

Delany's Fugue: Troubling the Power of Surveillance over Dyeth's mind and Dyethshome in *Stars in my Pocket Like Grains of Sand*

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Abstract

Samuel Delany's *Stars in my Pocket Like Grains of Sand* (1984) challenges questionable conceptions of knowledge and their limits/limitations. Theoretical study of this text has focused on considering issues of race and identity in relation to the science-fiction genre. This paper explores Delany's text from a surveillance studies perspective to analyze how surveillance, as a technological tool of power, functions in it. According to Foucault the disciplinary bent of society limits freedom. This is why tracing surveillance techniques in relation to knowledge as well as subjects/objects on Velm (an SF world in the novel) uncovers the limitations of seemingly liberal societies, who are disciplinary societies that put their power into practice through surveillance.

Keywords: speculative fiction, science fiction, cultural studies, science and literature, Utopias and surveillance studies.

Samuel Delany's *Stars in my Pocket Like Grains of Sand* (1984) can be perceived as an attempt at troubling complacent conceptions of knowledge and their limits/limitations. This research explores how Foucault's view of writing in Archaeology and Knowledge as a game-like attempt to disperse, scatter, and decenter sheds light upon a critical analysis of the novel. In the overly technologically oriented world, we live in various questions impose themselves upon us. How do we gain knowledge? How do others gain knowledge about us? How is knowledge filtered? Why is knowledge filtered? In his text, Delany raises all these questions through challenging our conceptions of what constitutes liberal societies and his deconstruction of surveillance. Past studies

of this text focused on its interrogation of issues of race, identity, and its reinvention of the science-fiction genre (Stringer 2016; Foster 2015; Tucker 2010). This study approaches Delany's text from a surveillance studies perspective with the aim of more deeply interrogating how surveillance as a technological tool of power functions. According to Foucault the inherent disciplinary drive of society mirrors that of the

prison. J. G. Merquior argues that Foucault's study of the prison "was bound to unfold into an anatomy of social power at large-as well as, inevitably, a reconsideration of our very concept of power" (108). Considering this, any attempt at dualistic categorization of the two worlds in Delany's novel falls apart. Marq Dyeth's Velm is not as liberal as it seems. In fact, though overt punitive measures are not as pronounced as in Rat Korga's Rhyonon the evasive and invasive power of surveillance in Velm overwhelms. This is why J. G. Merquior argues that Foucault's theory of power:

invites us to regard repression as ... the normal state of society ... (which) 'produces before repressing, mainly because what it represses individuals-are already, to a large extent, its products. (111)

This is why charting surveillance measures over knowledge as well as subjects/objects on Velm uncovers the ubiquitous workings of a seemingly liberal society. Moreover, one must keep in mind that though power is repressively impenetrable, it holds within itself the antithetical possibility of production. Roger Alan Deacon argues that, "global states of domination such as capitalism, patriarchy and racism were and are, at least to some extent, productive responses to perceived strategic threats" (176). One of the means through which disciplinary societies put this power into practice is surveillance.

As a science-fiction text Stars in my Pocket can be seen as a text imbricated in a crucial mode of art that speaks to our technologically pervasive present. Science fiction has been described as "a crucial and popular mode, even the mainstream mode, of thinking about life in a modern technoscientific world" (Weiner et al.) Defining science-fiction remains a challenge, however from its earliest appearance in the nineteenth century it has been concerned with how different technology tools shape human culture and our relation to the natural world (Rogers and Stevens). Heinlein argues:

In the speculative science fiction story accepted science and established fiefs are extrapolated to produce a new situation, a new framework for human action. As a result of this new situation, new human problems are created—and our story is about how human beings cope with those new problems. (qtd in Noriko and, 3).

Heinlein went on to describe the human experience of science as an origin of “new possibilities” in the early 20th century. Regardless of how bizarre the fictional world may be, or how seemingly unlikely as a model of the future, it shares at least this minimal equation of potential scientific knowability and potential existence with the implied reader's normal world. Fiction that rejects this equation is generally classified as fantasy, which readers of SF may also enjoy but will read and interpret according to different criteria (Heinlein 89). A key moment in the defining process of the genre was Darko Suvin's statement in 1977 that “SF is distinguished by the narrative dominance of a fictional novelty (novum/innovation) validated both by being continuous with a body of already existing cognitions and by being a ‘mental experiment’ based on ‘cognitive logic’” (Suvin 67). Suvin introduced “cognitive estrangement” as a characteristic which defines science fiction. It is this strange and yet familiar quality that shapes the futuristic worlds on various planets in Delany's text.

