Uniwersytet Wrocławski

Wydział Filologiczny

Instytut Filologii Angielskiej

Robert Gadowski

Refiguracje wolności we współczesnej amerykańskiej dystopijnej literaturze dla młodego czytelnika

Praca doktorska

napisana pod kierunkiem

dra hab. Mariusza Marszalskiego, prof. UWr

Wrocław 2021

University of Wrocław

Faculty of Philology

Department of English Studies

Robert Gadowski

Refigurations of Freedom in Contemporary American Young Adult Dystopian Fiction

PhD dissertation written
under the supervision of
dr hab. Mariusz Marszalski, prof. UWr

Wrocław 2021

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INTRODUCTION

The last several decades have seen a proliferation of civil freedoms on an unprecedented scale. For citizens of liberal democracies, freedom is understood as a universal phenomenon inextricably linked to universal human rights and liberties.[1] Individuals molded by the Western liberal democratic model treat freedom as an indispensable part of their lives. At the same time, the future prospects for freedom to reign ceaselessly are jeopardized by the fact that the West has been too self-satisfied with the liberties it has attained, believing that the liberal advances have been achieved once and for all, and that it is unimaginable that anything might stymie them, let alone reverse them. Terry Eagleton precisely identifies this symptom of the crisis in his seminal work *After Theory*. He believes that Western politics:

> had grown increasingly blunted, as it suited those in power that we should be able to imagine no alternative to the present. The future would simply be the present infinitely repeated − or, as the postmodernist remarked, "the present plus more options." (6-7)

If this is the case, then modern-day politics downplays the hard-won gift of feeling free. In short, for many Westerners freedom has lost its special status and become too mundane and obvious. While Eagleton's insights are illuminating, the perspective he describes fails to accommodate the harsh realities of the political and social unrest that has emerged in recent decades.

Western democracies are often characterized as free markets of ideas, which therefore offer space within the public discourse even to ideologies that are openly skeptical or sometimes unequivocally opposed to freedom understood as an inalienable human right. In fact, at the very moment that this dissertation is being written, the polarization of Western societies seems to be growing in proportion to the rapid radicalization of political life.[2] Grand populist narratives spun by political strategists are

[1] This notion will be discussed later on in my dissertation. However, it seems to be a self-evident feature of public discourse in Western democracies, which is permeated with discussions on civil rights and liberties.

[2] The issue of the polarization of Western societies may be analyzed further in the context of socio-political theories. One of the most interesting theories with regard to the US is the cyclical theory developed by Arthur M. Schlesinger Sr. in his *Paths to the Present* (1949). Schlesinger is known for his

becoming increasingly influential. Political parties push their agendas and notoriously obscure the meaning of freedom in their programs. Timothy Snyder poignantly describes this process in his book *The Road to Unfreedom: Russia, Europe, America*, in which he eloquently captures the faults of modern democracies' practices that are leading to a political crisis with regard to liberal democratic freedom within the Western world. He says:

> Americans and Europeans were guided … by a tale about the "end of history," … the politics of *inevitability*, a sense that the future is just more of the present, that the laws of progress are known, that there are no alternatives, and therefore nothing really to be done. In the American capitalist version of the story, nature brought the market, which brought democracy, which brought happiness. In the European version, history brought the nation, which learned from war that peace was good, and hence chose integration and prosperity. (iv)

This way of thinking denies the need to persevere in shaping socio-political conditions. On the one hand, people are made to believe by all kinds of politicians that a global triumph of the liberal democratic model is inevitable, but on the other they are confronted with dire conditions of everyday life that undermine the reputed success of democracy in the West. Snyder points this out:

> Politics of inevitability resists facts like poverty, financial crisis, inequality, this in turn makes people fed up with it. It undermines itself by being blind to the reality of the present. If it is so good, why it is so bad? (v)

Indeed, practicing politics this way has devalued the meaning of freedom. At the same time, the vacuum created due to the failure of the politics of inevitability has needed to be filled. People have craved a new narrative, a vibrant and persuasive way of approaching social and political life. Unfortunately, in many cases the narratives that have emerged do not champion freedom, but rather, by playing on people's fears, try to curtail freedom in the name of populist and authoritative policies. Snyder calls this type of politics "eternity politics."[3] He says that this narrative is used by "politicians [who] spread the convictions that government cannot aid society as a whole, but can only

belief that the self-generating tension between cyclical changes of liberal and conservative phases in American politics is a motor for social and political development.

[3] For a similarly critical approach to the practice of politics as resting on an unchangeable status quo, see also George Friedman's book *The Next 100 Years: A Forecast for the 21st Century* (2009).

guard against threats. Progress gives way to doom" (v). Therefore, in the end, eternity politicians effectively rid themselves of the responsibility to create new opportunities for freedom to flourish and they even exalt methods that limit freedom in the name of a greater good that is often tied with populist axioms. Western politics, once pregnant with meaning, is now "characterized by superficiality, unwillingness for reform and reducing life to spectacle rather than true reform" (v). Consequently, the crisis of freedom has been dangerously moving from a period of stagnation to what seems to be a full-on attack on intrinsic civil liberties.

This feeling of freedom being under attack can be conflated, to invoke George Lakoff's phrase, with the development of "siege mentality" that has taken root in Western politics, especially since the rise of international terrorism. While war and social disorder have always been foes of freedom, international terrorism has become a menace that lurks in the shadows and necessitates the implementation of unorthodox measures. The ever-growing state apparatus offers a solution to this problem, but it comes at a price: a drastic increase in coercion and surveillance, as well as restrictions on personal freedom. In the modern world plagued by the fear of terror, Western politicians readily posit themselves as guarantors of peace. In their policies, the ultimate remedy for terrorism lies in a concentration of power and the "necessary" curtailing of civil liberties. In such a scenario, the government becomes an emanation of the Big Brother from an Orwellian dystopia, and freedom becomes a currency to be exchanged for peace and a sense of safety.

These tendencies in social and political life all contribute to the contemporary crisis of freedom. While social philosophies that contemplate the impact of scientific progress provide a scholarly reflection on possible current and future threats to the liberal democratic paradigm, there is still another vibrant field of speculative deliberation on how democratic freedoms may be jeopardized. That area is fiction that clothes social and philosophical issues of human freedom in a literary costume.

Historically, in anglophone literature, the theme of freedom has been associated with the evolution of contemporary literary genres, in particular the emergence of the novel. The great English novels often delved into the issue of the development of an individual's autonomy in relation to the socio-cultural realities of the period. The works of such writers as Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson or Jane Austen highlight the importance of individual rights and liberties by introducing protagonists who face outmoded social mores and social pressure that hamper their freedom. Lynn Hunt, in

her *Inventing Human Rights: A History*, makes valuable observations on the role of the modern novel in facilitating the growth of individual freedom. Hunt states that "[n]ovels made the point that all people are fundamentally similar because of their inner feelings, and many novels showcased in particular the desire for autonomy," (39) which facilitated the spread of freedom in social and political spheres. Thus, much like the formula of the Bildungsroman[4] that underscores the importance of the growth of the protagonist, eighteenth century fiction served as a temple for the readers' civil growth, urging them to contemplate the extent of freedoms they could enjoy. Similarly, Joseph R. Slaughter, in his *Human Rights, Inc.: The World Novel, Narrative Form, and International Law*, asserts that the concept of the universality of civil liberties, later expressed through the creation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, derives directly from works of modern literary fiction. Slaughter states that novelists supplied "their idealistic projections of the blossoming free and full human personality," (52) thereby making it possible to move the discussion of the nature of freedom from the pages of philosophical tracts to the fictitious adventures of popular heroes and heroines, and then to the public arena. The novels produced social and political ferment that penetrated societies and, over time, made the recognition of the importance of civil freedoms a ubiquitous experience in the Western world.

By the end of the eighteenth century, the West had started to treat personal autonomy as a prerequisite for individual liberty, which resulted in the rise of civil rights, established to safeguard the political sphere of the freedom of an individual. In this context, it is no surprise that the denial of civil rights was a major transgression against what freedom was envisioned to be. One of the greatest examples of literary activism that condemns limitations of civil liberties and hails the expansion of freedom comes in the form of nineteenth century American slavery literature. Despite a rich tradition of literary representations of freedom in the political pamphlets of Philip Freneau and Thomas Paine, and the powerful Declaration of Independence drafted by Thomas Jefferson, everyday reality stood in stark contrast to the American adherence to the belief in individual rights. It was slavery literature that rendered freedom from

[4] The Bildungsroman can be further contextualized within a larger framework of the mythic structure of the hero's journey as envisioned by Joseph Campbell in his works. Campbell believed that all stories possess fundamental elements of the hero's journey − that is, an inner drive for self-discovery, a turbulent process of maturation and reconciliation with society once the hero completes his quest. In a Bildungsroman, the protagonist's freedom is underscored as he, or less frequently she, navigates social mores and conventions, learns from experience and nestles himself or herself in the social structure as a mature, autonomous person.

oppression a preeminent topic in the age of institutionalized slavery. Poignant narratives like Frederick Douglas's *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglas, an American Slave* (1845) and *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855), Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) or Solomon Northup's *Twelve Years a Slave* (1853) have become classics of literature promoting civil freedoms. At its core, slavery literature concentrated on the plea to expand freedom beyond the limits of class, race or gender, so that a true egalitarian society could be created.

In the twentieth century, the freedom theme in literature manifested itself differently, for the biggest danger to civil rights and liberties was experienced through totalitarian machinations of states such as Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and Soviet Russia. Totalitarian ideologies engineered societies and robbed them of freedom by means of propaganda, total invigilation and fearmongering. These horrors of history spurred authors of freedom literature to respond to the perils of their day. Notable expressions of concern for freedom trampled by totalitarian powers can be found primarily in the dystopian genre of the time. Literary works such as Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* (1924), Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), George Orwell's *1984* (1949), Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* (1953) or Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), serve as powerful warnings that authoritarian rule always leads to the complete decline of a society. In the end, freedom becomes an alien concept to people caught in the cogs of the machine of a totalitarian state.

In contrast to the dire historical upheavals of the twentieth century, at the dawn of the twenty-first century it seemed that freedom was thriving. Yet as the new millennium has gained momentum, new challenges to freedom are beginning to dominate public discourse. The crisis of freedom that has emerged as a complex outcome of the intersecting factors of politics, economy and social life has become a topic of dystopian narratives that aim to explore the ramifications of the denial of freedom in possible future scenarios.

In tandem with the heightened awareness of dystopian imperatives in Western culture comes the contemporary social trend to reevaluate the current state of liberal democracy. In this context (although it may be too soon to be certain) the pandemic of 2020 has been taking its toll not only in the sphere of public health, but also in the political domain.[5] Heralded by many commentators as a Black Swan event—an

[5] As I write, the full extent of social and political changes that will ensue as a result of the pandemic is still unclear.

occurrence that appears in history unexpectedly and dramatically changes the status quo—the coronavirus outbreak seems to be a harbinger of a new world order where the liberal democratic West will have to adapt to a transformed reality. This transformation will entail a change that will shake the foundations of modern-day freedom. Indeed, a revision of liberal democracy seems inevitable given that social anxieties triggered by the pandemic are undermining faith in the stability of the liberal democratic model, and the impending deep economic recession will undoubtedly challenge the popular belief that liberal democratic freedoms are granted forever. Moreover, political measures taken in response to the pandemic are often viewed by the public as either too lenient or too severe in relation to customarily prevailing civil liberties, while powerful political actors force their own agendas that curtail freedom. All of these factors may lead to a sinister future where the dystopian path becomes more possible than ever.

The 2020 coronavirus pandemic seems to imbue dystopian literary imaginings with more didactic power than previously might have been attributed to a subgenre of speculative fiction. Indeed, dystopian writings offer a deep insight into the nature of imaginable post-Black Swan futures where liberal democratic freedom has been either radically curtailed or virtually eliminated.

Seeking to investigate modern young adult dystopian fiction's speculations on potential threats to social and political freedom, I have chosen dystopian narratives that offer comprehensive depictions of conceivable future societies in which the idea of freedom has been compromised. These narratives include Lois Lowry's *The Giver* (1993), M.T. Anderson's *Feed* (2002), Nancy Farmer's *The House of the Scorpion* (2002), Scott Westerfeld's *Uglies* series (2005-2007), Neal Shusterman's *Unwind* series (2007-2014), Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games* trilogy (2008-2010), James Dashner's *The Maze Runner* trilogy (2009-2011) and Veronica Roth's *Divergent* trilogy (2011-2013). The selected dystopian works revolve around the interconnected themes of personal autonomy, civil liberties, political ideologies and cutting-edge technologies that have the power to change human nature itself. My purpose is to investigate how these possible factors might affect the paradigm of freedom defined according to the present-day understanding of the term.

In order to limit the scope of my work, I have decided to approach freedom primarily as a political ideal,[6] since in my view political praxis encompasses the

[6] The vast complexity of the concept of freedom may be better suited for a multi-volume analysis, whereas a doctoral dissertation is relatively limited in length. Furthermore, in my view narrowing down

ideological, philosophical and moral dimensions of freedom and situates them within the realm of the current social experience of every individual. Therefore, in the following chapters the meaning of freedom will be derived from the context of political discourse on the rights, liberties and ideologies that determine freedom in a given socio-cultural context.

The thesis is divided into four chapters. Chapter One presents an overview of the historical development of the idea of liberal democratic freedom. Starting with Ancient Greece, I trace the history of freedom through the Middle Ages, the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. Eventually, the focus of the chapter shifts to the utmost political expression of liberal freedom: the formation of the United States, arguably the first political body that fully expressed liberal democratic values. Lastly, the Western concept of civil freedom is approached as a process and social practice that may be prone to being redefined under the pressure of historical circumstances.

In Chapter Two, in order to provide a background for the following literary analysis, I first refer to the thinking of selected Western scholars who have sought to capture the essence of freedom. While human freedom emerges from the deliberations as an elusive idea, it can nevertheless be understood as a visceral phenomenon, a gut feeling that for over a century now has been taken for granted by most people in the West and thus understood as uncontested: liberal democratic freedom that should not be tampered with. Later in the chapter, I dwell on dangers to uncontested freedom as addressed in selected young adult (YA) dystopian writings, including Neal Shusterman's *Unwind* series, M.T. Anderson's *Feed*, Nancy Farmer's *The House of the Scorpion*, James Dashner's *The Maze Runner* series, Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games* trilogy, Veronica Roth's *Divergent* trilogy, Lois Lowry's *The Giver* and Scott Westerfeld's *Pretties* series. In the course of my research in the field of YA dystopian fiction, I have become firmly convinced that these narratives are most successful when they employ a critical stance that evaluates the ways in which social and political changes, facilitated by cutting-edge technologies, call into question the viability of liberal democratic freedom. Shusterman's and Anderson's literary visions are exemplary case studies of uncontested freedom endangered by shifting socio-political mores. In the case of Shusterman, the menace to freedom comes about as a nuanced change generated by biotechnological measures, whereas Anderson showcases the end

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the discussion to political freedom still does justice to the most important features of freedom in the West as epitomized by the liberal democratic model.

result of a radical IT revolution that establishes cyberspace as an inseparable part of human existence. The issue of uncontested freedom being under siege is further enriched by Nancy Farmer, who uses cloning as a way to ground discourse on freedom in a reality that resembles modern-day life, much like Shusterman's treatment of biotechnology; but her narrative maintains a feeling of alienation akin to Anderson's future America.

Further in Chapter Two I investigate the works of Collins, Dashner and Roth, which depict future societies run by authoritarian elites and reveal various methods employed to sabotage uncontested freedom in a dystopian socio-political set-up. My analysis is concluded with an examination of Lowry's and Westerfeld's novels, in which the assault on freedom is more covert, concealed behind a facade of utopian projects. The aim of my analysis is to show how these novels work in unison to unravel the ways in which abuse of novel technologies may jeopardize hitherto uncontested human freedoms.

In Chapter Three, I point out how biotechnological progress and information technologies, which play a major role in the creation of dystopian realities, may both problematize and endanger the traditional understanding of Western state-guaranteed civic freedom. Freedom here is understood as contested freedom − that is, an idea of freedom that can be redefined or renegotiated when shaped by new socio-cultural circumstances and/or technological inventions. Once such a redefinition is complete, this new emergent model of freedom may be radically different from the liberal democratic freedom that has reigned in previous centuries in the West. The literary analysis in this chapter focuses on Dasher's *The Maze Runner* series, Roth's *Divergent* trilogy, Shusterman's *Unwind* series and Collins's *The Hunger Games* trilogy and Lowry's *The Giver*. What makes these works extremely suitable for the discussion of contested areas of freedom is the fact that they offer compelling visions of futuristic worlds where the elites are largely successful in redefining the extent and even the meaning of civil freedom. Moreover, these narratives offer a horizon of hope, featuring protagonists who are capable of salvaging liberal democratic civil liberties by standing up to the oppressive systems. Their actions often bring forth a resistance movement that can negotiate the issue of civil freedom, so that civil liberties are restored while at the same time remodeled to match the changed world.

In Chapter Four, I delve more deeply into the nature of trans- and posthuman ideologies and their relation to freedom. My goal is to show how the selected dystopian

writings on trans- and posthuman developments challenge the primacy of human corporality, undermining claims to civic freedoms meant to protect natural human beings in their corporeal existence. For analysis in this chapter, I have selected novels that in my view best capture the range of issues arising from reckless implementation of trans- and posthumanist agendas. These narratives include Collins's *The Hunger Games* trilogy, Westerfeld's *Pretties* series, Shusterman's *Unwind* series, Farmer's *The House of the Scorpion* and M.T. Anderson's *Feed*. Each of these novels presents a different shade of bleak future that might befall the notion of freedom understood as a visceral experience anchored in human nature.

CHAPTER ONE

An Overview of the Idea of Freedom in the Western World

The cultural foundations of Western civilization are a fascinating matrix of customs, traditions and beliefs that shape the modern soul of Western peoples. In fact, it is virtually impossible to view contemporary culture as anything other than a hybrid of ideas and traditions that have mixed, transformed and spread over time. Within this cultural milieu, there is perhaps nothing more fundamental to the Western mind than the idea of freedom, seen as a prevalent characteristic of the human condition. But how exactly should freedom be understood and practiced? What are its features? How did freedom come about? These are questions that have troubled the greatest thinkers for millennia. This chapter presents an overview of the idea of freedom, which has been shaped by a series of controversies and insights that have gradually permeated Western civilization. The roots of the American model of freedom are planted firmly in the Western conception of freedom, so before coming to grips with the concept of American freedom one must examine the origins of this idea in Western thought.[7]

1.1. Freedom in Ancient Greece

Nowadays hardly any scholars doubt the importance of Ancient Greece in the process of the cultural ascension of Europe. In *A History of Freedom of Thought*, John Bagnell Bury points out that Western societies are indebted to the ancient Greeks for a great wealth of cultural achievements, ranging from their pioneering work in the field of

[7] America is treated here as a paragon of the democratic ideal of freedom, given that it was the first Western democracy to arise and is arguably still the most representative example of liberal democracy in practice.

literature, through politics to philosophy. But perhaps above all, it was the Greeks who nurtured cultural ideas that still shape the modern world—among these the idea of freedom. As Bury states: "If we review the history of classical antiquity as a whole, we may almost say that freedom … was like the air men breathed" (n.p.). This immediate reality of freedom penetrated every aspect of life in ancient times.

1.1.1. Individual Freedom in a Universe Determined by Fate and the Gods

Ilham Dilman delves more deeply into the immanence of freedom in his *Free Will: An Historical and Philosophical Introduction*, in which he investigates how ordinary Greeks viewed freedom. On the basis of the evidence of the available historical and cultural artifacts, Dilman is convinced that while the Greeks cultivated a strong belief in determinism on the one hand, on the other they did not consider themselves to be mere supine puppets in the hands of the gods and fate. In fact, they believed that individuals choose their own life path with full responsibility, even though the choices are always limited. Dilman points out that this vision of life is especially apparent in the mythological stories of Oedipus, Odysseus or Achilles, where the deterministic influence of the gods did not rob the heroes of the freedom to choose, and thus of the burden of responsibility. The Greeks believed their heroes to be free, and they also saw themselves as free (Dilman 19). As Dilman poignantly points out:

> [This] form of determinism, … does not contain a denial of the possibility of freedom. I expressed it in the conditional: '*if* you go on in such-and-such a way …' This does not imply, 'you *have* to go on in that way.' (34)

It is important to note that while these deterministic beliefs surfaced in the everyday lives of the Greeks, shaping their views on the nature of freedom, the Hellenic people upheld an even more influential set of freedom traditions that combined pragmatic social and political practices with thriving Greek philosophical thought.

1.1.2. The Social Basis of the Ancient Idea of Freedom: The Dichotomy of Freedom and Enslavement

For the ancients, the most basic social demarcation line was between a free person and a slave. In "Democratic Freedom and the Concept of Freedom in Plato and Aristotle," Mogens Herman Hansen delineates the most common usages and meanings of freedom in antiquity. At the very top of the list is freedom understood as the antithesis of the condition of slavery. Accordingly, freedom was conceived as a condition of exemption from being ruled by others — being in bondage or dependent on the will of someone else. Hansen illustrates this dichotomy as follows:

> The oldest and throughout antiquity most common meaning of *eleutheros* is 'being free' as opposed to 'being a slave' (*doulos*). It is the only meaning attested in the Homeric poems, and if a Greek in antiquity was asked what *eleutheria* was, the presumption is that first of all he would think of the opposition between *eleutheria* and *douleia* and say that a free person (*eleutheros*) was his own master by contrast with a slave (*doulos*) who was the possession of his master (*despotes*). (2)

For the ancients, the social institution of slavery was an integral part of their cultural identity. Thus, the opposition between freedom and slavery became an important concept that manifested itself ubiquitously in the everyday life of the Greek polis. In other words, the ancient meaning of freedom was born from the opposing notions of master and slave. As the great scholar of freedom, Orlando Patterson, states in *Freedom: Freedom in the Making of Western Culture,* the idea of freedom that stood in opposition to slavery became "a powerful shared vision of life" that made people value it greatly (xiii).

This rising communal awareness of personal freedom gave the Greeks a sense of unity that was to be tested in the times of the Persian wars (Patterson 84). When Greece was attacked by the Asian invaders, a truly dialectic process took place that solidified freedom as a basis of Western culture. As David Schmidtz and Jason Brennan assert in *Brief History of Liberty,* at the time of the conflict with the Persians, the Greeks became fully aware of the exceptionality of their cherished idea of freedom. The effect of this newly gained awareness was that:

> [the Greeks] realized that, by comparison to the Persians, they were relatively free, having more liberties protected by the state and enjoying greater control over their own lives. They regarded this condition of freedom as one of the reasons why they defeated the Persians: there was more at stake for the Greek warriors, since they were free citizens with homes to defend. (46)

The stimulation of the Greeks' "freedom consciousness" at this time made freedom the main idea in the cultural ambience of Ancient Greece and later in the West. The Greeks viewed themselves as those who possessed freedom, those who lived in a free community and were united as people within a free nation. Freedom in Ancient Greece was not a matter of private life, but was absorbed into the public domain and became a foundation on which Greek society was established (Patterson 79).

As centuries passed, the master-slave dichotomy remained a strong influence on the Western conception of freedom.[8]

1.1.3. The Political Dimension of Freedom in Ancient Greece

Perhaps the most widely recognized and the cherished achievement of the ancient Greeks is their creation of democracy—a system with the notion of freedom situated at its core. At the time when Greek democracy was born, the rule of the wealthy class of nobles or the tyranny of an autocratic king were ubiquitous political systems. Nevertheless, despite the political reality of the times, the Athenians put their faith in a much more open form of government.

Athenian democracy was unprecedented for many reasons, but it could not have risen without a profound shift in the collective consciousness of the Greeks. In *The Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes*, Mogens Herman Hansen asserts that what made ancient democracy possible was a major change in the cultural and social perspective of the Greeks, who began to identify the state with its people, not its territory. The masses were no longer viewed as subjects to be ruled, but were

[8] The contrast between the free and the subjugated persisted throughout medieval times in the feudal social structure. In the following ages, the master-slave duality constituted a blueprint for the relations between master and servant in the houses of the rich and noble. The freedom-slavery dynamic was clearly also palpable in the struggle for freedom of people of color in contemporary America, a matter settled only some sixty years ago. But the master-slave relationship is only one facet of the idea of freedom. Modern Western civilization would not be as it is today if freedom had not been established as a core political value in Ancient Greece, later to find powerful expression in the politics of Ancient Rome.

recognized as a political force to be reckoned with. Thus, the people became synonymous with the state. This new understating of the place of the individual within the state made it possible for the idea of freedom to enter political discourse (58-59, 80).

This pioneering shift in perspective is analyzed even more deeply in Lorenzo Infantino's *Ignorance and Liberty.* Infantino presents an overview of the circumstances that shaped early democracy. In Infantino's view, the crucial factor to which early democracy owes its success was the political brilliance of Solon, the reformer of Athenian laws. Solon's model of government "introduced the idea that a man ought to have a voice in selecting those to whose rectitude and wisdom he is compelled to trust his fortune, his family and his life." Solon's brainchild was democracy, that is, a "[g]overnment by consent [that] superseded government by compulsion" with "every citizen [being] the guardian of his own interests" (16).

In *The History of Freedom and Other Essays* Lord Acton, a renowned nineteenth century scholar of freedom, expressed his deep conviction that Solon's legacy changed the western world forever. In Acton's opinion, the hoary social scheme prevalent in Athens was a pyramid with the few rich at the top and the poor masses at the bottom. Solon's achievement was to topple this pyramid, freeing Athenian society from the power-grip of the elite. The upshot of this reform was that the rich, the privileged and the noble no longer maintained a monopoly on the state, but had to share their power with the poor, the underprivileged and the common folk, whose voices were now equally important. Acton expresses his deep respect for the Athenians in these words:

> Athens, which like other cities was distracted and oppressed by a privileged class, avoided violence and appointed Solon to revise its laws. It was the happiest choice that history records. Solon was not only the wisest man to be found in Athens, but the most profound political genius of antiquity; and the easy, bloodless, and pacific revolution by which he accomplished the deliverance of his country was the first step in a career which our age glories in pursuing, and instituted a power which has done more than anything, except revealed religion, for the regeneration of society. (7-8)

As Acton underscores, the Greeks effectively decided that Athenian society must be unified if the state was to be preserved. In the new democratic system, no one was neglected; "[t]he people … were the seat of power" (10) and the state became the dominion of the people. In this respect, the value of Athenian citizenship was enormous. To be free in ancient Athens was to enjoy an exclusive rank. But in order to have a

voice in public matters, one had to be a free adult male and a born Athenian. A large part of the population did not meet the requirements. Those Athenians who passed the criteria possessed an unparalleled degree of freedom in comparison to the non-free people like non-males or non-natives (Patterson 86). Ironically, Athenian democracy, which was first and foremost concerned with the celebration of freedom, was also a system where "being free" became an elitist concept that was defined by its sharp opposition to "being unfree."

Solon's idea of including common people's voices in a democratic government had its critics. Two centuries after Solon's reform, the eminent Greek thinker Plato was one of the most staunchest critics of democracy.[9] Plato regarded democratic rule as a system that championed clueless and uneducated masses. In his magnum opus, the *Republic*, Plato devises a powerful analogy that exposes democracy's flaws. He says:

> Imagine then a ship or a fleet in which there is a captain who is taller and stronger than any of the crew, but who is a little deaf and has a similar infirmity in sight, and whose knowledge of navigation is not much better. The sailors are quarreling with one another about the steering—everyone is of the opinion that he has a right to steer, though he has never learned the art of navigation. ... They proceed on their voyage in such a manner as can be expected of them. Him who is their partisan and cleverly aids them in their plot for getting the ship out of the captain's hands into their own whether by force or persuasion, they compliment with the name of sailor, pilot, able seaman, and abuse the other sort of man, whom they call a good-for-nothing. (321)

Plato's objection to democracy is that a government where everyone is free to rule is doomed to devolve into chaos. The common people lack experience and foresight in political matters; worse yet, public opinion can be easily swayed by skillful manipulators; and because the public makes the laws, the laws themselves are senseless.

Plato's pupil Aristotle displayed a similar distaste for democracy, seeing its weakness in the idea of freedom that it evokes. In *Politics*, Artistotle states that:

> in democracies of the more extreme type there has arisen a false idea of freedom which is contradictory to the true interests of the state. For two principles are characteristic of

[9] Plato championed a vision of a hierarchical state and a social structure with clearly defined classes. From the modern-day perspective, he could be criticized as a political dreamer whose utopian project was never a viable solution. Nonetheless, Plato's views have been influential for ages, and his ideal of a city ruled by philosopher-kings has spurred the imagination of many thinkers, such as St. Augustine, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Karl Popper, to name a few.

> democracy, the government of the majority and freedom. Men think … that freedom means the doing what a man likes. … But this is all wrong; men should not think it slavery to live according to the rule of the constitution; for it is their salvation. (169)

As the above objections to democracy show, both Plato and Aristotle advocated that freedom should not be viewed as unrestrained license to do what one wishes, but must be endowed with responsibility and wisdom. For Aristotle, much like for Plato, the unrestricted rule of the people is a political nightmare. Nonetheless, Aristotle was not as harsh on democracy as was his great teacher. He believed that democracy has its share of faults, but it "may yet be a good enough government" if it does not become radical in its principles and if the people resist the influence of demagogues (168).

The critique of democracy conducted by Plato and Aristotle marks the beginning of a long and rich history of debates concerning democratic rule. These controversies have not diminished over time, and were still vibrant during the formation of the early United States—a country widely recognized as a beacon of freedom founded on the principles of democratic government.

1.1.4. Freedom as Virtue in Ancient Greek Philosophy

Plato's major contribution to the concept of freedom was his concept of a link between the notion of virtue and the idea of freedom. For Plato the highest virtue was the Good, which could only be achieved through educated free choice. Achieving the Good depended on people's rational outlook on life. Plato believed that a truly free man was by nature a virtuous man, because he was not in bondage to his passions. Such a person, knowing the positive value of the Good, would always freely choose it. The Platonic idea was that passions encroached on people's freedom, thus making it impossible for them to achieve virtue. This particular view is explained further by Siobhan McLoughlin in *The Freedom of the Good: A Study of Plato's Ethical Conception of Freedom*, where she maintains that:

> In the Platonic sense of freedom the soul's choice is constrained by the desires of his lower soul [primitive desires and urges], which are not checked by his rationality. Thus, Plato shows that even though there may not be any external constraints on choice, actions are not fully free unless they are chosen through wise exercise of rationality imbued with virtue. (82)

What is more, Plato exposes the faulty definition of freedom that is understood as satisfying one's wishes. For Plato, freedom is something very different, for it means that one must be beyond the corrupting influence of unrestrained desires. Plato's conviction was that it was possible to be free once a person made wise use of reason. That is why he maintained that knowledge was the path that led to virtue. McLoughlin perfectly sums up Plato's idea of freedom by stating that what made Plato's insights on freedom groundbreaking was "[his] novel view of freedom as reasoned choice in line with the Good against the view of freedom as the ability to pursue any and all desires" (93). To be able to align freedom with the pursuit of the Good, one must be properly educated, preferably in philosophy. For Plato this kind of education would lead to a virtuous life. Thus, well-informed freedom leads to virtue.

The focus on self-control as a way to achieve freedom and virtue was also a matter of great importance to Plato's greatest student, Aristotle. As we saw in 1.3 (above), Aristotle, like Plato, believed that "human beings are invariably caught in a struggle between rationality and the wish to fulfil their desires" (Hansen 7-8). Aristotle seemed to see freedom as a necessary prerequisite to a virtuous life. For Aristotle, a virtuous life was inextricably identified with a happy life. Christopher Shields highlights the key points of Aristotelian philosophy in his work *Aristotle,* where he explains the relationship between happiness and virtue:

> A happy life is a life excellently, or virtuously, lived. It follows, Aristotle suggests, that an account of happiness will require an account of virtue, or excellence (*arete*) (*EN* 1102a5–7). Since, however, happiness is an expression of the faculties of the soul, the forms of excellence to be investigated do not extend to those pertaining to the body. … An account of happiness will give way to an account of the virtues belonging to the rational soul. (*EN* 1106a16–26) (323)

In order to lead a virtuous life one must exercise self-mastery on a daily basis. The practice of self-mastery guarantees one's freedom from passions and enables one to pursue the best, the most rational options. Therefore freedom understood as self-mastery is the pinnacle of rational conduct and is a high point of virtue. Indeed, for Aristotle the suppression of low desires was not a form of self-imposed limitation, but rather a true form of freedom. This special relationship between freedom and virtue is best seen as a

juxtaposition of "people who control their impulses and desires and … those who habitually succumb to the proddings of desire" (324).

The concept of freedom also occupied a central place in the philosophy of the Greek Stoics. Known for their contempt of earthly matters and their approval of a coolheaded approach to life, the Stoics had a habit of contrasting freedom with slavery, a relationship that mirrored the social reality of the ancient polis. But the truly interesting thing about the Early Stoics like Zeno, Chrysippus or Philo, was that in their view freedom had a clear moral dimension and strong ties with the notion of virtue.

The origin of the Stoics' philosophical concept of freedom can be found in Zeno's *Republic*. In *Determinism and Freedom in Stoic Philosophy,* Susan Bobzien points out that Zeno, while discussing the political reality of the polis, proposed that freedom is a crucial characteristic possessed by wise and virtuous men who are kind to their fellow countrymen.[10] In the light of Zeno's observation, it is apparent that the Stoics saw freedom as a positive attribute, a necessary component of virtue. In their eyes, a virtuous man was one who pursued knowledge and cultivated all positive traits of character. By doing so, he acquired moral integrity and eventually became the master of his passions and desires. Moreover, this virtuous state enabled a man to withstand external forces that tried to coerce him to do something against his will. In this sense, a wise man was free because he was independent of both internal cravings and external compulsion. He chose his own actions in accordance with the highest moral standards. That is why freedom was realized via knowledge and was a virtuous condition (339-340).

The Stoics' embodiment of the ideal of a virtuous free man was a sage. The sage was guided by wisdom and was the ultimate free person, for he could not be coerced. Nor was he a slave to his passions. Yet, as Bobzien acknowledges, the Stoic ideal of a sage was extremely hard to attain, even for the most devoted practitioners of Stoicism. That is why the truly virtuous and thus truly free men were believed to be few in number (340).

The coupling of the concepts of freedom and virtue celebrated by the Stoics discloses their view on the nature of life and philosophy. According to Dirk Blatzky, "[the Stoics] think of philosophy not as an interesting pastime or even a particular body

[10] Bobzien bases her conclusion on a paraphrase of Zeno's thoughts on freedom and virtue that can be found in Diogenes Laertius's *Lives and Opinions of the Eminent Philosophers*, a collection of biographical entries on ancient Greek philosophers.

of knowledge, but as a way of life. They define philosophy as a kind of practice or exercise" that will inevitably lead to a good life ("Stoicism," n.p.). In this sense, the Stoics had a unique perspective on freedom: They did not conceive of freedom as a mere abstraction, but cherished it as an idea to be acted upon on a daily basis.

1.2. Freedom in Ancient Rome

1.2.1. Freedom and Enslavement in the Social Context of Ancient Rome

The master-slave relationship in Ancient Rome was legally regulated and based largely on the Greek model. The Romans' appreciation of the law resulted in a number of documents that codified the rules regarding enslavement. This set of rules instituted in Roman law illuminates the importance of this relationship to the social framework of the state. In *Greek and Roman Slavery*, Thomas Wiedemann states that the Romans were very pragmatic in their understanding of freedom and slavery. Wiedemann says:

> Although … slaves were human beings, and thus had ceremonial rights … legally they were property in the absolute control of an owner − even to the extent that the owner could transfer his rights to someone else by gift or sale. All slaves were alike in being denied any legal claims on society. (15)

If one considers the importance of freedom as a marker of social position in Ancient Rome, then such drastic rules regulating slavery are not surprising. Being a free citizen with full rights secured by the state was valuable insofar as there was an opposite condition where the rights could be removed and freedom could be stripped away.

1.2.2. The Political Dimension of Freedom in Ancient Rome

Much like Greek democracy, the Roman republic was also a form of government dependent on the people, but in contrast to Athenian democracy the Roman people were not interested in direct involvement in the matters of the state. On the contrary, the Romans preferred an indirect participation in state policy and deeply believed that the state should act as a guardian of their freedom. In *Libertas as a Political Idea at Rome during the Late Republic and Early Principate*, Chaim

Wirszubski defines the Romans' views on freedom, stating that they believed that freedom was not an "innate faculty or right of man but the sum of civic rights granted by the laws of Rome" (7). The totality of rights, called libertas[11], granted every Roman citizen protection in relation to others who might want to violate his freedom. It is apparent that in the simplest terms the Romans understood freedom as:

> a right to claim what is due to oneself, and a duty to respect what is due to others. The latter being exactly what acceptance of the law amounts to, for to be law abiding ultimately means to respect rights other than one's own. (8)

In this respect it is no surprise that the law was of the highest value in Rome, as it was the ultimate safeguard of freedom. J. Rufus Fears further investigates the Roman conception of freedom in his essay "Antiquity: The Example of Rome," where he states that for the Romans, the law was the anchor of their freedom:

> The Roman People as a corporate body and the individual citizen possessed … freedom from involuntary servitude and freedom to exercise specific rights and to assume specific duties. Under this ideal of Liberty the Roman People, as a corporate entity, was its own master, free from internal domination by a monarch or by a political faction and free from subjection to any foreign power; the Roman People was thus free to exercise its sovereignty, free to determine its destiny, free to follow those laws and customs which represented the Roman way of life. (7)

Thus, with regard to exercising their freedom, the Romans were unlike the Athenians. The latter wanted to influence the state, while the former were giving themselves up to the state. In so doing, however, the Romans did not feel they abandoned their autonomy, but rather regarded the citizen-state relationship as a core foundation of their freedom. As Fears maintains, for the Romans:

> genuine [freedom] could be enjoyed only under the Law. The freedoms, personal and private, which constituted *Libertas*, were conceived of as the rights not of the isolated

[11] In *Liberty and Freedom: A Visual History of America's Founding Ideas* (2004), American historian David Hackett Fischer postulates that the Anglosphere is unique in its incorporation of the concepts of Roman libertas (individual rights) and Germanic freiheit (the social dimension of freedom) as liberty and freedom, two distinct words expressing the meaning of freedom in the English language. Fischer asserts that this coupling of the two concepts makes the Anglo-American experience of freedom richer and more complex than that of other cultural circles (1-15).

> individual but of the citizen within the organized community of the Roman state. … Society and the state thus provide the very conditions in which freedom is realized. (12)

In this sense, Roman freedom was totally dependent on the law and lawgivers. If the law prevailed, freedom prevailed too. That is why, once the republic was replaced by the Roman Empire and the emperor became the ultimate lawgiver, the Romans did not consider themselves victims of tyrannical rule. For them, as long as there was a lawgiver, their freedom was secured (Fears 25-26).

Even though the Roman and Greek conceptions of political freedom differed, there were some similarities. Just as in Athens, in Rome only freeborn male citizens could enjoy freedom. Yet, with time, the problem of the growing populace of the unfree made it necessary for the Romans to revisit the exclusiveness of this rule. At the time of the Roman conquests "the sociologically bizarre situation [arose] in which the native population had been reduced to a small demographic minority." Astonishingly, the Romans found themselves in a situation where "the vast majority of persons entitled to call themselves freeborn citizens were descended from slaves" (Patterson 235-236). The vast expansion of Rome made it all too obvious that the elitist view of freedom was inadequate. Paradoxically, it was at that time that the Roman imperialist model proved to be especially suited for propagating the idea of freedom. As Fears explains:

> in an age which equated [freedom] with imperial beneficence and which found salvation in acceptance of the emperor as the common father and saviour of the human race, [freedom] came to be commonly regarded as the innate faculty and natural right of all mankind. (25)

In imperialistic Rome, citizenship was granted to the whole population of the empire. Thus, the elitist model of freedom was rendered obsolete, and the idea of universal freedom was born.

1.2.3. Freedom as Virtue in Ancient Rome

For the Romans, freedom was connected with the notion of virtue, which was central to Stoicism, the most popular philosophy in Rome.[12] While it was the Greek

[12] One of the best-known Stoic philosophers was the second century Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius. Aurelius is often hailed as the epitome of the Platonic philosopher-king, a ruler with a deep disdain for

Stoics like Zeno or Philo who laid the foundation for the key Stoic ideal of the sage, the concept of a sage as a paragon of a free person was further developed by Roman Stoics, particularly in the works of Epictetus. Epictetus's greatest contribution was to shift the emphasis from freedom of action to contemplation of freedom as a state of mind. Epictetus was convinced that truly free people were not the ones that demonstrated freedom through their actions − for actions depend on far too many variables − but those who exhibited a free mind. That is to say:

> Freedom is a virtuous state of mind, desirable and to be aimed at. In order to achieve this virtue you must (i) know exactly what things depend on you and (ii) align your desires, life plan, etc. in such a way that you only ever want what depends on you and expect only what is within the boundaries of what depends on you. … In short, you possess freedom if, knowing what depends on you, you do not ever desire or deplore anything that does not depend on you. (Bobzien 343)

In this respect, the Stoic ideal of the sage was an embodiment of a person who recognizes the limits of what depends on us (Bobzien 343). In this sense, the shift that the Roman Stoics proposed became the basis of the modern understanding of freedom in Stoicism.

1.3. Medieval Christianity and Freedom

While the ancient conception of freedom was shaped by the Greco-Roman tradition, the Middle Ages were heavily influenced by the Christian understanding of freedom.[13] The Christian doctrine molded not only the religious life of Europe, but also served as a foundation of the social and political order on the continent. Christianity's treatment of freedom contributed something unique to the ideas upheld by the ancients.

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power, riches and simple pleasures, equipped with a strong moral compass and motivated by his love of philosophy. Aurelius can also be seen as a lover of virtue, much like Aristotle, equating a virtuous life with a good life. Freedom for Aurelius means to live up to the highest potential of a human being, that is, to make full use of the human capabilities of reason, contemplation, appreciation of the good and a moral conscience unimpaired by corrupting tendencies. This is the only truly free life for Aurelius. Paradoxically then, Aurelius, an all-powerful Roman Emperor, associates true freedom with a state of mind rather than with external features of one's life, such as power or prestige. For further discussion see Aurelius' *Meditations* (circa 161-180 A.D.)

[13] A related term here is Judeo-Christian. This concept gained popularity in the twentieth century, capturing the essence of religious pluralism that characterized the age and paying heed to Jewish tradition having profound influence on Christian values. However, in my view the context of the Middle Ages will be best tackled with the sole mention of Christianity, which at the time was treating itself in a very exclusive terms in relation to other religions.

