Control and Creativity: The Languages of Dystopia

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Abstract

This thesis examines the intersection of the dystopian novel and linguistic manipulation and projection in the last century. Through the examination of eight dystopian texts, I will consider the major linguistic changes and projections made by the authors as well as the implications of their inclusion in such dystopian worlds. I will also discuss the texts’ engagements with major linguistic ideas of the twentieth century, in particular the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis and linguistic relativity. The eight texts to be discussed include Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*, Anthony Burgess’s *A Clockwork Orange*, Suzette Haden Elgin’s *Native Tongue*, Russell Hoban’s *Riddley Walker*, Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*, George Orwell’s *1984*, Ayn Rand’s *Anthem*, and Katharine Burdekin’s *Swastika Night*. In line with some of the most influential theories of the century in the humanities and social sciences, language is seized by the authors of these works as a locus of control. However, their treatment of language also suggests a certain optimism that, through language and attentiveness to it, potential for positive reform may also be found.
Control and Creativity: The Languages of Dystopia
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I. Introduction

*The worst thing one can do with words is to surrender to them (Orwell: Politics 169).*

Upon opening the first pages of Russell Hoban's *Riddley Walker* or Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange*, it is clear something about the language and its use is different, that the very English the novels are written in have been manipulated and transformed. While some texts are more subtle than these, a trend is certainly evident among twentieth century dystopian novels of the English language that, often times, the language is manipulated, changed, or proposed to change. This study will examine how these changes and considerations in language are tied to the dystopian worlds they inhabit in eight twentieth century dystopian novels. I will begin with a critical analysis, highlighting some of the major linguistic trends and themes that are found among the eight novels under deliberation. While only two of the novelists represented here (Suzette Haden Elgin and Anthony Burgess) are considered linguists, the linguistic and anthropological Sapir-Whorf hypothesis and the related general theories of linguistic relativity also proved to be significant factors in the study and are of particular concern. Despite this fact, all authors engage significantly with language and how it affects the worlds they create, while some even have their own personal theories of the influence of language (such as Orwell). Additional work in cultural theory follows the discussion of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis in a survey of several of these theories that have particular concern for the affects and roles of language in society.
II. Introduction to the Texts

For this review, the eight twentieth century dystopian texts that were analyzed include Margaret Atwood’s The Handmaid’s Tale, Anthony Burgess’s A Clockwork Orange, Suzette Haden Elgin’s Native Tongue, Russell Hoban’s Riddley Walker, Aldous Huxley’s Brave New World, George Orwell’s 1984, Ayn Rand’s novella, Anthem, and Katharine Burdekin’s Swastika Night. These texts were chosen for a number of reasons including for some my prior experience with them, their status as seminal dystopian novels, and the range of linguistic change they exemplify, including linguistic themes, subscription to the principles of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, and overall linguistic manipulation in use or understood to happen after the time frame of the novel. In fact, aside from being dystopian novels with changes in English, the novels show great diversity, from the age of the created society to their overall themes, how they play with English, and in the degrees in which they differ from the Standard English spoken today or in the time of writing. Finally, these novels all in some way also play to my interests in linguistics and international studies, a characteristic that gives the project a more interdisciplinary bent. To support these and my analyses, other texts including interviews and personal and academic essays and books were also researched.

The society of Atwood’s near-future setting (most likely in Massachusetts and, more specifically, Cambridge) is a recently-born theocratic dystopia that rose to power as a fundamentalist Christian theocracy that obliges a caste-like hierarchy to combat the high lack of fertility and severely declining population rate. In this hierarchy, women as a
whole are prescriptively and descriptively subordinate to men, justified by the ruling
party’s fundamentalist and selective readings of passages and stories found in the Bible.
Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* is perhaps one of the novels that demonstrates the least
amount of language change relative to the English of the twentieth century, limiting most
of its linguistic manipulation to the addition of new terms and narrowings of meanings. It
is clear, however, that language plays a significant role in the power structure of this
dystopia, called Gilead, from how those in power attempt to perpetuate the power
structure down to how the more subordinated members of society, such as Atwood’s
protagonist, the Handmaid Offred, deal with and subvert this system.

Rand’s *Anthem*, similarly, has a low level of overall linguistic change. However,
she concentrates this change into one primary example, the elimination of singular
personal pronouns, primarily “I,” which serves as a symbolic theme to both the novella
and her philosophy in general. The story follows Equality 7-2521 in a society far in the
future in which our own time, as well as many of its technological inventions, has been
forgotten. Here, state-promoted collectivism reigns supreme while the individual and its
singularity do not even linguistically exist. Eventually, as Equality 7-2521 commits the
transgression of working alone and discovers electricity, the Council of Scholars
condemns the discovery and he makes his way into the Uncharted Forest. Later joined by
his love interest Liberty 5-3000, the two discover a house from former times, as one
might find in the present, and discover the word “I” and the other singular personal
pronouns. They then live out the rest of their days in their new-found individuality and
freedom, choosing the names Prometheus and Gaea as their new identities in this.
Orwell’s 1984, though written similarly in almost all Standard English, also carries with it the language of Newspeak. Though the reader is given only a few glimpses into the language, from lexical bits such as “doublethink” and “Ingsoc” to discussions of the development of the language, it is clear that the language plays no minor role in either the novel or Orwell’s themes and philosophies. Following lower-level government worker Winston Smith and his attempts at (and failure in) subverting the controlling entity vaguely but ominously called “The Party” around the year 1984 (at the time it was written in 1948, thirty-six years in the future), Newspeak is slated to become the replacement for Standard English (“Oldspeak”) among Party members (those really running the society) in Oceania (one of Orwell’s three super states, including Winston’s home in London) by 2050. While in the setting it is merely discussed as what it will be, Newspeak and its concepts and what Orwell says through this about our own relation to language and what we know through it are major themes throughout the novel, even extending into an Appendix that explains the language even further, including its key concepts, grammar, and how it would ultimately achieve a lesser state of linguistic thought and other goals of the Party.

In Brave New World, Huxley presents a futuristic London in which Ford and Freud take the place of God and people are genetically engineered and given a place in a caste system before they are even born. Some words are added to the lexicon as necessary while others take on new connotations. For example, “mother” becomes an obscenity while “father” is laughable. Children are raised by the state with a little help from a process called hypnopaedia, which consists of phrases said to a child thousands of times
as he or she sleeps and thereby instilling societal values and caste-consciousness (and contentedness) in each citizen via language. The story gives particular focus to the “Savage” named John, the son of a woman who was accidently left outside of the London society, and thus he never underwent hypnopedia, a fact that has grim consequences when he decides to follow Bernard Marx, a visitor from London, back to his mother’s home.

*A Clockwork Orange*, then, features a British society overrun by a teenage gang culture infused with unapologetic physical and sexual violence in the near but unspecified future. Burgess transmits this to the reader through the voice of Alex, his narrator and protagonist, and the Russian-influenced teenage slang he and his peers use called “Nadsat,” which exists alongside Standard English in the novel. After being caught by the police for unintentionally killing a woman during a burglary attempt, Alex volunteers to undergo a treatment that promises to make him a reformed person but, more importantly to him, set him free from jail. He finds, however, that this is not as pleasant as he imagined it would be due to the systematic hyper sensitization the process involves, which causes the brutal acts and even thoughts that he used to enjoy to make him physically sick. Eventually, the process is reversed and he is returned to his previous state only to later realize that he must become more mature. Burgess’s work is unique among these to be examined in his use of the slang (rather than one common language) and its role in and effects on the world he creates.

The world of Hoban’s *Riddley Walker* is also quite unique in its own right and, as in *A Clockwork Orange*, features a language very different than what the reader is used
to, evident even at first glance. In this novel Hoban presents an England long after the
destruction of civilization brought about by the climax of the nuclear age. Riddley is a
boy of twelve, more a young man in his culture, and has just become his settlement’s
“connexion man,” a title he inherited from his father after he died. This role is part
religious authority, part interpreter of stories, and partly government-influenced, but
before he gets the chance to settle into his job he finds an old, buried Mr. Punch puppet
and is on the run and under the mysterious protection of the pack of wild dogs that haunts
the land beyond the towns. Throughout his travels and stories, more is revealed about
how the world came to the state it is in, essentially the greed for “cleverness” and the “1
Big 1” (the nuclear disaster). Riddley also meets several new characters and stumbles
upon the attempt by some of this group to recreate weapons and technology from before
the 1 Big 1. Hoban translates this world to the reader through the voice of Riddley, a
relatively highly modified and more monosyllabic version of English that acts as both a
symbol for Riddley’s world while also offering clues to how it came to be and how the
people live in and view it.

Katharine Burdekin’s Swastika Night, written several years before World War II,
describes a world several centuries in the future after Nazi Germany has won the war (or
a war comparable to it) and Hitler is worshiped as a god. Women are marginalized as not
human and Christians, their religion appropriated and manipulated by the Hitler-
worshipping theocracy, exist on the fringes of society in an even lower position (Jews
are, it seems, nonexistent). Herman is a young German farm worker who runs into his old
friend Albert, a free-thinking English airplane mechanic that he met when stationed for
military service who is on a pilgrimage. Through a series of events, they gain the trust of an old Knight (one of the landed religious authorities) and inherit his family’s guarded history books that are the only testaments left of history as readers know it: of a time when Hitler was a man, women were not chattel, and even England had a great empire. Though the English used shows little deviation from the Standard English of today, there are several highly productive linguistic passages that will prove useful to examine for this study.

