and Ogawa's writer-narrator is cognizant of the disappearance of novels and the repercussions of not acceding to relinquishing her writing. As such, each character's commitment towards truthfulness is highlighted – they are not relativists for flippant, self-serving, emotionally appealing reasons, but because they believe truth matters, no matter the consequences of expressing it, and no matter the ugly, inconvenient, unpleasant facts that this may dredge up. Herein lies the didactic intent of these dystopian imaginings and their endotexts. As writerly, metafictional texts, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *The Memory Police* seek to orient readers to the possibility that their relativism is valuable in deconstructing the intensified post-truth condition. However, the novels suggest that this may only be the case if readers act as contemporary relativists who, in the face of dominant post-truth narratives, put their emotions, biases, and personal contexts to one side in favour of selecting an alternative method of assessment when it comes to making and selecting competing truth claims: their veracity.

Chapter Conclusion

Through the interplay between their main narratives and endotexts, Orwell's, Kennard's, and Ogawa's novels depict their protagonists both contributing to and undermining the post-truth conditions of their respective story-worlds. Laypeople, Orwell's and Kennard's novels suggest, may collude in exacerbating the post-truth condition either by professionally contributing towards it or in how they internalise the post-truth condition by deceiving themselves, foregoing their commitment to truthfulness, and ultimately making it permissible for external actors to similarly deceive them. As discussed above, professional collusion is apparent in Winston's work at the Ministry of Truth, whereas self-deception is evident in how Winston and Karl dismiss their expertise when selecting

which truth claims to believe, instead prioritising truth claims that they find appealing. However, this is not to say that laypeople are post-truth villains. Orwell and Ogawa both dramatize laypeople safeguarding truth through their creation of private archives that sit outside of totalitarian monopolies over truth determination. In both novels, characters employ relativistic attitudes to achieve this feat, but crucially, their relativism only counteracts the post-truth regimes of their respective story-worlds because their relativistic claims acknowledge uncomfortable, undesirable, unappealing facts, and therefore pursue truth above all else.

However, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, *The Transition*, and *The Memory Police* do not suggest that laypersons' roles in catalysing or deconstructing the post-truth condition is unique to their story-worlds, for the fact that such considerations are manifested by metafictional, writerly texts that cause readers to become active participants in the interpretive game bears extratextual considerations. As with Winston, Karl, and Ogawa's writer-narrator, laypeople can contribute to or undermine heightened levels of post-truth. To revisit Kalpokas, this is apparent in the desirable truth claims laypeople assert about themselves in job interviews or on social media; to revisit Kennard, this is evident in how laypeople deceive themselves by wilfully overlooking how 'the chips within [their smartphones] are causing massive deforestation, killing gorillas, and are made under essentially slave conditions'; and to revisit Baggini, this appears in how relativists question established versions of truth and the power structures that generate them – a key consideration, given that bad faith actors (e.g., political figures, experts, the press, social media companies) can abuse their positions of power as arbiters of truth to disseminate misleading truth claims.[859]

These extratextual considerations generate Barthesian bliss for readers of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, *The Transition*, and *The Memory Police*. Not only does navigating the interpretive complexities engendered by these novels' endotexts bring real-world readers to the realisation that they can contribute to or deconstruct the twenty-first

[859] See Appendix 2.

century's intensified post-truth condition, but the inherent didacticism of these dystopian imaginings provides readers with instructions with regards to their own relationship with truthfulness. Where characters collude in heightening post-truth in their story-worlds, they are presented negatively. Winston's enjoyment of his work refigures him as a cog within a deplorable totalitarian regime, whereas Winston's and Karl's self-deception when responding to Read Endotexts' truth claims ultimately leads to their downfalls – by overlooking the potential for 'Goldstein's Book' to deceive, Winston paves his own way to the Ministry of Love, while Karl dismisses his expertise as a professional textual fraudster, falls for a 'red herring' in the form of 'The Trapeze', and is lured into committing transgressive acts that drive him further from Genevieve.[860] The fates of Winston and Karl therefore serve as warnings for readers of Orwell's and Kennard's novels. Collude in the intensification of the post-truth condition, they stress, and face the consequences. Conversely, Winston and Ogawa's writer-narrator are presented more favourably when undermining the post-truth regimes of their story-worlds through their construction of private archives, for rather than supporting totalitarian forces or allowing them to exert their power, these characters bravely stand in opposition to them despite the known ramifications of doing so. It is therefore better and more noble, these dystopian imaginings argue, to challenge the post-truth condition of the twenty-first century. Subsequently, these endotexts offer a twofold evocation of bliss. First, they challenge the assumption that post-truth is solely enacted by the powerful upon the powerless, thus orienting readers to a realisation about their role in catalysing the post-truth condition. Second, they seek to undermine the belief that laypeople are powerless to resist post-truth's entrenchment. Resist the temptations of post-truth, these dystopian endotexts implore, and remain committed to finding, telling, and recording veracious truth claims. There lies the possibility of overcoming one of the most urgent crises of the twenty-first century.

[860] See Appendix 2.

Coda

The conception of endotexts, endotextures, and endotextuality marks the most significant scholarly contribution of this thesis. To reiterate, I define "endotexts" as:

> *Additional texts that assume the guise of a written document and are only found printed within, alongside, or around a fictional work's larger main narrative, from whose story-world they originate, and whose thematic concerns and central conceits they metafictionally crystallise, subsequently shaping real-world readers' interpretations of those narratives and alerting them to the extratextual presence of comparable issues, thus challenging the assumptions of the world that they hold.*

In summarising the generic function of endotexts, this definition also addresses "endotextuality", the theoretical framework that accounts for how they work. Bringing together transtextuality, the tension between theories of reader-response and the *mise en abyme*, metafiction, and Barthesian bliss, endotextuality offers a new way of reading and understanding endotexts that challenges the frequent criticism that they 'add little' to a novel, are 'self-indulgent', or are little more than expositional devices or narrative explainers.[861]

Identifying and examining three distinct endotextures only furthers the critical intervention made by this thesis. Written and Read Endotexts necessitate that the acts of composition or interpretation are narrativized within their counterpart main narratives, which signals the shift from main narrative to endotext. In dramatizing how fictional characters compose or interpret texts, Written and Read Endotexts 'fix the position of the real reader', for by demonstrating how readers should or should *not* make sense of the written word, these endotexts guide and shape how real readers understand them.[862] Parallel Endotexts paradoxically 'serve to enhance the traditional aim of verisimilitude' by

[861] Milner, 'Introduction', p. 6; Macdonald, 'The Power', p. 117.
[862] Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*, p. 153.

mimicking the textual fabric of society, all the while metafictionally 'widen[ing] a central theme of the novel' by reworking it in a variety of diegetic texts.[863] Through establishing this paradox, Parallel Endotexts orient readers to the extratextual prevalence of the problems with which they are concerned. Critical Endotexts particularly bring attention to the relationship between power and the written word, for they assume authoritative forms, are typically authored intratextually by powerful figures, and tend to dramatize how stories are shaped, framed, and remembered. These endotextures each work toward endotextuality's central function, albeit through different means, thus underscoring the point that endotexts are complex literary devices undeserving of the scholarly dismissal they have so far received.