The dynamic tension between the ancient and the medieval notions of freedom is underscored by Walter Kasper in *The Christian Understanding of Freedom and the History of Freedom in the Modern Era*:

> One can grant that, in the classical Greek world, freedom was conceived as the determining power of existence and as the ideal of human life. But in the same world freedom was restricted to a few individuals. In Athens only the free citizens were truly free, not the slaves or the foreigners. [Christianity holds] [t]hat man as human is free and that freedom constitutes the deepest nature of the human person. (5)

Thus, with the coming of Christianity, a new dimension of freedom was born. It was Christianity that introduced the concept of freedom into the religious discourse. For the first time, freedom was not only a philosophical ideal or a political program, but was placed at the very core of what constituted a human being. In short, freedom transcended the boundaries of political and social systems and became involved in the matters of the conscience and the mind. But it must be stressed that Christianity did not eradicate old beliefs;[14] rather, it drew from old patterns of understanding freedom and enriched them with religious implications. For instance, the Romans' conviction that it was the Emperor—the lawgiver—that granted and secured the citizens' freedom was mirrored in the Christian philosophy that saw God as the lawgiver who is also the ultimate source of freedom to all people. Freedom became intrinsically connected with spirituality, because a person could be free only through God, for it is He is who grants freedom.

With the rise of medieval theology and philosophy, it became apparent that people exercise freedom best through freedom of the will. Discussions of the compatibility of the notion of free will and an omnipotent God occupy a prominent place in modern philosophical thought. As Montague Brown asserts in "Augustine on Freedom and God," one of the paradigms of Christian faith is that "God's activity does *not* threaten freedom of choice and that freedom of choice does *not* escape God's activity." This is so because Christians accept that God is "the creator, source of all that is. On the other hand, it is self-evident that we have free choice" (51).

[14] In fact, Medieval Christianity drew heavily on ancient Greek thought, in particular adapting Platonic and Aristotelian notions to match Christian theology. This is visible in the works of eminent Christian thinkers like Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas Aquinas.

The question of freedom was addressed by prominent medieval Christian philosophers. Two of those thinkers, Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas Aquinas, greatly influenced the Christian conception of freedom in the Middle Ages and beyond. Following Ilham Dilman's analysis of Augustine and Aquinas in *Free Will: An Historical and Philosophical Introduction*, it can be observed that they embodied two different approaches to freedom in Christian philosophy.

Saint Augustine was among the first Christian philosophers who addressed the issue in question. Augustine's *The City of God* remains one of the most powerful Christian treatises on freedom. In *The Church and Secularity: Two Stories of Liberal Society*, Robert Gascoigne carefully analyzes Augustine's views. Gascoigne explains that Augustine put forward the idea of "a fundamental contrast between two meanings of freedom, based in two different loves: the love of God and neighbor, and the love of self" (3). The former is the expression of high morals and empathy, the latter stands for depravation and egoism. As Gascoigne continues, Augustine championed the notion that:

> [t]hese loves are the expression of our freedom; but for Augustine there are loves that intensify and multiply freedom, and others that in fact bind and choke it, spiraling downwards into various forms of destruction, addiction, and self-degradation. (26)

The main point of Augustine's work is thus a firm conviction that people are free to do whatever they please, except that only those who exercise their freedom with the Christian moral code in mind are truly free. In other words, transgression of God's commands is possible because of the nature of God-given freedom, but it inescapably causes damage to oneself and to others. Consequently, the medieval notion of freedom was characterized by a belief that freedom curbed by Christian values entails "the self's humility, the recognition that our lives are not of our own doing and making, that the meaning of our lives lies beyond ourselves," while unrestrained and unwise use of freedom tempts us to "use other persons in order to achieve the self's goals, refusing any sharing or mediating of those goals with the goals of others" (77).

In his analysis of Augustine, Dilman adds that his ideas reconciled, at least to a degree, the problem of free will and responsibility for the good and evil in the world. While God had commonly been accused of allowing evil, Augustine tried to vindicate God by casting light on free will as a gift from God to man. As he posited:

> Human beings have been given free will so that they can do what is right. What this means is that a creature who has the capacity to choose freely, and with that possibility we have the kind of life which has a moral dimension. But if man can, in particular circumstances, be presented with different options, and can choose to do the right thing, doing so freely, that is in the light of his moral convictions and, perhaps despite the pressure not to do it, or the temptation to do something else, he can also choose to do the wrong thing, to do something that is evil. (71)

By addressing the problem of evil and coupling it with the concept of freedom, Augustine linked those two ideas, a position he put forward in his treatise *On the Free Choice of the Will*. For Augustine, freedom was inseparably connected with morality because it entailed moral choices — every free action involved a choice between morally good or bad acts. This approach became very popular in the medieval Church, where the notion of freedom was conceived as part of the Christian religious framework. Augustine's ideas became influential in creating the Christian medieval philosophy of freedom.

With the revival of classical philosophy, particularly the Aristotelian tradition, the other groundbreaking Christian approach to freedom was introduced. The new view on freedom within Christian philosophy promoted by Saint Thomas Aquinas came to emphasize the relationship between reason and freedom. According to Dilman, Aquinas was very analytical in his interpretations of the problem of free will. Aquinas pointed out that "the free exercise of our capacity for choice had to do with the ability of our reason to judge what is best for us" (90), which is why freedom and rational judgment are connected. As Dilman explains, Aquinas went even further in his assertions. His stance can be characterized as follows:

> Will and judgment obviously go together: you cannot have the kind of will that can be free – 'free will' – without individual judgment. … This is the foundation, as [Aquinas] points out, of the possibility of merit and demerit, of reward and punishment. (94)

For Aquinas, reason was a necessary prerequisite for human freedom because it was through a rational outlook that people determined their actions. But this belief put Aquinas in a sharp contrast to Augustine's notion of freedom as a moral idea. Aquinas was concerned primarily with the rationality of free will, for he believed that it was bad

judgment, or irrationality, that was responsible for misuse of freedom and, by extension, for evil that men committed.

The dialectic of the moral and rational sides of free will constituted the Christian understanding of this concept and strengthened Christian faith in human freedom. But common everyday life in medieval Europe seemed to be far removed from this way of perceiving freedom. The Christian ideal of every human being's intrinsic freedom might have been a powerful notion in theology, but it was rarely realized in medieval society. One of the reasons was the feudal system that flourished in Europe. Feudalism arose in the ninth century and lasted for several centuries. The principles of feudalism are dexterously explained by Lord Acton in his *The History of Freedom and Other Essays*:

> Feudalism made land the measure and the master of all things. Having no other source of wealth than the produce of the soil, men depended on the landlord for the means of escaping starvation; and thus his power became paramount over the liberty of the subject. (34)

The feudal relationship between lords and their vassals left the latter with effectively restricted freedom. The fief was rarely if ever remote in distance, which meant that vassals were strongly dependent on their masters. This hierarchical model of society also influenced religious life, with the ecclesiastic hierarchy coinciding with feudal relationships.[15] A lord was seen as the God figure, the clergy as God's vassals and the common folk as subject to them all. Indeed, medieval times constituted a period when the clergy were able to rival kings and lords for political power. Thus, the common man found himself trapped between the authorities of the Church and the state. According to Lord Acton:

> the aim of both contending parties was absolute authority. But although liberty was not the end for which they strove, it was the means by which the temporal and the spiritual power called the nations to their aid. (36)

This power struggle culminated in the eleventh century with a clash between Pope Gregory VII and Emperor Henry IV of the Holy Roman Empire, in a conflict

[15] In his work on angelology *On the Celestial Hierarchy*, Pseudo-Dionysius the Arepagite descried the Kingdom of Heaven as composed of nine distinct levels of angelic orders, from the lowest, common angels, to the Seraphim, second only to God.

known as the Investiture Controversy. The pope claimed sole sovereignty in matters of both religion and politics, placing himself above the emperor and consequently above any form of secular authority. In *The Civilization of the Middle Ages*, Norman Cantor identifies the Investiture Controversy as one of the turning points in the medieval socio-political order. From that time on, the Church assumed universal power, involving both spiritual and social issues (265-276). The injustice bred by the feudal system and the power-hungry Church spurred the social, political and religious revolutions in the next epochs. These changes aimed to emancipate the common people and broaden their spectrum of freedom.

1.4. Freedom in Modern Europe

1.4.1. The End of Feudal Social Relationships and the Advent of New Ways of Viewing Freedom

The feudal system in Europe flourished for centuries, providing a solid framework for Western societies to rely on. Throughout the period, the social, political and religious conventions bore the imprint of the hierarchical nature of society. It must be said that the medieval world was remarkably well organized, but it was also inimical to any hint of defiance. In these conditions, freedom was never envisioned as an all-encompassing notion that instilled a sense of autonomy and self-determination in common people, since both the lands and power were in the hands of nobles or under ecclesiastical control.[16]

As the Middle Ages were coming to their end, though, polemics that challenged centralized authority started to permeate religious and political life. They thrived in the spirit of geographical discoveries, in new knowledge cultivated in newly founded universities, and in religious decadence fueled by corruption in the Church. With the

[16] Indeed, one of the biggest differences between the medieval and the modern ways of life centers around the issue of personal freedom. In an upcoming section of this chapter, I refer to Erich Fromm, who asserts that in the medieval times the masses were caught in a net of feudal dependencies that precluded them from making choices on many life matters. Thus, issues like one's position in society, political and religious preferences, and even family traditions and relationships were often excluded from the realm of personal choice. Fromm maintains that even though feudal order provided a clear sense of security for people, in time it became the source of profound pressure experienced by freethinking individuals. This pressure was a facilitator of great social and religious reforms in the Renaissance. Moreover, Fromm claims that the notion of individual freedom and individual social responsibility for the common people can largely be attributed to Protestantism, which, in order to differentiate itself from the dogmatic Catholicism, elevated individualism as a key virtue of modernity (*Escape from Freedom*, 39-102).

Bible being printed on a large scale, translated into various languages and thus available to a wider range of people for independent study, the monopoly of the Church was broken.

From these peculiar circumstances arose a momentous religious revolution known as the Reformation. As history has shown, the Reformation's implications were even more significant than its proponents might have imagined. Carter Lindberg argues in his monumental book *The European Reformations* that:

> there is among historians an increasing willingness to affirm that the Reformation was a turning point with great significance for universal history beyond its religious concerns. Thus significance has been described in terms of desacralization and deritualization, which is the critique of institutions and hierarchies provided space for individual self-determination. (x)

In short, the ideas put forward by religious reformers like Luther or Calvin paved the way for advancing personal freedom as a value in its own right. Medieval Christianity championed the notion of total submission to God, and by extension to the Church, but in the sixteenth century, this view was becoming obsolete. In his essay "Sixteenth Century Search," George B. Martin explains the shift by comparing the old view, represented in his work by Aquinas, and the revolutionary stance, epitomized by Luther: "Where Aquinas had spoken of the Church as the authority that guides man into virtue and knowledge of God, Luther now found that authority in his own immediate experience of the Scriptures" (69). As Martin puts it, even reformers like Luther agreed that: "obedience to God is true freedom… [but] [w]here Luther departs from the Middle Age's tradition … is in the exclusiveness of his language. At the core of Luther's religious opinions is his religious experience" (67).

Indeed, as the Reformation gained momentum, it became clear that the ecclesiastical order was losing its hold on the way people perceive their faith. Luther and other reformers accentuated the importance of a personal relationship with the divine. As a result of this dialectic clash between the two visions of spiritual experience, the notion of individual freedom came to life.

1.4.2. The Impact of the Protestant Reformation on the Emergence of New Ideas of Freedom

While the impact of the Reformation on European societies was overwhelming, the change that it effected was neither smooth nor quick. The Reformation's religious notions penetrated Western societies and propelled them into a violent period of religious wars that spread throughout Europe. In his essay "Religious Authority and Ecclesiastical Governance," Constantin Fasolt argues that the period of religious wars was an inevitable part of the history of religious authority, and that it contributed to the advent of the modern period as we know it (368-370). This point is further emphasized by David Schmidtz and Jason Brennan in *A Brief History of Liberty* where they observe that the wars dragged on until the menace of the total destruction of Western Europe loomed on the horizon. Only then, after years of fighting, did it finally become clear that an impasse had been reached: Neither side could overcome the other. As the authors put it:

> Western freedom of religion sprouted from mutual exhaustion. After decades of bloody wars between Protestants and Catholics, it was clear that no stable hegemony of either religion was possible. There comes a time, in wars over religious matters, when warriors realize that our best hope for peace lies not in agreeing on which religion is the correct one, but on agreeing to let people (or at least 'peoples') decide for themselves what religion to practice. (110)

Affirmation of the freedom of religion extinguished the flames of the religious wars. It was a truly momentous covenant that soon changed the face of the Western civilization. As Fasolt argues in "Religious Authority and Ecclesiastical Governance":

> A line was drawn that has never been drawn before: the line between the private and the public realm. … Henceforth religious authority was going to be grounded in the self, subject solely to individual choice, and wholly removed from the enforcement of laws in the public realm. (376)

Once ecclesiastical and social matters were considered separate, room emerged for individual freedom. Fasolt further elaborates on this notion in his lecture "Separation of Church and State: The Past and Future of Sacred and Profane," where he explains:

> Nowhere is this more obvious than where the separation of church and state is concerned. There are, so it would seem, two possibilities. Either you do enjoy religious liberty, or you do not. If you do, you do so because the separation of church and state has deprived the church of its former power to impose religious faith by force. … [F]reedom from force in matters of religion furnishes the single most important test for the extent of our liberty. Where freedom of religion is undermined, no other form of liberty can be considered safe. (21)

Indeed, freedom of religion proved itself to be the springboard for other forms of freedom that flourished throughout the sixteenth century.

1.4.3. Social Expansion of the Notion of Freedom

Because of the controversies over doctrinal issues and the devastations brought about by religious wars, the church and the state, once viewed as sources of unquestionable authority, were weakened, and it became apparent that they no longer held unchallengeable power over people. The conflicts also made it visible that authoritarian rule could be questioned and that lords could be deposed. In other words, the cornerstones of the feudal system were shaken to the very core.

While medieval man lived in a culture that was subjected to the authority of the church and the power of the feudal masters, the man that inhabited post-Reformation Europe was confronted with a new situation. In the post-Reformation period, Western civilization witnessed increasing tolerance and the spread of religious freedom. Whereas freedom had previously been a privilege of those who occupied the very top of the social ladder due to the power and influence secured by feudal relations, now it was within the reach of the lower classes.

Spurred by geographical discoveries, trade flourished; trade routes connected the world and made it possible to exchange goods on a larger scale than ever before. The economy was vibrant and businesses grew rapidly. This development is emphasized by Erich Fromm in his influential book *Escape from Freedom*. In Fromm's opinion, in the times following the turmoil of the Reformation:

> [t]he individual is freed from the bondage of economic and political ties. He also gains in positive freedom by the active and independent role which he has to play in the new

> system … Life has ceased to be lived in a closed world the center of which was man; the world has become limitless. (62-63)

Furthermore, according to Fromm, the "suprapersonal forces, capital and market" came to rule supreme in the place of strict feudal regulations, and enabled people to attain a higher standard of living. As a result, fully-fledged free individuals were born (62-63).

A similar view is championed by Dilman. He points to the advent of free trade and the free market as key components of the way freedom is perceived in modern societies. As Dilman explains:

> As trade emerges, there emerges with it a new way of being self-sufficient: in a market society, people can produce enough to meet their own needs by producing enough to meet other people's needs. Freedom of commerce under the rule of law empowers people to cooperate on a massive scale, liberating each other from poverty. (128)

This was an important process that elevated merchants' position in European societies. No longer bound by their feudal loyalties, the merchants were the first class that could attain freedom unknown to their forefathers. Through their economic status, they gained power and influence, which allowed them to attain freedom previously reserved for the aristocracy and the elite of the Middle Ages.

1.4.4. Intellectual Freedom

Besides being a time when Europe's socio-political freedom flourished, the Renaissance was also a period of growing intellectual freedom that was unknown in previous epochs. While medieval universities were centers of intellectual life, they did not offer unrestrained cultivation of reason.

The medieval approach to education was dominated by Scholasticism—a method of critical thought that emphasized obeying the authorities, be it the intellectual authority of classic thinkers like Aristotle or the ecclesiastic authority of the church. The policy supported by Scholastics was, as William Y. Hoye explains in "The Religious Roots of Academic Freedom," to "harmonize mature reason with the acknowledged commitments of faith" that were promoted by the church (425). In other words, it was the Church that controlled university academic life, effectively making it an extension

of its own authority. This point is corroborated by James Hannam in "Science and Church in the Middle Ages," where he states that:

> During the Middle Ages, the education infrastructure of Europe was overseen, if not managed, by the Church … which meant acting as both the guarantor of academic freedom and arbitrator of its boundaries. (Hannam, para. 3)

Indeed, the intellectual boundaries imposed by the church could not be breached, even if it was at the cost of the advancement of knowledge. As Richard Hofstadter puts it in *Freedom in the Age of the College*, "intellectual freedom existed within the framework of individual freedom that was coerced by the Church" (13).

By the end of the Middle Ages, the Church's power to smother intellectual freedom had weakened. Soon, a "predetermined, even to a degree unchangeable collection of given authorities" was juxtaposed with "flourishing youthful intellectual life" (Hoye 425), and Scholasticism became more fragile. Another strike at the very roots of the Scholastic method came from geniuses like Copernicus, Galileo or Kepler, whose work and theories entered the intellectual life of Europe despite objections raised at the time they were presented. In this respect, the spirit of intellectual freedom could not be contained by the controlling power of the Church. Freedom flourished in Renaissance universities that were able to expand their scope of teaching and thus enlarge the sphere of intellectual ferment.

1.4.5. The Growth of Political Freedom

Another area in which the growth of freedom was clearly visible was politics. The Renaissance witnessed the decline of the old system of rulership. It could be argued that the process that changed the political climate of Europe in the sixteenth and subsequent centuries started in the medieval period. The best known example comes from thirteenth-century England. In 1215, the growing uneasiness of the nobility towards the absolute power of the monarch and their readiness to fight for their political freedom resulted in the drawing up of a document called *Magna Carta Libertatum*. As Vernon Bogdanor puts it in *The Monarchy and the Constitution*, it was:

> drawn up by the barons and accepted by King John … under the threat of civil war … Magna Carta thus had something of the character of a treaty, under which the king

> would be granted allegiance by his subjects only in return for recognizing reciprocal duties towards them. (4)

While at first glance the *Magna Carta* seemed to be a concession to the angry nobility, it was much more than that. According to Bogdanor, the document stood as a powerful symbol that indicated a significant shift in socio-political dynamics, for it:

> showed that there was a politically active class developing in England, based primarily upon the barons, but extending to the knights and the gentry. This was of considerable significance for the growth of representative government. (4)

Before the charter was adopted, kings had ruled supreme in England, but with the *Magna Carta* a precedence was established that the monarch needed to pay heed to the people's voice. In *A Constitutional and Legal History of England*, Goldwin Smith maintains that in the following centuries the *Magna Carta* was used as a point of reference to solidify "an unalterable part of the fundamental law" that "there are certain things that a king might not do." In this way "the concept of royal responsibility was carried over to the modern state" and a "contract principle continued to relate the sovereign to his subjects and became a part of the origin of limited monarchy" (136-137). The representatives of the nobility that the king assembled to discuss the most important political matters became an indispensable part of the governing process. These gatherings came to be known as the Parliament. The emerging parliamentary power was an expression of the balance between political freedom secured by common men and the power wielded by the monarch. As both Bogdanor and Smith underscore, the conciliatory power of the *Magna Carta*'s ideas influenced the development of the modern state and enlarged the domain of political freedom for the less powerful classes. This change eventually brought about the rise of the democratic model of the state.

Nevertheless, these socio-political transformations did not mean that the notion of absolute rule was abandoned by political thinkers. In fact, the opposite was true: The celebration of centralized power is evident in Machiavelli's and Hobbes's theories.[17] Both philosophers shared a belief that man is primarily egotistic. Consequently, they doubted the common man's ability to exercise political freedom well. As Frederick

[17] Both Machiavelli and Hobbes considered politics to be first of all a pragmatic endeavor rather than an idealistic project. In this sense politics is stripped of its religious, moral or philosophical underpinnings, and is simply a tool to achieve goals set out by political players. (*Interpreting Modern Political Philosophy: From Machiavelli to Marx*. Ed. Alistair Edwards and Jules Townshend. 2002, pgs. 21-59)

Copleston suggests in his magnificent *A History of Philosophy: Late Medieval and Renaissance Philosophy*, it is necessary to understand that for Machiavelli and Hobbes:

> A natural consequence of [these beliefs] is the conviction that only a strong and unfettered central power is capable of restraining and overcoming the centrifugal forces which tend to the dissolution of society. (312)

In his magnum opus *The Prince*, Machiavelli advocated the principle that the end justifies the means and that the all-powerful prince needs to employ a cynical and calculated approach in order to rule efficiently, even if it means encroaching on his subjects' freedom. In his essay "Sixteenth-Century Search," George B. Martin explains Machiavelli's motivation:

> Machiavelli, disbelieving in any natural law that sustained kingship and wanting to see the reestablishment of old Roman republicanism, advocated a policy on the part of the prince to achieve these ends. (62)

For Machiavelli this policy meant that the prince must be the ultimate lawgiver and the state is an extension of the prince's power. Thus, the prince could curtail people's freedom as long as it was done in the name of a greater good.

A similar view was presented by Hobbes. For him, strong laws and a powerful sovereign are necessities in the political landscape of the state. In Hobbes's opinion, unrestrained freedom could disrupt the proper functioning of the state. This assertion resulted from the distinction he perceived between natural and social freedom. Indeed, whenever people act upon their desires or follow through with their actions, they exercise freedom to do so. According to Hobbes, this is the natural way in which freedom is practiced. Thus, as Thomas Pink argues in his "Thomas Hobbes and the Ethics of Freedom," in Hobbesian theory this natural freedom means that:

> [a] human is free in so far as there are no obstacles from outside his nature to the power of his own will or motivation to cause the actions willed or motivated. And likewise a river is free in so far as there are no obstacles in the form of dams or bridges or vegetation to the power of its current. As Hobbs puts it [freedom] is the absence of all impediments to action, that are not contained in the nature, and in the intrinsical quality of the agent. (555)

However, the social reality of freedom is very different. As Hobbes contends, people are in a constant state of war with one another because they have incompatible urges and pursue incompatible desires. This means natural freedom cannot be exercised in an unrestrained manner, for it would inevitably lead to conflict. To avoid social chaos, Hobbes's proposition is to curb freedom in the social sphere[18] − not by force, but by obligation. As Philip Pettit puts it in "Liberty and Leviathan":

> Obstruction represents loss of liberty in 'the sphere of nature'; obligation the loss of liberty in 'the sphere of artifice'. That one is obstructed will be a natural fact, as we might put it; that one is obligated (subject to the will of another) is a social fact. (140)

Subjugation to the sovereign is a key concept for the Hobbesian notion of political freedom. People willingly forego their natural freedom in order to safeguard a stable social order. As a way of doing this, they make a covenant to limit their freedom by subscribing to responsibility before the law. Furthermore, the people empower the sovereign to act as an arbiter of this agreement − both the guarantor and the enforcer of the law. In other words, for Hobbes, freedom constrained by the law is an essential constituent of any political system. According to Pettit:

> Hobbes recognizes three sorts of constitution (democratic, aristocratic, and monarchical), but thinks that his line on subjection applies equally in all. … In each case, subjects will be bound in the same way to obey the will of the sovereign, as that will expresses itself in laws and other decisions. (145)

The early modern period was a time when absolute monarchy flourished in the West and political life was dominated by models that reinforced the sovereign's rule, as the examples of the Machiavellian and Hobbesian doctrines demonstrate. However, there was also a steady flow of ideas and theories calling for more political freedom for the people that was not to be stopped. In "Locke, Liberalism and Empire," Duncan Ivison emphasizes this point:

> From the seventeenth century onwards there have been regular and various conventions, treatises, constructs and norms imposed on states (often through rough force, but also by invitation) that constrain relations over those they rule. (99)

[18] See also Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *The Social Contract* (1762).

In other words the importance of the people's voice in the political matters was becoming more prominent with each pact between the people and their sovereign.

One of the most influential philosophers whose theories championed a yet unseen scope of individual political freedom was John Locke. In his *Routledge Philosophy Guide Book to Locke on Government,* D.A. Lloyd Thomas maintains that Locke was in many ways a pioneer whose "political principles were … regarded as radicalism and subversion" (11). Indeed, in contrast to previous dogmas that either sanctioned the divine right of kings or defended the necessity for a sovereign to coerce the people, Locke's doctrines were fundamentally different.

Locke believed that men are created equal and that everyone possesses a set of rights that guarantees these liberties. In his *Second Treatise of Government*, Locke expressed this notion succinctly: "[m]en, being once born, have a right to their preservation, and consequently to meat and drink, and such other things as nature affords for their subsistence" (Book II, sec. 25). In accordance with this statement, Locke's political construct was to demonstrate that these rights endow each individual with the ability to conduct their own lives independently. In Locke's understanding, these rights are firmly established in nature, and are therefore natural rights. Natural rights stem from a broader natural law, which is a law "in accordance with which human conduct ought to occur" (Thomas 15). In other words, "the law of nature is universal. It applies to all persons at all times in all places" (Thomas 16). According to Locke, natural law secures every person's executive power over their lives—power that should not be limited, nor should it be dominated by an absolute ruler (Thomas 12). In Locke's view, any hierarchically orchestrated society is in blatant opposition to what natural law stands for.

The incentive of Lockean thinking and the introduction of the concept of natural rights brought about an expansion of freedom in the political sphere. For the first time, it was the individual that was granted political sovereignty. As Ivison puts it: "the sovereign individual acting on the basis of their natural rights … represents an influential vision of liberal freedom" (98). To contain this newly found political freedom of the individual, Locke advocated the formation of a model of community in which:

> Each person agrees to surrender individual control over [their] executive power of the law of nature in exchange for an equal share, along with all the other contractors, in the joint control of everyone's pooled executive power of the law of nature. (Thomas 25)

Importantly, Locke's notion of the community stands in direct opposition to absolute monarchy, which is delegitimized as a ruling system precisely because "it does not rest on the consent of the people" (Thomas 27).

What was revolutionary about this political theory was that Locke held that the power wielded by the government is nothing more than the power of the people channeled through the government institutions, and that it is the common man, not the sovereign, that actually creates the political reality of the state. Thus, Locke successfully introduced the notion of a government that has legitimate authority and that enlarges the individual's sphere of freedom. Consequently, the birth of the Lockean doctrine marked the dawn of a new political system in the modern era: democracy.

1.5. The Rise of Democratic Freedom in America

1.5.1. Lockean Natural Rights as the Foundation of American Freedom

The notion of natural rights penetrated the socio-political life of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the West. The idea that a man can attain freedom through self-determination was very appealing and created an alternative to despotic states where such freedom was vastly limited.

The Lockean doctrines underlay the Enlightenment project that championed the power of reason and progress and stood in opposition to the fixed dogmas of the autocratic models of government. Thus Locke's view that people have the right to freely manage their lives was compatible with the spirit of the age. In Britain, these beliefs were practiced as a form of civic freedom. Eric Foner observes in *The Story of American Freedom* that: "[b]y the eighteenth century the 'invented tradition' of freeborn Englishmen had become a central frame of Anglo-American political culture" (5). It was only natural that these views on freedom would travel with the emigrants to the American colonies. Milan Zafirovski maintains in *The Enlightenment and Its Effects on Modern Society* that:

> American civilization is, above all, the offspring and realization of the eighteenth century European Enlightenment and its liberal, democratic, secular, rationalistic, egalitarian, equitable, inclusive, pluralistic, universalistic, optimistic, progressive, and humanistic ideas and values. (3)

Americans clung to the idea of self-determination as an epitome of freedom because they experienced it first-hand in their daily lives in the colonies. The New World's soil promised a sustainable life and the opportunity to prosper in exchange for hard work and resolution. In other words, the colonists were free to be the architects of their own fortunes.[19]

Still, Americans also felt that they needed to maintain this freedom within the framework of a government that would be able to safeguard it better than the British Crown. For this reason, as well as disillusionment with unjust laws, irritation with tax policies and general disenchantment with the British monarchy, the colonists chose to become an independent nation. At the dawn of the Revolution, the spirit of American freedom found its full expression in the Declaration of Independence, drafted by Thomas Jefferson. The self-evident truths set forth in the Declaration, holding that every man has a right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, were derived from Lockean principles and became, for the first time in the modern era, the foundations of a national government.

1.5.2. The Birth of American Freedom

The Founding Fathers[20] of the United States were well aware of the eminence and potency of Locke's political philosophy. In their view, the foundation of a new nation required implementation of principles that, on the one hand, championed and protected individual freedom, but on the other hand ordered and empowered state

[19] An especially penetrating insight into the nature of the American character is conveyed in *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782), written by a French aristocrat, Michel Guillaume Jean de Crevecoeur, who was later naturalized as J. Hector St. John. The Frenchman describes the emerging American society and states that colonial life in America engendered mixed social structures, a lessening of religious fanaticism and intermarriage among different ethnicities—all of which had a positive effect on creating an American society that was radically different from the European societies of the time. Europe by the end of the eighteenth century, says de Crevecoeur, was still haunted by the ghosts of feudalism and absolute monarchy, whereas the American colonies were free of such a mindset. De Crevecoeur, in an almost prophetic manner, sees America as a promised land for future generations of immigrants and as a safe haven for people who love freedom and are willing to take risks in order to lead self-reliant lives.

[20] Interesting inquiries into the relationships between the Founding Fathers can be found in Joseph John Ellis's book *Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation* (2000).

mechanisms. On the surface, the ideas of natural rights and natural laws seemed to be at odds with the notion of the state. The core of this issue is defined by George Mace in his *Locke, Hobbes, and the Federalist Papers: An Essay on the Genesis of the American Political Heritage*. Mace puts forward a view of the state that was prevalent among Lockean thinkers:

> The state is nothing other than an ordering of relationships through establishment of restrictions and jurisdictions, and since it is not natural for man to restrict and order his behavior with respect to others, his natural condition is one of rights. Within a state, law is order and government is the ordered. Neither exists by consent of nature in a natural-rights condition. (6)

Thus, the Founding Fathers understood that: "[i]f the state is to exist it must be created" (6) − that is, it must be designed. The American nation had to arise as a manifestation of political doctrines cloaked in the mechanisms of governance. The first expression of this design was the Declaration of Independence (1776). As Mace observes, "[t]he American Declaration of Independence is the repository of the natural rights statements" (7). The Declaration made it clear that:

> Inalienable [natural] rights are rights that cannot be given up or taken away. They constitute an area in which individuals have freedom of action and, at the same time, and according to the Declaration, this area comprises the rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. (8)

As we have seen, from the very beginning the focus of the Declaration was on the idea of the freedom of an individual, as evidenced by the notion of the natural rights that were introduced into America's very tangible political reality. Thus, the Declaration of Independence was a harbinger of freedom for the new nation, but the epitome of the new policies came a few years later in the form of the United States Constitution (1787). The Constitution maintained the spirit of American freedom that arose during the Revolution, but aimed to give it more refined features.

The essence of the complex nature of freedom presented in the Constitution was captured in a series of essays published in the so-called Federalist Papers, authored by the trio of Alexander Hamilton, James Madison and John Jay. As Edward Millican poignantly describes in his *One United People: The Federalist Papers and the National*

Idea, the idea behind the Federalist perspective is as follows: "[t]he peculiar structure of America's central regime is formed by an amalgamation of two principles: (1) checks and balances and (2) separation of powers" (148). Both of these concepts were designed to eliminate any danger that autocratic rule might befall the new nation and jeopardize the freedom that was to be the fundament of the new state. In the spirit of Federalist thinking, Millican expertly explains:

> Checks and balances require that various political organs all be involved in carrying out the *same* public functions, so that each can interfere with the unconstitutional plots of the others. But separation of powers requires distinct governmental bodies to be accorded *different* spheres of operation and not to be subjected to the interference of other branches. Yet these seemingly contradictory concepts may be readily blended in practice: institutions that are for the most part functionally separate may be given a degree of control over the ordinary duties of the others. This combination of ingredients is a fundamental characteristic of the United States Constitution. (149)

The Federalist vision was one of a state that cannot be hijacked by elitist rule. The principle of checks and balances and the separation of powers were intended to guarantee the freedom of the common citizen and his right to hold responsible those he has elected to public office.

In summary, the two cornerstones of the American nation − the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution − were documents on freedom. They combined theoretical and practical aspects of freedom in order to form the specific American idea of freedom in both the social and political spheres. Mace adds:

> There are some who suggest that the Declaration and the Constitution differ greatly in themselves. They view the Constitution as … the product of a conservative reaction to the more democratic principles of the Declaration. … [T]he Declaration is a document of revolution while the Constitution founds and thereby stabilizes. (10)

The spirit that drove the Revolution was thus complemented by the conciliatory efforts of the Founding Fathers. The result was a state that offered an unprecedented degree of individual freedom to its citizens.

1.5.3. The Notion of Freedom at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century

In "Land and Liberty on the Post-Revolutionary Frontier" Alan Taylor argues that: "[t]he relationship between the frontier land and freedom" (81) underpinned the reality of the early nineteenth century. This is confirmed by James McPherson in his *Battle Cry for Freedom*. McPherson points out that it was Thomas Jefferson himself who "had defined the essence of liberty, which required the ownership of productive property" (23). Thus, possessing property was crucial to being a free American, as acquiring property offered the chance to be truly free.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, the best way to obtain property was to go to western North America, which boomed with opportunity and offered land for the taking. The settlers were free farmers and tradesmen who exemplified Jeffersonian agrarian America, where the idea of freedom was found at the grassroots of the nation. These people considered themselves free not because of federal law, but due to their inner adherence to the ideas of self-reliance and self-government.

1.5.4. Freedom and the Rise of the Common Man

Americans at the dawn of the nineteenth century found themselves in a unique position. On the one hand, the Revolution had given them a government that had established laws that promoted freedom. On the other hand, it was the common man's interest in self-determination that really made Americans feel free. Eric Foner comments on this duality of freedom in *The Story of American Freedom*. As Foner explains:

> America with its federal structure, separation of powers, increasingly democratic political system, and practice of admitting new territories into the Union as equal states, could enjoy both empire and self-government. (50)

In this cultural and political climate the "Empire of Liberty," as Jefferson had once called America, grew strong. Freedom was solidified as a domain of common citizens who, as Ralph Waldo Emerson proclaimed, were zealous "fanatics of freedom," who expressed almost a universal distrust and distaste for any form of governmental

regulations that they felt encroached on their rights. Soon this deep-rooted belief in the freedom of the common man became of great importance to American politics.

1.5.5. Freedom and Democracy in the Jacksonian Era

In the first volume of his magnum opus *The American Republic*, Richard Hofstadter argues that America of the early nineteenth century was a nation where "[f]aith in the competence of the common man was on the rise" (390-391). According to Hofstadter, it was at that time that the vision of America as the "creature of the people" permeated American politics and empowered the common man. This idea, characterized by a "strong impulse toward democracy," found its full expression during the Jacksonian Era (389).

During Andrew Jackson's presidency, American freedom was tantamount to the freedom of the common man.[21] Democracy truly enabled citizens to become the driving force behind American politics, due to "an extension of the right to vote [and] the increasing interest of the common man in exercising that right" (Hofstadter 391). In *Andrew Jackson*, his comprehensive study of the seventh American president, Sean Wilentz claims that Jackson's deep conviction that the "[a]ctual governing of the country should be conducted by the people at large" (156), and that "elected officials, including the president and U.S. senators … should be elected directly by the voters," produced a novel form of government that was ahead of its time (156). Michael P. Riccards explains in *The Ferocious Engine of Democracy* that this form of democracy vested in "direct communication with the people" (xix) came to be known as the Jacksonian model. Thus, it was during the Jacksonian era that democratic government became an indispensable part of what American freedom was.

[21] Jackson himself was a staunch believer in the democratic principle of majority rule. Robert V. Remini points out in his *Andrew Jackson: The Course of American Democracy, 1833-1845* (1998) that "[t]he transformation of the United States from a republic to a democracy was a slow process that had begun long before Jackson came to office. But more than any other individual he symbolized the arrival and acceptance of that concept" (337).

1.5.6. The Incompatibility of American Freedom and Slavery

If a free common man was the avatar of freedom in the nineteenth century United States, the slave[22] represented the absolute antithesis of freedom. Eric Foner claims that in the early Republic slavery was seen as "the denial of the right of self-government or dependence on the will of another," and stood in direct opposition to the ideal of a self-reliant man that American democracy championed. Alluding to the spirit of the American Revolution, Foner illustrates the hypocrisy of supporters of slavery who openly adhered to the ideal of freedom. Foner cites Richard Price's words to make his point: "[T]he people who have been struggling so earnestly to save themselves from slavery [of the British Empire], are very ready to enslave *others*" (qtd. in Foner 32).

Here, it is imperative to note that slavery had become an essential part of the American social, cultural and political scene before the nineteenth century. Richard Hofstadter elucidates that as the US was forming, "leaders like Washington, Jefferson, Madison, and Henry were well aware of the incongruity of slavery in a Republic dedicated to the principles of the Declaration of Independence" (521-522). Yet slavery continued despite this basic inconsistency. One of the main reasons was the importance of slavery to the South, to its economy and its way of life. The Southern economy was greatly dependent on plantations and a cheap labor force in the form of slaves. This was a major reason why the institution of slavery was alive and well in the mid-1800s (Hofstadter 500-513). Institutionalized slavery treated slaves as property, and this issue was contested by abolitionists, who saw the dehumanizing effects of that ideology. Still, the South was eager to defend its way of life and economic interests, and came up with ideas to justify its policies. As Hofstadter notes, the most popular arguments proposed that "[t]he Negro would only be harmed by being given his freedom" (512) or that slavery was, in fact, a form of "benevolent socialism" because the slaves were given clothes and shelter and their basic needs were taken care of (522). In turn, abolitionists retorted that human beings should not be treated as objects and that slave owners disregarded the basic tenets of the Declaration of Independence that spoke of liberty for all. Later in the nineteenth century, the abolitionist movement gained momentum with Harriet Beecher Stowe's influential novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin,* which sent an anti-slavery message across America.

[22] Slavery and its repercussions are still major issues in American social and political life.

This "divided mind"[23] of the America people translated into deep divisions in other areas of life. Gradually the problem of freedom and slavery became not only a morally-charged topic, but also a key issue in politics and a source of social unrest. The imminent conflict of the Civil War that brought an end to slavery was very costly to America, but it strengthened the idea of freedom and helped it blossom in the decades to come.

1.5.7. Economic Freedom in the Gilded Age

The Gilded Age that followed the Civil War witnessed the unprecedented growth of capitalism. The new theory of Social Darwinism promoted by thinkers like Herbert Spencer or William Graham Sumner rose to prominence. Social Darwinism provided a motivation for capitalist tycoons to unabashedly strive for profit. "Survival of the fittest" was now not only a biological but also an economic principle. Unrestricted economic freedom epitomized by energetic capitalism swept through the country.

In the Gilded Age[24] freedom became synonymous with the absence of any restraints. For businessmen who wanted to enact this negative concept of freedom in their enterprises, "laws regulating labor conditions were a form of slavery, since they deprived free agents of the right to dispose of property, including their labor, as they saw fit" (Foner 120). For capitalist entrepreneurs, anything that intruded into their businesses was a "paternalistic insult to free labor, a throwback to the thinking characteristic of slavery" (Foner 123). While business magnates felt threatened by regulations, laborers feared that a lack of regulations would lead to exploitation of their work. Capitalist employers did not cater to such sentiments; their concept of freedom was based on the shameless laissez-faire model. For workers, though, freedom was an egalitarian idea; they wanted to secure labor rights that would open up a path for them to win economic freedom. Indeed, laborers were almost totally dependent on their

[23] In literary theory, the divided mind can be associated with the postcolonial idea of double consciousness: a tension between two identities, that of a colonizer and that of a colonized person. In particular, the situation of African Americans has been a poignant example of people having split identities – on the one hand bearing the legacy of being descendants of enslaved people, but on the other participating in American culture that perpetrated slavery in the past.

[24] For a better understanding of the economic realities of the late nineteenth century, the capitalist vision of the market can be juxtaposed with Marxist theory. It can be argued that Marx and his followers correctly assessed the problems that plagued the economies of the West, but their vision of a grand revolution eliminating social and economic injustices in Western countries like Germany or the United Kingdom never came to fruition.

employers − a phenomenon that was frequently compared to a form of slavery. Wage slavery provoked tensions as workers rebelled against the tyranny of the moguls, and by the end of the nineteenth century, labor unions emerged to aid the workers in their struggle.

The tug-of-war between workers and entrepreneurs made it apparent that a market ruled by elitist capitalists was an expression of partisan economic freedom. Once economic freedom became a dominion of the few, it was at odds with the notion of all-American freedom.

1.5.8. The Expansion of Freedom in the Progressive Era

The reformist attitude in American society persisted throughout the so-called Progressive era. It was a time "dominated by a passion for social progress and for a reform in politics, business and morals" (Hofstadter 353). Economic freedom was also under scrutiny. In the sphere of economy, strong emphasis was put on "concern over the conditions of … fellow men" (Hofstadter 356).

Elitist capitalist freedom was to become more egalitarian. Eric Foner comments that this change was due to "middle-class reformers, male and female, often linked to trade unions, who sought to humanize capitalism" (141). Wage slavery was the greatest enemy of this project, for like chattel slavery before it, it robbed people of freedom and so was doomed to become obsolete (142). As Foner explains, "a consumer definition of freedom — access to the cornucopia of goods made available by modern capitalism — began to supplant an older version centered on economic and political sovereignty" (147).

1.5.9. Freedom and the Women's Rights Movement

Questions of freedom and equality became an important part of the political program of the feminist movement at the beginning of the twentieth century. Spearheaded by the suffragists, feminism recognized that women's freedom was curtailed in the political sphere and thus, as Carolyn Johnston explains in *Sexual Power: Feminism and the Family in America*, "legal and political equality" constituted the main goals of the movement. The eventual success of the feminist agenda "found its expression in the 19th amendment granting women the right to vote" in 1919 (132).

However, women's yearning for freedom was not limited to legal issues. As Johnston puts it, for the emancipated women of the next generations, "feminism meant the freedom of a woman to decide her own destiny, free of traditional sex roles, free to exercise their individual conscience and judgment" (132). In the following decades "women's increasing dominance at home helped to shape the theory, goals, strategies and accomplishments of the movement" (243).

Nevertheless, the expansion of women's freedom in the sphere of domesticity was only one side of the coin. The other was the struggle for equal opportunity in the workplace, which became the key aim for the next generations of feminists. With the growing influence of the counter-culture of the 1960s, women turned to "the American dream of mobility and freedom and rebelled when they realized that their gender prevented them from achieving their goals" (Johnston 251). Feminism has since undergone many transformations, and in contemporary times has resurfaced as a lifestyle (Foner 181), but its orientation towards the ideas of gender equality and freedom has remained unwavering.