Finally, Native Tongue also describes a dystopia in which women are considered chattel but in a different context. The United States of Native Tongue and indeed its whole world has contact with alien species and relies on Linguists and their families, multilingual in human as well as alien languages, to communicate with them. But the central linguistic element is the creation of Láadan, a language specifically and secretly designed by and for women under the theory, itself highly influenced by the principles of linguistic relativity and the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, that by giving women a language of their own that did not have the Western patriarchal structures they could affect social change, something author Suzette Haden Elgin thought might be applicable to the present world outside of the novel, as well (Elgin 308). The novel follows two women who eventually live in the same Linguist family compound: Nazareth, herself a linguist with remarkable skill, and Michaela, a specially trained wife-turned-widow-turned-servant who helps the Linguist women to protect Láadan.
III. Key Themes

Although these novels are tied together with their common premises—dystopian societies in which the English language has been manipulated, changed, or otherwise developed into a new dialect of sorts as a means to the novel—they of course also demonstrate vast differences among themselves. Their time settings, though all in the future, range from the frightening proximity of Atwood’s Gilead, where her characters are still guarding memories of the times before, or Burgess’s violent Britain of an unspecified but not-so-distant future, to the remoteness of the worlds of Riddley Walker or Anthem, so disjointed from our own, set centuries down the road. The novels also play out on both sides of the Atlantic, either in the modern day United States or the United Kingdom or in the case of Burdekin’s novel, in Germany (though Anthem never reveals exactly where it takes place). Through another lens, the aim or purpose of each narrative may range from the political in 1984, Anthem, and, in The Handmaid’s Tale, more feminist political, to the more philosophical themes of A Clockwork Orange and Riddley Walker. Finally, the specific linguistic phenomena that occur and are used vary from novel to novel, and even among the similarities, including those that follow, there is great variety in how they are carried out and to what ends. Nevertheless, three linguistic themes that are granted particular attention in the novels are the use of religious language, kinship terms, and control or use of highly-productive names and referents.

III. A) Religious Language
In each of the novels analyzed, religion is present in some way; though, it may not be explicitly mentioned and in a few cases it is discussed without presenting any specific or unique linguistic phenomena. In most cases, however, the language the author uses or the linguistics involved incorporate religious diction, connotations, or simply worldviews, and often all three are evidenced. Even if it is not directly present or referenced, this religion and religious language is in all novels affiliated with Christianity and its terms, theology, people, etc. (though the language is certainly not limited to that of Christianity). As these novels are set in either the United States, England, Germany, or unnamed countries that might easily be likened to them (particularly the former two), they are therefore set in countries with histories highly influenced by Christianity, which is also the religion those countries may be said to be most familiar with.

These uses of religion and religious language or linguistic references may serve many ends and often similar ends are found in more than one novel. For example, religion is used in many novels as a basis of authority. This is demonstrated by several authors who use words or linguistic structures reminiscent of Christianity or religion in general to show the attitudes of the society’s citizens towards a ruling party, and vice versa. In other cases, authors may give certain focus to religious texts, especially when concerned with who may read these texts and their general availability.

*The Handmaid’s Tale*

*The Handmaid’s Tale* is perhaps the best example of religion as a narrative and linguistic element, even among its relatively low level of other linguistic phenomena. The government of Gilead, a Christian fundamentalist theocracy, roots its power over the
people in its assumed religious authority and through this justifies and exercises its political authority. Linguistically and otherwise, this is in many ways a mask (for example, the government often disregards or hones in on parts of the Bible to give it a meaning that allows their societal systems), though through its linguistic incorporation into the citizens’ everyday lives and structures, this authority and the lifestyles it obliges are becoming almost as natural to Gilead as language itself. This progression may, of course, be difficult to predict as Gilead in The Handmaid’s Tale is so young for anything to yet seem “natural” and it is only through the appendix that the reader learns of its longevity into a time when these structures perhaps were more so regarded as a sort of cultural default. Offred often thinks of this possibility in terms of her own daughter who was taken from her at an age young enough that, being raised in the Gileadian society, would know little else and consider the life she was taken into as natural.

Much of this biblical justification is evident in the restructuring of the society in the referents that are used and many government organizations and titles are allusive of Christian principles, symbols, or characters. For example, The Rachel and Leah Center, where future Handmaids such as Offred learn about their new roles, is eponymous of the story of Jacob and his wives told in Genesis that serves as biblical precedent for the State’s system. This translation for Gilead’s society ignores the fact that it necessitates their lifestyle being based on state-condoned adultery, which is theoretically illegal (both in the state and in the religion it is based on) and also hypocritically and more obviously encouraged through the “Jezebels,” state-sponsored secret prostitutes (based on the
vilified Queen Jezebel, who in 1st and 2nd Kings is an independent and strong woman later and is later associated with sexual immorality).

Also, in the state-mandated family units that hold the society together and which are headed by a (male) Commander in the more powerful units such as that on which the novel focuses, a few women take the role of a “Martha.” In Offred’s household, Cora and Rita are the Marthas and, as all Marthas do, take charge of the regular domestic work. The name is derived from the account in the Gospels of Luke (10:38-42) and John (11, 12:2) about a woman named Martha, her siblings Lazarus and Mary, and their friendship with Jesus. Martha is portrayed as too often occupied (or preoccupied) with housework such as serving dinner after Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead and while Jesus visits her and Mary. It is after this latter incident that she is gently admonished by Jesus for not being like her sister but rather focusing on less important matters like her domestic work. Here again Gilead’s system disregards that her behavior was not looked upon favorably when they encourage the women as Marthas, though in another sense the Marthas may also be receiving their own “gentle admonishment” as the reason that they have been assigned that role is for their inability have children and therefore they must be regulated to domestic tasks rather than the ostensibly more important work of having children.

Other names for roles in the society also draw on Christian language, such as “Guardians of the Faith,” “Angels of the Apocalypse,” and the title of the Commanders, both truncated and full. Shortened, “Commander” is reminiscent of the Ten Commandments, the guiding principles laid out in the Bible in Exodus, or simply “commandment,” which again has certain biblical connotations (for example, Jesus is
asked about and speaks on multiple occasions about which commandment is greatest of all, and where he gives to commandments to love God and to love one another). In the full form, they are the Commanders of the Faithful, the “Faithful” of course being the populous and the beliefs they have been ascribed. This title is also similar to that used by at least one modern-day theocracy, that of Morocco, where the king is also referred to by this title, giving him dual roles in the political and the theological. Christian monarchs have used titles like this as well, including English monarchs who have retained the similar title “Defender of the Faith” (despite breaking from the Catholic Church that bestowed the title). Through these choices in titling, the religious fundamentalist foundation is integrated even more fully into the weave of the society and how it organizes people and, finally, even the identities of the people. Furthermore, it demonstrates the focus of the country as a theocracy, reinforcing, too, who is in control and why, suggesting to the people that it is God’s will they be in charge or that at least they have God’s approval (in that they can use God’s words or titles for their own).

These names and titles are not, even for the Commanders, optional and are prescribed by the totalitarian government. But the government exercises its linguistic control in other ways as well. Like the titles, another religious and linguistic prescription is in the greeting and farewell rituals of the Handmaids during their walks to go shopping (one of the few times they can be together). The “accepted” greetings form an adjacency pair reminding the Handmaids of their role in Gilead, the first woman saying “Blessed be the fruit,” while the other responds with “May the Lord open,” referring of course to their statuses as among the only women able to have children and the societal hope that will
happen (Atwood 19). The farewell, then, is a simple “Under His Eye” in reference to the fundamentalist Christian presupposition the government operates under and a reminder to follow the rules and roles. While it is not specifically noted that these formalities are government-mandated, their population goal orientation and religious nature as well as the insinuation from Offred that they are in many cases simply a put-on suggest that they may be and at the very least there is a suspicion and/or punishment that may result from acting outside of this norm. In this, the ruling parties have yet another way to linguistically instill their values in their citizenry while also exercising and demonstrating their control and the heavy grip they have on everyday lives.

Linguistic control is also exercised in the laws dictating who may read the Bible. In this case, women are in general not permitted to read, save the more powerful and religiously-fanatic Aunts. This, of course, means that they cannot read the Bible but instead must have it read to them either by the Aunts or their Commanders. This keeps women and in particular the Handmaids away from the supposed highest source of power and guidance in the fundamentalist theocracy that rules them, allowing those above them the powers of interpretation and therefore implementation. However, much of the religious linguistic aspects, such as the above forbidding of reading and additional examples in the naming or labeling system, are more appropriately discussed in later sections (and will be more fully expanded there).

*Swastika Night*

Burdekin’s *Swastika Night* similarly has a high level of religiously linguistic features among a relatively low level of overall linguistic manipulation. As discussed
earlier, despite the continued presence of Christians in Burdekin’s Germany, the new
Hitlerian religion assumes many Christian theological concepts, terms, and ideas for its
own use (among, of course, many differences). The most prominent example is Hitler’s
Christ-like status: he is both man and God, perfection, and has brought about the
salvation of the people (Burdekin 6). “Hitler!” is even used as an interjection as one
might say today “God!” or “Jesus Christ!” (Burdekin 190) or in the phrase, “Oh, for
Hitler’s sake!” (Burdekin 22). Even the church as a physical structure mimics
Christianity’s former church design in the shape of a cross, but of course the new religion
requires a swastika as its shape. As one might in reference to the divine (Christian or
otherwise), for example, pronouns referring to Hitler are capitalized.