My conceptualisation of endotexts, endotextures, and endotextuality has been couched in relation to literary dystopias. Throughout this thesis, I have shown that there is a longstanding tradition of dystopian endotextuality by analysing twenty-two novels across a one-hundred-and-twelve-year period whose authors represent eleven different nations: Canada, China, the Czech Republic, Egypt, Finland, Germany, Japan, Poland, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. Analysing the dystopian genre in this fashion has revealed that it possesses a preoccupation with the problem of truth that transcends historical and geopolitical boundaries, for its endotexts stress that political leaders, experts, the press, social media, and laypeople alike may in isolation or in collaboration exacerbate the post-truth condition, thus profoundly imperilling and destabilising truth. Foregrounding the dystopian genre's preoccupation with truth, its importance, power, and fragility, and the perils of allowing it to be abused, distorted, and disregarded by bad faith actors who seek to gain, maintain, or exert control is a crucial scholarly intervention at a time when post-truth's prevalence shows little signs of deescalating. Disinformation about the coronavirus pandemic that 'spread[s] unnecessary fear and panic', incites division by 'stigmatizing and vilifying people and

[863] Michael Hinken, 'Documentary Fiction: Authenticity and Illusion', *Michigan Quarterly Review*, 45.1 (2006) <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?cc=mqr;c=mqr;c=mqrarchive;idno=act2080.0045.128;g=mqrg;rgn=main;view=text;xc=1> [accessed 26 November 2023].

groups', and generates 'medical mistrust' that devalues expert opinions continues to abound.[864] The Putin administration mobilised a 'propaganda campaign on social media' that attempted to legitimise and influence how the world came to understand Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, whereas 'Israeli state discourse and […] misinformation serves as an extra arm to the overall Israeli military policy' to misleadingly frame the newly escalated Israel-Hamas war.[865] Moreover, recent developments in artificial intelligence (AI) are thought to pave the way for a 'post-truth society' to emerge, one in which '[t]he real truths about individuals, groups, and organisations become meaningless or worthless' because 'AI-based credit decision-making systems' will increasingly dictate individuals' abilities to apply for insurance or mortgages, deepfakes may put forward 'doctored video[s] in which a person can be made to appear as if they are doing and saying anything', and services such as ChatGPT may convincingly fabricate information.[866] Post-truth, in other words, constitutes one of the most urgent crises of the twenty-first century, something which has long been anticipated in dystopian imaginings, and something that has been reached in spite of such anticipations.

Literary dystopias are intentionally didactic texts. They serve as 'prophetic vehicle[s]' that 'warn […] of the dangerous course we are following', thus 'educat[ing] readers' and encouraging them to 'resist ignorance and resignation' with regards to

[864] Daniel A. Erku, Sewunet A. Belachew, Solomon Arbha, Mahipal Sinnollareddy, Jackson Thomas, Kathryn J. Steadman, and Wubshet H. Tesfaye, 'When fear and misinformation go viral: Pharmacists' role in deterring medication misinformation during the 'infodemic' surrounding COVID-19', *Research in Social and Administrative Pharmacy*, 17.1 (2021), 1954-1963 (p. 1955); UN News, 'Hatred going viral in 'dangerous epidemic of misinformation' during COVID-19 pandemic', *United Nations*, 14 April 2020 <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/04/1061682> [accessed 6 January 2024]; J. Jaiswal, C. LoSchiavo, and D. C. Perlman, 'Disinformation, Misinformation and Inequality-Driven Mistrust in the Time of COVID-19: Lessons Unlearned from AIDS Denialism', *AIDS and Behaviour*, 24.10 (2020), 2776-2780 (p. 2776).

[865] Dominique Geissler, Dominik Bär, Nicolas Pröllochs, and Stefan Feuerriege, 'Russian propaganda on social media during the 2022 invasion of Ukraine', *EPJ Data Science*, 12.35 (2023), 1-20 (p. 1); Daniel Falcone, 'Israel Is Using Disinformation and Deflection as a Foreign Policy Stratagem', *truthout*, 29 October 2023 <https://truthout.org/articles/israel-is-using-disinformation-and-deflection-as-a-foreign-policy-stratagem/> [accessed 6 January 2024].

[866] Kiyosha Murata, 'Post-Truth: Organisational Social Responsibility in an AI-Driven Society', in *Platforms and Artificial Intelligence*, ed. by Ahmed Bounfour (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2022), pp. 269-281 (p. 269); p. 270; for ChatGPT's convincing fabrication of information, see Jonathan Brill, 'AI Is Creating A Post-Truth World', *Forbes*, 19 December 2022 <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jonathanbrill/2022/12/19/ai-is-creating-a-post-truth-world/?sh=65bdb26d17ad> [accessed 6 January 2024].

contemporary ills.[867] Endotexts align with this dystopian didacticism. Through shaping readers' interpretations of dystopian narratives by emphasising their core concerns and messages, endotexts counteract novels' anxiousness about whether their lessons can be gleaned by repeatedly foregrounding them – if a dystopian warning is akin to a road sign exclaiming "Danger Ahead!", the endotext serves as the sign's bright red paint and placement at eye level that ensures that it cannot be missed. The didacticism of endotexts is key in a time in which dystopias' warnings have fallen to the wayside. Literary dystopias have been reduced to mass entertainment, or, at best, as a satirical genre that 'exercise[s] moral judgement [and] condemns human failings [and] calls attention to individual or collective evil', thus serving as a pressure relief valve that vindicates readers' frustrations with the world they live in.[868] Readers may also find relief in dystopian fiction, which reminds them that 'no matter how bleak [things are], things could be worse'.[869] These responses to dystopian fiction constitute a near post-truthful attitude towards the genre, with readers prioritising how the genre makes them feel (relieved, vindicated) over a narrative's "facts" or message.

