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**Ira Levin's *This Perfect Day* (1970) and Lois Lowry's *The Giver* (1993): A Comparative Study**

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## *Dedication*

*I dedicate this work to my beloved parents, brother and sisters for their  
unconditional support.*

*To all my friends, especially Tahar, Kahina, Hayet and Sara who have been there always  
for me whenever I needed help.*

*I am indebted to every one of you.*

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## Abstract

This dissertation is a comparative study of two American dystopian novels namely Ira Levin's *This Perfect Day* (1970) and Lois Lowry's *The Giver* (1993). Focus has been laid on the affinities between the two author's representation of surveillance as a strategy for building sameness and conformity. To examine this point, this dissertation has brought into focus the way the governments depicted in the novels seek to manipulate language/knowledge to construct a falsified reality. It has also dealt with the use of technological surveillance to control the public and private spaces. The last section has dealt with the use of medical surveillance to better control individual's bodies rendering them docile. To carry out this study, I have relied mainly on Michel Foucault's concepts of "*procedures of external exclusion*" and "*the medical gaze*" as well as David Lyon and Zygmunt Bauman's theory of "*post-panopticon*". After a thorough analysis of Levin's and Lowry's novels, I have come to some conclusions. Both narratives have revealed that surveillance in all its aspects is a major entity in dystopian texts to show how intertwined it is with the future of humanity, and in what manner it is viewed as the sole solution to many of contemporary world's afflictions.

**Key words:** Surveillance, Post-panopticon, Conformity, Sameness, Foucault, Discourse, Medical Gaze.

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## I. Introduction

The last fifty years have witnessed an unprecedented interest in dystopian literature for young adults, a new literary wave that came as a response to various postmodern conditions, featured by post-apocalyptic settings, surveillance, technology that pull the youth away from the realms of nature and the rise of “inverted totalitarianism.” The latter is a term coined by Sheldon Wolin, who regards it as a system where contemporary regimes have corrupted and subverted democracy; it represents a blend of powers that includes modern as well as archaic ones.<sup>1</sup> It shares the same aspiration as Nazism and Stalinism toward total collectivism, unlimited power, and aggressive expansionism, but through different strategies.<sup>2</sup>

Young adult dystopian fiction often deals with the same themes as classic dystopian such as surveillance and totalitarianism where characters are unable to defy their corrupted system. However, as the former is targeted at younger readers, protagonists are usually able to question authority for utopian change and rebellion might be made, but their regimes still triumphs. Characters have chosen apathy over activism; they allow those in power to make choices for them, while being unaware of the political true state of affairs. In reality, their lives are rather mapped out for them by the government, people end up acting and thinking the same due to the fear of being caught out or punished. A society of robots is therefore created.<sup>3</sup>

Accordingly, the two American novels Ira Levin’s *This Perfect World* (1970) and Lois Lowry’s *The Giver* (1993) exemplify the characteristics of young adult dystopian literature that deal with a futuristic society where sameness and conformity are the norm. They offer a projection of what life on earth might become if governments control every aspect of human life notably language/knowledge, space and the body.

## Review of Literature

*This Perfect Day* and *The Giver* have created an aura of critical thinking regarding their rich sources for interpretations due to the varied themes that their respective authors tackle. One of the major themes these critics have been interested in is that of religion. In a thesis written by Rebecca I.M. Edward, specifically under the subsection “The Psychodynamics of Fear: The Hybrids Novels of Ira Levin”, she discusses the impact of religious principles within Levin’s novel. She states that “the comparison of the world of UniComp to the Garden of Eden seems inevitable.”<sup>4</sup> This is because citizens worship UniComp as their god and that “any kind of deviance or daring to assert one’s individuality, will be immediately punished and labeled as incurable.”<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, this is theologically viewed as a sin. Similarly, in a thesis entitled “When Fiction Affects Reality: Tacit Religious and Political Dogmas in Lois Lowry’s *The Giver*”, Belaroui Thameur and Azzouz Hamza draw a connection between Lowry’s novel and some religious interpretations that can be deduced within the narrative. They claim that “*The Giver* can be read in many ways, one of which is a religious allegory.”<sup>6</sup> They further see the protagonist Jonas as the symbolization of Jesus Christ, because of the sufferings that he bears of hunger, tiredness and cold for “the salvation of his people”,<sup>7</sup> and his arrival to Elsewhere symbolizes the death of Christ.

Furthermore, critics explored the theme of patriarchal domination. With the establishment of a society which thrives on sameness, sex and gender related differences had to be abolished. Males and females are supposed to be no longer predisposed to roles which are dictated by their gender. Yet, according to some critics, women are still portrayed as less powerful and inferior. Marketa Stovichova argues that patriarchal dominion is somehow presented within Levin’s *This Perfect Day*. Stovichova asserts: “There is no exact figure of a greedy man. And the main protagonists of the Family are four male politicians, who

symbolize the unity and intelligence of the global community and are celebrated and highlighted in various public speeches and songs.”<sup>8</sup> According to her, superiority and uniqueness is distributed by leading men, and the book creates this idea that only a man is able to handle it. From the same perspective, Kara Hemphill in her article entitled “Gender and the Popular Heroines (and Heroes) of the Young Adult Dystopia”, she explains how women in *The Giver* challenge traditional gender roles but still succumb to certain ideals. She states:

Despite rejecting traditional gender roles in one area, Lowry introduces them through her depiction of “Birthmothers” girls who are assigned at a young age to have three children before spending the rest of their lives doing hard labor. Jonas’s mother is horrified when his younger sister Lily expresses interest in this profession, saying there’s very little honor in that Assignment.<sup>9</sup>

In this way, Lowry presents the Birthmothers as “brood mares”<sup>10</sup>, used only for their reproductive roles, revealing a subtle gender bias beneath the illusion of true equality. Accordingly, it is apparent that the two novels retain the conventional gender norms despite the authors’ attempt at portraying a utopian post-gender future where male and female characters are on the same playing field and break various gender barriers.

Four critics approached *The Giver* using Michel Foucault’s concepts. For instance, Don Letham uses the concept of “power relations” to analyze the inevitable power that is practiced by the whole society not only by the Chief of Elders. He states that: “regardless of where Jonas and Gabriel end up, they have not escaped, and indeed cannot escape, society’s power structures[...] because power comes from everywhere.”<sup>11</sup> He further argues: “even the hero Jonas reminds his father of the rules of the community: ‘You looked at his name? Isn’t that against the rules?’”<sup>12</sup> As a result, Jonas falls into the trap of becoming the voice of those in power. Another critic who uses the concept of power is Ahmed Sartage who explores how reality is constructed through operationalization of discourse. He argues that “*The Giver* depicts a totalitarian state that not only contrives a

systematic way of controlling the minds of its subjects but also their milieu.”<sup>13</sup>This is to say, discourse of power has permeated all spheres of life.

Moreover, Tiina Virtanan and Chelsea Elmore use Foucault’s techniques of discipline that help the Elders to create a community of docile bodies. One of the techniques that Virtanan mentions is the “art of distribution in space.”<sup>14</sup>She notes: “In *The Giver*, the person is defined by the place and position assigned to him [...] it means that every individual have specific positions and jobs that they fulfill, such as Nurturer, Birthmother and Speaker.”<sup>15</sup> This technique aims to determine where each individual will reside in space and relates to methods of “enclosure, partitioning, functionality of space.”<sup>16</sup> Chelsea Elmore is another critic that approaches *The Giver* using the theory of discipline. She states: “The community in *The Giver* undergoes a severe amount of external discipline implemented by their governmental system.” She further describes “the Elders eyes as the representation of Bentham panopticon.”<sup>17</sup> Through the use of disciplinary techniques, Elmore states that “the people within the novel are trained under the same style of discipline in which Michel Foucault imagined after hearing about the panoptic prison.”<sup>18</sup>

From the above review of literature, it is apparent that Foucault’s concepts of power, discipline and panopticon are already studied in Lowry’s *The Giver*. Letham and Sortage, who study the concept of power in Lowry’s novel, focus their attention on the way social practices are constructed, with a scant focus on language. Moreover, critics Chelsea Elmore and Tiina Virtanan used Foucault’s theory of discipline to investigate the spatial and temporal techniques practiced by social institutions to create docile bodies. They also focused on the way Elders cast their panoptical gaze to control their bodies but in traditional sense, which means they did not include a detailed analysis of the use of technological surveillance. Therefore, this research paper attempts to further extend a detailed representation of

surveillance to reach sameness and conformity in the novel in comparison to Levin's *The Perfect Day*.

### **Issue and Working Hypothesis**

The present dissertation is a comparative study of Levin's *This Perfect Day* and Lowry's *The Giver*. To my best knowledge, the two works have never been studied together despite their similarities on a number of levels. Therefore, my intention is to compare them, and shed light on some aspects that reflect the convergence between the two narratives. More precisely, the purpose of my work is to analyze how surveillance is used in order to reach sameness and conformity. Three aspects of surveillance are going to be studied: the control of language/knowledge, technological surveillance and medical surveillance.

To accomplish my aim, I have selected Foucault's concepts of "*procedures of external exclusion*", the "*medical gaze*" and Lyon and Bauman's extension of Foucault's theory through their concept of "*post-panopticon*" in order to bind the novels together. The three concepts trace the notion of surveillance and the different techniques through which it is manifested. First, Foucault's concept of "*procedures of exclusion*" is helpful to understand the language/knowledge treatment in both narratives. Second, David Lyon and Zygmunt Bauman's innovative theory of "*post-panopticon*" is relevant to take a deeper look on the author's portrayal of technological surveillance in a contemporary dystopia. Last but not least, the concept of "*medical gaze*" aims at discussing the use of medicine and medications to achieve a total sameness of compliant bodies.

In addition to the introduction, methods and materials, and the conclusion, this dissertation includes three chapters. The first chapter emphasizes the role of language manipulation and limitations of knowledge to construct social facts. Light is shed on the novels use of language precision, censorship and erasure of memory to achieve total

manipulation of knowledge. The second chapter discusses the author's use of technological surveillance in the public and private sphere as well as its impact on the privacy of characters. As for the last chapter, it discusses the medical methods used to achieve the previous mentioned utopia. In more precise words, this part mirrors the controllers' use of clinical gaze and treatments to create normalized characters

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Wolin, Sheldon S. “*Democracy Incorporated: Managed Democracy and the Specter of Inverted Totalitarianism*,” Princeton University Press, 2008

<sup>2</sup> Domina Petric, *Soft and Inverted Totalitarianism*, The Knot Theory of Mind, March 2020: 01-30. Accessed September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020 url: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339843432\\_Soft\\_and\\_Inverted\\_Totalitarianism](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339843432_Soft_and_Inverted_Totalitarianism)

<sup>3</sup> Safia Benia, *Docile Bodies and Panopticon: Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go*, (Master Thesis, University of Mohamed Boudhief Msila, 2019), 11.

<sup>4</sup> Rebecca I.M. Edward, “The Psychosocial Implications in Contemporary Horror Fiction with Special Reference to the Works of Stephen King Ira Levin and William Peter Blatty”, (Ph.D thesis, Bangalore University, 1990), 43.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 43

<sup>6</sup> Belaroui Thameur and Azzouz Hamza, “When Fiction Affects Reality: Tacit Religious and Political Dogmas in Lois Lowry's *The Giver*” (Master thesis, Mohammed Boudiaf University, 2017), 48.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 50.

<sup>8</sup> Marketa Stovickova, “The Novels of Ira Levin” (Bachelor Thesis, Tomas Bata University, 2013), 26.

<sup>9</sup> Hemphill, Kara, “Gender and the Popular Heroines and Heroes of the Young Adult Dystopia” (2015). *Honors Research Projects*. Accessed October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020, URL: [http://ideaexchange.uakron.edu/honors\\_research\\_projects](http://ideaexchange.uakron.edu/honors_research_projects), 13.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 14.

<sup>11</sup>Latham, Don. "Discipline and Its Discontents: A Foucauldian Reading of *The Giver*"(2004). *Children's Literature* 32. Accessed October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2020. URL: <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/55620/summary>, 17.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>13</sup>Sartage Lone, *Language and Power: A Foucauldian Reading of Lois Lowry's The Giver*, *New Academia: An International Journal of English Language, Literature and Literary Theory*, Vol. VII Issue II, April. 2018: 1. Accessed November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020, URL: <http://kr.cup.edu.in/handle/32116/2215?show=full>

<sup>14</sup> Tiina Vitertanen, "Individual and Societal Control in Lois Lowry's *The Giver*." ( Pro Gradu Thesis, University of Tampere, 2012), 48.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 49.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 49.

<sup>17</sup>Chelsea Elmore, "Locked In: Foucault and *The Giver*", Southeastern University College of Arts & Media, Accessed September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020, URL: <https://cam.seu.edu/locked-in-foucault-and-the-giver/>

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

## **II. Methods and Materials**

### **1. Methods**

To give my work a theoretical basis, I have opted to analyze Levin's *This Perfect Day* and Lowry's *The Giver* by relying on Michel Foucault's "procedures of exclusion" and "medical gaze" elaborated in *The Order of Discourse* and *The Birth of the Clinic*, respectively, and David Lyon's and Zygmunt Bauman's concept of "post panopticon" developed in *Liquid Surveillance*. These concepts form the nucleus of the present research.

#### **a) Procedures of external exclusion**

The concept of "*procedures of external exclusion*" is first introduced in Michel Foucault's inaugural lecture at the College de France entitled "*The Order of Discourse*" in 1970, where he outlines the meaning of discourse and the way it functions in society. A plethora of literature notes that in the study of language, discourse often refers to the speech patterns and use of language, dialects, and acceptable statements within a community that share similar speech conventions. However, for Foucault "a discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling point of resistance."<sup>19</sup> In other words, discourse is an instrument of power, created and perpetuated by those who have the power over the means of communication that control reality and social practices. Besides, discourse has subversive relations of power beyond institutions, as it operates by "rules of exclusion" which are conditioned and constrained by a set of explicit and implicit rules that enable any activity and at the same time limit it.<sup>20</sup>

Foucault enlists many procedures in which discourse is both constrained and produced within a society. I will be dealing with only two external procedures. First, the most familiar one is "*prohibition*" or the forbidden speech. The latter deals with "covering objects, rituals within their surrounding circumstances, and the privileged or exclusive right to speak on a

particular subject.”<sup>21</sup> In simple terms, Foucault denotes how those in a position of authority enable the circulation of some topics while keeping taboo subjects out of circulation. Furthermore, the division between “*true and false*” statements is another exclusionary practice. Those in positions of authority who are seen to be ‘experts’, are considered the only individuals who can speak the truth and the statements of those who lack authority will not be regarded as truths.<sup>22</sup> Foucault argues that the notion of truth is something that is supported materially. He states: “the will to truth rests on an institutional support: it is both reinforced and renewed by a whole strata of practices, such as pedagogy, of course; and the system of books, publishing , libraries, learned societies in the past and laboratories now.”<sup>23</sup> According to him, all of these institutions work as a part of the “regime of truth”. He sees society as an arena for a struggle to establish and pass on a regime of truth that develop techniques and procedures to inculcate and transmit cultural values considered to be true.<sup>24</sup>

### **b) Post-panopticon**

*Panopticon* is an architectural design for a prison which is principally created by the English architect Jeremy Bentham in 1700s. The concept of the design is to allow all prisoners of an institution to be observed by a single security guard, without the inmates being able to tell whether they are being watched.<sup>25</sup> Since the 1970s, scholars of surveillance studies have insisted that the panopticon should be taken as a metaphor for surveillance of all types, with emphasis on power relationships.<sup>26</sup> Notably, the French theorist Foucault developed this concept through sociological lenses to describe how surveillance in the 19<sup>th</sup> century started to spread from prison to different social institutions in form of confined spaces such as clinics, hospitals and schools.

However, with the massive high-technology developments many theorists sought to extend this concept to reflect the way the panoptical gaze has permeated the private and public sphere. In particular, in a book entitled *Liquid Surveillance*, David Lyon and Zygmunt

Bauman extended this concept to become known as “*post-panopticon*.” Their new version of the panopticon suggests that it does not require a confined space because it can process without it. In other words, surveillance does no longer require a certain ground to settle on; rather it can function like “*liquid*”, which is according to both authors a softer form of surveillance that may appear arbitrary and haphazard.<sup>27</sup> In their book, they note:

I have used the critique of the panopticon many times as a means of indicating how contemporary modernities have gone beyond some of their earlier features. Indeed, the panopticon is used as part of the ‘before’ story of which the ‘after’ is now liquid modernity. The world of fixity dissolved into flows; the dispersal of disciplines into new spaces, new situations.<sup>28</sup>

By way of explanation, the authors emphasize the way modernity is liquefied, due to the global use of high- tech; decisions are made in more fluid ways across both private and public spaces.

Furthermore, Lyon and Bauman feature many devices in which individuals can be monitored in public and private places through what they call “*electronic panopticons*”. They note that “the panopticon is alive and well, armed in fact with electronically enhanced, ‘cyborgized’ muscles so mighty that Bentham or even Foucault could not and would not have imagined them.”<sup>29</sup> This is to say, in the traditional panopticon, surveillance-based technologies were limited while in post-panopticon surveillance they have advanced to include devices such CCTV cameras, Day Care cams, tracking devices such as GPS (Global Positioning Satellite), etc. These technologies that originated in military camps, prisons and police or government departments are later encroached on every place and are used for civilian, local and familial purposes. Critics also refer to the devices that are carried by individuals on daily basis. They claim: “just as snails carry their homes, so the employees of the brave new liquid modern world must grow and carry their personal panopticons on their own bodies.”<sup>30</sup> By this, they refer to the devices that are carried by individuals on daily basis which can help the

state to practice control or gather personal information in order to determine individuals' actions.

Last but not least, Lyon and Bauman discuss the impact of these technological devices within the post-panopticon society that led to what they refer to as "*the death of anonymity*". Indeed, they assume that it has become natural for anyone to confess or expose personal details in this age, and the veiled became subject to suspicion, which pressures the individual to strip in so that he/ she does not become "excluded" from society. In this regard, they note: "this is how, as Foucault also says, visibility becomes a trap, but it is a trap that we ourselves help to construct."<sup>31</sup> It can be said that Lyon and Bauman's post-modern version of panopticon does not forget Foucault's original concept; they rather adjust it in order to be relevant to the current life. It is important to note that dystopian fiction frequently engages with the subjects of surveillance, and that the concept of post-panopticon echoes the characteristics of this genre since it is inherently concerned with issues such as autonomy, technology and power struggles.

### **c) The Medical Gaze**

"*Medical gaze*" is a concept developed in Foucault's book "*The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*". It refers to the way in which the medical discipline dehumanizes illness and abnormality.<sup>32</sup> In his book, Foucault develops a critical view about modern disciplined medicine as individual's body becomes a site where medical knowledge is generated. He deciphered the medical discourse before the French revolution when "medicine related much more to health than to normality."<sup>33</sup> During this period, physicians shared their personal aides only with particular members of aristocracy. The sick and poor rested upon the works of religious orders and charitable organizations. As an attempt to improve this situation, various hospitals' were set up to ensure this aim. They were funded and administered by the State, and later decentralized as autonomous institutions.

After the reconstruction of a post-revolutionary society, Foucault claims that medicine underwent a huge change. Reformers began to realize that the hospitals could be used not to demonstrate old truths but to introduce new sciences as medicine cast its gaze on individual's bodies. In Foucault's words, "medicine was regulated more in accordance with normality than with health"<sup>34</sup>, and "the medicine of diseases has come to an end; there now begins a medicine of pathological reactions."<sup>35</sup> Empiricism-- the practice of gaining knowledge through the art of observation-- becomes the new way to deal with the human body. Bodies are now "observed, examined, measured against the established norm."<sup>36</sup> Therefore, the body is able to be dehumanized by medicalization just to render it socially acceptable.

## **2. Materials**

### **a) Summary of Ira Levin's *This Perfect Day***

Ira Levin's *This Perfect Day* is a science fiction dystopian novel published in 1970. The narrative is set in a futuristic society after 2000s where uniformity and efficiency are the norm. Human beings are united under the name of The Family, and all ethnic races are gathered under one language and white color skin. This perfect society is ruled by a central computer called UniComp, a superior being that has been scheduled to keep citizens under surveillance and decide over their life choices including what assignments they should be doing, from profession to marriage and even death. Men and women receive monthly drug treatment in medical centers, responsible for making them docile and controlling their reproduction. The novel centers on the young protagonist Chip also named Li RM35M4419. Just like his grandfather, Chip's desire is to exercise free will, but it seems impossible in his medicated world, for it is viewed as a sign of sickness that needs to be treated through a combination of treatments. As the story progresses, Chip matures into adulthood and unlike the rest of his friend, he starts seriously questioning the way this 'perfect society' functions. He finds out that Unicom is controlled by a group of "programmers" who manage a

luxurious life in the underground of their city and controls humanity in its expansion and in its desires in order to shape the world according to their own standards. He finds an ally called King who works secretly to overthrow Uni's leaders. He guides Chip toward the island of incurables, who have taken refuge on islands that do not appear on the maps of Uni's world. They together plan to debate the values of Unicom's leaders. The author questions many contemporary issues mainly about censorship, technological surveillance, genetic engineering, and especially the quest of characters for conformity.

### **b) Summary of Lowry's *The Giver* (1993)**

*The Giver* is an American novel from the young adult dystopian genre, written in 1993. It takes place at some unspecified future date, a seemingly perfect society that revealed to be dystopian as the story progresses. The utopian community depicted in this novel has embraced "sameness" where everything is scheduled and planned based on statistics and probabilities of The Elders. The latter are a group of scientists who decide upon individual's choices from a young age including their spousal relationships, future jobs, birth control, etc. When they decided to go to sameness, they erased all memories of the past including: war, racism, famine and violence, a man called the Receiver of Memory is assigned to assimilate these memories to ensure complete stability and security.

On his twelfth birthday, the protagonist Jonas is chosen to take the role of the Old Receiver of Memory. He is required to sacrifice in order to receive memories of the past in a form of mental transfer and taught how to use them from the old mentor. He experiences a mixture of feelings of love, empathy and hate. As a result, he gains a new perspective about his artificial constructed community. He is set aback when he finds out about "release," which is a lethal injection process equivalent to that of death for unwanted people who do not

conform the community standards. Against all odds, Jonas tries to escape to “Elsewhere” outside their community to protect them all, a challenge that no one has ever succeeded at.

## Endnotes

<sup>19</sup> Foucault, M. *Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books. 1977.

<sup>20</sup> “Foucault's Concept of Discourse Explained”.Cultural Reader.

<sup>21</sup>Foucault, Michel. “Orders of Discourse.” 4.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 8

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>24</sup> Michael Arribas-Ayllon, Valerie Walkerdine, “Foucauldian Discourse Analysis”, 9.

<sup>25</sup> Connor Sheridan, "Foucault, Power and the Modern Panopticon", (Senior Thesis, Trinity College: 2016), 12.

<sup>26</sup> Jerom Dobson and Peter Fisher, *The Panoticon's Changing Geography*, *The Geographical Review*

<sup>27</sup> David Lyon and Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Surveillance: A Conversation*, (Cambridge: Polity Press ,2013), 16.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid,18.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid,51.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 54.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid,56.

<sup>32</sup> Zeynep Balcioğlu, *The Medical Gaze Between the Doctor, the Patient, and the State*, October 11, 2012, URL: <https://www.e-ir.info/2012/10/11/the-medical-gaze-between-the-doctor-the-patient-and-the-state/>

<sup>33</sup> Foucault, Michel, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1975). 49.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 49.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 207

<sup>36</sup>Ibid, 54.

## Chapter One: Language and Knowledge Surveillance in *This Perfect Day* and *The Giver*

The backbone of all Foucault's theories is "*power*" used as a basic structure to understand how modern regimes come to create their discourse. His writings emphasize the positive and productive rather than repressive nature of power as it is believed by Marxists. He states: "power doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, and produces discourse."

Having said this, power and knowledge play a crucial role in dystopian fiction as they mislead individual's actions, limit the scope of knowledge and silence free speech through subtle methods by fooling people with utopian assumptions. In this context, Roberta Trites has established a significant connection between the dystopian literary genre and Foucauldian discourse. She claims: "social institutions are determined by discourse, and they exist for the purpose of regulating social power."<sup>37</sup> Trites adds: "adolescents are silenced by three institutions that purport to empower people: school, family, and local government."<sup>38</sup> According to this quote, "*power is everywhere*"<sup>39</sup>, permitting discourse to spread effectively so as to keep some statements and practices in circulation and exclude others from it.

In *This Perfect Day* and *The Giver*, discourse is used as a tool by social institutions to create barriers between people. Thus, the following chapter attempts to examine the treatment of language as well as the construction of knowledge in Lowry's and Levin's novels, by identifying the different techniques that are employed to achieve sameness and stability through discourse surveillance. I will rely mainly on Foucault's concept of rules of "*external exclusion*". The latter is a conception of "discourse" that would help to analyze the link between language/ knowledge and surveillance.

To begin with, the first theory of exclusion comes in the form of “*prohibition*”. Foucault states that, “we know quite well that we do not have the right to say everything, we cannot speak of just anything in any circumstances.”<sup>40</sup> In other words, the way individuals perceive something to be as a “fact” must be subjugated to a process of ratification by those in a position of authority. Therefore, it is difficult to perform some actions or to speak about topics they consider as “taboo”.

In both novels, the use of right and precise words is inevitable since it prevent any kind of misunderstandings and misconceptions to occur. In *This Perfect Day* members of society are expected to address each other very formally. Some taboo words such as “fight” and “hate” which describe aggressive actions are not tolerated since they were used during the Pre-U era, when according to the Family members “everything was chaos.”<sup>41</sup> Besides, sameness of language is portrayed in the way they refer to each other using words such “one mighty family”<sup>42</sup>, “brother” and “sister” or referring to themselves using the pronoun “we” which infers a collective group instead of “I”. It stresses unity over individuality, and the actions of the many over the actions of the one. Another example is in the way children are taught to sing the “rhyme of bouncing ball” similar to a clapping game. The rhyme is based on figures on whose philosophies this fictional society is based. Levin notes the full rhyme in his novel:

Christ, Marx, Wood and Wei, Led us to this perfect day.  
Marx, Wood, Wei and Christ, All but Wei were sacrificed.  
Wood, Wei, Christ and Marx, Gave us lovely schools and parks.  
Wei, Christ, Marx and Wood, Made us humble, made us good.<sup>43</sup>

The above rhyme shows that their leaders attempt to ingrain their ideology of sameness even in children’s games. It lends a certain sense of the ominous and encapsulates the essence of the society it describes. Each of the names mentioned in this song has its own significance. For instance, Wei and Wood are the individuals “who started the unification

treaty.”<sup>44</sup> Their names are always chanted and remembered since childhood because of their commitment and sacrifices made to build this “perfect society”.

To suppress individuality even further, people are given four names for each gender. Levin notes: “four names for boys, four names for girls! What could be more friction-free, more everyone the same.”<sup>45</sup> Girls are supposed to have names like Mary, Yin, Peace and Anna, and for boys are Li, Karl, Bob and Jesus. These names are then followed by a specific number. The protagonist’s name is Li RM35M4419, but his grandfather calls him Chip to give him a sense of uniqueness inside of him, but being original in this society is to violate equality. The reason behind the use of these alphanumeric appellations is not mentioned in the novel, but it obviously reveals the mechanistic nature of their world that renders individuals to a state of robots.

Similarly, in *The Giver*, people are taught to use the “*precision of language*” since the age of three as part of their language acquisition to make them speak words in the same way. It is stated: “Our community can’t function smoothly if people don’t use precise language.”<sup>46</sup> It is evident that the use of correct language is ingrained and accepted by the whole community. For instance, when Jonas is only four years old, he is chastised at school for saying “starving” rather than “hungry”. The author notes: “he was hungry. No one in the community was starving, had ever been starving, and would ever be starving. To say “starving” was to speak a lie.”<sup>47</sup> As he grows up, Jonas internalizes the need for precise language, and makes efforts to spell the right words. This is illustrated by his confusion around how to express his feelings about the upcoming ceremony of “Twelves”. Considering the words “eager”, “excited” or “frightened”, “he realized that frightened was the wrong word to describe his feelings”<sup>48</sup>, for “it was too strong an adjective.”<sup>49</sup> He finally finds expressions like: “I’m feeling apprehensive [...] glad that the appropriate descriptive word had finally come to him.”<sup>50</sup> Thus, language precision in this society must always be

used in neutral terms; it emphasizes the elimination of personal expression in favor of the speech of sameness.

Moreover, precision of language is enforced through the use of violence.<sup>51</sup> A relevant example is related to Jonas's friend Asher who says something that is not precise at school, through his words "smack instead of snack."<sup>52</sup> As a result, he is given the required punishment of regular beatings that "left marks on his [his] legs."<sup>53</sup> Asher gets silenced instead of running the risk of being brutally punished again. In this context, Roberta Trites argues that "teenagers in dystopian narratives experience school as a site in which they are simultaneously repressed by authority and peers."<sup>54</sup> Therefore, rather than encouraging these young teenagers with a proper assistance that would overcome their linguistic problems, they punish them for the insignificant mistakes.

Furthermore, in order to silence the valuable sources of knowledge, book reading is another element that is prohibited in both novels. In Levin's *This Perfect Day*, authority prohibits books as a way to enforce social conformity. As life moves forward, people increasingly opted for simplified forms of entertainment like computers and television as a veil that obscures characters' ability to think deeply about societal issues. If people read at all, they read entertaining comic books. In fact, real books that would threaten the existence of government are "screened". In other words, they are monitored so as to restrict the spread of information within texts that would reveal the discourse of the past. However, sometimes this society does recognize the necessity of referring to the past as an attempt to avoid future mistakes. As an illustration, Chip and his friends try to read and decipher books in order to find answers to his wonders; his adviser Bob insists that Chip puts down his books to live happily. Later on, Chip starts to question again his friend Snowflake: "why should the books have been screened?"<sup>55</sup> Snowflake answers:

“I think we’ve been taught things that aren’t true, about the way life was before the Unification.”<sup>56</sup> She further reveals:

Violence, the aggressiveness, the greed, the hostility. There was some of it, I suppose, but I can’t believe there was nothing else, and that’s what we’re taught, really. And the ‘bosses’ punishing the ‘workers,’ and all the sickness and alcohol-drinking and starvation and self-destruction. *Do you* believe it?” He looked at her. “I don’t know,” he said. I haven’t thought much about it.<sup>57</sup>

According to this quote, the majority of citizens have no idea how their world has come to its present shape; they only follow what is dictated to them by the government. Thus, books help to open the mind to painful realities, but they also symbolize an escape from mind control.

In addition to this, part of sameness is to control its citizens to speak only one language. According to Pierre Bourdieu, the state creates a unified linguistic market where only the official language is taught to children.<sup>58</sup> This is to say, a person is supposed to use the right words, right grammar, register, tone, body language and so forth in a manner that is favorable by the social structure of the linguistic market.<sup>59</sup> Following the principles of sameness, all ethnic groups are taught to use English. In fact, books that were written in other languages during the “Pre-Uni” era are now written in a backward style, which makes it difficult to read. As this is the case, Chip and his nonconformist friends discover a series of books hidden in the museum written in French, Spanish and Italian languages. They together try to decipher and learn some new words. As Levin portrays it:

He went to work on the language Lilac had tried to decipher. She showed him the books she had worked from and the lists she had made. *Momento* was *momento*; *silenzio*, silence. She had several pages of easily recognized translations; but there were words in the books’ every sentence that could only be guessed at and the guesses tried elsewhere. Was *allora* “then” or “already”? What were *quale* and *sporse* and *rimanesse*? He worked with the books for an hour or so at every meeting.<sup>60</sup>

This quotation expresses the extent to which Chip is suspicious about the hidden reality of books and his curiosity to learn and decipher new languages. This view is also shared by his friend King, who attempts to express his doubt. He says: “suppose you decipher a language and read a few books in it and find out that we are taught things that are untrue.”<sup>61</sup>This citation mirrors the way Chip and his friends are willing to discover the truth, despite the government’s debasement of knowledge.

In *The Giver*, the only necessary books that are found in each house are: “a dictionary, and the thick community volume”<sup>62</sup>. They contain only descriptions of what exist inside their community. Besides, the community’s main book is called the Book of Rules which dictates how a person can interact both in public and inside the family households. However, except the Receiver of Memory, no one has access to regular books that hold the history of the past. When Jonas visits the house of Receiver of Memory, “He couldn’t imagine what the thousands of pages contained.”<sup>63</sup> He starts to ask questions: “Could there be rules beyond the rules that governed the community? Could there be more descriptions of offices and factories and committees?”<sup>64</sup> Although the books and citizens have fallen victims to censorship, Jonas does not cease to question himself. For this reason the government filters knowledge by excluding individual books and produces only acceptable sources, so that people will only know what the government wants them to know.

It is also important to mention that the Elders control the production of the written words. Although the citizens are taught to read and write, they lack the means to practice on their own writing skills. The Elders deprive the members of the community from the possibility to write down thoughts that would contradict what they say or to transmit their memories through the process of writing. As it is discussed previously, the only way to spread information in Jonas’s community is to speak it out loud. This form of communication is under constant surveillance by video camera and microphones. This and

the aforementioned precision of language relate to Foucault's technique of the spatial distribution which aims "to set up useful communications and to interrupt others."<sup>65</sup> Indeed, useful communications are the only official books allowed along with the announcement on the microphones that support their regime. According to Foucault, these "statements will underpin what is taken to be common sense knowledge."<sup>66</sup>

Furthermore, all assignments that are inspired by art are cut out from the classification list because all the subjects that can affect the self-development of young adolescents are eliminated by the government. In *This Perfect Day*, there is no room for artistic creativity. Job classifications take place at the age 15. The only positions that exist are based on scientific functions for example: a supervisor, laboratory technician, geneticist, doctor, biologist, dentist, and cosmonaut. When Chip meets a young artist named Karl who "frequently carries a green covered sketch pad"<sup>67</sup>, he is amazed by his talent and tells him that "it's a shame you weren't classified an artist."<sup>68</sup> Karl answers him "I only draw free hour. I am not allowed to let it interfere with my work or whatever else I'm supposed to be doing."<sup>69</sup> Karl starts to draw members without bracelets, animals, things that exist during the Pre-U era. Such a discovery scares Chip and then reports him to his advisor. But he realizes his act was not correct, after which the feeling of guilt grows inside him.