The creed said by the men in the opening church service, too, demonstrates this as
it is a clear imitation of the Apostles’ or Nicene Creed. Like the Apostles’ Creed, sections
of the Hitlerian creed also begin with an anaphoral “I believe” (while the Nicene Creed
begins with “We believe”). Furthermore, all three creeds follow a similar progression,
from a God as father figure (God the Thunderer, God the Father), to the son (Hitler,
Jesus), to a less concurrent final part. In the Christian creeds, this final part refers to the
Holy Spirit as well as additional other beliefs to supplement. In the novel’s version, this
last part might be more accurately described as two, the first professing belief in the
“Twin Arch-Heroes” and the last exalting the “soldierly and heroic virtues” (Burdekin 6).
These virtues, among them pride, courage, violence, brutality, and more do show some
connection with the Holy Spirit, themselves being “spirits” in their own rights as well as
by the fact that they are, in a sense, what has been left behind after the son figure has left.
The progression of the creed in the novel also reveals further imitations. Firstly, God the Father of the Christian creeds shares much more with God the Thunderer of the novel’s than having a holy son that brought about salvation for the world, namely their attributed creation of the earth and their almighty power (the former having that added on after the title of Father and the latter being “the Thunderer,” a title associated with similar power and that recalls the Germanic god “Thor”). Hitler’s likeness to Christ is also made more evident in the diction used and the structure of the creed, creating parallels such as in the progression of each man’s life, including the nature and circumstances of his birth, the reason for his coming, and his exit from the world. The clear references and editing evident in the Hitlerian Creed exhibit not only the new religion’s borrowing (or stealing) and manipulation of, at the very least, Christian structure and theology through the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds but also reveal key differences between the societies out of which each grew, namely relative views concerning women. For example, the Hitlerian Creed exalts Hitler for being the so-called “Only Man,” neither begotten nor born of a woman (as Jesus is described as being), the latter quality evoking the asserted impurity of women that underlies the ideologies concerning them in Swastika Night’s Germany. All of this, too, is assumed to be discussed in the “Hitler Bible,” considered “too holy” to be read by or even to women. Unlike in The Handmaid’s Tale, however, there is much less attempt to justify the women’s condition to them or to the men as by this point (several centuries well into the dystopia’s society), their conditions seem wholly natural.

*Brave New World*
Brave New World also features a substitution God, or rather, two substitution Gods—Ford, as he is usually called, and Freud, as he purportedly called himself when discussing psychological matters. The wordplay between the two influential twentieth century men is, of course Huxley’s, as is the use of the T sign to replace the sign of the cross (referencing Ford’s Model T). These changes as well as the general reverence the people do have for “Our Ford” clue the reader in on not only the values the dystopia is based on (efficiency and similar values of modernity) but also, as elsewhere, to a method the authorities use to maintain control and the ultimate, placating goal of happiness. While religion is less a linguistic force in Huxley’s vision than in many others, it is nevertheless a significant presence, some of which plays out in language.

1984

Some of the novels, namely 1984 and Anthem, utilize religion and religious language in more atheistic societies. To be clear, this is not “atheist” in the sense that it involves a group of people or the whole society in general that knowingly rejects religion, but rather that there appears to be no explicit religion because the choice and even the concept of religion as it is known today do not exist. However, there is in both a god-like figure who is, in both cases, associated with and representative of the ruling state body. The language used in each is one of the principal ways that this is translated to the reader and may also show one of the mechanisms that the governments used in their infancies to gain influence and power.

In 1984, this god-like figure is of course Big Brother, the supposedly omniscient head of state, despite his vague tangibility and doubtful continued existence. The people,
especially those fifteen percent in the Party, show a dutiful and unwavering devotion to
this man or idea, whichever he may be, and with it a blind faith and acceptance of
whatever the government decides is truth. This happens most notably in Winston’s job
when he is able to actually edit written history as it was reported in The Times and when
history and even in a sense the present are so easily changeable in the eyes of the people
(at war with EastAsia one minute, Eurasia the next, keeping Big Brother alive, from
aging, etc.). From this, a conflict results in having so much evidence but knowing so
little that has retrospectively been associated with Orwell by Noam Chomsky in his
labeling of the phenomenon as “Orwell’s Problem,” (van Gelderen 105, 287).

The religiously-connoted words chosen by the narrator and certain people in the
novel in reference to Big Brother also show his god-like status. For example, during the
“Two Minutes Hate,” the narrator describes what is referred to as “the worship of Big
Brother” (Orwell 110). One woman in particular is also described as “praying” and as
referring to Big Brother as “my savior,” all words within the realm of religion (Orwell
102). “Savior” also has a certain relevancy to Christianity (especially since 1984 takes
place in London, England, a traditionally Christian part of the world), referring to Jesus,
relating Big Brother linguistically to having his own man-god status. Even the warning
“BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU” bears a certain resemblance to the prescribed
farewell “Under His Eye” in The Handmaid’s Tale, linguistically reinforcing the presence
of this overbearing figure in the people’s everyday life.

Anthem
The people of Ayn Rand’s *Anthem* also live under a similar godlike presence. Instead of a person, however, this presence is more an idea and its symbol—collectivity and the word “we.” This is again shown in the society’s use of religiously-connotated words in reference to the government and this spirit of collectivity and in the sociolinguistic mores they follow.

Firstly, religiously-connotated language (particularly that associated with Christianity) is used in reference to the state both by the state itself as well as by the citizens. The guiding principle of the government and its citizens is, for instance, referred to as “the Great Truth,” while “hymns,” are sung to these principles (Equality 7-2521 mentions the Hymns of Brotherhood, Equality, and the Collective Spirit) (Rand 8, 12). On an even higher level, the sort of pledge that the children say in school is ended with “Amen,” while Equality 7-2521 discusses that the society still maintains a reverence of Saints, but these are Saints of such concepts as Labor, Councils, and the Great Rebirth (Rand 9, 24). Later, once Equality 7-2521 has discovered the word “I” (and the other singular personal pronouns), he reflects on what he calls “the worship of the word “We,” and describes “I” with religious language (and a religious-like fervor), calling it a “holy” word and even later as, quite explicitly, “god”/“the face of god,” (Rand 55, 50, 52). As in this last example, the religious words are first directed towards the spirit of collectivity as promoted by the state and its symbolism in the word “we” and then later in rebellion towards individuality and its symbolism in the word “I.”

This conversion is carried on through the narrative by other means, as well. One less explicit but more allusive case involves reference to the widely-recognized phrase in
the Lord’s Prayer [Matthew 26:42 (KJV)] when Jesus is praying in the Garden of Gethsemane before his death that states “Thy will be done,” “Thy,” of course, referring to God. This phrase is first alluded to when Equality 7-2521 describes the process of learning what one’s life vocation is to be. Upon the verdict of the Council of Vocations, each Student must raise his or her right hand and recite, “The will of our brothers be done,” (Rand 11). The construction and wording of this phrase bring to mind the words of the Bible verses mentioned above, placing “our brothers” in the position of God, exactly as the governing bodies see it [especially consider that their “brothers” are the State (“We exist through, by and for our brothers who are the State,”)] (Rand 9)]. Later, however, when Equality and Liberty 5-3000 are on the verge of discovering the word “I” and Equality is explaining that they are going to be staying in the house they have found, Liberty 5-3000 says, “Your will be done,” (Rand 48). Although at this point she cannot linguistically express the singularity and individuality that she desires to express, it is clear that in the absence of all other persons (as well as the absence of the possibility that others would want to go along with it), her use of “your” is referring only to Equality 7-2521, thus placing him in that God position. Through these two references, Rand shows the transition from State/others as God to self as God, a key theme in this work as well as in her objectivist philosophy.

As in 1984, all traces of former religions have vanished, their language instead being borrowed for use by the government. For the reader, this has the obvious effect of demonstrating how the State and its wishes have become not only god-like, but the god of its people (in this case particularly “the great WE” is God) (Rand 8). In the world of the
narrative itself, this would not have the same connotation for the characters, as they have no notion of the prior existence of Christianity or religion in general and so this change is mostly reader-motivated (existing to make a point to the reader). Any argument that might be made that the use of religiously-allusive words is a result of the events and setting of the narrative would be that its current usage is a vestige of the former days when the dystopia was in its infancy (after the ironically-labeled “Unmentionable Times,”) and the government, perhaps, drew on religious language to display its authority and position as to whom the people should give their loyalty and fervor (Rand 8). This proposition that the religious language is reader-motivated and/or a vestige (or representation) of former methods is also possible in other novels in this study with a similar usage of religious language.

_A Clockwork Orange_

Religion also has some role and influence in _Riddley Walker_ and _A Clockwork Orange_, though perhaps less so linguistically and overall in comparison to the others. In _A Clockwork Orange_, this role is manifested mostly in the presence of the priest and the “Catholic themes” that are explored, influenced by Burgess’s own past and at the time present religious affiliations, as well as in a limited example of Alex’s use of Nadsat. Nadsat has, for example, its own word for God (Bog) and Alex is aware enough of certain biblical concepts to reference them in his narration, if even in passing or with a touch of sarcasm (he calls Sunday “the Sabbath” and references doubting Thomas) (Burgess 4, 57).

_Riddley Walker_
In *Riddley Walker*, the “religion” of the people in Inland (England) consists of misreadings, misunderstandings, and an anachronistic combining of the stories of St. Eustace (who becomes “Eusa”) and the nuclear disaster that sent civilization to the point it is at in the novel. Along with this mythology are other side stories and the belief in “Aunty,” the culture’s sexually aggressive metaphor for death. As one analysis asserts, this religion or “cult” is “more a piece of government propaganda than an authentic religion,” (Cowert). However, like a religion, it is present always to those who believe it (most if not all of the people in the settlements) and it is the subject of rituals as well as much pondering about why the world is the way it is and what is to be done about it. The religion and its mythologies are also highly tied to the scientific factors leading to their predecessors’ destruction, for example, in the naming of the “Littl Shynin Man the Addom,” a central figure who calls to mind both Adam the first man in the Bible as well as the atom and atomic warfare. This religion is disseminated by the government through the Eusa Showmen, who present the Eusa Story upon which the religion is founded, “connexion men” like Riddley’s father, as well as perhaps “tel women” like the character Lorna who keep many of the society’s stories alive through an oral tradition. Riddley explains that only those affiliated with this government may have written copies of the Eusa Story but that does not matter too much as most people could not read it, giving the government even more control of the story. While religion plays a relatively less intense linguistic role in *Riddley Walker* compared to many of the other novels discussed, it is clear that it is a leading influence in the lives of the characters as well as a key tool for illuminating the back story and themes of the novel and this is highly linked to certain
sociolinguistic factors of Riddley’s world (such as the illiteracy of the majority of the citizens and the political structures in place).