Paying attention to endotexts offers a corrective to this. Through constructing complex, multilayered textual objects, endotexts demand difficult, critical, and careful reading from real-world readers. They suspend the suspension of disbelief, insisting that readers slow down and consider a work's meanings and purposes, examine how and why different textual components relate to one another, and reflect on a novel's artifice, thus foregrounding a literary dystopia's didacticism. Indeed, through clarifying and crystallising their main narratives' thematic concerns, preoccupations, and messages,

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[867] Raffaella Baccolini and Tom Moylan, 'Introduction' in *Dark Horizons: Science Fiction and the Dystopian Imagination*, ed. by Raffaella Baccolini and Tom Moylan (New York: Routledge, 2003), pp. 1-12 (p. 2); Karen F. Stein, 'Post-Apocalypse, Post-Human: Some Recent Dystopias' in *The Age of Dystopia: One Genre, Our Fears and Our Future*, ed. by Louisa MacKay Demerjian (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2016), pp. 47-58 (p. 48); Raffaella Baccolini, 'Living in Dystopia' in *Dystopia(n) Matters: On the Page, on Screen, on Stage*, ed. by Fátima Vieira (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2013), pp. 44-45 (p. 45).

[868] Jonathan Greenburg, *The Cambridge Introduction to Satire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 13.

[869] Nyshka Candran, 'Why do we find comfort in terrifying stories?', *BBC Culture*, 14th May 2020 <https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20200508-why-depressing-dystopia-stories-are-popular-during-covid-19> [accessed 16 October 2023].

endotexts emphasise a dystopia's warnings. This effect is reinforced by the inherent metafictionality of endotexts, for by alerting readers to the possibility that the nightmarish scenarios they read are not uniquely fictional, they guide them towards the lessons imbued within dystopian works. Moreover, the complex interpretive processes necessitated by endotexts bring readers to possibilities that may disrupt the assumptions they hold about the world, thus evoking bliss that orients them to the alerts offered by literary dystopias and subsequently empowers readers to navigate and address them in reality. Endotexts and literary dystopias therefore closely align; a didactic device reinforces a didactic genre, together ensuring that a novel's dark warnings do not go unheeded.

I have demonstrated a utopian view of the dystopian throughout this thesis. Utopian visions 'aim for the betterment of […] community' by offering 'radical alternative[s]' to their contemporaneous societies, thus suggesting that change and improvement – or even the mere possibility of change and improvement – are fundamentally utopian.[870] This impulse is apparent in literary dystopias, which 'demand their readers actively think through social contradictions, and reflect on the gap between the fictive and the present lived reality' and serve as 'an exploration of ways of resist[ing]' caustic conditions found in the present.[871] Dystopias may therefore 'maintain a horizon of hope' beyond their pages, for by presenting nightmarish extrapolations of contemporary society, they impel readers to work towards something different, something better.[872] I likewise possess a utopian understanding of dystopian endotexts. They offer hope even in instances where their main narratives are anti-utopian, for their metafictionality and the extratextual bliss they evoke by 'unsettl[ing] the reader's historical, cultural, [and] psychological assumptions' sees dystopian endotexts urge real-

[870] Rahime Çokay Nebioğlu, *Deleuze and the Schizoanalysis of Dystopia* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), p. 18; Caroline Edwards, *Utopia and the Contemporary British Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), p. 42.
[871] Stock, *Modern Dystopian Fiction and Political Thought: Narratives of World Politics*, p. 99; Nebioğlu, *Deleuze and the Schizoanalysis of Dystopia*, p. 7.
[872] Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia*, p. 147.

world readers to behave, think, and see the world differently.[873] Indeed, if, following Christopher Schaberg, literature has value in the post-truth era, if fiction 'is among the most effective tools in humanity's toolkit', if 'storification' and fact-centred 'emotional narratives' are central to the fight against post-truth, then endotexts' blissful slowness, insistence that alternative viewpoints are considered, and development of readers' critical thinking skills means that they are uniquely adept at inoculating readers against the intensified post-truth condition of the twenty-first century.[874] As such, endotexts are, much like the dystopian genre, 'characterised by hope towards the unfulfilled, unachieved utopia, showing the reader a road that must start in the present', for only by seeing through post-truth can individuals begin to safeguard truth from those who nefariously seek to destabilise and devalue it.[875]

Endotextuality is ultimately a formal feature of literary dystopias. Not only does it abound throughout the dystopian genre, but its very purpose encapsulates the genre's didactic aims and utopian impulse. For too long, endotexts have been overlooked, dismissed, and maligned, something which I have sought to address by providing them with a serious conceptualisation for the first time. Here, I have offered a new framework with which classical, canonical, and contemporary works alike can be reread, reinterpreted, and have new meanings in them uncovered. The dystopian genre shows no signs of disappearing. To be human is, I suspect, to worry – worry about the state of the world, worry about the state of the future, worry about what it means when fundamental virtues like truth are besmirched and eroded. These worries transform into warnings in politics, science, and art, warnings that possess dystopian emphases and anxieties, warnings that fill our pages, screens, imaginations, and dreams. Let us therefore heed these warnings by paying attention to endotexts, endotextures, and endotextuality – lest we wish to sleepwalk into oblivion.

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[873] Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, p. 14.

[874] Yuval Noah Harari, *21 Lessons for the 21st Century* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2018), p. 239; Lobna Hassan, Sebastian Deterding, J. Tuomas Harviainen, and Juho Hamari, 'Fighting Post-truth with Fiction', *Storyworlds: A Journal of Narrative Studies*, 11.1 (2019), 51-78 (p, 51); p. 69.

[875] Vita Fortunati, 'Why Dystopia Matters' in *Dystopia(n) Matters: On the Page, on Screen, on Stage*, ed. by Fátima Vieira (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2013), pp. 28-36 (p. 29).