1.5.10. Freedom and the Civil Rights Movement

Like women, other groups within the US felt excluded from the promise of American freedom. An interesting case is that of Native Americans, who were the last minority to be granted the right to vote, by the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924. Another is the case of African Americans. Men were granted de jure civil rights, including the right to vote, after the Civil War,[25] but were de facto prohibited from enjoying their share of civil liberties by Jim Crow laws. In opposition to these violations the civil rights movement arose, finding expression in the civil disobedience protests of the 1950s and 1960s. As Eric Foner argues, the movement was concerned with "eradicating a multitude of historic wrongs — segregation, disenfranchisement, exclusion from public facilities, confinement to low-wage menial jobs" – and at the same time putting forward a positive narrative of freedom that meant "equality, power, recognition, rights, opportunities" (277).

[25] African American women were granted right to vote by 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (1920).

The greatest figure associated with the civil rights movement was undoubtedly Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. In his famous "I Have a Dream" speech delivered during the March on Washington in 1963, Dr. King identified the core of the problem by stating that "the Negro still is not free" primarily because Black Americans are "crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination." In that regard, as Dr. King asserted, the civil rights movement "will not pass until there is an invigorating autumn of freedom and equality." Dr. King envisioned a common goal for all Americans: a restoration of freedom to those who had previously been denied it. He believed that white Americans had also "come to realize that their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom." (MLK 1-3) Thus, as Foner maintains, by speaking of freedom as a unifying idea, King aimed to eradicate "the gap between races and fused the Black experience with that of the nation" (279).

Richard H. King poignantly describes the profound range of the postulates of the civil rights movement in *Civil Rights and the Idea of Freedom:*

> There is no doubt that the first, obvious goal of the movement was the dismantling of the Jim Crow system in the South. In that respect it *was* the reformist movement. But the desire for freedom expressed in the biblical idiom of collective liberation, in the psycho-political quest for the transformed sense of self, and in the political emphasis on the participatory freedom, that is, genuine self-determination, encompassing both individual and collective dimensions, suggested that the movement had more in mind than the goals entailed by liberal reform. (201-202)

Although the civil rights movement officially ended in the 1960s,[26] its main tenets still influence the national cultural paradigm. The civil rights movement succeeded in changing the face of American society; specifically, it "enriched [Americans'] general conception not only of the meaning of rights, equality, and democracy, but especially of politics, citizenship and freedom" (King 203).

[26] The death of Martin Luther King and the passing of Civil Rights Fair Housing Act marked the year 1968 as the traditional end date for the civil rights movements of the 1950s and 1960s. That is not to say, however, that the issue of civil rights ceased to be a major concern in American social and political in the next few decades.

1.6. Freedom in the Recent Era

By the end of the twentieth century, the expansion of freedom into various spheres of American life was virtually complete. The enormous work done by the civil rights movement and feminism had made the US a globally recognized beacon of freedom. This was never more pronounced than in the 1980s, when the final clash between the American system and Soviet communism took place. Yet while the seeming collapse of the freedom-denying communist system provided a moment of triumph[27] for Western democracies, the fall of the Eastern bloc did not secure freedom as the principal idea for the coming decades, as Joshua B. Freeman points out in *American Empire*. The new era was marked by the promise of a new world order, and the fresh blossoming of globalization seemed to offer a happy alternative to the Cold War period, but as the 1990s progressed, "global disorder became normalized, even relatively small groups, through low-tech terror tactics and guerilla warfare, found that they could disrupt … even advanced societies" (Freeman 415). Many of these terrorist groups were informed by radical Islam, and their target was liberal democratic freedom, whose tenets they fundamentally opposed. A utopian vision of a world ruled by the American ideal of freedom has been brutally questioned.

The fear of terrorism has become the sign of modern times. As Freeman points out, with the looming threat of terrorism, a "new phase in American history" has begun (466). In the aftermath of the tragedy of 9/11 "sweeping security program[s]" that involve increased surveillance have become the norm. Freeman claims that the "enhanced powers of the state" inaugurated a "struggle over the meaning of democracy" as well as over "the proper role of the government" (Freeman 466-467). The general sentiment among Americans in recent years has been that freedom is being trampled in the name of peace and security, while some have also pointed out that the "global village" has become so interconnected that the notions of the private and the public need to be reconsidered, and so does the idea of freedom.

[27] The triumphalist tone was common in the early 1990s. A good example of this attitude is Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992), where the end of the Cold War is hailed as being tantamount to the final stage of evolution of political systems. For Fukuyama, the fall of communism signified that liberal democracy was the ultimate political achievement of Western civilization. While at the time this view may have been understandable, in my opinion it does not properly address the faults of liberal democracies that can lead to the decay of liberal freedom. It seems that Fukuyama failed to acknowledge the danger of Western democracies falling prey to autocratic tendencies within their own institutions. Once liberal democratic institutions become corrupt, democratic forms of government can be used as a mere tool in the hands of power-hungry politicians.

In his persuasive work *Whose Freedom?*, George Lakoff expresses his concern over the evolution of the ideal of freedom in contemporary times. Lakoff believes that the American state has become increasingly adverse to its citizens' freedoms. The "siege mentality" adopted by the state stands in direct opposition to the spirit of the expansion of freedom advocated in previous epochs. By promoting fear and a constant "state of emergency," Lakoff observes, freedom is being slowly but inexorably curtailed (6-7).

The question of the evolution of the ideal of American freedom is of the utmost importance not only for the US but for the whole of Western civilization as well. The nature of individual liberty, the problem of the limits of the state, the dichotomy of the private and the public, changes within democratic modes of government are all among the essential features of the phenomenon called freedom. While it might have felt at times like an accomplished achievement, Western democratic freedom is demonstrably in a state of constant flux. Literary extrapolations of this idea, especially those offered by the genre of dystopian speculative fiction, provide inspiring insights into possible developments of freedom in the future.

CHAPTER TWO

The Failure of Uncontested Freedom

This chapter aims to highlight looming dangers to uncontested liberal freedom as we know it, and that we have gotten used to taking for granted: the concept of freedom introduced by cognitive scientist and linguist George Lakoff. Here I am going to present an overview of potential dangers to freedom as seen through the lens of selected works of American dystopian literature for young adults (YA).

2.1. Uncontested Freedom

The evolution of the concept of freedom in the US[28] has been a lengthy process. Indeed, as history shows, social struggles and upheavals, political debates and disagreements, legal vicissitudes and the rise of various democratic institutions have expanded freedom with each successive generation.

The progression of freedom in the United States is the basis for one of the most remarkable works dedicated to the analysis of freedom and democracy: the celebrated *Democracy in America* by Alexis de Tocqueville. The French aristocrat marveled at the ingenuity of the freedom experiment that occurred in the New World. First and foremost, he admired America's success in producing a new kind of a political system where freedom could flourish. As Tocqueville wrote:

> The general principles which are the ground work of modern constitutions − principles which were imperfectly known in Europe, and not completely triumphant even in Great Britain, in the seventeenth century − were all recognized and determined by the laws of

[28] While the following deliberations on the development of the idea of liberal democratic freedom might apply to the Western world in general, I have narrowed down the discussion to the United States, viewed as the cradle of modern liberal democracy.

> New England: the intervention of the people in public affairs, the free voting of taxes, the responsibility of authorities, personal liberty, and trial by jury, were all positively established without discussion. (58)

While Tocqueville recognized that the foundation of American freedom lies in the British tradition of civic liberty, he also observed that freedom had reached a new dimension in America, where it was infused into the culture, forming a unique notion that Tocqueville called "habits of the heart." Tocqueville asserted that:

> the manners of the people may be considered as one of the general causes to which the maintenance of a democratic republic in the United States is attributable. I here used the word manners with the meaning which the ancients attached to the word mores, for I apply it not only to manners in their proper sense of what constitutes the character of social intercourse, but I extend it to the various notions and opinions current among men, and to the mass of those ideas which constitute their character of mind. I comprise, therefore, under this term the whole moral and intellectual condition of a people. (330)

In other words, freedom established its stronghold in the American socio-cultural milieu and became the very fabric of American reality. Accordingly**,** the notion of cultural change became associated with possible transformations of the idea of freedom.

Centuries later, the Tocquevillian perspective[29] on freedom is still shared by numerous scholars. George Lakoff presents a similar point of view in his book *Whose Freedom? The Battle Over America's Most Important Idea*, published in 2007. One of Lakoff's first statements is that "America has been a nation of activists, constantly expanding its most treasured freedoms" (3). According to Lakoff, freedom reached its full bloom precisely because it was a dynamic force, for "freedom is realized not just in stasis, or at a single moment in history, but in its expansion over a long time" (73). For Lakoff, freedom evolves and expands in the US as a gradual advance into a variety of social, cultural and political areas.

[29] Alexis de Tocqueville is hailed as one of the greatest historians of his age and one of the most influential thinkers to probe the issue of freedom, because his approach to history was all-encompassing and grounded in diligent investigation and a deep understanding of social mores, as well as an ability to forecast future developments. Especially interesting are Tocqueville's thoughts on the evolution of both the American and Russian empires (*Democracy in America*, 2002, p. 485). In this sense, the Tocquevillian method could be understood as a pioneering project in political and social sciences.

Myriad common impressions of the concept notwithstanding, freedom invariably eludes solid definition. This has proven to be a great obstacle for many scholars who have attempted to capture the essence of this ideal. Orlando Patterson in his influential *Freedom in the Making of Western Culture* explains that:

> [f]reedom, like love and beauty, is one of those values better experienced than defined. On the verge of waging one of the bloodiest civil wars of all time in its defense, Abraham Lincoln complained that he knew of no good definition of freedom. The situation is hardly different today, in spite of vast literature on the subject. (1)

Indeed, the plethora of definitions offered by various intellectuals throughout the ages prove the point that Patterson makes. It seems that a universal consensus on freedom is virtually impossible. Hence, paradoxically, freedom is one of the most deeply analyzed, yet also one of the most controversial ideas in the West. Patterson asserts that the unending, dogged struggle towards a final definition of freedom stems from the very foundations of Western civilization, namely reliance on the analytical method. Patterson observes that "[w]e have … a strong tendency in Western culture to rationalize our values, to explain them, and to demonstrate their internal coherence" (1-2). While this analytical approach has been very fruitful with regard to scientific inquiry or technological progress, with cultural phenomena it often fails. Still, Patterson indicates that there will be no end to a search for a perfect definition of freedom because "[n]o other value or ideal in the West carries such a heavy burden — one impossible to discard or neglect" (2).

Patterson's convictions are shared by C. Fred Afford. In *Rethinking Freedom: Why Freedom Has Lost Its Meaning and What Can Be Done to Save It*, Afford maintains that freedom is "becoming an all-purpose word for everything that is good in our way of life" (i). Afford is concerned that freedom as a concept is too elusive, but his suggestion is not to create a new definition, but rather to move the focus of philosophical reflection onto the field of the human experience of freedom. In short, Afford firmly supports the notion of "[p]lacing people's experience of freedom at the center of a discussion" (9). In this respect, one can arrive at a proper definition of freedom only after analyzing people's experience of this phenomenon. Yet, this approach seems to be a double-edged sword: One may argue that without a proper

definition of freedom to begin with, people's experiences cannot provide a firm intellectual foundation for a discussion of this concept.

It seems that Patterson understands this crucial dilemma and poignantly argues that the polyphony of views on freedom has produced:

> not one, but two interacting histories of freedom. There is the history of freedom as ordinary men and women have understood it — vague, to be sure, yet intensely held. A value learned in struggle, fear and hope. Paralleling this has been the history of people's efforts to define 'true freedom', to arrive at the essence of what freedom really is, if we only thought about it logically, or moralized correctly. (2)

Regarding the latter history of freedom − the one of seeking viable definitions − Friedrich von Hayek maintains that there is a common feature that unites most perspectives on freedom. In his work *The Road to Serfdom*, Hayek asserts that the Western understanding of the idea of freedom has always been envisioned primarily as the absence of authoritarian power that limits one's autonomy. Hayek claims that this vision of freedom is evident in the intellectual tradition of Western thought, because:

> [t]o the great apostles of political freedom the word had meant freedom from coercion, freedom from the arbitrary power of other men, release from the ties which left the individual no choice but obedience to the orders of a superior to whom he was attached. (36)

John Locke can undoubtedly be counted among those "great apostles" of freedom. Despite all the time that has passed since he formulated his philosophy, his vision of freedom is still relevant in modern political and social discourse. For Locke, freedom, at its very core, means an absence of constrains; he states in his *Second Treatise of Government* that:

> [m]en being, as has been said, by nature, all free, equal and independent, no one can be put out of this estate, and subjected to the political power of another, without his own consent. (Book VIII, section 95)

Locke clearly signals that there is a certain sacred area of freedom for every individual and that it must not be invaded.

The idea of freedom as an absence of coercive force is also championed by another notable thinker of the early modern period: Jean-Jacques Rousseau. In his famous work *The Social Contract*, Rousseau argues that:

> [e]very man having been born free and master of himself, no one else may under any pretext whatever subject him without his consent. To assert that the son of a slave is born a slave is to assert that he is not born a man. (Book IV)

It is important to note, however, that while both Locke and Rousseau view freedom as an absence of coercion, which might be understood as absolute, unrestrained freedom, neither of them argues for what could be described as an anarchist[30] attitude. On the contrary, both philosophers maintain that freedom can flourish only when it is practiced within a civil society. One of the pillars of that society is the rule of law — an idea important to both Locke and Rousseau.

More recently this focus on freedom as defined within the legal boundaries of a state was also recognized by Hayek. The Austrian-British thinker offers an insight into the matter:

> The Rule of Law was consciously evolved only during the liberal age and is one of its greatest achievements, not only as a safeguard but as the legal embodiment of freedom. As Immanuel Kant put it (and Voltaire expressed it before him in very much the same terms), 'Man is free if he needs to obey no person but solely the laws'. (95)

Locke's and Rousseau's views on the issue in question influenced the great nineteenth-century scholar John Stuart Mill. Continuing the rich history of the idea in the West as well as the monumental philosophical and political tradition dedicated to the subject, Mill bequeaths to posterity his writings on the matter that, in a manner of speaking, may be regarded as a tutorial on freedom for evolving young democracies. Similarly to Locke and Rousseau, he believes that freedom essentially means a condition of being free from coercion. He presents this view in the following passage from *On Liberty*:

[30] In popular understanding of the term, anarchism is labeled as a philosophy of life that champions a free-for-all mentality. However, the fact of the matter is that anarchism is a far more complex phenomenon. I have used the term here to refer to political anarchism, which asserts that there are no legitimate forms of government and that political control is always a coercive force. (Fiala, Andrew, "Anarchism," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2018 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta)

> [T]he sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is self-protection. That the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. …. The only part of the conduct of any one, for which he is amenable to society, is that which concerns others. In the part which merely concerns himself, his independence is, of right, absolute. Over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign. (53)

However, Mill seems to go a step further in his explorations of freedom, asserting that:

> The only freedom which deserves the name, is that of pursuing our own good in our own way, so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs, or impede their efforts to obtain it. (55-56)

While this statement echoes the sentiment of freedom as an absence of compulsion, it also asserts that to be free means to fulfill one's potential. This idea proved very prolific in the times of rampant capitalism at the turn of the twentieth century.[31]

Permissible limits of coercion and satisfactory prospects for self-actualization as two sides of freedom are Isaiah Berlin's focus in his seminal essay "Two Concepts of Liberty." Berlin's work, published in the 1950s, remains among the most widely appreciated and frequently cited reflections on the subject of freedom. In Berlin's understanding, much like a coin that has two sides, freedom is essentially dualistic. The thesis of Berlin's essay is captured in the form of open questions:

> [Freedom in] the 'negative' sense, is involved in the answer to the question 'What is the area within which the subject − a person or group of persons − is or should be left to do or be what he is able to do or be, without interference by other persons?' The second, which I shall call the 'positive' sense, is involved in the answer to the question 'What, or who, is the source of control or interference that can determine someone to do, or be, this rather than that?' The two questions are clearly different, even though the answers to them may overlap. (2)

[31] A German sociologist, Max Weber, was one of the most famous scholars who studied the classical capitalist system in the West. In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber observes that "material goods have gained … an inexorable power over the lives of men," which means that "the pursuit of wealth, stripped of its religious and ethical meaning, tends to be associated with purely mundane passions" (124). Thus, freedom can be seen as a function of the consumer market; that is, the meaning of freedom is tantamount to an unrestrained accumulation of wealth. Weber calls such a system "an iron cage" (123).

Thus, Berlin initiates a discussion of the two-fold nature of freedom. The answers he gives are plain and clear:

> [W]hatever the principle in terms of which the area of non-interference is to be drawn, … liberty in this sense means liberty *from*, absence of interference beyond the shifting, but always recognisable, frontier. (5)

Berlin's take on the positive aspect of freedom is similarly expressed:

> The 'positive' sense of the word 'liberty' derives from the wish on the part of the individual to be his own master. … I wish to be a subject, not an object; to be moved by reasons, by conscious purposes, which are my own, not by causes which affect me, as it were, from outside. (8)

It is noteworthy here that Berlin's "positive freedom" has been a problematic issue for many thinkers, mainly due to the fact that it hinges upon the assumption that each individual wants to pursue self-fulfillment. German psychologist and philosopher Erich Fromm, cited in Chapter One, singles out "positive freedom" as a major factor that has reshaped Western societies. He argues that individualism in the modern sense of the word is primarily a product of the Renaissance, and in particular of the Reformation. Emergent individualism coupled with positive freedom creates a tension within a modern person that leaves him or her confused and susceptible to manipulation. Fromm puts forward this argument in *Escape from Freedom*:

> [M]odern man, freed from the bonds of pre-individualistic society, which simultaneously gave him security and limited him, has not gained freedom in the positive sense of the realization of his individual self, that is, the expression of his intellectual, emotional and sensuous potentialities. Freedom, though it has brought him independence and rationality, has made him isolated and, thereby, anxious and powerless. … and the alternatives he is confronted with are either to escape from the burden of his freedom into new dependencies and submission, or to advance to the full realization of positive freedom which is based upon the uniqueness and individuality of man. (x)

Fromm believes that positive freedom has not yet been properly understood on a popular level,[32] or at least that it has not been understood to the degree that negative freedom has. In his study Fromm points out that:

> while in many respects the individual has grown, has developed mentally and emotionally, and participates in cultural achievements to a degree unheard-of before, the lag between "freedom from" and "freedom to" has grown too. (36)

With old sources of authority like the church or the monarchy removed, a yearning for positive freedom can be misdirected. According to Fromm, this means that in the political sphere, a promise to fulfill an individual's wishes is a tactic seized by the populists. Under the banner of protecting one's freedom, they assume the authoritarian position. Fromm's own experience convinced him that this mechanism was responsible for the rise of National Socialism in Germany in the 1930s and that it was going to be replicated in political life in the following decades.

As these approaches to freedom illustrate, whenever a definition of freedom emerges it is always subject to evolution. Importantly, efforts to describe freedom do not originate solely from philosophical discussion, but also stem from social and cultural transformations that imbue freedom with new meanings. It can be argued that each definition of freedom was a product of its time. For that reason it is extremely problematic to adhere to one definition of freedom as a universal standard. In this context, my approach towards freedom will be informed by two factors that, in my understanding, best serve the purpose of this dissertation. First, I wish to take into account how relevant a given definition is to the most recent socio-cultural conditions, and second, how it relates to the rich tradition of freedom in the West.

In my opinion, the definition of freedom offered by George Lakoff, mentioned in the opening of this chapter, best satisfies these conditions and thus will be treated as

[32] In his opening argument in *Escape from Freedom*, Fromm associates freedom with an effort to eliminate "political, economic, and spiritual shackles" (1), and highlights the idea that freedom from bondage and oppression, that is negative freedom, has been envisioned throughout the history of Western civilization to simply mean "human freedom as such" (1). Fromm claims that negative freedom was essentially realized because "man has rid himself from old enemies of freedom" (104). Positive freedom, however, as Fromm suggests, is a very problematic issue because the more emancipated a person becomes, the more "isolated, afraid and alone" he or she is (104). In this context, "new enemies of [freedom] have arisen, enemies which are not essentially external restraints, but internal factors blocking the full realization of freedom of personality" (104-105). Consequently, this fact precludes any constructive usage of positive freedom.

the definition of choice for my project. Lakoff struggles to define freedom in terms that do justice to the notion's intricacy and elusiveness. It seems to him that a solid definition is impossible, but freedom can be framed within a complex of issues that Lakoff calls uncontested freedom (simple freedom) and contested freedom, respectively. In the simplest terms, uncontested freedom refers to a group of ideas that have traditionally been linked to freedom. Uncontested freedom incorporates all the concepts that have always been present in discussions of freedom and are universally recognized as pertinent to it. On the other hand, contested freedom refers to specific elements of freedom that are subjects of widespread controversy. For the purpose of this chapter, I am going to focus on uncontested freedom, and then in the following chapters delve into the notion of contested freedom.

When it comes to uncontested freedom, Lakoff envisions it in the following manner:

> [uncontested] freedom is extended metaphorically to achieving any kind of purpose — typically in a social realm, including morality, politics, business, art. A further metaphor — the society of mind metaphor — projects freedom onto the will, properly governed by reason and judgment. (38)

According to Lakoff, freedom is in principle a visceral phenomenon. It is an idea that is best understood through intuition rather than hard rules. In this way, the perennial problems related to freedom − the proper relationship between an individual and the state, the purpose and limits of coercion, the nature of the free market and free enterprise − are seen as an intertwined network of ideas rather than a single concept of liberal freedom.

Like Tocqueville, Lakoff appears to believe that freedom is a phenomenon that surfaces in the public and the private spheres, and is approximated within a mental framework where ideas related to freedom are charted. Lakoff seems to think that all social groups can experience freedom to the fullest because of the favorable conditions propagated by the American liberal democratic system. The Founding Fathers' vision of a country where freedom is available to all[33] has always been a part of the cultural amalgam of the American Dream. In contemporary times, as Lakoff puts it, "[f]reedom

[33] It must be noted that at the beginning of the U.S. statehood full civic liberties were reserved for propertied white men. However, the later expansion of freedom throughout American history has been dictated by a deep conviction that it has always been a notion to be applied to all.

… becomes being free to *live the dream*, with nothing holding you back or keeping you down" (31).

Considering the slow but relentless progress of freedom, by the end of the twentieth century, the broadening of the scope of civil liberties, along with structural and political changes, have enabled women, ethnic minorities and LGBTQ communities to enjoy greater freedom in many parts of the Western world. Concurrently, with the advent of the modern era, some considered the current standard of civil freedom to be nearing its perfect form. Popular confidence in the inevitable victory of liberty for all encouraged a spirit of complacency and curbed the growth of freedom. In his thought-provoking book *Too Much Liberty? Perspectives on Freedom and the American Dream*, David J. Saari suggests that a somewhat relaxed approach to freedom might be its undoing, stating that:

> where freedom of human beings is great, the yearning for liberty is weak, because the motivation to be free is being well fed every day, and liberty does not break out into dreams, revolutions and rebellions. This condition of great and extensive freedom … exists in the United States today and, as a consequence, the drive for greater freedom … is muted. (20)

Saari feels that the greatest achievement of freedom in America − that is, its effective perseverance in various fields of human life − is also its greatest weakness. By being broken down into categories, with each category preoccupied with its own field of specialization, freedom loses its impetus. As a result, apathy towards the greater understanding of freedom is commonplace and the desire for greater expansion of freedom is thwarted. Thus, freedom might fall victim to its own success (Saari 20).

On the other hand, as a response to the growing realization that Americans have become complacent, taking democratic freedom for granted, a vibrant discussion on America's most cherished ideal is reemerging.[34] In the face of a changing world − in particular, the threats of international and domestic terrorism, encroachment on the realm of privacy in the Internet and the problem of an ever-growing government − discourse on freedom has been reinvigorated to take on new challenges.

[34] A growing polarization of the political scene in Western-type democracies, where various movements challenge the status quo, can also be seen as a factor that contributes to social uncertainty regarding the extent of civil liberties and the issue of social justice.

2.2. Dystopian Fiction as a Fitting Genre for Considerations of Human Freedom

Issues concerning freedom have always been a vital subject of literary explorations. At one extreme, utopias tend to present idealistic depictions of places where freedom, though often limited by the common good, is an a priori assumption. At the other, the more recent dystopian genre is disposed to alert the reader to possible perils to freedom looming in the future. Importantly, the unique power of dystopian texts to engage with cultural ideas such as freedom has long been recognized by scholars. In *The Dystopian Impulse in Modern Literature*, M. Keith Booker argues that there has been:

> a gradual shift from utopian to dystopian emphases ... especially since dystopian societies are generally more or less thinly veiled refigurations of a situation that already exists in reality. (15)

In this context, Booker asserts, it is apparent that "dystopian and utopian visions [are] not as fundamentally opposed but [are] very much part of the same project" (15). However, while literary narratives where freedom flourishes without obstacles are deemed boringly utopian, it is dystopian fiction that keeps freedom vibrant as a concept by constantly putting it to the test. As Booker explains, dystopian texts "provide fresh perspectives on problematic social and political practices that might otherwise be taken for granted or considered natural and inevitable" (19). Thus, dystopian narratives prove to be a remedy for the complacency and apathy that Saari deems to be the greatest enemies of freedom.

Furthermore, dystopias are designed not only as cognitive experiments that pose dire warnings of diminishing freedom. They also offer an imaginary space for scenarios where freedom is trampled, and at the same time, dystopian writings explore ways in which freedom can be salvaged and restored. According to Booker, dystopias essentially keep ideals like freedom "fresh and viable and [prevent] them from degenerating into dogma" (177).

The same line of argument is provided by Tom Moylan is his *Scraps of the Untainted Sky*. Moylan is certain that this feature of dystopian fiction is due to its:

> textual machinery [that] invites the creation of alternative worlds in which the historical spacetime of the author can be re-presented in a way that foregrounds the articulation of its economic, political, and cultural dimensions. (xii)

Moylan calls modern renditions of this genre *critical dystopias* and asserts that they belong to a form of dystopia characterized by:

> a textual mutation that self-reflexively takes on the present system and offers not only astute critiques of the order of things but also explorations of the oppositional spaces and possibilities from which the next round of political activism can derive imaginative sustenance and inspiration. (xv)

For Moylan, modern dystopian works are clearly set apart from classical dystopias like Huxley's *Brave New World* or Orwell's *1984* that offer no real possibility for freedom to be restored in the end. In contrast to these narratives, there is always "a horizon of hope" (147) in critical dystopias.

The possibility for freedom to persevere in dystopian conditions is also invoked by Raffaella Baccolini, whom Moylan cities in his volume. Moylan quotes from Baccolini's essay "Gender and Genre," in which she wrestles with the idea of dystopian literature. Like Moylan, Baccolini uses the term *critical dystopias* and maintains that these narratives preserve "the utopian impulse *within* the work." Moylan further refers to Baccolini's belief that "the traditional subjugation of the individual at the end of the novel" has been soundly rejected in most current critical dystopian literature, which as a result "opens a space of contestation and opposition" (qtd. in Moylan 189). In other words, "new maps of hell" (Moylan 182) in the form of contemporary critical dystopias make it possible not only to navigate through the hellish dystopian wasteland, but also to escape it entirely. Consequently, the potential of dystopias to engage with the notion of freedom in a world that seems to be increasingly hostile toward this idea cannot be overstated.

Most critical dystopias that have appeared in the last three decades fall under the rubric of Young Adult Fiction and/or Science Fiction.[35] The narratives usually envision a future where freedom has been crushed by either a totalizing ideology, an all-

[35] It is important to note that dystopian fiction has never been a pure genre. It is best to envision critical dystopias as a modus operandi that functions best in Young Adult narratives and in Science Fiction literary tradition.

controlling government, or a disaster that has toppled Western civilization and rendered many of its cultural ideals obsolete. In the US, these dystopias reverberate with special meaning, considering the fact that a utopian vision of a society built upon the premise of individual freedom is deeply ingrained in American culture. The striking quality of these narratives is that they go beyond mourning the loss of freedom, providing a more focused perspective on what constitutes the idea of freedom, how it can be transformed and, if need be, reinvented.

This transformative quality of dystopian fiction is recognized by Clare Bradford, Kerry Mallan, John Stephens and Robyn McCallum in *New World Orders in Contemporary Children's Literature*. As the authors state, dystopian fiction positioned as a part of Children's and Young Adult literature is characterized by:

> [a] pervasive impulse towards what can be termed 'transformative utopianism'. This concept is realised as fictional imagining of transformed world orders and employs utopian/dystopian themes and motives which propose new social and political arrangements. (2)

In this respect, the "transformative purpose" (8) of dystopian imaginings is to showcase future worlds that have their roots in contemporary social and political tendencies, especially those that display darker features. This emphasis on the future world being tainted by the errors of the present has been growing since the 1990s, with the nascence of "visions of dysfunctional, regressive, and often violent societies" (8). These disturbing fictitious futures often result from slight, hardly perceptible changes in the cultural blueprint of a society or a small shift in moral sentiments that can be traced to the present time. In other words, dystopias use the rationale of the butterfly effect to demonstrate how important the standards of today are in relation to the possible developments of tomorrow.

One of the most powerful cultural phenomena that has the potential to radically reshape the future is the technological revolution that is already underway. In *Tomorrow's People*, Susan Greenfield proclaims that speculative fiction, including dystopian imaginings, is rightly absorbed by investigations into the prospects and perils of the techno-scientific[36] revolution, for:

[36] Techno-science is understood here as the advancement of technology coupled with the development of the scientific method and subsequent scientific discoveries of the modern era. The term is often used to

> [t]he impact of science and technology on our existence, in the future, is no longer a whimsical excursion into science fiction. Those sci-fi images of yesterday now have an enchantingly amateurish glow. (2)

Thus, the powerful and inescapable influence of technological advancement opens up questions about the future of our civilization. As Greenfield astutely observes, "[t]he real problem is not what is technically feasible but the extent to which what is technically feasible can change our values" (7).

The issue of humanity's innermost values in regard to the possible dangers of technological progress was addressed by Francis Fukuyama in his seminal book *Our Posthuman Future*. In the opening chapter, Fukuyama acknowledges the dystopian impulse in literature by discussing Huxley's *Brave New World*. Fukuyama argues that it is evident that "[o]ur view of human nature is the source of values" (7), and that when consulting dystopian literature it is obvious that science has the potential to alter our nature to a dangerous degree. If this ever happens, Fukuyama worries, human values, freedom among them, would be under siege. The American thinker frames this problem in the context of the liberal democratic system that he treats as the pinnacle of all political endeavor, guaranteeing freedom for everyone. He says:

> Liberal democracy has emerged as the only viable and legitimate political system for modern societies because it avoids either extreme, shaping politics according to historically created norms of justice while not interfering excessively with natural patterns of behavior. (14)

The invasion of science into the most private spheres of human life strikes Fukuyama as the greatest danger of the nearest future. The outcome might be diabolical, and it does not take much to imagine that even one step in the wrong direction could have dreadful consequences.

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underscore the fact that there is a powerful interdependence and interconnectedness of these two fields of human endeavor.

2.3. Looming Dangers to Freedom in Selected YA Dystopian Fiction

The notion of democratic freedoms being compromised by future societies embracing the "benefits" of scientific and technological progress is made manifest in Neal Shusterman's *Unwind* series. In the dystopian world conceived by Shusterman, children up to the age of eighteen find themselves at the mercy of a devious system. Parents are given a choice to either keep their children, if their offspring live up to their expectations, or to hand them over to state authorities who will "unwind" them − that is, dismantle the children's bodies via a novel medical procedure so that each and every part is rendered usable for others. This arrangement is a result of the Bill of Life which was passed by consensus after the Second Civil War, fought by Pro-Life and Pro-Choice armies. As a matter of fact, this bill does not actually confirm the sanctity of human life. On the contrary, the technological means legitimized by the bill make it possible to treat the lives of children as subject to the whims of their parents, and by extension, to the whims of the government. The failure of democracy is epitomized by a remark from one of the characters: "The Bill of Life was supposed to protect the sanctity of life. Instead it just made life cheap" (53).

While most contemporary readers, brought up respecting the democratic rights of an individual, would presumably view "unwinding" as a cruel violation of personal liberty, Shusterman speculates about a dystopic society that could be tempted to sacrifice some of their freedoms, including human life, to draw personal benefits without regard for their possible detrimental impact on the fate of others. Shusterman illustrates this point early on in his narrative, when the reader is introduced to the main protagonist of the series, Connor. Sixteen-year-old Connor is a troubled boy who, although good-natured at heart, is prone to being rebellious and reckless. His parents decide to unwind him, in fear that Connor will turn out to be a failure, both for himself and his family. Connor makes his escape from home before the Juvenile Authority (the police force that collects those designated to be unwound) can catch him. On his way out, Connor hides in a truck, and when the trucker comes back an exchange between the two ensues. As Connor tries to convince the trucker to help him flee, the trucker does an unexpected thing:

> The trucker scratches his beard stubble and thinks for a movement. 'Let me show you something, Connor.' He reaches over Connor and grabs, of all things, a deck of cards

> … and does a skillful one-handed shuffle. 'Pretty good, huh?' … Then the trucker takes a single card and with a sleight of hand makes the card vanish into thin air. (13)

While Connor expresses his amazement, the trucker explains that he lost his arm in a car accident and it was replaced by a new limb:

> 'These fingers here knew things the rest of me didn't. Muscle memory, they call it. And there's not a day that goes by I don't wonder what other incredible things that kid who owned this arm knew, before he was unwound.' (14)

In this brief scene, Shusterman portrays unwinding as something horrifying by contemporary standards,[37] but at the same time, perversely, socially desirable considering the fact that transplantation medicine requires human organs, preferably from young donors, that serve as replacement parts.

The next person whose freedom is threatened is Risa. At fifteen, Risa is a talented young girl who has an aptitude for playing the piano. Because Risa was abandoned by her parents as a baby, she was raised in a state home. Due to budget cuts, she is denied continued care and deemed expendable. The bureaucratic system is merciless, and Risa learns at a special meeting with her custodians that she is going to be unwound. While Risa expresses her fear of death, Mr. Paulson, a lawyer present at the meeting, gives her a shocking answer: "The fact is, 100 percent of you will still be alive, just in a divided state" (24). Thus, scientific advancement in medicine lends power to the authorities to remove teenagers, who still do not have the status of full citizens, from the sphere of freedom and to treat them like property.

In view of these examples, it is evident that freedom of particular sections of society, in this case objectified teenagers, is effectively denied. Shusterman's novels can be seen as a warning against the advent of a new dystopian anti-democratic social paradigm bred by increasing tensions between new profit-oriented technologies and the world of power-hungry politics. It is apparent that for Shusterman technology, and biotechnology in particular, has a fundamentally political dimension. This perspective has been well expressed by a leading theoretical physicist, futurist and popularizer of science, Michio Kaku. In his *Visions: How Science Will Revolutionize the 21st Century,* Kaku asserts that: "knowledge is power, and power is inherently a political and social

[37] It is important to note that organ trade is practiced today, particularly in the Asian criminal underworld. In its most horrifying form, it involves the harvesting of body parts from unwilling victims.

question" (260). Moreover, Kaku argues that since humans made a transition "from passive by-standers to the choreographers of nature" (9), the future of humankind has been forever changed. Much like Fukuyama, Kaku believes that "biotechnology is impossible to contain" (244), and that in time it will definitely change the world "for better or for worse" (242). Apparently, Shusterman subscribes to these reflections, but with a major proviso: In his view the change envisioned by Kaku will definitely be for the worse. As his books suggest, those in control of powerful technologies will not shy away from trampling individual freedoms.

A threat to freedom that might originate from vast future advancements in already- existing technologies is also a major theme of M.T. Anderson's celebrated novel *Feed*. It seems that Anderson's vision might not be merely imaginary, given that many futurists, including H.G Wells, Arthur C. Clarke, Hans Moravec, Alvin Toffler and the aforementioned Michio Kaku, have long predicted a rapid acceleration in computer sciences and IT technologies. The prevailing consensus seems to be that in the coming decades scientists will delve deeper into the limitless opportunities of the Internet. Kaku himself is especially interested in a merger of human mental capabilities with information networks − an event that he thinks will mark the dawn of a new cybernetic world (*Visions*, 52-54). While Kaku remains optimistic and his ideas about the future are predominantly visions of human freedom flourishing in computerized systems, Anderson takes a decidedly grimmer turn in his extrapolation on innovative IT technologies, which he sees as the biggest threat to human freedom. For Anderson, the advancement of computerized systems, especially the omnipresent Internet, will result in new forms of coercion. Anderson warns that these technologies help the authorities to spy on or even manipulate their users to such a degree that their personal freedom is in danger.

Feed is set in a near future when most US citizens are connected to an advanced form of the Internet called the Feednet. The connection is not merely access through a computer or other IT device; the Feednet is linked directly to the brain and other vital organs via a device called the feed. This link is often established in infancy, so that the feed raises its users on information, images and advertisements. Naturally, this symbiotic IT[38] system is maintained by a culture that promotes the feed and its

[38] The emergence of symbiotic IT has been a dream of trans- and posthumanists for decades (see Ray Kurzweil's 2005 *The Singularity is Near*). One might assume that if such a day arrives, symbiotic IT will

advantages. Even the US government sponsors announcements that speak of America as a "nation of dreams" where all human desires can all finally be realized in an "age of oneiric culture" (*Feed* 150).

The main protagonists of the novel are teenagers: an oblivious conformist, Titus, and a defiant critical thinker, Violet. The duo meets while spending a spring break on the Moon and they eventually develop a romantic relationship. While they are partying in a club, a hacker associated with an anti-feed organization hacks all of the feeds of Titus, Violet and their friends and disrupts their connections to the Feednet. After this incident, Violet's questioning nature leads her to challenge the view of the world presented by the Feednet. She comes to the conclusion that people have been mentally enslaved and used as pawns by powerful corporations that thrive on the population's intellectual impotence and lack of a sense of personal freedom. After gradually reassessing her worldview, Violet tries to convert Titus, expressing her anxieties about the feed to him:

> When you have the feed all your life, you're brought up to not think about things. … It's something that makes me angry, what people don't know about these days. Because of the feed, we're raising a nation of idiots. Ignorant, self-centered idiots. (*Feed* 113)

Violet, Titus and their friends are hospitalized in order to diagnose and repair their broken feeds. These efforts are successful, except in Violet's case, whose feed is deemed beyond repair. It is then that the reader learns that replacing the feed can have serious side effects. Violet explains: "[T]he problem is, if you get the feed after you're fully formed, it doesn't fit as snugly. I mean, the feedware. It's more susceptible to malfunction" (170). Furthermore, these systemic failures entail real life consequences. Violet tells Titus the terrible truth that "[t]he feed is tied to everything. Your body control, your emotions, your memory. Everything. Sometimes feed errors are fatal" (171). It is heavily implied that FeedTech does not want to fix Violet's feed due to their analysis of her character as being too critical of the status quo. Thus, it is revealed that the feed not only invades the privacy of its users and restrains their personal freedom, but, most dangerously, FeedTech has the power to mandate the life and death of any

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mark the end of humanity as we know it, since the barrier between human nature and technology will be critically breached.

given individual. The very core of human freedom − the right to one's life − is taken away once a person is deemed dangerous or unfit.

In "Dystopian Visions of Global Capitalism: Philip Reeve's *Mortal Engines* and M.T Anderson's *Feed*," Elizabeth Bullen and Elizabeth Parsons argue that the world presented by Anderson is a dystopia with no possibility of a happy ending − something quite uncharacteristic of the dystopian texts of the last two decades. The authors point out that "Violet functions as more than an exemplar; it is principally her responsiveness that amplifies the reader's perception of Titus" (134). Titus, on the other hand, is portrayed as the epitome of a perfect feed user. Uninformed and self-indulgent, Titus learns nothing from his relationship with Violet or from her revelations concerning the feed. He is a poster boy for undemanding complacency, a person who does not know or care about personal freedom. However, Bullen and Parsons vividly observe that even though ignorance is said to be bliss:

> the bystander [Titus] does not escape the tragic fate of the activist [Violet], but rather he will also die in the way that a frog immersed in gently heated water is boiled before it realises its danger in time to escape. (134)

In a similar manner, in "Our Posthuman Adolescence: Dystopia, Information Technologies, and the Construction of Subjectivity in M.T. Anderson's *Feed*," Richard Gooding astutely observes that Anderson's vision of the future is marked by the "soft totalitarianism of the feed"[39] where "any outward-looking sense of social justice is undermined by the narcissistic imperative to buy, consume, and discard" (116). Paradoxically, the most valuable thing discarded in *Feed* is freedom.

Still another insight concerning the notion of freedom in *Feed* is presented in *New World Orders in Contemporary Children's Literature*, in which the authors highlight that "the society of *Feed* is in the latter stages of increasing entropy and cybernetics has destroyed the autonomy of the human subject" (Bradford et al. 168).

[39] Soft totalitarianism can be understood as a political system that employs authoritarian techniques and can de facto be classified as a totalitarian state, while de jure it remains a democracy and lays claim to democratic processes and institutions. An intriguing insight into this phenomenon is provided by Sheldon Wolin, who coined the term "inverted totalitarianism" (associated with "soft totalitarianism"). In his *Democracy Incorporated: Managed Democracy and the Specter of Inverted Totalitarianism* (2008), Wolin used the example of the United States as a country slowly shedding its democratic nature and transforming into an autocratic oligarchy. In such an arrangement, democratic elections, for example, would still exist as a form of choosing the government, but they would be guided by the people in power. See also another related term: "guided democracy."

Thus, the novel underscores humankind's dependence on technology to the point of people losing their basic autonomy. In a computerized paradise, freedom becomes a commodity that the Feednet cannot provide. Even more shockingly, it is an unwanted commodity that the masses are willing to trade for a false sense of security and over-indulgence in consumer goods.

It is additionally worth noting that in the world created by Anderson, there is no grand battle against liberty, no coup d'état, no bloody dictatorship − only a gradual giving in to the enticements of the Feednet. What the book offers to its readers is a grave warning against the unchecked and unrestrained intrusion of IT technology into every sphere of human life. The seeming utopia brought forth by an advanced form of the Internet is in fact a world where freedom is being stolen and imperceptibly replaced by total dependence. Anderson paints a picture of America run by formidable corporations that use people's increased reliance on their technology to solidify their monopoly on power.[40] In such a world, personal freedom is virtually nonexistent, because one's innermost secrets and desires can be seized and taken advantage of though the feed. In short, a crucial misstep in the development of the Internet produces a world where freedom is virtually erased.

Another dystopian narrative that extrapolates on the dangers of already ongoing technological progress in relation to freedom is Nancy Farmer's *The House of the Scorpion*. The novel is set in a near future in which cloning has become a ubiquitous practice and is often abused to serve the purposes of a wicked elite. Technology has made it possible to enhance the human body and prolong life by procuring body parts from human clones. As these clones are nothing more but sources of spare parts, their brains are destroyed at birth so that they cannot hinder the procedure, which dooms them to live out the rest of their days as mindless animals. Although they are biologically human, the clones are not only denied their civil liberties, but are actually incapacitated to prevent them from claiming their supposedly inalienable right to personal freedom, on account of their being "grown" in laboratories.

