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THE UNDERPINNINGS OF DYSTOPIA:  
A COGNITIVE POETIC APPROACH TO HUXLEY'S *BRAVE  
NEW WORLD*

DANIEL PÉREZ MARQUES

[dperez968@alumno.uned.es](mailto:dperez968@alumno.uned.es)

TUTOR ACADÉMICO: Dr. Ismael Iván Teomiro García

LÍNEA DE TFG: Sintaxis Inglesa

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## ABSTRACT

A major piece of dystopian literature, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* remains one of the most influential English novels of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In order to study how the ambiguous dystopia of the New World is constructed, in this essay I employ a Cognitive Poetic approach, applying concepts developed within Cognitive Linguistics to literary analysis. The analytical method adopted aims at exploring the process of dystopian science-fiction reading as well as attaining sound evidence that supports intuitional interpretations about the relationship of the individual with the community.

**Keywords:** *Aldous Huxley, cognitive linguistics, literary analysis, dystopian literature.*

## RESUMEN

La gran obra de literatura distópica de Aldous Huxley, *Un Mundo Feliz*, sigue siendo hoy en día una de las novelas inglesas más influyentes del siglo XX. Para poder estudiar cómo se construye la ambivalente distopía detrás de este nuevo mundo feliz, en este ensayo se propone un enfoque poético-cognitivo consistente en la aplicación al análisis literario de conceptos desarrollados en el campo de la lingüística cognitiva. La adopción de este método analítico tiene por objetivo explorar el proceso de lectura de ciencia-ficción distópica en sí mismo, así como obtener fundamentos sólidos para interpretaciones intuitivas acerca de la relación entre individuo y comunidad.

**Palabras clave:** *Aldous Huxley, lingüística cognitiva, análisis literario, literatura distópica.*

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## INTRODUCTION

### ACADEMIC INTEREST

Aldous Huxley's visionary *Brave New World*, Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and Zamyatin's *We*, are the defining works of the dystopian literary tradition that was consolidated in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Where utopian fiction implies the imagining of a perfect and desirable alternate world—whether in order to idealistically justify philosophical arguments, to condemn the baseness of reality or to prove the impossibility of achieving such utopias—dystopian fictions are futuristic extrapolations of the real world and invite the reader to consider the potential consequences of their beliefs and assumptions, as well as the social and ideological tendencies that pass unnoticed and unchallenged in the present.

However clear one's intuitions about the dystopian quality of *Brave New World*, the future depicted in the novel shows a certain ambivalence—as pointed out by M. Atwood and D. Bradshaw in their respective introductions to current editions of the book (Atwood, 2007; Bradshaw, 1993). Different literary theories offer in turn different lenses through which study and characterise the dystopia: feminist and gender reading might expose the institutionalised, patriarchal mechanisms that cap the female experience, such as the stigma of motherhood (explicitly perceived as more disgusting than fatherhood in the New World) and the use of state-prescribed Malthusian belts; a Marxist analysis would expose the World Controllers' utilitarian arguments to rule over the masses, or condemn the fragmentation of the working class into a series of alienated, mutually loathing, class-unconscious castes; a deconstructivist approach could very well envision the novel as simultaneously utopian and dystopian in its celebration and condemnation of modernity. Each strategy, according to its subjacent ideology, highlights specific facets of the dystopia, and the more is revealed about the imagined future, the higher our awareness of the present becomes.

The particular lens I employ throughout this essay to analyse the dystopia in *Brave New World* is Cognitive Poetics<sup>1</sup>. An essential definition of this approach may

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<sup>1</sup> Also named Cognitive Stylistics.

be summarised as the application of Cognitive Linguistic concepts to text analysis, which brings together the fields of psychology, linguistics and literary criticism. Because of its width of scope, Cognitive Poetics may be used to account for possible readings of literary works at the levels of individual or communal interpretation.

### **AIM AND SCOPE**

The main objectives of this essay are to unveil more of the ambiguous dystopia of *Brave New World* and to provide sound evidence for surface intuitions about the novel by applying a rigorous method to the analysis of the text. To achieve this, it is necessary to explore the interplay between reader and text in dystopian science-fiction reading, and to understand the cognitive and linguistic mechanisms behind it. The Cognitive Poetic framework developed offers the possibility of a wide-ranging analysis, from examining of the act of reading to the definite textual level.

### **STRUCTURE**

In the first half of the essay, I introduce the fundamental concepts that will be used in the analysis of the novel. An outline of the main tenets of Cognitive Linguistics is given prior to the description of the fundamental concepts developed in the field, in a bottom-up fashion, from the most fundamental to the more complex instances of idealised cognitive models, mental spaces, and text worlds.

The second part of the essay comprises the analysis of *Brave New World*, which is structured in a top-down approach—I begin by analysing the readerly aspects of dystopian fiction reading and developing a model of discourse world in order to understand how notions of plausibility and accessibility relate to the language of the novel and the importance of iconicity, and move forward to explore the mental underpinnings behind the cognitive models of the New World. Being able to understand how the dystopia is linguistically articulated allows for an analysis of the main characters in their relation to the world they inhabit.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The analysis of this essay is qualitative in nature. The model of discourse world I develop initially helps narrow down the most relevant aspects of the text in relation to the articulation of dystopia; then, by applying the Cognitive Poetic approach developed in the Theoretical Framework section to the text, the most salient cognitive models present in the New World are exposed. Whilst interpretive, the characterisation of the novel's protagonists is grounded on the models found in the text.

## **STATE OF THE MATTER**

Lakoff and Johnson's insights with regards to conceptual metaphor and idealised cognitive models in *Metaphors we live by* (1980) mark the birth of Cognitive Linguistics. Drawing from the concepts developed in said field—and in light of their possible application to translation—M. Freeman coined term 'cognitive poetics'<sup>2</sup> in the mid 1990's to describe her interdisciplinary approach to literary studies (Freeman, 2009); the publication Stockwell's textbook, *Cognitive poetics: An introduction* (2002) may be taken to mark the coming-of-age of the discipline.

Despite its being a relatively new field of study, Cognitive Poetic analysis has proven an effective means of grounding literary criticism in the realm of cognitive science. Examples of fruitful Cognitive Poetic approaches to literature include Freeman's (2003) work on Emily Dickinson's poems, which offers a coherent account of the understanding of metaphor creation and interpretation, as well as some insight into the strengths and limitations of traditional literary criticism; Peña's (1997) revision of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, where the relationships between Mr. and Mrs. Bennet, Jane and Elizabeth, Bingley and Jane, and of course Elizabeth and Darcy, are examined by the means of Cognitive Linguistic concepts such as conceptual metaphor and image schemata—and which also shows how the whole novel is structured around one of the most prevalent cognitive metaphors in

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<sup>2</sup> It is widely accepted that earlier use of the term by Reuven Tsur dates back to his *Toward a Theory of Cognitive Poetics* (1980). The paradigm pursued in this essay aligns with Freeman's independently developed definition of the term.

the English language: that LOVE IS A JOURNEY; finally, Stockwell's *The poetics of science-fiction* (2000) offers a comprehensive account of what science-fiction reading consists of—from the 'micro' level of the cognitive mechanics supporting the text to the 'macro' level of science-fiction as a genre.

With regards to Huxley's novel, different perspectives had shed some light on the dystopian nature of *Brave New World*. For instance, Hamamra's (2017) Foucauldian reading exposes how individual stability in the eyes of the World State is achieved through eradication of individuality, and that World Controllers have eliminated 'language that expresses thoughts and emotions'; from a feminist and genre perspective, March (2003) is in a position to affirm that 'the replacement of procreation with sexual activity both liberates and confines women'; Firchow (1984) has reasonably recognised a deeper humanity than what has traditionally been granted to the characters of the novel. However, other than Stockwell's work on general science-fiction and utopian/dystopian literature—which necessarily includes brief analyses of Huxley's novel—an extended Cognitive Poetic approach to *Brave New World* has not been attempted, as far as my knowledge reaches.

What the Cognitive Poetic approach has to offer is a less interpretive means of reaching the same conclusions as Hamamra's, March's and Firchow's, under the scope of a comprehensive theory.

As Barry (2009) suggests, several limitations of Cognitive Poetics should be noted. He points out that an extended analysis by means of Cognitive Linguistic concepts could result tedious and unmanageable. The solution he finds to be most prevalent in the field is a tendency to deal with very short texts. However, Cognitive Poetic analysis of extended pieces of literature has been carried on successfully—see Freeman's (1995) work on *Macbeth* or Peña's (1997) revision of *Pride and Prejudice*. To the potential tediousness of the Cognitive Poetic readings of longer texts, it is important to add a methodological concern: in analysing the language of the literary work, one will often encounter the cognitive foundations of language to overwhelmingly permeate the totality of the text. While this will sometimes illustrate how authors do consciously or unconsciously make use of cognitive linguistic



strategies, in order to develop a significant analysis, qualitative notions of salience and relevance become of uttermost importance in narrowing down the text.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The definition of the present approach to the analysis of *A Brave New World* sees Cognitive Poetics as understood by Freeman and Stockwell: a literary theory that is grounded on the findings and developments of Cognitive Linguistics<sup>3</sup> (Freeman, 2003: 253; Stockwell, 2002: 4). Before delving into the particular concepts and tools originated from CL research and their application within text analysis, I must first provide an overview of the theoretical grounding of the discipline.

### 1. THREE FUNDAMENTAL DIMENSIONS OF CL

As a field ascribed to the cognitive sciences, the underlying general assumption of CL is ‘that our interactions with the world are mediated through informational structures in the mind’ (Geeraerts & Cuyckens, 2007: 5); the particular corollary being that those structures are organised, processed and conveyed by means of natural language. In their understanding of language as a form of cognition, Geeraerts and Cuyckens (2007) draw the following fundamental features of CL:

- Meaning is seen as the ‘primary linguistic phenomenon’ (5) since it is the content which forms and informs said informational structures;
- As the function of language is to categorise world knowledge, ‘there is no need to postulate a systemic or structural level of linguistic meaning that is different from the level where world knowledge is associated with linguistic forms’ (5); and that
- Language does not mirror objective reality, but rather imposes a structure onto the world that allows for categorisation of world knowledge.

To the cognitive dimension of CL, we must add the notion of *functionalism*: the basic method of analysis that assumes ‘that linguistic structure cannot be analyzed independently of the uses to which is put’ (Nuyts, 2007: 548). Geeraerts (2006) coincides in his vision of CL as ‘a *usage-based linguistics*’ that features a ‘*contextualized conception of language*’ (29). It shares with the functionalist tradition in its broad sense the view of language not as a distinct ‘module’ but as ‘an integral

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<sup>3</sup> Throughout this essay, the acronym CL denotes *Cognitive Linguistic* or *Cognitive Linguistics*.

facet of cognition' (Langacker, 2007: 422)—in this sense, the functionalist nature of CL informs its cognitive dimension. Moreover, the notion of context in CL ranges from the utterance and textual levels to the individual's conceptual system as well as the conceptual system of a given culture—thus, the functionalist aspect of CL also informs its *experientalist* dimension as described below.

A crucial position that characterises CL is the rejection of both objectivism and subjectivism in favour of a different account of understanding and truth. In examining the concept of truth within the scope of metaphors (in the cognitive sense, as explained below), Lakoff and Johnson (1980) highlight some determining incompatibilities with either philosophical stance (186). By elaborating on a typical example found in their discussion of truth and understanding, we can summarise their argument as follows:

1. *Metaphors are capable of truth.*

That the expression 'Inflation has gone up' is capable of truth is evident—however, the metaphorical nature of such an ordinary, non-poetic sentence must be made clear (albeit intuitively) by pointing out several cognitive processes that we take for granted in producing and understanding such metaphors.

To begin with, *inflation* is an abstract concept, not a worldly, material identity; as such, it cannot *be* anywhere in the world, from which follows that it cannot *go* anywhere. Furthermore, an increase in the rate of inflation is not naturally, physically oriented upwards, as numbers do not exist in a vertical arrangement. In CL terms, the expression involves the *mapping* of the abstract concept of *inflation* onto that of a physical substance, and that of an increase onto the direction *up* (170).

While these mappings will be studied in further detail in the following sections, this example shows that we are able to conceptualise actual situations in metaphorical terms and evaluate these metaphorical expressions for truth (172).

2. *Objectivism cannot account for metaphorical truth.*

This is an immediate conclusion from the above. We may as well conceptualise inflation as being a substance and an increase as moving vertically—in the objectivist view, these ideas are false in that they do not exist outside of our conceptual system.

However, it is relevant to note the ubiquity in language of the second mapping (and its corollary, that of the decrease into the downwards direction), which is examined early in the work by Lakoff and Johnson: 'The number of books printed each year keeps going *up*. His draft number is *high*. My income *rose* last year . . . The number of errors he made is incredibly *low*. His income *fell* last year.' (15). As these authors conclude, projections of such kind 'are deeply rooted in physical and cultural experience; they are not randomly assigned' (18). Whilst objectivism cannot account for metaphorical truth, the cognitive dimension of CL is concerned the 'kind of objectivity relative to the conceptual system of a culture' (193).

### 3. *Subjectivism cannot account for nonconventional metaphor failure.*

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) examine the traditional binary opposition between objectivism and subjectivism in Western culture (159), which would lead one to conclude that if metaphors are not objectively true, they must be therefore subjectively true. Indeed, subjectivity seems to account for original uses of metaphor. These authors discuss the nonconventional nature of the Shakespearean quote, 'Life... is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing' (Shakespeare, in Lakoff & Johnson, 1980: 174).

On the one hand, the quote invokes a conventional notion: 'In general, a life story imposes a coherent structure on elements of your life that are highlighted' (173), such as the participants involved in the story, their motivations, plans and goals, the salience of some episodes of life and the causal connection between them<sup>4</sup>, etc. On the other hand, the particular projection LIFE IS A STORY TOLD BY AN IDIOT subverts some of the entailments held by convention—we understand that this kind of life would have no coherent structure ('full of sound and fury'), and that no causality could be drawn from the selected events of the tale, providing no meaning to the whole ('signifying nothing').

In evaluating the truth of Macbeth's metaphor, Lakoff and Johnson note that it

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<sup>4</sup> In CL terminology, the conceptual metaphor initially invoked by Macbeth is LIFE IS A STORY.

may well fit the lives of people whose life circumstances change so radically, rapidly, and unexpectedly that no coherent life story ever seems possible for them (175).

In spite of the subjective aspect in the successful production and understanding of nonconventional metaphors, scrupulous examination shows that subjectivity underdetermines metaphorical truth.

Let us consider the mapping of 'increase' onto 'upwards'. Given its ubiquity in language, this projection seems to be somewhat conventionalized amongst speakers. Yet there are alternative conventionalized understandings of the arrangement of quantities; for instance, it is not uncommon to organise numbers from left to right in increasing sequence (such as the elements of a x axis in a Cartesian coordinate system). If the truth of a metaphorical expression were entirely subjective, we would have absolute freedom to propose a mapping of 'increase' onto 'right', conceptualising the increase of inflation rates in that direction. Nevertheless, the sentences 'Inflation has gone *right*' or 'His income *went left* last year' are not obviously recognisable—we understand that these examples fail in their formulation of meaning.

Consequently, we must conclude that metaphorical truth is neither entirely objective nor completely subjective. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) synthesise thus their critique to both accounts of truth:

What objectivism misses is the fact that understanding, and therefore truth, is necessarily relative to our cultural conceptual systems and that it cannot be framed in any absolute or neutral conceptual system . . . What subjectivism specifically misses is that our understanding, even our most imaginative understanding, is given in terms of a conceptual system that is grounded in our successful functioning in our physical and cultural environments (188).

The alternative to this duality is articulated as an *experientalist myth*, which simultaneously acknowledges that 'since we understand situations and statements in terms of our conceptual system, truth for us is always relative to that conceptual system' and that 'our conceptual system emerges from our constant successful

functioning in our physical and cultural environment' (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980: 180). The defining quality of the experientalist account of truth is that it allows for both the subjectivity of the individual's conceptual system and the objectivity of the communal conceptual system of a given culture.

As we have seen, the underlying assumptions held within Cognitive Linguistics form a three-dimensional foundation based on *cognition*, *functionalism* and *experientalism*.

## **2. KEY CONCEPTS IN COGNITIVE LINGUISTICS**

The following sections introduce some of the key concepts and ideas developed in the context of CL. By no means exhaustive, this account is particularly concerned with the tools relevant to our Cognitive Poetic approach: Idealised Cognitive Models (and their particulars), and the notions of mental spaces, worlds and blending.

### ***2.1. Idealised Cognitive Models***

Although of central importance in his work, Lakoff has not provided a specific definition of what Idealised Cognitive Models<sup>5</sup>, are (Ruiz de Mendoza, 1996: 342). We may synthesise the definitions proposed by Stockwell (2002: 33) and Ruiz de Mendoza (1996: 342) and define ICMs as conceptual representations of the world that are:

1. set up to organise our world knowledge as to produce a way of understanding and negotiating reality;
2. structured by interrelated categories;
3. conventional in that these categorial relations are informed by social, cultural and individual experience.

As such, 'each ICM is a complex structured whole, a gestalt... [which], as used, structures a mental space, as described by Fauconnier' (Lakoff, 1987: 68). We shall

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<sup>5</sup> Hereafter ICMs.

explore mental spaces in further detail later in this section. Stockwell (2002) provides the following characterisation:

[Cognitive models] can consist of image schemas and propositional structure relating certain elements to others, and they can be enriched or reconfigured by the action of conceptual metaphor and metonymy. (33)

The above description of ICMs identifies a distinction in the constituent cognitive principles of a given ICM which has been formalised by Ruiz de Mendoza (1996), who distinguishes *operational* and *non-operational* cognitive models (343). Operational models are characterised as being dynamic, in that they involve some sort of cognitive process, while non-operational models are static and are involved in the definition of the former—which does not imply that they are more central to the structure of ICMs.

### 2.1.1. Non-Operational Models

#### 2.1.1.1. Image Schemata

A fundamental assumption in the experientialist perspective is the *embodiment* hypothesis: that '*human physical, cognitive and social embodiment ground our conceptual and linguistic systems*' (Rohrer, 2007: 27). This idea underlies the work by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), who claim that 'most concepts are partially understood in terms of other concepts' (56). In examining the groundings of the human conceptual system, these authors explore how abstract and complex concepts are systematically grounded on concepts stemming directly from bodily experience.

For instance, the structure of our spatial concepts, which informs much of our conceptual system, 'emerges from our constant spatial experience, that is our interaction with the physical environment' (1980: 56-57). An example of this is the

concept UP<sup>6</sup>, central in our understanding of space and fundamental in the articulation of more complex concepts<sup>7</sup>. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) note that

our spatial concept UP arises out of our spatial experience. We have bodies and we stand erect. Almost every movement we make involves a motor program that either changes our up-down orientation, maintains it, presupposes it, or takes it into account in some way . . .

Thus, UP is not understood purely in its own terms but emerges from the collection of constantly performed motor functions having to do with our erect position relative to the gravitational field we live in (56).

Considering our environment and our body's adaptations to it, the concept UP—along with other spatial concepts, such as 'FRONT-BACK, IN-OUT, NEAR-FAR' (1980; 56)—is seen as immediately emerging from our bodily experience. Further consideration of the human body and its conceptualisation of itself and its surroundings shows that the self is perceived as a CONTAINER with a definite inside-outside boundary, and that it is composed of SUBSTANCES like flesh and bones (1980; 58). This self is self-distinguished from other OBJECTS and CONTAINERS around it, finding in these separate ENTITIES distinct or projected boundaries.

Working from this insight, Johnson (1987) defines an *image schema* as 'a recurring, dynamic pattern of our perceptual interactions and motor programs that gives coherence and structure to our experience' (xiv). The example of the VERTICALITY schema is used to exemplify this idea, as it emerges from a systematic application of an UP-DOWN orientation in conceptualising our experience of the environment—for instance, in 'perceiving a tree, [in] our felt sense of standing upright, [or in] the activity of climbing stairs' (xiv).

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<sup>6</sup> In Cognitive Linguistics, the use of small capital letters denotes an abstract conceptual model that does not occur in language, but that informs the use of particular linguistic expressions (conventionally highlighted by italics).

<sup>7</sup> Such as the concept of VERTICALITY, or the metaphors MORE IS UP or GOOD IS UP.



From Johnson's summary of 'most of the more important image-schemata' (126), our focus will lie on those used by Lakoff (1987) in defining further types of ICMs (271-278).

The CONTAINER schema involves the conceptualisation of an entity as having an interior separated from an exterior by a distinct boundary. This schema stems directly from our self-experience of the body as a container or as an entity inside a container—such as rooms, the world, etc. (Lakoff, 1987; 272).

We also conceptualise our bodies as complete wholes with distinct parts in a particular configuration (1987; 273). This PART-WHOLE schema is applied to other objects (a tree is seen as the sum of its roots, bough, branches and leaves) and is equally imposed on more complex concepts—for instance, the notion of life as a sequence of stages.

The LINK schema is the conceptualisation of the relation of constrain and dependency between two entities (1987; 274), from the physical experience of a foetus linked to the mother's womb by its umbilical cord to the notion of commitment in marriage.

The parts of our body conceptually arranged in a CENTRE-PERIPHERY schema, by which we distinguished a central core trunk and peripheral limbs (Lakoff, 1987; 274). This structure explains why we would perceive 'a tree that loses its leaves [as] the same tree' (1987; 274) but would not be able to conceptualise a heap of leaves as a tree.

Finally, the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema is an abstraction stemming from the experience of arriving to a destination from an initial point, following a path set in a particular direction (1987; 275). Complex concepts such as finite activities (e.g.: a game of chess) are conceptualised in this fashion.

#### 2.1.1.2. *Propositional ICMs*

Propositional cognitive models are composed of an *ontology* or 'the set of elements used in the ICM' and a *structure*, 'the properties of the elements and the relations holding among them' (Lakoff, 1987; 285). Whilst acknowledging the objectivist aspect of propositional ontologies, Lakoff emphasises the mental nature

of the arguments composing them: these entities do not correspond with slices of reality (285) but essentially representational cognitive constructs.

Five different types of propositional structure are proposed: the simple proposition, the scenario or 'script', the feature bundle, the taxonomy, and the radial category. Since the particularities of these types are not central to our analysis, a general notion of these ideas will be sufficient for the articulation of more complex CL concepts and the application of ICMs in the Cognitive Poetic approach.

A basic *proposition* consists of an array of mental elements and a predicate that holds among them (Lakoff, 1987; 285); more complex propositions arise from the operations studied in logic theory (Cienki, 2007: 178).

The three ontological arguments of a given *scenario* are structured in a SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema, where the source is the initial state, and a series of events form a path to a final state conceived as a goal (Lakoff, 1987: 286). For instance, maturing can be understood as a complex scenario where a person is found initially in a state of infancy (source) and arrives at old age (goal), through the experience of childhood, adolescence, adulthood, etc. (events)<sup>8</sup>. We will return to this example to explain the notion of *blending*.

The ontology of a *feature bundle* is an array of properties, which is structured in a CONTAINER schema (Lakoff, 1987; 286). Feature bundles are isomorphic to classical categories 'with clear boundaries defined by the properties common to all of its members' (Cienki, 2007: 178).

Lakoff's revision of classical categories incorporates the cognitive operations that structure these ICMs in the form of image-schemata. Categorial organisation distinguishes between *taxonomic* ICMs, defined as idealised hierarchies following the UP-DOWN schema of container-type feature bundles where a higher-order category is the WHOLE of its lower-order, non-overlapping PARTS (Lakoff 1987: 287); and *radial categories*, container-type categories with subcategories within them

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<sup>8</sup> Experimentation with the reversal of the prototypical order of such scenario in literature has been carried out in, for example, F. S. Fitzgerald's *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*, and M. Amis' *Time's Arrow*.

(Cienki, 2007:178), organised by the CENTRE-PERIPHERY schema so that 'one subcategory is the center; the other subcategories are linked to the center by various types of links' (Lakoff, 1987: 287).

### 2.1.2. Operational Cognitive Models: Metonymy and Metaphor

This section is concerned with ICMs that involve the cognitive process of *mapping across domains*. Ruiz de Mendoza and Otal (2002) highlight the importance of a clear understanding of the notion of 'domain' in defining and differentiating metaphor and metonymy (28) and discuss the limitation of the most influential views of domains as either cognitive models, frames, scenarios or encyclopaedic networks (28-38). However, they fail to propose a formalisation of their understanding of domains. In this essay, we understand domains as coherent organisations of experience, structured by means of ICMs (Kövecses, 2002: 4; Lakoff, 1987: 288).

In the CL framework, mappings are understood as 'sets of conceptual correspondences' (Lakoff, 1987; 386) that arise from the ability to perceive similarities between objects, a sensitivity to relations between them, and the recognition of patterns in such relations as to produce generalised abstractions (Freeman, 2003: 254). We are able to construct abstract domains of knowledge and find relations between them—moreover, these conceptual relations lead to the formation of new domains of knowledge (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980: 151).

The key distinction between metonymic and metaphoric mappings is that 'a metaphor is a mapping across different domains, while a metonymic mapping is domain-internal' (Ruiz de Mendoza & Otal, 2002: 56).

#### 2.1.2.1. Examples of Metonymic mappings

The definition of metonymy suggested above accounts for the limitations of seeing metonymy as having 'primarily a referential function [that] allows us to use one entity to *stand for* another' (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980: 36). This view was motivated by the study of metonymic concepts systematically occurring in Western culture, such as THE PART FOR THE WHOLE ('Get *your butt* over here!'), PRODUCER FOR

PRODUCT ('He bought a *Ford*') or THE PLACE FOR THE EVENT ('Remember *the Alamo*') (38-39).

However, Ruiz de Mendoza and Otal (2002) have challenged Lakoff and Johnson's characterisation of metonymy by proposing examples of non-referential but predicative metonymies, such as 'She is a real brain' or 'She's (just) a pretty face', where 'neither the brain nor the face refers to the whole person' (26). Further consideration into the direction of such mappings (53) and the nature of the nature of the domains involved (81-83) has yielded finer distinctions between types of metonymy, which are nevertheless beyond the concerns of this essay.

#### 2.1.2.2. *Examples of Metaphoric mappings*

*Conceptual metaphors* allow us to comprehend one conceptual domain (*target*) in terms of another conceptual domain (*source*) by drawing sets of correspondences between them (Kövecses, 2002: 4-6). An early example deployed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) is the conceptual metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR, where elements of the abstract domain of ARGUMENT are mapped onto those elements of the domain of WAR:

This metaphor is reflected in our everyday language by a wide variety of expressions:

ARGUMENT IS WAR

Your claims are *indefensible*.

He attacked every weak point in my argument.

His criticisms were *right on target*.

...

It is important to see that we don't just *talk* about arguments in terms of war . . . Many of the things we *do* in arguing are partially structured by the concept of war. (4)

While over the years there has been extensive refinement of the initial taxonomy of conceptual metaphors (Kövecses, 2002: 36-40; Ruiz de Mendoza & Otal, 2002: 43-50), the scope of our Cognitive Poetic approach is mainly concerned with the tripartite distinction drawn from the cognitive function these metaphors

perform (Kövecses, 2002: 33). This criterion distinguishes from *structural*, *orientational* and *ontological* metaphors.

In structural metaphors, a target domain is structured and understood in terms of a relatively knowledge rich source domain (Kövecses, 2002: 33; Ruiz de Mendoza and Otal, 2002: 36). Early examples of metaphorically structured concepts are provided in Lakoff and Johnson (1980): ARGUMENT IS WAR, TIME IS MONEY (4; 7-8); other well-examined examples include: IDEAS ARE FOOD ('There are too many facts here for me to *digest*'), UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING ('I see what you're saying'), LOVE IS MAGIC ('She *cast her spell* over me') (46-49).

Oriental metaphors organise a conceptual target domain by assigning it spatial orientation (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980: 14). The mapping of 'increase' onto 'upwards' discussed above is an orientational metaphor formalised as MORE IS UP; other examples include HAPPY IS UP/SAD IS DOWN ('You're in *high* spirits . . . I'm feeling *down*'); GOOD IS UP/BAD IS DOWN ('Things are looking *up* . . . Things are at an all-time *low*'); and VIRTUE IS UP/DEPRAVITY IS DOWN ('She is *upright* . . . That was a *low* trick') (15-16).

Finally, ontological metaphors impose onto abstract phenomena a more delineated structure emerging from our broad physical experience, such as the concepts CONTAINER, SUBSTANCE or OBJECT (Kövecses, 2002: 34; Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 25). The mapping of 'inflation' onto a SUBSTANCE is an ontological one (26). We can conceptualise THE MIND by means of all of these metaphors:

THE MIND IS AN OBJECT: He gave us his *piece of mind*;

THE MIND IS A CONTAINER: There is always fear *in the back of my mind*;

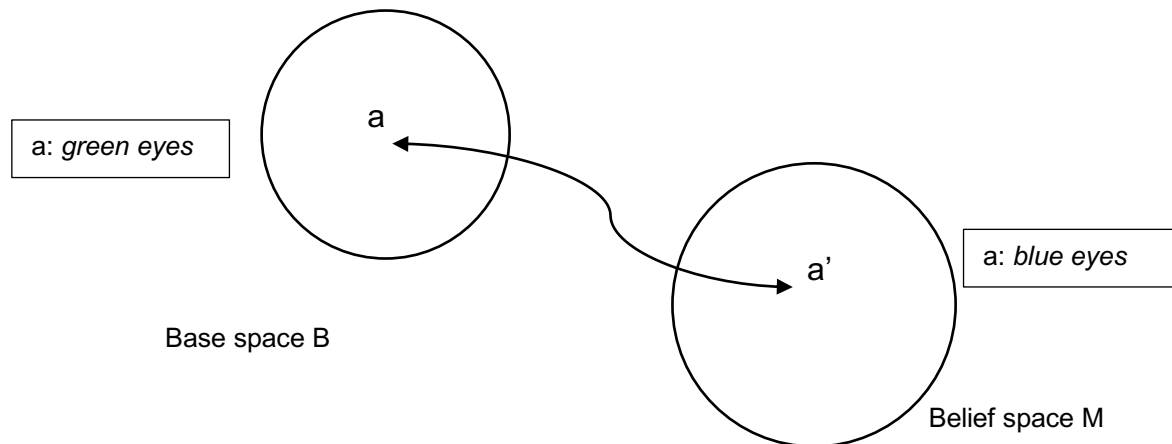
THE MIND IS A SUBSTANCE: She was lost *deep in thought*.

## **2.2. Mental Space Theory**

Within the realm of CL, Mental Space Theory is mainly concerned with cases of opaque referentiality (Fauconnier, 2007). *Mental spaces* are defined as partial sets of structured information and inferences assembled in discourse as it develops (Fauconnier, 2007: 351; Sweetser & Fauconnier, 1996: 10); these new domains are

introduced by *space builders*, such as in the following example from Sweetser and Fauconnier's work (1996):

**Figure 1. Example of Mental Space analysis.**



Max believes	the woman with green eyes	has blue eyes.
[space builder]	elements of Base space	elements of Belief space

In this example, there is a base space corresponding to reality where there is an element **a** with the associated properties 'woman' and 'green eyes'. The space builder *Max believes* opens a new mental space M that will hold elements that correspond to Max's beliefs. It is in this space where we find a counterpart **a'** to the element selected in the base space, which is associated with the property 'blue eyes' (13). In discourse, this process may be iterated multiple times, yielding a complex series of mental spaces, such as in *When I was in my prime, I could have pinned down Hulk Hogan in a second*, which involves the articulation of four subsequent spaces (Fauconnier, 1996:70).