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Appendix 1: A Taxonomy of Endotextures

Throughout this thesis, I analyse an array of dystopian endotexts, in which the term "endotexts" is taken to mean:

> *Additional texts that assume the guise of a written document and are only found printed within, alongside, or around a fictional work's larger main narrative, from whose story-world they originate, and whose thematic concerns and central conceits they metafictionally crystallise, thus shaping real-world readers' interpretations of those narratives and empowering them to extratextually tackle comparable issues.*

In conducting this analysis, I have identified three distinct types of endotext, or "endotextures", which I have named "Written and Read Endotexts", "Parallel Endotexts", and "Critical Endotexts", the definitions and purposes, forms, and examples of which are detailed in the following tables.

Table A: Written and Read Endotexts

Definition and Purpose	Typical Forms	Examples
Written and Read Endotexts are embedded within their counterpart main narratives. To be present endotextually, Written and Read Endotexts necessitate the narrativization of the acts of composition or interpretation. In other words, their co-presence is made possible by the main narrative dramatizing how they are written and made or how they are read and understood. This recreation of textual production and textual engagement is a deeply metafictional move, for it	Books-within-books; newspaper reports; diary entries; letters; emails; text messages; social media posts and messages.	Rubashov's diary (Written Endotext) in Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* (1940). 'The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical

'draws attention to [the novel's] status as an artefact', for just as Written and Read Endotexts are deliberately constructed and intentionally interpreted objects, so too are the novels to which they belong.[876] This particularly 'serves to fix the position of the real reader'.[877] The interplay between a main narrative and a Written Endotext shapes how a real reader perceives a character who wrote it: Which information do they choose to present and how do they present it? Which information do they withhold? Which information do they outright fabricate? Read Endotexts serve to instruct real readers on how they should or should not interpret texts. Where characters are rewarded for how they read texts (i.e., following an instruction well, deciphering a riddle, gaining new knowledge), real readers are encouraged to do the same, whereas where characters are punished for how they make sense of texts (i.e., they miss vital information because they do not read a text in full, their lack of criticality leads them to be deceived), real readers are provided with an example of what they ought not to do. In relation to post-truth, Written and Read Endotexts dramatize how truth claims are produced and how audiences choose which truth claims to believe, thus laying bare		Collectivism' (Read Endotext) in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949). Newspaper headlines (Read Endotexts) in Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle* (1962), Philip Roth's *The Plot Against America* (2004), and Lauren Beukes's *Zoo City* (2010). The social media posts made by (Written Endotext) and sent to (Read Endotext) Mae in Dave Eggers's

[876] Waugh, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction*, p. 2.
[877] Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*, p. 153.

how emotional appeals, the affirmation of beliefs, and personal desires are likely to trump veracity.		*The Circle* (2013).

Table B: Parallel Endotexts

Definition and Purpose	Typical Forms	Examples
Parallel Endotexts are interstitial texts that particularly obstruct the progression of their counterpart main narrative. Rather than directly commenting on or being explicitly commented on by their main narratives, Parallel Endotexts exist in a non-hierarchical relationship with their main narratives. Instead, they relate to, comment on, and report on issues that exist within a novel's broader story-world. Here, Parallel Endotexts mimic the ubiquity of written texts in the real world, and thus 'serve to enhance the traditional aim of verisimilitude' by making their story-world appear as real as the material world.[878] Simultaneously, Parallel Endotexts 'widen a central theme of the[ir] novel[s]' by reworking them in a variety of diegetic texts, which paradoxically disrupts verisimilitude by orienting readers metafictionally to the extratextual presence of similar themes, topics, and problems.[879] In other words, Parallel Endotexts reflect the textual fabric of society all the while highlighting that intratextual issues have real-	Chapter epigraphs; interstitial documents (transcripts; biographies; newspaper reports; magazine articles; diary entries; letters; social media posts; illustration labels).	Buzz Windrip's 'Zero Hour: Over The Top' in Sinclair Lewis's *It Can't Happen Here* (1935). Transcripts, letters, dictionary entries, and magazine excerpts in Johanna Sinisalo's *The Core of the Sun* (2013/2016). Labels appended to archaeological illustrations in Naomi

[878] Hinken, 'Documentary Fiction: Authenticity and Illusion'.
[879] Hinken, 'Documentary Fiction: Authenticity and Illusion'.

world counterparts. Moreover, through mimicking the textual fabric of society, Parallel Endotexts recreate the degree of information overload that characterises the twenty-first century. Just as there are an array of texts to make sense of when interpreting Parallel Endotexts and their corresponding main narratives, so too is there an abundance of readily available information to interpret extratextually. In highlighting this, Parallel Endotexts bring attention to a condition that has made post-truth so persuasive.		Alderman's *The Power* (2016). Biographies, documents, and reportage in Omar El Akkad's *American War* (2017)

Table C: Critical Endotexts

Definition and Purpose	Typical Forms	Examples
Belonging to the same story-world, Critical Endotexts embed their counterpart main narratives and directly discuss them as if their characters and events were real. As such, Critical Endotexts tend to be written intratextually from a vantage point of the story-world's future (i.e., at a point future to the conclusion of the main narrative) and often prominently feature authority figures, such as academics, experts, or political figures, who commentate on the story-world's past. In doing so, they metafictionally foreground the relationship between power, writing, and history by dramatizing how stories are shaped, framed, and remembered, thus	Forewords, introductions, and prefaces; afterwords and epilogues; appendices; footnotes; frame narratives.	Anthony Meredith's editorial footnotes in Jack London's *The Iron Heel* (1908). The 'Foreword' in R. C. Sherriff's *The Hopkins Manuscript* (1939).

inviting real world readers to particularly reflect on how world events are narrativized and by whom these stories are told. This is particularly pertinent to the post-truth condition, under which some academics, experts, and political figures abuse their authority and reputations as arbiters of truth to propagate post-truthful narratives.		The 'Censor's Postscript' in Karin Boye's *Kallocain* (1940/1967). The 'Historical Notes' in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985).

Appendix 2: Transcript: Interview with Luke Kennard, Author of *The Transition*, 7th December 2022

Liam Knight: Firstly, to what extent are you comfortable with your novel being described as 'dystopian'?