The human cloning theme underlying the plot of the novel brings to mind the long-standing controversy over the still largely-hypothetical social practice, involving

[40] This is a dystopian trope that investigates the issue of collusion between big business and the state. In this framework, the citizen is primarily treated as a consumer, and supporting consumer lifestyle becomes the chief goal of the state's policies.

the assumed rights of the individuals who would be "produced" as a result. The issue has been part of a wide scientific debate for decades, since the creation of the cloned sheep Dolly. One of the most lucid overviews of contemporary approaches to human cloning can be found in Carmel Shalev's article "Human Cloning and Human Rights: A Commentary." With respect to freedom and human rights, Shalev expresses a deep belief that there should be no excuse whatsoever for abusing the rights of human clones. She points out:

> A foundation of human rights is the prohibition of any form of discrimination against persons because of circumstance of birth or genetic heritage. It should be crystal clear than any child born as a result of cloning—be it legal or illegal—is entitled to recognition as a human being and to enjoy all human rights without discrimination. (140)

Interestingly, however, while she stands up for the full civil rights of hypothetical human clones, she does not join the impassioned crusade against cloning as such. On the contrary, Shalev is adamant in her defense of the technology as a viable field of scientific endeavor that can be used for the betterment of the human race. What she champions is freedom of scientific research that is often under attack from ultra-conservative circles. She strongly believes that "[l]iberty not only constrains the power of government, but it also limits the moral tyranny of the majority" (138-139).

While the controversy over human cloning remains a hot issue, the truth of the matter is that as of now humanity has not had to confront the problem of an actual cloned person. And indeed, as conservative as most societies still are, the human world will probably not have to handle such moral dilemmas for some time yet. Still, the story of *The House of the Scorpion* alerts readers to the possibility and its challenges. Farmer predicts that the moral precepts most Western societies have espoused may be compromised or even rejected by the public in the coming decades. As currently increasing global authoritarian tendencies show, the right to democratic freedoms is not set in stone, and more and more national governments merely pay lip service to the precepts seemingly enshrined in the Declaration of Human Rights.[41] Farmer clearly

[41] In recent years, major political players, like Putin's Russia and Erdogan's Turkey, have been criticized for putting up a facade of democracy in order to hide creeping totalitarian transformations taking place in these countries.

cautions that human rights conventions can be ignored by renegade politicians or authoritarian rulers like El Patron, the ominous opium magnate, who grows Matt, his youthful clone, with impunity. If this happens, human rights will be considered not universal but discretionary, dependent entirely on the authority of a government that assumes the power to pass the final verdict on who is and who is not human, who can enjoy civil rights and who can be deprived of them.

Additionally, Farmer's narrative demonstrates that is it possible to imagine that social and political tensions surrounding controversial issues like cloning can be used to justify social discrimination. In the long run, tensions that might divide the public may become powerful tools for inciting social prejudices. Cloing technologies may turn out to be a pretext for justifying the creation of a category of second class citizens, or even worse, human beings that are branded as animals.

Farmer's message concerning human rights and individual freedom is recognized by Ryan Kerr in "The Father, Son, and the Holy Clone: Re-vision of Biblical Genesis in *The House of the Scorpion*." Kerr observes that *The House of the Scorpion* is a dystopian expression of a long literary tradition that "addresses questions of humanity through non-human entities" (99). In this regard, the main protagonist of Farmer's novel is an embodiment of the controversies surrounding the issue of the boundaries of human nature. Kerr points out that Matt "occupies an uncanny space: he has the full consciousness and feeling of a human, yet is still defined as non-human by those around him" (100). Ultimately, the decision to grant Matt civil liberties is an arbitrary political decision, dependent on the whims of politicians. The lesson concerning freedom is that the clash of experiential reality and ideological prejudice often ends up with social reality conforming to the rules set by biased social theories. Hence, Nancy Farmer's narrative may serve as a dire warning regarding modern-day debates on eugenics[42] and the dangers to freedom that can arise from it.

Another example of dystopian fiction that intertwines the issues of freedom and morality is James Dashner's trilogy *The Maze Runner*. Dashner's novels depict an

[42] In the popular mindset, the practice of eugenics has been perceived very negatively, mainly due to the horrifying experiments conducted by the Nazi regime. However, discoveries in the field of biotechnology, coupled with the increasing popularity of the transhumanist movement, seem to be fueling a reemergence of eugenics as a valid field of scientific endeavor. The trend is sure to continue to evoke strong political and moral controversies, especially given that technologies that make it possible to manipulate human nature are going to become more ubiquitous and readily accessible in the future.

apocalyptic world ravaged by a mysterious disease as a result of cataclysmic solar flares. People infected by the virus descend into madness and human civilization stands at the verge of a total collapse. As humanity is pressed to seek ways to guarantee its survival, an immensely powerful organization called WICKED (short for World In Catastrophe: Killzone Experiment Department) is formed to find a cure. WICKED has at its disposal material resources and manpower unparalleled in human history and soon establishes itself as a tyrannical group. The self-proclaimed saviors of humanity, WICKED does not shy away from breaking any social or moral norms to meet their goals are met.

The first installment of the series, *The Maze Runner*, features an experiment that WICKED conducts. The organization plants a group of teenage boys in the maze designed as an experimental area, which the protagonists find out only after they escape. The boys have no memory of anything prior to their arrival at the maze. To add to the ordeal, the maze is guarded by huge ball-like bionic robots that can kill those who want to seek a way out. The boys form a community called the Gladers, and soon realize that their only hope is to rely on their innate intelligence, skills and cunning in order to escape from the maze. The main protagonist, sixteen-year-old Thomas, is one of the last teenagers to be dropped into the maze. The subsequent books tell the story of the Gladers' escape and their discovery of the malevolent machinations of WICKED.

I would like to propose a reading that views Dashner's narratives as a penetrating approach to the complex issue of freedom, especially the conflict between individual freedom and authoritarian agendas. In the novels, WICKED is the prime catalyst of this conflict, since it hides its authoritarian inclinations under a mantle of benevolent peacekeeping and concern for the well-being of humanity. Thomas and his friends are treated like lab rats, serving WICKED's higher purpose. Following Thomas's adventures, readers are exposed to the possible dangers to personal freedom in a world subject to authoritarian rule.

This stark contrast between individual freedom and authoritarian measures is highlighted in a scene where WICKED's Assistant Director Janson, nicknamed Rat Man, confronts the Gladers. He says:

> "I represent a group called WICKED," Rat Man continued. "I know it sounds menacing, but it stands for World In Catastrophe, Killzone Experiment Department. Nothing menacing about it, despite what you may think. We exist for one purpose and

> one purpose only: to save the world from catastrophe. … The man slowly passed his eyes over every Glader in the room. His upper lip shone with sweat. "The Maze was a part of the Trials. Not one Variable was thrown at you that didn't serve a purpose for our collection of killzone patterns. … "You may think, or it may seem, that we're merely testing your ability to survive. On the surface, the Maze Trial could be mistakenly classified that way. But I assure you – this is not merely about survival and the will to live. That's only part of this experiment. The bigger picture is something you won't understand until the very end." (55-58 *The Scorch Trials*)

Indeed, this revelation is startling for the Gladers, but as the story develops the full extent of WICKED's manipulations comes to light. Not only are the experimentees legally incapacitated, robbed of their freedom, but they are essentially objectified, as they are steered by mind-controlling devices implanted in their brains without their consent or prior knowledge. An example of how severely a person's free thinking can be dimmed by the device is evident once Thomas's chip is disabled. Thomas can observe drastic changes in his thought processes:

> "WICKED is good." For some inexplicable reason, those words popped into Thomas's mind. It was almost as if his former self—the one who'd believed that WICKED's objective was worth any depraved action—was trying to convince him that it was true. That no matter how horrible it seemed, they must do whatever it took to find a cure for the Flare. But something was different now. He couldn't understand who he'd been before. How he could have thought any of this was okay. He'd changed forever." (*The Death Cure* 49)

In Dashner's novels, the chip may represent an instrument of state oppression[43] but also, figuratively, the lazy mindset of those who are willing to sacrifice their freedom and put their trust in the hands of powers like WICKED. In turn, the activities of WICKED testify to the universal truth once expressed by Lord Acton: that absolute power corrupts absolutely. As Dashner's fiction suggests, humanity should be wary of

[43] A popular conspiracy theory regarding chip implementation is that chips can enslave the humans who have them. Interestingly, this trope has been extremely popular in fiction, which offers many renditions of electronic chips that curtail a person's agency. In this respect, the question of chipping is one facet of the discussion on the extent of the incorporation of technology into the human body. It seems that if one posits a reductionist theory of the mind, then a device producing electric impulses may indeed be able to effectively manipulate the mind by interfering with the stimuli passed to the brain. However, this could be seen as mere brain manipulation rather than mind control in the eyes of idealists who give primacy to consciousness expressed through the workings of the mind, but not limited by the physicality of the brain.

overwhelmingly powerful organizations, since they have a tendency to abuse their power. This is especially true in times of peril, when the public focuses on imminent dangers and often neglects to pay close attention to those who propose to tackle these dangers. In other words, freedom is in danger not only from evident tyrants, but also from false messiahs who goad the public into giving up their civil rights in exchange for the promise of an easy peace of mindless surrender that wipes away life's problems.

The universal truth that freedom is not a given, but something people have to defend and work for, also strongly underlies Suzan Collins's famous *The Hunger Games* trilogy. In the first novel of the series, *The Hunger Games*, Collins envisions a world in the post-apocalyptic United States where a new country called Panem is established. This state comprises twelve districts, controlled by the Capitol, whose citizens have to endure a cruel dictatorship that implements multiple surveillance and coercion methods. The freedom of the people is severely restricted by the Capitol's thirst for total dominance. It is revealed that every year the Capitol organizes an event called the Huger Games—an annual spectacle that resembles a gladiatorial competition with a special arena erected and the Games televised throughout Panem. Each district is required to submit a boy and a girl who have to fight to the death against other children; there can be only one survivor. The devious nature of the Games is designed to thwart any sign of rebellion and remind people that they are at the mercy of the Capitol. In fact, the Games were first established after one of the districts tried to loosen the power grip of the Capitol. The renegade district (thirteen) was annihilated, and since that time the Games have served as both a reminder and a threat to those who might wish to claim their freedom back.

Collins starts her narrative in district twelve, which epitomizes the broken spirit of the people of Panem. In this region, people lead harsh lives of tedious labor and misery. Food is scarce and the living conditions are terrible. Many people work in the mines, which are infamous for very high accident rates. Katniss, the sixteen-year-old protagonist of the series, often sees "[m]en and women with hunched shoulders, swollen knuckles, many who have long stopped trying to scrub the coal dust out of their broken nails" (4). One very special thing that breaks the routine of everyday life is the reaping ceremony: an event before the Games when a boy and a girl from a given district are selected. Each young member of the community has their slip in the lottery. Katniss's greatest fear is that her younger sister Prim could be chosen to fight in the arena. Unfortunately for Katniss, her sister is indeed selected, and this choice creates a

palpable tension with "the crowd murmuring unhappily" (21). The people are forced to see the most vulnerable members of the community being sent to die, stripped of their freedom and dignity. Even though the situation seems hopeless, Katniss chooses to volunteer to take her sister's place. In doing so, she not only sacrifices herself for her sister, but challenges the system as unfair. This act of courage is taken by the people as a symbol of resistance. Katniss observes that while they lack the spirit to fight back, they almost palpably emanate "[s]ilence. Which says we do not agree. We do not condone. All of this is wrong" (24). The President of Panem, Snow, immediately recognizes the danger stemming from this act of defiance and considers Katniss an enemy of the dystopian Capitol.

Though they have no freedom to refuse to enter the gladiatorial arena, Katniss and Peeta (the district twelve boy chosen by the lottery) do not despair, but try to rationally contemplate the situation they have been put into. From Peeta's perspective it is apparent that the Capitol uses the Games to dehumanize its victims as well as to build its own image of an unchallengeable power holder. However, Peeta also ponders the possibility of subverting the Capitol's plan from within the Games; he says: "I keep wishing I could think of a way… to show the Capitol they don't own me. That I'm more than just a piece in their Games" (142). Peeta realizes that once people accept their loss of freedom, they forfeit their claim on it forever. But if the Capitol's position is contested, the spirit of freedom can be reinvigorated. Katniss and Peeta choose to go down this path and vow not to become ruthless killers for the Capitol's entertainment. They act upon their love of freedom, and soon the reader realizes that the duo are not going to surrender their autonomy. On the contrary, Katniss and Peeta struggle to preserve it with every action and every decision they have to make in the arena.

Collins's depiction of the Games and the subsequent war between the people and the Capitol is full of enlightening insights on freedom, violence and the human struggle to survive. As Kimberly K. Dougherty states in "Urban Assault, Past and Future: Firebombing and Killer Robots in Suzanne Collins's *Mockingjay*," *The Hunger Games* series is a commentary on modern Western civilization, and in particular:

> Collins addresses the violence of the Twentieth Century through the medium of young adult literature, tapping historical memories to move beyond the textbook and create a visceral contemporary experience. … she exposes and challenges the direction in which current and future wars are moving. (32)

Following Dougherty's train of thought, it seems that Collins tends to use the "Young Adult genre as a medium … to expose a new generation" (40) to the problems of war and violence, as well as the loss and recovery of freedom. This trend is especially visible as the story progresses through the series.

After a few weeks the Games are at their final stage and only Katniss, Peeta and Cato, a murderous boy from District Four, are still alive. In a brutal climax, Katniss and Peeta confront and overcome Cato, thinking that both of them can be proclaimed victors after a change of the rules states that two people can co-win the Games. However, in the end they are not allowed to both win and are told that they must kill one another. Unable to decide who should die, Katniss convinces Peeta to commit suicide by eating poisonous berries. Katniss's plan stems from desperation, but it is also her last effort to undermine the Capitol's authority; as she explains: "[T]hey have to have a victor. Without a victor, the whole thing would blow up in the Gamemakers' faces" (344). In a panic, the authorities proclaim both of them victors. Initially, it seems that the ruling solves the problem, but actually an insidious plot has already been devised in the Capitol. Snow understands that through their disobedience, the young people have demonstrated that even in the harshest conditions imaginable there is still a possibility of freedom. In taking a stand against the power of the Capitol, Katniss and Peeta commit a political act of resistance that will develop into a fully-fledged rebellion. Haymitch, a mentor to both Katniss and Peeta, informs Katniss about the situation, warning her: "'Listen up. You're in trouble. Word is the Capitol's furious about showing them up in the arena. The one thing they can't stand is being laughed at and they're the joke of Panem'" (356-357). What is unbearable for the authorities is that their totalitarian power can be undermined through a simple demonstration of human dignity and an undaunted spirit.

As the first book introduces the idea of a revolution, the next installments of the series develop the subject of a fight for freedom, with Katniss standing as a symbol of liberty. Collins manages to craft a narrative in which the trajectory of the story goes from total submission to a reawakening of the desire for freedom, and ends in the successful re-establishment of a free society. In this sense, Katniss embodies the high ideal of freedom that can never be crushed or taken away. Interestingly, Katniss's vision of a world rid of dystopian terror is a remarkably simple one. It is a desire for ubiquitous freedom, which her forefathers were denied. In " 'The Dandelion in the Spring': Utopia as Romance in Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games* Trilogy,"

Katherine R. Broad analyzes the way Collins portrays Katniss's desires for free existence after the days of the dystopian dictatorship. As Broad argues, by the end of the series it becomes clear that:

> this end vision is utopian, for the way it fulfills [Katniss's] dream of a seemingly impossible world without the Capitol offers an obvious improvement over the previous dystopian regime, and highlights the possibility of enacting social change, however limited. (125)

Katniss's desire for freedom from oppression is echoed in Veronica Roth's *Divergent* series, where the question of social organization and social control is explored through the misfit protagonist who challenges the well-organized but extremely restrictive society. Roth's story is set in a post-apocalyptic Chicago where the social structure has been remade into a caste system. Everything in the city is meticulously planned, and each person commits his or her life to one of five factions that are seen as the pillars of the community. Each faction represents one of the key personality traits that its members possess. Accordingly, Abnegation is the home for the altruistic; Amity, for the peaceful and kind; Candor, for the honest; Dauntless, for the courageous; and Erudite, for the intelligent.

Thus, the most important event in the life of every member of the community is the aptitude test, a drug-induced simulation that reveals the key features of one's personality, providing insight into the mind of each community member. Every sixteen-year-old needs to take the test because the simulation is believed to prepare young adults for the faction that will be best suited for their temperament. Interestingly, the test results are treated as suggestions, not as decisive factors determining which faction one must choose. However, the choice of a faction is obligatory; otherwise a person is abandoned by the community and deemed "factionless."

The protagonist of the series, Beatrice, a young girl from a family with strong Abnegation tendencies, undergoes the test and discovers with anxiety that her results are inconclusive. People with such results are called Divergent. This occurrence is said to be extremely rare and is a phenomenon that the authorities look at as a mark of a dangerous personality. A Divergent simply does not fit into the prearranged society. What is more, a Divergent is a person who is seen as a true free thinker and free spirit, impossible to control and hard to defeat.

At the ceremony of Choosing, Beatrice decides to join the Dauntless and changes her name to Tris. From that moment on, Tris starts a personal journey of self-discovery by trial and error, facing her own fears, developing friendships and learning about the organization of the community. Soon it becomes clear that under the facade of order and peace there is a power-struggle at the top that puts the relative freedom of the citizens in danger, because one faction desires to control all the others. Erudites see themselves as the most fit to rule Chicago. Their lust for knowledge gives them the means to assume power, as they are the only faction that controls technology and they intend to use it to their advantage.

An important part of the Erudites' scheme is to take control of Tris's faction, the Dauntless, who are the only group skilled in combat. During her training, Tris realizes that the serum they are administered to supposedly track a missing member of their faction is in fact designed to control their minds. Once the serum starts to work, the power-hungry Erudites can strong-arm others into submission by using mind-controlled Dauntless as their pawns. Tris, being a Divergent, is unaffected by the serum and seizes an opportunity to challenge the Erudites and save the community.

According to Balaka Basu in her "What Faction Are You In? The Pleasure of Being Sorted in Veronica Roth's *Divergent*," the issue of individuality is at the center of Roth's series. As Basu claims, "Roth's novel appears to be positioned as a warning against the seductive pleasures of being categorized and classified" (20). Categorization kills originality and imposes boundaries on one's sense of identity. The power of Roth's narrative stems from the fact that she recognizes that individuality is the cornerstone of free thinking. Furthermore, it seems that Roth uses individuality, embodied by Divergence, as a springboard for a wider discussion of ideas connected to autonomy and freedom. Basu underscores this by stating that "Roth clearly draws a correlation between free-thinking and Divergence" (25). In the case of the test, the serum or any other instance of Tris overcoming challenges through sheer determination, it becomes apparent that "Divergence can be read … as the ability to overcome externally imposed control through the exercise of free will" (25). In other words, Tris's status as a free-thinking maverick that escapes simple categorizations enables her to be a powerful opponent for the enemies of freedom. The curse of being a Divergent turns out to be a blessing in disguise.

The way Tris grows as a protagonist is reminiscent of the development that Katniss Everdeen went through in *The Hunger Games* series. Miranda A. Green-Barteet

states in "'I'm beginning to know who I am': The Rebellious Subjectivities of Katniss Everdeen and Tris Prior" that there are many similarities between the two heroines that focus on their ability to exercise their freedom. Green-Barteet points out that both Katniss and Tris use rebellious acts primarily to "become self-governing subjects capable of directing the outcome of their own lives rather than remaining passive objects able to be controlled by their societies" (34). They both share a desire to purse their freedom to the fullest, and this overrides the subjugation that their respective societies are founded on. Furthermore, both *Divergent* trilogy and *The Hunger Games* series introduce societies that seem to revolve around the notion of annihilating one's desire to be autonomous. As Green-Barteet explains:

> both require their citizens, at times forcefully, to relinquish their individual power in exchange for a certain level of safety and security. What many of those citizens, particularly in Roth's series, fail to realize is that their deeply valued and much-desired safety comes at the cost of their individuality. (37)

Roth's world, despite its pretense of safety and order, actually precludes self-development, for it only gives its protagonists the choice of "limited freedom" (43). Tris's Divergence helps to tear down artificial boundaries and overthrow the laws of the society that prevents people from exercising their freedom to the fullest.

The prevalent message in these novels is that our times are marked by a renewed totalitarian impulse that is gaining ground in allegedly mature liberal democracies. The negative political changes are facilitated, if not outright enabled, by ever-advancing technologies that those in power use to privilege the haves over the have-nots, buttress hierarchies and control the common people through increasing surveillance and more or less clandestine violations of civil liberties.

The narratives featuring the fall of freedom discussed so far are properly dystopian, but there is another subgenre of dystopian fiction equally suited to reflection on the issues of endangered freedom: the fake utopia.[44]

[44] The question of proper nomenclature in relation to dystopia and fake utopia might be conceptualized as follows: Dystopia is designed to present a vision of the world that is unwelcome and detrimental to the human condition, whereas fake utopia can be seen as a failed utopian project that discloses its negative sides only after careful scrutiny (see: Frederick Jameson's *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions*, 2005).

Normally, utopias are viewed as fictitious places that guarantee freedom and create an environment for it to flourish. Yet once this is attained, the drive towards greater freedom seems to be eliminated: After achieving a seemingly perfect state there is no room left for improvement upon this ideal. This paradox is highlighted by the authors of *New World Orders in Contemporary Children's Literature*, who point out: "Utopian communities are thus imagined, desired … but are not represented as evolving and developing systems" (108). It therefore seems that the very nature of utopian worlds prevents evolution and makes these communities especially susceptible to the erosion of the values and laws that created the paradise in the first place.

One of the primary victims of utopian entropy is freedom. A vivid example of such an eroding utopian social order is presented by Lois Lowry in her celebrated novel for Young Adults, *The Giver*. Lowry tells the story of a boy called Jonas, who lives in a perfect community where every part of human life, from birth to old age, is meticulously planned. After a childhood dedicated to developing innate talents and doing voluntary work for the community, at the age of twelve young citizens are assigned to a particular job by the Elders, a group that governs the society. From this moment on they occupy a lifelong work position, such as the Laborer or the Nurturer. Life is simple, there are no substantial troubles, no hard feelings, nor painful memories, nor uncomfortable situations. What is more, due to advancements in science, the community established Sameness that prevents recognition of differences, either biological or ideological. Sameness manifests itself clearly when the characters fail to see color, music or acknowledge different skin tones and facial features.

Despite the potentially noble motivations behind it, such as the elimination of bigotry or inequality, Sameness also has adverse consequences for the society that most of the people fail to perceive and/or acknowledge. In "Seeing Beyond Sameness: Using *The Giver* to Challenge Colorblind Ideology," Susan G. Lea emphasizes that "from *The Giver*, we might extrapolate … that not only are there negative effects of being blind to color, there are missed opportunities and delights in not being aware of color" (62). In other words, by eradicating difference, the community in *The Giver* also eradicates the possibility to cherish and celebrate difference. Furthermore, Lea recognizes that *The Giver* uses "fear of abandonment" (54) − an anxiety often present in children who desperately want to belong to a community and are frightened that their developing individuality will be incompatible with the general trends and views of the people around them. This fear is very much present in *The Giver*, where there is no art, music,

comedy or free-spirited fun, and anyone who does not conform to the rules is cast aside and viewed as being unfit to exist in the community. As Lea further explains, "Sameness appeals to that … fear; it affords, really guarantees, safety. By fully subscribing to Sameness, all risk of individuality—of choice—is eliminated" (56). The underlying fear of abandonment becomes a springboard for the discussion of freedom in the novel. Indeed, this feature of Sameness functions as a watchdog for any hint of free thinking or free action.

Lea's observations correspond with those of Rocío G. Davis in "Writing the Erasure of Emotions in Dystopian Young Adult Fiction: Reading Lois Lowry's *The Giver* and Lauren Oliver's *Delirium.*" Davis claims that Sameness makes it possible to "obliterate historical and cultural memory," and that this results in a community that has "trapped themselves in a dystopia that rejects real individual originality as it purports to celebrate community harmony" (53). In other words, creating a utopia is at odds with freedom, both in theory and practice. Davis points out:

> So for freedom *from* the perceived conflicts resulting from emotions, the societies have given up individuality and freedom *of* choice: of profession, of marriage partners, or even of how many children will be part of their family. … Passivity becomes an ideal as citizens are encouraged to appreciate the life they have and fear anything that would disrupt the society. (61)

In short, the seemingly utopian world of *The Giver* is numb to the prospects of freedom. The very human drive to expand, explore and experience life in all its aspects is thwarted by a feeling of security and conformity. Everyone knows what his or her responsibility is, and it seems there is no place for freedom of action or expression. In *The Giver*, knowledge of the past or concern about the future appear to be unnecessary and, in fact, an undesirable burden.

This characteristic of Lowry's narrative is identified in *Utopian and Dystopian Writing for Children and Young Adults*, where Carrie Hintz and Elaine Ostry shrewdly observe that "tensions between individual freedom and the needs of society" (9) are indeed the underlying theme of the story that follows Jonas's attempts to seek individual autonomy beyond the community. At the ceremony where children turning twelve are assigned a life-long position, Jonas is given the highest honor: to become the new Receiver of Memory for his community – a position he has been carefully selected for. The Receiver is the only member of the community who experiences memories of the

past, both joyful and fearful ones. Without the Receiver, the memories could return to other people and make them re-experience their old concerns. This cognizance becomes crucial once Jonas decides to leave the community. It is explained that his escape would mean that memories and knowledge of the past would return to people. By confronting these memories and emotions, they would be liberated from the mental prison of Sameness. Jonas's departure means not only his own individual liberation, but also brings about freedom on a communal level.

The overall message of *The Giver* has been hotly debated. In the article "A Return to Normal: Lois Lowry's *The Giver*," Susan Louise Stewart criticizes Lowry's novel, arguing that even though Lowry asserts "the Power and Dominance of Choice" (23), she ultimately fails to support this idea. Lowry's novel, Stewart suggests, might have been more impactful if Jonas experienced, or at least entertained, various alternative ways to obtain freedom. Yet, the story is designed in such a way that Jonas's freedom depends on a very obvious, clear choice that everyone oriented towards freedom would make. There is no element of hesitation or temptation involved. While Stewart might be correct that Jonas does not really have a choice in the typical sense of the word, it is also true that Lowry does signal in her novel that even in the event of a system failure the only way to experience freedom is to leave the entire malfunctioning society behind. In other words, paradoxically, Jonas is forced to flee because the utopian system becomes tantamount to bondage. It seems that the system described in *The Giver* can be seen as a metaphor for the failure of liberal democracy which, if misguided by its own zeal for justice and equality, can trample freedom. The certainty that freedom will thrive in a seemingly utopian society has been exposed as false**.** Freedom should never be taken for granted; otherwise, as Lowry illustrates, this complacent approach fosters stagnation and a gradual loss of our natural yearning for freedom.

If freedom can erode and decline even in a seemingly utopian community, there is a possibility that dystopian terror might impose itself under the guise of a utopian paradise. The human striving to reach an ideal is a powerful creative force that has shaped world civilizations for millennia, but it can be immeasurably dangerous if misunderstood or manipulated. Utopias have always been concerned with the notion of perfection, but as Scott Westerfeld underscores in his *Uglies* series, the precise meaning of perfection can be twisted so that the whole ideal becomes corrupt. In Westerfeld's novels, the idea that a utopia has finally been achieved shuts down any debate on

society's shortcomings, let alone possible vices. There is no space for questioning the meaning of perfection, which in Westerfeld's world is understood primarily as physical excellence.[45] Playing on the theme of human vanity, Westerfeld creates a world where every young person that turns sixteen undergoes a state-sponsored operation that renders them perfect, all the physical imperfections of their bodies being flawlessly fixed. Those whose have had the operation are called Pretties, while those still awaiting it are called Uglies. The Pretties live in a golden cage, an ideal environment with their every whim and desire catered to by a high-tech, comprehensive serving system sponsored by the state. On top of that, their sense of superiority towards those with less-than-perfect physiques is constantly stoked up by state propaganda. The operation is communally universal and is held to be a natural part of human evolution.

The main protagonist of the series, a young girl named Tally, has been exposed to state propaganda promoting the operation since her babyhood. Tally is constantly instructed that a desire to be beautiful is what "a million years of evolution had made … part of the human brain" (*Uglies* 11). Furthermore, the state adheres to the overarching policy that any difference stemming from the biological make-up of humans is something to be eliminated. The randomness of genes, for example, is presented as a callous variable that prevents people from achieving happiness. This feature of Westerfeld's narrative is commented on by A. Salter in "Ugly Bodies, Pretty Bodies: Scott Westerfeld's *Uglies* and the Inhumanity of Culture." Salter asserts that at first the society of the Pretties might be alluring, given that it is sustained by an ideology that aims to rid the world of injustice and war. Salter points out that this craving for a better world is a universal human desire, and that "Westerfeld's text responds to" this common human need (5). The Pretties see the world prior to their operations as being worse off with all the differences it involves, and their vision of an ideal community is built upon the assumption that "the source of so much of the world's conflict seems to be driven by difference—difference of power, difference of religion, difference of values, and difference of resources" (5). Much like Lowry's *The Giver*, Westerfeld's *Uglies* showcases misuse of the noble impulses of humanity striving for perfection. By and large people may often mean well when introducing new systems that promise to cure old ills, but in their positive fervor they tend to overlook the danger of power-hungry forces conspiring to use the utopian urge to their advantage, eventually

[45] Westerfeld makes use of the modern-day cult of beauty and youth as a starting point for his exploration of transhuman possibilities that equate a perfect physique and sound health with the ideal of beauty.

curtailing the promised freedom and changing a world of hope into a dystopian nightmare.

The underlying dystopian, freedom-affecting feature of the world of the Pretties is brought up by Shay, Tally's friend, who points out to Tally that "you weren't born expecting that kind of beauty in everyone, all the time. You just got programmed into thinking anything else is ugly" (*Uglies* 47). The social programing is seen as necessary in order to ensure the Pretties' utopian plan. But the programming goes much deeper than mere propaganda. Tally begins to realize that the operation effectively limits one's autonomy and makes a person more obedient and meek. Tally's observations are corroborated by Shay's own musings that the operation changes one's personality:

> [M]aybe when they do the operation—when they grind and stretch your bones to the right shape, peel off your face and rub all your skin away, and stick in plastic cheekbones so you look like everybody else, maybe after going through all of that you just aren't very interesting anymore. (*Uglies* 30)

The operation is shown by Westerfeld to profoundly affect both one's body and one's mind. People become more docile and passive after the procedure; they also are much more eager to go along with the state propaganda, and seem to lose their grasp of the idea of freedom. As the reader learns in the first novel, this behavior is a serious side effect of brain-damaging lesions sustained during the surgery. In the article, Salter argues that even if the lesions were not used to account for the disappearance of one's autonomy, the reader would still understand that "becoming Pretty is a fundamental transformation" (9) and that the implications of allowing the state to change individuals according to its design is at odds with the fundamental sense of human freedom. Thus, Westerfeld shows that once a society becomes obsesses with a certain ideal, in this case perfection, other ideals, such as freedom, are suppressed in order to fit into the grand narrative advanced by the state.

As the series unfolds, Tally learns more about the abuse of power and misuse of technology that define the world she lives in. The young protagonist vows to oppose this oppressive system, and in the course of the subsequent novels her character evolves into a paragon of freedom. Tally defies the ubiquitous ideological and biotechnological manipulations that affect both the body and the mind, and leads a fight for freedom. Tally retains her freedom by acting upon her own ideals while opposing the

complacency and docility that are presented as utopian, but which in actuality harm people and turn society into a superficially beautiful but psychologically grim dystopia.

The dystopian narratives we have discussed so far draw heavily on the rich tradition of freedom in the West and each takes a firm stance on the issue of uncontested freedom as a cornerstone of the liberal democratic way of life. Thinkers like Tocqueville and Lakoff point to the fact that freedom is a deeply rooted ideal that is best understood in everyday practice. Furthermore, philosophical and political insights into the nature of freedom reveal that uncontested freedom is the focal point of all ideas of freedom, the source from which all interpretations of freedom emerge. Uncontested freedom is experienced primarily as an absence of coercion and as a yearning for unrestrained free enterprise. While the former aspect of uncontested freedom has been widely accepted in the popular consciousness, the latter is only now growing in importance, due to the proliferation of democratic institutions and the spread of the Western lifestyle.

Still, the popular experience of uncontested freedom in recent times is far removed from the triumphalist tone of previous decades. As demonstrated, concerns regarding the survival of freedom are best expressed in modern YA dystopian fiction that reinforces the notion of uncontested freedom in its imaginings of future scenarios where a crisis of freedom is imaginable. All of the narratives discussed in this chapter address the concept of freedom through the lens of social critique, pointing out the faults and weaknesses of systems that fail to guarantee people's civil rights and liberties. A close analysis of the political forces that shape the social dimension of freedom reveals that the uncontested freedom posited in the liberal democratic paradigm fails to accommodate currently changing political realities, showing its weaknesses when challenged by new ideological trends oriented toward social control, backed up by cutting-edge technologies. The nature of the transformation that may await Western democratic freedom is further explored in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

Contested Freedom and Its Negotiations

George Lakoff's definition distinguishing between uncontested and contested freedom will be applied in this chapter to carry out an analysis of dystopian young adult fiction, speculating on fictionally predicted negotiations of contested freedom.

As mentioned earlier, uncontested freedom is understood as an intuitive, common appreciation of what freedom means. When it comes to contested aspects of freedom, Lakoff indicates that they relate to a specific approach regarding issues that overlap with freedom but are not essential to freedom's core. For example, while both progressives and conservatives in the US recognize the reality of uncontested freedom, they differ greatly when it comes to contested freedom: the realms of religion, economy or domestic and international affairs that overlap with the core issues of the democratic model of freedom. Additionally, it is important to say that some aspects of contested freedom can be more prominent, or less so, at a given time, while others can appear or disappear as the zeitgeist demands it.

Before proceeding further with the discussion of the possible future scope and character of negotiations regarding contested freedom as they are addressed by YA speculative fiction, I need to note that the speculations are not merely imaginary, but rather informed extrapolations from the current state of world affairs. Thus to be able to appreciate the depth of literary insight offered by the authors, it is necessary to assess the current state and condition of modern Western democracies at the end of the last and the beginning of the new millennium.

It might arguably be claimed that Western Europe after WWII, the USA after the victory of the civil rights movement and Eastern Europe after the fall of communism

have almost reached the pinnacle of democratic freedom.[46] The decades of prosperity they have enjoyed have been conducive to promoting high standards of civil liberties in their institutions as well as in the daily lives of their people. By the end of the twentieth century, it appeared that freedom was well established in many areas of social and political life. This situation was in stark contrast to the volatile times of the early twentieth century, when freedom was in dire peril. Now it appeared that in an increasingly more interconnected world, humanity might gradually be transformed into a globalized community following the principles of Western democracies. In short, a prosperous future of freedom seemed within reach. This view was broadly popularized by Francis Fukuyama's seminal *The End of History*, published in 1992. Fukuyama argued that the emergence of the liberal democratic state as the ultimate victor in the struggle against communism marked a new beginning in human history. By the end of the twentieth century, it seemed that liberal democracy was widely regarded as the definitive political system. Freedom had seemingly become commonplace and there was little room for improvement; in the West just a few tiny steps toward freedom needed to be taken, rather than great leaps.

However, the belief that freedom had become a shockproof ideal that cannot be toppled has proven demonstrably false in recent years. The political and social forces within and without Western civilization have never stopped contesting freedom. The stagnant democratic model has been confronted with new challenges in a very dynamic globalized world. Among the most pertinent issues that freedom has faced is the threat of terrorism. Since the 9/11 terror attack in New York in 2001, a number of legislative measures have been put in place that have provoked intense debate on the state of freedom in the West. In America, the Patriot Act has extended the powers of the government concerning surveillance over and coercion of American citizens. The newest advancements in technology have become tools used by governmental authorities to better monitor and control American citizens. Since 2001 similar legislation has been enacted in many Western countries, including Poland. One after-effect of these measures being implemented is growing concern on the part of the public

[46] A triumphalist tone regarding the degree of freedom in the US is often questioned. The ongoing debate involving controversial social and political issues such as systemic racism, reproductive rights, and xenophobia, just to name a few, make it apparent that there is still some room for improvement for American vision of freedom. Furthermore, it must be highlighted that the liberal democratic paradigm has not been adopted to the same degree everywhere in the West. A good example of this can be seen in the current controversies surrounding the rights of LGBTQ people in countries like Poland and other former Eastern Bloc states.

about personal freedom, especially in regard to ubiquitous surveillance and privacy issues.

Another challenge to liberal democratic freedom is the process of globalization and, in particular, the way globalization pertains to economic freedom. It is no secret that corporate giants wield power and influence far beyond that of some nation-states. Multinational corporations treat the global market as a playground for their economic strategies, with corporate interests often clashing with the interests of the sovereign populations.[47] In some cases global resources such as oil or drinking water have been appropriated by large corporations. While the problem of monopolistic tendencies has always been part of capitalist economy, globalization magnifies its effects greatly. Tensions concerning free access to and free distribution of goods and resources raises questions about the allegedly beneficial nature of globalization and about its constraining impact on locally exercised democratic freedom.

Apart from international threats, Western democracies also face issues regarding the social well-being of their citizens. In the West, the gaps between different social strata have not been bridged even in the times of the greatest prosperity, and after the economic crisis of 2008, it seems that the problem has become even more apparent. In modern day Europe, many economies still feel the repercussions of the crisis: In countries like Spain, Italy or Greece, even before the COVID-19 pandemic, unemployment rates were soaring, especially among young people. In these countries, dire economic conditions are detrimental to fully enjoying the benefits of democratic freedom. It is no surprise that the lack of viable economic stability causes tensions between the haves and the have-nots. The United States, for example, witnessed a rise in massive protest movements[48] like Occupy Wall Street in September 2011. Young Americans, disillusioned with the course that liberal democracy was taking, voiced their discontent over their freedoms being trampled by bankers and tycoons, and over the government abandoning its constitutional duty to safeguard their freedoms. Thus,

[47] A clear example of the conflict of interests between corporate agendas and the nation-state can be seen in the recent clash between Google and the Chinese government, resulting in the banning of Google China in the People's Republic of China.

[48] These types of movements often express public disapproval of the state's policies and aim to reform, or sometimes even reject, the liberal democratic system that in the eyes of the protesters perpetrates institutional, economic or social injustices. Other examples of protest movements that have gained wide recognition in recent times include the American Black Lives Matter movement and the French Yellow Vests movement.

interestingly, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, in an age of apparently unprecedented expansion of the Western conception of freedom, the idea is still being tested and shaped to the needs of its current users. Considering growing police states, economic inequalities and more and more frequent legally valid violations of privacy, it might appear that freedom is in regress. The triumph of freedom heralded by Fukuyama may have been just a brief period of relative stability. It now seems that there are simply too many contested areas of freedom for this ideal to remain unaffected.

3.1. Freedom vs. the Police State and the Clash of Civilizations

The challenges facing Western liberal democracies can be further analyzed within the context of freedom and its negotiations in the changing socio-political landscape of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Fukuyama's 1992 prophesy that the evolution of liberal democratic freedom was soon to end was dismissed by Samuel Huntington, who asserted that Fukuyama had miscalculated the future of world politics. In "The Clash of Civilizations?" (1993), Huntington made it clear that he could not go along with Fukuyama's premise that the liberal democratic model as the pinnacle of freedom stands as the end of the history of political systems. Although Huntington is positive that the West has produced a working social and political model that champions freedom, he is also quite vocal about the fact that this system is far from being adopted worldwide. In fact, while Western politics and culture have a vast global impact, nowadays a contestation of the values upheld by the West is widespread in cultures that have traditionally been opposed to Western dominance. In contrast to Fukuyama's belief in the end of history, Huntington states that cultural differences will cause a massive conflict known as the clash of civilizations. To support this thesis, Huntington states:

> Western ideas of individualism, liberalism, constitutionalism, human rights, equality, liberty, the rule of law, democracy, free markets, the separation of church and state, often have little resonance in Islamic, Confucian, Japanese, Hindu or Orthodox cultures. (40)

What is more, the cultural hegemony of the West and its insistence on transcribing its values across the globe is something that stands at odds with the vested interests of

other civilizations. In Huntington's view, a cultural clash is the natural result of this antagonism:

> The West in effect is using international institutions, military power and economic resources to run the world in ways that will maintain Western predominance, protect Western interests and promote Western political and economic values. That at least is the way in which non-Westerners see the new world, and there is a significant element of truth in their view. (40)

Huntington's insights imply that liberal democracies, far from spreading worldwide, are actually contained within Western civilization. Perhaps this is why the expansion of Western democratic freedom is currently halted. Belief in the supremacy of liberal democratic freedom has been shaken by the fact that competing ideologies have started to ever more openly challenge the West. One of the most powerful and ominous threats to the Western ideal of freedom comes from a radical version of Islam.[49] Radical Islam has taken up terrorism as a tool instrumental in spreading its ideology. In his article "Terrorism, Hegemony, Globalization, Clash of Civilizations," Andrzej Galganek maintains: "Terrorism … is a manifestation of an intercivilizational clash as it demonstrates the ability of non-Western civilizations to strike at the centers of the West" (28). In other words, "[t]he increasing attractiveness of radical Islam emphasizes the failure of modernization ideals based on American values" (16), including the liberal democratic paradigm of freedom.

It seems that marginalized Islamic radicals use terror as a tool to build their ideological position, which favors the civilization of Islam and shuns Western ideals. In a similar manner, though for inverse reasons, the ever-present threat of terrorism is used by the governments of Western liberal democracies to justify increases in the use of surveillance technology and personal control measures. Thus, each in its own way, both sides are working to undermine the idea of Western freedom.

The fact that not a few modern democracies are almost imperceptibly starting to turn into police states should be a primary concern to people in the West nowadays. While liberal democracies have been promoting the notion of the common good and the will of the people in the service of freedom and civil liberties, at the present time the

[49] The weaponization of religion has been a major concern in the world of politics for centuries. In recent years, the radicalization of some Islamist groups has been seen in the West as a key reason for the rise of international terrorism.

emphasis of Western politics seems to have shifted from freedom to security. It is not surprising that in an increasingly more dangerous world, the masses are more preoccupied with their personal security. What is troubling, however, is that this inclination often correlates with a readiness to sacrifice some aspects of freedom that people used to have. Western governments tend to take advantage of popular sentiment and use it as an opportunity to extend their powers, even if some of their new policies are hard to justify as anti-terrorist measures and appear all too obviously authoritarian moves to more closely surveil and control the lives of the citizens.

In *Law, Liberty and the Pursuit of Terrorism,* Roger Douglas touches upon this issue as he points out that because of the threat of Islamist terrorism after 9/11, the United States passed a number of legislative bills and governmental regulations that have effectively limited civil liberties. Society's willingness to surrender part of their freedom was astounding. Douglas observes that if "legislatures never gave governments more powers than they were seeking, they frequently gave the government all or almost all the powers it wanted" (223). This phenomenon is explained by George R. Skoll in his interesting book *Social Theory of Fear: Terror, Torture, and Death in a Post-Capitalist World*, Skoll starts by pointing out that social control wielded by the government comes from the fact that as the lawmaker, the state is effectively the hegemon. He says:

> The law, in its totality, is a sign that stands for force. It is in this sense that law and the state coemerge. As the state claims a monopoly on violence so it claims a monopoly on coining the law. At the same time, the state normalizes the law. (50)

There is no denying that within the plethora of regulations concerning a possible terrorist threat, some could be argued to severely limit civil liberties. And the limitations do not seem to be temporary, for once governments have acquired specific powers, it is hard to imagine that they will ever surrender them willingly. Then there is the issue of the people themselves. Observing social moods, one can infer that in general, politically justified and low-profile power grab carried out by stealth is not strongly opposed by the majority of Americans or by other Western societies. On the contrary, slow yet steady changes in the law in the name of security are often widely supported. Skoll explains that this is consistent with the natural impulses that shape human social behavior. He points out that:

> mature adults in contemporary societies fear losing the securities of hierarchical control. It is safer to keep things as they are. It is safer not to know how elites control people to extract wealth. It is safer not to take responsibility for their own lives but to hand it over to someone else whom they can blame if things go wrong. (154)

Thus, taking advantage of the weaknesses of human nature, groups holding power and running state governments rob their fellow-citizens of freedom by using the pretense of providing them with security. Furthermore, the ideological narrative of the war on terror provides a believable excuse for imposing constraints on civil liberties.

3.2. Freedom, Globalization and Economic Upheaval

The massive social and political changes that have occurred in the last two decades and influenced the concept of freedom can by and large be linked to the new phenomenon of globalization, with global terrorism and rampant social control programs as its byproducts. Indeed, globalization, for all its positive idealism, may become the nemesis of modern liberal democracies and democratic freedom as we define it today. The problem lies in the very premise of this axiological transformation from separate societies into a global community. After the Cold War[50], Western countries experienced decades of relative prosperity and peace. In fact, it seemed that the world was becoming a better place under the leadership of Western democracies. As mentioned above, Western hegemony produced the idea of globalization viewed as a process that was meant to push cultures closer, close gaps between them, and eventually lead to a utopia of global oneness. This line of thinking presumes that globalization has a viable potential to enrich human life worldwide. As Clive S. Kessler observes in his essay "Globalization: Another False Universalism?":

> globalization, as a key feature of contemporary social life, does not simply work its way upon important practical dimensions (economic, political, communicative) of contemporary life but, in doing so, involves a central philosophical issue. ... – the moral issue of human equality and universalism – itself. (19)

[50] Odd Arde Westad claims in "The Cold War and the International History of the Twentieth Century" that "orthodox Western interpretation of the causes of the Cold War contains both a definition and a timeline. The Cold War means a period of Soviet aggression that was initiated by its growing power in the latter stages of the war and which had become doctrine in 1947" (3-4). This period is thought to have come to an end once the Soviet Union was officially dismantled in 1991. Westad claims that this is a traditional outlook on the Cold War period but even among historians there is a palpable skepticism if "a 'definite' history of the Cold War is possible (or indeed should it be possible)" (2).

However noble the assumptions posited by adherents of globalization are, it is apparent that globalization as a unifying project has major flaws. First, it is extremely hard to pinpoint what globalization really means, since there is no single clear definition of globalization that is agreed on in academic circles, much less in political or social spheres.[51] Second, it has long been pointed out that globalization is in fact an avatar of Western power and a way in which Western domination—especially that of the United States—is secured around the world. This power, in contrast to the traditional view of a hegemony based on military strength, is primarily realized as economic supremacy.

The complex nature of globalization as well as its impact on the notion of freedom are finely analyzed by Marek Kwiek in his article "Freedom and Globalization." Kwiek's main focus is on the extrapolation of political and social changes associated with globalization. He believes that one of the key effects of the globalized world is the erosion of national divides in favor of a global market and global society. The old world of nation-states is expected to be replaced by a new world order. Viewing the progression of globalization in the last decades, Kwiek wonders if:

> [we] already found ourselves in a "postnational" world in which there are new rules of the game in all social and political domains, as well as in economy? (3)

In this novel reality, Kwiek maintains, the economic stamina of a country or a geographical region will be decisive for determining their social and political status. Kwiek argues that with the advent of a global network of economic giants: "[the state] will become more of an arbiter between competing, mainly economic, forces, guaranteeing fair play of all participants of the game" (5). However, once the nation-state is relegated to the role of an arbiter, or worse yet, an observer of economic policies, the Western ideal of freedom may be in danger. Kwiek points out that "globalization theory and practices seem to undermine the traditional concepts of freedom and democracy." To Kwiek, this is a logical conclusion drawn from the fact that "[t]he future of the social contract of modern nation-states is no longer certain. ... Globalization favors … economic rationality rather than ... freedom, democratic principles and social values" (5). The problem stems from the fact that while liberal

[51] Globalization is often understood as a convergence of different phenomena that relate to diverse aspects of social life, for instance: a surge in international travel, an increase of interconnectedness of national economies, the founding and maintenance of international institutions such as the UN or the WHO that determine global norms of conduct, and the proliferation of popular culture through various media outlets.

democracies have to a great extent shielded their citizens from the negative impact of unchecked economic forces, the emergence of a world market as envisioned by globalists might unleash these forces on the world without adequate political instruments to regulate them. In this context, concerns about social justice in a globalized world become more apparent.

Actually, in the nineteenth century similar concerns were raised by Karl Marx and his followers, who believed that predatory capitalism perpetuated a vicious cycle of social injustice and material deprivation. Similarly, with corporations wielding power on a global scale, for smaller economic entities entering the global economic system would likely equate to playing a fixed match. As Angelo Segrillo explains in "Liberalism, Marxism and Democratic Theory Revisited," the Marxist critique of capitalism with respect to the idea of freedom was primarily focused on the fact that under the guise of equality, the system created a vast social divide between the have and the have-nots. Western democracies did not solve this problem, because, as Segrillo explains, referring to Marx's reasoning:

> capitalist society is *inherently* undemocratic because if the means of production are concentrated in the hands of a minority class, and not socialized throughout the population these unequal conditions will influence the strictly political field as well. (15)

In Segrillo's view, Marx's focus was on material resources rather than political ideas. The position that Marx highlighted is very natural to people who tend to focus on their immediate necessities, and especially on their material condition. In his understanding, only a vast abundance of material resources, and/or opportunities to get them, could enable people to take advantage of the civil liberties that democratic societies offer. As Segrillo states:

> Marx's truly great idea is that in human society as well as in nature nothing takes place otherwise than through material transformations. … desire is nothing; we have got to know the material conditions which determine our possibilities of action; and in the social sphere these conditions are defined by the way in which man obeys material necessities in supplying his own needs, in other words, by the method of production. (44)

While it must be admitted that since Marx's time, liberal democracies have evolved to restrain some of the inherent flaws of the capitalist economy, the problems have not been satisfactorily solved. To make matters worse, in a globalized world liberal democracies might become obsolete, and the new economic system that would emerge would likely be hijacked by corporate monopolies that would have a major say in many social and political issues, including those of liberal freedoms.

3.3. Freedom and Its Negotiations

Freedom as understood in Western civilization has been envisioned as a liberal ideal. Liberal democratic systems have arisen to shape cultural and political conditions and to build institutions that would secure liberal democratic freedom. As the previous chapters indicate, the history of freedom is a history of its continuous expansion, and thus, as George Lakoff points out in *Whose Freedom?*, the "traditional idea of freedom is progressive" (3). In recent years this liberal democratic freedom has been contested on various fronts. One of the effects of this dispute is a growing concern about freedom being a genuinely progressive ideal. To contest the very nature of freedom is to effectively cast a shadow of doubt on its intrinsic meaning, resulting in a plethora of ways in which freedom can be negotiated, or even challenged in Western democracies. This issue is important, Lakoff says, because the way people perceive their cultural ideals shapes the living reality of a given culture.

As Lakoff aptly observes, contesting freedom involves a possible redefinition of the concept. In order to illustrate this point, Lakoff begins his book with remarks concerning the political situation in the United States at the verge of the twenty-first century. He points out that the conservative wing of American politics wishes to redefine the very meaning of freedom in America, their goal being to "go back before these progressive freedoms were established" (5). In other words, with recent developments in politics, freedom as an ideal is vulnerable to a transformation called for by those who wish to weave their own political narratives. If this is so, the danger of a profound paradigm shift regarding freedom is on our doorstep. Lakoff is deeply worried by these tendencies, and he poignantly states: "[f]reedom defines what America is—and it is now up for grabs" (5). American politics have moved in the direction of contesting ideals that define the nation's very existence. Conscious of the possible danger of such a bias, Lakoff warns that "[t]o lose freedom is a terrible thing; to lose the idea of freedom

is even worse" (5-6). But it is not only America where political battles are being fought over cultural ideas. In Europe, as in much of the broadly understood West, the rise of fundamentalist and populist movements that challenge the liberal democratic vision of freedom is an undeniable fact. These powerful political forces seem to champion an understanding of freedom as a prize in an ideological war. In short, it does not matter if the liberal democratic ideal of freedom has permeated Western democracies for centuries now, since populists believe that the idea of freedom is not set in stone and can be redefined according to their own needs.

This ideological revolution is accompanied by momentous social and cultural changes that are taking place in the West. An average European or American citizen sees the world as increasingly influenced by the changing economic environment, multicultural policies and an upsurge in technological advancements. These cultural challenges coincide with the aforementioned crisis of liberal democracy. Thus, the present state of political life in the West is a fertile ground for new ideologies to spring up. The major lure of the new fundamentalists' and populists' propaganda is their promise to solve all the socially imperative issues by instituting a new order that will re-evaluate and positively transform present-day democracy. Actually, this goal is not as far-fetched as it might appear, given that fundamentalists and populists play on universal human sentiments, using alarmist rhetoric and generating a sense of emergency in the political consciousness of nations. Indeed, Lakoff is observant in his assertion that today, perhaps more than ever before, the fate of freedom will rest on the result of the battle of ideas.

Perhaps the most problematic aspect of the changes in the political sphere is the claim laid by populist politicians on the monopoly of representing the voice of the people. While the key aspect of democracy is political diversity, populists present themselves as the only ones who are in touch with the problems faced by the people in Western democracies, wielding post-truth as a political weapon and overburdening national budgets to bribe societies. In doing so, they distort the concept of the will of the people, for in actuality they do not speak for the majority. Benjamin Arditi in his study *Politics On the Edges of Liberalism: Difference, Populism, Revolution, Agitation* adduces Carl Schmitt, a German political theorist, who shared a similar perception of concepts like the will of the people, the public good and the populist agenda. Arditi notes that Schmitt constructed his theories around the notion of contesting the status quo. Much like modern-day populists who challenge liberal freedom and democracy,

Schmitt believed in a "sense of a moment when 'the power of real life' as he calls it, shakes the pattern of mechanical repetition characteristic of normal times" (96). In Schmitt's model, "great transformations occur … by setting in motion human collectives" (96). In a similar fashion, populists try to sway the power of the masses to their advantage. They seem to feel that time is nigh when a corrective to democratic practices and the concept of freedom should be conducted, and believe that with them in power the West will move along the right path − their path.

The appeal of the populists stems from the seemingly reasonable postulates they make. Arditi recognizes that, at least on the level of everyday politics, it is "hard to reject many of [populists'] avowed goals when taken at face value, as they read like a wish list for a socialist and radical-democratic agenda," (56) especially the very appealing claim "to empower the 'common man' " (56). Nevertheless, alluring as these promises are, they are out of tune with populists' troubling belief in "the messianic nature of [their] leaders" (56) and the requirement of total submission to the rules posited by the new order that these leaders propose. And when personal freedom is at stake, these authoritarian tendencies do not bode well for the governed.

The complex nature of democracy and freedom entangled in an ideological struggle is one of the issues addressed by Robert Dahl, an eminent scholar of freedom and democracy. In his life-long study of these ideas, Dahl does not shy away from tackling the issue of the crisis of freedom and democracy. In "The Past and Future of Democracy," Dahl maintains that the West is now in a period of soul-searching, and that this examination of democratic values is bringing forth interesting, and sometimes disturbing conclusions. Simply put, Dahl notes that on the one hand, for a great number of people freedom and democracy have become empty slogans. On the other hand, there is still a deep faith in these ideals, even if many people are disenchanted with them. Freedom may have become a cliché term, but the ideal remains deeply rooted in people's lives. Feeling perplexed, Dahl tries to come to grips with these seemingly mutually exclusive approaches to freedom and democracy, stating:

> In quite recent years, a new and rather disturbing change seems to have taken place in some of the oldest and seemingly most secure democracies—that is to say, in democratic countries. Many citizens appear to have lost confidence in their key political institutions … And yet, paradoxically, that loss of confidence has not, at least so far, eroded citizens' support for democracy, which remains surprisingly strong. (3)

This paradox, Dahl asserts, makes the perennial nature of democracy and freedom even more pronounced. Dahl ventures the questions: "[D]oes it reveal something deeper about the nature of democracy? And what, if anything, does it portend for the future?" (3). In the context of modern politics, it seems that these questions remain as important as ever.

Tensions concerning these ideological battles over freedom have their expression in the world of fiction as well. As noted in the previous chapters, literary fascination with freedom seems to intensify with every successive decade. The growing intensity with which many authors are pursuing speculative literary scenarios where freedom is in peril may be correlated with the fact that freedom is being viciously attacked in various social and political spheres. In *Picture Imperfect: Utopian Thought for an Anti-Utopian Age*, Russell Jacoby offers an analysis of the key aspects of utopian and dystopian fiction. In his view, this type of fiction offers a unique possibility for critical engagement with various socio-cultural issues interwoven into narratives that depict future worlds that are in many ways reminiscent of ours. When it comes to the issue of freedom in dystopian literature, Jacoby observes, "dystopias seek to frighten by accelerating contemporary trends that threaten freedom" (12-13). This statement echoes strongly on the pages of recent young adult science fiction dystopias that engage in critical extrapolations on the possible pathways to contest, or even redefine freedom.

3.4. Young Adult Dystopian Narratives and a Redefinition of Freedom

One example of an extrapolation on modern challenges to freedom is envisioned in Neal Shusterman's *Unwind* series. Shusterman's America is a mirror image of the modern day United States, with the exception that rising tension between Pro-Life and Pro-Choice advocates cannot be resolved through democratic processes, which leads to a brutal conflict known as the Second Civil War or the Heartland War. As a result, the country's weak democracy crumbles under pressure from both sides and a new political order emerges. Eventually, the newly constituted government proposes conciliatory policies that are aimed at healing the nation. In exchange, however, the new authorities assume autocratic power over human life. In this reconstructed America, the very nature of liberal democratic freedom is altered. In his novels, Shusterman describes the moral, spiritual and political consequences that arise in the aftermath of this transformation. The plot serves as a catalyst for Shusterman's contemplation of the effects of the shift,

and it seems that his insights are meant to provide the reader with ideas about the way freedom might be redefined.

In the novels it is clear that in this new political reality, a dramatic change in the approach to human life has occurred. In the very beginning of the series, it is explained as follows:

> The Bill of Life states that human life may not be touched from the moment of conception until a child reaches the age of thirteen. However, between the ages of thirteen and eighteen, a parent may choose to retroactively "abort" a child. (*Unwind* n.p.)

Within the time frame specified by the Bill of Life, teenagers, once deemed by their parents to be failures, can have their rights taken away. Once their freedom is removed, they are detained by the state to be unwound, that is, to get dismantled for their body parts. In other words, the state has the power to retroactively strip teenagers of their rights as citizens, which they seemingly acquired at conception. Thus, in Shusterman's America, the concept of unalienable rights that are guaranteed to every person is undermined. It is now the government that has full power to decide if the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness can be terminated. It is a chilling vision of the future, because the ideals that America was founded upon have been completely discarded. Moreover, the termination of rights is not tied to any transgression of the law by the children. Rather, it is subject to an arbitrary governmental ruling that uses the decision made by the parents as a pretext. Importantly, there seems to be no legal measure to appeal against this decision. Appalling as it might appear, freedom in Shusterman's world is conditional, not an inalienable right as imagined by the Founding Fathers.

The prospect of exclusion from civic society is something that strikes terror in the hearts of the characters in Shusterman's narratives. The essence of the governmental approach to the unwinds is epitomized in a conversation between Connor, a young protagonist who runs an asylum for runaway unwinds, and his close friend and right-hand man, Trace. They talk privately about the fate of teenagers who have managed to escape from Juvenile Authority, the state agency that captures unwinds. For both of these characters, it is apparent that the children were "legally made nonentities" (*Unwholly*, 126), and consequently cannot claim any legal protection. At one point, the

antagonist of the series, a violent and charismatic young man named Starkey, learns the ugly truth about the fate of the unwinds. As soon as he is deemed to be a burden to his family, the Juvenile Authority comes to take Starkey away. When is being escorted away, one of the officers remarks mockingly: "Congratulations, Mr. Starkey. You no longer exist" (*Unwholly* 5). At that moment, Starkey realizes what unwinding really means. It is apparent that to be deemed an unwind means to be categorized as a person that has no legal standing and therefore no rights.

From these examples, it is clear that Shusterman is interested not only in the moral and ethical dimensions of a person's freedom being stripped away, but also in the issue of freedom and human rights as a political concept. This problem is central to the work of the Italian political thinker Giorgio Agamben. Agamben states that the actuality of a human being as a subject to political authority has been a source of social tensions for centuries, which is especially visible in the modern era. In his *Means Without End*, Agamben offers the following insight concerning the political landscape:

> Classical politics used to distinguish clearly between zoe and bios, between natural life and political life, between human beings as simply living beings, whose place was in the home, and human beings as political subjects, whose place was in the polis. Well, we no longer have any idea of any of this. We can no longer distinguish between zoe and bios, between our biological life as living beings and our political existence, … our private biological body has become indistinguishable from our body politic, experiences that once used to be called political suddenly were confined to our biological body, and private experiences present themselves all of a sudden outside us as body politic. We have had to grow used to thinking and writing in such a confusion of bodies and places, of outside and inside, of what is speechless and what has words with which to speak, of what is enslaved and what is free. (138-139)

In other words, with the progress of political awareness and the expansion of political institutions and doctrines, human beings have become principally identified through their affiliation with the state, that is, their identity is synonymous with being subject to some kind of political authority. Agamben points out that this is evident in the legal status of a refugee. He also states that in the modern world a human being is basically a political being, since there is no civilization today that does not involve politics. Agamben is certain that while everyone's personal life has inevitably become political, very few people indeed realize the fact. He says that popular understanding of what life is arises from a stubborn adherence to the previous state of affairs: a world where zoe −

"bare life," as Agamben calls it − and bios − political life − were separate. In contemporary times, however, "bare life" has been absorbed by political life.

By extension, it stands to reason that each aspect of human life is regulated by politics. That is why in Shusterman's world political authority can arbitrarily strip away someone's freedom, because if one is not a citizen, one is not officially a human being either. This state of affairs is emphasized by Agamben in the following passage:

> In the system of the nation-state, so-called sacred and inalienable human rights are revealed to be without any protection precisely when it is no longer possible to conceive of them as rights of the citizens of a state. (*Means Without End* 19-20)

If this is so, Shusterman's America is even more ominous than it may have appeared at first. In this world, freedom is redefined as not universal, but conditional by nature. To be free requires a proper legal status. When this status is removed, freedom no longer applies to a person. Because of this redefinition of what freedom means, a whole group of people can be mercilessly treated as things rather than human beings. Needless to say, this violation of personal freedom stands in sharp contrast to the original spirit of the Declaration of Independence, which championed inalienable human rights.

There is yet another approach that explains the redefinition of freedom that takes place in the *Unwind* series: the notion of governmentality, which entails an examination of phenomena that many political scholars recognize as being pertinent to modern Western democracies. Within this conceptual framework, governmentality defines new ways in which liberal democracies exercise their powers in relation to civil freedoms. Briefly, governmentality refers to government practices and behaviors aimed at molding the mass of citizens in ways that those in power deem appropriate. In *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society*, Mitchell Dean asserts that in contemporary times liberal democracies have become the locus of governmentality. Dean addresses the question of how liberal democracies are changed by their use of coercive and disciplinary methods of governing. Dean states that the primary function of each government is to regulate the everyday life of their citizens. Thus, the more far-reaching the government is, the more influence on everyday human affairs it exerts. For Dean, the government concerns itself primarily with determining the playing field of human existence, and thus, logically, it engages with the realm of freedom. For Dean, to be free

is to be able to act freely within a given socio-political reality (*Governmentality* 21). In light of this, Dean makes the following observation:

> The problem [the people] have faced in recent times was not the imaginary fascism of the liberal-democratic state, but how sovereign and coercive rationalities and techniques, from the detention camp to workfare, were suddenly and unexpectedly re-implemented within the very territory of the liberal art of government. (8)

Dean suggests that present-day liberal democracies are transforming into governing systems that are progressively more intrusive and ever more coercive with regard to an individual's freedom. However, he also maintains that there is a significant difference in this respect between modern democracies and authoritarian states of the past. His rationale is as follows: "*liberal* modes of government, are distinguished by trying to work through the freedom or capacities of the governed" (23) in contrast to absolutist regimes that wanted to thwart the freedom of the people in order to impose the regime's rule. Consequently, in these changed political systems, freedom is not to be negated, but contained within a specifically designed political framework. Dean probes this idea further:

> Government concerns the shaping of human conduct and acts on the governed as the locus of action and freedom. It therefore entails the possibility that the governed are to some extent capable of acting and thinking otherwise. (23)

In other words, this new system seizes people's lives through its all-encompassing regulatory power and wields freedom as a tool to be used for authoritative purposes. In this context, what passed as democracy is but a shadow of the liberal democratic model upheld decades before the dawn of governmentality.

This idea that freedom itself can be instrumental in bringing about a new political order that eclipses liberal democracy may explain why Shusterman's world is so obscure when viewed in the context of modern liberal standards. Unlike many other authoritative regimes that feature in varied dystopian narratives, Shusterman's future America has a semblance of freedom left, but it is a misguided and misused freedom. Paradoxically, unwinding is hailed as a great triumph of a democratic process of conciliation and compromise, while the contemporary approach towards this issue would be that of incredulity and outrage.

Shusterman's message concerning freedom seems to parallel Dean's observations. Dean points out that even though liberal democracy is a model that tends to "presents itself as a critique of excessive disciplinary power in the name of the rights and liberty of the individual" (133), it has not rid itself of this method, but rather has remade it into a tool to be used more modestly and perhaps more covertly. In democratic modes of government, authoritarian connotations of coercion and discipline have been abandoned, while new associations of these methods as tools to maintain peace and secure order have been introduced. Hence, for Dean it is obvious that liberal democracies will clandestinely view coercion and discipline as useful tools to secure social order. The issue is where to draw the line demarcating the justified use of these tools, since excessive usage of them is often rationalized through the language of democratization, but is, in fact, in violation of the democratic spirit. In this respect, liberal democracies are one step away from authoritative governments, and in some cases, as Shusterman's novels indicate, these flaws in democratic systems become apparent, turning freedom into a parody of itself.

These deliberations on freedom, life and politics can be traced back to the work of Michel Foucault. The French philosopher is renowned for his contributions to political science and philosophy in the field of coercive power and state authority. In particular, Foucault is hailed as a pioneer in the field of biopolitics, a novel approach to coercive politics that examines the notion of regulating life through disciplinary means. In their article "Biopolitics and Security in the 21st Century," commentators of Foucauldian biopolitics Michael Dillon and Luis Lobo-Guerrero maintain that the concept of biopolitics entails:

> epistemologies … concerned with surveillance and the accumulation and analysis of data concerning behavior, the patterns which behavior displays and the profiling of individuals within the population. Instead of causal law, such power/knowledge is very much more concerned to establish profiles, patterns and probabilities. (6-7)

As those authors suggest, Foucault postulated that "political existence and power, [are] not simply dealing in legal subjects but with living beings" (13-14). In other words, biopolitics is a venture into the mechanisms of administrative power over human life as encapsulated in the political reality of the modern nation state. In this respect, the liberal democratic view of freedom is one of the permutations of biopolitical realities that

modern Western civilization upholds. Freedom as understood in this model is a function of biopolitics, not an independent ideal. And this is so because freedom can only be exercised through human action, and if this action is modeled or directed, freedom is also transformed. In other words, in Foucauldian philosophy, freedom is eclipsed by biopolitical machinations.

Another scholar of Foucauldian thought, Bogdana Koljević, further explains biopolitics in her article "Biopower and Government Techniques." Koljević says:

> Foucault scrutinizes the gradual penetration of life into history, i.e. into law and politics, starting from the 18th and onwards through the 19th and 20th centuries. Foucault refers to this process - corresponding to the development of liberalism – as biopolitics. Biopolitics, therefore, is not a term denoting just any discipline, but a rather specific tendency, a conceived technique used to start regulating the life of the populace in its entirety. (72)

Hence, in biopolitics freedom is encompassed entirely by political systems and gradually transformed according to the authorities' grand plan.[52] Foucault assumes that freedom is a facet of an autonomous human life and so can become instrumental in creating a biopolitical reality.

As the above deliberations demonstrate, the freedom of the body is gradually transformed into a tool of biopolitics. This notion is best illustrated in Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*. Foucault maintains that the steady transformation of the body into a tool to be used by the state is best exemplified by the disciplinary techniques that were implemented at the dawn of modern incarceration systems in the eighteenth century. Before that time, sovereigns operated primarily through force and corporal penalties, but in the Age of the Enlightenment, the sovereigns' power was manifested as a transformative force, aimed at changing the subjects' bodies and minds.

These aspects of Foucauldian thought find an apt parallel in the reflections on the vicissitudes of freedom in Suzanne Collin's *The Hunger Games* trilogy, set in a world built on coercive power and the rule of terror propagated by an all-powerful state. Collins's novels take place in a dystopian future where a new political order has emerged from the ashes of the United States. This new country, called Panem, is

[52] In this case, there seems to be no outright rejection of freedom, but rather freedom becomes a part of a political paradigm and ceases to be a moral or philosophical concern.

controlled by the Capitol, Panem's power center. Panem's subordinate districts correspond to different regions of the modern-day US. While Shusterman's future America is a place where there is still a vague illusion of freedom and democracy left, Collins draws a much grimmer picture of the totalitarian state of Panem eradicating any vestiges of freedom.

In order to solidify its power, the Capitol employs biopolitics: meticulous strategies that restricted in the capacity of both the human mind and the human body to exercise freedom. The emergence of Panem is celebrated every year with a ceremony called The Reaping Day. In District Twelve, where Katniss (the main protagonist of the series) resides, the mayor recounts the foundation of Panem during the ceremony. Katniss reports this event:

> It's the same story every year. He tells the history of Panem, the country that rose up out of the ashes of a place that was once called North America. He lists the disasters, the droughts, the storms, the fires, the encroaching seas that swallowed up so much of the land, the brutal war for what little sustenance remained. The result was Panem, a shining Capitol ringed by thirteen districts, which brought peace and prosperity to its citizens. Then came the Dark Days, the uprising of the districts against the Capitol. Twelve were defeated, the thirteen obliterated. The Treaty of Treason gave us new laws to guarantee peace and, as our yearly reminder that the Dark Days must never be repeated, it gave us the Hunger Games. (*The Hunger Games* 18)

The Hunger Games are a gladiatorial tournament in which children from each district are selected during the Reaping Day ritual and then forced to participate in mortal combat. Katniss is fully aware that the Capitol uses the Hunger Games to strike terror in the hearts and minds of the population; as she says: "this is the Capitol's way of reminding us how totally we are at their mercy. How little chance we would stand of surviving another rebellion" (*The Hunger Games* 18). Much like in the Foucauldian vision of biopolitics, the Capitol rules through a combination of force and manipulation. It is apparent that the Capitol's agenda is to thwart any form of resistance through the use of children as sacrificial scapegoats. The bodies of the children are therefore objects of the Capitol's policy. Katniss states that this can also be regarded as a form of torture; she notes: "To make it humiliating as well as torturous, the Capitol requires us to treat the Hunger Games as a festivity, a sporting event pitting every district against the others" (19). The power of the state to exercise coercive power though torture is also

explored in Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*. Much like the ritual of the Reaping Day, the tributes in Collins's novel can be associated with "[t]he tortured body [which] is first inscribed in the legal ceremonial that must produce, open for all to see, the truth of the crime" (*Discipline and Punish* 35). The crime in this case is the actuality of a deep-seated yearning for freedom that still exists within the populace. In an echo of Foucault's concepts, in *The Hunger Games* series the bodies of the protagonists become tools of biopolitics, constraining personal freedom.

If the ritual of the games can be seen as an elaborate form of torture, it can also be argued that it is designed as a vicarious death penalty imposed on the once-rebellious districts. Foucault specifically links capital punishment meted out by the state to a crude demonstration of power; he says: "The public execution is to be understood not only as a judicial, but also as a political ritual. It belongs, even in minor cases, to the ceremonies by which power was manifested" (*Discipline and Punish* 47). As noted, this power rests within the premise of coercive and disciplinary methods that each government can employ. In this respect, it becomes apparent that even liberal democracies are no different from authoritarian states, for they also employ these tools, albeit on a much smaller scale. Foucault seems to suggest that no matter the system, coercion and discipline are always at odds with freedom.

In Collins's novels, this fact produces tension between the biopolitical agenda of the state and people's striving for freedom. One of the protagonists, Peeta, expresses this sentiment: "I keep wishing I could think of a way … to show the Capitol they don't own me. That I'm more than just a piece in their Games" (*The Hunger Games* 142). As the utterance illustrates, freedom in Panem has become totally encapsulated within a political system where the government is in a position to dictate its range and scope. In this arrangement, the state acts as an administrator of freedom, while the people are relegated to the status of passive recipients of what the state is willing to present as freedom.

The vision of the state seizing freedom has been a widely entertained anxiety in the Western world. The aforementioned dystopian novels of the *Unwind* series and *The Hunger Games* trilogy also reflect on this disturbing possibility. Both Shusterman and Collins present a narrative trajectory where the state becomes a malicious tyrannical force. As far as political and philosophical deliberations are concerned, the insights provided by Agamben, Mitchell and Foucault also probe this issue. In virtual unison the thinkers suggest that it is an inherent feature of modern states, including liberal

democracies, to assume an authoritarian role towards their citizens. In other words, the modern state apparatus gradually penetrates all the strata of society, appointing itself the role of the sole protector and manager of the citizens' lives.

This process has been particularly visible in the United States, a liberal democracy that was founded on the premise of popular opposition to tyranny and authoritarianism, whose political project assumed universal freedom to all landowners, eventually broadened to include people of color and women. A study of the political history of the USA reveals that as consecutive decades passed, the federal government evolved from the guardian of freedom, removed from the everyday life of the average American, to an enabler of freedom that interferes with every aspect of a citizen's existence.[53]

The first attempts at curtailing hard-won civil freedoms in the USA can be traced back to the early days of American democracy. In nineteenth century America, the ideal of freedom was rooted in the notion of autonomous individuals pursuing their goals with a minimum of interference from the government. That was a time when unchecked capitalism was rampant and the ideals of self-reliance and self-sufficiency ruled supreme in American society. Yet amidst America's territorial expansion, the political power of Washington DC over the nation grew increasingly. To Henry David Thoreau, it seemed that freedom was caught up in the trap of political machinery. Thoreau expresses his concerns with the growing institutionalization of freedom in his essay "Civil Disobedience," where he states:

> government never of itself furthered any enterprise, but by the alacrity with which it got out of its way. It does not keep the country free. It does not settle the West. It does not educate. The character inherent in the American people has done all that has been accomplished; and it would have done somewhat more, if the government had not sometimes got in its way. (189)

The writer is very adamant in his criticism of any overly influential government. His sees freedom as stemming from unrestrained human action rather than as a state that

[53] For example, the Jeffersonian ideal of agrarian America with a restrained governmental power was supplanted by the welfare state ideal that expanded the power of the government during F.D. Roosevelt's presidency, and in modern times by Barack Obama's interventionism.

needs to be monitored and sanctioned by an institution. Interestingly, when Thoreau says:

> The mass of men serve the state thus, not as men mainly, but as machines, with their bodies. ... In most cases there is no free exercise whatever of the judgement or of the moral sense; but they put themselves on a level with wood and earth and stones; and wooden men can perhaps be manufactured that will serve the purpose as well. (190-191)

Thoreau sounds almost exactly like Foucault, for he sees the instrumentalization of citizens as the antithesis of what freedom is supposed to be. The American thinker believes that freedom can only flourish in a society built on individual autonomy guaranteed by a small government.

Thoreau's near-anarchistic concerns about the oppression of big government were verified in the decades that followed his statement, most definitively during the traumatic upheaval of the Great Depression that precipitated the crisis of the venerated idea of freedom as self-reliance unencumbered by strict governmental control. The autonomous, free American was confronted by forces that were much larger than an individual person could manage. The market crash rendered people vulnerable and in dire need of protection from the economic fallout. At the time, the long-cherished dream of freedom was eclipsed by a strong desire for security. The government met this need with F. D. Roosevelt's proposal of the New Deal, which to all intents and purposes redefined freedom as a social prerogative secured and regulated by the state rather than an inalienable right exercised by independent individual citizens.

As the years after World War II prove, Western liberal democracies have followed the path of an increasing systematization and politicization of civil freedom. In the following decades, Roosevelt's 1941 State of the Union address, commonly referred to as "The Four Freedoms" speech, served as a manifesto for most Western liberal democracies. Roosevelt understood the expansion of freedom in terms of a "perpetual peaceful revolution" (4) and he felt that in the grim realities of World War II America needed to assert its place as a beacon of freedom and an enabler of free society. Roosevelt's vision was that of America united under the banner of the freedoms the federal government was supposed to protect:

> The first is freedom of speech and expression—everywhere in the world. The second is freedom of every person to worship God in his own way—everywhere in the world. The third is freedom from want—which, translated into world terms, means economic understandings which will secure to every nation a healthy peace time life for its inhabitants—everywhere in the world. The fourth is freedom from fear—which, translated into world terms, means a worldwide reduction of armaments to such a point and in such a thorough fashion that no nation will be in a position to commit an act of physical aggression against any neighbor—anywhere in the world. (6)

Roosevelt's America was meant to adopt a nationwide policy concerning democratic freedom that was in accord with the political agenda of the time. This politicization of freedom required ideological cooperation of the people, for as Roosevelt said:

> A free nation has the right to expect full cooperation from all groups. A free nation has the right to look to the leaders of business, of labor, and of agriculture to take the lead in stimulating effort, not among other groups but within their own groups. The best way of dealing with the few slackers or trouble makers in our midst is, first, to shame them by patriotic example, and, if that fails, to use the sovereignty of government to save government. (5)

The last sentence illustrates perfectly Roosevelt's idea of the state emerging as the ultimate guarantor and wielder of freedom. This novel attitude was a far cry from the individualist, highly autonomous vision of freedom of the nineteenth century. Now, freedom was to be dependent on communal participation that was sanctioned by the state's policy. To deviate from this policy was to sabotage freedom for all others.

It seems that Roosevelt's freedom from fear corresponds with Erich Fromm's insights concerning freedom in the modern age. Fromm contends that individual freedom is a source of tension within a person who struggles to embrace responsibility for his or her own actions. Moreover, an individual often feels impotent in the face of impersonal forces of great magnitude, such as wars or economic crises. In these conditions, individual freedom does not amount to much. In times of trouble, a strong government or an authoritative leader may be perceived as a perfect locus of freedom. In exchange for security backed up by a force greater than any single person, an individual is tempted to view freedom as a right maintained by the state. However, while individual freedom is only limited when it encroaches on the freedom of another individual, freedom sanctioned by the state is always conditional. Nowadays, arguably,

Western countries are plagued by excessive coercion and infringement of the personal spheres of individuals' lives in the name of public security. Governments indeed offer freedom from fear, but at the cost of a long list of liberties being limited.

In point of fact, since the 1940s, a great shift has occurred in Western democracies. The state as an institution has taken on the role of the locus of freedom and its policies have become associated with securing freedom from social calamities, like economic injustices or health crises. This phenomenon has become known as the welfare state.[54] Unlike the small government of the nineteenth century, the welfare state of the twentieth century has become a caretaker, tending to the needs of its citizens much like a parent takes care of children. The state wields its power through sweeping social programs and political projects. Interwoven with them, freedom is offered to people as a product designed in accordance with the vision of those in charge. Consequently, freedom becomes an instrument of political strategy.

In *Governmentality,* Dean explains the phenomenon of the welfare state of modern liberal democracies and how it affects freedom and civil liberties. He sees the welfare state as an expression of a secular rendition of the Christian ideal of the shepherd and the flock. While the biblical image of the God-Father was projected onto the figure of the shepherd and the faithful were envisioned as the flock, the modern version of this model "is modified to be transformed into its secular version of state and citizen" (91). Similarly to the totalizing power of religion, the modern state assumes a totalizing power as well. In this context, the freedom of an individual is confined to what the state deems to be the appropriate expression of freedom. This is an idea of freedom that is "tied up … with the relation between the collective and the individual, with notions of obedience and duty" (99). As Dean observes, the idea of submission to the authority figure sits at the heart of the liberal democratic system:

> Liberalism presents itself as a critique of excessive disciplinary power in the name of rights and liberty of the individual. However, …. [t]he generalization of discipline is a

[54] While the welfare state was supposed to be a remedy for the problems that plagued the Western world, it was also heavily criticized as a faulty political arrangement. In his 1977 lecture entitled "The Fallacy of the Welfare State," Milton Friedman claimed that the key dangers ensuing from the welfare state dynamics are governmental incompetence in the distribution of wealth, and normalization of coercion as an effective measure to collect money from citizens. He also argued that "[t]he welfare state measures … strain the social fabric and tend to undermine the social consensus, which is necessary for a decent and a free society. … The welfare state tends to divide its citizens into special interest groups, each of which seeks to promote its interest at the expense of some other group" (8).

> condition of liberal government and necessary to processes of the democratization of sovereignty. (133)

Dean believes that while the West has moved away from the historically infamous political systems of intrusive and heavy-handed authoritarianisms toward more subtle and benign modern liberal democracies, the element of disciplinary power has been retained. In this sense, a democratic state posits itself as a positive force that offers freedom and liberty, public values so precious that any opposition to the state's policies is treated as an attack on freedom. Much like a protective parent enacts his or her will on a family and takes measures to direct the children toward the right path, any modern liberal state takes action to make sure that its objectives are met by the citizens. Therefore, to contest these measures is to undermine the implied cogency of the parent-state and its vision of freedom.

Lois Lowry's celebrated novel *The Giver* is an illustrious example of a state assuming the parental role. The rulers of the community in the novel, the Elders, operate under the guise of benevolent authorities that try to secure a good life for the citizens. The population in *The Giver* lives under an illusion of a perfect society where freedom can flourish. In fact, as the reader sees through the eyes of the young protagonist, Jonas, freedom is restricted to a matrix of rules and regulations that severely limit any autonomous action. And not only that, for the daily life of every citizen is scrupulously monitored by ubiquitous surveillance systems. On top of that, even natural human impulses, for example sexual urges, are suppressed through drugs. All of this is done in the name of the peace and security that being a part of the community ensures.

What is striking, however, is that the average community member seems to believe that he or she is living in a true utopia rather than a dystopian nightmare. This apparent paradox of perception may be explained by insights proposed by George Lakoff. The American cognitive scientist and linguist argues that an adopted frame of reference constitutes the most powerful tool that shapes the human view of reality. The community in *The Giver* subscribes to a potent frame in which freedom and individuality are subjugated to the communal good and the authority of the Elders. Within this framework, anyone who does not conform is seen as an aberration. Hence, one could argue that the world of *The Giver* is the final product of a welfare state gone rogue. In this reality, the government is seen as a parental figure that always knows best what is good for the citizens, who are infantilized.

In fact, Lakoff observes that the conceptualization of the government as a parent has deep roots in the way people use language. In common speech, the idea of a family is often equated with that of a nation, while parental authority seems to be projected onto state leaders.[55] Lakoff asserts that while the conceptual framework for a nation is a family, America has two very different models of what an ideal family should be: a strict-father family and a nurturing-parent family. In the United States, the strict-father model applies to conservative politics, while the nurturing-parent model is upheld by progressives. Liberal democracy thus draws from both models, with one aspect or the other being more pronounced depending on the political side that holds power. These two models also determine the way Americans envision freedom. According to Lakoff, to promote a particular frame of reference concerning the "nation as family" metaphor is to control people's perception of freedom (*Whose Freedom* 66).

In *The Giver*, the Elders seem to embody both aspects of the parent figure — a nurturing yet strict authority. A closer view of the Elders is presented by Jonas while awaiting their decision concerning his future profession, a pronouncement made when citizens turn twelve. He observes that the Elders monitor every aspect of a person's life:

> During the past year he had been aware of the increasing level of observation. In school, in recreation time, and during volunteer hours he had noticed the Elders watching him and the other Elevens. He had seen them taking notes. He knew, too, that the Elders have been meeting for long hours with all of the instructors that he and other Elevens had had during their years of school. (15)

Though it may seem that the Elders are genuinely interested in the proper assessment of children's capabilities so that they will be assigned the correct vocation, it is also important to note that the decision is final and it determines the whole life of a young person. This is a gravely serious matter, so much so that Jonas is distressed. He shares his thoughts with his father, who seems to have blind faith that "the Elders are so careful in their observation and selections" (7) that any mistake is impossible. His advice to Jonas is that he should just accept the decision at face value. To the reader,

[55] Authoritarian rulers often stylize themselves as "fathers of the nation," using carefully attuned language in order to steer the masses by convincing them that they perform a benevolent parental role through their autocratic policies.

though, it is obvious that a prospect of one's life being completely dependent on an arbitrary decision is at odds with the liberal democratic idea of freedom.

In many aspects, *The Giver*'s seemingly utopian organization of life evokes strong parallels to Plato's *Republic*, a classic of political thought. There are some striking similarities between Plato's work and Lowry's narrative. Plato's ideal city-state represents a perfect system. It is a highly hierarchized society with three distinct classes: producers, warriors and guardians. Guardians are the ones that are chosen to rule. Plato asserts that people within those classes will be happy to accept their roles because they will follow the profession that best suits their aptitudes. Moreover, to ease tensions between the classes, private property is to be abolished and families are to be dismantled, so that children and parents will not know each other. In a similar manner, the community in *The Giver* is also hierarchized, with various classes led by the Elders, the class destined to rule. The other classes are expected to accept the roles that were assigned to them by the ruling class. Property is managed by the community, as are interpersonal relationships. Just like in Plato's vision, the family in the traditional sense has been abolished: Families are no longer made up of relatives but are artificially created by the state.