Because the scope of Mental Space theory is concerned with the understanding of units of discourse, there is a distinction to be made between mental spaces and conceptual domains, since they are inherently local in nature (Kövecses, 2002: 227). Sweetser and Fauconnier warn that

Because the explicit structure set up in spaces is minimal, and because the default structure is always revisable as discourse unfolds, spaces are different

sorts of things from worlds (such as logicians' possible worlds, or the fictional worlds of narrative) (1996: 12).

Nonetheless, beyond the strict scope of Mental Space theory—that is, not restricted to the utterance and partial domains level—we find that the notion of *blending* has allowed for the analysis of extended narratives (Stockwell, 2002: 97). This model involves cross-mapping across multiple input spaces, where the abstracted common elements across domains form a *generic* space, and the emerging features from such connections form the *blend*. For instance, let us apply this model to the conceptual domains of LIFE and JOURNEY. The propositional ICM LIFE is partially seen as a series of stages from infancy to old age, following the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema as argued for above in (2.1.1.2); that the structure of JOURNEY follows the same schema is obvious. A projected generic space includes this structural image-schema, while the 'blended' space presents a new metaphorical mapping: LIFE IS A JOURNEY. The emergent structure in the blend provides the logic behind the metaphor, as the counterparts from both ICMs are superimposed—for instance, a situation or circumstance in life is informed by the legs of a journey in 'He's not happy with where he's at in his life', or certain ways of living may be measured in terms of speed such as in 'She used to live life in the fast lane'.

As such, our concern with Fauconnier's Mental Space Theory is limited to the extent that it can be incorporated to the Cognitive Poetic approach, for it

offers a unified and consistent means of understanding reference, co-reference, and the comprehension of stories and descriptions whether they are currently real, historical, imagined, hypothesised or happening remotely (Stockwell, 2002: 96).

## **2.3. Text World Theory**

### **2.3.1. Possible Worlds**

The idea of *possible worlds* was initially developed by logicians and philosophers as a means to evaluate the truth-value of propositions that are non-actualised in our actual world (Semino, 1997: 57-58; Stockwell, 2002: 93). Propositions are possible if they are logically consistent with at least one possible

world—a set of states of affairs that may be actualised or hypothesised (Semino, 1997: 59-60). Possible worlds logic has been found a more adequate substitute to traditional logic in the consideration of fiction, as propositions framed within their fictional worlds can have fictional truth or falsity (Semino, 1997: 61; Stockwell, 2002: 93).

### **2.3.2. World Levels.**

Within the Cognitive Poetic study of literature, Text World Theory is motivated by the twofold nature of the text: on the one hand, there is the physical object that contains the text and exists autonomously; on the other hand, a text's existence is heteronomous inasmuch it is dependent of its reader's engagement (Stockwell 2002: 135-136). This framework examines the cognitive processes involved at three levels: the *discourse world*, the *text world* and its *sub-worlds* (Stockwell, 2002: 136-142; Gavins, 2003: 130)

Borrowing the notion of possible world from the field of logic, the Cognitive Poetic definition of *discourse worlds* sees fictional worlds as the common ground domains arising from the interaction between text and reader; these worlds are constantly negotiated and updated by discourse, not unlike mental spaces (Gavins, 2003: 93-94; 137).

In the negotiation of the discursive common ground, the elements of discourse worlds—their objects, time, nature and language—are processed in terms of their *accessibility* or closeness to their counterparts in the reader's base world. The result of this process involves a certain pursuit of efficiency: 'in reconstructing the content of fictional worlds, we operate with an underlying assumption that they share the same properties as the actual world unless we are explicitly told otherwise' (Semino, 1997: 64). This is described as the Principle of Minimal Departure.

The result of the accumulated negotiation of a common ground forms the *text world*, which consists of *world-building elements* and *function-advancing propositions*. The former 'define the background against which the main events in the discourse will be set' (Gavins, 2003: 130): they are the deictics, adverbs, nouns, etc. that articulate a sense of time and space, and invoke the characters and objects



in the text world. The latter constitute the dynamic propellers of the narrative, such as 'states, actions, events and processes, and any arguments or predicaments made in relation to the objects and characters in the text world' (Stockwell, 2002: 137).

*Sub-worlds* represent embedded and provisional variations in the texture of the current text world (Stockwell, 2002). They include the same structural elements than worlds—world-building elements and function advancing propositions—but imply a momentarily shift in attention away from the text world. *Flashbacks*, the exploration of a character's beliefs or the consideration of possibilities within the fiction are examples of deictic, attitudinal and epistemic sub-worlds, respectively (140–141).

## ANALYSIS

### 3. NEGOTIATING THE FUTURE: DISCOURSE WORLD ANALYSIS

The temporal setting in Huxley's *Brave New World* is imagined by extrapolation of the present timeline, thus presenting a *serial* version of the reader's future (Stockwell, 2000: 22–23). In order to understand how this future is built by both author and reader (i.e.: the formation of text-worlds), attention must be given to the interplay between reader and text—that is, to the nature of the discourse world. What follows is an attempt at describing the discourse world of the reading of *Brave New World* based on the notion of blending introduced in (2.2).

In accordance with Werth's (1999) vision of discourse as a '*joint venture for building up a Common Ground*' (85; emphasis in the original), it is possible to characterise the articulation of the discourse world as an on-going *negotiation* between reader and author/text. The title of the novel itself hints at the initialising elements of this negotiation, as it predisposes the reader to face a 'new world' in contrast to an implied 'old world'<sup>9</sup>.

This old world is the reader's initial contribution to the negotiation: a base-reality space corresponding to their ICM of the actual world, and a projected counterpart of said ICM, which will be informed by the fictional elements of the text. The fact that such complex ICMs can be conjured does not mean that all nor any of their elements are activated in readiness. Rather, only the information required by a *necessary* context will become activated through textual cues (Stockwell, 2005: 136). The fact that the text determines which areas of knowledge have to be evoked for comprehension is what Werth called *text-drivenness* (1999). In this sense, cross-space mapping across these ICMs is completely text-driven.

Because textual cues in dystopian fiction are iconic in nature (more of which in 5.1), the relationship between the proposed ICMs is metonymic, which is suggested by Stockwell (2000): 'In cognitive linguistic terms, dystopia involves a conceptual metonymy rather than a metaphorical mapping' (191). That is to say, the fictional

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<sup>9</sup> By this I do not mean that this is evident to the reader at their first reading, as this approach does not privilege first over subsequent readings. The use of *initial*, *first*, etc. refers to the text's sequential order, and do not assume a first-time reader.

space corresponds to a subset of the base-reality whose elements have been extrapolated into the future and thus modified. HISTORY, GOLF or MOTHERHOOD are some of the reader's idealised models in the base-reality that are evoked and reshaped by the text in the fictional space. An example of how the reader's idealised conceptualisation of Central London is altered in *Brave New World* is given in (4.1).

Conceptual integration or *blending* is used to account for the cognitive mechanisms of metaphor and metonymy formation. Therefore, it is possible to apply the model of conceptual integration to the reading of *Brave New World*—and dystopian fiction in general—to illustrate the negotiation of discourse world.

### **3.1. Dystopia as a metonymic process: a blending-based approach**

Following the notion of blending, commonalities produced and found by such mappings are abstracted into a generic space. The Principle of Minimal Departure (PMD) dominates the background elements that comprise the generic space. On one level, that which is not foregrounded by the text is assumed to be maximally similar to its base-reality counterpart, and thus not relevant. Additionally, when the text introduces a modification of a fictional counterpart, the PMD keeps what has not been modified maximally similar to its properties in the base-reality.

Throughout *Brave New World*, for instance, nothing is said with regards to alien life, the terraforming of another planet, or the existence of Paris—this information is not relevant for the negotiation, and the reader is left to assume a minimal departure with their reality: in A.F. 632 there has been no extra-terrestrial contact, Mars is still inhospitable and Paris remains the capital of France. Furthermore, when modification to a base-reality counterpart element is introduced, the PMD still applies: the London in the New World is very different from the reader's model of the city, yet the Thames must be assumed to still exist in the city's fictitious counterpart.

The blend-space between base-reality and its text-informed fictional counterpart is where the narrative text worlds are formed. It is initially similar to the reader's base-reality, but as the text incorporates new elements of context<sup>10</sup> (alterations of the

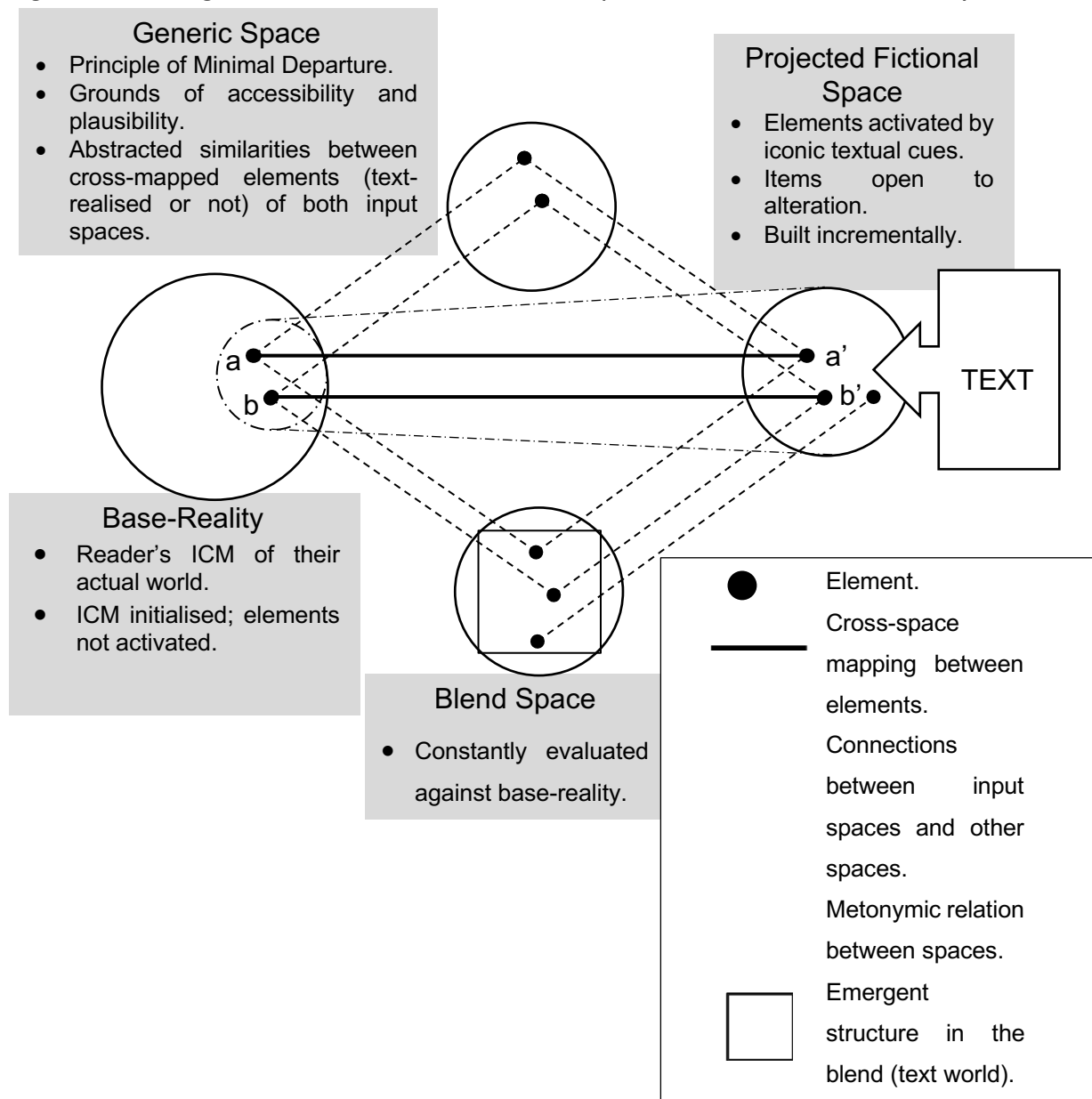
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<sup>10</sup> Which occurs in an incremental fashion; see (Werth, 1999: 95; 289-306).

base-reality), the distance between them increases. If the generic space is characterised by the abstraction of similarities between counterparts to handle background information, the emergent text worlds comprise a sum of the earlier spaces in which the commonalities and the alterations are ‘blended’ into a consistent whole.

Figure 2 illustrates schematically this model of discourse-world formation in *Brave New World*.

**Figure 2. Blending-based model of Discourse World (after Fauconnier & Turner, 2003)**



To exemplify this model, I have selected the first paragraph of the novel, as it is particularly salient for two main reasons: firstly, for its complete lack of predication—and therefore its density of world-building elements; secondly, it is the first contact between the reader and the New World beyond the title of the book.

A SQUAT GREY building of only thirty-four storeys. Over the main entrance the words, CENTRAL LONDON HATCHERY AND CONDITIONING CENTRE, and, in a shield, the World State's motto, COMMUNITY, IDENTITY, STABILITY. (Huxley, 2010)

The text world above lacks not only function-advancing propositions, but also time and character world-builders:

#### *World-builders*

Time	Unspecified <sup>11</sup> ;
Location	Over the main entrance; in a shield; Central London;
Objects	Building; words over the entrance; The World State's motto; the World State;
Characters	None in the text world.

The above world-builders are text cues that activate the relevant elements of both base-reality and fictional space. In reading 'Central London', the reader conjures their own conceptualisation of the innermost area of London (in turn, a complex ICM) across both spaces. In their base-reality space, buildings of over thirty-four storeys are uncommon in Central London, there is no Hatchery and Conditioning Centre, and there exists (presumably) a mental image of St. Paul's Cathedral and the Thames riverbanks. The projected fictional counterpart of the reader's idea of Central London introduces text-driven modifications to this ICM, such as the inclusion of the Hatchery and Conditioning Centre, or the fact that skyscrapers are ubiquitous enough to point out that the Centre is 'of *only* thirty-four storeys' (emphasis mine). The generic space contains commonalities between those counterparts: ruled by the Principle of Minimal Departure, maximal similarities

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<sup>11</sup> Later on, in the same initial chapter, the time world-builder 'A.F. 632' is introduced (2), but the novel's future —i.e.: what 'A.F.' means—will only become specified in Chapter 3. Again, this is what is meant by *incrementation*.

between cross-mapped elements are assumed, which means that, for instance, the reader's idea of London as a CONTAINER of St. Paul's Cathedral or the River Thames is carried across spaces. The resulting image of the readerly identifiable elements of base-reality London 'blended' with the towering buildings of its fictional counterpart resides in the blend-space in which the text world is built.

Negotiation between reader and text in the genre of science-fiction is governed by a need to maintain plausibility, as Stockwell (2000) argues:

The universes of science fiction may be radically different, but they use generally conventional narrative patterns as one strategy of maintaining plausibility. . .

One way of specifying this further is to schematise the degree of 'accessibility' between our actual world and the fictional world [...]. Factors include correspondences of known physical objects, of chronology, of natural laws, of categories, of language, and so on . . . Since they involve readerly judgements based on readerly knowledge and expectations, this could be seen as a specification of the notion of plausibility . . .

In order to recognise the relation between cross-space and accessibility, a model of memory structure is required. Stockwell (2000: 134–135) outlines a simple structure of readerly awareness, in which three bands of memory are distinguished: short-range *active* memory accounts for the most immediately encountered units of meaning; *semi-active* memory is constituted of previously read and remembered text, having thus a longer-range than active memory; and *dormant* memory which passively includes all extra-textual encyclopaedic knowledge. Following this basic model, it is possible to recognise how the cross-space relates to all three bands of memory. As reading goes on, current abstracted similarities across mappings of active, text-realised elements (i.e.: 'very recent text') incrementally move from the *active* to the *semi-active* band (i.e.: 'all remembered text-realised sentences') and are stored by means of the cross-space, which also contains the encyclopaedic background knowledge that is not text-realised but is assumed by the Principle of Minimal Departure (e.g.: the mental icons of St. Paul's or the Thames, in the example above). Necessarily, factors of accessibility reside in this cross-space.

#### **4. THE LANGUAGE OF DYSTOPIA**

The model of discourse world I have put forth helps us identify the solidity of the cross-space as grounds for plausibility, and the cognitive distance between base-reality and the text-worlds formed in the blend-space. In this negotiation of common ground, text-driven subversion of base-reality elements requires a certain degree of iconicity to be successful: the greater the abstracted similarities between counterparts are, the more distance between fiction and reality may be afforded.

Having developed such a model of discourse world, I am in a position to reflect on the cognitive mechanisms that articulate the dystopian sense of *Brave New World*. Insight as to how this dystopia is built (co-jointly by reader and text) is given by an overview of iconicity, as follows.

##### **4.1. Iconicity in Brave New World**

Within semiotics, iconicity is defined as the resemblance of the sign to that which it signifies. The deployment of icons in literature may serve multiple purposes, but in the case of science-fiction reading—in which plausibility is paramount—it roots fictional elements to their base-reality counterparts, helping the reader find analogies in their actual world to the new elements introduced by the text.

Throughout the novel, many icons—of several different kinds—can be found; Lange (2013) offers a thorough account of iconicity in *Brave New World* from a linguistic, albeit not cognitive, perspective. For the purposes of this essay, morphological and lexical iconicity, as well as syntactic and pragmatic iconicity, are of particular interest. I have drawn a threefold distinction between the icons identified in Lange's study:

<i>Non-societal</i> icons	Lexical and morphological icons signifying fictional, physical elements, which do not reflect any aspect of the New World's society;
<i>Semi-societal</i> icons	Icons that provide inferred information about the fictional society;
<i>Societal</i> icons	Icons that directly reflect a given aspect of the fictional society.

Non-societal icons found in Lange (2013) include devices, vehicles, applications, and instruments such as super-cornet, vibro-vac massage, and zippi-camicknicks, as well as chemical formulae. Examples of semi-societal icons are Charing-T tower (which directly signifies the rocket station and, indirectly, society's worship of Henry Ford) and the names of sports such as Escalator-squash or Electro-magnetic Tennis (indirectly signifying the New World's society's abhorrence of simplicity). Finally, societal icons such as the World State's motto—COMMUNITY, IDENTITY, STABILITY—or the rhyme Ending is better than mending reflects what the fictional society in Brave New World do value and believe.

All three types of icon involve the reshaping of a base-reality counterpart incorporated into the 'blended' text world, which is constantly evaluated against the base-reality space. But while these icons increase the distance between base-reality and text-world, non-societal icons—unlike societal and semi-societal icons—do not elicit any negative evaluation from the reader. This is to say, Brave New World is not dystopian due to the presence of inter-continental rockets or synthetic music machines. On the contrary, the dystopia lies (partly at least) within the New World's social imaginary, which—if plausibility is successfully maintained—could be the reader's own in the future.

The remaining of this essay will study the New World's society by means of the CL tools developed in (2.1.2). The aptness of a Cognitive Poetic approach is extensively motivated by the Sapir-Whorf's hypothesis, which can be summarised as follows:



I Structural differences between language systems will, in general, be paralleled by nonlinguistic cognitive differences, of an unspecified sort, in the native speakers of the two languages.

II The structure of anyone's native language strongly influences or fully determines the world-view he will acquire as he learns the language.

(Brown, in Kay & Kempton, 1984)

Which echoes with Hogan's point that 'society is born only with language' (Hogan, in Diaz Betancor, 2006). Therefore, a CL analysis of the individual characters' language will expose some of the cognitive underpinnings of the dystopian society.

#### **4.2. Cognitive Models in the World State.**

As argued above, the character's understanding of society and communal values can be accessed by their usage of certain operative cognitive models sustained throughout the novel. It is important to note that a number of these ICMs may be present in the reader's language; however, their prevalence indicates in what terms do the inhabitants of the New World conceive their society.

In the New World, humans are decanted in Hatcheries by means of very elaborate techniques in order to yield specimens of particular characteristics that satisfy the society's needs as suggested by *Predestinators* and World Controllers. Variation in terms of height, strength or intellectual ability—prior to *hypnopaedic* conditioning—provides criteria for the classification of humans in a hierarchy that naturally follows a VERTICALITY schema: a system of colour-coded castes, from a minority of Alphas to a mass of working, slavish Epsilons. The individual SELF is PART of a caste feature bundle; the sum of such categories yields a taxonomy, at the top of which we find the SOCIETY of the New World. This cognitive model is ingrained into the social imaginary to such an extent that a metonymy permeates the most narratorial passages of the novel:

Like aphides and ants, the leaf-green Gamma girls, the black Semi-Morons swarmed round the entrances . . . Mulberry-coloured Beta-Minuses came and went among the crowd. (54)

Another khaki female stepped forward. (185)

For a moment, the khaki mob was silent . . . (187)

These examples illustrate how the colour of the individual's uniform—that is, the colour associated to their caste—takes over the description of the individual. A person is understood in relation to what place in the caste system they occupy, and relationships amongst people are informed by their relative positions in the hierarchy. Following the logic of the taxonomy, the society is the sum of its parts (the castes); therefore, an individual that does not fit their prototypical category is not part of the society. In the New World, it is a social duty to act as one has been decanted and conditioned to do so. Indeed, the Director of Hatcheries warns Bernard that

'Alphas are so conditioned that they do not have to be infantile in their emotional behaviour. But that is all the more reason for their making a special effort to conform. It is their duty to be infantile, even against their inclination.' (84)

Beyond its hierarchal structure, the SOCIETY of the World State is often metaphorically understood in terms of the BODY domain.

#### SOCIETY IS THE BODY

'Not philosophers but fret-sawyers and stamp collectors compose the backbone of society.' (2)

'Not a cell in the social body' (78)

'When the individual feels, the community reels' (81)

This is partially encoded in language since the SOCIETY has a PART-WHOLE relationship with the SELF, which is contained by the BODY. In the New World, the individual is vital insofar as they are part of a greater entity, but much of the conflict felt by the misfit characters is owed to their ability to recognise themselves as distinct from the whole, but not being able to act and feel accordingly. Indeed, the concept of Self dissolves behind the logic of this conceptual metaphor. It is not surprising, then, to see how little value is given to the individual by the Director of Hatchery and Conditioning: 'Murder kills only the individual – and after all, what is an individual?'

#### SOCIETY IS A MACHINE

A thousand millions scabbled the crust of the earth. The wheels began to turn (36).

'They're the gyroscope that stabilizes the rocket plane of society' (195).

Alongside the BODY, SOCIETY is also conceptualised as a MACHINE. The World Controller Mustafa Mond claims that the New World 'has chosen machinery and medicine and happiness' (207). Such an admiration for machinery naturally permeates their conception of society and, therefore, of themselves. By this model, the individual is logically PART of a MACHINE: it can be substituted (see the D.H.C.'s quote above), repaired and improved—a term not to be used lightly, since such an 'improvement' in the New World means not the advancement of the individual, but the increasing of productivity of the machine:

'But in Epsilons,' said Mr Forster very justly, 'we don't need human intelligence.'

Didn't need and didn't get it. But though the Epsilon mind was mature at ten, the Epsilon body was not fit to work till eighteen . . . If the physical development could be speeded up till it was as quick, say, as a cow's, what an enormous saving to the Community!

'Enormous!' . . . (11)

Stockwell (2000) claims that 'fundamentally, science fiction literalises metaphors' (178). In the third chapter of the novel, the metaphor SEX IS A GAME—present in our language nowadays—reflects the infantile conceptualisation of sex in the World State, which is the root of the conflict between John and Lenina. Such metaphor informs the use of the nursery rhyme 'orgy-porgy'; the casualty with which Fanny suggests Lenina to rape the Savage: "Well, if that's the case," said Fanny, with decision, 'why don't you just go and take him. Whether he wants it or not.'" (165); and Lenina's concern for how 'fun' her night with Bernard was.

Unable to understand sex in the same terms as Lenina, John is reduced to beastly madness when she advances on him; in a more covert fashion, Bernard despises those who have 'had' Lenina and talk 'about her as though she were a bit of meat' (39). It is clear that both John and Bernard are misfits and do not share with their society the idea that THE INDIVIDUAL IS A SHARED POSSESSION.

#### THE INDIVIDUAL IS A SHARED POSSESSION

'But everyone belongs to everyone else' (34)

'I'm surprised you haven't had her'. (37)

Under this model, the individual can only be part of the social whole when they participate in the sexual game, when the self is let go—annihilation of the self is indeed the point of the orgiastic Community Services: ‘Ford, we are twelve; make us one . . . Annihilating Twelve-in-One! We long to die . . .’.

Given thus the importance of sex as a communal and socialising activity, it is not surprising to see how WOMEN are understood as MACHINES in the novel: the sample for this metaphor is limited to the memorable use of the adjective ‘pneumatic’ to characterise several female characters, which is nonetheless notably prevalent throughout the text. Beyond the implication of such a conceptualisation of women, it is important to note that an understanding of MEN on those or similar terms is not present in the book.

##### **5. COMMUNITY, IDENTITY, STABILITY: CHARACTERISATION THROUGH COGNITIVE POETICS.**

From the understanding of society provided by the above cognitive metaphors, it is possible to conclude that the dystopia in Huxley’s vision lies within the potential dissolution of the unique individuality into the massive social whole. What follows is an analysis of some of the most identifiable characters in *Brave New World*, focused on the conflicts that arise from the relationship between their new-found selves and the society they live in.

Other than during a brief period of fame, Bernard fails to accept the social values and ideas pointed to by the metaphors above and is thus incapable of belonging to the world he inhabits. He becomes highly aware of himself, for better or for worse, when he is rejected by potential sexual playmates, challenged by lower-caste subordinates or threatened by the other Alphas who have shared Lenina, which motivates his wish for self-discovery. Identity in Bernard’s case involves being an outcast, not belonging to the social body and emancipating himself in order ‘to be an adult all the time’ (81). When he is accepted by others, Bernard’s identity recedes, and he becomes part of the norm.

As an outsider, very much like Bernard, John is unable to fit either the Savage Reservation or the New World. Concerning the cognitive models discussed above, John's strangeness is most salient with regards to both the caste system and the SEX IS A GAME metaphor: on the one hand, sex marks in John's case the beginning of self-discovery, as much of John's identity derives from his reading of Shakespeare—which he owes to Popé and Linda's affair, and the first words of which he reads are Hamlet's reprimanding Gertrude. On the other hand, the New World's attitudes towards sex distances him from his mother and community—Linda's sexual behaviour is what made him an outcast in the Reservation—as well as from Lenina, for whom he feels the urge to do something noble and worthy prior to their encounter, which she is not prepared to understand. This incompatibility between individuality and communality with regards to sex culminate in John's suicide after the final orgy. Where Bernard's identity temporarily faded as he became more in tune with the New World's precepts, John is rendered unfit to cope with such opposite conceptions of the world.

Helmholtz is the third great outsider of the novel. While equally aware of his separation from the rest of his fellows, Helmholtz is unique in that his opting out of being shared or his refraining from sexual activity are decisions that serve a purpose. Self-exploration is identified with the ability to escape the creative limitations of the New World's language itself.

'Did you ever feel,' he asked, 'as though you had something inside you that was only waiting for you to give it a chance to come out? Some sort of extra power that you aren't using — you know, like all the water that goes down the falls instead of through the turbines?' He looked at Bernard questioningly.

'You mean all the emotions one might be feeling if things were different?'

Helmholtz shook his head. 'Not quite. I'm thinking of a queer feeling I sometimes get, a feeling that I've got something important to say and the power to say it—only I don't know what it is, and I can't make any use of the power. If there was some different way of writing... Or else something else to write about...'

For all his cry for independence, Bernard is only capable of self-definition through conflictive opposition to what was expected of him; when Helmholtz comes into conflict with Authority, it is only accidental. His ambition is to express his self, to

explore his identity in words—rather, in concepts—that are not available in the New World. Where both John and Bernard were in conflict with the social system supported by language, Helmholtz's issue is with the limited scope with language itself.

All three of these characters are outsiders in that they are aware of their individuality and show some sort of dissatisfaction with the world. In the end, their efforts of self-definition do not yield successful results: Bernard's counter-currently defined self does not hold firm against the temptation of belonging; John's individual conceptualisations of love and sex lead him only to isolation and final annihilation; no matter how remote the Falkland Islands are, Helmholtz might never be able to escape the linguistic barriers the New World has imposed onto him.

Whilst equally unsuccessful in her own aspirations, definition of self is not something Lenina ever considers in the novel. Unaware of her own uniqueness, and perfectly content with her role in the New World— 'She thinks of herself that way. She doesn't mind being meat.' (80)—Lenina does seem with the collective sharing of the individual with both Henry Foster and with the Savage. Exclusivity is not the only source of individual differentiation in her case, as she is described as being 'uncommonly pretty' and 'particularly pneumatic'. Moreover, she is allowed to wear green throughout the novel, which is not the colour of her caste: Gammas wear green, but she is not a Gamma (54), nor Delta or Epsilon; considering her position at the Hatchery, she is probably a Beta, who wear Mulberry-coloured uniforms. For the most part, Lenina manages to be a successful part of the community (by the World State's standards) and be a unique individual.

## CONCLUSION

The focus of my essay has been to unveil more of the ambiguous dystopia of *Brave New World* through the analysis of language at a cognitive level. Fundamentally grounded on the developments of Cognitive Linguistics, the adoption of a Cognitive Poetic approach has allowed for the analysis of an extended literary work, as it places equal emphasis on the text as on the act of reading itself. By examining the relationship between reader and text, I found that the dystopian quality of the novel stems from the articulation of the New World's society—and by analysing the language that supports it, some of its cognitive architecture was exposed.

I must address several problems and limitations of this work. Analysis of an extended piece of literature by Cognitive Linguistic means is always at risk of being rendered tedious, if carried on to a deep level. The Cognitive Poetic analysis of dystopian reading has been my attempt to achieve a textual selection criterion coherent with the method at hand, and has proven to have some efficacy; however, much of the text which has been ruled out—mainly corresponding to the narratorial voice—could offer equally valid grounds for analysis.

In this essay, I have placed special emphasis to the interplay between reader and text and then to the text itself, which has resulted in a loss—along with the narratorial voice—of focus on the authorial aspects of the novel. Relevant aspects such as historical context and motivations fall beyond the scope of my approach.

Because one cannot assume the reader is familiarised with the potential application of Cognitive Linguistic concepts to literary analysis, the structure of my thesis includes an incrementally built overview of some of these developments. I have tried to work from the most fundamental concepts to define the more complex ones, which result in a didactic and somewhat extensive explanation.

Finally, there is the question of efficiency and relevance that the Cognitive Poetic approach rises: whether the same conclusions drawn by the application of Cognitive Linguistic means to literature could be reached by the simpler routes of other literary theories. My ultimate findings regarding the conflict in the individuality of the self being lost into the oppressive social whole, the Word State's

implementation of a maimed and limiting language, the devaluation of sex and its impact on the New World's population, and the deeper complexity behind apparently simplistic characters have each been reached before by application of different, essentially dissimilar traditional theories (see p. 7 of this essay). However, I deemed it relevant that a Cognitive Poetic approach may reach all these same conclusions in a cohesive and non-conflictive way—precisely because it addresses the fundamental processes that allow for such readings. While qualitative analysis of literature implies the management of interpretation and subjectivity, Cognitive Poetics offers a framework to better understand and justify the intuitions that originate in reading, rendering the analytical results accessible for discussion.



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