Luke Kennard: I think I became increasingly comfortable with that as a label during the process of writing it. Initially, when I wrote the first draft, it was set in a sort of present day situation, which would have been around 2012, so it was set in a sort of vague present. In the editing feedback from my agent, her first main point of feedback was that it didn't make sense for it to take place in the present day. She said I would just get into too many complications and that I couldn't place a revolutionary scheme like the Transition into the UK as it was in 2012 and have it make sense because it has too many ramifications for too many other things that would necessitate a lot of worldbuilding or adjusting in order for it to make sense. So her suggestion was to pitch it forwards a little.

Knight: Yes, I had always interpreted the book as being present-adjacent.

Kennard: Yes, that was my feeling. My agent said it only needed to be set ten years ahead. So that was my first job: to go through the novel and see it as being set in 2025 or thereabouts. Things were not going to be massively different, but there were going to be little changes to things like consumerism. It was kind of fun. I made the assumption that self-driving cars were going to be in popular use – as they very well may be – and drew upon my own purchasing habits – when shopping for groceries online, I found that I would often just populate my new basket with the contents of the old one – to create the automatically self-replenishing fridges and cupboards. You don't even notice the money going out of your

account or the items being delivered; they go through a service hatch – a smart kitchen would have a service wall with doors that the delivery guys open and post things into, and it would tell when you had ran out of things, like milk, and it would automatically be added to your next order. There would be a constant, almost conveyor-belt like circulation, but essentially with human beings running it. Although I didn't really explore it in the novel, these people, your delivery drivers and so on, would become the underclass that are being worked as if they are machines. The novel itself is beyond that layer, though, it's more to do with the aspiring middle class, the zoomers. But yes, there was a conscious decision at that point to make the novel more dystopian and to understand that it would be received as belonging within that genre.

Knight: Karl seems to be a lazy, disengaged, or apathetic reader, seen in how he gives up on reading the Transition brochure when it mentions Piaget and how he doesn't read the scheme's daily bulletins. Similarly for Genevieve, neither she nor Karl read the scheme's contract or make time to read newspapers. I was wondering if there was any significance in the choice to have such apathetic or disengaged readers?

Kennard: Yes: I wanted to play that off the fact that Karl is also bright enough to write five pieces of A-Level coursework at a time by cutting and pasting things. I think that I felt that that's where things were going at the time. It's probably also a self-portrait of my laziness and apathy at its worst. It has to be a bit of discipline, I think, to do those things properly.

Knight: Would you say that it is that apathy – Karl's apathy in particular – that lead him down the failed path that he goes down?

Kennard: Yes – I think his apathy toward reading is about finding more and more shortcuts, and the view that if you find a shortcut to something, that thing becomes increasingly meaningless. So the novel was written against that idea, as well as the idea of essay farms, which just entrench the idea that money is the only important thing because they make it possible for reasonably well off students to take shortcuts in their studies. It's that complete detachment, I suppose, in a Marxist way, of the worker from their labour, the alienation of labour, and I could see that playing out on conceptual and intellectual levels to the point where it is devalued. This was also a reaction to Conservative policies toward arts and culture as well, which had become worse and worse. The crisis in higher education in the arts and humanities at the moment is because of them garrotting these subjects at an earlier stage in their development, cutting things from GCSEs and discouraging A-Level students from taking English. It has a knock-on effect. The absolute necessity of these buzzwords like critical thinking and things like that and the way in which our entire culture is set up to discourage them that feels systematic, and to me felt systematic in some quite interesting ways, and in ways that aren't judgemental. Karl is just trying to scratch a living. I knew a lot of people in the early 2000s who were doing a lot of these bogus writing jobs. They were so desperate to do something that involved writing that they would, for £50 a throw, write copy for travel websites and things like that, hammering out things about places they had never been. At the time, I didn't really have any interesting work – I was

working a data entry job for the local council – and so I was jealous of them. I would have much rather been doing fraudulent copywriting! I was envious of the Karls.

Knight: That interestingly brings me to my next question, especially because you used the word 'fraudulent'. I see Karl as a 'fraudulent writer'; he reviews products he's never used, and he writes 'study aids' that he knows students will just pass off as their own work. Is his truth-indifference born out of necessity – does he have to forego his commitment to truth not because he is lazy but because he was scrounging to survive?

Kennard: I think that's it, and he does have low self-esteem as well – well, it's a mixture, actually; it's a mixture of pride and low self-esteem. He sees himself as somebody who would never go in for something like a Marks and Spencer graduate scheme, get on the management chain and have a perfectly respectable well-paid job and do whatever he liked in his spare time. He sees himself as above that in some way. He sees himself as a properly creative type of person who wouldn't do that sort of work: he would see that as selling out. He doesn't see undermining the entire education system as selling out! And I think there's something quite human there. We all do things and get away with them, or hope we can. To take a really crass example, we all have smartphones and try not to think about the fact that the chips within them are causing massive deforestation, killing gorillas, and are made under essentially slave conditions. We just put that out of our minds. It's not our fault that the system is the way it is. We are implicated in it, but that's not to say that we should throw our phones away.

Knight: That's really interesting, because I've been reading a lot about post-truth recently, and specifically about collusion and how we co-construct a post-truth environment. But similarly, what you're saying there is that the world and society are the way they are and yet we have to tell ourselves these small lies or we have to forget certain inconvenient facts in order to comfortably function within that society. So you're saying that smartphones are responsible for so many evils in the world, but we choose to forget about that in order to comfortably engage with them and engage in society.

Kennard: This 'choosing to forget' thing I think is really essential; I think that's really well put. But that's sort of all-pervading. We have to choose to forget a lot to just carry on living an adult life inevitably full of compromise. I think the older you get, the more you realise how compromised everything is. Alongside these notions of post-truth, I think we also have this prosecutorial, carcery thinking in social networks that seeks to punish and seeks to find people's transgressions and mercilessly punish them for it. It's horrible, seeing the way the people are dragged for the slightest infringement of the bien pensant. The immediate go-to at the moment seems to be to try to publicly shame someone and hold them up as an example of everything that is wrong, and I think we need to remember that that person is a human being, another person who probably has rent to pay. We need to remember that this is what is being put at risk: we could literally be destroying someone's life. It's indicative of the 'I want to speak to the manager' attitude; for me, it plays into this whole idea of everything becoming PR and customer relations, but none of us having to think about the repercussions of the things that we do

and the damage that we do, all of which plays into that idea of 'collusion'. We just hope to get away with things. We hope that we're not part of a systematic problem, but actually we are. 'Collusion' is a valuable way of looking at the role we play in the most dreadful things that we wouldn't associate ourselves with at all, like our collusion in white supremacy, either by remaining silent or by quietly benefitting from it without questioning it.