In order to secure uniformity, the Elders have eliminated any appearance of difference, so that now people do not perceive colors or recognize different facial features. There is also no music or any form of art. In all of those instances, Jonas's special gift of seeing color stands as a symbol of unabashed individuality. The diversity of colors that Jonas starts to perceive signals the importance of choice and the fact that without the alternatives that are attainable by recognizing differences, true freedom is impossible. Lowry indicates that human nature is to strive for options, to experience diversity, and to pursue what one wants freely. This pursuit cannot be predetermined by an outside authority.

Interestingly, Lowry's community can be criticized in virtually the same manner in which critics approach *The Republic*. As Eric Brown remarks in "Plato's Ethics and Politics in *The Republic*":

> The critics typically claim that Plato's political ideal rests on an unrealistic picture of human beings. The ideal city is conceivable, but humans are psychologically unable to create and sustain such a city. (n.p.)

This observation is also true of Lowry's novel. Furthermore, in Plato's ideal city, Brown asserts, "the rulers aim at the organic unity of the city as a whole, regardless of the individual interests of the citizens" (n.p.) as well as making use of propaganda to sway the opinion of the masses. Consequently, this extensive control "represents a totalitarian concern, and it should make us skeptical about the value of the consent given to the rulers" (Brown, n.p.). The role that the Elders play in *The Giver* can be seen in the very same context. One of the common criticisms of Plato's ideal city, Brown continues, is that "political self-determination and free expression are themselves more valuable than Plato recognizes" (n.p.). Lowry understands this problematic issue, and crafts her narrative so as to emphasize the pitfalls of a community that does away with self-governance. Only through self-emancipation, exemplified by an escape from the community, is Jonas able to regain the ability to exercise free expression and free choice, qualities that seem to be prime characteristics of freedom for Lowry.

Undoubtedly, Lowry's *The Giver* can be seen as a dystopian rendition of the Platonic city, but with a message that underscores the importance of freedom. In addition, the idea of freedom present in *The Giver* appears to correspond with the notion of freedom championed by Karl Popper, an eminent twentieth century philosopher and a staunch critic of Plato's utopia. Popper believed that freedom is a function of human nature, which in itself cannot be fully explained nor neatly categorized. In this sense, human nature is incompatible with an ideal society, because what spurs civilization forward is freedom of thought and free circulation of ideas. Both of these notions entail unpredictability and uncertainty rather than the security and order of the utopian system ("On Freedom," 81-92). In this sense, human imperfection trumps any artificially created order, and a yearning for freedom overcomes the stable yet suffocating prison of utopia.

The Platonic utopia epitomizes an excess of uniformization that puts any form of individualism at a disadvantage. In essence, individualism is deemed to be a trait that sabotages the totalizing project of utopia. If this is so, individual freedom must be subjugated to the collectivist impulses in societies modeled on the Platonic ideal city. Veronica Roth's *Divergent* trilogy impressively tackles this aspect of individual freedom, with the writer emerging as a staunch critic of the idea of social categorization and a proponent of freedom empowered by individualism.

The *Divergent* trilogy is set in a future Chicago that has been rendered a dystopian enclave. The society is divided into five factions, each of which has a distinct

role to play in the city's social structure. In Roth's narratives, the concepts of individuality and collectivism form a powerful ideological coupling that reflects on the juxtaposition of the ideas of freedom and subjugation. The main protagonist, a sixteen-year-old girl Beatrice, who calls herself Tris, is a paragon of individuality. Her individualistic traits are underscored by her aptitude evaluation score attained in a test devised by the Erudites, the faction that is held as the most intelligent and best suited to be the leaders of the community. Much like in *The Giver*, the population in the *Divergent* series is expected to abide by the rules of the appraisal procedure. Once the test results are known, young people must decide which faction they are going to join. In theory, they can choose whichever faction they want, but choosing anything other than what is indicated by the test results is a highly unusual occurrence. Moreover, if a person joins a faction that does not correspond with their test score, life within this faction becomes challenging to the point that the pressure from the faction leads to the individual being ostracized. If a person does not choose a faction at all, they become outcasts, plagued by poverty and disrepute. In both cases, free choice dictated by a person's individuality results in suffering and exclusion. In this sense, free choice is but an illusion.

It seems that in the *Divergent* series every instance of individuality is eclipsed by a collectivist philosophy upheld by the system. True and authentic individual freedom is not respected; in fact, it is positively discouraged. Thus, every citizen's greatest fear is that he or she will not fit into the society's carefully crafted order. When Tris takes her test, she immediately feels doubtful that the results will adequately indicate the correct place for her in the community. She expresses her fear as follows:

> As the moments pass, I get more nervous. I have to wipe off my hands every few seconds as the sweat collects—or maybe I just do it because it helps me feel calmer. What if they tell me that I'm not cut out for any faction? I would have to live on the streets, with the factionless. I can't do that. To live factionless is not just to live in poverty and discomfort; it is to live divorced from society, separated from the most important thing in life: community. (*Divergent* 22)

Tris's worst suspicions come true when she is informed by Tori, the person that conducted the test, that the results are ominous for Tris's future standing in the community:

> "Wait," I interrupt her. "So you have no idea what my aptitude is?" "Yes and no. My conclusion," she explains, "is that you display equal aptitude for Abnegation, Dauntless, and Erudite. People who get this kind of result are . . ." She looks over her shoulder like she expects someone to appear behind her. ". . . are called . . . Divergent." She says the last word so quietly that I almost don't hear it, and her tense, worried look returns. (*Divergent* 22)

Tris finds herself faced by the menace of being excluded from the society. The situation is truly paradoxical. If she embraces her individuality, she will be "free," with the bitter freedom of an outcast; if she rejects it and gives up her freedom, she will be granted a place within the society, with prospects of security and well-being. Hence, Tris's own individuality and her yearning for freedom become antithetical to the high ideals of social order preached in the Divergent world.

Erich Fromm presents an analysis of the relationship between individuality and freedom that could shed light on the situation presented in the *Divergent* trilogy. In his *Escape from Freedom*, Fromm recognizes the pivotal role of the communal sense of belonging that characterized the development of the concept of individuality in the West. Until the Middle Ages, Fromm argues, "[a] person was identical with his role in society; he was a peasant, an artisan, a knight, and not *an individual* who *happened* to have this or that occupation" (41). The concept of participation in a collective overshadowed any form of individuality. Fromm states that this type of a person "was not free in the modern sense, neither was he alone and isolated" (41). According to Fromm, once the concept of individuality emerged in the popular consciousness during the epochs of the Renaissance and the Reformation, people were faced with the realization of their autonomous nature and, as a consequence, distanced themselves from the community as a source of their identity. Freedom became a matter of individual choice rather than communal relations. Therefore, once a person was rid of ties to the community, "[t]hey were more free, but they were also more alone" (47). Fromm's observations seem to ring true for the position in which Tris is placed in the first novel of the series. She is torn between an impulse to conform to social rules and a yearning to embrace her individuality through free choice.

The scorn with which the society in the *Divergent* trilogy approaches the issue of individual freedom also parallels the attitude of distrust and disdain towards the notion of individuality in the philosophy of eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe. In "The Meanings of 'Individualism' ", Steven Lukes mentions philosophers who saw the

emergence of individuality as a force that threatened to topple the existing social order. Lukes cites the French philosopher Joseph de Maistre, who conceived of the individual as nothing more than a part of society analogous to the situation in which " 'a river which flows into the ocean still exists in the mass of the water, but without name and distinct reality' " (qtd. in Lukes 47). Other reactionary philosophers of the period also felt that a fully-fledged individual consciousness mocked the natural order of things. Lukes finds this argument lucidly expressed by Hugues-Félicité Robert de Lamennais, whom he quotes as follows:

> Man, Lamennais argued, "lives only in society" and "institutions, laws, governments draw all their strength from a certain concourse of thoughts and wills." "What," he asked, "is power without obedience? What is law without duty?" (Lukes 47)

In this sense, Lukes notes, Lamennais wants to undermine individualism by stating that it:

> destroys the very idea of obedience and of duty, thereby destroying both power and law; and what then remains but a terrifying confusion of interests, passions, and diverse opinions? (qtd. in Lukes 47)

The community in the *Divergent* trilogy exhibits similar reactionary views towards individual freedom. In the novels, the overall assumption is that unchecked individualism leads to an overabundance of free choice, which leads to chaos. Thus, freedom must be restricted on an individual level for order to prevail.

Dystopian deliberations on freedom, apart from addressing political and psychological issues, also entail moral reflection. If, within the bio-political scheme proposed by Foucault, freedom is seen as a function of a given political system, then in the event of the collapse of such a system and a failure to establish a new one, humanity's sense of freedom will be informed primarily by ideological viewpoints.

An interesting inquiry into the issue of individual freedom in a world engulfed in chaos is presented in James Dashner's *The Maze Runner* novels. In the first installment of the series, the main protagonist, sixteen-year-old Thomas, wakes up in the Glade, an artificially created enclave that resembles a small settlement. Thomas has no memory of the past and is placed in a community of boys also suffering memory loss. The only way to discover what has happened leads through a gigantic maze that surrounds the Glade.

Food and shelter are provided to the captive boys by the mysterious Creators, who seem to hold institutional power over their charges' entire lives. The Gladers realize that the maze is a part of a bigger scheme, but its purpose is not clear. They are in no position to claim any right to civil liberties, and they can only wonder what forces, political or otherwise, could be behind their enslavement. With every consecutive day bringing no solution to their plight, the boys become more and more dedicated to finding it. One of the protagonists, Newt, sums up the importance of the maze in the life of the Gladers:

> Everything we do—our whole life, Greenie [Thomas]—revolves around the Maze. Every lovin' second of every lovin' day we spend in honor of the Maze, tryin' to solve something that's not shown us it has a bloody solution, ya know? (*The Maze Runner* 38)

In fact, the physical and psychological torments the boys are undergoing constitute data input used for a further analysis that the Creators are going to perform. Learning the maze is inconsequential, for the Creators want the Gladers to find a way out through a door they can find within the maze, not to solve the maze itself. Thomas is able to see this truth:

> [T]hey wanted to test us … Everything was provided for us, and the problem was laid out as one of the most common puzzles known to civilization—a maze. All this added up to making us think there *had* to be a solution, just encouraging us to work all the harder while at the same time magnifying our discouragement. (*The Maze Runner* 300)

Once the protagonists flee from the maze, they are rescued and escorted to a safe place. This is when the purpose of the test is revealed. One of the rescuers explains:

> As for you — you're just a few of millions orphaned. They tested thousands, chose you for the big one. The ultimate test. Everything you lived through was calculated and thought through. Catalysts to study your reactions, your brain waves, your thoughts. All in an attempt to find those capable of helping to find a way to beat the Flare. (*The Maze Runner* 366)

The Flare is a virus that emerged as the aftermath of catastrophic solar flares that ravaged the planet. The subsequent novels in the series reveal that the Flare is an artificially created virus that was designed to eliminate a portion of the remaining

population, the rationale being that after the cataclysm there were not enough resources left to sustain the survivors. The masses were left in the dark, while a group called WICKED was formed to find a cure. In this matrix of deceit and morally ambivalent choices, the fact that the children were coerced, trapped and tortured seems like a minor complaint. The bottom line is that in order to safeguard the greater good for the people, any civil rights, including personal freedom, can be denied if those in power follow the maxim "the end justifies the means."

While Dashner does not justify the abuses of power that WICKED is guilty of, their methods can at least be accounted for by invoking the moral philosophy of consequentialism. Walter Sinnott-Armstrong explains that:

> the term "consequentialism" seems to be used as a family-resemblance term to refer to any descendant of classic utilitarianism that remains close enough to its ancestor in the important respects. ("Consequentialism" n.p.)

Quintessentially, Sinnott-Armstrong clarifies, consequentialism "denies that moral rightness depends directly on anything other than consequences" (n.p.).

A corresponding line of thought can be found in *The Maze Runner* series. The practice of stripping young people of their freedom and treating them as lab rats is an act that can only be vindicated if it serves a greater good. Some Gladers died in the process, some experienced traumas, but test was set up to save millions and thus can be justified in the eyes of the members of WICKED. Similarly, Sinnott-Armstrong notes that the difference between saving an individual life versus saving millions of lives always seems to be arbitrary unless one subscribes to consequentialism, because "consequentialists can simply say that the line belongs wherever the benefits outweigh the costs" (n.p.). In any case, the fact that the freedom of a person or a group can be restricted in the name of a greater good inspires moral reflection. In the case of freedom, Dashner indicates that political and psychological deliberations must be placed in a moral landscape.

While *The Maze Runner* trilogy undoubtedly merits interest as a literary contribution to the discourse on how and to what extent incursions on individual freedom in times of major social calamities, like a plague, might be justified, the novel certainly gains extra zest and topicality in the context of the outbreak of the 2020 global coronavirus pandemic. Even though it predates the pandemic by a decade, it

felicitously, (if a bit exaggeratedly) predicts the ways world governments might tackle problems arising from the current pandemic. As a matter of fact, many countries worldwide have put into effect special coercive measures that suspend the usual balance of civil duties versus rights and liberties, constraining the latter for the sake of public safety comprehended as the greater good. In this light *The Maze Runner*'s dystopian world devastated by a viral plague seems to be less distant and less fictitious than it may have seemed.

Concluding, contested freedom emerges as a key area of interest for political forces that seek to reshape the cultural fabric of Western liberal democracies. Indeed, as the YA dystopian fiction narratives discussed here warn and actual historical reality confirms, a profound contestation of the nature of freedom is already underway. People's attention is being diverted to mundane matters at hand while the contested areas of freedom are slowly being transformed. In a truly Hegelian way, freedom is often forced to accommodate new realities. This is possible because, as Foucauldian biopolitics postulates, freedom is no longer an ideal raised on a pedestal and is now relegated to the grim realities of everyday life. Once devalued, it loses its prestige and its quasi-sacred quality.

This profound departure from classically understood liberal freedom is clearly visible in all of the narratives discussed in this chapter, which view freedom as being subject to negotiation. Each of the novels reveals contested areas of freedom that are not legally protected against continual attempts to redetermine the extent of civil liberties, against scientifically justified actions resulting in the imposition of a rigid social hierarchy, and the impact of biotechnology on the shaping of human societies. These narratives anticipate possible futures where freedom has been profoundly affected, futures where liberal democratic freedom is shaken and new visions of freedom are introduced for future generations. The next chapter will follow up with an analysis of emerging IT technologies and the futurist philosophies of trans- and posthumanism, which hail the advent of a new paradigm that will greatly affect the liberal ideal of freedom.

CHAPTER FOUR

Freedom in a Posthuman Future

One of the most prominent and thought-provoking perspectives employed in YA dystopian fiction is posthumanism. The posthuman paradigm in these narratives entails radical technological developments that initiate profound transformations of the socio-cultural reality of the protagonists. However, while posthumanism is seen as tied to technological progress, its scope is too vast to be confined only to the field of techno-science. Rather, technological innovations are used as catalysts for extrapolations on possible futures where the very concept of human beings is altered, and consequently the social and cultural constructs associated with the notion of humans are contested and transformed. Among these ideas is the concept of freedom.

An important thing to note is that posthumanism has faced the serious problem of a lack of a canonical definition. Posthumanist theorists have been struggling to define what exactly posthumanism boils down to, fearing that one definition of posthumanism will not do justice to its highly complex web of ideas. This problematic issue was addressed by, among others, Andy Miah in his "Posthumanism: A Critical History." What Miah advocates is that we should recognize the intrinsic difficulty in mapping out posthumanism as a cohesive movement. For Miah "posthumanism … is not a distinct perspective. It is the detritus of perspectives" (23) and it is his conviction that forcing a definition undermines the heterogeneous nature of posthumanism. Bearing in mind Miah's insights, the following section will explore a few essential ideas associated with posthumanism.

4.1. Posthumanism: Key Ideas

In the simplest terms, posthumanism is often conceived of as a school of thought that is critical towards the notion of humans, especially in relation to the concept of the humans championed by humanism. Indeed, posthumanism can be seen as a philosophical challenger to humanism, offering a fundamental reconfiguration or even elimination of many humanist ideals. For instance, posthumanism calls into question the long-held dogmas of the human experiences of embodiment, subjectivity and consciousness.

The critical character of posthumanism has been linked to the postmodern notion of deconstruction,[56] which is why many posthumanist scholars invoke the influential postmodernist thinker Jean-Francois Lyotard and his seminal book *The Postmodern Condition* as a basis for their critique of the so-called grand narratives and meta-narratives that they wish to supplant with a new philosophical agenda.

In this respect, it is quite obvious that posthumanism is not a philosophy of despair that bemoans the end of the idea of the human. On the contrary, the dissolution of the humanist notion of the human condition is celebrated and encouraged, for posthumanists believe that anthropocentrism has tainted the humanities and sciences to the point that their explanatory power and innovation have been severely limited. Apparently a change in thinking about man is called for, which is given voice to by Robert Pepperell in *The Posthuman Condition: Consciousness Beyond the Brain.* Pepperell states that posthumanism heralds "the end of 'humanism', that long-held belief in the infallibility of human power and the arrogant belief in our superiority and uniqueness" (171). It appears that shedding the ideological limitations imposed by humanist dogmas is essential for posthuman philosophy.

For posthumanists, the source of this liberation from the humanist doctrine is located in technological progress. In posthumanism, technology represents a powerful force that permeates various fields of human endeavor, effectively becoming a phenomenon that is pertinent to all aspects of human life. Thus, posthumanists argue that in recent decades technological advancements have become an inseparable part of

[56] *Encyclopedia Britannica*'s entry on deconstruction discloses that deconstruction can be understood as a critical stance examining inherent tensions between opposing concepts. In deconstruction it is the tension that arises that is the focus of the study. Similarly, it can be argued that the posthuman paradigm relies on the opposition of human nature and the posthuman state that is to be achieved in the coming future.

the human experience. The concept that technology and humanity form a complex relationship contests the notion of a binary opposition between the human and the non-human operating in distinctly separate spheres. In this way, posthumanism implies that exaltation of the duality of the mind and body that is prevalent in Western civilization may be a serious mistake. Indeed, one posthumanist goal is to probe the boundaries that these dichotomies generate. Miah explains that:

> the philosophical project of post-humanism can be marked by a set of boundaries and our cultural relationship to them. To this extent, post-humanism is a philosophical stance about what might be termed a perpetual becoming. (23)

In this context, posthumanity is about going beyond the limits set by nature and socio-cultural conditioning. Consequently, for posthumanists the concept of the human is not fixed and stable as the former humanist project implies; rather, human nature is seen as being malleable and fluid.

Neil Badmington argues in his book *Posthumanism* that the posthumanist belief in a flexible human essence can be traced back to some of the key thinkers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Badmington asserts that the posthumanist perspective was actually foregrounded in the works of Darwin, Marx and Freud. He further explains that Darwin assaulted the notion of a stable human essence by introducing the idea of evolution as a determining force behind humanity's development. In this view, human beings are subject to change; they are no longer perfect creations of God. Marx refuted the notion of human essence in philosophy by applying the idea of evolution to human societies and highlighting the inherent tensions in social orders, thus undermining the notion of stable social hierarchies. Finally, Freud defined the idea of human essence in psychology, opening up a discussion on human rationality and the power of the subconscious, and effectively paving the way for new inquiries to emerge concerning the human mind and its propensities (4-10). At present, following the aforementioned theories, a modern techno-scientific revolution facilitates new ways of approaching the biological and psychological make-up of human beings.

In short, the technological boom of the last decades, marked by the arrival of the computer age, has mediated a transformation of the concept of a human. This novel concept of a human being highlights a state of symbiosis in which humans merge with their technological creations. An example of this profound change has been offered by

Pepperell, who argues that communication, an essential quality of the human condition, has been radically reinvented by modern communication technologies. Pepperell clarifies that by pointing out the common use of modern communication tools like the Internet:

> we start to see "meetings" of thousands of people who are physically remote, and the building up of on-line communities distributed across the world. It seems that in this electronic world one's physical attributes will be less significant that one's "virtual presence" or "telepresence." From all this derives the notion that we can increasingly socialise, work and communicate in a way that, strangely, diminishes human contact, while simultaneously extending it. In telepresent environments it will be difficult to determine where a person "is," or what distinguishes them from the technological form they take. (5)

Another example of an intertwined relationship of a human being and techno-scientific advancements can be seen in the recent emergence of diverse biotechnological improvements of the human body. Pepperell states that:

> If life can run more efficiently and become "fitter" in collaboration with mechanical systems then it will do so. By the same token, if humans are able to exist more effectively by acquiring further machine-like enhancements then they will do so. This does not necessarily mean the extinction of the human genome. (171)

Pepperell points to the idea of a posthuman as an entity whose life is a collaboration of biological and technological systems. In short, the human condition has been irreversibly changed by technology to the point that it cannot be properly defined by the humanist project[57] and therefore must be explored within the posthumanist conceptual framework.

The question of human evolution as being dependent on technological advancements is also an important issue for N. Katherine Hayles. In her celebrated *How We Became Posthuman*, Hayles suggests that humanity is entering an age when evolution of intelligent machines will supplement biological evolution. For Hayles, it is clear that at some point humanity could enhance itself with technological proxies, or even merge its bodies with machines, transgressing the old models of embodiment and

[57] The humanist project, by definition anthropocentric, draws on the basic assumptions of humanist philosophy - humanism's views of nature, culture, human nature, religion, science, etc.

opening itself to new ways of experiencing reality. All those scenarios point to a posthuman future where technologically mediated bodies will be imminent (283-291). In this sense, a posthuman epitomizes the ultimate eradication of limitations imposed by nature. Hayles's vision is best summarized by Miah who says that "[f]or Hayles, posthumanism is characterized by a (desired) loss of subjectivity that is based on bodies losing their boundaries" (8). Miah also points out that Hayles's ideas bear a resemblance to the concept of a cyborg as envisioned by Donna Haraway in her influential essay "A Cyborg Manifesto."[58] Miah declares that:

> Haraway's work in fashioning the contemporary use of the term cyborg is a crucial component of how post-humanism has developed in the last twenty years. (8)

Haraway's cyborg can be seen as a manifestation of a posthuman entity that emerged as a result of the transformative power of technology. Haraway is sure that a cyborg would certainly disrupt humanist ideas about corporeality to the point that some key features of humanity, like gender, would become obsolete.

The desire to escape the biological destiny of humanity is also seen in Stefan Herbrechter's *Posthumanism: A Critical Analysis*. In his lucidly argued book, Herbrechter offers an overview of posthumanism and spends some time exploring the idea of cyborgization as an emanation of the posthuman. Herbrechter maintains that:

> Cyborgizaton is … not merely a hybridization of the organic and the mechanical, but the grafting of the information and digital (i.e. virtual and virtualizing), coded and simulated (i.e. no longer relying on representation) onto human embodiment. (188)

Thus, a cyborg is not simply an enhanced human, but a new way of expressing humanity, one that does not abide by firm biological laws that characterize the human species. For Herbrechter, then, posthumanism is not merely "antihumanist" in its creeds, but it primarily "represents a radicalization and at the same time 'relocation' of the human" (199).

The concept of the relocation of the human, as Herberechter puts it, is also important for Rossi Braidotti in her poignant book *The Posthuman*. It seems that Braidotti understands this relocation of the human as "becoming posthuman," a process

[58] Haraway's essay is considered to be a pioneering work that bridges the gap between feminist theory and posthumanist philosophy.

that entails "redefining one's sense of attachment and connection to a shared world, a territorial space: urban, social, psychic, ecological, planetary" (193). Braidotti appears to believe that in this way a posthuman becomes "a transversal entity." In this "radical immanence" of the posthuman condition, life itself is broken down and absolved of the presuppositions of the humanists, who tend to approach life through the anthropocentric perspective. In contrast to the limiting view of life as tied to the human-oriented experience that Braidotti calls bios, she develops the concept of zoe, which is seen as "an impersonal force" that seems to encompass all aspects of life as a collective phenomenon shared by all creatures. In order to connect to zoe, a posthuman being is "unfolding the self onto the world while enfolding the world within" (193). Herein lies the most radical change that posthumanism postulates. For a posthuman, the very aspect of being alive entails a completely different idea of life itself.

4.2. Transhumanism: Key Ideas

For many posthumanists, the notion of the redefinition of human life is intrinsically connected to technology as a transformative tool that is capable of reshaping the biological make-up of human beings. These posthumanists harbor a belief in auto-evolution[59] of the human species, that is, the guided evolution of humankind towards a posthuman future. The key aspect of this concept is explained by Christopher Coenen in his "Utopian Aspects of the Debate on Converging Technologies." Coenen claims that some posthumanists are primarily interested in the "practicality" of posthuman deliberations; they want to go beyond a mere philosophical discussion and orient their efforts toward achieving real results by creating a new form of a human being. Their agenda is to hail the future of "radically transformed human beings" who would be synonymous with "artificial beings [created] by means of engineering" (4). In this context, Coenen elucidates, these thinkers posit themselves in the matrix of posthumanism under the banner of transhumanism. In his view, transhumanists are

[59] The idea presumes that human beings have reached a phase of civilizational development that makes it possible for them to steer the course of evolution. While for Darwin evolution was a purely natural phenomenon enabled by the mechanism of natural selection, the trans- and posthumanist stances generally assume that evolution can also be viewed through the metaphysical lens and that the end goal of evolution is to transcend human nature.

primarily characterized by their avid exploration and promotion of "augmentation of human capacities and abilities" (4).

One of the most influential transhumanist thinkers, Max More, offers an explanation of the relationship between posthumanism and transhumanism. In his "Transhumanism: Towards a Futurist Philosophy," More claims that "*Transhumanism* is a class of philosophies that seek to guide us towards a *posthuman* condition" (n.p.). In the same manner Nick Bostrom, another prominent transhumanist, states in his "Trans-Humanist FAQ" that "[i]n its contemporary usage, 'transhuman' refers to an intermediary form between the human and the post-human" (6). Thus, both More and Bostrom define transhumanism as a movement that aims to attain posthumanity. In this regard, posthumanism and transhumanism share a similar conceptual framework but they emphasize different aspects of humanity mediated by technology. Transhumanists are primarily interested in the proliferation of the process of this mediation, whereas posthumanists are keen on exploring the end results of this process. However, while posthumanism is typically associated with a strong antihumanist sentiment, transhumanists have a deep respect for ideas championed by humanism. Bostrom clarifies this phenomenon in these words:

> Transhumanism can be viewed as an extension of humanism, from which it is partially derived. Humanists believe that humans matter, that individuals matter. We might not be perfect, but we can make things better by promoting rational thinking, freedom, tolerance, democracy, and concern for our fellow human beings. Transhumanists agree with this but also emphasize what we have the potential to become. (4)

A major concern for transhumanists is the apparent fallibility of human nature. They perceive humankind as a work in progress, and thus they deem both the biological make-up of human beings as well as human values and ideals as subject to change. Transhumanism underscores the importance of creating the meaning of human experience independent of the dogmatic understanding of human values. On the other hand, transhumanists are often perceived as radical proponents of personal freedom. Bostrom himself declares that transhumanism is a freedom-oriented philosophy, as he states: "[t]ranshumanists place a high value on autonomy: the ability and right of individuals to plan and choose their own lives" (4). Bostrom goes on to explain that transhumanism highlights the notion that "competent adults are usually the best judges of what is good for themselves" and therefore, transhumanists "advocate individual

freedom," but only if it rests on the principle of an informed choice (31). While Bostrom asserts that there are numerous advantages of transhumanist pursuit of technological modifications of the human body, he also proclaims that "[t]ranshumanists seek to create a world in which autonomous individuals may choose to remain unenhanced or choose to be enhanced and in which these choices will be respected" (4). Therefore it appears that a world as envisioned by transhumanists is seemingly an egalitarian one.

But transhumanists themselves are divided, and there are some groups among them that pay less attention to the obvious practical problems concerning the arrival of new human forms, which is more characteristic of the general public than the academically grounded transhumanism of More and Bostrom. Coenen lists some of the most influential transhumanists of this variety: "Marvin Minsky, an AI research pioneer, Hans Moravec, an expert in robotics, Ray Kurzweil, an IT expert, inventor and futurologist, and Eric Drexler, the famous nanofuturist" (4). These transhumanist activists are responsible for the lion's share of recognition the transhumanist movement receives. For Coenen it is clear that these futurologists appear to perceive themselves as "scientifically enlightened" and an "avant garde of humanity, pressing ahead with physical, cognitive and mental 'betterment' or 'enhancement', as well as with the transformation of human beings into man-machine hybrids" (9). Their ultimate goal is to "create a civilisation that is able to control evolution" (9).

In the grand scheme of things, however, this particular group of transhumanists seems to overlook the negative consequences of their agenda. Langdon Winner in "Are Humans Obsolete?" sheds more light on the aforementioned architects of futuristic visions of transhumanism. An icon of transhumanism, Ray Kurzweil is, in Winner's estimate, pushing towards a world "thoroughly sanitized of human beings and their debilities" (32). Winner quotes from Kurzweil's bestseller *Robot: Mere Machine to Transcendent Mind* to support this assessment:

> Our artificial progeny will grow away from and beyond us, both in physical distance and structure, and similarity of thought and motive. In time their activities may become incompatible with the old Earth's continued existence. (qtd. in Winner 32)

Winner also notes that in a similar fashion Hans Moravec offers a vision of a future with the human species being gradually replaced by robots. Winner asserts that

Moravec welcomes a future where robots will "look less and less like the clunky machines we see today, and more and more like artificial, self-reproducing organisms" (33). Finally, Winner concludes that in the cases of both Kurzweil and Moravec, their zeal for improving humanity makes them prefer "the smarter, more resourceful, more powerful successors to our pathetically weak and incompetent species" (33), and in adopting such an attitude they turn a blind eye towards "ordinary humans" who are going to forego the chance to augment themselves.

4.3. Criticism of Posthumanism and Transhumanism: Ethical Concerns

Indeed, many posthuman and transhuman theories provoke major philosophical and moral concerns. As mentioned above, Bostrom was among the first to recognize the inherent problems with technology that enhances some people while others are left behind in the auto-evolutionary race. Bostrom declares that there is a certain degree of similarity between that scenario and the contemporary situation where "[r]ich parents send their kids to better schools and provide them with resources such as personal connections and information technology that may not be available to the less privileged" (20). It is not hard to imagine, says Bostrom, that "social inequalities" are increasing because of such behavior (20). Bostrom argues that the same can be said about access to newly developed technologies. Eventually he admits that "[t]echnological progress does not solve the hard old political problem of what degree of income redistribution is desirable," but he retains his optimism in the emancipatory power of these technologies because new discoveries "can greatly increase the size of the pie that is to be divided" (21).

With regard to possible dangers of an impending posthuman future, Winner offers a bleaker assessment. He asserts that "[d]reams of human equality and solidarity embraced by liberals, utopians, socialists, and pragmatists of earlier generations have no standing in theories of a posthumanist future" (35). The fault lies in the fact that enhancements will be unevenly distributed, which will result in the emergence of "highly unequal successors to homo sapiens," a dangerous phenomenon that Winner feels is "routinely applauded in posthumanist schemes" while "expressions of ethical concern about tensions between old-fashioned inferiors and newly engineered superior specimens are typically given short shrift" (38-39).

Perhaps the best known and most widely acclaimed critique of posthumanism is expressed in Francis Fukuyama's influential book *Our Posthuman Future*. As noted in Chapter Two, Fukuyama makes use of dystopian imagery offered by Aldous Huxley in *Brave New World* to comment on the fact that manipulations of human nature are usually treated as a dangerous precedent. Fukuyama draws the reader's attention to more grounded problems that can emerge as a consequence of a new a posthuman populace, for instance the emergence of a highly hierarchized society, which he sees not as an advance, but a step backward in the development of Western civilization.

Fukuyama and others like him are often called bioconservatists. In "A History of Transhumanist Thought," Bostrom explains that whereas bioconservatists come from various social and political backgrounds, they are united under the key principle that "bioconservatism … opposes the use of technology to expand human capacities or to modify aspects of our biological nature" (23). Among the most prominent bioconservatists besides Fukuyama, Bostrom includes Leon Kass, an American educator and a former chairman of The President's Council on Bioethics. Kass's concerns revolve around the notion of human dignity and human values. Bostrom feels that Kass's objections come down to his strong conviction that "technological mastery over human nature could end up dehumanizing us by undermining various traditional 'meanings' such as the meaning of the life cycle, the meaning of sex, the meaning of eating, and the meaning of work" (24).

Fukuyama voices a particularly strong objection in this regard as well. He is wary of modifying human nature because he believes it is a source of values that have been developed through the evolution of the human species and that find their expression in the apparent universality of human rights. In his view, human values are a feature of biologically determined and mentally conceptualized human inclinations that are distributed among homo sapiens. In contrast to posthumanist and transhumanist optimism concerning enhancements and modifications of the body, Fukuyama perseveres in his pessimistic view that these changes can negatively impact human nature and thus undermine human values (1-10).

4.4. Freedom and the Posthuman/Transhuman Future

In the context of Fukuyama's insights, the notion of freedom depends on the stability of human nature and the ways in which human beings experience freedom in their inner

and outer lives. According to Fukuyama, what guarantees the freedom and equality epitomized in modern liberal democracies is the fact that universal human nature is the common denominator for the whole species. To go beyond this shared nature means to leave "a safe harbor that allows us to connect, potentially, with all other human beings" (218). Posthumanism undermines the notion of human nature as fixed, and in doing so forsakes the concepts of freedom and equality that emerged as a result of the evolution of humanity. Fukuyama's main concerns is that freedom will be stripped of its value in a posthuman future. In a concluding passage of his book, Fukuyama articulates his anxiety that freedom will likely have to be transformed as a political and cultural idea and that this change may actually endanger the liberal democratic model of freedom that rests on the notions of equality and fairness. Fukuyama lays out his argument as follows:

> We may be about to enter into a posthuman future, in which technology will give us the capacity gradually to alter [human] essence over time. Many embrace this power, under the banner of freedom. They want to maximize the freedom of parents to choose the kind of children they have, the freedom of scientists to pursue research, and the freedom of entrepreneurs to make use of technology to create wealth. But this kind of freedom will be very different from all other freedoms that people have previously enjoyed. … Many assume that the post-human world will look pretty much like our own—free, equal … [b]ut the posthuman world could be one that is far more hierarchical and competitive. (217-218)

Fukuyama expresses similar reservations concerning biotechnology in his article "Gene Regime." Here his intent is to highlight the complexity of the problem of the future usage of biotechnologies; he states: "The same technology that promises to cure your child of cystic fibrosis or your parent of Alzheimer's disease presents more troubling possibilities as well" (57). Fukuyama's answer to these concerns is to push for legislative and political means that will make it possible to "discriminate between those technological advances that help humans flourish and those that threaten human dignity and well-being" (57), but it is unclear how exactly it could be done. Fukuyama's concerns about the way technological progress might reshape the Western ideal of freedom is not to be treated lightly, since his anxiety about the future of freedom is shared by many influential scholars of biotechnology and posthuman/transhuman futures.

It is apparent that the problem of biotechnology is not only an issue of pragmatic implementation, but also an ideological and moral quandary. In an essay "Toward a Philosophy of Technology," Hans Jonas, a famous philosopher and an expert in bioethics, argues that technology is not a mere tool used by humankind, but has become the subject of culture. This has happened because technology has been coupled with the philosophical notion of progress. Jonas says: "Progress … is not just an ideological gloss on modern technology, and not at all a mere option offered by it, but an inherent drive [of society]" (35). If progress is indeed tantamount to the needs of society, then posthuman and transhuman theorists can argue that their goals are synonymous with social development because these revolve around the notion of progress as well. Thus, posthumanists and transhumanists identify progress as the "chief vocation of mankind" (38). From Jonas's observations one can assume that these theorists play the roles of both technological enthusiasts and social reformers.

Jonas's insights are supported by Daniel Dinello in his book *Technophobia! Science Fiction Visions of Posthuman Technology*. In Dinello's estimation, posthumanists and transhumanists seem to subscribe to "Technologism — a millennialist faith in the coming of Techno-Christ, who will engineer happiness, peace, and prosperity" (31). Dinello explains that "Technologism — the posthuman religion of technology" maintains that "utopia became a worldly technological goal, rather than an otherworldly post-death reward" (45). In this context, the futurist visions of Kurzweil or Moravec have a potential to grow into political programs. What is more, Dinello claims, posthumanists and transhumanists, by "[e]mbracing science as [s]alvation" from the limitations of the human condition, willingly radicalize their position. For Dinello these groups become zealots of progress, a "techno-religion [that] possesses priests, apostles, sacraments, doctrine, and miracles as well as faith in apocalypse, resurrection, immortality, and heaven" (31). Indeed, by and large, the main goal of posthumanism and transhumanism is to eradicate the faults of human nature either by modification of the body or by transgression of human corporality. Such ambitious goals would certainly reshape the cultural make-up of the West and question the founding principles and ideals of Western civilization.

In *Life, Liberty and Dignity*: *The Challenge for Bioethics*, Leon Kass articulates his view on the insidious dangers of biotechnological manipulation and its socio-cultural impact. He claims that the issue of biotechnology as part of a future life strikes at the very core of Western civilization because: "[t]he greatest dangers we confront in

connection with the biological revolution arise not from the principles alien to our way of life, but rather from those that are central to our self-definition and self-being" (3). Kass argues that utopian projects that preceded posthuman and transhuman visions have brought only disappointment and provoked:

> a special kind of helplessness experienced by millions of people in the twentieth century as a result of modern despotism, to whose utopian programs and tyrannical success and excesses modern technology … contributed mightily. This sobering fact reminds us that what is called "man's power over nature" is, in fact, always power of some men over others. (42)

Indeed, the enthusiastic prophets of an imminent posthuman future often seem to neglect the possibility that once biotechnology is introduced into people's daily lives, it can be hijacked by agents who are not driven by morally laudable motives. In "Ageless Bodies, Happy Souls: Biotechnology and the Pursuit of Perfection," Kass states that while biotechnology could be a great asset in a struggle for the betterment of the human condition, its power could also become irresistible to those who want to hold total control over humankind. Indeed, biotechnology is a perfect tool to attain such power, since it is able to tamper with the very nature of human beings. Once this is the case, freedom would be in grave danger, for in the Western world freedom has always been envisioned as anchored in a stable human nature. As history teaches, dictators and totalitarian regimes assuming control over state-of-the-art technologies are not an unlikely scenario. In fact, the last century is full of vivid examples of brutal autocrats making use of advanced technologies to oppress human freedom in order to reach their power-greedy goals. The Nazis and the communists were particularly adept at implementing novel technologies and scientific discoveries to subjugate human freedom to the state. In this sense every cutting-edge technological advancement has potential for good or ill, and the more potent the technology in question, the more horrendous the results of its misuse could be. Kass explains it as follows in the context of biotechnology:

> [T]he "dual use" aspects of most of these powers, encouraged by the ineradicable human urge toward "improvement" and the commercial interests that see market opportunities for non-therapeutic uses, means that we must not be lulled to sleep by the fact that the originators of these powers were no friends to the Brave New World. Once

> here, techniques and powers can produce desires where none existed before, and things often go where no one ever intended. (11)

Much like Leon Kass, Nick Bostrom, a great enthusiast of transhumanist and posthumanist ideologies cited in Chaper Three, also recognizes possible problems that this new brand of technology can introduce. Bostrom seems to have a good measure of a commonsensical approach to transhumanism and posthumanism, and offers a sound, judgmental analysis of some threats that may be caused by the scientific offspring of these ideologies. In "The Future of Human Evolution," Bostrom writes that indeed, many risks can be associated with "present or anticipated future technological developments" (3). Bostrom is deeply aware of different aspects of posthumanity, but his main concern is not rapidly developing technologies that can alter human nature per se, but the lack of proper management of these technologies. In this context, Bostrom seems to frame the discussion by asking how these technologies can be controlled, rather than if these technologies should be pursued at all. Bostrom focuses on the dangers of "freewheeling evolutionary developments" in the field of science that may "take us in undesirable directions" (3). For Bostorm, to anticipate dystopian scenarios where transhumanism or posthumanism can bear bad fruit is not synonymous with a call for abandoning these projects, but constitutes a challenge for more decisive regulation and control. Bostrom asks: "[s]uppose we could foresee … the dystopian evolutionary scenarios … What would then be our options? One response would be to sit back and let things slide. ... Another response would be to lament the dystopian outcome but conclude that nothing could be done to prevent it" (10-11). What Bostrom advocates is "to assume control over evolution" (18). Indeed, people with the ability to control human evolution would have unprecedented power over personal freedom, even to the point that they would be able to smother it.

However, Bostrom seems to fail to see that there are additional issues to be resolved − for instance, the problem of who is going to be the one who controls evolution and who will control the controllers. Bostrom's solution of monitoring and controlling the use of these technologies does not take into account the fact that the controllers may be the ones who will decide to misuse them. It seems that Bostrom envisions governmental agencies as well-equipped to perform the task of the controllers of these technologies. Yet such measures might not stop governments from turning into dictatorships with the help of biotechnology. Bostrom's antidote to possible

misapplications of new technologies only works against agents outside the highest power structures and presupposes that governments can resist infestation with totalitarian tendencies. In the dystopian genre, such thinking is often criticized as being far too simplistic, even naive. Classic authors of the genre like Aldous Huxley or George Orwell make an effort to show this erroneous way of thinking, and modern authors of dystopian narratives always seem to raise the point as well.

Still, it must be said that Bostrom is intellectually honest in his deliberations on the transhuman/posthuman world. In "Transhumanist Values," he is concerned how freedom will be reshaped in a future where technology would alter what it means to be human. Bostrom speculates that the issue of biotechnological enhancement at the present time may be beyond human understanding:

> In much the same way as chimpanzees lack the cognitive wherewithal to understand what it is like to be human – the ambitions we humans have, our philosophies, the complexities of human society, or the subtleties of our relationships with one another, so we humans may lack the capacity to form a realistic intuitive understanding of what it would be like to be a radically enhanced human (a "posthuman"). (n.p.)

Given our inability to adequately describe possible dangers of emerging technologies, Bostrom appears to suggest that such problems will have to be dealt with as they occur.

It is clear that Bostrom's thoughts on a potential transhuman/posthuman future go well beyond scientific implications. He is well aware that transhumanism and posthumanism will alter not only our science, but also our culture, because new technologies always, albeit gradually, infiltrate every aspect of human life. Much like the rise of the social media in the last few decades, the impact of biotechnology will also influence patterns of human behavior, social norms and ethical dilemmas. Once the realm of culture is probed, many values that the West holds dear will be open to reexamination. Bostrom says:

> Some values pertaining to certain forms of posthuman existence … may be values for us now, and they may be so in virtue of our current dispositions, and yet we may not be able to fully appreciate them with our current limited deliberative capacities and our lack of the receptive faculties required for full acquaintance with them. (n.p.)