**III. B) Kinship Terms**

Another similarity among many of the novels is the use of certain family terms within a larger trope of placing meaning and significance in referents, names, and labels. In all, the use of family terms is usually manifested either in a use of “brother” or “aunt,” while certain others are used in a few examples as well. In the cases of these dystopian cultures, the use of these family terms achieves a certain amount of camaraderie or familial closeness, suggesting that those in the relationships using the terms may have something akin to a sort of family bond. *A Clockwork Orange* and *Anthem* in particular showcase this element of camaraderie that emerges as a result of the use of family terms.

*A Clockwork Orange*

In *A Clockwork Orange*, family terms are used in two key ways. Firstly, Alex often addresses his readership with the phrase, “Oh my brothers,” establishing that element of camaraderie between him and the reader, almost as if he is extending an invitation or an appeal to him or her to listen to what he has to say. Punctuating the novel every so often, Burgess has said that Alex’s use of “Oh, my brothers,” was intended to, and does, “engage the reader,” making him or her a sort of non-participatory “accomplice” (simply watching the violence, in a way, rather than taking part in it), (Ingersoll 28).

Secondly, Alex refers on occasion to those around him using family names. Mostly, this is, again, by calling them “brothers,” but he also refers to the young girls he
eventually rapes as “little sisters” while also referring to himself in this situation as “uncle,” (Burgess 48). In the use of these terms by Alex in relation to those around him, a sense of irony is produced as he is often calling them by these names in a context of violence that he is about to commit, heightening the disparities in the relationships in Burgess’s England through the use of terms incorporated into the slang indicating closeness and even assumed love contrasting the actual relationships of unapologetic violence and lack of thought concerning the other person.

Anthem

The citizens in Equality’s world in Anthem also use sibling terms to indicate a sort of camaraderie among themselves. In this case, it is the common, accepted practice to refer to others in the society as “brother” or “sister.” As Equality explains, one may not have any preference for specific other people, and thus in a sense forbidding friendship, and this choice to refer to all others as siblings, a relationship one cannot in theory choose, represents a certain equality in status among them. If, for example, they called their peers by any other family terms such as “mother,” “father,” “aunt,” “uncle,” or even “big sister” or “little brother,” some sort of hierarchy and individual, relative authority would be implied and this is exactly what the society opposes and linguistically has tried to abolish.

What is more, this promotes a cultural metaphor that everyone is part of one large family, especially since real family units have been eliminated. With the family units done away with, several focuses of loyalty have also been eliminated—spouses, children, parents, etc.—in much the same way that Oceania’s government in 1984 promotes
marriage as having the singular purpose of producing more children for the Party (Orwell 148).

The use of family terms in these societies promotes much more than camaraderie, however, and is often also used for control figures. By using these terms, however, filled with the camaraderie, equality, and familial love explained above, this authority is “hidden” behind the terms’ pretexts, creating a false and misleading sense of egalitarianism. In the case of *Anthem*, the “brothers” and “sisters” are all others who, as the group, matter more than the individual who must then suppress his or her own self value relevant to this. Equality 7-2521 explains that when all people are still young children in the House of Students, for example, they must recite before sleeping each night: “We are nothing. Mankind is all. By the grace of our brothers are we allowed our lives. We exist through, by and for our brothers who are the State. Amen,” (Rand 9).

From the earliest ages they are learning their places as less important and less valuable than the overall group around them—essentially the State—which Rand, like most of the other authors, ultimately paints as the great evil of this society.

*1984*

*1984* demonstrates family terms used for authoritative figures as well in the use of the name “Big Brother” for the god-like leader of Oceania. As the people’s “brother,” he is portrayed as someone on the same plane as them, perhaps an equal, despite his elevated leadership status. That he is a “big” brother does add a certain sense of authority, of course, but it is still with that false sense of camaraderie (much more so than a title like “father” that might be less friendly and more authoritative). Even a sense of protection,
still false of course, is insinuated in Big Brother’s name just as one might think of an older brother protecting his younger siblings.

*The Handmaid’s Tale*

In *The Handmaid’s Tale*, one of Gilead’s few non-biblically based titles is “Aunts,” for those older women who train and indoctrinate the future Handmaids (at the Rachel and Leah, or “Red,” Center). The Aunts arguably have the most control over the Handmaids and other women, perhaps even in an indirect way more than the Commanders whom they themselves fall under in the cultural hierarchy. Given even this small amount of power, relatively so little compared to the men but so much compared to other women, exploit it to their full advantage while also conforming enthusiastically to the State’s function and objectives (this enthusiasm may well be one of the reasons why they were chosen for this position in the first place and also may bolster their desire and, of course, ability to hold onto the power). As “Aunts,” these women are implied to be in the older position relative to the Handmaids, those with whom they deal most directly (making the Handmaids a sort of “niece”). Their authority is, however, somewhat removed and hidden in that they are aunts rather than mothers, who would have more direct authority over them. The title of Aunt, like that of “Big Brother,” veils this authority in the insinuation of a certain kindness and familial love, suggesting that, as they do say, what they are doing is out of love and for the women’s own good.

*Riddley Walker*

Finally, an “Aunt” also appears in the world of Riddley Walker in the form of “Aunty,” the rat-riding, goddess-like character believed to bring death to a person.
Because of her mythical and less politicized persona, she is that much more different from many of the other examples above but nonetheless maintains that combination of familiarity and authority also found in those relational names. Authoritatively, she is death and so she is also very feared. Both in the sexually imposing means by which death comes in the story and its inevitability (even for the cavalier man in the story Riddley tells called, “The Bloak as got on top of Aunty”), death and therefore Aunty is portrayed as something that cannot be avoided and that strips a person of his or her own control as the choice, of course, is not theirs and the person to whom death comes is interpreted to be passively waiting for it (knowingly or not).

With a name like Aunty, not only a family title but also made more familiar with the --y suffix, the closeness of death is also implied. Death is more common and comes much sooner, it seems, in Riddley’s world, so much so that it is as much a member of the family as an aunt. With this choice in name and metaphor for death, the mythology of Inland has perhaps attempted to paint it as a less fearful event, as after the “Bad Times” and its subsequent destruction, they do not, for example, have the optimism of a heaven. *Brave New World*

To an extent, *Brave New World* proves a sort of exception to these themes, focusing more on the kinship terms of “mother” and “father” than those seen more in other dystopian novels. The society of Huxley’s London is actually marked more by a clear absence of family terms rather than their distinguished presence. Contrasting the uses of brother and other kinship terms to create loyalty in other novels, *Brave New*
World uses none, as somewhat unsurprising move when one considers that the goal of
Huxley’s society is apathy rather than feeling, indifference rather than loyalty.

III. C) Naming/Other Referents

In addition to the use of familial terms, there are other referents and names that
contribute to the expression of this familiar trope in the novels. While this literary
technique is not quite the same as the others in that it is not setting up and solving a
linguistic problem in the narrative, it is still beneficial to include in that one would not
want to ignore that these novels still participate in playing with the language in a more
traditional, symbolic (and, still, sociolinguistic) way to contribute to making, for
example, an aesthetic or political point also made with the linguistic changes discussed
elsewhere in this paper. Names are often employed as vehicles for furthering points made
or as symbols rooted in the language itself (as well as elsewhere in the texts). In cases
like Brave New World, the use of certain names given by ruling forces, like Bernard’s
last name “Marx,” can provide clues to the value systems the dystopian societies grow
out of.

1984

In 1984, however, Orwell employs Winston Smith’s name to evoke the British
nation and people. His first name, Winston, is of course reminiscent of Sir Winston
Churchill, who at the time of publishing had finished what would later be one of two
terms as the British Prime Minister. His surname Smith, on the other hand anchors its
significance in its status as the most common name in England (Surname). Through this
choice in name for his main character, Orwell gives Winston Smith simultaneous levels
of functioning, on the one hand suggesting the common, everyday English citizen with “Smith” while on the other hand invoking the high regard of Churchill following his leadership during World War II. What happens to Winston Smith, Orwell seems to say, could happen to anyone, from the average man to a great political force and hero. As Churchill was also a sort of representative or emblem for the British state during his time as Prime Minister, a further symbolic level is added in causing Winston Smith to function also as a symbol for Britain in general.

The other name in the novel with similar symbolic weight is that of the leader of the potentially fictitious clandestine rebel group called the Brotherhood, Emmanuel Goldstein. Both his first and last names work in concert to convey his otherness and therefore his nonconformity to the standards of Oceania. His surname, Goldstein, is commonly associated with the German Jews, a group obviously persecuted for their being “other” and foreign during World War II, not long before 1984 was published. His first name, on the other hand, means “God with us.” It is no surprise, given Oceania’s atheistic society that reveres its leadership in Big Brother as one would a god that any other gods, and certainly “God with us” as the leader of the rebel group (a potentially savior-like position), would be deemed the enemy and eliminated. Or, as is presented as a possibility in the novel, perhaps Goldstein never existed and is instead a creation of the Party as a distraction and target to focus negative energy and force among the citizens. In this sense, he is also shares characteristics with, and receives his name from, leftist and anarchist Emma Goldman and faux Jewish speaker Rabbi Emmanuel Rabinovich. Though his orations are generally cited as from the 1950s, Rabinovich’s nonexistence
and the anti-Semitism that his creation propagated do lend curious and possibly intentional similarities.

*The Handmaid's Tale*

The naming system in Gilead, similarly, goes beyond simply the titles of Aunts and Commanders and is yet one more way the patriarchal relationship between men and women is established, expressed, and maintained by naming women, in a very one-sided manner, almost always in relation to men. This is most evident in the way that the Handmaids are named via the simple addition of the world “Of” to their Commander’s first name, i.e., Offred is the result of “Of” plus “Fred.” The Handmaids, stripped of their real names, then receive a name change with each of their two-year periods of service. This is demonstrated in the case of Offred’s shopping partner “Ofglen” who is during the course of the novel two different women using this same name: first a member of the underground organization Mayday and then her replacement. Ofglen, so long as the Commander “Glen” exists, will also exist, but she will be different women depending on the time, and her role will become her name, and that will take her over. By the end of the novel, the reader does not even know the real name of the narrator; she is simply and forever “Offred.” To the reader as well as to those discussing her story in the “Historical Notes,” her identification, through this name, is completely dependent on the man who was her Commander. In the case of Offred, too, there is a level of wordplay in the name, punned perhaps as both “off-read” (that she is misunderstood) or “offered” (suggesting her lack of agency in her role as a child bearer).
It is not, however, only the Handmaids whose names, whose identifications, label them according to their relationships to men. Other categories of women in Gilead receive one-sided appellations classifying them, also, in relation to the man in their lives, including the Wives (whose official title is “Commander’s Wife”), Daughters, and, less prestigious but still enforcing the system in the lower socioeconomic classes, Econowives. It is important to note, then, that the man to whom these titles relate does not have his own relational title but rather one that stands on its own, such as “Commander” rather than “husband.” Even other men in the society do not have job titles that oblige their relation to a ruling man. Nick, for instance, is simply a Guardian (full title: Guardian of the Faith).

Marthas, too, take supporting roles (though not as explicitly tied to a man) in that, while the biblical episode on which their title is based is about Martha (as well as her siblings), it is just as much about Jesus, who might be considered the “main character” (particularly in the larger scope of the Gospels and the New Testament), whereas Martha is more of a supporting, secondary character filling out the background or a few minor plotlines.

One might also speculate that this notion is evident in the title “Aunt” as well, at least where the women are concerned. The Aunts, as mentioned above, are perhaps the more fervently participative women in Gilead and in authority are near or at the top for women’s positions. Thus, in the case of the Handmaids, these Aunts are in a sense like the “sisters” of the Handmaids’ authoritative father figures, the Commanders. Because the Aunts’ duty is influencing the Handmaids, their name is more directly relational to
them rather than to the Commanders, while still displaying the authority of being the older, placing the Handmaids in a child or “niece” position (Offred realizes this, herself, in a way, noting, “She called us ‘girls,’” [Atwood 28]). Still, the title of Aunt is indirectly determined by both their and the Handmaids’ relationships to a man, the Commander. All of the above names and titles, it is important to note, are not, even for the Commanders, optional and have been instead prescribed by the totalitarian government, reassuring the patriarchal hierarchy, again, in these linguistic identities.

*Anthem*

Finally, the names in *Anthem* contribute to the overall progression that the novella follows from oppression under collectivity to the freedom the two main characters eventually find with the pronoun “I,” individuality, and Rand’s philosophy of objectivism. When the novel opens, they have the names given to them by the government (as all people have some form of in this society): Equality 7-2521 and Liberty 5-3000. Their combination of a word promoting collectivity and sameness, ironic and connoted positively, and a mere five-digit number serve together to depersonalize the characters in their world and to personify the collectivism for the reader. Furthermore, the five-digit number each is assigned is reminiscent of phone numbers used by the monopolistic AT&T at the time, then consisting of two letters, one number, a dash, and four more numbers (taken from the characters’ names, an example might be EQ7-2521). By reducing the characters’ identities to mere phone numbers, Rand is further asserting the depersonalization and loss of self-evident in collectivist systems.
Soon after first meeting and talking, however, Equality 7-2521 and Liberty 5-3000 find out that each has given the other a new name in his or her mind. Instead of Liberty 5-3000, she is called "The Golden One" and instead of his own state-given name, Equality 5-2521 is called "The Unconquered." These are symbolic of their first forays into the individuality, both in recognition of themselves and favor of another person, so fervently forbidden by the state. This is only an attempt however, as incomplete as Liberty 5-3000's jumbled attempt to tell Equality 7-2521, "I love you," which results in a wordy effort to turn the plurality the linguistic system seems to necessitate into something more singular and intimate but that nevertheless demonstrates movement towards recognition of individual being and agency.

As the novella concludes, the two have again taken new names. With the discovery of books that brought about the discovery of "I" also came the new and permanent names of Prometheus (for Equality 7-2521) and Gaea (for Liberty 5-3000). These names were chosen by Equality 7-2521, testifying to the self-promoted agency gained in their move and discovery, as well as taken from the names of gods, asserting finally the supremacy of the individual in Rand's opinion.

*Riddley Walker*

Much like the words of Riddley's world in *Riddley Walker*, the names of Hoban's "Inland" are also allegorical, symbolic, and double-meaninged, saying as much about his world as they do about that in which his was written. In the Afterward, Hoban explains, "I had a lot of fun letting words wear themselves down into new words and new meanings. I did this with people's names, too....I tried to get as much story action into my
words as possible,” (226). The reader is acclimated to this trend early in the novel, when Riddley, reflecting on his own name, says “Walker is my name and I am the same. Riddley Walker. Walking my riddles where ever they’ve took me and walking them now on this paper the same,” (8). As far as we as readers can tell, however, this consciousness of the meanings (and double meanings) of names is not universal. Some characters’ names, like Straiter Empy (“morally upright” Member of Parliament), Abel Goodparley (“capable smoothtalker”), and Erny Orphing (“earnest political orphan”) are allegorical and do not refer to anyone of individual qualities outside of their political office. Names of offices, such as the Ardship of Cambry or the Pry Mincer, too, are primarily symbolic, the former evocative of “hardship” and also recognized in Riddley’s world to have formerly been “Archbishop” and the latter is phonologically reminiscent of violence. Like Riddley, some specific names hold allegorical value, especially those in the Eusa Story. Eusa, Hoban says, is merely the broken-down version of Saint Eustace, but others have also identified other possibilities, such as a representation of the USA (same pronunciation if looked at as a word rather than an acronym) (Cowart). The Littl Shyning Man the Addom is in name a composite of Adam, the first man in the Biblical creation story and the scientific atom that lead to the downfall of Riddley’s ancestors. Like Eusa and the Addom, many of the characters of Riddley’s world demonstrate the political, religious, and technological world it has arisen from and is becoming.

III. D) Additional Notes

There are, of course, still yet more similarities beyond the above described among the works represented, some having more or less to do with their simultaneous
categorization as dystopian novels. For example, among almost all the novels considered, there was an explicit political stance against socialist, communist, and collectivist orientations as well as, to a somewhat lesser extent, fundamentalisms. In these novels, the power of language has been harnessed to demonstrate the worst in the potential and reality of these leanings and attitudes.

Perhaps one of the primary ways that this is done is through a take-over of the power over reading and writing, the production and consumption of the written word. It also includes a specific method with which the governing forces of many of these novels went about establishing and maintaining their authority, such as through the Newspeak dictionaries of 1984 or bans against women engaging with the written word in The Handmaid's Tale, for example. While written forms are not necessarily language they are nevertheless forms of language and do depend on language and therefore have a deeply connected relationship with it. Furthermore, because writing represents language, it necessitates use of language, and consequently, thought concerning and in language. Writing, as a more preservable (or more easily preservable) form of language than spoken therefore can also reach more people than spoken and, to the governments of these novels (and perhaps those that they are inspired by), limit and control written language for its power and influence. In another way, writing also allows for more “complex calculation” than spoken language, more precision and thought is not only involved but nearly necessary. Particularly in 1984, Orwell demonstrates beliefs involving this (also expressed in his essay Politics and the English Language) that a simplification of
language creates conditions for and leads to a simplification of thought, less dangerous, in Orwell's opinion, to Oceania's (and England's) government.

Finally, in converting some of their stories to written form (or, in Offred's case, a recorded spoken form transcribed into written) and in the simple fact that a novel is the choice of medium, the characters of these novels and who narrate them are to some extent seizing some power for themselves, as much as they can, to let their voice be known (often, this act is against the ruling power's laws). Whether it be a subtle meta-reminder about the importance of the written work at the same time also the authors' chosen forms of the novel for their art and messages, or the recurring theme of a connection between language, in whatever form, and thought and actions, the significance of written forms is often evidenced in dystopian novels that work with and manipulate the English language.
IV. Linguistic Relativity and the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis

The significance of language in many dystopian novels owes much to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis or, more broadly, linguistic relativity in general. Theories of linguistic relativity posit that the language we use influences, to some degree, our thoughts, perceptions of reality, and worldview. Throughout the history of the study of linguistic relativity (particularly after the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis helped to add definition to it and bring it more into intellectual consciousness in the middle of the twentieth century) somewhat different understandings have been presented and favored, varying in terms of the extent to which thought is influenced, shaped, or even controlled by language and in terms of what elements of language play a role in this influence.

The interrelatedness of language and thought was considered academically and intellectually as far back as in the work of German scholars Johann Herder (1744-1803) and Wilhelm von Humboldt (1762-1835) but did not really take off until the first half of the last century when Franz Boas, Edward Sapir, and Benjamin Lee Whorf, anthropologists working in the United States, took to and developed it (Kramsch 11). Grounded in the central idea that different languages create or contribute to different ways of viewing the world, Sapir and Whorf supported and developed linguistic relativity with somewhat different models.

Sapir, for his part, examined and supported the connections between language and thought only in how the lexicons of languages differ, specifically how they place elements of life into different categories (Werner 77). In Sapir’s words, “the language
habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation” (Sapir 86). These choices are found and based in interpretations suggested by the way different languages intrinsically understand and translate reality, providing “a loosely laced straitjacket for thinking because it limits individuals to customary categories of thought” (Werner 83). In Sapir’s view, the lexicon was significant because it made these categories readily available to speakers, privileging them and thus contributing to how people viewed and organized what the categorized words refer to and their place in the world.

Whorf, on the other hand, extended the bearing language has on thought and worldview to a basis primarily in the grammar, rather than the lexicon, of a language (Werner 77). In many ways, though, Whorf was still in agreement with Sapir concerning the significance in the ways languages organize the world. Their points of concurrence are evident when Whorf writes:

“We cut nature up, organize it into concepts, and ascribe significances as we do, largely because we are parties to an agreement to organize it in this way—an agreement that holds throughout our speech community and is codified in the patterns of our language...we cannot talk at all except by subscribing to the organization and classification of data which the agreement decrees” (Whorf 86-87).

Whorf’s arguments, first presented in 1940, hinged upon his work with Native American Indian languages, specifically Hopi, and how its conceptualization of time in grammar differs from that of English (cyclical and relative as opposed to English’s “Newtonian” and more linear perception) (Kramsch 12).

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis began to lose some favor as Chomsky’s theories of transformational/generative grammar in linguistics became more popular, underscoring
the similarities of languages and Universal Grammar. More current discussions tend to accept linguistic relativity while insisting upon the weaker or less intense versions of the theories, leaving stronger versions, especially linguistic determinism, as interesting but flawed and disposable ideas (as well as fodder for authors of dystopias). Linguistic determinism, a stronger version of Sapir and Whorf’s ideas, goes beyond language’s mere influence on thought to suggest that language actually determines thought and worldview (Werner 79). Linguistic determinism probably receives most of its attention for its potential to incite controversy rather than for its plausibility (as the theories could indirectly prompt racism and prejudice and/or put into question the validity and objectivity of scientific conclusions) (Kramsch 12-13). As such, linguists, anthropologists, and other scholars that wholeheartedly take the theories of linguistic determinism seriously are few and far between and even Whorf, who is sometimes counted as a representative of this group, always qualified his more intense propositions (Werner 79).

Theories of linguistic determinism as well as stronger and weaker understandings of linguistic relativity do find considerable attention, however, in many dystopian novels. Myra Barnes, in a study of languages in science fiction, adds to this, saying that “all dystopian languages technically belong to Whorf” (Booker 81). This statement and its implications are especially true for those languages or versions of languages proposed or used in 1984, Native Tongue, and Anthem, all of which give significant weight to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis as language in the worlds of these novels is treated in such a way that borders on linguistic determinism. In examining how the novels in this study relate
to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, I discerned among them three groups separated by the
ways in which the novels engage with the principles of the hypothesis and linguistic
relativity. The first group is made up of the three novels mentioned above for the
attempts made in them to shifting thought by shifting language whether the shifting be to
a new language or within the same and whether the shift is to constrain thought or to free
it. The second group includes Riddley Walker and A Clockwork Orange for using by far
the most superficially altered languages that are more euphemistic and laced with
symbolism in a way and to a degree that the other novels’ languages are not. Finally, the
last group consists of those novels that have minimal linguistic change (both in how they
are written and in terms of any predicted linguistic changes) and include The Handmaid’s
Tale, Swastika Night, and Brave New World. These novels play with language to a
lesser extent than the others without ignoring it, the key changes being found in the
dystopian societies’ lexicons and appropriations of terms for new contexts.

In 1984, the language is of course Newspeak, the linguistic creation of the Party
with its own words and grammatical constructions rooted in Modern Standard English
and with the specific purpose of promoting English Socialism, (called “Ingsoc” in the
language). The Appendix of 1984 explains this purpose as two-fold, saying, “The
purpose of Newspeak was not only to provide a medium of expression for the world-view
and mental habits proper to the devotees of Ingsoc, but to make all other modes of
thought impossible” (Orwell 373). Newspeak, the Appendix imparts, included a
simplified morphological system, significantly reduced vocabulary, and words designed
to be “staccato and monotonous,” all with the goal of reducing the amount of thought one
must do when using language, specifically thought outside of the range of Ingsoc. Not only is Orwell’s vision of Newspeak Sapir-Whorfian in its purpose of eliminating concepts through the elimination of words, it also posits that a separate language is actually necessary to fully inhabit the worldview of Ingsoc.

Orwell, however, does not specifically state reference to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis or linguistic relativity but does discuss language and thought together in his essay *Politics and the English Language*. Orwell’s language of Newspeak in *1984*, published about three years after the publication of the essay, seems to be almost an example or a demonstration of the ideas he put forth in the essay, notably those many that concern how language affects thought. One of the main points of the essay concerning this is summed up when Orwell asserts that “if thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought” (Orwell: Politics 167). Orwell discusses this in asserting also that by yielding to another’s language—Newspeak in the novel, ready-made phrases in the observations made in the essay—that “they will construct your sentences for you—*even think your thoughts for you, to a certain extent*—and at need they will perform the important service of partially concealing your meaning even from yourself” (Orwell: Politics 165, emphasis mine). Themes summed up in the above quotation run through Orwell’s novel as well as the essay, in many ways suggesting ideas in line with linguistic relativity, or even its stronger form, linguistic determinism (particularly in the stated goals of Newspeak and the role it is to have in Oceania’s future). The appendix discussing the linguistic properties and purposes of Newspeak at the end of the novel stands as testimony to the importance of these ideas to Orwell and this particular work.
Just as the Party feels the need to create Newspeak for these purposes, the women Linguists in Elgin’s Native Tongue also feel that they need their own language of their own creation to fully allow the feminine mode of the thought they desire expression for in resistance to the male-dominated ideology that controls their society. In contrast to the focusing and narrowing of thought at the center of Newspeak, allowing thought via language to accommodate the principles of Ingsoc and only the principles of Ingsoc, Láadan is more positively connotated, hinging on language’s potential for emancipation alongside its potential for oppression; its ability, according to theories of linguistic relativity, to be conducive to certain worldviews. Elgin, herself a linguist, subscribed to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis while not going so far as linguistic determinism and has explained that her proposition of a woman’s language in the form of Láadan was a sort of “thought experiment” meant to test several hypotheses, including such weaker forms of linguistic relativity and similarly that “change in language brings about social change, rather than the contrary” (Squier and Vedder 308, 325). Attesting to her faith in the power of linguistic relativity, she was testing a hypothesis that if women were offered a language of their own they would either nurture it or replace it with something better (Squier and Vedder 308). In the novel, this last hypothesis is the hope in Láadan, that “as more and more little girls acquire [it] and begin to speak a language that expresses the perceptions of women rather than those of men, reality will begin to change” (Elgin 250). Elgin took Láadan beyond Native Tongue and did create a dictionary for the language, including a more than one thousand word vocabulary (Elgin “Introduction”). The language itself, however, never really took off outside of the novel.
The Linguists of the novel, including the women, work to grow up multilingual in multiple Earth and alien languages, which themselves are separated into “humanoid” and “non-humanoid” languages. While some in the novel are attempting to crack the barrier of the non-humanoid languages that the Linguists have been unable to learn, many of the Linguists insist on the sheer impossibility of it because to know the language would be to inhabit the non-humanoid’s view of the universe, which itself is impossible and would lead the human mind to “self-destruct” (Elgin 66). Here, Native Tongue also takes the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis to a horizon unique among the novels analyzed in its inclusion of alien languages, tying inability to learn a language with the inability to inhabit a worldview (or, perhaps more precisely, universe-view).

Finally, Rand’s Anthem proves itself significantly entrenched in theories of linguistic relativity. Rather than present another language instead of Standard English, however, Rand keeps the language but makes the major change of the elimination of singular personal pronouns. Through this elimination, it is suggested that the people living in that world and its language could not have the concept of individuality because the language does not leave that option open, does not categorize the world to include it. For example, Equality and Liberty have difficulty fully grasping and conveying the concept of one singular person loving another singular person and it is only after they learn the first person singular pronoun “I” that they can wholly express this love and inhabit the individuality intrinsic to the word.

Like Anthem, A Clockwork Orange and Riddley Walker are written in the voices of those who use and live in their society’s unique language. Unlike Anthem, however,
they demonstrate a language much more superficially altered from English both in the
general lexicon (particularly A Clockwork Orange) and in the orthography (particularly
Riddley Walker, which uses many of the same words as Standard English but with some
phonologic changes and different spellings). The language used in many of the other
novels, however, exists more as threats or potentials. Láadan and Newspeak are not yet
even in real use in Native Tongue and 1984, only projections awaiting completion, and
the way of speaking presented in Brave New World (and its hypnopaedia) as well as in
others is only slightly modified Standard English (much less so than Nadsat and
Riddley’s language), allowing the smaller or less drastic changes relative to the present to
take on more meaning and more pointed meaning. In A Clockwork Orange and Riddley
Walker, however, the language has already evolved (not to mention, theoretically much
more naturally) and is already in use and even being used to tell the story. As readers we,
too, are then entrenched in the languages, experiencing them with Riddley and Alex to
the extent that we can (as linguistic relativity or determinism might suggest we cannot
fully experience them).

Nadsat in A Clockwork Orange, though, actually exists concurrently with dialects
of Standard English, including the adults’ ways of speaking that Alex can easily switch in
and out of and the dialect he hears used by several of his fellow prisoners. The
possibility is even presented (in the form of a vague dream or hospital visit) that the
prison chaplain, the “charlie,” is able to make his words more like those of the youth
(Burgess 191). This fluidity and ability to change languages, to an extent, challenge
(though not necessarily negate) the influence of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis in the novel,
suggesting that neither a change in language necessitates a change in worldview nor is it necessary to have another language to express another way of seeing the world (as in 1984 and Native Tongue). Alex’s positioning at the end of the (British, twenty-one chapter version of the) novel also suggests a lesser influence of linguistic relativity because he suggests that he has himself changed in outlook but not necessarily or wholly in language. While it is true that his friend and former fellow gang member Pete does change his language when he matures to new ways of seeing and being in the world, Alex’s experience suggests that a language change does not oblige a change in worldview nor is a change in language necessary for a new perspective (as he does, after all, tell the story in Nadsat after at least allowing the reader to assume he has changed and matured). By granting language less of a final influence on him, Burgess underscores the novel’s overriding theme of free will, suggesting not only that that choice is necessary but that Alex can make that choice for himself (rather than being completely at the mercy of society and its discourses).