Knight: Exactly – so often it's the case that we don't question these things because it's often easier not to. Questioning our own collusion can be quite uncomfortable. If I may, I wanted to ask you about 'The Mentor's Edition' in *The Transition*? Do the parables it contains have any deeper meaning or have any bearing on the truth behind the Transition? For instance, I read the first parable about the stray dog at the butchers as being about someone really grafting to get no benefit whatsoever, whereas the other dogs just went around to the bins at the back. So I was wondering if the parables have any bearings on what the Transition is about, or are they purposefully ambiguous because the Transition is similarly ambiguous or because 'The Mentor's Edition' is in fact designed to be a trap of sorts?

Kennard: I think perhaps they were partly parodies and maybe forerunners to the Jordan Peterson 'this is going to be some wisdom' type thing in the way that he might use, for example, Pinocchio to make a comment about something but rarely draw any conclusions by doing so. So the parables were partly a parody of that tendency of movements and self-help organisations to have these actually deliberately ambiguous parables that are supposed to be instructive but actually aren't. The dogs one I think relates to the Transition's

philosophy, which is about opportunistic entrepreneurship, which is, in a way, what Karl had been doing, he just didn't find a way to make it socially acceptable and he wasn't successful enough. If Karl had been running what was essentially an essay mill and making £150,000 a year out of it, then that probably would have been seen as a really good thing, and so the only thing that really matters to the Transition is the success of the enterprise. And I think the dog parable was a gesture towards arts and culture: don't dance around trying to impress people; nobody cares.

Knight: That's interesting, your comment about performativity and the arts, as the next parable is the one about the dying writer who wants her work to be burned. You said earlier that the book was written at a point where the arts and humanities were being routinely discredited by the conservative government, and it seems the first two parables are directly related to that: there's the performativity of the stray dog, and the writer wants all of her creations to be destroyed upon her death. There's some sort of implication, maybe, that the Transition is promoting some sort of negative mindset or attitude toward the arts, or is itself a product of a system that has a certain negative mindset or attitude toward the arts and humanities.

Kennard: Yeah, it is, and I suppose the Transition sees the arts and humanities as superfluous and as being inefficiently marketized, and it is distrustful of something that is done for not enough gain, for something that is done for the love of it, or for some nebulous sense of artistic merit. They would look very kindly on the people who run and work for music streaming platforms, but they would see the musicians and songwriters themselves as stupid for going

into that side of it, even though they are the only reason those platforms exist in the first place. Again, this is something that has happened since the book was written: bands that were able to make a living – even if it wasn't a huge living – in the era of CDs could earn £30,000 a year through royalties on CD sales alone, but now they earn £500 a year because they get 0.03p every time someone plays their song. And this is the way that we consume music now, but we don't see ourselves as being implicated in that. We don't see ourselves as directly participating in the total amateurisation of an entire art form. And by amateurisation, I mean that that has real class ramifications; only the people that have the means and free time to do it will ever be able to afford to do it again, if this path continues along to its logical conclusion. I think 'The Mentor's Edition' is a bit of a trip as well, in terms of how it works in the plot, definitely. It just ensnares Karl into committing some sort of transgression against the programme, so it is a bit of a false flag test too. I also think it was part of the 'drinking the Kool-Aid' thing as well, and maybe part of the way that – based on the reading I've done about twelve-step programmes and talking to friends and family of mine who have done that – you just have to work the programme; you have to have a certain humility in a way and accept that a lot of what you are being told is going to sound like spiritualist gobbledegook and you are going to hate it, but trust it, and keep working at it and keep doing it. So I think they were trying to invoke a similar level of trust, in a way, to the quasi-religious elements of AA and any sort of rehabilitative scheme. Even if you think it's beneath you, you have to forego that and just work the programme and trust that these opaque parables are going to actually build to something, to some better way of living.

From an event that I did, I know that some of my readers are very distrusting of the premise of the novel. They read it and asked, 'What's wrong with success?' and I replied by talking about how impossible it is to buy a house, and how it will only get more and more impossible, and how I thought that they weren't quite aware of this, given how they've had mortgages since the 1990s. For those people, they don't see how it's not so easy for people 10-15 years younger than them, and how the system does not work for people who are only a few years younger than them, and how it will only continue to get worse. There's nothing to be done about it – I'm not a politician – but this process is literally disenfranchising an entire generation and the tiny group of winners is going to get tinier and tinier and they will become more and more exploitative and more and more defensive about their own position – again, this sense of looking the other way when we are indirectly responsible for something, not feeling like we have to take any responsibility for that. And I suppose it doesn't take much to push that a few years into the future, where we will be even more enraged by the increasingly small group of people who can afford what we have been promised – and I do have some ambivalence about this; I do have some sense that maybe what we have been promised was silly and what we need is tenancy reform and just making sure that we have a model a bit more like the continent, where we can just rent the same place and you have rights as a tenant, which we just don't have here; you can be booted out of your own home with a month's notice by anyone at any time. So there's a part of me that sees the novel as a reaction to the disappointment held by older millennials who were told that as long as they worked hard and went to university because that was an option available to them – I

know I mentioned in another interview about how in my dad's generation, only 4% of people got to go to university at all, and he only did on a language scholarship, and that's something that if I had been that age in the 70s with my modest talents in nothing that's very applicable, I never would have got into university if I was from my dad's background – they would get a decent job and do all the normal core things that would give them a fulfilling existence. But that isn't really possible anymore, so there is a sort of anger or disappointment about that. I see a lot on Twitter at the moment from people saying that they have paid £200,000 in rent in the last 15 years, having lived in 11 different places, but they won't be accepted for a mortgage even though the monthly payments are less than the rent they've been paying, they've paid off two private landlords' mortgages on their own homes by virtue of being forced to live by the current system. There's a sense of 'I was promised better than this. I was told that if I did the right thing and worked hard and essentially made a success of myself in some way, I would have more to show for it, and I don't'. And it's that bubbling sense of anger that I guess I felt and I feel is sort of coming to the surface a bit now, and I have to resist the temptation to tweet this and say, 'Hey guys, buy my first book so that I can buy a house!' So yes, I have this sense of ambivalence, because if a friend of mine made a career out of designing tableware, I would be like, 'good for you', I wouldn't be like 'ugh – you're selling out!' I feel like I had to say this to those readers I mentioned earlier. I'm not against people doing well – of course I'm not. I wouldn't look down on people for succeeding. I just feel that the way in which we are being told we are allowed to use our skills and talents, especially if they are creative, is that we can only use