If human values cannot be treated as stable in the transhuman/posthuman paradigm, then the seminal question is how to understand freedom in the context of human nature being changed by biotechnology. One can speculate that what we call freedom today may not be considered freedom in the transhuman/posthuman world, for freedom would be reshaped in accordance with the biotechnological manipulations of humanity. This poses obvious problems, because if freedom cannot be guaranteed to mean what it means today, it cannot be preserved in the future. The notion of human rights as a cornerstone of freedom in the modern world is a good example of the issue. It seems that Bostrom's position in this respect echoes views expressed by strong critics of biotechnology like Kass or Fukuyama, who warn that if human nature is to be tampered with, the idea of a stable human essence would have to be cast aside. This, in turn, would open a Pandora's box in relation to the concept of freedom. The chaos that would ensue would be a direct result of the notion that since human nature is not stable, the rights given to humans are not fixed either. Of course, Bostrom does not necessarily follow the pessimistic visions of Kass or Fukuyama, but his theorizing still leads to a key point: that what the modern world knows as freedom will likely be contested in the nearest future. Moreover, if transhumans and posthumans were to be, as Bostrom observes, far removed from humans, would they also be far removed from freedoms championed by humanity today? Is freedom going to be available to those who are deemed transhuman/posthuman? These and similar questions are of the utmost importance for the future of human freedom.

4.5. Whose Freedom? Biotechnological Subversion of Egalitarianism

One of the most popular arguments against biotechnological manipulation is the notion that a posthuman future will topple the contemporary social order of the West and, as a result, redefine freedom as a democratic ideal. In *Life, Liberty and Dignity*, Kass argues poignantly that once introduced in society as a standard practice, biotechnology will mark the end of egalitarian society which is the base of modern-day freedom. It is obvious to Kass that, as with many new technologies, the first to reap the benefits of technological progress will be the ones with the power and resources to secure their access to enhancement and genetic engineering procedures. These groups would have a head start over the rest of the population and would seize the opportunity to become the new elite. Thus, there may be a point in the future when society will be made up of both

enhanced and unenhanced human beings. In Kass's opinion such social structure would inevitably lead to the establishment of a "rigid hierarchy" (8).

The dismantlement of egalitarian society is also a fear of Jeremy Rifkin, a famous critic of biotechnology and the posthuman age. In "What Biotechnology Means for Future of Humanity," he expresses his disdain towards biotechnological intrusions into human nature. His argument revolves around apprehension that such procedures will inevitably result in the "rise of the eugenics civilization" (43), that is, the antithesis of modern-day democratic societies where equality is the foundation of social order. Rifkin is deeply worried that in a posthuman future "[m]eritocracy could give way to 'genetocracy,' with individuals, ethnic groups and races increasingly categorized and stereotyped by genotype, making way for the emergence of 'informal' biological caste systems in countries around the world" (43). In such a world, the notion of freedom would resemble that of the ancient ideal of freedom that sanctioned a reality where only a select few who possessed economic and political advantages could enjoy freedom fully. Meanwhile, the rest of the populace was in bondage − servitude or slavery − with their freedom severely curtailed by their status. In the biotechnologically mediated posthuman age, the importance of status would have similar consequences. Both Rifkin and Kass argue that enhanced humans would be placed at the top of such a social pyramid. Moreover, given that biotechnology would be the only means to propel oneself into the higher strata of society, these technologies would be guarded, shrouded in secrecy or extremely expensive, so that they would be virtually unattainable by the general public. In "Ageless Bodies," Kass claims that a biotechnological revolution that welcomes the posthuman and transhuman vision of enhanced and transformed human beings would produce

> disparities between who will and who will not have access to the powers of biotechnical "improvement." The case can be made yet more powerful to the extent that we regard the expenditure of money and energy on such niceties as a misallocation of limited resources in a world in which the basic health needs of millions go unaddressed. (15)

Rifkin shares Kass's pessimistic outlook on the issue. He states in "What Biotechnology Means for Future of Humanity":

> Human genetic engineering raises the very real specter of a dystopian future when the haves and have-nots are increasingly divided and separated by genetic endowment,

> where genetic discrimination is widely practiced, and where traditional notions of democracy and equality give way to the creation of a "genetocracy" based on one's genetic "qualifications." (60)

In this view, the new caste of genetically superior beings will assume control of human evolution, much to the detriment of the freedom of those who do not belong to the transhuman/posthuman elite. The system will be rigged to promote those at the top, but they will elect themselves on the basis of their economic and/or social status. Within such a system, it is hard to imagine that the notions of equality or democracy would still be valid. In fact, freedom would have to be radically redefined.

Numerous young adult science fiction narratives grapple with the problem of freedom being denied to people in a future where egalitarianism is replaced by elitism. One of the more poignant examples of the demise of egalitarian freedom is *The Hunger Games* trilogy. In addition to a powerful theme concerning the inherent drive towards freedom even among those who have been oppressed all their lives, Collins's works offer an overview of methods that, through the use of advanced technologies, made it possible for the elite to establish control over the rest of the population. In this respect, freedom is a privilege that only the ruling class can enjoy. The others are simply slaves controlled by high-tech systems.

The society in *The Hunger Games* series is heavily conditioned by state propaganda used to eliminate any residue of freedom within the populace. The Capitol targets the human mind because it is the locus of freedom. In the first book of the series, it is established that the Capitol uses media broadcasting as an instrument to propagate the notion that Panem is a country where social and political order are well maintained and everything is proceeding according to the grand design of the benevolent government. Therefore, the history of the uprising against the Capitol is framed as an unfortunate event that virtually eliminated most of the population of the country, which meant that any political or social instability has to be avoided at all costs. In this scenario, the Capitol is presented as a peacemaker that creates order out of chaos. In *Deterring Democracy*, Noam Chomsky points out that propaganda is one of the most effective means to curtail people's freedom.[60] Chomsky asserts that any form of

[60] The complexities of propaganda as a powerful tool of social engineering were also addressed by Chomsky in his study of media propaganda techniques in *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (1988), a book co-authored with Edward S. Herman. Chomsky later published

government, even a liberal democracy, makes use of propaganda because it allows them to shape public opinion without the use of force:

> The logic is straightforward. A despotic state can control its domestic enemy by force, but as the state loses this weapon, other devices are required to prevent the ignorant masses from interfering with public affairs, which are none of their business. … The problem of "putting the public in its place." (399)

It is plain that this paradigm is applicable to the dystopian reality in Collins's trilogy. In *The Hunger Games* series, state propaganda is indisputably one of the most important techniques used by the elite to limit people's freedom.

While the Capitol's propaganda is reactive at times, it is mostly preemptive in nature. The elite understand that people still harbor views that are unfavorable towards the Capitol, and that if such sentiments gain popularity, a revolt is possible. Hence, as the story unravels, the reader learns that in Collins's world, the elite employ the merciless tactic of pitting each of the districts that comprise Panem against the others. Panem's system is designed to foster a sense of alienation among the districts, strictly limiting knowledge about the conditions in particular districts, as well as making it impossible to travel freely between different regions. The feeling of seclusion from others and constant brainwashing via media broadcasts make it hard for the population of the any district to see the others as allies. Indeed, the Capitol wants to breed suspicion and distrust so that the people cannot unite and overthrow their masters.

But the Capitol's efforts to thwart freedom go beyond mere media propaganda; they materialize in the annual public ritual of the Hunger Games. The spectacle is a twisted form of *panem et circenses* where the bloodshed directs people's attention away from the oppressive yoke of the Capitol. The media boost the cult of gladiatorial competition among the districts, in which representatives of each district (called *tributes*) fight to the death in a nation-wide event. The tributes are symbolic figures embodying each district so that the people can rally behind them during the games.

The Hunger Games are promoted as a contest of skills and wit, in which − within the context of the games − the tributes have seemingly absolute freedom to act,

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Necessary Illusions: Thought Control in Democratic Societies (1989) that also deals with the issues of propaganda and media analysis.

freedom to decide for themselves in the extreme scenarios the arena. For the population of Panem, the Hunger Games exemplify the existential struggle on the most primal level of basic freedom − freedom that is denied to the districts in their daily endeavors, but is granted to the representatives of the districts during the games. Thus, each district can vicariously experience the fight for freedom.

Yet, even that scenario is manipulated by the Capitol. People may believe that the fight in the arena is fair, but this is not the case. The tributes are not free actors, but merely pawns in a game that can be determined at any time, be it by a sudden change of rules or an unexpected intervention on the part of the game-makers. One can argue that the tributes' position is even more pitiful than that of the ancient Roman gladiators, who could at least count on their luck and skills, and hope to eventually gain freedom if their performance was impressive enough. Unlike their Roman counterparts, the tributes are denied any extent of freedom, and through them, the districts are denied freedom as well.

As the history of world civilizations shows, totalitarian pressure exerted upon the masses always leads to a strong feeling of discontent. Anger and frustration among the masses are then used as a rationale for revolutionary movements intent on removing autocratic rulers in order to establish freedom. This scenario promises a positive solution to the problem of freedom being oppressed, but revolutions in dystopian narratives are often a far cry from being oriented toward a single goal. A good example is the two-faced nature of the revolution that takes place in the *Hunger Games* series.

The lack of freedom in Panem is overwhelming, so it would seem that the rebellion that was launched to topple the Capitol's rule would champion true freedom for the people, but in fact the rebels offer only ersatz freedom. The bitter irony lies in the fact that the tyranny of the Capitol's elites is not counterbalanced by a freedom-oriented system that the rebels ostensibly aim to establish; on the contrary, for the rebels, freedom is only an empty slogan, while their deeds disclose their nefarious agenda. Katniss grows increasingly suspicious of the rebel leaders, but still tries to reconcile the rebels' propaganda of freedom, justice and equality with their more ominous deeds. Her deliberations on the nature of the rebellion take place in the context of increasing violence in Panem. The Capitol strengthens its iron grip on the districts because it aims to thwart any form of dissidence spurred by Katniss' defiance in the first book in the series. With the Capitol's violence becoming unbearable, for Katniss and others in Panem it seems that the rebellion is the product of a historical necessity to

oppose despotism. However, as the conflict intensifies and more and more battles are won by the rebels, Katniss notices that while the rebels parade her as an icon of freedom, they are ready to discard her and use only her image to further their despotic plans. The two-faced nature of the rebel leaders is epitomized by Alma Coin. After Katniss is proclaimed to be missing and presumably dead during a military operation, Coin does not hesitate to abandon her, addressing the crowds:

> Dead or alive, Katniss Everdeen will remain the face of this rebellion. If you ever waver in your resolve, think of the Mockingjay, and in her you will find the strength you need to rid Panem of its oppressors. (*Mockingjay* 294)

In fact, Katniss is safe and sound, but she learns that the rebels have the same disregard for human life as the Capitol. What is more, they seem to display the same contempt for freedom as the despots they are trying to overthrow. With the rebellion's triumph over the Capitol, the rebel leaders themselves assume the role of Panem's elite. Coin becomes the President in place of the deposed Snow; she even upholds the idea of Hunger Games in which the children of the former elites would be tributes, mirroring Snow's previous decrees exactly. Thus, even though the rebellion was allegedly aimed at overthrowing tyranny in the name of freedom, it becomes increasingly more dubious that it has ever been sincere. By the end of the series, the prospect of freedom for the people is very grim. It seems that one oppressor has been substituted for another.

Paradoxically, in *The Hunger Games* series, it is the revolutionaries themselves that undermine the notion of freedom. It would seem that this is only a fictitious idea, but in fact the situation described by Collins is similar to machinations that have already been used in history: The scenario played out in *The Hunger Games* trilogy has some striking parallels with real historical events during the Bolshevik Revolution.

Freedom in *The Hunger Games* series can be enjoyed only by those at the very top of the power hierarchy. The system is insulated, and no one outside of President Snow's close circle of confidants has any real power in the country. In the very same manner, Tsarist Russia was a despotic state where the power hierarchy remained intact and any possibility of expanding freedom were an unlikely development. In Panem the rebellious response to autocratic rule comes from a popular uprising; in Russia it was the Bolsheviks that led the charge against what they perceived as Tsarist tyranny. In both cases the revolutionaries siphon the feelings of frustration and rage that permeates

the masses. The yearning for freedom is strong and the populace is ready to subscribe to a movement that will voice their demands. Bertrand Russell explains the nature of the Bolshevik revolution in *The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism.* Russell states that the Bolsheviks' plan worked because it weaponized social frustration:

> Communists … wait for some propitious moment when events have caused a mood of revolutionary discontent with the existing Government. They then put themselves at the head of the discontent, and carry through a successful revolution. (119)

In Panem, the situation is very similar. The rebellion leaders assume the role of saviors bringing freedom to the oppressed population, but once they seize power, concerns for freedom are cast aside. Similarly, in Russia the Bolsheviks positioned themselves as the voice of the exploited masses, but once they came to power "[b]y proclaiming itself the friend of the proletarian, the [Bolshevik regime has] been enabled to establish an iron discipline, beyond the wildest dreams of the most autocratic American magnate" (77). This scenario has an eerie similarity to the situation described by Collins in her novels. The rebellion in *The Hunger Games* series passes as the voice of the tyrannized people and, much like in Tsarist Russia, it seems that the general populace is kept in the dark about the real agenda of the rebellion. The ultimate goal, both for the Bolsheviks and *The Hunger Games* rebels, is never to achieve freedom; it is solely a thirst for power that drives their actions. As the rebellion starts to unfold, much like during the Bolshevik revolution, the people of Panem never suspect that "[i]t is also possible, having acquired power, to use it for one's own ends instead of for the people" (110).

There seems to be a strong correlation between the social history of humanity and dystopian imaginings concerning the issue of freedom. Both seem to indicate that a genuine freedom-oriented revolution is very problematic, given that revolutionary movements can either forsake their goals in order to cling to power or can be hijacked by power-hungry individuals who never cared about freedom at all. Consequently, even if the revolution prevails, it is not the victory of freedom but rather a way to maintain the vicious cycle of some form of autocratic rule. This observation leads to grave conclusions about freedom in the future worlds envisioned by dystopian writers. A future where technology-empowered elites will be granted ever more advanced ways to control populations may be a future in which freedom is virtually impossible to achieve.

In dystopian fiction, freedom is typically eroded by state propaganda and the use of force − elements that are present in all the YA narratives selected for this discussion, and are best illustrated by *The Hunger Games* novels. However, these are only some of the methods that a tyrannical state has at its disposal. Freedom in dystopian worlds is also endangered by a variety of tactics linked to state-of-the-art advancements in technology. Dystopian narratives illustrate quite clearly that with the help of cutting-edge technologies, the wedge of totalitarianism will be driven into social and cultural milieus, slowly but steadily tearing societies apart and rendering them vulnerable to the interference of the all-powerful state. Perhaps the greatest danger that stems from these technologies is the possibility that human nature itself is going to be transformed to satisfy autocratic demands.

While propaganda and coercion can greatly influence one's ability to hold on to freedom, these are essentially external threats. On the other hand, technological interference in the human body constitutes a completely different level of danger: a threat to freedom located inside the body. Indeed, biotechnological manipulations exacted or promoted by the authorities in despotic states have the potential to totally deprive the subjugated population of freedom, given that these operations change the biological and mental processes that make it possible to think about freedom in the first place.

Scott Westerfeld's *Uglies* series serves as a dire warning against the consequences of biotechnological operations sponsored by the state. For Westerfeld, it is obvious that once the biological make-up of humanity is altered, other changes will follow − the most important one being the possibility to curtail freedom in people's minds via direct surgical intervention.

Similarly to Westerfield's *Uglies*, Shusterman's narratives paint a picture of a world heavily influenced by biotechnology. In his works, human nature is subject to a radical transformation. For many critics of transhumanism/posthumanism (who are often collectively called bioconservatists), the notion of human nature constitutes sacred ground, because they conceive of human nature as the locus of freedom. Once humanity is altered, freedom would also have to be redefined, and bioconservatists see such a redefinition as a change for the worse.

Not without a reason, the issue of freedom is the subject of much debate between bioconservatists and transhumanists/posthumanists. In *Posthumanism and Somatechnologies*, Lucie Dalibert describes a bioconservative outlook on enhancement

technologies that promise to fundamentally reshape humankind. She states that for the critics of radical enhancement: "[t]echnology is value-laden as well as an agent of change. That is, technology, or rather Technology inasmuch as it is conceived in a transcendental way, becomes a system that shapes, even constitutes, and ultimately enslaves human existence and social life" (47). If this is the case, Dalibert continues, "it is the instrumentalisation and objectification, hence latent dehumanisation of human beings" that bioconservatists fear the most (48). Dalibert seems to pinpoint the core of bioconservative arguments perfectly.

One of the key figures among bioconservatists, Leon Kass, describes his views about the coming of the biotechnological age and its threats to freedom in his essay "Preventing a Brave New World." Kass introduces the context of transhuman/posthuman aspirations in the following way:

> Human nature itself lies on the operating table, ready for alteration, for eugenic and psychic "enhancement," for wholesale re-design. In leading laboratories, academic and industrial, new creators are confidently amassing their powers and quietly honing their skills, while on the street their evangelists are zealously prophesying a post-human future. For anyone who cares about preserving our humanity, the time has come to pay attention. (1)

Kass is convinced that a future in which human nature would be drastically transformed is a very grim perspective for freedom. He draws from the legacy of Aldous Huxley's perennial classic *Brave New World* to link the use of biotechnology to dystopian imaginings. Kass believes that a dystopian future could emerge as a result of a utopian impulse for perfecting life, promoted by transhumanists/posthumanists. Kass also identifies one of the reasons why the debate on human enhancement seems so controversial. He points out that the disagreements between bioconservatists and transhumanists/posthumanists arise from their fundamentally different approaches to freedom. He states that transhumanists/posthumanists tend to unwaveringly believe in:

> the freedom of scientists to inquire, the freedom of technologists to develop, the freedom of entrepreneurs to invest and to profit, the freedom of private citizens to make use of existing technologies to satisfy any and all personal desires, including the desire to reproduce by whatever means. (3)

Bioconservatists, on the other hand, are concerned with the means and ends of the possible biotechnological revolution, and are cautious about supporting any expansions of freedom. They feel that these expansions might come at a high cost − even at the cost of endangering what it means to be human.

In this context, the issue of freedom is regularly raised regarding the use of biotechnology that might alter the genetic make-up of human beings. Inquiry into the nature of human freedom in a world profoundly influenced by enhancement technologies is the key concern for an eminent critic of transhumanism/posthumanism, Jurgen Habermas. Habermas is known for his in-depth analysis of the social and moral implications of biotechnologies. Habermas feels that transhumanists/posthumanists nest themselves in the Western tradition of progress associated with technological advancements and improvements in the standards of living. In *The Future of Human Nature,* he states:

> From the perspective of the liberal state, the freedom of science and research is entitled to legal guarantees. Any enhancement of the scope and focus of the technological control of nature is bound up with … the political prospect of enlarging the scope of individual choice. And since enlarging the scope of individual choice fosters individual autonomy, science and technology have, to date, formed an evident alliance with the fundamental credo of liberalism, holding that all citizens are entitled to equal opportunities for an autonomous direction in their lives. (25)

Habermas believes that these views are prevalent in Western societies and are unlikely to change easily. He claims that transhumanists/posthumanists assume the role of heralds of liberalism, coating their ideologies with promises of expansion of technologies of freedom. On the other hand, bioconservatists have failed to clearly present to the general public their warnings about dangers to freedom. Habermas even states that the bioconservatists' efforts to promote "legislative interventions restricting the freedom of biological research and banning the advancements of genetic engineering" (25) are often mistaken for "a vain attempt to set [themselves] against the dominant tendency to freedom of modern society" (25). Thus, despite the fact that bioconservative skepticism towards biotechnology cannot be viewed uncritically, Habermas maintains that bioconservatism is a voice of reason and a true champion of freedom in debates about human enhancement. For Habermas it is plausible, and even

necessary, to restrain technology in the name of a higher ideal − specifically, in the name of universal human nature.

Like Habermas, Kass also struggles with the issue of freedom. He wants to reconcile the notion of freedom as an ideal that is being redefined with the need for limitations that he feels must be placed on biotechnology. Kass stresses the negative consequences that unchecked biotechnology may bring. He agrees with Habermas that bioconservatists are not opposed to the expansion of the specific freedom to pursue knowledge, but they want to safeguard universal human freedom because they link it to a unique experience rooted in the essential nature of humans. Once human nature becomes the subject of experiments, human freedom may be in danger. Kass explains his point:

> Though we favor freedom of inquiry, we recognize that experiments are deeds and not speeches, and we prohibit experimentation on human subjects without their consent, … and, when necessary, uphold the primacy of human freedom and human dignity even over scientific discovery. (3)

Kass and other bioconservatists see freedom not as the ability to do whatever one wants, but as the right to do what one ought to do. Consequently, everything done in the name of freedom must be done with special care towards human nature and human ethical values.

To his credit, Kass is very careful not to demonize his opponents, even though he is positive that their approach to freedom is fundamentally flawed. He says:

> The defenders of [biotechnological manipulations] are not wittingly friends of despotism. Quite the contrary. Deaf to most other considerations, they regard themselves mainly as friends of freedom: the freedom of individuals to reproduce, the freedom of scientists and inventors to discover and to devise and to foster "progress" in genetic knowledge and technique, the freedom of entrepreneurs to profit in the market. …. We have here a perfect example of the logic of the slippery slope. … If reproductive freedom means the right to have a child of one's own choosing by whatever means, then reproductive freedom knows and accepts no limits. (10)

For Kass, this view of freedom is unacceptable, because it denotes freedom as a way for one's whims and wishes to override human nature itself.

Habermas approaches the problem of transhumanist/posthumanist visions of freedom in a similar way. Habermas maintains that transhumanists/posthumanists believe in freedom that provides virtually unrestrained access to and usage of technology, especially in regard to other human beings via biotechnological interventions. For Habermas, this is a twisted form of freedom, because it assumes power over others and reduces human beings to the status of experimental subjects, essentially robbing them of their personal freedom. Habermas is especially concerned with the concept of freedom of a prospective human being, a subject of biotechnological manipulations:

> When the adolescent learns about the design drawn up by another person for intervening in her genetic features in order to modify certain traits, the perspective of being a grown body may be superseded – in her objectifying self-perception – by the perspective of being something made. (53)

If one is made, Habermas maintains, one is relegated to the status of a thing, and things do not possess freedom. Furthermore, Habermas emphasizes his belief that freedom is something sacred to a human being and as such should never be dependent on the caprices of another person. He explains:

> We experience our own freedom with reference to something which, by its very nature, is not at our disposal. The person …. knows herself to be the irreducible origin of her own actions and aspirations. But in order to know this, is it really necessary for this person to be able to ascribe her own origin to a beginning which eludes human disposal ...? (58)

Hence, in Habermas's view, this kind of use of biotechnology strikes at the very heart of freedom as an experience of every individual.

The problem of freedom in the context of biotechnological interventions is also analyzed by Michael Sandel in his essay "The Case Against Perfection." Sandel recognizes that one of the most prominent arguments against radical human enhancement is that manipulations of human nature are an assault on freedom. He explains: "[a]ccording to this argument, genetic enhancements for musical talent, say, or athletic prowess, would point children toward particular choices, and so designer children would never be fully free" (n.p). Sandel himself is not entirely swayed by this

argument, but he admits that "[t]he shadow of eugenics hangs over today's debates about genetic engineering and enhancement" (n.p). Eugenics has a bad reputation precisely because the movement disregards human freedom in the name of progress towards an ideal human. Referring to this issue, Sandel asserts:

> There is something appealing, even intoxicating, about a vision of human freedom unfettered by the given. It may even be the case that the allure of that vision played a part in summoning the genomic age into being. But that promise of mastery is flawed. It threatens to banish our appreciation of life as a gift, and to leave us with nothing to affirm or behold outside our own will. (n.p)

Just like Habermas, Sandel appears to believe that human will, even if directed by good intentions, should never be regarded as sufficient in itself to supersede human freedom. No one should wield such power over other humans.

4.6. Transhuman/Posthuman Philosophy in YA Dystopian Narratives

The transhuman/posthuman perspective has become an important part of the cultural landscape of the last few decades. Indeed, modern culture is saturated with technology, to the point that the youth of today cannot imagine a world without smart devices or social media. It can be said without a shred of exaggeration that traditional cultures based on social relationships conducted in real life have been supplanted by a kind of techno-culture where technology is a key factor determining the nature of social relations. In her recent book *Engineering Youth: The Evantropian Project in Young Adult Dystopias,* Anna Bugajska offers a penetrating insight into the expansive nature of transhumanism in relation to modern youth culture; as she says: "many spheres of cultural influence between teenagers and the H+ movement are the same" (235).[61]

In this cultural set-up, the growing influence of transhumanism/posthumanism has also been noted in literature, in particular in the field of children's and YA fiction.[62] The dystopian blueprint coupled with the literary conventions of science fiction has proved to be a powerful combination that tests the limits of novel technologies and their

[61] *The H+ movement* is a term used by Bugajska as synonymous with the transhumanist movement.
[62] In recent years, criticism of children's literature and YA fiction has been enriched by numerous books on the topic: Noga Applebaum's *Representations of Technology in Science Fiction for Young People* (2009), Victoria Flanagan's *Technology and Identity in Young Adult Fiction: The Posthuman Subject* (2014) and Zoe Jacques' *Children's Literature and the Posthuman: Animal, Environment, Cyborg* (2015).

impact on social and political life. In general, YA dystopian narratives engage in critical discussion with transhuman/posthuman ideas, and assume an evaluative stance on how social order could be transformed and maintained according the principles offered by these philosophies. It is also attractive to young readers that the transhumanist/posthumanist movements offer intriguing insights into questions that typically trouble young adults, including the issue of personal freedom — a fact that YA fiction capitalizes on in order to boost young readership. Bugajska shrewdly observes that "by underlining personal autonomy as one of the most important values, juvenile texts became perfect vehicles for the transhumanist ideology" (235).

The following sections of the thesis are devoted to an analysis of transhumanist/posthumanist visions of freedom in YA texts. These narratives comment on the use of eugenics and cyberspace in the creation of a future where freedom is gravely endangered by transhuman/posthuman ideology.

4.6.1. Scott Westerfeld's *Uglies* Series: The Shapes of Posthuman Freedom and the Eugenic Impulse

Bioconservative worries about freedom being possibly under threat from posthuman biotechnology are aptly addressed in Scott Westerfeld's *Uglies* series. In Westerfeld's novels, biotechnological manipulations are a tool used by a caste of powerful individuals who want to transform society according to their eugenic assumptions. The protagonists live in a city that promotes an ideal image of a citizen, the primary focus being on a perfect body that is a gateway to a life full of pleasure. The ideal body is the result of an operation that is mandatory for everyone who turns sixteen. The city's propaganda makes it seem as if this is the only way to lead a meaningful life. Consequently, the doctors who perform this operation wield extraordinary power over others, shaping not only their bodies but their identities as well. However, meddling with human nature comes at a high cost. The effects of the operation are not only skin-deep, but extend to a person's mental faculties. One's critical thinking and abilities to perform complex tasks are dramatically hindered. As a result, people who have undergone the operation, called the Pretties, appear to be mindless drones rather than fully-fledged, mature human beings. In essence, their freedom has been stripped away by medical procedures. In the books, several characters refer to this state as feeling

"bubbly" or being a "bubblehead." These individuals' freedom has been reduced to only one aspect of their existence: living an enjoyable but ultimately meaningless life.

The fact that one's individual freedom is limited by the operation is a secret. The main protagonist, Tally, learns about it from her best friend Shay, and at first dismisses the revelation as something very unlikely. In the first installment of the series, Tally talks with Shay about becoming a Pretty and states that in her opinion "[Y]ou just have pretty dreams the whole time" (*Uglies* 30). But Tally's outlook slowly changes and in time she becomes skeptical about the procedure.

In contrast to the general public, the doctors who perform the operation are well aware of the brain lesions and their negative effects. The operation renders individuals docile and easily controllable. In the context of bioconservative worries about freedom, it is clear that those who possess power over the means of enhancement have power far beyond political influence. The doctors essentially determine what it means to be human. This oppressive system is personified in the character of Dr. Cable, the key figure behind the operations and the management of the city. She is willing to defend the notion of the benevolence of the operation and wants to suppress knowledge of its harmful effects. During a conversation with Tally, Dr Cable tries to sway Tally's opinion about becoming a Pretty. She plays on Tally's emotions and presents a positive view of the system:

> This city is a paradise, Tally. It feeds you, educates you, keeps you safe. It makes you pretty. … And our city can stand a great deal of freedom, Tally. It gives youngsters room to play tricks, to develop their creativity and independence. But occasionally bad things come from outside the city. (*Uglies* 59)

For Dr. Cable, freedom extends only as far as she and her minions allow it. The threat that she refers to is a few dissidents' set of beliefs that diverge from the views promoted in the city. One group that she especially singles out as dangerous are the Rusties, people who have decided willingly to refuse body enhancement procedures. They may not be many, but their very existence proves that embracing the doubtful blessings of biotechnology is not the only way to become happy.

Through her association with David, a boy she met by accident in the wilderness, Tally ventures into a settlement populated by Rusties. David has never been enhanced, nor is he permeated with the propaganda that people in the city are

bombarded with. His parents, Az and Maddy, are runaway doctors who, upon discovering the adverse effects of the operation, decided to leave their old life behind. In a conversation between Az, Maddy, David and Tally, the mystery of brain lesions is explained, providing a better understanding of what the Pretties are:

> David spoke up. "The lesions aren't an accident, Tally. They're part of the operation, just like all the bone sculpting and skin scraping. It's part of the way being pretty changes you."
> "But you said not everyone has them."
> Maddy nodded. "In some pretties, they disappear, or are intentionally cured—in those whose professions require them to react quickly, like working in an emergency room, or putting out a fire. Those who deal with conflict and danger … "
> "People who face challenges," David said. (*Uglies* 133-134)

From the above exchange, the reader can infer that, in a way, the Pretties are designer-made human beings. They benefit by being given perfect bodies, and society benefits from the process of remodeling their brains, which results in lowering their aggression level; as Az says: "Before the operation, there were wars and mass hatred … These days we're just a bit… easier to manage" (*Uglies* 136). Eventually, the Pretties may constitute a more peaceful and manageable society, but only because they have been robbed of their free will in deciding who and what they want to be.

While a degree of posthuman biotechnological engineering, applied on a broad scale, might produce a submissive society, Westerfeld imparts that advanced technologies applied selectively might produce a posthuman elite powerful enough to claim freedom above and beyond all the others. This point is illustrated by a class of beings in the novels that are designed to push the boundary of biotechnological enhancements, called Specials. The Specials are not merely better humans, but beings who constantly think of themselves as transcending the human condition as we know it. Their bodies are not just better looking, but also possess qualities that are animal-like − for instance, sharp, predatory teeth used as weapons. Their skills and strength are also off the human scale and can be described as superhuman. In the course of her adventures, Tally becomes one of the Specials. After obtaining an augmented body, she is also given an altered personality. The following passage reveals her thoughts after becoming a Special:

> Tally's operation had taken the longest. She'd done a lot of very average things in her past, and it had taken a while for the doctors to strip away all the built-up guilt and shame. Random leftover emotions could leave your brain muddled, which wasn't very special. Power came from icy clarity, from knowing exactly what you were. (*Specials* 4)

Tally relishes the feeling of being vastly different from the Uglies or Pretties. She conceives of herself as a different kind of being: "She was non-random, above average … almost beyond human" (*Specials* 16). The same transformation of personality applies to Tally's friend Shay:

> It didn't matter what you looked like. It was how you carried yourself, how you saw yourself. Strength and reflexes were only part of it—Shay simply knew that she was special, and so she was. Everyone else was just wallpaper, a blurred background of listless chatter, until Shay lit them up with her own private spotlight. (*Specials* 5)

The passages above illustrate perfectly that both Tally and Shay feel liberated from the constraints of human nature. Their new, enhanced condition grants them a feeling of uninhibited freedom. Throughout the novel it is clear that the girls perceive themselves as being far above the human species. With their superhuman powers comes a desire to impose their will onto others.

The qualities displayed by the Specials resemble the features of the Nietzschean ideal of the Overman (Der Übermensch).[63] There is no denying that the Overman is a multifaceted idea that entails complex meanings, but as many scholars agree, a key component of the notion of the Overman pertains to Nietzsche's views on freedom. In "Friedrich Nietzsche," an entry on the main Nietzschean concepts in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Anderson R. Lanier states:

[63] The Overman (Der Übermensch) is one of the best-known Nietzschean ideas. The Overman is subject to many interpretations, but it could be understood as an allegory that Nietzsche employed to convey his distrust of the moral claims of Christianity. For Nietzsche, it was not feasible to transcend human limitations through the ascension of the spirit and moral excellence as envisioned by religion. Instead, he advocated focusing on human excellence as achieved in the material world. In fact, Nietzsche called for the rejection of moral precepts that are founded on traditional views on good and evil, and introduced the idea of will-to-power as a counterbalance to Christian morality. (See: Anderson, R. Lanier, "Friedrich Nietzsche," the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* [Summer 2017 Edition], ed. Edward N. Zalta; and Leiter, Brian, "Nietzsche's Moral and Political Philosophy," the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* [Spring 2020 Edition], ed. Edward N. Zalta)

> From the earliest reception, commentators have noted the value Nietzsche places on individuality and on the independence of the "free spirit" from confining conventions of society, religion, or morality. (n.p.)

In other words, the ultimate freedom for Nietzsche is embodied in the Overman, who moves beyond these conventions, forming his or her own values. Nietzsche detests the limitations of human nature and believes that true individual freedom must mean the absence of any restrictions. Thus, the Overman is truly above and beyond common humanity. Lanier continues to explain that Nietzsche's "appeal to *self-determination* suggests that we might explain the value of individuality by appeal[ing] to an underlying value of *autonomy*" (n.p.). According to Nietzsche, a truly autonomous individual is a person who overcomes their own habits of upholding values and rules that are effective in a given society and culture. In overcoming oneself, Nietzsche would argue, lies the key to transcending the human condition.

It appears that the transhumanist conception of enhanced humanity shares a lot with the Nietzschean philosophy of freedom. While it is true that Nietzsche's Overman is often treated as an abstraction, many transhumanists argue that the transhumanist agenda complements the notion of the Overman. While some key thinkers in the field, like Nick Bostrom, indicate that the similarities between the two may be superficial, other transhumanists believe that the connection between transhumanism and the Overman is profound. In "The Overhuman in the Transhuman," Max More comments:

> The concept of self-overcoming resonates strongly with … trans-humanist ideals and goals. Although Nietzsche had little to say about technology as a means of self-overcoming, neither did he rule it out. And, as a champion of what he saw as a coming age of science, it is not difficult to see technology as part of it. (3)

For More, the Overman, or as many transhumanists prefer to call the entity, the Overhuman, can come about as a result of biotechnological manipulations. This point is further addressed by Stefan Lorenz Sorgner, who states in "Nietzsche, the Overhuman, and Transhumanism" that "both transhumanists and Nietzsche hold a dynamic view of nature and values" (30) and are "in favour of bringing about a revaluation of values" (32). If this is the case, an enhanced body is a means to achieve a new state of being that will bring forth a transformation of values. In this context it seems reasonable to assume

that freedom enjoyed by beings that eclipse the capabilities of the human body and/or mind will be vastly different from that of unenhanced humans.

4.6.2. Neal Shusterman's *Unwind* Series and Nancy Famer's Novel *The House of the Scorpion*: Denying Freedom via Biotechnological Instrumentalization of Human Nature

In Westefeld's series, the extent of freedom enjoyed by different parts of society is inextricably linked to radical transformations of the human body. In these narratives, biotechnology serves as a gateway to a new state of being, a posthuman form that moves beyond ideas associated with the human experience of freedom. In short, once human nature is altered, freedom must be redefined as well. This point was raised decades ago by Leon Kass in his influential 1998 essay "The Wisdom of Repugnance: Why We Should Ban the Cloning of Humans." Kass published his essay at the dawn of the biotechnological revolution spurred by the cloning of the sheep named Dolly. Kass asserts that in the age of biotechnology, the eventual expression of an incentive to manipulate nature will be a drive to master human nature. He explains this process:

> Human nature becomes merely the last part of nature to succumb to the technological project, which turns all of nature into raw material at human disposal, to be homogenized by our rationalized technique according to the subjective prejudices of the day. (696)

In the *Uglies* series, mastery over human nature means creating new types of beings. In this respect, the human body serves as the foundation for new forms of life that do not resemble traditional humans in either appearance or mindset. In essence, their transformation renders them unable to enjoy the human experience of freedom based on equality of rights because they have ceased to be natural humans sharing a universal experience of humanity.

Besides genetic and surgical bioengineering that may become traps for human freedom, contemporary YA dystopian narratives also point to human cloning as a biotechnology that may endanger personal freedom. For bioconservatives, a proliferation of human cloning technologies is akin to opening Pandora's box. Among the skeptics, Leon Kass in particular is very vocal about the dangers he associates with

genetic replication of an organic human template. Interestingly, Kass invokes science fiction narratives as powerful warnings against human cloning. In these narratives, Kass observes, the true nature of cloning is exposed, because these stories "make vivid the meaning of what looks to us, mistakenly, to be benign" ("The Wisdom of Repugnance" 701). In these stories, cloning and other similar biotechnologies open up a path to the mass production of human beings. Clones are instrumentalized by being treated as products rather than as free agents. Kass views cloning not as an achievement, but as a way to confuse the meaning of what it means to be human. This confusion is especially vivid in regard to human universals, like the notion of freedom.

Grim consequences for human freedom resulting from biotechnological instrumentalization of successive reconfigurations of the posthuman "human" being are addressed in Neal Shusterman's *Unwind* series and Nancy Famer's novel *The House of the Scorpion*. Both authors offer interesting contributions to the discussion on future implementations of varied biotechnologies and potential dangers for the exceptional experience of human freedom exercised by unique human beings, arising from the fact that a "human" being of this kind can be designed and mass produced. The question of the standing of these beings is essential because their status as people or objects would be a critical determinant while making the fundamental decision of whether to grant the beings agency and personhood, and thus whether to grant them the right of freedom.

In Shusterman's novels, the story takes place in a near future in which the United States has gone through the second Civil War. The country has been torn apart by the war between Pro-Life and Pro-Choice armies. Amidst the conflict, a new technology emerged that made it possible to literally deconstruct a human being, so that his or her body parts could be used by other hosts, while the original human was considered to be still alive, albeit in a divided state. After the war, this technology is used as a method to manage teenagers between the ages of 13 to 18, who, according to a consensus reached after the war, can be dismembered in the process of unwinding. The ultimate decision is up to the parents, but there are many powerful pressure groups that try to influence the law so that unwinding could become more common. Thus, paradoxically, after a conflict that revolved around the issue of the sanctity of human life, many teenagers in the *Unwind* series find themselves to be disposable, with their human rights retroactively terminated once the decision to unwind them is made.

The way those teenagers are stripped of their freedom and denied human rights is a good point in the novels for Shusterman to invite the readers into a deeper

examination of the question of freedom. By far the most powerful message about freedom is sent by Shusterman when he introduces the character called Cam Comprix. Cam is "the world's first fully composite human being" (*UnWholly* 140). He is created through an innovative technique of reverse unwinding, which means that Cam is literally composed from parts of 99 different people. He is designed to be a perfect specimen; the donors' talents and even personality quirks are transferred into his composite body. In essence, Shusterman uses the Frankenstein[64] archetype to craft the character of Cam, but to his credit, he goes beyond questions of the monstrosity of such practices and focuses on the issue of freedom and identity.

While Shusterman addresses the issue of freedom from the point of view of a composite human being, Farmer probes the well-known dilemma that arises from the possibility of human cloning. In Farmer's novel, there is a powerful drug-lord called El Patron who sets up his own mini-state called Opium in a near future at the border of Mexico and the US. El Patron is obsessed with aging, and his seemingly limitless resources grant him access to cutting-edge biotechnologies. In his manic fear of death, El Patron has decided to clone himself numerous times, and he uses these clones as sources of body parts once his own organs start to fail. However, being a sentimental man, El Patron decided to have one clone brought up as a normal human child, so that this young boy (called Matt) could enjoy a happy childhood, which El Patron himself never had. In a similar vein to Shusterman, Famer plays out the theme of the dichotomy of the status that is ascribed to Matt, who is often referred to as an object, no more than a result of a biotechnological experiment, while at other times he is humanized and viewed as a fully free individual in his own right.

It is obvious that in both Shusterman's series and Farmer's novel the question of freedom is intertwined with the notion of complete control over the beings produced. Kass believes this is the crucial problem associated with technologies that make it possible to intervene in the evolutionary process by granting power over one human's design to other humans. Kass is certain that this scenario is feasible in the near future, for he asks:

[64] Frankenstein is often hailed as the embodiment of the archetype of the Other. However, while Frankenstein is a tragic hero in a tale of science gone wrong, Cam represents a positive outcome of a scientific endeavor. In this sense, Cam becomes a positive Frankenstein — in him the notion of otherness as the locus of monstrosity is demythologized.

> [Would] complete genetic control of one generation over the next … be ethically problematic and essentially different from current forms of assisted reproduction? If so, where and how will they draw the line, and why? ("The Wisdom of Repugnance" 701)

Kass appears to be correct that one of the main issues here is power. Total control over another human being seems like a complete denial of their freedom. But what if these beings are not classically human? Then the possible dissonance between freedom and control might perhaps be alleviated. Indeed, in their respective stories both Cam and Matt are often deemed non-human. If these arguments hold water for both Cam and Matt, the relationship between them and their creators is not to be understood as a relationship between the controlled and the controllers, but rather between products and their producers. In this scenario, products like Cam and Matt do not possess freedom.

In Shusterman's narratives the question of whether Cam is a product or a person is essential to the books' discussion of freedom and Cam's progression as a character. One perspective is offered by Cam's creators, an organization called Proactive Citizenry. It seems that the organization is free to treat Cam as a product, since they choose to advertise him and ultimately sell him to the military. Once Cam is informed of this, he complains that he is essentially being treated as property and that the notion of people being property was abolished after the Civil War in the nineteenth century. However, the representative of the military, General Bodeker, disagrees vehemently. The general offers the following explanation of why the term *property* applies to Cam:

> [The term *human*] applies to individuals, which you are not. You are a collection of very specific parts, each one with a distinct monetary value. We've paid more than one hundred times that value for the unique manner those parts have been organized, but in the end, Mr. Comprix … parts is parts. (*UnSouled* 209)

In this respect Cam is reduced to the status of a thing rather than an individual and consequently the question of his consent — or free choice — never comes up.

Matt's status as a human being with rights and autonomy is incessantly questioned throughout *The House of the Scorpion*. Matt is kept away from other humans in a small section of the mansion that El Patron allotted to him, but upon being discovered by the children of El Patron's family, the Alacrans, he is automatically denied his personhood. The eldest child, Steven, continuously dubs him "an animal" (26) and his sister, Emilia, expresses her conviction that "[c]lones aren't people" (26).