In A Clockwork Orange as well as in Riddley Walker, the influence of theories of linguistic relativity is more evident in the metaphorical properties of the languages used. In this way, not only is the language how Alex and Riddley see the world (according to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis) but it is also a metaphor for their worldviews, translating them to the reader through the symbolism infused into the very nature of the words themselves and as a medium. In Alex’s Nadsat, for example, the child-like rhyming and rhythm of the words as well as the several borrowings from schoolboy slang (appy polly loggy, baddiwad, or eggiweg, for example) evokes a thematic connection to the youth he
eventually leaves behind and all of its violent precocity and lack of moral restraint. The language is also highly euphemistic on several levels, particularly for the reader who is told a bloody story of physical and sexual violence in words that require contextual inference and that lead to a somewhat vague, detached understanding and imagining. Unless Alex grew up speaking Nadsat rather than Standard English (as is probably not the case), this choice to partake in the argot that replaces the words of the way of speaking that he is more “native” to would suggest for him the same euphemizing effect. For example, words indicating violence such as krovvy, nozh, and tolchock desensitize and detach Alex and his peers, to an extent, their use (both out loud and in Alex’s mind) from their referents he knows in English (blood, knife, to hit). Indeed, the entire point of the treatment Alex undergoes is to (re/hyper)sensitize him to these actions, to reverse through non-linguistic means this trait to an extent tied to and even allowed by language (though, as mentioned, the treatment does not affect his language, affecting him on a more and different subconscious level, putting the limits of Sapir-Whorf in this text to the test). Similarly, the lexicon of Nadsat at times makes light of more mature or serious understandings of words, often involving sex and/or violence. For example, Nadsat and Alex’s use of the slang have reduced sex, a word with many underlying and abstract meanings, to “in-out-in-out,” a mere description of a physical act, allowing the action to overshadow the equally significant abstract and cultural meanings and even moral considerations or associations that it then becomes more detached from. Even the use of the word “charlie” or “charlies” for the occupation of a chaplain (and specifically a prison
chaplain) undercuts the man’s more serious work, referencing a comedic actor and reducing the job title to a common boys’ name.

The words and structures used by Riddley have a similar metaphoric quality, reminiscent of the past and reflective the brokenness his world has inherited. The language used, though evolving as any language would, is often described as “devolved” for its similarities to the version of English used centuries ago and its seeming loss of refinement (Interview). The words used also tend to be monosyllabic (or have a reduced number of syllables), having split words like surprise, ahead, and between into smaller parts: sir prize (Hoban 28), a head (Hoban 38), be wean (Hoban 1). Such a style gives the narrative a fragmented or disjointed feel, that all the pieces are no longer fitting together as they once did (before what is called the “1Big1” that was the nuclear disaster centuries earlier). The reader, able to contrast Riddley’s words with another version of English, has this perspective, contributing to the warning effects of the story as dystopia. Riddley, unlike the reader and even Alex in his own world, has little contrast with other forms of language (with the exception of the version of the Eusa story recorded years before), suggesting the language change for Riddley’s world is more reader-motivated and aesthetic, at least in its metaphorical properties, though theoretically nonetheless still affecting the characters and their worldviews. In the end, the language used in both novels not only affects the characters’ worldviews and the reader’s understanding of the world through the metaphorical properties of the language, but also how the reader views the characters’ worlds—essentially, the reader’s worldview of their narrative worlds.
Given the languages used in *Riddley Walker* and *A Clockwork Orange*, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis would posit that Alex and Riddley see the world differently than those of us who do not live in the languages they do (primarily because of the language rather than the simple fact that our worlds are so different). What is more, it would posit that they would see the world more differently than the characters in the other novels that have less apparent language changes and language changes that are left as threats of further in the future. As Werner summarizes according to linguistic relativity, “The more dissimilar the languages are, in their lexicon—that is, in conceptual and grammatical categories—the greater their tendency to embody different world views” (Werner 79). Along with this discussion of the degree of differences, Werner also considers the rates at which different parts of speech see changes or additions, noting that lexical items for objects in the real world and nouns in general change the fastest, then verbs, and finally lower level grammatical categories, which he says will have more of an effect on thought and worldview. Accepting this hierarchy, it is reasonable to also accept that Alex and Riddley see their worlds the most dissimilarly from a speaker of present Standard English (though with possible competition from Equality in *Anthem* as well as the future speakers of Láadan and Newspeak if considering beyond the temporal scope of the novels, the former for the change in language that goes so deep as to the level of pronouns and the latter two for the fact that they will no longer even be comprehensible to a speaker or reader of Standard English). While due to its heavy reliance on Anglicized Russian words Nadsat replaces more lexical items than Riddley’s language, Riddley’s language does see what appear to be some isolated cases of more deep-seated linguistic change.
This includes at least minor change in the range of some verbs as well as in how words are cut up and, in a sense, “redistributed.” For example, in just the first page Riddley demonstrates an expanded range of the verb “to come,” opening his story with the words, “On my naming day when I come 12,” “come” indicating that Riddley has turned twelve in addition to the more traditional usage also seen throughout the novel (Hoban 1). Additionally, as English words of today are fragmented, some take on new meanings as the single-syllable pieces that are created (and sometimes reworked a little) become other words but still part of the larger whole. For instance, “Inner G” takes the place of the (for them) archaic “energy,” implying a different relationship to the concept of energy, one of the forces that led to their predecessors’ downfall, as an almost profound entity (Hoban 90).

The novels not yet discussed also follow Werner’s note about the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis that nouns will change first. This is the case for most of the linguistic changes in these novels and while some may include changes in categories beyond nouns, examples are few and far between and have relatively little effect on the overall scale. While this phenomenon can be seen in each of the remaining novels, it is perhaps best exemplified in The Handmaid’s Tale which includes many words added to the language to suit the new culture and system Offred and other people in Gilead live under. A sampling of the everyday lexicon turns up words and phrases such as “unwomen,” “Particicutions,” “Econowives,” and “Angels of the Apocalypse,” all unique to the society and interpretable with the contextual clues of the novel.
Atwood also gives significant attention to range and multiplicity in semantic properties, either through specialization of words ("ceremony," for example, gets a capitalization and refers mostly to the monthly charade the household participates in in hopes of the Handmaid being impregnated and Offred notes that the meaning of "Labor Day" has shifted, never before having anything to do with mothers) or through emphasizing these ranges and multiplicities. For instance, ranges and multiplicities are particularly meaningful in the code word for the underground resistance group of the same name—Mayday—first proffered by Ofglen in a second context (that of a day in May, a May day) and also explained to have come from the French "m’aidez,” a command asking for help (as they are in a sense doing). In another instance, Offred mulls over the word “chair” and the many things it can mean, trying to hold on to the past the linguistic freedom it afforded. She explains, “These are the kinds of litanies I use, to compose myself,” calling attention to the freedom language like this affords in contrast to the control exercised by the government (Atwood 110). As Gilead-specific words would become more in use, they would in a Sapir-Whorfian style contribute more to the habitual thought of the dystopia’s citizens, as would the narrowing of the range of meanings that Offred attempts to prolong as long as she can through her meditations on words existing before Gilead and their meanings (in addition to chair: shatter, sheepish, undone, relish, and more).

Finally, Huxley’s Brave New World finds itself at what seems an interesting crossroads of the first group of novels so clearly influenced by the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (1984, Native Tongue, Anthem) and the third group addressed whose main
linguistic change is mostly surface change in Standard English. Brave New World certainly follows many of the characteristics of that last group, employing new nouns such as “soma holiday,” Bokanovsky’s Process/ bokanovskification, and “Alpha minus” (as well as the whole range of caste distinctions). Words currently in use, too, change and are differently connoted, as has already been mentioned about the words “mother” and “father,” offering clues via a language-thought connection about how the culture is structured. However, the extreme influence of the process of hypnopædia on the ways people actually think in the novel seems to suggest a high influence of the principles Sapir and Whorf investigated (the novel was written before they published their theories but many of the ideas they were working with were certainly there beforehand). I would argue, however, that Brave New World does in fact better fit in with novels less reliant on Sapir-Whorfian principles than that and fits better with the group discussed last. Huxley’s narrative is less like the group of 1984, Native Tongue, and Anthem because it deals with differences of worldview—extreme differences of worldview—within the exact same language. John the “Savage” and his peers in London, for example, speak the very same English with only a few surface differences not equivalent to their differences in worldview and the difference that John has not undergone hypnopædia, a process also done in the same Standard English. While this linguistic situation does suggest that Brave New World is relatively less Sapir-Whorfian than other novels in this study, it nevertheless maintains that language and thought are not wholly independent of one another (hypnopædia, after all, does still contribute to worldview) and says something to the virtue of being attentive to language.
While the hypothesis and linguistic relativity theories tend to focus more on how separate languages affect worldview, novelists usually must stick on the whole to the language of their readers (or to the language’s still-comprehensible fringes). Nevertheless, it appears that dystopian novels have a unique and profitable relationship to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, seizing on its proposition that language, their very own medium of expression, has significant bearing on how a person and whole societies see and orient themselves in the world. The novels explore linguistic relativity as both constricting and emancipatory, though never going so far as being linguistically deterministic.
V. Language in Contemporary Theory

In addition to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, language also took on significance in many contemporary cultural theories outside of anthropology and linguistics that also influenced dystopian novels in the past century. Booker notes this trend, commenting, “Despite otherwise major differences in ideology and approach, almost all major modern theorists and critics of both literature and society have shared a central emphasis on language” (Booker 80). Among these, Booker mentions several theorists in particular whose work added to the dialogue concerning language and society, including Mikhail Bakhtin and Michel Foucault. Bakhtin, he summarizes, attributes “a clash between different languages” as the cause of discord and rivalry in groups in society while Foucault “pictures society as a swirl of intersecting and competing discourses” (Booker 80). In at least this basic summarization of Bakhtin, underlying notions similar to linguistic relativity and an assumption of a significant impact of language on thought and culture are suggested in that the differences in languages Bakhtin discusses may cause conflicting differences in worldview. At the same time, these different worldviews may come into a power struggle with one another, alluding to Foucault’s proposition that discourses in society are continually competing and colliding with one another. In the dystopian novels surveyed here, it appears that many of the authors have characterized their central forces of power resemble the ideas of Foucault and Bakhtin and as they seek to eliminate any discourses competing with their own (and thereby eliminate the conflict
altogether by eliminating the differing languages) while at the same time strengthening their own discourse in the struggle.