them if we make money, and a lot of it, essentially making it a business. Really, it's just another way of saying 'You are going to become a businessperson.' That's the only end option available to you, and that's the only business that the Transition offers. It sets people up, own part of their company, and make them a miniature CEOs. At the time, I knew so many people who worked in recruitment, worked in recruitment agencies, or worked in recruitment agencies who recruited people to work in recruitment. That was a big job at the time, and the Transition is similar; it's like a recruitment agency for recruitment agencies. It is its own business, but hides that it is its own money-making scheme that is trying to harness what it sees as this untapped resource in this generation of people who have been shut out through making vague promises, like how they promise to give people some of the kind of middle-class life they were told would be theirs.

Knight: Albeit a very restricted one with these tiny, tiny houses!

Kennard: Yeah – a miniaturised version of that! That was another edit that my agent made. Those houses were comically tiny in the first draft, and she said that I was going a bit too far, and that it was a bit too silly at times. It still worked, but I needed to keep it plausible. The doors weren't high enough – they were only shoulder height! And she said that was a bit daft and would have been funny if it was a comedy sketch.

Knight: Oh that's brilliant! Now earlier on, we spoke about ambiguity. We spoke about ambiguity with regards to 'The Mentor's Edition', and I find 'The Trapeze' to also be ambiguous to an extent. I feel like it promises quite a lot – or it is rumoured to – i.e. in terms of really what the Transition is about, but it doesn't really deliver on that,

either because Karl's university friends cannot make heads nor tails of it, when Karl does have access to it, he's too hungover to get past the first page, and even Mr Roderick is quite dismissive of it. He seems to be the most knowledgeable character about it in the story-world, but he dismisses it and summarises its message as being one of population control. Furthermore, we as readers have very limited access to 'The Trapeze' as well. So I see this as a ghost of an endotext, and I wanted to ask why – what drew you to implement such a ghost of an endotext? It's there, but only just.

Kennard: Yes, it's very limited, its presence in there. It's a bit of a red herring, I think. But yes, it barely comes into the novel. There are these little fragments that have been collaged into some of those computer-generated paintings. There's this sinister sense that it will reveal what is underneath the Transition. It gets towards illuminati stuff almost, or conspiracy theories. I wanted it to comment on the social engineering of the Transition, its divisiveness, and the metric of somebody's worth. They see potential in people and think that they can contribute to the programme, and so they try to keep them and winnow out the rest of the participants. So I think it's partly a gesture toward that. There are so many people who disguise their disturbing population control fantasies under ecological fears. I've always cared about the natural world – I love animals and I'm really quite fond of human beings, so those fantasies are things I always find disturbing. Also it's a bit of a myth. There are various population studies academics who have proved that we're not going to carry on increasing exponentially. I think there's this kind of dread that because we've gone from one billion people in the world in the 1900s to seven

billion people or so years later that it's going to carry on, and in another hundred years there will be two hundred billion of us, and it won't. I think the prevailing theory, if anyone cared to read it, is that it will balance out at about eleven billion tops and then start to go down again. We're not going to keep on expanding forever. So a lot of the hand-wringing about that is just unfounded, and actually comes down to light fascism in a way and wanting to control people who aren't the 'right sort of people', the people who shouldn't be having children. I think I wanted to sort of vaguely comment on that with this idea that this sort of club of Rome stuff is a part of this capitalistic way of thinking that determines that there are some people who are undesirable and should not be allowed to breed because they won't contribute adequately to society. Underneath that is the question of what they mean by 'contribute to society', which literally comes down to making money, making money, making money. It's a radically individualistic stance as well, because as much as we are told to do certain things that will help us be fulfilled and successful and happy, there is also this idea that we are supposed to aspire to make enough capital so that we can live as far away from other people as possible, in a sort of gated community, preferably just our own detached gated community, with a big, air-conditioned car that is hermetically sealed from the world around us, and so that we can opt out of any national health system and go private, and opt out of any state education and go private. That is what we are taught to see as success, and we are taught that people that have earned that deserve it, and that it is the best and the optimum, and that if all of us could do that, if all of us had the resources to do that, we would and should do that, we should aspire to that. To me, that's the worst worldview

possible and it leads to some of the mess that we're in now and leads to some of the damages to our basic capacity to take care of the most vulnerable people in our society, and that it's just such a horrible, bogus way of living as well; it's so uncommunal and cut-off that it's almost a kind of hell. Nothing fills me with more dread than seeing these luxury mansions where celebrities live and become depressed and develop substance abuse problems and become scientologists in the most cut-off luxury with no meaning in their lives, no meaning or community or connection to anyone else, because that's what we're taught to aspire to. We're taught to aspire to have as few connections as possible. I guess I'm talking in fairly strong terms about the UK here, but that is my culture, so I think it's okay to write about that. I know that in Japan, for instance, dependency is not seen as a weakness. It's seen as a strength to have people depend on you and it's seen as a strength to depend on other people. I'm aware that's very vague, but my understanding is that dependency is not a weakness or something to fear. At the same time, Japan is a hugely capitalistic powerhouse of a country with terrible work practices, but culturally, there's something there that is very humane and real. I think we're taught not to depend, and that to do so is a terrible failure. Gradually, it cuts us off from each other. So 'The Trapeze' was intended to be a gesture towards that, but it also functions as a bit of a red herring: Karl thinks that he has finally found the evidence that will undo the scheme, in the same way that the purported sex scandal that he thinks he has uncovered might be another lead, another way of bringing it down. Of course, none of it works, in the same way that I think none of it would work in real life. I've had people berate me for the ending being depressing.

