

“Remembering the Future”: Shaping a Collective Future in Lois Lowry’s *The Giver* (1993) and its Film Adaptation by Phillip Noyce (2014)

Futures Studies is a multidisciplinary academic field that has developed in the last decades. Pioneering studies on the subject, such as those Wendell Bell (1997) or David Wilson (2000), have emphasized the meaningful and revealing nature of the images of the future originating in every society, images which embody the projections of the fears, hopes and anxieties of the community which produces them. The collective memory as a reconstruction of the past in the light of the present has been extensively analysed by many scholars such as Barbie Zelizer (1995) or J. K. Olick and J. Robbins (1998) among others. Consequently, it seems necessary to examine the “construction” of the collective future which also contributes to shape and reinforce the collective identity. In this sense, P. M. Szpunar and K. K. Szpunar (2016) underline the close relationship and similarities between recalling the past and imagining the future and suggest a mutual influence and interdependence between both processes. In the same way that the images of the future are the result of the ideological constructions about the past, the “collective future thought is itself the driving force behind the (re)construction of a collective past” (378) and can have a directive function in shaping it (383).

The purpose of this paper is to apply this notion of “collective future thought” by Szpunar and Szpunar to the dystopian novel *The Giver* (1994) by Lois Lowry and its film adaptation by Philip Noyce (2014). Both the novel and the film (although with significant differences) represent a future dystopian society where citizens live happily through the strict control of their emotions, knowledge, perception and language. Memories of the past, as a powerful and threatening artefact, are preserved but kept away from the members of the community, who live their lives placidly unaware of the collective past they have been deprived of. In this society memories represent the source of potential transformative change for the future (Hanson 1993, 46). Their suppression becomes an oppressive control strategy on citizens who do not share anymore the common collective past which defines their own identity and enables the collective future thought of the community. Therefore, this paper seeks to discuss the deep connections between past and future in this dystopian community. These connections are embodied in the character of the Receiver of Memory, the only individual who holds all the collective memories of the past in order to unburden the rest of the members of the society from the painful suffering of knowledge. Ultimately, he represents the link where past and future are going to co-exist in a bond of reciprocal interaction by being, using the critical notion by Sara Ahmed (2006), mutually “oriented” to each other.

References (maximum 150 words) (Chicago style)

- Ahmed, Sara. 2006. *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Bell, Wendell. 1997. *Foundations of Futures Studies: Human Science for a New Era*. New Brunswick: Transactions.
- Hanson, Carter F. 1993. "The Utopian Function of Memory in Lois Lowry's *The Giver*". *Extrapolation* 50 (1): 45-60.
- Olick, J. K., & Robbins, J. 1998. "Social Memory Studies: From "Collective Memory" to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices". *Annual Review of Sociology* 24: 105-140.
- Szpunar, P. M., & Szpunar, K. K. 2016. "Collective future thought: Concept, function, and implications for collective memory studies". *Memory Studies* 9 (4): 376–89.
- Wilson, David A. 2000. *The History of the Future*. Toronto: McArthur & Company.
- Zelizer, Barbie. 1995. "“Reading the past against the Grain”: The Shape of Memory Studies". *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 12 (2): 214-39.

Keywords: Collective future; temporal orientations; *The Giver*; Lowry, Lois; Noyce, Phillip.