For example, Burgess sets up a contrast between the Standard English language used by the adults in *A Clockwork Orange* and the Nadsat used by Alex and many of his violent peers (not to mention yet other languages and discourses set in potentially conflicting juxtaposition, like the ways of speaking Alex encounters in his inmates when he is put in jail). While less linguistic control is attempted, Burgess makes it clear that language serves as a sign of division as well as a dividing line among groups (particularly among adults and youth gangs), a situation only emphasized by the prestige, both overt and covert, attached to each way of speaking among those groups. In Burgess’s England, underlying power struggles reminiscent of Foucault’s vision are already evident between the norms supported by authorities and the fear instilled by youth gangs. Each group promotes the use of certain discourses and competes for the influence over the citizens. The eventual decisions by Pete and Alex to leave the violence behind (and in Pete’s case, to change language) demonstrate, to an extent, the influence of the intersecting discourses and even the triumph of one over the other. As was discussed with the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, Alex’s maintenance of his characteristic slang does somewhat undercut the alleged influence of the language, though this is not to say that he would not change it in the future to externally match or even support his new worldview.

While in *A Clockwork Orange* the discourses and languages, despite their conflict, have free range and use, this is not the case for many dystopias in which direct control of language is much more prominent. Many dystopias, then, see a much more
pointed reinscription of Baktin and Foucault’s ideas where languages and their control have much more at stake. Many authors’ visions include societies in which languages and forms of language are explicitly controlled by (usually governmental) authorities in an attempt to eliminate competing discourses and the groups that are associated with them. Often, rather than simply eliminate the competition itself, the discourse of that rival and subversive discourse in general is targeted. This is true, for example, in the feminist dystopias in this study in which feminine discourses are repressed and female voices disenfranchised by dominant, usually male, actors. In Native Tongue, the feminine discourse is of course the women Linguists’ language of Láadan, a language they realize they cannot let the men know they are serious about, anticipating the control that may be exercised against it (instead, they pretend to dabble in a false women’s language, “Langlish,” to set up a false, weaker competing discourse the men can falsely feel secure in their power over). Swastika Night also represses women’s discourse, mostly through near dehumanization of women and their removal from public life, though language plays a role in the Hitler-worshipping sermons they attend and in the creeds everyone recites regularly.

Finally, the theocracy of Atwood’s Gilead tries to eliminate most women’s discourse and to control the very little of it that is left in an effort to promote its own oppressive discourse. Women are restricted from virtually all public and even private discourse, including reading, writing, and most open conversation. While, for example, the Handmaids go to the store, not only are store signs pictures rather than words to prevent them from reading, but their dialogue is bookended by prescribed greetings and
farewells; and just about as much creativity is allowed in what they can and do say in between. Part of this forced self-restraint is a result of the chance that one Handmaid might report the other for saying something potentially subversive. It is in moves such as these of giving women even a small amount of authority (and here, a linguistic threat) over one another that women have the most discourse; however, that discourse is always then carefully regulated to promote only the dominating power structure (for example, in the power the Aunts have at the Red Center).

Feminist discourses are not the only discourses to be targeted in dystopian societies, of course, though they provide an effective model that reflects the general trend. 1984 and Brave New World, then, take Bakhtin and Foucault’s discussions of language and discourse in society to a more general level. Orwell’s narrative, through Newspeak and the control of other linguistic resources, pits the Party’s discourse against all others; and Huxley’s society achieves a similar effect by promoting ambivalence towards other discourses. By promoting a future society monolingual in Newspeak, the Party would have eliminated (at least in a linguistically determinist way) any other of the competing and intersecting discourses Foucault describes, as well as the site of conflict in other languages as Bakhtin sees it. In 1984, the Party also follows the popular trend of increasing control of the written word while decreasing the freedom associated with it. Novels are produced solely by the government and all news stories are written in Newspeak but left subject to constant revision based on the truth the Party wants to promote. As is expected for restrictions like these, writing is also not permitted, keeping in check potential subversive discourse. The Party also controls discourse by a control of
the competition, in this case the discourse of rebel Emmanuel Goldstein. As ontologically mysterious as Big Brother, Goldstein lives mostly in legend and is used as a focus of hate by the Party and also allegedly wrote a book speaking out against the government. It is unclear to what extent Goldstein did exist and subvert, as the Party has molded it all into a competing discourse, they have controlled and demonstrated their superiority over.

The ruling actors in *Brave New World*, on the other hand, are somewhat less harshly and overtly controlling, even allowing their citizens to visit places of different discourses. Certain different discourses are, in fact, encouraged as the society functions on a caste system from birth bolstered by repetition of sentences and maxims while children sleep essentially telling them to be content with the social position they are at. These discourses, however, are prevented from following Foucault’s model fully by being prevented from really intersecting and competing, as the subject is placed in his or her place from even before birth and then made to be content to be there.

One final discussion of the role of language is that of how language and discourse contribute to subjectivity and construction of the subject, as articulated by Catherine Belsey (and in her debt to, among others, Louis Althusser and Emilio Benveniste). First deferring to Althusser, she alludes to what he calls Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs), which both bolster and reproduce ideologies. Among these are two key areas dystopian novels evidence changes in language—family and religious organizations. This attention to these particular categories as highly productive and ideologically influential pieces of language suggest a certain attentiveness on the part of the manipulators of the languages
to these ISAs and their influence on ideology, which the manipulators hope to influence via similar language. In terms of language, then, Belsey generally argues that it not only allows the possibility of subjectivity but, with discourse, actually does the job of creating the subject. The significance of the first person singular pronoun “I” is especially significant in her argument for its necessary differentiation of a consequent “non-I” (Belsey 595). Discussion of the word “I,” of course, calls to mind Rand’s Anthem; and while Belsey is focused more on the differentiation between “I” and “you” that creates subjectivity, her argument is nevertheless anticipated by Rand in that the society in Anthem seeks to eliminate the differentiation between “I” and “we” through control of the pronouns.

Other novels, less interested in going so far as changing grammatical representations of subjectivity, focus mostly on how discourse affects subjectivity. As Belsey notes, however, subjectivity “is linguistically and discursively constructed and displaced across the range of discourses in which the concrete individual participates” (Belsey 596). Viewing the connection between discourse, language, and subjectivity in this way calls to mind the ways many actors in the dystopian novels considered in this study attempt to control the kind and quantity of discourses to create the kind of subject they desire. 1984 provides an archetypal example. In one sense, the Party’s advancement of Newspeak as the soon-to-be only language (and its explicit aims to necessitate and eliminate certain ideologies) rearranges the way the subject defines him or herself in language, and in this case the subject begins self-identifying only in ways conducive to Ingsoc. 1984 is also archetypal in the Party’s control of written and spoken
discourse both in public and private spheres (via screens in homes, the constant fear that a peer will turn another in for “thoughtcrime” or a related offense, publication of what are probably all literary works and the only newspaper, The Times, etc.). As discussed earlier, control of discourse also occurs in 1984 through the appropriation of Emmanuel Goldstein’s image and works (whether or not they correspond correctly to any actual, historical man) as the Party sets up a clear binary of ideologies, keeping it no secret which they endorse and force.

The Handmaid’s Tale, too, includes similar control of discourse, again, both in private and public spheres, both spoken and written. As discussed earlier, Offred often ruminates on the multiplicity of language, something she is so restricted from, and often this parallels a multiplicity in her own subjectivity, especially as a woman as the government of Gilead is quite specific what her subject position as a woman still able to give birth is. She makes this parallel clear while thinking about the many meanings and linguistic connections she can make concerning the word “chair,” after which she says (as mentioned earlier), “these are the litanies I use to compose myself;” (Booker 169). By reminding herself of the multiple purposes and interpretations of words, the creativity they can incite, she reminds herself, too, that she is more than just her womb, red habits, and forced submissiveness. To this, Belsey explains that “The individual subject is not a unity, and in this lies the possibility of deliberate change” (Belsey 597). Here, Belsey offers an hopefulness similar to that found in the fact that none of the novelists examined go so far as linguistic determinism, suggesting that language and thus the role it plays in subjectivity has the potential to be not only confining but also liberating.
VI. Directions for Further Study

In many ways, this study has only begun to scratch the surface of how language is approached in dystopian novels and, naturally, many questions remain unanswered (and even unasked). If the study were to be expanded, a more thorough look of dystopian and utopian literature outside of the twentieth century would be necessary so as to consider the trends of the 1900s, including the level of language play displayed, in a larger context. A further question concerns the way in which language changes in dystopian novels are to be interpreted as reflecting a changed reality or as changing the reality themselves—or, as an intervention in the process, a mixture of both.
VII. Conclusion

Throughout this study, I have seen and shown that novelists of twentieth century dystopian literature in English, like many of their peers, regard language as significant for its purported relation to and influence on worldview and how people actually think. In line with some of the most influential theories of the century in the humanities and social sciences, language is seized by novelists of dystopias as a locus of control—a tool used to gain and maintain power, to hinder subversion, to control the individual, and to encourage compliance. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, despite its often contested status, was particularly considered for its frightening proposition that our language is our destiny and that we might not have control.

However, none of the novelists investigated takes a wholly determinist view of language, preferring instead a position that language does not necessarily wholly confine us, but it will if we let it. Language, they propose, certainly has an effect, but this effect can be both enslaving and liberating and the direction it takes on the individual often is rooted in how much attention the individual pays to the language, whether it be the women of Native Tongue taking it upon themselves to create a language to free them from another or Equality 5-2521’s search for a way to express singular love. And even though Orwell’s Winston eventually falls and loves Big Brother, clues in the Appendix suggest that Newspeak never did succeed in the long run. In this way, it is possible that dystopian novels are more optimistic than they present themselves and the fact that all stop short in some way of linguistic determinism demonstrates that while language can be
and is appropriated for control and oppression, it also has in it the potential for positive reform, if we are only attentive to it.
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