What is more, the Alacrans and their allies refer to Matt as "it" throughout the novel. In fact, the dehumanization of clones seems to be a common sentiment not only in Opium but among people worldwide. Because of these experiences, Matt starts to develop the idea that being a clone means he is inferior. It is only when Matt interacts with people with great empathy that his self-esteem is boosted. One of the two bodyguards assigned to Matt by El Patron at one point describes to the young man the process of creating clones. Tam Lin understands the feeling of alienation Matt is experiencing. By referring to the notions of family ties and sexual reproduction as missing in the process of human cloning, Tam Lin indirectly condemns this use of biotechnology; he says to Matt: "You're alone in a way real humans can't understand. Even orphans can look at pictures and say, 'That's me ma and that's me da'" (80). Tam Lin goes on to explain that Matt was not begotten, but was produced in a lab from El Patron's DNA sample. Shocked, Matt ponders his origins by desperately asking "[s]o I'm just a piece of *skin*?" (80).

The situations that Cam and Matt face call their agency into question and consequently subvert their freedom. Even though they are seemingly no different from other people, they are continuously denied the status of human beings due to their origins. The only way for them to be considered free is to assert their own personhood. Cam and Matt manage to do it, albeit each in a slightly different fashion.

In Shusterman's world, Cam is treated like a wonder of technology, the pinnacle of what scientific progress can achieve. He even describes himself as being like a concept car. What he means is that he is a result of a pioneering project in biotechnology. Indeed, Cam's existence is a harbinger of a new type of humanity, and this is something that his creators want to underscore. Roberta, Cam's handler, explains to Cam how she views him:

> It was a choice we made to give you a piece of every ethnicity. From the palest sienna-Caucasian to the darkest umber tones of unspoiled Africa, and everything in between. … You are everyman, Cam, and the truth of it is evident in your face. …. You will be a shining beacon, the greatest hope of human race. You will show them that, Cam! By the mere virtue of your existence, you will show them! (*UnWholly* 61-62)

Roberta presents this view of Cam at the official introduction of Cam to the world. During the televised conference, it is clear that Roberta is in awe of what she and her colleagues have achieved. For her, Cam is the embodiment of a scientific victory. She

starts the conference by invoking an age-old scientific goal, saying: "[s]ince time immemorial, mankind has dreamed of creating life" (*UnWholly* 139). Her words echo a sentiment that Kass labels the "Frankensteinian hubris to create human life and increasingly to control its destiny," which for Kass basically means "man playing God" ("The Wisdom of Repugnance" 687) with a display of unparalleled control over human life. While Roberta embodies a strong optimism about the power of biotechnology to create humans, other people are more skeptical about Cam. During the same conference, one of the reporters asked to interview Cam denies him any right to be treated as a genuine human being. He tells Cam: "[y]ou might be made from [humans], but you're no more human than a football is a pig" (*UnWholly* 142).

Interestingly, both the enthusiasts of the new biotechnology and its opponents seem to gloss over the problem of Cam's freedom. It is Cam who fist raises the issue of agency and, by extension, the question of whether he is free in the same manner that other humans are. Cam's anxiety about his status as a free person drives his actions within the novels. If he is imbued with human nature and his humanity is recognized, then he has the same rights and obligations as others; he is a person and therefore possesses autonomy. But if he is not recognized as human, then human rights and obligations do not apply to him. In an emotional conversation with Roberta, Cam reveals his concerns: "[b]ut what if there is no 'I' inside me? What if I'm just flesh going through the motions, with nothing inside?" (*UnWholly* 162). Roberta tries to console him by saying: "Live your life and soon you'll find the lives of those who came before won't matter. Those who gave rise to you mean nothing compared to what you are" (*UnWholly* 162). In this exchange, Roberta asserts that Cam's personhood comes from his ability to act of his own volition. Cam is a person because he has a moral and spiritual life and is a free agent able to exercise his will.

In the same manner as Cam, Matt arrives at a realization as to what makes up his humanity. By the end of the novel, Tam Lin clarifies to Matt in very blunt words that the status of clones as non-humans is a lie perpetrated in order to subjugate them. Tam Lin is very straightforward, saying: "No one can tell the difference between a clone and a human. That's because there *isn't* any difference. The idea of clones being inferior is a filthy lie" (*The House of the Scorpion* 245). Matt realizes that, indeed, he has all the qualities of a human being. Throughout the book, he grapples with emotions, ethical choices and willingness to exercise his agency. His personhood reflects that of any other character. Thus, just like Cam, if he is a person, he is free by default. In fact, Matt

realizes that the only confusion as to his status as a free individual comes from the purposefully obscure legal definition that is aimed to muddle the waters. In the eyes of the law, if a person is cloned, his or her copy is automatically declared "an *unperson*" (367), because it is deemed to be illegal to have two people of the exact same genetic make-up. This international law confirms then that clones are de facto humans, but de jure they are artificially relegated to the position of an object or an animal for the purpose of keeping the existing social and political order intact.

A bioconservative reading of Shusterman's and Farmer's novels concurs with current criticism aimed at biotechnology. Cam's and Matt's cases perfectly illustrate the bioconservative fear of the instrumentalization of human beings by denying them human status and effectively robbing them of freedom. Kass puts this succinctly:

> Scientists who clone animals make it perfectly clear that they are engaged in instrumental making; the animals are, from the start, designed as means to serve rational human purposes. In human cloning, scientists and prospective "parents" would be adopting the same technocratic mentality to human children: human children would be their artifacts. ("The Wisdom of Repugnance" 696)

The instrumentalization of human beings is then indeed the ultimate denial of human freedom. Even if one were a composite human or a cloned human, bioconservatives would argue that the status of a free person would still apply in these instances, because possessing human nature is in itself the guarantee of being a free agent.

The issue of human nature as the determinant of freedom is also addressed by Francis Fukuyama in *Our Posthuman Future*, discussed earlier. Fukuyama asserts that "instrumentaliz[ing] human beings" by creating "genetically identical human beings is contrary to human dignity" (148) and may constitute one of the greatest dangers to freedom in the future. To Fukuyama, dignity is an essential human attribute that safeguards human freedom. He elaborates on this in the following passage: "If we strip away all of a person's contingent and accidental characteristics away, there remains some essential human quality underneath that is worthy of a certain minimal level of respect — call it Factor X" (149). In effect, Factor X is tantamount to being human; as Fukuyama explains: "[t]he circle of beings to whom we attribute Factor X has been one of the most contested issues throughout human history … Factor X is the human essence, the most basic meaning of what it means to be human" (150). Fukuyama

makes it clear that Factor X can be denied unjustly, in support of which he gives examples of various ethnic, social and minority groups that have experienced such treatment. However, the fact is that today the actions of those who have denied others their humanity and therefore their freedoms are considered morally wrong. Thus, Shusterman's composite humans and Farmer's clones are cases of Factor X being unjustly denied. The intention of both Shusterman and Farmer is to highlight the fact that even if human beings are created by biotechnology, their nature is identical to that of other humans; therefore they are free persons, not merely products of scientific design.

4.7. Freedom and Cyberspace

While biotechnology has the power to transform humanity's understanding of freedom, it is not the only new technology that hails a future where freedom must be reinterpreted and reinvented to fit the changing times. The first decades of the twenty-first century have witnessed a boom in communication and IT technologies that have penetrated all the social and cultural strata of Western civilization.[65] Nowadays, envisioning the future of human freedom without placing it in the context of cyberspace is impossible. Indeed, for many thinkers cyberspace is the epitome of a utopian locus for freedom, a space free from the troubles of the material world, with possibilities of creating novel, fascinating, often personally customized worlds. Lawrence Lessig, in his classic "The Laws of Cyberspace," claimed in the late 1990s that a new epoch in human history was about to begin. He said:

> This is the age of the cyber-libertarian. It is a time when a certain hype about cyberspace has caught on. The hype goes like this: Cyberspace is unavoidable, and yet cyberspace is unregulable. … Cyberspace is that place where individuals are, inherently, free from the control of real space sovereigns. (3)

Lessig noted that humanity needs to learn how to live on the brink of these two worlds, but he was cautious not to be overly optimistic about the outcome of such efforts. As a

[65] IT technologies are very relevant to the posthuman agenda. Posthumanists conceive of the contemporary IT revolution and the development of cyberspace as the first step on the path toward transcending the human condition.

sober thinker, Lessig believed that cyberspace can have its negatives as well. It may become a space where surveillance and restrictions are the norm and where dreams of unhindered freedom are supplanted by total control exercised by the designers of cyberspace. This issue is a frequent theme in many works of dystopian fiction about cyberspace. In these dystopian narratives, cyberspace is synonymous with a space rid of true freedom. In the last few decades, perhaps the most poignant novel on the topic has been *Feed,* written by M.T. Anderson.

The story is set in a future where advancements in IT technologies result in the development of an updated version of the Internet called the Feednet. As its name suggests, the Feednet provides its users with entertainment, information and social communication via the feed, a high-tech device implanted directly into people's bodies and linked to the brain and the neurological system. While most Americans enjoy the Feednet and spend their time entertained by virtual reality, the world is torn by political conflicts, environmental disasters and social upheavals that Feednet users remain oblivious to. The novel is narrated by a teenage boy named Titus, who is a typical user of the Feednet, ignorant of the real-world problems and obsessed with consumerism and a relentless pursuit of fun. Titus's worldview is challenged when he meets Violet, a girl with a critical outlook on life that gets enhanced as her feed starts to malfunction. Violet's physical condition worsens with every chapter, but at the same time she starts to free herself from the system of control imposed by the Feednet. Unfortunately, the malfunctions of Violet's feed are critical and eventually lead to her death. Before that happens, though, she engages Titus in many conversations that shed light on the nature of the world they live in.

In the story, having the feed is necessary if one is to realize the American Dream, expressed as the pursuit of happiness. Advertisements are constantly delivered by the feeds to keep the populace enamored with this innovative technology. One of the advertisements says: "[W]e have entered a new age. We are a new people. It is now the age of oneiric culture, the culture of dreams. And we are the nation of dreams. We are seers. We are wizards. We speak in visions. … What we wish for, is ours" (150). Still, despite this triumphalist rhetoric, the hard fact of the world in *Feed* is that not everyone participates in cyberspace happiness. In Anderson's world, there is a sharp divide between those who have feeds installed and those who do not or cannot have them installed for a variety of reasons. Violet explains that only 73% of Americans have the feeds and that people who do not have them feel inferior. The have-nots of Anderson's

America are often mocked and ostracized, even to the point of being treated as second-class citizens (102-103). In short, the future presented in *Feed* seems like a manifestation of the greatest worries that bioconservatists like Fukuyama or Kass are expressing today. Paradoxically, in *Feed*, technological progress greatly hinders the growth of freedom and even reverses the process of acquiring freedom. To be truly free, one simply has to have the feed, otherwise many things in life, like a good job or a booming circle of friends, are unavailable.

Years before the IT revolution and the rise of social media, Jean Baudrillard in his treatise *Simulacra and Simulation* postulated that the utopian impulse to create artificial, simulated realties can backfire. Baudrillard was aware that participation in virtual reality would mean that everyone who was unable or unwilling to connect to it could be stigmatized. In the early 1980s, Baudrillard saw the media as the first step in the advent of simulated realities, and he observed that:

> Whoever is underexposed to the media is desocialized or virtually asocial ... We are all complicitous in this myth [of the media]. It is the alpha and omega of our modernity, without which the credibility of our social organization would collapse. (61)

Indeed, since the publication of *Simulacra and Simulation*, the media have become an inseparable part of the Western civilization and have been instrumental in the emergence of cyberspace. Consequently, even though a person is at liberty to disregard cyberspace, this choice entails very grim consequences for one's life. In fact, it is a parody of a free choice, because choosing participation in cyberspace promises happiness, while choosing to stay away from it means misery. In *Feed*, people are pressured to become a part of cyberspace. They are essentially robbed of true free choice, because choosing not to have the feed condemns them to a life of limited possibilities.

In his though-provoking book *You Are Not A Gadget*, Jaron Lanier also comments on dangers to freedom that may arise from an overreliance on cyberspace, the Internet and social media. Lanier is very skeptical about a future where human beings turn their attention from living in the real world to being submerged in virtual reality. In Lanier's opinion, at first glance it seems that cyberspace will offer a truly open culture, a free market of ideas accessible to everyone, but in truth it will be a heavily monitored, meticulously designed space for governments and enormous

companies to influence the population. In this context, overt advertisements and subliminal messages will become the main weapon to control the masses. Lanier puts it this way:

> At the end of the rainbow of open culture lies an eternal spring of advertisements. Advertising is elevated by open culture from its previous role as an accelerant and placed at the center of the human universe. (56)

Thus, people may be constantly bombarded with advertisements and their lives may be defined by consumerism. Free choice becomes an illusion, since cyberspace invades one's mind, manipulating a person into becoming an unthinking slave of global companies. For Lanier, it would be a mockery of freedom, for the world would be cleverly manipulated by money and power. There would be no place for the ideals of free choice and free expression. Interestingly, Baudrillard had similar thoughts about this issue. The French thinker comments on the power of advertising that arose in the 1980s:

> Today what we are experiencing is the absorption of all virtual modes of expression into that of advertising. All original cultural forms, all determined languages are absorbed in advertising … [a t]riumph of superficial form, of the smallest common denominator of all signification. (61)

A similar scenario is presented in *Feed*, where advertisements are basically invading a person's mind through the feed directly linked to the brain. There are no barriers between the self and cyberspace; one's mind is totally exposed. Violet becomes aware that she is constantly being manipulated by advertisements, so she tries to salvage at least same semblance of privacy. She tells Titus:

> [W]hat I've been doing over the feed for the last two days, is trying to create a customer profile that's so screwed, no one can market to it. I'm not going to let them catalogue me. I'm going to become invisible. (98)

Violet is concerned that she is being treated as a plaything by global corporations. She longs to reestablish her freedom by being able to escape constant monitoring and profiling in cyberspace. Lanier's comments from *You Are Not A Gadget* seem to

perfectly reflect Violet's observations of what the world in *Feed* has become. The symbiosis of the human mind and the feed is a mark of "a new kind of social contract" where "[c]ulture is to become precisely nothing but advertising" (57). Lanier would undoubtedly support the claim that whereas Violet retains some awareness of the dangers to her freedom, most people in the novel are brainwashed to accept this reality as normal.

But the power of the feed is not only related to issues of consumption. The feed actually influences people's innermost thoughts, the core of human freedom. Violet explains this function of the feed: "[t]he feed is tied into everything. Your body control, your emotions, your memory. Everything" (170). Hence the feed is not only a part of life; it is life. Violet puts it succinctly when she desperately addresses Titus's friends, who are mesmerized by a new trend pushed by the Feednet; she shouts: "You don't have the feed! You are feed! You are feed! You're being eaten! You're raised for food! Look at what you've made yourselves!" (202). This is how Anderson envisions the ultimate danger to freedom posed by cyberspace. The threat lies not only in surveillance and control techniques, but in the way cyberspace takes a person's sense of reality hostage. One cannot long for freedom if one is not aware that freedom has been lost.

It is only Violet who becomes aware that she has been trapped by the Feednet. She has no freedom outside of what the feed allows her to feel or imagine. Even when her mind slowly starts to rebel, her thoughts are still crafted in ways that the feed lets her articulate them. This is perhaps the most terrifying realization in the book. Violent exasperatedly states:

> Everything I think of when I think of really living, living to the full—all my ideas are just the opening credits of sitcoms. See what I mean? My idea of life, it's what happens when they're rolling the credits. … What am I without the feed? It's all from the feed credits. My idea of real life. (217)

Violet's mind has been conquered by the feed. There is no escape even for a person that is aware of the problem. It appears that Lessig's concerns about human freedom in relation to the nature of cyberspace parallel Violet's realizations in the novel. In his prophetic warning, Lessig presents his view on why cyberspace can become the greatest adversary of freedom:

> [T]he world we are entering is not a world of perpetual freedom; or more precisely, the world we are entering is not a world where freedom is assured. Cyberspace has the potential to be the most fully, and extensively, regulated space that we have ever known — anywhere, at any time in our history. It has the potential to be the antithesis of a space of freedom. (3)

Thus, freedom has not found a safe haven in cyberspace. On the contrary, cyberspace as envisioned by Anderson is a perfect trap for freedom, because it promises untold wonders but in reality represents oppression of the ultimate kind: a denial of free agency.

In the end, what the dystopian narratives discussed above attempt to convey is a warning that transhuman/posthuman ideologies can readily rationalize a transformation of humankind that will forever change the notion of human freedom. These ideologies herald the prospective advent of a technological utopia that may promise unlimited freedom but in reality might bring grave dangers to humanity, like blind faith in the power of technology, instrumentalization of human nature in the name of progress, and a risk of deepening social divides that will negate the existence of egalitarian societies. Furthermore, dystopian narratives warn humanity that fruits of technological progress like cyberspace and IT technologies can be controlled by groups motivated by power and profit. When this happens, technological advancements become tools of oppression. As they suggest, the future holds many challenges to the notion of freedom that Western civilization holds dear.

CONCLUSIONS

The objective of my dissertation has been to investigate refigurations of liberal democratic freedom in contemporary American Young Adult dystopian narratives. I have explored the meaning of freedom in historical, political and philosophical dimensions, and in the course of my studies it came to transpire that freedom has always been a complex and multifaceted idea that has been at the center of a vibrant debate that spans centuries.

Historically, the notion of freedom is one of the most celebrated and at the same time most contested cultural ideas. Deliberations on freedom continue to move our hearts and minds, given that freedom is experienced primarily as an everyday social reality, a concept best appreciated through social practice. The first decades of the twenty-first century witnessed a convergence of historic processes that marked a new beginning for the Western concept of freedom and the liberal democratic paradigm.[66] In this context, I believe that refigurations of freedom speculated upon in selected dystopian writings prefigure imminent changes to the liberal democratic paradigm that a combination of social, political, economic and technological issues may likely produce on a global scale in a not-too-distant future. My analysis attempts to indicate possible variants of freedom that might arise in a world where dystopia has become the norm.

My views on freedom have been largely shaped by George Lakoff's concepts of uncontested and contested freedom. Drawing on Lakoff's perspective, I wanted to present freedom as a fundamentally progressive idea[67] that can be fully understood if it is perceived as emerging from a dynamic process of socio-cultural changes. Furthermore, my dissertation asserts that liberal democratic freedom represents one of

[66] By this I mean a vast range of social, cultural and political events that continue to shake the Western world. Among these one can highlight the growing polarization of Western societies, the upsurge of radical nationalism and the institutional crisis of liberal democracy epitomized by controversies surrounding the political ambience of Europe and the US.

[67] Lakoff deeply believes that freedom has been under attack from forces that want to distort its true meaning. One of the main ideas that emanate from his book is that the notion of progressive freedom is questioned by enemies of freedom that want to renegotiate and remodel its meaning (*Whose Freedom? The Battle Over America's Most Cherished Ideal,* pp. 3-18).

the pinnacles of Western culture. Yet in recent years a certain regression of liberal democratic freedom has been observed. It seems that liberal democratic freedom has been eroded by the grim realities of current political and social tensions in the West. In other words, the status quo, let alone the further progress of liberal democratic freedom, is no longer a given in the context of contemporary issues that strike at the core of the liberal democratic system. This regressive trend has been augmented by the 2020 pandemic crisis, which will undoubtedly continue to change the social and political fabric of the world, and to influence the way freedom will be construed in a post-pandemic world. Considering the current freedom-constraining worldwide political drift, anxious questions as to what freedoms may be granted to or withheld from future generations cannot be lightly dismissed. Informed conjectures aimed at addressing the questions have been offered by social sciences for decades, but results of scholarly studies have always been slow to impress anyone other than academicians. Literature may not enjoy the prestige of academia, but it has invariably been a sensitive barometer of social change. The claim I make in this thesis is that dystopian fiction for young adults is this sort of barometer, gauging potential fluctuations of freedom effected by all-pervasive digital and bio-technologies.

In Chapter One, I presented an overview of the historical development of the idea of liberal democratic freedom, emphasizing the fact that the Western concept of freedom should be understood as a process and a social practice that is liable to be redefined under the pressure of historical circumstances. As demonstrated in my dissertation, liberal ideologies have sought to broaden the sphere of freedom through gradual transformations of political systems in the West. The main trajectory of this evolution was from an elitist version of freedom that characterized ancient times, through feudal freedom propagated in the Middle Ages, to a more egalitarian vision of freedom celebrated in the Age of Reason − the third version being a relatively recent invention in the history of political ideas; a high point in the long evolution of freedom. Roughly since the mid-nineteenth century, the ideal of liberal freedom has come to be regarded as a cornerstone of the Western way of life. Hence, in Western thought the extent of freedom that a given society enjoys has become a quantifiable determinant of civilizational progress, assessed by the Human Freedom Index, co-published annually by the Cato Institute (US), the Fraser Institute (Canada) and the Liberales Institut at the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom (Germany).

Nonetheless, however unshaken the common understanding of freedom might seem, particular interest-driven attempts at reshaping the concept have not ceased, nor have the foes of freedom laid down their arms. Freedom's progress may be a fact of history, but it must not be assumed to proceed without hindrance. Apart from traditional enemies of freedom like absolutist rulers and fascist or communist dictators, the latest history indicates that the biggest issue that can threaten freedom is the erosion of liberal democracy itself. This danger comes from the fact that freedom, once very hard to achieve, has now become a commodity seemingly easily attainable and, as a result, has been greatly devalued by the success of the Western liberal democratic system.

Dystopian literature for young adults makes conjectures about possible hazards to freedom in the near future. On the one hand, these texts speculate on which hypothetical threats to freedom have the potential to become real, and on the other they forecast future refigurations of freedom in dystopian societies where freedom as we know it today is under siege. In Chapter Two I dwell on likely threats to the Western idea of freedom, understood as uncontested freedom, as envisioned by Lois Lowry, M.T. Anderson, Nancy Farmer, Scott Westerfeld, Neal Shusterman, Suzanne Collins, James Dashner and Veronica Roth. My analysis displays that the most serious menace to uncontested freedom can arise from collectivist impulses exploited by dystopian regimes that threaten individual freedom and therefore challenge liberal democratic freedom founded on personal autonomy. Lowry's *The Giver* may be seen as a parody of a welfare state that casts the citizens in the role of children who need to be taken care of by an overprotective parent. In this case, the state apparatus presented in the novel highlights the unity and collectivism of the populace by assuming a parental role, but in the end turns out to be an authoritarian regime in disguise. Similarly, collectivist thinking informs the actions of the authorities in Dasher's *The Maze Runner* series and Roth's *Divergent* trilogy, who are willing to sacrifice the well-being of an individual or a social group in order to enforce their vision of order. Treating freedom this way robs it of fairness, and in a twisted way elevates the interests of a pressure group above the interests of an individual.

In a similar manner, Collins's *The Hunger Games* trilogy comments on the rejection of social equality that leads to an attack on uncontested freedom. Collins creates a society where an economic chasm has been introduced between the haves and the have-nots; those who are deemed worthy have access to technological novelties that others are deprived of. Collins's future world can be seen as the end result of an

instrumental usage of technology that makes it possible to keep people in check. In a similar manner, Westerfeld points to the dangers of subversions of social equality that lead to a loss of freedom. In his scenario, biotechnological manipulations are hailed as an ultimate expression of morphological freedom − that is, freedom to alter one's physical body. Westerfeld draws heavily on trans- and posthuman imagery and scrutinizes the notion of civil freedom in regard to beings that, in many ways, lose their human nature in favor of a new trans- and posthuman status.

The posthumanist vision of freedom discussed in Chapter Two involves the notion of designed humans—beings that are created through the use of biotechnology. Powerful literary speculations on this issue feature in Shusterman's and Farmer's novels in which trans- and posthuman technologies make it possible for governments to instrumentalize humans, thereby robbing them of their agency and relegating them to the status of a product. The objectification of people has vast social and moral repercussions in the context of uncontested freedom that rests upon the sacred validity of an individual as an autonomous agent, possessing personhood, ergo the right to act on behalf of his or her freedom. Consequently, trans- and posthumanism pose a threat to uncontested freedom because they dismantle human agency and promote a strictly pragmatic approach to human nature and human rights. This slant can be perceived more and more widely as technologies like cloning and gene manipulation become modern-day reality.

Arguably the most dire dangers to uncontested freedom discussed in Chapter Two can be found in M.T. Anderson's *Feed*. In contrast to the above-mentioned novels, Anderson does not cultivate even a glimmer of hope that freedom can exist in a world where corporate propaganda invades people's minds on a daily basis. Subtle but systematic coercion that amounts to a soft violation of one's sense of self is a truly diabolical set-up where freedom is lost imperceptibly. To make matters worse, this loss of freedom is not effected by a brazen dictatorial act, but is the result of the masses' silent complacency and intellectual laziness. Anderson's world provokes the realization that technology is never neutral, since it is a tool that can be used either for good or ill.

While nestled within the cultural matrix of the West, uncontested freedom seems hard to topple. A much more promising target for enemies of freedom is the area of contested freedom, which is a field of vast controversies. Disputes surrounding contested freedom are the point of departure for Chapter Three, which addresses the idea of contested areas of freedom in the context of biotechnology and information

technology. My analysis of the selected dystopian narratives shows that forces that are antithetical to freedom might be likely to assault contested areas of freedom centered around the issue of the appropriate range and scope of civil liberties. It must be noted that the very nature of civil liberties leaves them open to assault from the enemies of freedom. It is my firm belief that dystopian scenarios indicate that the issue of control over civil liberties is crucial to the future shape of freedom.

The point is that contested freedom is an area of political maneuvering, dependent on the actions of political actors. Agents that operate in politics are often motivated by the prospect of power and prestige; the more power-hungry the politicians are, the more dangerous they become to freedom. The political goal of seizing control of whole societies can be achieved because the idea that a private life can be autonomous and removed from the public domain fails in a world increasingly more interconnected and interdependent. There is no place for absolute individual rights in a political machine that relies on a myriad of interconnections. Moreover, there is no escape from legal regulations when the private and the public areas of life merge.

A heavily regimented socio-political reality is a playground for political actors who want to assume total control of the masses. Accordingly, while in theory a person still possesses a legal claim to freedom, in practice the potential for unobstructed exercise of their civil liberties is limited by the all-powerful state. This realization is what unites the diverse perspectives on contested areas of freedom expressed in Dasher's *The Maze Runner* series, Roth's *Divergent* trilogy, Shusterman's *Unwind* series, Collins's *The Hunger Games* trilogy and Lowry's *The Giver*. Despite their varied approaches to dystopian regimes, these works share a common thread concerning the bleak future of contested freedom. The authors indicate that refigurations of freedom may come as an aftermath of heated negotiations of the extent of civil liberties in societies where political power has been assumed by authoritarian elites. The governments in these novels were legally established in response to grave civilizational threats, like war, social crises or a deadly plague, but in the process of reacting to the immediate dangers to humanity, they severely curtailed freedom. The authors' view is that this turn of events to be expected, since it ensues from basic principles of human psychology. Chaos engenders fear and worry, and tumultuous circumstances create a demand for order. The deeply engrained human need for socio-political stability leads to people's willingness to pay any price − even surrendering their civil liberties − to feel safe and protected. In the worlds of the dystopian futures discussed above, many people

are scared or beaten into submission, but there are also some who are indifferent to or even supportive of the iron fist of their tyrannical governments. This is because even the crudest form of tyranny offers a certain vision of order, and for those who experience the chaos of the dystopian world where order and security are valued above freedom, even tyranny is preferable to anarchy. Still, while such an attitude may be understandable, it should not be accepted; a loss of freedom in exchange for a semblance of safety can turn out to be a very dangerous bargain. What the novelists are unanimous about is that the only viable way to prevent civil rights from being stolen is the rise of grassroots freedom-fighting movements that are rooted in societal dissatisfaction. The spark that ignites these movements results from growing social friction between the haves and the have-nots. The polarization of social classes is therefore an unfortunate reality that plagues dystopian regimes, but at the same time, it is a catalyst for social unrest that can arise and ferment, so that the notion of freedom is kept alive by those who experience it the least.

Chapter Four discloses still another angle from which an attack on freedom may be launched. In this chapter Collins's *The Hunger Games* trilogy, Westerfeld's *Pretties* series, Shusterman's *Unwind* series, Farmer's *The House of the Scorpion* and M.T. Anderson's *Feed* all strongly point to the notion that possible future refigurations of freedom are closely correlated with advanced technological intrusions into the biological make-up of human beings. So far the human body, − while always an element of complex networks of biopolitical relationships − has remained intact and constituted a common denominator for the whole human species, a locus for human rights and liberties. But with the advent of trans- and posthumanism, this safe haven has become compromised. The hypothetical reshaping of freedom in a trans- and posthuman future is a result of a disastrous assumption that human nature is entirely malleable and should be remodeled to achieve an ideal vessel for human consciousness, an end goal of trans- and posthuman ideology that is often expressed only in very vague terms. The scope of the modifications varies from novel to novel, but the end result is always the same: a dismantling of the visceral experience of freedom that is grounded in universal human nature. While it cannot be denied that human nature itself is a contested concept, for the practical purposes of this discussion a simplified line of argument can be adopted: Since human nature is associated with human corporality,

whenever the human body is breached with biotechnological manipulations, human freedom is sabotaged as well.[68]

As the dystopian novels under discussion tend to indicate, there is a grave danger in meddling with the millennia-old paradigm of a human being, since subverting the fundamental stability of humankind means everything that is considered human is also challenged. In a world in which there is no decisive definition what it means to be human, the obliteration of a democratic order established to grant equal civil rights to all human beings is an inevitable consequence. The threat would be imminent, because in trans- and posthuman worlds social hierarchy would consist of human, sub-human or superhuman categories, and hence one's place on the social ladder would depend largely on one's access to human enhancement technology. Obviously, in such circumstances, freedom could not be shared as a universal experience by beings who no longer share the same nature.

Besides highlighting the likely impact of biotechnologies and information technologies on resetting the scope of freedom available to particular individuals, these American dystopian writers link the foreshadowed decline in public freedom to future modes of governance. As their dystopian narratives indicate, sooner or later the authority that establishes an individual's position in the trans- and posthuman social hierarchy will be either an all-powerful government or a super-corporation. In either case, these trans- and posthuman gods among men will be above mere humans, and thus their freedom will expand enormously, while all others will be discriminated against and cast aside. As my explorations in the final chapter demonstrate, it is hard to take seriously a vision of a universal trans- and posthuman heaven with an equal distribution of the blessings of technology, given that time and time again the history of humanity shows that might, not fairness, is right. Ultimately, in a trans- and posthuman world, freedom would belong to those who would be deemed worthy of it and the power structure of future societies would be much less egalitarian than today, thereby undermining the liberal democratic model of freedom.

The trans- and posthuman agenda that, if followed, might lead to dismantling liberal freedom can be elucidated through Zygmunt Bauman's metaphor of the liquidity

[68] It is my deep conviction that a more in-depth project exploring the notion of human nature as seen in trans- and posthumanist philosophy and the vast ramifications of a paradigm shift concerning the unbreachable borders of human corporality would be an extremely fruitful academic endeavor. The topic itself is definitely a hallmark of the early 2000s, considering the technological progress made in biotechnologies and the growing social awareness of the issue, both of which seem to indicate that merging humans with technology on a biological level is just a matter of time.

of the modern world, expressed in his renowned book *Liquid Modernity*. Bauman examines contemporary culture, which in his view has been unable to successfully resolve a fundamental conflict within itself. He believes that on the one hand, modern culture seems to relish the idea of stable values and traditions, but on the other, it actively subverts them. In other words, Bauman views modern culture as steadily and rapidly dismantling its own creations, weary of stable cultural ideals, including freedom. Bauman calls this new chapter in Western history "liquid modernity" characterized by "society's hospitality to critique" (24). As Bauman perceives it, liquid modernity is a collage of:

> patterns and configurations … no longer "given," let alone "self-evident" … clashing with one another and contradicting one another's commandments, so that each one has been stripped of a good deal of compelling, coercively constraining powers. (7)

Viewed in light of *Bauman's* analysis of modernity, trans- and posthuman perspectives on human nature and freedom can be seen as an emanation of an ever-changing world where human nature is cherished, yet destined to be subverted. Thus, to borrow Bauman's terminology, trans- and posthumanism uphold an idea of humanity "in a state of constant transgression" (28) that can therefore be purged of the vestiges of freedom residing in human nature − an act that is sure to completely redefine social and political freedom.

A logical inference that can be drawn from these considerations is that if Lakoff's idea of freedom is true, then freedom must be firmly anchored in human beings themselves, and the radical departure from this assumption offered by trans- and posthumanism is a truly dangerous prospect. In other words, my dissertation subscribes to the belief that human nature is the ultimate blueprint for humanity and that it determines the experience of freedom that gives rise to cultural, political and social representations of this phenomena. To radically modify human nature means to undo Western civilization, which is focused on the individual human.

In conclusion, I believe that a grim prediction about the future of modern-day liberal democracies is aptly featured in the dystopian narratives selected for my project. All these dystopian worlds share the vision of a political landscape where democratic institutions have forsaken their original call to uphold the ideal of freedom. The former liberal democracies are transformed into systems that champion strong political power,

imposing totalitarian control over the population. As a word of caution, it can be added that while the narratives are fictitious, actual anti-democratic processes are underway in more than a few modern-day liberal democracies whose citizens are facing various degrees of limitation to freedom.

The message that the dystopian novelists discussed above convey to their reading public is that the privilege of freedom that the Western world has won the hard way, through protests, riots, uprisings and revolutions, may not last forever. Therefore, if endangered, it must be vehemently defended. Societies that fail to stand up for their freedom when they see the first indications that it is being taken away from them may imperceptibly find themselves in the shackles of a tyranny from which they will not be able to break free for decades, if not centuries. In his memorable Gettysburg Address, delivered on the 19th of November, 1863, Abraham Lincoln defined democracy as "government of the people, by the people, for the people,"[69] which also holds true for freedom. While freedom is for the people, it is simultaneously by the people, who, if they want to stay free, must never take it for granted.

One more valuable lesson that can be learned from the dystopian literary representations of the future discussed in this thesis is that freedom has to be conceived not as an absence of constraints, a nihilistic pursuit of self-interest, but as an ongoing process, a negotiable social contract that seeks to reconcile the optimal self-definition of the individual and the well-being of the broader social collective. What the dystopian fictions by Lois Lowry, M.T. Anderson, Nancy Farmer, Scott Westerfeld, Neal Shusterman, Suzanne Collins, James Dashner and Veronica Roth imply is that societies of the future need to be ready to keep watch with anxious vigilance on the enemies of freedom, at the same time constantly striving to strike a balance between individual rights and a satisfying communal coexistence, all of these endeavours being underpinned by an unflinching belief in the sacred value of universally shared human nature.

[69] There exist several slightly different version of Gettysburg Address. All of them can be found at http://www.abrahamlincolnonline.org/lincoln/speeches/gettysburg.htm. The quote used here is the same in all of them.

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SUMMARY

The aim of this dissertation is to investigate refigurations of freedom in contemporary American Young Adult dystopian fiction. The idea of freedom, changed and contested throughout the ages, has become the staple of modern-day liberal democracies and a beacon of hope amidst dark tendencies that endanger the future. This dissertation offers an analysis of freedom in the context of its historical significance for the Western civilization, newly emerging socio-political trends, and the proliferation of cutting-edge technologies that all converge to shape human life now and in the nearest future. This dissertation also highlights the fact that freedom has become a prolific topic for literature, and in particular for sinister scenarios presented in the work of selected contemporary American dystopian writers who convey visions of the future where a profound refiguration of freedom and the whole democratic paradigm is inevitable.

The dissertation comprises six parts: an introduction, four chapters and conclusions. The aim of the introduction is to sketch the importance of contemporary socio-political developments that challenge the liberal democratic model and our understanding of freedom. Literary fiction of the modern era is presented as a tool that both facilitates and comments on the evolution of the notion freedom in the West and has the power to forecast the future scenarios for freedom through the use of speculative fiction, and in particular the dystopian genre.

Chapter One presents an outline of the historical development of the idea of liberal democratic freedom. It encompasses an overview of the historical circumstances and accomplishments in the process of the emergence of the liberal democratic system. The overview starts with an exploration of the notion of freedom in Ancient Greece and ends with an inquiry into the recent debates on the proper extent of civil liberties in Western societies.

Chapter Two examines the concept of freedom as a visceral phenomenon and its status as an uncontested ideal that serves as a foundation for the liberal democratic way of life. This view of freedom as an uncontested notion has failed to reinforce freedom because it portrays it as far too static and unable to respond to the dynamic socio-political changes that occur in the modern world. The aim of this chapter is to emphasize the magnitude of the imminent crisis of freedom with the help of chosen dystopian writings. The works used for analysis is this chapter include Neal Shusterman's *Unwind* series, M.T. Anderson's *Feed*, Nancy Farmer's *The House of the Scorpion*, James Dashner's *The Maze Runner* series, Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games* trilogy, Veronica Roth's *Divergent* trilogy, Lois Lowry's *The Giver* and Scott Westerfeld's *Pretties* series.

Chapter Three focuses on the examination of contested freedom, that is areas of freedom that have always been treated as auxiliary to what freedom essentially means, and therefore are highly susceptible to be modified or even negated by the forces that aim to thwart freedom. The exploration of

these tendencies is supported by an analysis of James Dasher's *The Maze Runner* series, Veronica Roth's *Divergent* trilogy, Neal Shusterman's *Unwind* series and Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games* trilogy and Lois Lowry's *The Giver*.

The last chapter investigates trans- and posthuman ideology as a powerful tool that imbues developing technology with a philosophical and political narrative that can endanger liberal democratic freedom which is anchored in the notion of the universal human nature. The problematization of freedom within the context of human corporality sheds new light on the possible dangers to freedom that may arise once the human body is breached by technological advancements. This chapter is supplemented by an analysis of trans- and posthuman tendencies in Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games* trilogy, Scott Westerfeld's *Pretties* series, Neal Shusterman's *Unwind* series, Nancy Farmer's *The House of the Scorpion* and M.T. Anderson's *Feed*.

The dissertation ends with conclusions that extrapolate on the tendencies analyzed in the previous chapters and offers insights into the notion of freedom that is currently contested in various areas of socio-political life.

STRESZCZENIE

Celem rozprawy jest omówienie refiguracji wolności we współczesnej amerykańskiej literaturze dystopijnej dla młodego czytelnika. Idea wolności stała się znakiem przewodnim dla sytemu liberalnej demokracji, pomimo że historycznie należy ona do jednych z najbardziej kontestowanych idei społeczno-politycznych. Niemniej jednak wolność stała się synonimem wartości, która stoi w kontrze do mrocznych tendencji autorytarnych zagrażających ludzkości. Niniejsza rozprawa oferuje analizę wolności w kontekście jej znaczenia dla cywilizcji Zachodu, jak również usytuowania wolności w ramach najnowszych trendów społeczno-politycznych i technologicznych, których konwergencja ukierunkowuje życie codzienne każdego człowieka i wywiera swój wpływ na najbliższą przyszłości ludzkości. W dysertacji podkreślony został wymiar wolności jako ważnego tematu literackiego. Jest to szczególnie uwydatnione we współczesnej amerykańskiej literaturze dystopijnej, która prezentuje wizje przyszłości, gdzie wolność oraz koncepcja liberalnej demokracji stają w obliczu nieuchronnej przemiany.

Niniejsza praca składa się z sześciu części: wprowadzenia, czterech rozdziałów oraz konkluzji. Celem wprowadzenia jest przedstawienie kontekstu społeczno-politycznego warunkującego obecne zagrożenia dla wolności. Literatura została zaprezentowana tutaj jako środek, który umożliwia zarówno rozszerzanie idei wolności jak i swobodny komentarz na temat owoców tego rozwoju. Ponadto literatura dystopijna stanowi idealny materiał dla prowadzenia eksperymentów myślowych, w których pole wolności zostaje mocno zawężone.

Rozdział pierwszy stanowi opis historycznej ewolucji koncepcji wolności oraz systematyczne wyłanianie się systemu liberalnej demokracji jako sytemu politycznego, który chroni i rozszerza wolność jednostki. Przegląd tych tendencji sięga do źródeł koncepcji wolności w starożytnej Grecji, a konkludujące fragmenty rozdziału dotykają współczesnych problemów dotyczących wolności w kontekście debaty nad prawami obywatelskimi w świecie Zachodu.

Rozdział drugi to rozważania na temat idei wolności jako fenomenu w dużej mierze opartego na jej intuicyjnym rozumieniu. Wolność jest tu ujęta jako tzw. „uncontested freedom," czyli idea, która zasadniczo nie podlega dyskusji lub redefinicji. Jest to bazowe podejście do wolność jako koncepcji stałej, niemalże statycznej. Jednakże takie ujęcie niesie z sobą zagrożenie pojmowania wolności jako nieprzystosowanej do stawienia czoła dynamicznym zmianom zachodzących obecnie na świecie. Kryzys wolności jest tematem przewodnim w przeprowadzonej analizie serii Neala Shustermana *Unwind*, książki M.T. Andersona *Feed*, dzieła Nancy Farmer *The House of the Scorpion*, serii James Dashnera *The Maze Runner*, trylogii Suzanne Collins *The Hunger Games*, trylogii Veronici Roth's *Divergent*, książki Lois Lowry *The Giver* oraz serii Scott Westerfelda *Pretties*.

Rozdział trzeci rozpatruje tzw. „contested freedom," tzn. cechy wolności, które są postrzegane jako wtórne i mogą być przedmiotem transformacji nie wpływającej zasadniczo na bazowe podejście do

wolności. Jednakże „contested freedom" daje możliwość wejścia w polemikę na temat wolności jako takiej, a co za tym idzie jest to sposób, w który siły mające na celu radykalną zmianę lub nawet negację wolności mogą swobodnie działać. Analiza w tym rozdziale dotyczy serii Jamesa Dashera *The Maze Runner*, trylogii Veronici Roth's *Divergent*, serii Neala Shustermana *Unwind*, trylogii Suzanne Collins *The Hunger Games* oraz dziele Lois Lowry *The Giver*.

Ostatni rozdział to opis i analiza rozumienia idei wolności w świetle ideologii trans- i posthumanizmu. Trans- i posthumanizm stały się narzędziami zmian w postrzeganiu roli technologii jako istotnej siły wymuszającej przemiany społeczne i kulturowe. Tego typu przemiany widoczne są również na płaszczyźnie wolności i koncepcji liberalnej demokracji. Przekonanie o istnieniu uniwersalnej natury ludzkiej, której bastionem jest ludzka cielesność jest gwarantem wolności. Założenie to jest mocno kontestowane przez trans- i posthumanizm, co staje się przyczynkiem do wtargnięcie technologii w ciało człowieka. Możliwe zagrożenia dla wolności wypływające z trans- i posthumanizmu są analizowane na podstawie trylogii Suzanne Collins *The Hunger Games*, serii Scotta Westerfelda *Pretties*, serii Neala Shustermana *Unwind*, książki Nancy Farmer *The House of the Scorpion* oraz dzieła M.T. Andersona *Feed*.

Ostania część dysertacji to konkluzje, w których zawarte są przemyślenia odnośnie omówionych tendencji refiguracji wolności w wyselekcjonowanych dziełach dystopijnych. Ponadto sformułowane są tutaj spostrzeżenia autora na temat wolności jako idei, która jest obecnie kontestowana na różnych polach życia społeczno-politycznego.