Knight: Not at all! By the end of the novel, we have a group of individuals who are making a concerted effort to tear down something, although not totally bad, has evolved or mutated into a more nightmarish version of its original self. There's the idea that a very small group of individuals cannot undo such an all-pervasive ideology. To return to the idea of collusion, a lot of what you're saying is that we've been taught to be successful, but that in order to do so, we must tread on other people, or other people have to lose, but we ignore that. I wonder if it's the case that a small group of individuals is not enough to overcome the Transition; there would have to be a much broader movement against it.

Kennard: Yeah, it would have to be something more organised and politically radical if there was going to be a rejection of those values. It's a bit of a 'get-out clause' as a writer, because I'm not trying to provide the answers here, I'm just saying that it's not going to work to have some sort of big heroic moment. I guess I was trying to almost echo thriller novels with the last 15,000 words or so, where the characters try to expose something by going public with it, and my view was 'no you're not', and if they did, it wouldn't change anything, which can just lead to more apathy I suppose. Ultimately, I wanted to consider what it was the we still have. There's so much that we are powerless to change. Again, I think this is something that social media has distorted: too many of us see ourselves as activists, as journalists, as human rights lawyers with zero training, zero experience, and zero actual qualifications to even talk like that. We think we can change things, but we can't – we're just feeding into the anger addiction and outrage addiction of the loop of social media. We're just playing into Twitter's hands.

The negative emotions are the things that keep people engaged, and we're really performing that role as one of the little products, we're one of the little things rolling off the production line with our daily grief and our daily outrage at a particular indignity that's happened that we can gather 70,000 clicks for and people say, 'I'm so sorry that's happened to you'. It's a farm. And that's not what the novel's about, it's something that's happened since, but I think we're deluded into thinking that we have more power than we do, and I think that that leads into problems with how we view nationalism. We actually have more in common with ordinary people – regardless of our cultures and the countries we live in – than we do with the ruling class of the country we do live in, but we're distracted by these patriotic myths and generalisations about specific national identities that keep us apart and keeps us subdued and keeps up turning on each other, instead of the people who are actually responsible for the systems we live under. We could be doing things a different way, but it's also not really in our power. We do have to work in the system that's there and try to find a way of being good – if that's the right word – or to try to find a way of being more communal, or at least of helping each other in some ways, of doing the things that make no economic sense that actually make life worth living and sustainable.

Knight: Yeah, we can't change the system, but we can change how we operate within the system, in essence, thank you. My final question is a quick one. A lot of the contemporary novels that I'm working on have very little critically written on them, just by virtue of being new. As such, I'm relying on published interviews to get some critical materials. So what I'm wondering is if there were any books

– fiction, non-fiction, dystopian, non-dystopian – that you feel informed your writing of *The Transition* in any way, especially with regards to the endotextual elements in the novel. I know you've mentioned self-help books, and that's an area of literature I now need to explore, but is there anything else that you feel is essential to understanding *The Transition*?

Kennard: I think Dave Eggers's *The Circle* was really prophetic on social media stuff and how the musicians have to pay to play in the courtyard of the Google-equivalent. Mostly, I was thinking of pyramid schemes in the way that people sell makeup and products like that, where there's a very small, deceptively small, group of people who are actually making a profit out of it, but they're making a profit from the people who are scraping at the bottom of the pyramid, the people who are just setting a little table at a market to sell these products, probably only making £20 a time, but they're kicking up, and there's enough of them kicking up, that those at the top are able to make a good profit off of doing very little.

Knight: Of course, I can see how those types of schemes would have had an influence on the novel, for sure. Well, those are my questions over. Thank you so much, Luke, I really do appreciate your time this afternoon and your agreement to be interviewed in the first place. You've given me lots to think about that I'm sure will inform my thesis, for sure!

Appendix 3: Participation Information Leaflet and Blank Participant Consent Form for Luke Kennard Interview

Participation Information Leaflet

Title of the proposed study

An interview with Luke Kennard, author of *The Transition* (London: 4th Estate, 2017).

Description of the proposed study

As part of my thesis, 'Literary Dystopias in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries: An Endotextual Account' (title pending), I intend to interview Luke Kennard, author of *The Transition*, given that it is central to one of my thesis chapters. Conducting this interview with the novel's author will lend further scholarly attention to *The Transition*, thus bolstering the critical materials related to it that will be used both in my thesis, but also potentially by future researchers.

Invitation to participate and explanation of what participation entails

As author of *The Transition*, you have been selected to take part in this interview process. Please note that your participation is voluntary and that you may withdraw at any time.

The study will comprise one interview, held over Zoom, which will last no more than one hour. You may ask for breaks at any point during this interview. Interview questions will be shared ahead of time, and you may veto any of the questions before, during, or after the interview. The interview will be recorded so that a transcription may be produced afterwards, after which the recording will be deleted. You may access the transcript and veto any of its contents after the interview.

You may ask questions or ask for further clarification on any of the above prior to participating.

Reward/reimbursement/expenses

There will be no reimbursement, etc., for participation.

Confidentiality/anonymity and data security

Content will not be anonymised, and no confidential data will be collected. Files (e.g., of the transcript) will be kept on a secure, password-protected USB stick.

Results of the study

Select quotations from the interview will be used as secondary material in the course of my thesis chapter, a copy of which will be shared with you. A full copy of the transcript will be included within my thesis as an appendix.

Who is funding the study

N/A

Contact details

Please contact Liam J. L. Knight using [redacted]

Consent Form

Title of the proposed study

An interview with Luke Kennard, author of *The Transition* (London: 4th Estate, 2017).

Fair processing statement

This information is being collected as part of a research project concerned with literary dystopias and post-truth by the Department of English Literature in the University of Birmingham. The information which you supply and that which may be collected as part of the research project will be entered into a filing system or database and will only be accessed by authorised personnel involved in the project. The information will be retained by the University of Birmingham and will only be used for the purpose of research, and statistical and audit purposes. By supplying this information you are consenting to the University storing your information for the purposes stated above. The information will be processed by the University of Birmingham in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998. No identifiable personal data will be published.

Statements of understanding / consent

- I confirm that I have read and understand the participant information leaflet for this study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions if necessary and have had these answered satisfactorily.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason. If I withdraw my data will be removed from the study and will be destroyed.
- I understand that my personal data will be processed for the purposes detailed above, in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.
- Based upon the above, I agree to take part in this study.

Name, signature, and date

Name of participant:	Date:	Signature:
Name of researcher obtaining consent:	Date:	Signature: