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GENDERED DYSTOPIA: GENDER POLITICS IN YEVGENY ZAMYATIN'S *WE*

This paper undertakes to examine the gender politics of Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* (1924), the probable prototype of the modern dystopia, by analyzing how the author adheres to or subverts the characteristics of dystopia specifically in terms of gender representation. The novel illuminates anxieties about gender issues of the author's time. It can be argued that Zamyatin's concern is with equality (sexual and otherwise) at the expense of individuality and creativity within the socialist state. It is my contention that in *We*, Zamyatin suggests that enforced equality will not solve the gender and sexual inequalities of the day. Furthermore, Zamyatin uses socio-political satire to comment subversively on the complexities of the patriarchal social and political structures present in the society in which he wrote.

This paper observes that for Zamyatin, gender and genre are flexible, and that stylistic elements can be the focus in a genre that some would characterize as polemical, topical, and political. Dystopias are thought to be imbedded in a particular political milieu, but this paper shows that there are certain qualities and themes that are common to the genre, no matter when or where the dystopia is written or set.

Key words: Zamyatin, gender, dystopia

1. INTRODUCTION

The public regulation of sex determines gender roles to a great extent within dystopian worlds. Some dystopian societies are apparently androgynous while others are built upon deeply entrenched and seemingly inescapable gender designations. I will undertake to examine the gender politics of Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* (1924), the probable prototype of the modern dystopia, by analyzing how the author adheres to or subverts the characteristics of dystopia specifically in terms of gender representation. The novel illuminates anxieties about gender issues of the author's time. It can be argued that Zamyatin's concern is with equality (sexual and otherwise) at the expense of individuality and creativity within the socialist state.

Although the novel has been compared with and seem to bookend George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1931), two widely read and representative examples of the genre, little critical attention has been given exclusively to the thematic and stylistic concerns of *We*. Zamyatin's *We* exhibits structural relationship between sex and rebellion: the magnitude of sexual repression in these controlled sexual systems demands that any and all subversive activity be accompanied by or centred upon unorthodox and illegal sexual activity. Thus, as much as sex is central to the regime's external control or attempted obliteration of the individual's inner life, it also becomes the locus for rebellion, personal liberation, and the disruption of established power systems.

It is my contention that in Zamyatin's *We*, the author suggests that neither enforced equality nor religious fanaticism will solve the gender and sexual inequalities of the day. Furthermore, Zamyatin uses socio-political satire to comment subversively on the complexities of the patriarchal social and political structures present in the society in which he wrote.

The following section will be concerned with theoretical framework and criticism. I will review the critical scholarship of dystopia, discussing different definitions of dystopia along with trends of canon formation. It must also be kept in mind that the genre of dystopia evolved out of or as a reaction to the concept of utopia as it is expressed in utopian novels, and as such, there is a relationship between the two genres. It might be said that within each dystopia there is an attempted utopia that has gone wrong, and it is the concern of the dystopian novelist to demonstrate just what has gone wrong. I will consider different gender theories as they relate to dystopia. Finally, I will review the scholarship on *We* and other representative texts of the genre along with the scholarship that has addressed gender issues in dystopian

novels, showing ultimately that there is a place for this particular analysis in the body of criticism on dystopia.

The central body of the paper will be concerned with contexts and constructs, analyzing and discussing the social organization and activity in the novel. I will discuss specifically the representation of gender within the specific social and political paradigms of *We*, examining in detail where gender fits within the specific ideologies, institutions, and agencies that make up the “ideal society” of the novel. As loss of freedom often results from extreme social organization, the theme of freedom versus happiness will be discussed in the novel. I will then analyze the system of justice that exists within *We*'s dystopia. I will also examine the conditions in which this novel is created and from which gender issues emerge by considering the specific socio-historical attempts at utopianism to which Zamyatin was reacting in writing his dystopia. Finally, I will examine the ways in which characters engage in resistance against the state by breaking the established rules of sexual conduct in order to assert individuality and agency in the face of potentially overwhelming domination.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: DYSTOPIA, GENDER, AND CRITICISM

2.1. DEFINING THE GENRE: FROM ANTI-UTOPIA TO DYSTOPIA

Dystopias stand in direct opposition to utopias. The word ‘dystopia’ stems from the word ‘utopia’, coined by Sir Thomas More (meaning “no place,” from the Greek: ‘ou’ meaning not and ‘topic’ meaning place). Moore implied that although ‘no place’, a utopia was an ideal world. Add the prefix ‘dys’ (meaning, from the Greek, “hard, bad, ill”) and the word becomes literally ‘bad place’ (Klein 1967: 49). However, as Chris Ferns explains:

Dystopian fiction, in seeking to challenge and subvert the norms of the traditional utopia, exposes many of the contradictions and evasions inherent in the political and social aspects of the utopian dream. By the very fact of providing an opposition, dystopian fiction not only provides a dramatic focus which utopian literature so often conspicuously lacks, it also highlights the inherent authoritarianism which many utopian writers seek to conceal by showing authority only in its most benign aspects. (Ferns 1999: 374)

Dragan Klaic offers a more complete definition of dystopia in his book *The Plot of the Future: Utopia and Dystopia in Modern Drama* (1991), incorporating the intrinsic relationship between utopia and dystopia:

[A]n unexpected and aborted outcome of utopian strivings, a mismatched result of utopian efforts—not only a state of fallen utopia but the very process of its distortion and degeneration as well...[dystopia] involves utopian ambitions while describing their total collapse. (Klaic 1991: 3)

Most, if not all, theorists dealing with dystopia reinforce this connection between utopia and dystopia. As put by David W. Sisk in the introduction to his book *Transformations of Language in Modern Dystopias* (1997): “Dystopian fiction, utopia’s polarized offspring, turns human perfectability on its head by pessimistically extrapolating contemporary social trends into oppressive and terrifying societies” (Sisk 1997: 2). Most scholars cannot agree on the definition of dystopia and its relationship to the term anti-utopia, but all agree that the dystopian genre is forever linked to utopia. Laurence Davies states that “there is an unruly playfulness in dystopia that has the potential to be more utopian than utopias can be themselves” (Davies 1999: 205). Booker expands, explaining that

utopian and dystopian visions are not necessarily diametrical opposites. Not only is one man’s utopia another man’s dystopia, but utopian visions of an ideal society often inherently suggest a criticism of the current order as nonideal, while dystopian warnings of the dangers of “bad” utopias still allow for the possibility of “good” utopias, especially since dystopian societies are generally more or less thinly veiled reconfigurations of a situation that already exists in reality. Moreover, dystopian critiques of existing systems would be pointless unless a better system appeared conceivable. One might, in fact, see dystopian and utopian vision not as fundamentally opposed but as very much part of the same project. (Booker 1994: 15)

Northrop Frye, in his article “Varieties of Literary Utopias” (1965) calls anti-utopia “utopian satire or parody” (Frye 1965: 28), while Gary Saul Morson claims in *The Boundaries of Genre* (1981) that anti-utopias represent an “anti-genre” (Morson 1981: 115).

The dystopian movement, both as separate genre to write and write about, is a modern one, but the date of origin is also up for debate. As stated by Tom Moylan in *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia* (2000):

Although its roots lie in Menippean satire, realism, and the anti-utopian novels of the nineteenth century, the dystopia emerged as a literary form in its own right in the early 1900s, as capital entered a new phase with the onset of monopolized production and as the modern imperialist state extended its internal and external reach. (Moylan 2000: xi)

Eugene Weber, in his article, “The Anti-Utopia of the Twentieth Century” (1971) explains that “Utopia was nowhere, or it was very far away. Now this is no longer so; Utopia is just around the corner, and it generates reactions based on quite concrete hopes and fears” (Weber 1971: 82). While utopias were still ‘no place’, there was no real fear of their realisation. But as the threat of utopias becoming a reality rose, dystopias began to appear to call into question the notions of any and all perfect societies. In keeping with the modernist movement, with its overriding themes of estrangement, alienation and revolt, dystopias called into question the prevailing dogmas of social and scientific progress and worked to provide “fresh ways of looking at man’s position and function in the universe” (Cuddon 1998: 516). This is not to say, however, that dystopian sentiment has not existed much longer. Krishan Kumar in *Utopia and Anti-Utopia in Modern Times* (1987) states that

the very announcement of utopia has almost immediately provoked the mocking, contrary, echo of anti-utopia. Hesiod's Golden Age is succeeded by an Iron Age of unending pain and sorrow. Plato's Republic elicits the satire and ribaldry of Aristophanes and the Attic comedy. Bacon's scientific utopia is mercilessly ridiculed in Swift's Gulliver's Travels...There have always been those who, for reasons of individual psychology or social ideology, have been profoundly skeptical of the hopeful claims made on behalf of humanity by social prophets and reformers. (Kumar 1987: 100)

This sentiment is echoed by Payton E. Richter in “Utopia/Dystopia?: Threats of Heel or Hopes of Paradise?” (1975) who also points out that “[t]he ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle attacked his teacher Plato’s ideal city-state as described in *The Republic*” (Richter 1975: 5). But Alexandra Aldridge reiterates that the dystopian genre is unique. She writes: “This is not to say that dystopia is merely ‘utopia in reverse’ as it has often been called, but a singular category issuing out of a twentieth-century shift of attitudes towards utopia” (Aldridge 1984: 17). Chris Ferns furthers the sentiment by saying that “it is only in the twentieth century that dystopian fiction, combining a parodic inversion of the traditional utopia with satire on contemporary society, begins to take on the kind of mythic resonance that underlies the appeal of the traditional utopia from More on” (Ferns 1999: 105).

But how do we differentiate between anti-utopia and dystopia? Answering the question becomes difficult because at one time the two were considered synonymous, and, in fact, still are by some. Eugene Weber uses the term 'anti-utopia' while the works he uses are clearly examples of dystopias (see Weber 1971). This was not uncommon, as Aldridge points out that dystopian fiction was "usually called anti-utopian in the 1950's and 60's" (Aldridge 1984: 11) and that "for the last two decades or more, 'anti-utopia' and 'dystopia' have been used by critics interchangeably" (Aldridge 1984: 8). In 1967, Hillegas states that "[a]lthough sometimes given such names as dystopias or cacotopias, they have most often been called anti-utopias" (Hillegas 1967: 3). The term anti-utopia also suited critics, such as George Kateb (see Kateb 1963) and Chad Walsh (see Walsh 1962) who understood dystopias to be the "enemy" of utopias. Aldridge is one of the first to distinguish between the two terms in 1984: "The terms satiric utopia (or utopian satire), anti-utopia and dystopia are the most frequently used [terms]; they provide the most helpful generic distinctions, and taken in that order also suggest something about the genesis and evolution of the contemporary negative form - the dystopian novel" (Aldridge 1984: 5). According to her, the differentiation between the two terms lies in that "[t]he pure anti-utopia is simple and primarily a direct attack on the concept of utopia...The rise of dystopian fiction...is attributed to disillusionment with actual 'utopian' schemes in the real modern world" (Aldridge 1984: 8, 11). This is not to say that some did not use the term dystopia with a great deal of consistency, such as Richter's book *Utopia/Dystopia?*. But others still maintain no distinction between the two terms. Krishan Kumar notes in a footnote that "I use 'anti-utopia' as a generic term to include what is sometimes called 'the dystopic' or - more rarely - the 'cacotopia'" (Kumar 1987: 447). Sisk clarifies the distinction between the two terms, claiming that "anti-utopias merely criticize more generalized utopian ideals, while dystopias aggressively target contemporary social structures without direct reference to utopias" (Sisk 1997: 5). He goes on later to state: "In a nutshell, all dystopias are anti-utopias, but not all anti-utopias are dystopias" because anti-utopias can "depict pleasant societies" but "dystopias always depict horrible societies" (Sisk 1997: 6).

Regardless of how the relationship between the two concepts is understood, it is clear that dystopia represents an evolution away from anti-utopia, and the two genres or literary concepts are now separate, even if initially they were used interchangeably.

2.2. GENDER THEORY

Gender is the term used to describe categorization based on culturally coded traits. Most feminist literary criticism “takes gender as a fundamental organizing category of experience,” and similarly insists that “the inequality of the sexes is neither a biological given nor a divine mandate, but a cultural construct” (Greene and Kahn 1985: 1). Feminist criticism often seeks to expose the sex/gender system as “that set of arrangements by which the biological raw material of human sex and procreation is shaped by human social intervention” (Rubin 1975: 165). Underlying the power relationships involved in the sex/gender system are the various institutions and discourses integral to the concept of ideology, which define “the imaginary relationships of individuals to their real conditions of existence” (Althusser 1971: 162). As a system of beliefs and assumptions, ideology dictates and represents the actions, meanings, and identities of a particular culture’s subjects. Powerfully, ideology “masks contradictions, offers partial truths in the interest of a false coherence, thereby obscuring the actual conditions of our existence and making people act in ways that may actually contradict their material interests” (Greene and Kahn 1985: 3). The ideologies that inform and delimit a particular culture at a particular time become inscribed into daily lives and the texts that are created.

Monique Wittig effectively articulates this point of view when she observes that “there is no sex. There is but sex that is oppressed and sex that oppresses. It is oppression that creates sex and not the contrary” (Wittig 1982: 64). Summarizing one of Wittig’s critical points, Judith Butler explains that “for Wittig there is no distinction between sex and gender; the category of ‘sex’ is itself a gendered category, fully politically invested, naturalized but not natural” (Wittig 1982: 143). “Sex” as a category is, according to Wittig, a discursive product of a signifying system used to oppress. So the question becomes, can one defer to a purely material body, material sex, or is everything constructed according to discursive categories of gender? Taking up these questions in *Gender Trouble* (1999), Butler insists that, because of performativity, the “reality of gender is [...] put into crisis” (Butler 1999: xxiii). Distinguishing further between sex and gender, Butler argues that

if gender is the cultural meanings that the sexed body assumes, then a gender cannot be said to follow from a sex in any one way [...] The presumption of a binary gender system implicitly retains the belief in a mimetic relation of gender to sex whereby gender mirrors sex or is otherwise restricted by it. When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender

itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and woman and feminine a male body as easily as a female one. (Butler 1999: 10)

By questioning the relationship between sex and gender, Butler is also questioning the naturalness of sex: “perhaps this construct called ‘sex’ is as culturally constructed as gender; indeed perhaps it was always already gender” (Butler 1999: 10-11). Butler seems to be following closely Wittig’s interrogation of the sex/gender system. When Butler begins to problematize the relationship of gender to the subject, however, her own theory of performativity takes shape. She asks whether people possess a gender category or actually, essentially are a gender (Butler 1999: 11). Acts, gestures, and desires are interrogated, declared performative, because they are manufactured by various cultural signs and discourses (Butler 1999: 173). This is significant in that these acts and desires “create the illusion of an interior and organizing gender core, an illusion discursively maintained for the purposes of the regulation of sexuality within the obligatory frame of a reproductive heterosexuality” (Butler 1999: 173). It is strategies such as drag and gender parody that reveal the imitative structure of gender itself.

Teresa de Lauretis also contributes significantly to the construction of gender debates. She begins *Technologies of Gender* (1987) by outlining the limitations of theorizing gender using the concept of sexual difference (either biological or discursive). This kind of logic, she insists, has two major shortcomings. First, sexual differences “constrain feminist critical thought within the conceptual frame of a universal sex opposition” (de Lauretis 1987: 2), which places one squarely within the territory of essentialism. Secondly, sexual differences “tend to recontain or recuperate the radical epistemological potential of feminist thought inside the walls of the master’s house, to borrow Audre Lorde’s metaphor” (de Lauretis 1987: 2). In other words, sexual differences evade the productive concept of the gendered subject as being multiple, divided, and contradictory. Insisting on the need to unravel the concept of gender from sexual differences, de Lauretis puts forward her theory of the “technology of gender,” adapted from Foucault’s “technology of sex.” Proposing that gender is the product of various social technologies and discourses, de Lauretis makes four propositions. First, she insists, “gender is (a) representation” (de Lauretis 1987: 3), but is careful to note that it does have real implications for material life. Second, “the representation of gender is its construction” (de Lauretis 1987: 3). Third, the construction of gender occurs today, as it has in previous cultures and histories. Not only has its construction taken place in what Althusser would term “ideological state

apparati,” but also in “the academy, in the intellectual community, in avant-garde artistic practices and radical theories, even, and indeed especially, in feminism” (de Lauretis 1987: 3). Fourth, gender is constructed by “any discourse, feminist or otherwise, that would discard it as ideological misrepresentation” (de Lauretis 1987: 3). Like “the real,” she observes, gender “is not only the effect of representation but also its excess, what remains outside discourse as a potential trauma which can rupture or destabilize, if not contained” (de Lauretis 1987: 3). It is as part of the fourth proposition that de Lauretis makes use of the term “space-off” to refer to what the representation of gender leaves out or makes unrepresentable (de Lauretis 1987: 26). As de Lauretis argues, there is a movement between the identities produced by dominant discourses and those that remain unrepresentable. One of the projects of gender studies becomes an articulation of those identities that have always existed in the spaces around those constructed by official discourses.

2.3. GENDER AND DYSTOPIA: A SURVEY OF MODERN SCHOLARSHIP

I have already alluded to the two major dystopian texts which *We* precedes: *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. These are the best known of the modern dystopian novels. Therefore, one might wonder at the decision to analyze Zamyatin and whether this is possible without in-depth exploration of Huxley and Orwell. *We* has been noted as the exemplar/prototype of the modern dystopia, but is a strictly linear and chronological model of influence necessary for analysis? I would like to begin to answer this question by reviewing the comparative scholarship that exists between these three novels.

Scholars have recognized the connections between *We*, *Brave New World* and/or *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (see Brown 1976; Sargent 1984). Although Huxley denied knowledge of *We* before writing his dystopia, many critics disregard this assertion (Richards 1962: 54; Seymour-Smith 1976: 239). Among other features, Huxley seems to have borrowed from *We* its institutionalized promiscuity and state-controlled child-rearing, along with the apparently “ungendered” workforce that results from freedom from family responsibilities. On the other hand, other critics (Collins 1973: 41, Stites cited in Ferns 1999: 247) accept Huxley’s denial and look to earlier writers who influenced both *We* and *Brave New World* such as Wells and Federov. Orwell acknowledged the influence of both Zamyatin and Huxley on his dystopia. Although

the regime in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* uses sexual repression rather than shallow licentiousness to undermine personal relationships and strengthen state allegiance, the rebellious relationship between Winston and Julia in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* mirrors that of D-503 and I-330 in *We*, right down to the secret meeting-place (the Ancient House of *We* becomes the room above Charrington's shop of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*) and use of contraband food, clothing and cosmetics. Even Winston's precarious position as a seditious journalist has its origin in D-503's initially state-commissioned poem turned journal of rebellion and discovery of subjectivity. These are only a few of many structural and thematic similarities between those three works.

Comparison on the basis of sex has also been made between these three novels. Lyman Tower Sargent (1984), in the essay noted above, contrasts the differing ways that sex is used as a means of social control in the dystopias of Zamyatin, Orwell, and Huxley: "One major disagreement in the classic dystopias is over the question of sex as a means of social control. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* suggests suppression; *Brave New World* proposes promiscuity; *We* has controlled promiscuity." Sargent goes on to ask whether "control through pleasure [is] more effective than control through pain" (Sargent 1984: 38).

Critics have also examined the representation of gender in the dystopias of Orwell, Huxley, and Zamyatin. In "Women in Dystopia/Utopia: 1984 and Beyond," Joyce McCarl Nielsen claims that Julia functions as little more than an earth goddess, and attributes Orwell's "lack of concern about women as a class" to the failure of liberalism to concern itself with gender equality (Nielsen 1984: 145). Baruch questions the role of women in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Brave New World* and asks whether unconventional sexual acts have the same liberating effect for women as they do for men in these novels:

Today, rebellion consists of redefining the context of the act itself, its motions and emotions, its causes and effects, for like the Marquis de Sade we see the sexual relation as the paradigm of all power relationships, and recognize that what is liberation for men may be enslavement for women, something neither Huxley nor Orwell seemed to recognize. (Baruch 1979: 41)

Margaret Wise Petrochenkov, in "Castration Anxiety and the Other in Zamyatin's *We*," considers how genital imagery associated with certain characters, particularly I-330, figures into D-503's castration anxiety. She explicates extensively how gender is represented in *We*, and how "sexual potency" is linked with "mental creativity" through D-503's act of writing (Petrochenkov 1998: 252). On the other hand, Sona

Stephan Hoisington, in "The Mismeasure of I-330," focuses on I-330's mythological rather than her psychological significance and asserts that she is not the femme fatale that other critics have made her out to be, observing that Zamyatin challenges and transcends gender stereotypes (Hoisington 1995: 88) by having her play mythological roles that are usually reserved for men but allowing her to retain her own identity (Hoisington 1995: 81-82). This perspective especially calls for a comparison between *We* and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*.

A few critical works have undertaken a comparison of Atwood and Zamyatin. Laurence Davies compares the utopian elements of the societies presented in *We*, *Brave New World*, and *The Handmaid's Tale*, particularly as presented in the speeches of the Benefactor, the World Controller, and the Commander, in "At Play in the Fields of Our Ford: Utopian Dystopianism in Atwood, Huxley, and Zamyatin." Bret Cooke's recent work *Human Nature in Utopia, Zamyatin's We* compares Zamyatin's text to many other dystopias, including references to *The Handmaid's Tale*. Chris Ferns, in *Narrating Utopia*, briefly but directly contrasts the protagonists in *We* and *The Handmaid's Tale* with protagonists in utopian works (Ferns 1999: 111) and contrasts the first-person narration of both texts with the third-person point of view employed in Huxley's and Orwell's texts (Ferns 1999: 131-132), while in the broader context comparing and contrasting *We*, *Brave New World*, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and *The Handmaid's Tale* (Ferns 1999: 105-138) in his chapter on dystopia within this survey of utopian literature. He points out that the satire of Zamyatin, Huxley and Orwell upholds gender stereotypes and sexual power imbalances from their own times as more desirable than what we find in their dystopian worlds, but that Atwood breaks with this trend by offering a female protagonist and subverting many of the conventions of the genre (Ferns 1999: 130).

In comparing D-503, Winston Smith, and Offred as diarists, we can see that *We* and *The Handmaid's Tale* have something in common with each other that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* does not share. Ferns has already pointed out their shared first-person point of view. The diary is the text in Zamyatin's and Atwood's novels; whether it is hand-written or voice-recorded, we get a first-person account in the form of a diary. This is not so in Orwell's text: Winston's diary is only part of the text that is narrated in the limited omniscient point of view. And both *We* and *The Handmaid's Tale* imply that the order of the record may have been reshuffled or rearranged, calling into question the very reliability of the diaries.

I intend to contribute to this body of criticism by offering a close and explicit analysis of *We* that goes further than the analyses that have already been made. It is

because of the poetic and imagistic nature of the writing of Zamyatin that I undertake an analysis of Zamyatin to the exclusion of Huxley and Orwell.

3. GENDER AND RESISTANCE IN WE

The political and social settings of a dystopian novel are very important—perhaps more important than in other fiction genres. The state itself is what the protagonist struggles against. The regime becomes a central character: the antagonist. Totalitarian rulers like the Benefactor are really faces and voices for the state: they are emblematic. We must not forget that these fictional dystopian states have arisen out of utopian schemes. The architects of the states in question shaped gender into their blueprints. Some regimes, like OneState in *We*, attempt to gender-neutralize the population into efficient state-loyal workers who have no seeming gender differences. In part this is accomplished through state control of sexuality and the elimination of family obligations. State-directed promiscuity assures that sexual energy is expended while close familial bonds are eliminated, and the lack of family responsibilities eliminates gender-specific roles like breadwinner and homemaker. In the state, uniform and bald heads are also meant to make everyone look similarly androgynous.

Since sexuality is so closely controlled and in some cases repressed, resistance against the state will inevitably involve sexual rebellion. The protagonist in *We* engages in private activity as he becomes more aware of his individuality. It is therefore fitting that the reclamation of privacy would involve illegal sexual activity. In D-503's case, he has non-sanctioned relations with I-330 that involve contraband such as lingerie, alcohol, and cigarettes, and he illegally impregnates his old partner, O-90.

3.1. SOCIAL ORGANIZATION IN ZAMYATIN'S *WE*

Zamyatin's OneState is a mathematical and machinelike society that is extrapolated from the assembly-line production model of Frederick Winslow Taylor (Beauchamp 1983). The homogeneity of this society is depicted in D-503's intended poetic treatise on the grandeur of OneState: "As usual, all the pipes of the music factory were singing the OneState March. The Numbers were marching along in step in neat ranks of four—hundreds and thousands of them in their sky-blue tunics with the golden badge

on each chest bearing each one's state number" (Zamyatin 1983: 6-7). Each number has a "bald head" and there is no externally differentiating signification of gender like the clothing and cosmetics of the twentieth century. Clearly, the androgyny that is present in *We*, as in other dystopias, is a condition of that state-serving society that aims to achieve uniformity. It seems to be a dystopian motif that the loss of individualism includes the ambiguity of gender roles and the loss of gender-marking traits. Every number is a servant of the state, a cog in the machine, and other than for the temporary engendering of children, sex roles and gender identities seem to be irrelevant to the machine's constituent parts.

At the beginning of the novel, the protagonist finds beauty and comfort in this society and describes it in utopian terms: "I saw everything: The unalterably straight streets, the sparkling glass of the sidewalks, the divine parallelepipeds of the transparent dwellings, the squared harmony of our gray-blue ranks" (Zamyatin 1983: 7). Even further on, he feels part of something greater than himself: "To the right and left through the glass walls I see something like my own self, my own room, my own clothes, my own movements, and all repeated a thousand times. It cheers you up: You see yourself as part of an immense, powerful, single thing. And such a precise beauty it is: not a wasted gesture, bend, turn" (Zamyatin 1983: 33-34). The prescribed daily walks as they are here described eerily anticipate the parades and demonstrations of later Nazi Germany, but this kind of uniformity is not restricted to cavalcades and pageantry; every activity, even the most mundane, is performed according to this Taylorian choreography:

Every morning, with six-wheeled precision, at the very same hour and the very same minute, we get up, millions of us, as though we were one. At the very same hour, millions of us as one, we start work. Later, millions as one, we stop. And then, like one body with a million hands, at one and the same second according to the Table, we lift the spoon to our lips. And at one and the same second we leave for a stroll and go to the auditorium, to the hall for the Taylor exercises, and then to bed.
(Zamyatin 1983: 13)

In this "utopia," it is not merely political and social organization that operates as a well-oiled machine, but perfection can apparently be found in the most minuscule muscular spasm. The effect is that while *D-503* intends to portray the beauty of these synchronized movements, the reader's response is quite different; we see here a mundane and meaningless existence. Anyone who is familiar with the imagery in Fritz Lang's film *Metropolis* (1926) should recognize the horror of this mechanized actuality.

However, the system has not been perfected. The “mathematically infallible happiness” (Zamyatin 1983: 3) that is supposed to result from this unity and lack of individualism must be supplemented with scheduled time for individually chosen and initiated activities:

Even we haven't yet solved the problem of happiness with 100 percent accuracy. Twice a day—from 16:00 to 17:00 and again from 21:00 to 22:00—the single mighty organism breaks down into its individual cells. These are the Personal Hours, as established by the Table. During these hours you'll see that some are in their rooms with the blinds modestly lowered; others are walking along the avenue in step with the brass beat of the March; still others, like me at this moment, will be at their desks. (Zamyatin 1983: 13)

Preference for differing activities to fill these Personal Hours shows that there is still within each Number some kind of individuality. According to this description, we can see that some have athletic and some have bookish predilections, while others are interested in more furtive pursuits behind the blinds. It is still necessary to express oneself individually; however, time for this expression is regulated by the Table of Hours.

This reference to lowered blinds brings us to the sexual activity of OneState. Sex is the only activity that takes place behind closed doors, so to speak. All other activity within the home is monitored by neighbours, this being easily enabled by the fact that all Numbers live in apartments of glass:

Once home I passed quickly by the desk, handed the duty officer my pink ticket, and got the pass to use the blinds. We get to use the blinds only on Sex Day. Otherwise we live in broad daylight inside these walls that seem to have been fashioned out of bright air, always on view. We have nothing to hide from one another. Besides, this makes it easier for the Guardians to carry out their burdensome, noble task. No telling what might go on otherwise. (Zamyatin 1983: 19)

But it seems that they do have one thing to hide, hence the blinds. It is somewhat difficult to account for the state-sanctioned privacy that is conceded in this one area of life. One would think that in OneState, where privacy has not been valued for hundreds of years, Numbers would not hold on to any twentieth century squeamishness about being seen in or seeing others in the sex act. We could accept this as something that the state regards as necessary, along with the need for Personal Hours. It could be that the privacy that is afforded the sex act results from the early

twentieth century sensibilities of Zamyatin and/or his audience. More likely though, the state recognizes the incendiary potential of expressed sexuality and keeps it behind the blinds in order to diminish any potential for rebellion. D-503 does note that during the rebellion near the end of the novel he could see “through the glass walls [...] that male and female Numbers were copulating without the least shame, without even lowering the blinds, without so much as a ticket, in broad daylight” (Zamyatin 1983: 212). Ironically, the state’s allowance of privacy allows subversives an opportunity for performing anti-state activities away from the public gaze. One would think that the state would be aware of the possibilities of this systematic reprieve from scrutiny. The fact that D-503 succeeds for so long in breaking the prescribed routine reveals that the system is flawed. S-4711, a dissident, does a better job of monitoring D-503’s activity than any real Guardian.

This sexual activity is actually a well-planned system of promiscuity that is programmed by the state: “They give you a careful going-over in the Sexual Bureau labs and determine the exact content of the sexual hormones in your blood and work out your correct Table of Sex Days. Then you fill out a declaration that on your days you'd like to make use of a number (or numbers) so-and-so and they hand you the corresponding book of tickets (pink)” (Zamyatin 1983: 22). Although sex is a purely recreational activity in OneState, all this bureaucracy is not put into place simply for the enjoyment and fulfilment of the Numbers. The state is attempting to eradicate or redirect—in mathematical terms, to factor out—psychological drives that would distract the Numbers from their duties: “But isn’t it clear that bliss and envy are the numerator and denominator of that fraction known as happiness? And what sense would there be in all the numberless victims of the 200-Years War if there still remained in our life some course for envy?” (Zamyatin 1983: 22). In order to eradicate envy, then, the state attempts to even the playing field: “any number has the right of access to any other Number as sexual product” (Zamyatin 1983: 22). In OneState, apparently, there should be no such thing as unrequited desire.

However, the very fact that envy would exist without this system shows us that individuality is not absent from this society. Even though androgyny and uniformity rule the day, physical differences would apparently factor into Numbers’ selections of sexual mates: “But some cause did remain, because noses remained the button noses and classical noses mentioned in that conversation on our walk, and because there are some whose love many people want, and others whose love nobody wants” (Zamyatin 1983: 22). OneState has apparently eliminated envy and love by reducing it all to a mathematical equation:

So it's clear—there's no longer the slightest cause for envy. The denominator of the happiness fraction has been reduced to zero and the fraction becomes magnificent infinity. And the very same thing that the ancients found to be a source of endless tragedy became for us a harmonious, pleasant, and useful function of the organism, just like sleep, physical work, eating, defecating, and so on. (Zamyatin 1983: 23)

The state has attempted to factor out not only what it sees as the principal causes of unhappiness and despair, namely jealousy and unrequited desire, but this system also has the effect that Numbers are less likely to engage in pair bonding that might distract them from their duty to the state. We can assume that gender-specific physical characteristics are not considered necessary when attracting a mate, hence the androgyny of this society. By reducing sex to a functional physical necessity, the state attempts to produce completely passionless drones. However, D-503 fails to see the mathematical flaw in this analogy: that the denominator of a fraction cannot be zero.

Sex in OneState is normally recreational and diversionary, and only under the right conditions is conception the intended result. In typical dystopian style, D-503 explains that system while expressing a disdain of “ancient” conception and child-rearing practices:

And then—isn't it absurd that a government (it had the nerve to call itself a government) could let sexual life proceed without the slightest control? Who, when, howevermuch you wanted... Completely unscientific, like animals. And blindly, like animals, they produced young. Isn't it funny—to know horticulture, poultry keeping, fish farming (we have very precise records of their knowing all this) and not to be able to reach the last rung of this logical ladder: child production. Not to come up with something like our Maternal and Paternal Norms. (Zamyatin 1983: 14)

Although we are not given all the details of these Maternal and Paternal Norms, we can deduce that these are physical and intellectual standards and that the intended result is the kind of uniformity that we have already talked about. We do know that 0-90 was “about ten centimetres shorter than the Maternal Norm” (Zamyatin 1983: 6). Those who meet the Maternal and Paternal norms and who are permitted to conceive surrender the child to the state upon birth. Zamyatin does not offer the kind of meticulous detail about state-run child-rearing that Huxley does, but we are given glimpses into the childhood and education of D-503 and R-13 in reminiscences about their electronic teacher, Pliapa. Again, this absence of filial responsibility allows the state to be central in the life of every Number, and it also allows for Platonic

functional androgyny since child-rearing is not the domain of any one gender. However, it is worth pointing out that the only child care worker we meet is a mature female, U.

3.2. FREEDOM VS. HAPPINESS IN *WE*

Dystopian states often claim to limit freedom in order to offer happiness and protection. State propaganda often utilizes tricky semantics. We know that D-503, when justifying the philosophy of OneState, often uses the visual of plus and minus signs (or positive and negative) to argue a logical paradox within the state's dogma. When he is talking about the spiralling OneState model of human history, for example, he says:

the circles vary, some are gold, some are bloody, but all are divided into the same 360 degrees. It starts at zero and goes forward: 10, 20, 200, 360 degrees—then back to zero. Yes, we've come back to zero—yes. But for my mind, thinking in mathematics as it does, one thing is clear: This zero is completely different, new. Leaving zero, we headed to the right. We returned to zero from the left. So instead of plus zero, we have minus zero. (Zamyatin 1983: 112)

This kind of mathematical paradox, a negative or positive zero, cannot exist. Again, D-503 uses faulty logic where zero is concerned. D-503 goes on to say that he sees this zero as the edge of a “knife-sharp cliff: the path of paradox lies along the blade of a knife - the only path worthy of the mind without fear” (Zamyatin 1983: 113). It is worth pointing out that in the OneState model, history is reduced to zero; it is negated, as it is in many dystopias, and so perhaps “negative zero” does seem to apply here. “Utopia” is history in stasis.

Part of the justification for slavery is offered by suggesting that personal freedom is the source of society's problems. D-503 uses mathematics again to formulate an equation that links freedom with crime: “Freedom and criminality are just as indissolubly linked as...well, as the movement of an aero and its velocity. When the velocity of an aero is reduced to 0, it is not in motion; when a man's freedom is reduced to zero, he commits no crimes. That's clear. The only means to rid man of crime is to rid him of freedom” (Zamyatin 36). Again, the suggestion is that stasis and non-movement, or arriving at zero, is the way to guarantee OneState's idea of happiness, namely freedom from crime. Freedom, associated with movement, is also associated with unbalanced equations and crime.

The claim of the state is that individuals will be happier without personal freedom because of the protection that the state affords. In *We*, state poet R-13, appropriately, extols the virtues of “freedom from”: “Those two in Paradise, they were offered a choice: happiness without freedom, or freedom without happiness, nothing else. Those idiots chose freedom. And then what? Then for centuries they were homesick for the chains” (Zamyatin 1983: 61). We cannot miss the mythical allusions to utopian ends here. OneState claims to have restored Paradise:

Paradise was back. And we're simple and innocent again, like Adam and Eve. None of those complications about good and evil: everything is very simple, childishly simple—Paradise! The Benefactor, the Machine, the Cube, the Gas Bell, the Guardians: All those things represent good, all that is sublime, splendid, noble, elevated, crystal pure. Because that is what protects our nonfreedom, which is to say, our happiness. (Zamyatin 1983: 61)

If the Numbers of OneState accept “nonfreedom” and the “happiness” that comes with it, they accept as something virtuous and good those methods alluded to here—“the Machine, the Cube, the Gas Bell, the Guardians”—which make the utopian dystopic.

Richards points out that one of Zamyatin's sources is Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor in *The Brothers Karamazov*: “people are more persuaded than ever that they have perfect freedom, yet they have brought their freedom to us and laid it humbly at our feet” (Dostoevsky 1952: 130). The point is that totalitarian regimes do not necessarily impose strictures on an unwilling and resistant population. The suggestion here is that people, insecure in their freedoms and seeking security, allow governments to take enough control to enslave them. That is the real threat. The Grand Inquisitor goes on to say, “man is tormented by no greater anxiety than to find someone quickly to whom he can hand over that gift of freedom with which the ill-fated creature is born” (Dostoevsky 1952: 131). In *We*, the Benefactor echoes these justifications for enslaving the population:

I ask this question: What is it that people beg for, dream about, torment themselves for, from the time they leave swaddling clothes? They want someone to tell them, once and for all, what happiness is—and then to bind them to that happiness with a chain. What is it we're doing right now, if not that? The ancient dream of paradise...Remember: In paradise they are blessed, with their imaginations surgically removed (the only reason why they are blessed)—angels, the slaves of God. (Zamyatin 1983: 207)

In *We*, D-503 links freedom with crime and distinguishes between positive freedom and negative freedom or between freedom to and freedom from. Zamyatin makes it clear, however, that this distinction with regard to freedom is a logical fallacy when it is obvious that the population is living under oppression and no one is free from the crimes of the state.

3.3. THE SYSTEM OF JUSTICE IN *WE*

One of the key justifications given by governments for impinging upon or ignoring civil and human rights is the need to “protect” its citizens from perceived dangers such as criminals or terrorists. What can follow this tendency in terms of justice are zero tolerance policies and the increasing of police powers. It seems, then, that the institutions of justice are inextricably linked to any society’s attempt to deliver its citizens “freedom from” and its consequential limiting of an individual’s “freedom to.” In *We*, the system of justice is crucial to controlling and indoctrinating the population.

First of all, certain vices that can conceivably cause harm to the individual are outlawed, creating the illusion that the state's protection is for the good of all. As D-503 tells I-330 as she sparks up a cigarette and produces some liquor in the Ancient House: “you know it yourself, *whoever shall poison himself with nicotine, and especially with alcohol, need expect no mercy from OneState*” (Zamyatin 1983: 54). This is a typical motif in dystopian fiction: the state treats its citizens as wards or minors and encourages a childlike and dependent relationship to the state. These taboos seem to be for the good of the individual, but that is not the case. The collectivist belief is that to harm the self is to harm the state.

A serious crime in dystopian regimes is criticism of the state or its leader. In Record 9 D-503 describes the public execution of a poet who spoke out against the Benefactor. There is no mercy in dystopian justice, and the Benefactor uses another vivid metaphor, along with some fuzzy logic, to portray the paradox of this “tough love” that is later central to Orwell’s Ministry of Love: “A true algebraic love of mankind will inevitably be inhuman, and the inevitable sign of the truth is its cruelty. Just as the inevitable sign of fire is that it burns. Can you show me a fire that does not burn?” (Zamyatin 1983: 206).

The punishment for even the smallest of crimes is out of all proportion to the offence in dystopias. In *We*, the punishment for all crimes is the same: public

execution by vaporization at the Benefactor's machine: "Looking down from this summit, there's no difference between a woman who gave birth illegally—O—and a murderer, and that madman who dared aim his poem at OneState. And the verdict is the same for them all: premature death" (Zamyatin 1983: 112). Sometimes offenders are first tortured in order to extract incriminating evidence against others, as is the case for I-330 who steadfastly refuses to give in (Zamyatin 1983: 225).

Public executions that come with much pomp and ceremony are common to *We*. Such extreme social control necessitates not only swift punishment of subversives, but punishment within the public's eye. D-503 describes an execution in a manner chillingly devoid of empathy:

There was one...standing on the steps of the Cube, the sunlight pouring down on him. His face was white, or no, not white, it was no color at all, his glass face, his glass lips. Just his eyes, dark, sucking, swallowing holes...and that terrifying world that he was only minutes away from. The gold badge with his number had already been taken. His hands were tied with a purple ribbon (ancient custom; the explanation seems to be that in old times, before this was done in the name of OneState, the condemned naturally thought he had a right to put up a fight, so his hands were usually chained). (Zamyatin 1983: 45-46)

In this passage, D-503 describes not only acceptance of the execution by the audience, but reference to "ancient" chains for the condemned shows that D-503 now expects general acceptance of their fate by those accused.

D-503 goes on to describe the actual moment of execution, for which the Benefactor is judge, jury, and executioner:

My eyes lifted up, and so did thousands of other eyes, up to the Machine. The inhuman hand made a third cast-iron gesture. And, shaken by some invisible wind, the criminal moves...a step... another...and takes the last step that he will make in his life. He is face up to the sky, his head thrown back, on his final resting place. (Zamyatin 1983: 47-48)

The opening lines of this passage, "My eyes lifted up," along with reference to the multitudes, are reminiscent of Biblical narrative. The Benefactor as administrator of justice is deified and this scenario could be the Last Judgement. What follows is described in near apocalyptic language as the accused is struck by the "Hand of God" as if being struck by lightning:

Heavy, stone, like fate itself, the Benefactor made one full circle around the Machine and laid his huge hand on the lever. Not a rustle anywhere, not a breath. All eyes were on that hand. What a whirlwind of fire that must feel like—to be a weapon, to have the force of hundreds of thousands of volts. What a stupendous fate!

An instant. The hand fell, loosing the current. A sharp blade of unbearable light. A shudder in the pipes of the Machine, a crackling that you could hardly hear. The spread-eagled body was covered by a light, sparkling little puff of smoke, and then before our eyes it began to melt, and melt, and it dissolved so fast it was horrible. And then—nothing. A puddle of chemically pure water, which just a moment ago had been in a heart, red, beating up a storm. (Zamyatin 1983: 48)

If D-503 shows any emotion at all here, it is only awe and excitement at this display of power and control. The Benefactor is imbued with all the power of the regime over life and death, and it is noteworthy that D-503 feels no revulsion against this abuse of power, but he admires it. In a dystopia, it is necessary to have a public demonstration not only to serve as a deterrent against further crimes against the state, but such occasions must be seen as an integral and necessary aspect of the dystopian society. Desensitization to horror is a result of these public displays that will lead to general acceptance of such brutal measures. Comparing the Benefactor to "fate itself" shows that there is comfort in this ceremony: the population believes that there are inevitable consequences to a given course of action. What they can rely on is that traitors will be punished.

3.4. SOCIAL AND HISTORICAL CONDITIONS OF *WE*

I have established in the preceding section that dystopia has a parodic relationship to utopia. Indeed, specific attempts at achieving political utopia have informed the novel here in question. Although the geographical setting of OneState is not discernible in the text itself, Zamyatin was clearly extrapolating his dystopia from existing conditions within post-revolutionary Russia (Kumar 1991: 66). We must not forget that Zamyatin was at first a Bolshevik (Richards 1962: 8) who had high hopes for the Revolution,

but gradually his hopes were chilled by misgivings. On the one hand he saw the sufferings brought by the Revolution and the Civil War; the way they brutalised man and destroyed many

old but still vital cultural values, while on the other hand the new regime seemed to be betraying its faith: the former heretics were establishing a new intolerant orthodoxy and Revolution was in danger of being smothered in a blanket of Entropy. (Richards 1962: 36-37)

Richards comments further on Zamyatin's foresight regarding not only Russia, but other totalitarian regimes to come:

We was a remarkable anticipation of many of the features of Stalin's Russia. We read of State Science, the Institute of State Poets and Writers, norms of motherhood and fatherhood. There is only one newspaper, The State Newspaper. The annual elections, held on the Day of Unanimity, generally result in a 100 per cent poll in favour of the authorities. There is no pretence at a secret ballot. The Single State demands that poets should write works glorifying the state, and the punishment of enemies of the state, who confess their crimes before being executed, is accompanied by odes declaiming the wisdom of this punishment. The Benefactor with his state police force has almost the political power and ruthlessness of Stalin himself. We was equally in many ways an anticipation of Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and modern China. (Richards 1962: 68)

Richards goes on to say that these measures were not imposed on a completely unwilling population, neither in Zamyatin's fiction nor in Stalin's Russia: "these external forces would not be enough if they were not complemented by powerful desires within man himself for secure, sleepy anonymity in preference to free, awake individuality" (Richards 1962: 68). Zamyatin saw that society on some level desires this oppression, and this was one of the principal dangers against which he was warning his audience in light of the recent revolution and the influence it might have over Europe in general.

Brett Cooke, in his recent study on *We*, comments on the utopian vision's requisite reshaping of the individual in order to redesign society. He points out that when Zamyatin was writing his novel, "Plans were then afoot in the nascent Soviet Union to put social construction into action so as to create of its citizens 'the New Soviet Man' and to establish a social utopia within a few decades" (Cooke 2002: 4). He goes on to say that Zamyatin anticipated many social policies that were not yet fully in existence, such as "the controlled press with its official optimism, the political constraints on the arts, the one-party system, the cult of the personality, fixed elections, secret police, and show trials" (Cooke 2002: 4), echoing Richards's observations. Again, we see that the dystopian response to utopia centres on parodying

and exposing the coercive means necessary for such a reshaping of society and the individual.

3.5. RESISTANCE AND REBELLION IN *WE*

Some would suggest that traditional utopias are almost always patriarchal. Elaine Hoffman Baruch comments on the sexist nature of utopian and dystopian visions: "Many readers feel uncomfortable with [Plato's] plan, for it is predicated on a communalization of wives, children, and property, to say nothing of a controlled system of eugenics, which turns out, it might here be said, to be characteristic of twentieth-century anti-utopias, or dystopias" (Baruch 1979: 31). She is, of course, referring to Plato's *Republic*, often considered to be the originating text of the concept of political utopia. Baruch points out that gender specific functions within the perfectly imagined society go right back to the beginnings of utopianism.

Baruch's study focuses on *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Brave New World* as far as the dystopia goes, but she makes some useful observations and asks some interesting rhetorical questions that can be useful to an examination of gender in other dystopias. She interrogates whether the scheme is dream or nightmare from the perspective of gender: "utopias for men are often dystopias for women. Might it then be possible that dystopias for men are utopias for women?" (Baruch 1979: 38). Question pertinent to this paper follows: if *We* is a dystopia for men, is any female character in the novel experiencing utopia? Certainly I-330 comes to a dystopian end. Perhaps O-90, who manages to escape to the Mephi wilderness to bliss in gestation and motherhood, finds some kind of utopia, but to say that *We* is a utopia for women based on this fact would be erroneous.

Sex, in most dystopias, is both a tool of repression and a site of resistance, the former for the state, and the latter for the subversives. Baruch's questions suggest that the answers cannot be simple. She begins to answer her own questions by looking at the role of sex and of sexual resistance within certain dystopias. She points out that differences exist in different works concerning societal norms and forms of resistance:

When sex is a tool of the state, to be used as an opiate like soma or the feelies, as in Brave New World, sexual abstention becomes an act of rebellion. But when sex is a forbidden act, as in the sexually repressive society of 1984, then following one's impulses is liberation. Or is it? A question we have to ask ourselves is whether the sexual act in relation to the culture bears the same meaning for women as it does for men. (Baruch 1979: 40)

In *We*, where sex is used as an outlet for the tendency to engage in personal activities, resistance comes not by abstaining but by having sex outside the prescribed parameters or in contexts different from the sanctioned norm (the Ancient House) and with the use of time communally set aside for sex for subversive activities. D-503's illegal sexual encounters with I-330 initiate his unorthodox thoughts of individualism and tendencies towards rebellion. He puts himself and his relationship with her before his duties to the state. He asserts his individuality within a collectivist society, protecting his agency so that he can preserve the affair. He is willing to lie for her and to commit sabotage against OneState by allowing her to hijack the Integral.

For I-330, does "the sexual act in relation to the culture [bear] the same meaning [...] as it does for men"? This is a complex question since we do not get to know I-330 as intimately as we do D-503. First of all, D-503 is a first-person narrator so there is more intimacy between him and the audience. Secondly, our experience of I-330 is filtered through his consciousness and so the reader cannot see her objectively. What we do know of I-330 is that she uses sex very specifically as a means of sedition. For her, sex is not merely connected to rebellion; it is the very means of her resistance. I-330 is apparently a more self-assured sexual rebel than D-503. Where for him sexual resistance involves a perilous and frightening revelation of the irrational, for I-330 it is wielded like a well-honed weapon not only for her personal liberation, but for the liberation of all from the oppressive regime of OneState. Her ability to use that which the state seeks to suppress and control, sexuality, only to awaken in others that which the state seeks to repress and control, the irrational, points out the flaws inherent in the system.

In Zamyatin's dystopia, sexual rebellion also involves intentional impregnation outside the state's control, as in O-90's case. We know that O-90 yearns for a child and is willing to risk execution for the fulfillment it will bring her. Why, however, does D-503 impregnate her? It seems to be for no other reason than to get rid of her so that he can resume his affair with I-330 uninterrupted. For O-90, the sexual act and her associated rebellion has strictly personal meaning. In contrast to I-330, she engages in intentional and illegal impregnation in order to create a bond between herself and D-503. She does not desire to overthrow the state in the way that I-330 does, but she does desire to escape the restrictions that the state has placed on her experience and in the end she is more successful. In *We*, it is significant that aberrant sexual behaviour is initiated by the women, not by D-503.

4. CONCLUSION

We like to believe that some of the most private issues in society are the ways in which we express gender, engage in sexual relations, engender children, and organize families. These issues are, however, played out publicly; it would be erroneous to say that these matters are entirely private. Our choices in such matters are surely influenced and limited by social mores and the media. However, in a dystopian novel, these spheres are removed completely to the public domain. In *We*, the outward signs of gender are removed as the population is gender-neutralized. Furthermore, all sexual contact is bureaucratized through the pink ticket system during prescribed personal hours. Finally, family organization in *We* is non-existent. Children are brought up and educated in state-run facilities.

I have attempted to distinguish between terms like dystopia and anti-utopia that have not been used consistently by critics. Aldridge sees utopian satire and anti-utopia as earlier forms of the twentieth century dystopia. Morson acknowledges that canon formation is arbitrary and based canon formation on the critic's purpose. This has been a useful starting point for explicating my purposes in this paper: to explore the gender politics in the dystopian text that has previously received little attention.

Gender is essential to the political and social settings of dystopian novels because the state takes control of family organization, sexual activity, and gender roles. OneState has an androgynous population that has no filial responsibilities and can engage in controlled sexual promiscuity. In *We*, Zamyatin demonstrates the nightmarish outcomes of governing sexuality within an extremely collectivist or extremely conservative system.

Zamyatin uses his dystopia to explore the theme of freedom versus happiness. In *We*, the state claims to have limited freedom in order to ensure happiness for its citizens. Of course, the irony of this claim becomes obvious with the further claim that although people may have lost “freedom to,” or agency, they have been given “freedom from,” or apparent protection from crime and responsibility. Zamyatin demonstrates that the danger here involves people’s desire for this kind of protection, and they hint that it is a willing populace that allows totalitarian systems to come into being.

The regime in question takes an extreme approach to justice in order to afford this “protection.” They claim to be protecting citizens from destructive vices but what is really being protected is the state against breakdown and challenges from the populace. Public torture, executions, and the display of human remains are used both

to deter crime and to desensitize the population to state-inflicted terror. As well, Zamyatin incorporates citizen complicity into the implementation of justice.

It seems that utopianism informs *We*. Zamyatin was reacting to the attempt to create a perfect society after the Russian Revolution and predicted many features of Stalinist Russia. Zamyatin, then, exposes the coercive means that have and could be used to implement attempted utopia in the real world. I have also considered gender in terms of what is utopia and what is dystopia for men and women. While *We* is clearly a dystopia, perhaps O-90 was able to find utopia outside the Green Wall, which is ironic since the wall was meant to shut in a utopia.

OneState is a fictional and speculative extension of existing conditions within the author's society; the seeds for *We* lie in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution. Finally, Zamyatin shows that sexual and gender control will ultimately result in resistance and rebellion that is centred upon contravening sexual laws and gender roles, and it is this rebellion that ultimately drives the journey of the dystopian protagonist.

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RODNA DISTOPIJA: RODNA POLITIKA U ROMANU MI YEVGENYA ZAMYATINA

Sažetak

Ovaj rad ima za cilj da istraži rodnu politiku u romanu Mi Yevgenya Zamyatina, jednog od začetnika moderne distopije, tako što će analizirati načine na koje autor podržava ili podriva osnovne odlike distopije kroz tematiku prikaza roda. Roman razotkriva anksioznosti koje se kriju iza pitanja roda u autorovom životnom vijeku. Izvjesno je da Zamyatin podupire jednakost (seksualnu i drugu) na uštrb individualnosti i kreativnosti u okviru socijalističke države. Moj rad će utvrditi da kroz roman Mi Zamyatin sugerira da nametnuta jednakost nije rješenje za rodne i spolne nejednakosti njegovog vremena. Također, Zamyatin se okreće satiri kako bi podrivački komentirao o kompleksnostima patrijarhalnih društvenih i političkih struktura prisutnih u vremenu u kojemu je on pisao.

Ovaj rad je ustvrdio da su rod i žanr za Zamyatina fleksibilni pojmovi te da stilistički elementi mogu biti fokusom u žanru koji bi mnogi okarakterisali kao polemički, tematski i politički. Za distopije se tvrdi da su dijelom određenog političkog miljea, ali ovaj rad je pokazao da postoje određene osobenosti i tematike koje su sveprisutne u ovome žanru, bez obzira na mjesto radnje i vrijeme kada je distopija napisana.

Ključne riječi: Zamyatin, rod, distopija

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