Likewise, In Jonas society, all the activities that provoke their feelings such as listening to music are eliminated. In fact, music is very important for Jonas because it is something that he never heard before. Along with his capacity to "see beyond" differences, colors and feelings, Jonas is also gifted with the ability of "hearing-beyond."<sup>70</sup> When he arrives to Elsewhere at the end of the novel, he listens to music for the first time and felt "hope and regeneration"<sup>71</sup> because of the emotions that triggered him. It signifies a new life beginning. He is also given a memory inside a museum where "paintings filled with all the colors."<sup>72</sup> Art and music provides in Jonas the necessary catharsis that enables him to exist and find

meaning in his unstable world. Because they only “encourage those activities that are useful to society and exclude those that are considered counterproductive”<sup>73</sup>, art in all its forms is sought to be eliminated as it is seen as unproductive.

The distinction between ‘*true and false*’ is the second exclusionary practice. Foucault claims that “each society has its “regime of truth that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; which enable one to distinguish true and false statements”<sup>74</sup>. In this regard, the “Elders” and “programmers” in *This Perfect Day* and *The Giver* respectively, are the group of politicians who are responsible for the production of a regime they deem to be “*true*”; they have re-appropriated history in order to implement their own “regime of truth” based on falsified facts, hence contributing to false consciousness of individuals.

In both narratives, the controllers make use of numerous examples of “*neologism*” and “*euphemism*” as a way to conceal true historical facts and produce certain truths that maintain their innocent image<sup>75</sup>. In Levin’s novel, language does not naturally grow, but the author is likely to be inspired by an artificial language. He makes use of numerous words that are made to seem less threatening by calling a word by another such as “tranquilizers. The latter are believed by citizens to be “much more effective”<sup>76</sup>, “minimize aggressiveness”<sup>77</sup>. Citizens regularly visit medical centers to receive treatments said to consist of vitamins and medicines designed to keep the members healthy. However, once they take them “they felt a little better every day, a little more awake and alert, little more sure that sickness was what they had have and health was what they were growing toward”<sup>78</sup>, the author notes. Furthermore, the naming of “incurables” in the novel is one of the most alarming neologistic practices. These are isolated to different places “on mountaintops and “in deep caves”<sup>79</sup> where the Family members have no control. They are considered sick and contagious since violating restrictions and thinking in pre-U thoughts

is seen as a sick behavior, such as thinking about “job classification” or “taking off their bracelets”.<sup>80</sup> Since it is the obligation of every member to take care of other Family members, they turn in the sick member to the medical centers where they can be treated back to health. By creating this new way of referring to rebellious individuals, the government erases all evidence of their identity in order to conform to its new cultural standards, effectively rendering them powerless and identity-less.

Again Lowry is similar to Levin in this respect. In Jonas’s society, the concept of death does not exist; it is removed from the recognition and awareness of society because the committee of Elders put people to death for unjust reasons. However, in order to fool people into believing that this act is peaceful and civil, they introduced the term “release” which according to the Elders stands as the equivalent for “death”. Citizens are led to believe that release is a positive experience because it comes with a ceremony where a person is sent to a pleasant place called “Elsewhere”. Furthermore, for Jonas who is raised in a community where human emotions have been eradicated, the Elders view “love” as a superficial concept referred namely as “stirrings” that need to be suppressed. In fact, Jonas learns about love when he receives a memory of a family celebrating Christmas. In the memory, Jonas is inside a cozy house surrounded with warmth and love. Lowry notes his reaction to this memory: “I liked the feeling of love, he confessed. He glanced nervously at the speaker on the wall, reassuring himself that no one was listening. ‘I wish we still had that’ [...] I do understand that it wouldn’t work very well. And that it’s much better to be organized the way we are now.”<sup>81</sup> Later on, he goes on to ask his parents if they love him, but he is instantly corrected for his words: “you used a much generalized word, so meaningless that it’s become almost obsolete.”<sup>82</sup> His mother further says: “You could ask, ‘Do you enjoy me?’ The answer is Yes.”<sup>83</sup> This clearly shows the extent to which the Elders manipulate words and reality; while death is praised and celebrated, love

is discouraged. Through this technique of wordplay, Kacey Rigbsy argues that “the reader’s imagination in dystopian texts is captured by using words just familiar enough in our common vernacular to grab attention and make readers comfortable, yet often twists the meanings of the words into things much more sinister.”<sup>84</sup>

Last but not least, in both novels, “*amnesia*” plays a big role in how their system came to fruition<sup>85</sup>. This process can be related to Foucault’s concept of “discontinuity” which reflects “the flow of history and the fact that some things are no longer perceived, described, expressed, characterized, classified, and known in the same way from one era to the next.”<sup>86</sup> With the use of medications to erase memory of the past, Chip and Jonas find it hard to come to terms with the reasons behind such exploitation. Chip is attracted to books and languages that are forbidden in his society. As a way to understand his cultural past during Pre-U, he always asks questions like “why should the books have been screened?”<sup>87</sup>, or “why aren’t we using our heritage wisely and without waste?”<sup>88</sup> In a similar manner, Jonas is told that he will be bearing “the memories of the whole world [...] before you, before me, before the previous Receiver, and generations before him.”<sup>89</sup> Once he receives past memories, he understands the true nature of certain things that are both pleasurable but also painful which makes him change his outlook on society. It becomes more obvious to him than the other citizens, for he is forced into an assignment where he must be the “scapegoat” for the society.<sup>90</sup> Both characters are similar in that through the loss of collective memory and erasure of knowledge, their minds are swaying between the past and present making efforts to conform to truths set by the governments. Therefore, the study and teaching of history in both novels is no longer about collecting and transmitting facts neutrally. It is rather about approaching the past from a biased stance to shape the present in order to satisfy the power holders desire.

To sum up, this chapter treats the theme of language/knowledge surveillance which leads to sameness and conformity in reference with *This Perfect Day* and *The Giver*. By discourse, Foucault does not only refer to the spoken and written communications, but all the social practices that are constructed through knowledge and power. Indeed, his theory of power through “*discourse prohibition*” and production of “*truth/false*” knowledge demonstrates that institutions in dystopian literature rely on language to regulate individual’s behavior first by : prohibiting certain practices to prevent clashes and critical thinking and second by producing falsified facts whether through direct propaganda or more subtle euphemistic changes in linguistic patterns. Through all of these methods the communities depicted in both novels erased the knowledge of the past for the sake sameness and predictability lulling individuals into a false sense of ease.

## Endnotes

<sup>37</sup> Roberta Seelinger Trites, *Disturbing the Universe Power and Repression in Adolescent Literature*, (University of Iowa press Iowa City, 2000), 21.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 21.

<sup>39</sup> Foucault, Michel, “*The History of Sexuality*”.( New York :Pantheon Books, 1978), 93.

<sup>40</sup> Foucault Michel, “The Order of Discours”, 4.

<sup>41</sup> Levin, *This Perfect Day*, 67.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid,83

<sup>43</sup> ibid, 7.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 16.

<sup>46</sup>Lowry, *The Giver*, 81.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 48.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>49</sup> ibid, 10.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 12.

<sup>51</sup> Tiina Vitertanen, Individual and Societal Control in Lois Lowry's *The Giver*, Pro Gradu thesis, University of Tampere, 2012.

- <sup>52</sup> Ibid, 39.
- <sup>53</sup> Ibid, 39.
- <sup>54</sup> Trites, *Disturbing the Universe Power and Repression in Adolescent Literature*, 35.
- <sup>55</sup> Ibid, 92
- <sup>56</sup> Ibid, 92
- <sup>57</sup> Ibid, 92.
- <sup>58</sup> Bourdieu Piere, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 49.
- <sup>59</sup> The Linguistic Marketplace,  
<http://www.ello.uos.de/field.php/Sociolinguistics/TheLinguisticmarketplace>
- <sup>60</sup> Levin, *This Perfect Day*, 94.
- <sup>61</sup> Ibid, 93.
- <sup>62</sup> Lowry, *The Giver*, 51.
- <sup>63</sup> Ibid, 51.
- <sup>64</sup> Ibid, 51
- <sup>65</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 155.
- <sup>66</sup> Mills, Michel Foucault, 74.
- <sup>67</sup> Ibid, 39.
- <sup>68</sup> Ibid, 41.
- <sup>69</sup> Ibid, 41.
- <sup>70</sup> Lowry, *The Giver*, 99.
- <sup>71</sup> Ibid, 74.
- <sup>72</sup> Ibid, 79.
- <sup>73</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 152.
- <sup>74</sup> Foucault Michel *The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge*, (London, Penguin,1998), 50.
- <sup>75</sup> Rigbsy Kasey, “Language in the Dystopian Landscape: Wordplay, Euphemism, and Morality”(Bachelor of Arts :University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2019), 43.
- <sup>76</sup> Ibid, 13.
- <sup>77</sup> Ibid, 57.
- <sup>78</sup> Ibid, 81.
- <sup>79</sup> Levin , *This Pefect Day*, 9.
- <sup>80</sup>
- <sup>81</sup> Lowry, *The Giver*, 81.
- <sup>82</sup> Ibid, 81.
- <sup>83</sup> Ibid, 81.
- <sup>84</sup> Rigbsy Kasey, “Language in the Dystopian Landscape: Wordplay, Euphemism, and Morality”(Bachelor of Arts :University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2019)

<sup>85</sup> Carter Hanson, "The Utopian function of memory in Lois Lowry's *The Giver*." *Extrapolation* 50, no. 1 (2009): 45+. *Gale Academic OneFile* (accessed October 25, 2020). 5.

<sup>86</sup> Osman Daniel, "The discontinuity in the continuity". Michel Foucault and the archaeological period Accessed October 25, 2020, URL: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326635169\\_The\\_discontinuity\\_in\\_the\\_continuity\\_Michel\\_Foucault\\_and\\_the\\_archaeological\\_period](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326635169_The_discontinuity_in_the_continuity_Michel_Foucault_and_the_archaeological_period) , 5.

<sup>87</sup> Levin , *This Pefect Day*, 92.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, 111.

<sup>89</sup> Lowry, *The Giver*, 98.

<sup>90</sup> Joshua M. Seematter, A Grip on Society's Throat, <https://joshuaseematter.wordpress.com/content-knowledge/the-giver/>

## Chapter Two: Technological Surveillance in *This Perfect Day* and *The Giver*

The decades that followed World War II brought issues of surveillance and privacy into the light of serious public debate for the first time in U.S. and the world history.<sup>91</sup> Surveillance has become an inescapable feature of daily life. Stories of excesses of government surveillance were featured prominently in the mass media. Congressional hearings resulted in the passage of privacy laws, and new regulations emerged to govern the information practices within some private industries. Movies featured surveillance, and social scientists started to analyze it.<sup>92</sup> Critics Lyon and Bauman discuss how the idea of visibility is implemented in the architecture of the post-panoptic world. They emphasize the fact of this change within the global modern society, and how the modern world has now seen the separate areas of ‘public’ and ‘private’ drain into one.<sup>93</sup>

In parallelism with the dystopian genre, “*post-panopticon*” theory is highly significant to understand the diverse representations of surveillance and its relationship with digital technology. Authors in this genre tend to portray tech-surveillance as a double edged sword. While it based on utopian principles of using scientific knowledge to ensure safety and security, it is also used by governments as an oppressive and corruptive force to monitor the behavior of its citizens.<sup>94</sup> Therefore, the present chapter is concerned with aspects of this notion; by exploring the innovative and diverse technologies used to create a “surveillance society” in Levin *This Perfect Day* and Lowry’s *The Giver*. In other words, this section will establish how the boundaries between the public and the private spheres are controlled through an assembly of surveillance methods which result in individuals being increasingly monitored as well as the loss of their privacy.

Lyon and Bauman refer to a number of electronic devices through which surveillance is practiced in the public area. Devices such as computers, microphones, video cameras, and their interconnectedness allows for highly sophisticated processing of data<sup>95</sup>.

They claim that by the extreme use of these devices “society itself becomes a panoptic prison, and the prison becomes everywhere.”<sup>96</sup> Indeed, there are probably very few places in a modern city which are not equipped with surveillance technology, and today it can be seen as an integrated part of public urban life. The workplace and city environment in Levin’s and Lowry’s narratives are highly monitored; an assembly of surveillance methods is used to keep citizens always visible in the public area.

In Levin’s *This Perfect Day*, there are many ways in which the activities of citizens are under constant surveillance. The use of the artificial intelligent computer called “Unicomp” is a prominent example. This omniscient god-like figure is the epitome of surveillance. The protagonist Chip, the oppressed yet rebellious-minded character is completely doubtful about his artificially constructed life being. Every time he starts to question the existence of this computer, his adviser Bob would always remind him of Uni’s power: “It knows everything. Now who’s going to make the better, more efficient classification, you or UniComp?”<sup>97</sup> He further reminds him of on Uni’s awareness that he was thinking about his own classification: “You’ve been given hundreds of tests since your first day of school and UniComp’s been fed the results of every last one of them. You’ve had hundreds of adviser meetings, and UniComp knows about those too.”<sup>98</sup> Therefore, school is one of the public institutions where young children are exposed to surveillance. Following the completion of their observations, the advisers meet and discuss their behaviors, and Unicomp decides upon their future classification.

In addition to UniComp that knows everything, “scanners” and “speakers” are major devices that are installed in the public space; they can be considered as an appalling replica of the sinister and sophisticated CCTV today.<sup>99</sup> With the role of “speakers” to enforce rules, “scanners” enables authority to search above and beyond what their undercover people did when no one was looking. It also provides a security checkpoint which

“produces a green yes or a red winking no on the indicator,”<sup>100</sup> at entries in every building, workplace, medical centers, rooms or when taking food or getting goods they desire. In fact, there is no currency in the world, so money is not involved in anything. Whatever the members need or want, they can get it with the approval of scanners if their working performance is good enough. It decides, whether they deserve the object of their desire or not, and if obtaining the commodities is healthy for them or not. The same system applies to traveling, when one has to always ask first for permission; the computer and scanners decide whether the journey can be realized or not.<sup>101</sup> Thus, the awareness of being scanned at the entrance of every corner they walk in makes the citizens survey themselves and avoid any kind of deviance.

As far as the workplace is concerned, the committee of Elders in Lowry’s novel uses spying “cameras” attached with “speakers” to livestream and observe their assigned targets. The committee of the Elders puts these devices in different public buildings such as nurturing and child-care centers, schools, etc, to help them track the productivity of their citizens. In fact, “Assignments” are the “secret selections”<sup>102</sup> made for children during their volunteer groups. The youngster does not have the right to choose their desired job; they only wait for the call from the elders for their position and occupy it for the rest of their productive life. Jonas’s Father recounts his experience when he was young about the community leaders observing his behaviors and interests to select for him a future assignment. He says: “I studied hard in school, as you do, Jonas. But again and again, during free time, I found myself drawn to the new-children. I spent almost all of my volunteer hours helping in the Nurturing Center. Of course the Elders’ cameras knew that, from their observation.”<sup>103</sup> It is made apparent that cameras help the Elders to select the appropriate assignments so that they may assign a person who can be an appropriate fit. Then, each family member understands their clearly defined role and engages in the

corresponding work that must be obeyed; otherwise the cameras can detect their transgressions.

In fact, cameras and speakers are also used for public shaming to get members of the community to conform to their rules. Lowry gives several examples to show the extremity of surveillance in this community. This idea is shown when Jonas remembers his own public humiliation when he has once taken an apple to school. The Speaker roars: “ATTENTION. THIS IS A REMINDER TO MALE ELEVENs THAT OBJECTS ARE NOT TO BE REMOVED FROM THE RECREATION AREA AND THAT SNACKS ARE TO BE EATEN, NOT HOARDED.”<sup>104</sup> Another event which illustrates this point is when the speaker makes another public announcement in response to Jonas’s sister Lilly’s taking off her hair ribbons: “ATTENTION. THIS IS A REMINDER TO FEMALES UNDER NINE THAT HAIR RIBBONS ARE TO BE NEATLY TIED AT ALL TIMES.”<sup>105</sup> The people targeted by the speaker respond “instantly and obediently.”<sup>106</sup> Besides, anyone who breaks the rules must apologize in front of the community by saying “I apologize to my community.”<sup>107</sup> In return, the community responds: “we accept your apology.”<sup>108</sup> Therefore, using loudspeakers for public shaming rather than having constructive conversations is a normal habit in Jonas’s society. In this context, Farah Mohammed argues that in “the digital world everyone is a public figure and everyone is a target.”<sup>109</sup> She further claims that “the conversations that used to be reserved for friends, family members, and communities are now open for scrutiny, criticism and even persecution of anyone.”<sup>110</sup>

In the city landscapes portrayed in *This Perfect Day* and *The Giver* surveillance technology is used to maintain borders. Within each city, there are further divisions between those who are made to live there by accepting the rules, and excluding the deviant category for not following or fitting their community’s standards. In fact, critics Lyon and

Bauman referred to this surveillance methods as “*banopticon*.” It focuses on unwanted individuals and shows who is welcome or not to cross state borders.<sup>111</sup>In *This Perfect Day*, the group of programmers seems to control the entire map of the world by hiding what lies behind their city boundaries.

A small group of rebels, “sick members” according to the society, manages to invite Chip to a meeting inside a museum, a place created by their leader King and where they can indulge in their fantasies for a while every week because no surveillance is implemented there. Chip and Lilac begin to search through old museum maps, and then check out the maps according to his own limited knowledge. Because Chip works as a genetic researcher, “he himself, for instance, can verify the genetics labs and research centers and the cities he has seen or heard spoken of by other members. Lilac can verify the advisory establishments and other cities.”<sup>112</sup> They begin to wonder if the other “incurables have escaped to the islands.”<sup>113</sup> They find out that they are exiled to the islands on the peripheries where they have a different kind of existence. At this moment, a minor lie of Chip is discovered by his adviser when Chip enters the museum wearing his digital bracelet. Then he is taken for a treatment along with his friends. Levin notes the reaction of his adviser Bob: “there are no islands that aren’t on maps; and treatments don’t dull us; and if we had the kind of ‘freedom’ you’re thinking about we’d have disorder and overpopulation and want and crime and war.”<sup>114</sup>No matter where a person is in their city, Uni and his programmers will be able to see everything; it represents the same dynamic as the watchman and the prisoners in the panopticon prison but in a modern structure.

The residents in *The Giver* learn at a young age to be afraid of what lies beyond the community boundaries. In fact, “Elsewhere” is the term used for the community boundaries, and the Elders make frightening rumors about what lies beyond the city. For example, when a “pilot flies over the community”<sup>115</sup>, cameras instantly tracked his

position, then the speaker later announces that the pilot has just made a mistake and “will be released for his error.”<sup>116</sup> Therefore, the Elders make them believe that they are free to move wherever they want; while in reality they are trapped in their panoptic bubble, as Margret Atwood argues “a rat in a maze is free to go anywhere, as long as it stays inside the maze.”<sup>117</sup> This kind of surveillance methods can discriminate and prioritize particular groups over others to maintain sameness.

Resorting to surveillance in public areas can be tolerated when its purposes are to ensure the protection of the general public and diminish the crime rate. Yet, it is important to note that the same devices are sometimes used to spy on users from different walks of life to collect personal information and use it for the benefit of a specific group. In this context, post-panopticon theory represents an accumulation of information because the government feeds its society with technologies that invade individual’s privacy. Lyon and Bauman assert that “in our live times, personal data become more valuable commodity than raw materials or energy; they are vacuumed so vigorously by organizations and made available by people using their cell-phones, shopping in malls using ID cards, being entertained or surfing the internet.”<sup>118</sup> Hence, this practice is unwarranted, for privacy is everybody’s right.

In Levin’s *This Perfect Day*, the metaphor of “*personal panopticon*” is represented through the implementation of digital bracelets clasped around every citizen’s wrist. It serves as a sort of GPS device that tracks the location of citizens and connects them to the “Unicomp”, an online system of authorities which tells the family members where they are allowed to go and what to do. They hold their bracelet to a scanner and instantly flash a green for “yes” or red for “no” for any decision, whether they have access to a building, boarding a plane, making a phone call, or for the smallest things such as taking a toy. Once they go to bed they take them off. Chip is made to believe that there are times and places,

including his bedroom, where he is not seen and he can let down guard. However this is revealed to be untrue as the programmers of Uni perpetuate the idea that there are private places so that the real thoughts of the community members can be discovered. Chip mistakenly believed that there is a blind spot where a camera is implemented inside his bracelet even when it is switched off, and that talking to his friend about his plan to destroy Uni is not being heard at all. However, his adviser Bob knows about his plan and reports him to Uni. By being continually connected to these bracelets, the citizens are reduced to the condition of “cyborgs”, which according to Donna J. Haraway are ‘hybrid creature(s), composed of both organism and machine.’<sup>119</sup> Haraway uses the image of the cyborg as a metaphor to explain how humans are connected to their surroundings through the extreme use and dependence on electronic devices.<sup>120</sup>

Another means through which personal data are collected is the use of “telecomps”. Chip’s society has no personal room where they can keep their secrets and personal feelings, for their advisers are required to create profiles and record their personal stories through the use of personal computers called “telecomp” which are wirelessly linked to Unicom. According to Lyon and Bauman “this process of constructing individual’s electronic profiles which compiles personal data is referred as “data double.” They describe it as “the virtual representation of a person in an electronic profile for the purpose of being governed and controlled; it tends to be trusted more than the person, who prefers to tell their own tale.”<sup>121</sup> In this context, sometimes Chip likes to meet his adviser to open a conversation about his desire to choose an individual job for himself. He tells him that “Uni’s decisions were meaningless”<sup>122</sup> and informs him about his desire to “escape from sameness and universal mechanical efficiency”,<sup>123</sup> but Chip knows in advance the reaction of his adviser, for “he might become frightened”<sup>124</sup> and record this behavior in his computer, by giving “the data to Uni and get him fixed up again.”<sup>125</sup> Thus, when the

general good and individual interests are connected in this way, like any other individual, Chip has no room for personal matters.

In a similar way, Jonas's community exemplifies the information society in the way Elders acquire power through the collection of citizen's personal data. One of the ways is "the information stored in the Hall of Open Records"<sup>126</sup>; a building that houses videos of every activity practiced within the community from birth to death. For instance, every institution contributes to the collection of data based on observation: "all of his volunteer hours would be carefully tabulated at the Hall of Open Records."<sup>127</sup> As mentioned previously, these professions provided for every child are sorted based on their characteristics and behaviors. In fact, citizens have access to the information within the building and can only research certain videos that are approved by government. The seemingly sole purpose of this building is to make information accessible, shareable and free to ensure the safety of the world's citizens. It resembles the virtual version applications of social media through which privacy is now seen as hiding knowledge from your follows.

Furthermore, with the implementation of microphones and speakers in every family dwelling, the home place becomes a source to collect private information about citizens. Just as the citizens are aware that the city and the workplace are public spaces which are monitored. They are also made painfully aware that they are always monitored in their homes. Lowry states: "no doors in the community were locked ever". It means that everybody's life is open to scrutiny. However, the annex of Receiver of Memory is unique, because the door is locked and the speaker has an off button. When Jonas realizes this during his training, he "almost gasped aloud. To have the power to turn the speaker off? It was an astonishing thing."<sup>128</sup> Simply because the elite class of Elders are the only group

who have the privilege to turn them off. The rest of the community cannot decide when their private sphere is invaded, and any dare to have any control over these devices or to switch them off is intolerable by the Elders.

Besides, in every house there is a microphone that records their “rituals of dream telling feelings.”<sup>129</sup> The latter is a daily habit in which parents are required to redirect their children thinking to conform to the community rules. On the surface, it might appear to be simply habits to promote mental health and create an atmosphere of openness, but it is imposed by the community of Elders to help them reveal what goes on in their mind. With the awareness of microphones being around, Jonas feels compelled to hide and repress his feeling of love for his friend Fiona. However, concealing feelings “was of course against the rules.”<sup>130</sup> He is constantly reported by the speaker to take a pill.

In their post-panopticon theory, Lyon and Bauman argue that it is not only technology that contributes to the loss of human’s privacy, but society itself helps to bring anonymity to its end.”<sup>131</sup> Behind the apparent accessibility to technology in both public and private places, there are the disappearance of privacy and the beginning of homogenization. According to them, this erosion of anonymity is a product of pervasive electronic- panopticon, cheap cell phone cameras, free photo and video web hosts, and perhaps most important of all, a change in people’s views about what ought to be public and what ought to be private.<sup>40</sup> Accordingly, the growing use of surveillance in different sectors of lives, led people to invite themselves in order to practice in this game without being totally aware that they are already being used by governments as their ears and eyes that listen to and watch their neighbors, friends, family members.

In *This Perfect Day* the members of community are responsible for reporting each other, as programmers distribute surveillance responsibilities to the public. When Chip and

his nonconformist friend Lilac begin to search through an old museum maps to plan for an escape, their ruse is discovered by Bob. A woman's voice from the loudspeaker orders everyone to "do the noticing and reporting"<sup>132</sup>, for there is "a member in the building who's sick and acts aggressively and runs away from his adviser."<sup>133</sup>Next, the majority of members "looked at one another"<sup>134</sup>. The speaker further reports:

Look at the bracelets of the members around you. We're looking for Li RM. Be sure that every member within your sight is checked by at least one other member. He was caught and arm-pulled around —by the member who had been looking at him. Members screamed. "It's him!" they cried. "There he is!" "Help him!" "Stop him!"<sup>135</sup>

The above quote implies that the community uses both vertical and lateral surveillance to practice control. The state and citizens are practicing surveillance together at the same time, even the members are normalizing this act by asking for "help" to get him a treatment. After this incident, Chip and his friend are drugged to the treatment room, and the speaker expresses appreciation for the community's help. It is said: "the emergency is over, brothers and sisters, and you can go on now with what you were doing. Thank you; thank you for your help and cooperation. Thank you on behalf of the Family, thank you on behalf of Li RM."<sup>136</sup> Chip becomes aware of peer surveillance and knows he must discipline himself and outwardly conform. This kind of peer to peer surveillance is much like the American campaign of "If You See Something, Say Something", in which individual's practices operate as the watchdog of the state; they are empowered to strengthen security while providing their own safety.

In Lowry's *The Giver*, people are coerced into participating in group activities where they are subject to the surveillance of their peers and are disciplined into responding involuntarily. Citizens are not only encouraged to reveal prohibited actions of nudity, violence and lying, but also the simplest deeds such as complaining about workers who

“lacked the interest or skills for the more vital jobs”<sup>137</sup>, “going out night”<sup>138</sup>, or sharing any feelings of sympathy that are basically against the community standards. Jonas’s classmate Pierre represents this tendency in an exaggerated way. Jonas does not like his attitude because he “was very serious, not much fun, and a worrier and tattletale, too.”<sup>139</sup> He is always worried about the most trivial rules in the community constantly asking others: “have you checked the rules?”<sup>140</sup> and “I’m not sure that’s within the rules.”<sup>141</sup> Pierre has internalized all the rules forcing others to do the same. This kind of communal surveillance is referred by Mark Andrejevic as “lateral surveillance”. In his article “The Work of Watching One Another”, he states: “lateral surveillance is not the top-down monitoring of employees by employers or citizens by the state, but rather the peer-to-peer surveillance of spouses, friends, and relatives.”<sup>142</sup> Rather than agents of institutions public or private, to keep track of one another. This can be seen in how carefully the members of the community watch one another, as it is their duty to report any abnormal actions. It shows the power of modern surveillance and the way individuals are willing to invite themselves to be part of this process and making their own private life publicly available to all.

Through a convergence of tech-surveillance methods, individuals have given up their privacy in both the private and public sectors for the sake of sameness and equality. As a result, characters become reduced to the quality of robots. The omnipresent tech-surveillance allows the leaders to reinforce the ideology of sameness; it further helps them to achieve the automatic manner of life and characters as well. It, indeed, instructs the dwellers into seeing tech-surveillance as an embodied part of their lives rather than as a random act of consciousness.

In a nutshell, Lyon and Bauman’s discussion of post-panopticism offers a helpful framework for considering how surveillance functions in modern society. By revisiting

*This Perfect Day and The Giver* in the light of their stretched surveillance theory, the way that the individual and societal body can be controlled through a combination of surveillance methods has been established. The similarity in their texts emphasizes how central these issues continue to exist in popular culture and contemporary life. Alongside governments, and institutions, people also help to collect data on each other, consequently watching come at all levels. The state justifies surveillance in terms of the common good, security and social safety, but they have also scarified a portion of their individuality as they contributed to their dependence on technology to the point where they ceased to question a world without it. Therefore, it is important to develop certain surveillance laws and guidelines to protect people and at the same time to avoid exposure from the substantial harms posed by surveillance.<sup>143</sup>

## **Endnotes**

<sup>91</sup>Herbert S. Lin, Lynette I. Millett, James Waldo, *Engaging Privacy and Information Technology in a Digital Age*, (The National Academic Press: 2007), 380.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid, 380.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> VictoriaFlangen, *Surveillance Societies Privacy and Power in YA Fiction :Technology and Identity in Young Adult Fiction*(Palgrave Macmillan, London: 2014) 128.

<sup>95</sup> JensKremer, *The End of Freedom in Public Places? Privacy problem arising from surveillance of the European public space*. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Helsinki 2017),5

<sup>96</sup> David Lyon and Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Surveillance: A Conversation*, 8.

<sup>97</sup>Levin, Ira. *This Perfect*, 36.

<sup>98</sup>ibid, 36

<sup>99</sup> TinhinaneBachar, *George Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four between Fiction and Reality: An Inquiry inside the Surveillance Society* (University of Bejaia, 2018),38.

<sup>100</sup>Levin, Ira.*This Perfect Day*, 14.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, 16

<sup>102</sup> Lowry, *The Giver*,

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, 45

- <sup>104</sup> Ibid, 48
- <sup>105</sup> Ibid, 20.
- <sup>106</sup> Ibid, 20.
- <sup>107</sup> Ibid, 9.
- <sup>108</sup> Ibid, 42.
- <sup>109</sup> Farah Mohammed, The Danger of Public Shaming in the Internet Age, <https://daily.jstor.org/the-danger-of-public-shaming-in-the-internet-age/>
- <sup>110</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>111</sup> David Lyon and Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Surveillance: A Conversation*, 57.
- <sup>112</sup> Levin, *This Perfect Day*, 112.
- <sup>113</sup> Ibid, 113.
- <sup>114</sup> Ibid, 123.
- <sup>115</sup> Lowry, *The Giver*,9.
- <sup>116</sup> Ibid, 9.
- <sup>117</sup> Margret Atwood, *The Handmade's Tale*, (Boston : Houghton Mifflin, 1986) 19.
- <sup>118</sup> David Lyon and Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Surveillance: A Conversation*, 17.
- <sup>119</sup> Donna J. Haraway, D. (1991). *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. (New York: Routledge.2019),57.
- <sup>120</sup> Ibid, 57.
- <sup>121</sup> David Lyon and Zygmunt Bauman: *Liquid Surveillance: A Conversation*, 13.
- <sup>122</sup> Levin, *This Perfect Day*,
- <sup>123</sup> Ibid, 65.
- <sup>124</sup> Ibid, 158.
- <sup>125</sup> Ibid, 76.
- <sup>126</sup> Lowry, *The Giver*, 14.
- <sup>127</sup> ibid, 15.
- <sup>128</sup> Ibid, 53
- <sup>129</sup> Ibid, 10.
- <sup>130</sup> ibid,28.
- <sup>131</sup> Ibid, 13.
- <sup>132</sup> Levin, Ira. *This Perfect*, 126.
- <sup>133</sup> ibid,126.
- <sup>134</sup> Ibid, 126
- <sup>135</sup> Ibid, 126.
- <sup>136</sup> Ibid, 128.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid, 35.

<sup>138</sup> Lowry, *The Giver*, 12

<sup>139</sup> David Lyon and Zygmunt Bauman: *Liquid Surveillance: A Conversation*, 13.

<sup>140</sup> Lowry, *The Giver*, 37.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid, 37.

<sup>142</sup> Andrejevic, Mark. "The work of watching one another : Lateral surveillance, risk, and governance." (2002).3.

<sup>143</sup> Emilie Kaleta, *Surveillance Society in Dystopian Novels and Contemporary Society*, (Master thesis, Aalborg University, 2020), 106.

### Chapter Three: The “Medical Gaze” in *This Perfect Day* and *The Giver*

While highlighting the technologies of power and their place in politics, economics and other domains, Foucault does not neglect the medical element through which he captures the changing forces of medical knowledge and its growing influence in these increasingly techno-scientific times as he notes: “the medicine of diseases has come to an end; there now begins a medicine of pathological reactions, a structure of experience that dominated the nineteenth century, and, to a certain extent, the twentieth.”<sup>144</sup> Indeed, the manipulation and transformation of the human body by biomedical technology is increasing. Nonmedical problems are treated as medical problems, described using medical language, and understood through the adoption of a medical framework.<sup>145</sup> Consequently, the pharmaceutical industry becomes amenable to “biomedical enhancement”<sup>146</sup> by feeding individuals with drugs, surgery, and other medical interventions aimed at improving one’s mind, body, or performance, which what doctors or society deem to be socially expected standard.

In *This Perfect Day* and *The Giver* medicine is taken to extreme limits. To reach a total control of sameness, the medical staff manipulates the citizen’s body through the use of treatments to decide what is normal and what is not. Any behavior that is defined as immoral is medicalized; certain life conditions such as mood, aging, childbirth are medicalized as well. It is important to note that Foucault’s concept of the “*medical gaze*” is abstract and lacks concrete examples from everyday life to ground it. Therefore, the present chapter will analyse some cases in which body is used as a site for medical treatment and how it contributes to the normalization or deviance of individuals.

Foucault argues that power operates by a desire to achieve the perfect body that society requires.<sup>147</sup> The obsession with a healthy and productive body is what characterizes the two novels. They draw attention to the fact that aging has become medicalized as a

social issue. Youthfulness is favored while aging is seen as a social burden. They get rid of elderly people because they are unproductive and need much care. Therefore, ending their lives is viewed as the best solution for them. This “senicidal thinking” is founded on the assumption that human worth is aligned to productivity<sup>148</sup>.

*This Perfect Day* depicts aging as an inevitable dystopia that every individual is doomed to face by making body transplant surgeries for aged people. Part of sameness “is to kill people at the age of sixty-two”<sup>149</sup>, Levin writes, but the process of killing them is never violent; they are killed peacefully and quietly. Levin states: “Sixty-two is the optimum dying time, better than sixty-one or sixty-three and better than bothering with artificial hearts”<sup>150</sup>. However, the programmers that run Uni are promised immortality. In fact, many people consider it as a privilege that their limbs will be used to replace their leaders ageing bodies.<sup>151</sup> In other words, exceptional members like programmers “have to be preserved as long as possible for the family sake.”<sup>152</sup> The old programmer Wei explains to Chip that a young Athlete is going to replace parts of his body: “he was proud that he was going to become allied to me.”<sup>153</sup> This can be taken as a pioneering example of scientific utopianism, both in real life and in fiction. The apocalypse of dystopian fiction has already arrived to current elderly people. Instead of accepting the natural progression of the life course, modern medical industry medicalize old age in an attempt to control it,<sup>154</sup> either by subjecting it to anti-aging treatment such as diets and surgeries or ending their lives.

The previous-mentioned idea is also shown in *The Giver*. When they are no longer useful to society, the elderly are sent to “The House of Old”, a kind of nursing home “where they are so well cared and respected”<sup>155</sup>. Shortly after this, they kill them in the “ceremony of release” through a lethal injection. Though they are not necessarily sick or infirm, they are no longer useful to the society in their opinion. Jonas once volunteers for the House of Old where he bathes an elderly woman named Larissa. She has witnessed Old

Roberto's ceremony of release and describes it as "wonderful." When Jonas asks her "what happens when they make the actual release,"<sup>156</sup>she answers: "I don't know. I don't think anybody does, except the committee. But you should have seen his look. Pure happiness, I'd call it."<sup>157</sup>There is innocence in the way Larissa has put her faith blindly in the Elders, not knowing the reason behind getting rid of the elderly. This is because they are taught that this 'release' is a time of life celebration, but in reality it means "disposal of the unneeded members."<sup>158</sup>Sarah Holland argues that "one of the current arguments in favor of legalizing human euthanasia against the elderly is that they may stand as a burden on their families, the community and the state and may feel pressured by society to pass away rather than remain a living old person."<sup>159</sup>

Moreover, the regulation and surveillance of childbirth is brought into attention. As a matter of fact, dystopian fiction has the tendency to portray women's bodies to be solely resources of reproduction. From the Second World War onward, dystopian writers continue to tackle themes of reproduction and overpopulation.<sup>160</sup> According to Anthony Burgess "it reflects the wave of 'Baby Boom' that brought an increase in birth rates because of the improvements in the medical advances and standards of living. Therefore many countries implemented coerced sterilization programs to decrease population size"<sup>161</sup>. This is clearly mirrored in both novels where medical activities are the norm for the birth process, and any objection will be labeled as deviant.

In *This Perfect Day*, self-sterilization is encouraged. Most women are sterile and only few young females are allowed to have babies. Indeed, "treatments were to prevent women from having too many babies."<sup>162</sup>One of them is the young Snowflake, who has independent tendencies; she is assigned to give birth through artificial insemination. Her adviser explains her upcoming role in medical center: "Uni is the machine that's going to classify you and give you your assignments, that's going to decide where you'll live and

whether or not you'll marry or not; and if you do, whether or not you'll have children and what they'll be named if you have them.”<sup>163</sup> However; she does not accept the idea of carrying a baby because of her young age. Levin notes her reaction to her adviser: “I know what's been going on. What do you think I am a dead body? A baby. It stinks, It's rotten, It's all there is.”<sup>164</sup> Snowflake decides to get rid of her unborn baby by running away from her city. In this novel, women's bodies are represented as inherently defective and in need of external regulation. Consequently, birth is transformed from a natural process into a medicalized event that needs to be observed.

In *The Giver*, the issue of overpopulation is addressed quite explicitly. Following the ideals of sameness, scientists impose a system of “Family Units” and decide upon their spousal relationships which allow only 50 births a year and two children per parents. Giving birth to a baby is considered as a job assigned especially for young females who possess the qualities of a strong “Birthmother”. During the ceremony of twelve, a young female named Inger is chosen for this role. Lowry describes this role saying: “she would enjoy the three years of being pampered that would follow her brief training; she would give birth easily and well; and the task of Laborer that would follow would use her strength, keep her healthy, and impose self-discipline.”<sup>165</sup> However, its sinister side is that these females are genetically engineered to deny them the natural procreation which is produced through artificial insemination.<sup>166</sup>As a result, children are not biologically related to their parents or siblings and have no idea about it. This is portrayed when Jonas asks The Receiver of Memory about the reason behind the Elders' refusal to allow the birth of more than two babies per family. The Giver transmits the memories of devastation of global famine and war. He says: “centuries back. The population had gotten so big that hunger was everywhere. Excruciating hunger and starvation. It was followed by warfare”<sup>167</sup>. Considering overpopulation as the cause of numerous social problems,

demographic control allows the community members to be entitled to a fair share in all community.

Sameness is introduced as a solution to these aforementioned concrete issues of ageism and birth control, but it also seeks to solve more ethical ones such as racism. Through genetic engineering the medical staff manipulates women's bodies in a positive way to provide maximum security and protection for the infant and to ensure the birth of a "perfect child." It is worth mentioning that eugenics in democratic countries played a significant role long before it is used by the Nazis which led to the almost complete annihilation of European Jewry.<sup>168</sup> However, scientists in these democratic countries, namely the United States and Canada, claim that genetic engineering is based on the utopian assumptions of improving the quality of the human race. Therefore, the genetic engineering that they have once considered to be a racist policy when it was used by the Nazis is now praised and encouraged.<sup>169</sup> This belief is illustrated in both novels as characters do not view geneticists to be merely playing with their bodies; they are convinced that they are doing what is best for them to create a "master race."

In *This Perfect Day*, children are genetically engineered to have certain traits and fit into a social caste of sameness. Programmers are supposed to design babies at the stage of "embryo"; a stage that helps them to produce their desirable traits. In reality, this operation is performed when a particular gene associated with a disease is detected. But in Chip's society, genes are modified out of a desire to attain perfection. "Hair is the same, eyes the same, skin the same, and shape the same; boys, girls, all the same. Like peas in a pod,"<sup>170</sup> the author notes. It clearly shows the programmers' obsession to reach sameness in every little detail. Chip is born with one brown eye and another green, which makes him different from the other members. Scientists are trying to treat this 'difference'. Levin recounts one of the advisers called Wei trying to convince him to let doctors modify the

color of his eye. He states: “If nothing could be done about it, then you would be justified in accepting it. But an imperfection that can be remedied? That we must never accept.”<sup>171</sup> He further reminds Chip of the principle of sameness: “One goal, one goal only, for all of us—perfection,”<sup>172</sup> he adds; “we’re not there yet, but some day we will be: a Family improved genetically so that treatments no longer are needed; a corps of ever-living programmers so that the islands too can be unified; perfection, on Earth and moving outward to the stars,”<sup>173</sup>. This quote implies that genetic engineering is a double edged term. While it can be beneficial to prevent health issues and perfecting human race, it can also take a portion from his identity.

In *The Giver*, creating the perfect child seems ideal in their community, or else it will be euthanized. Jonas learns about the fate of the babies who do not develop according to the expectations of the Elders. According to scientists, Gabriel is the “sweet little male with a lovely disposition”<sup>174</sup> whose health does not progress like normal babies “he had not gained the [appropriate] weight to his days of life nor begun to sleep soundly enough at night to be placed with his family unit”<sup>175</sup>. In fact, he is brought to Jonas’s house and given supplementary nurturing and care to overcome these problems. Yet “he remained fretful at night, whimpering often, and needing frequent attention”<sup>176</sup>. Because he does not meet the Elder’s requirements for normal babies, Gabriel is labeled “inadequate”, and the only solution is to “release” him.

Another case that illustrates the Elders’ manipulating genetics is their elimination of colors in everything even in skin tones as citizens see only in black and white to make people racially similar. Being the new receiver of memory, Jonas starts seeing colors he has never seen before, such as the skin color of the crowd’s faces and Fiona’s red hair. Eventually, he perceives the entire spectrum of colors, revealed when the Receiver of Memory shares the memory of the rainbow and explains to him: “our people made that

choice, the choice to go to Sameness. Before my time, before the previous time, back and back and back. We relinquished color when we relinquished sunshine and did away with differences.”<sup>177</sup>To Jonas, the fact that people cannot see colors is another downside of sameness as he states: “If everything’s the same, then there aren’t any choices! I want to wake up in the morning and decide things! A blue tunic or a red one?”<sup>178</sup>As far as skin color is concerned, Jonas does not question the elimination of the racial differences. It can be deduced that the Elders’ elimination of colors to avoid racism and conflicts is a positive step that aims at establishing social stability. However, promoting color-blindness by implying that the future is full of “pale” people and “light” eyes hints at the fact that the future will only be populated by a white race<sup>179</sup>. According to Mary Couzelis, “dystopia novels that ignore race or present a monochromatic future imply that other ethnicities do not survive in the future or that their participation in the future is not important.”<sup>180</sup>

Foucault’s view of modern doctors is another point which I shall direct my attention to. His concept of the “medical gaze” describes how doctors modify the patient’s story, fitting it into the medical discourse for the purpose of managing and influencing people’s future behavior<sup>181</sup>. For instance, in *This Perfect Day*, advisers are the agents of achieving the above-mentioned utopia of hygienic society through the scientific gaze as “everybody has weekly meetings with an advisor to help them live the way they are supposed to.”<sup>182</sup> In reality, however, the readers immediately realize that the advisers are those who contribute to the docility of citizens. Rosen is one of the manipulative advisers who seems caring and sensitive but is shown ultimately to be just as manipulative as the others. Some characters try to please her during the weekly-meetings by revealing their health issues. Once she gathers their secrets, she starts embarrassing them to make the treatment a normal process. Rosen is also responsible for alarming citizens from the speaker to take the treatment every week. By keeping a constant observation, a corpus of

knowledge is achieved which helps Rosen and other advisers gather the required data to cure and control a patient through daily analysis. This is especially applicable to the global pandemic of COVID19 that has changed the management of world health. Although, in some democratic countries, surveillance is being used to analyze health data related to COVID-19, authoritarian regimes also appear to be using the pandemic as an excuse to double down on gathering data, silence critics and misuse information.<sup>183</sup> *Human Rights Watch* has noted that the Chinese and Russian Governments are just two examples of those expanding their surveillance capabilities and restricting people's rights in ways that are not justified on public health grounds.<sup>184</sup>

In *The Giver*, people that are in charge of their patients are called Nurturers, like Jonas's father who follows the rules set forth in the Book of Rules. Jonas learns about the truth of release when his father decides to kill one of newborn twins simply because they need to respect the required number of newborns for each year. They weigh the babies and the lighter one is euthanized by directing a "needle into the top of new-child's forehead"<sup>185</sup>. Jonas is disgusted by his father's daily remorseless actions against babies. However, his father is merely doing what "he was told to do, and he knows nothing else,"<sup>186</sup> as the Receiver of Memory states. This can be clearly related to the way Foucault regards the medical industry; he states that "doctors are doctor-oriented, not patient-oriented, and thus medicine creates an abusive power structure"<sup>187</sup>. Jonas's father has no idea about what he is doing; he is another product of "panoptical mechanism." He loves new born babies passionately and can fight for their survival. However, having grown up in a society where babies are euthanized for the tiniest health issues, "release" is not considered as a tragedy but a way to keep the society devoid of any disability problems.

In fact, the medications are used to reinforce their medical practices; they brainwash their minds to make their norms appeal moral and right. They use tranquilizers which function as real life “psychotropic pills” which can provide an instant relief for any daily psychological stress, thereby calming, pacifying citizens into a state of perfect tranquility. According to Foucault, such conformity is not achieved through coercion but rather through desire<sup>188</sup>. In more precise words, the use of drugs and medical treatments to treat physical and mental problems is a normal practice accepted by the whole community to the extent that a world without them is unimaginable. Therefore, anyone who decides to live without medications has to accept the status of an “outsider” in the society.

in *This Perfect Day* treatments take place every week and are believed by citizens to be “much more effective”<sup>189</sup> because they minimize “aggressiveness [...] joy [...] perception and every other fighting thing the brain is capable of”<sup>190</sup>. They regularly visit medical centers to receive treatments said to consist of “Vaccines, enzymes, the contraceptive, sometimes a tranquilizer,”<sup>191</sup> designed to “prevent diseases and to relax members who were tense and to keep women from having too many babies and men from having hair on their faces”<sup>192</sup>. Once they take them, “they feel a little better every day, a little more awake and alert, little more sure that sickness was what they had have and health was what they were growing toward.”<sup>193</sup> As it is mentioned above power creates the desire to conform to these norms. This is reflected in the way characters are embracing the role of these treatments in their lives when Snowflakes, for instance, states: “the different chemicals we get in our treatments are very precious”<sup>194</sup>. This also reflected in *The Giver*, sexual desire is suppressed; therefore controlling birth rates and euthanasia is normalized by describing it as “wonderful and pure happiness.”<sup>195</sup> In other words, people are effectively manipulated as they blindly accept and conform to the rules.

Therefore, characters in these novels are in a world so pharmacologically reliant that they take a drug for nearly every situation, whether to go to bed or wake-up or just to numb their thoughts from reality. According to the *American Association of Consumer Healthcare Products*: “today, medical use of drugs to control behavior is shockingly high”<sup>196</sup>. They further argue: “brain imaging studies of drug-addicted individuals show changes in areas of the brain that are critical to judgment, decision making, learning and memory, and behavior control.”<sup>197</sup> Therefore, the authors warn against the dangers of the over-use of medications that has become the new norm.

Nevertheless, Foucault claims that the imposition of these practices can create not only the “normal” individual who can participate in his/her own oppression but also the “abnormal or deviant” one.<sup>198</sup> Levin highlights the fact that all individuals “who refuse to take the treatment are consigned to an assembly line of incurables.”<sup>199</sup> This created a social division where the group of incurables is accepted as something uncanny and inhumane that needs to be excluded from the public gaze. They are referred as “sick”, “biological freaks” and “troublemakers.”<sup>200</sup> On the other hand, Jonas’s mother, who works for the Department of Law, explains the outcome of breaking a rule three times: “you know that there’s no third chance. The rules say that if there’s a third transgression, he simply has to be released.”<sup>201</sup> She even recounts a story of a father who has been released for breaking the rules three times: “no one ever mentioned his name; the disgrace was unspeakable”.<sup>202</sup> This clearly shows that it is not only the unhealthy and unproductive citizens who are released but also the lawbreakers; they kill them for minor offenses. As a result, Jonas’s ‘training sessions with the Receiver of Memory lead him to express his anger and desire to feel emotions, see colors and make choices. He engages in his first rebellious act against sameness by refusing to take his pills. Thus, having been raised in a world that embraces sameness in every aspect of their lives leads the two protagonists

to question their society's way of life and start to plan toward salvaging remnants of previous times by rebelling.

To sum up, the above chapter highlighted the ideals of sameness that are followed by the medical staff to achieve perfect bodies. Levin and Lowry suggest that this system has impoverished rather than improved the human subject. Foucault's concept of "medical gaze" has helped to reinforce this ideology of sameness set forth by controllers. While this system has greatly benefited their communities by ensuring its sustainability with controlling overpopulation, genetic make-up, eliminating racial differences and so on. It has far greater effects, as it has eliminated aspirations, creative identities and especially their individuality. Foucault's "medical gaze" is no longer the gaze of any observer, but that of a doctor supported and justified by a specific institution with the power of intervention<sup>203</sup> and dehumanization. It focuses on contemporary regimes and how their technology makes the body visible to exploit it for scientific knowledge.

## Endnotes

<sup>144</sup> Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic*, 103

<sup>145</sup> Peter Conrad, *The Medicalization of Society: On the Transformation of Human Conditions Into Treatable Disorders*, (The Johns: Hopkins University Press, 2007), 20.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid, 85.

<sup>147</sup> Jean Pylypa, Power and Bodily Practice: Applying the Work of Foucault to an Anthropology of the Body, *Arizona Anthropologist* no 13, (1998), 3.

<sup>148</sup> Sarah Hollands, "Magical thinking and the aged-care crisis," <https://www.griffithreview.com/articles/magical-thinking-and-the-aged-care-crisis/>

<sup>149</sup> Levin, *This Perfect Day*, 99.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid, 99.

<sup>151</sup> Science and violence in popular fiction: Four novels of Ira Levin, <http://archive.unu.edu/unupress/unupbooks/uu05se/uu05se0g.htm>

<sup>152</sup> Levin, *This Perfect Day*, 250.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid, 250.

- <sup>154</sup> Hailee Gibbons, “Compulsory Youthfulness: Intersections of Ableism and Ageism in ‘Successful Aging’ Discourses”, *Review of Disability Studies: An International Journal*, [Volume 12, No. 2 & 3](#) (2016) : 2, <https://scholarspace.manoa.hawaii.edu/handle/10125/58668>, 15.
- <sup>155</sup> Lowry, *The Giver*, 80.
- <sup>156</sup> Ibid, 25.
- <sup>157</sup> Ibid, 25.
- <sup>158</sup> Zelda Djermoun, *Making the World a Better Place: A Postmodern Dialectical Analysis of Sameness in The Giver (1993) by Lois Lowry and the Philosophy of Humanity's Future in Dystopian Literature* ( Master thesis: Bejaia University, 2019), 56
- <sup>159</sup> Sarah Hollands, “Magical thinking and the aged-care crisis”.
- <sup>160</sup> Dystopias: The Wanting Seed and Dystopian Reproduction, <https://www.anthonyburgess.org/twentieth-century-dystopian-fiction/dystopias-the-wanting-seed-and-dystopian-reproduction/>
- <sup>161</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>162</sup> Levin, *This Perfect Day*, 30.
- <sup>163</sup> Ibid, 20.
- <sup>164</sup> Ibid, 29.
- <sup>165</sup> Lowry, *The Giver*, 38.
- <sup>166</sup> Tiina Vitertanen, “Individual and Societal Control in Lois Lowry's *The Giver*.” ( ProGradu thesis, University of Tampere, 2012), 48.
- <sup>167</sup> Lowry, *The Giver*, 72.
- <sup>168</sup> Eugenics in the United States [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eugenics\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_States#:~:text=The%20American%20eugenics%20movement%20was,being%20%22well%2Dborn%22](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eugenics_in_the_United_States#:~:text=The%20American%20eugenics%20movement%20was,being%20%22well%2Dborn%22)
- <sup>169</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>170</sup> Levin, *This Perfect Day*, 17.
- <sup>171</sup> Ibid, 250.
- <sup>172</sup> Ibid, 255
- <sup>173</sup> Ibid, 250.
- <sup>174</sup> Lowry, *The Giver*, 13.
- <sup>175</sup> Ibid, 32.
- <sup>176</sup> Ibid, 73.
- <sup>177</sup> Ibid, 63.
- <sup>178</sup> Ibid, 65.

- <sup>179</sup> [Carrie Hintz](#), [Balaka Basu](#), [Katherine R. Broad](#), , *The Future Is Pale: Race in Contemporary Young Adult, Contemporary Dystopian Fiction for Young Adults: Brave New Teenagers*, Mary J. Couzelis , Newyork: Rutledge: 2013. 131.
- <sup>180</sup> Ibid, 132
- <sup>181</sup> David Misselbrook, "Foucault," <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3662436/>
- <sup>182</sup> Levin, *This Perfect World*, 50.
- <sup>183</sup> Tasneem Nazeer, *The Coronavirus Crisis Digital Surveillance and Technological Totalitarianism*, Byline Times, April, 7, 2020, <https://bylinetimes.com/2020/04/07/the-coronavirus-crisis-digital-surveillance-and-technological-totalitarianism/>
- <sup>184</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>185</sup> Lowry, *The Giver*, 98.
- <sup>186</sup> Ibid, 97.
- <sup>187</sup> David Misselbrook, "Foucault,"
- <sup>188</sup> Jean Pylypa, "Power and Bodily Practice: Applying the Work of Foucault to an Anthropology of the Body",15.
- <sup>189</sup> Levin, *This Perfect Day*, 13
- <sup>190</sup> Ibid, 57.
- <sup>191</sup> Ibid, 57.
- <sup>192</sup> Ibid, 30.
- <sup>193</sup> Ibid, 80.
- <sup>194</sup> Ibid, 28.
- <sup>195</sup> Lowry, *The Giver*, 25.
- <sup>196</sup> "Drugging of Americans Resembles Brave New World", **Pr Newswire**: <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/drugging-of-americans-resembles-brave-new-world-suggests-journal-of-american-physicians-and-surgeons-300235535.html>
- <sup>197</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>198</sup> Deborah Findlay, *The Medical Gaze: Medical Models, Power, and Deborah Findlay Women's Health*, Dalhousie University, 5
- <sup>199</sup> Levin, *This Perfect Day*, 184.
- <sup>200</sup> Ibid, 184.
- <sup>201</sup> Lowry, *The Giver*, 12.
- <sup>202</sup> Ibid, 12.
- <sup>203</sup> Foucault , *The Birth of the Clinic*, 103.

## Conclusion

This dissertation explored the theme of surveillance in order to implement “sameness” and conformity as depicted in the American narratives Levin’s *This Perfect Day* and Lowry’s *The Giver*. Through the study of similarities of the novels, it is clear that their works represent dystopian literature that deals with the encroachment of surveillance on very aspects of life including language/knowledge, space and the body. To reach this aim, I have relied mainly on a Foucauldian perspective using concepts of “*procedures of external exclusion*”, “*post-panopticon*” and the “*medical gaze*”, respectively.

In the first chapter, focus has been put on the analysis of language/knowledge surveillance. It has shown the different strategies used by the oppressive governments to suppress free communications and thoughts through precision of language, world-play, censorship, elimination of memory, etc. The second chapter is devoted to the technological and innovative methods used to better control the private and public space as illustrated in the two novels. As far as the third chapter is concerned, it has addressed the medical tactics used for the obstruction of individual’s identity and the creation of self-disciplined and docile bodies. Broadly speaking, the two authors warn against the dangers of continuing the quest for utopia in today’s society. One cannot deny the effectiveness of surveillance in different areas of life, but it has changed the world into a globalized panoptic bubble aiming to work nearly for the same functions.

The framework of this dissertation did not permit me to deal with all the issues of the novels. Therefore, a further piece of research may be conducted on these novels in relation to other themes. I suggest that the issue of sameness can be extended in another paper with the theme of “rebellion” using Roberta Trites’s extension of Foucault’s theory of power ““Do I dare disturb the universe?”” in order to study the protagonists act of rebellion against the ideology of sameness.

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