The text is temporally situated in a future where various human societies have developed on planets. A portion of these worlds is shared with alien intelligent nonhumans like Dyeth's Velm. Human worlds align themselves with one of two factions (the Sygn or the Family). The goal of such alignments is to avoid the Cultural Fugue which is a state of life and planetary destruction. The text begins with a long “Prologue” narrating the life of “Rat” Korga, a young man living on a planet called Rhyonon. Korga is a misfit who has been in trouble with the law practically all his life, and at the beginning of the prologue, he is subjected to “radical anxiety termination,” a space age lobotomy that is supposed to make him happy. Instead, he becomes a slave, a “rat” working as a porter at different research stations under appallingly inhuman conditions – until one day his planet is destroyed in a mysterious holocaust, whose cause the readers never get to know. Rat Korga of Rhyonon, the main protagonist, is the only known being to survive Rhyonon's Cultural Fugue. Rat Korga eventually meets Marq Dyeth a diplomat living on the planet Velm, a Sygn aligned planet. Korga then is suddenly removed from Velm because of the threat of possible Fugue that he brings to Velm; he is the only being with information regarding

the destructed world of Rhyanon. This makes him and Dyeth central objects of surveillance by GIS throughout the novel.

According to Foucault, disciplinary societies are ruled by the concept of surveillance or panopticons. The panopticon is an image of a prison design introduced in the eighteenth century (Jeremy Bentham was the first to discuss it) with a watchtower in the middle and all the cells of the prisoners surrounding it (200-201). It is designed to make the prisoners feel they are under constant surveillance, which ingrains within them an inner sense of surveillance. Within these societies the exercise of power becomes less subtle and more effective in its drive towards general surveillance. According to Foucault all of us are caught in the same webs of power. The Panopticon represents the ultimate expression of power/knowledge. By making the inmates assume that they are totally visible to an assumed gaze, this arouses within them a state of conscious visibility which supports the functioning of power. The inmate becomes his own jailer by watching himself. However, critics of Foucault like David Lyon critique the totalizing power through which the Panopticon is portrayed. He draws attention to the fact that Bentham was not able to build a prison with Panoptic architecture. He critiques the fact that Foucault portrays discipline at the end of his treatise to be viewed by subjects in a completely negative light without taking into consideration how social control functions in an ambiguous and recursive manner (Lyon 73-75). He provides an example of this by referring to the establishment of social rights institutions in the nineteenth century when he argues, "In other words, the burgeoning panopticism of nineteenth century institutions emerged hand in hand with growing commitments to social rights" (76). Lyon designates this process as part of what Giddens refers to as the "dialectic of control" (76). This dialectic is what we see functioning in society etched out for us in *Stars in My Pocket*.

It is within such a society that Dyeth lives. Towards the end of the novel Jobonnot warns him, "They are watching. Watching you...Myself, I'm quite terrified, sitting here, on your world, knowing what I know about Korga, thexiv, you, Rhyanon, Velm" (342). In these words, it becomes clear to us how invasive knowledge acquired through surveillance can arouse fear in a disciplinary society. However, throughout the novel the highly technological nature of life with various aspects of attempts at social justice, like organizing marriage and raising children, facilitate invasive knowledge about all individuals. Knowledge in such a society becomes a commodity of exchange with set limitations.

Therefore, knowledge is filtered and controlled, and the subjects/products of society sense the danger of acquiring unauthorized knowledge. Moreover, all information is discovered to be controlled by “a complex strategical situation” (Racevskis 96). Foucault regarded power as intangible, in *The History of Sexuality* he suggests “power is not an institution, and not a structure [...] it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society” (qtd in Racevskis 96). In Delany's novel, it is not really GIS (General Information System), an entity responsible for filtering all knowledge on Velm, or the Web who have power over knowledge but the strategical, complex situation in Dyeth's society, which includes the interactions between the Web, GIS or any other unknown power player. This analysis of the manner through which surveillance functions in *Stars in My Pocket* portraying various players involved in the practice invites us to question whether the Panopticon, as a key concept in surveillance studies, is really applied correctly. Lyon suggests, “the panoptic may not be an appropriate image on account of its capacity to make ‘society like a prison’ so much as because of the embedded nature of its discipline” (75). In a society like Velm where surveillance technologies have become very advanced the image of the prison loses its expressive power. Along those lines David Lyon's definition of surveillance as “any collection and processing of personal data, whether identifiable or not, for the purposes of influencing or managing those whose data have been garnered” appears more suitable for the analysis through which surveillance functions in the societies of *Stars in My Pocket* because it takes into considerations the multifarious and horizontal nature of the process (Surveillance 14).

On Dyeth's world, Velm, those in power filter knowledge before it reaches him. When Rat Korga's world, Rhyonon, faces destruction, possibly due to Cultural Fugue, GIS withholds any information regarding the planet, “for the next seventeen hours, General Info was open for no questions beyond elementary multiplication tables” (93). Furthermore, when GIS came back to service any request about Rhyonon was blocked, “All information pertinent to your query is undergoing extensive revision” (93-94). The term “revision” here raises questions. Who revises? Why is revision needed? Which perspective will the revised edition promote? If information regarding Rhyonon undergoes revision, how much more information has undergone the same process? When does it become necessary to revise information? We realize that revision of information or information reclassification involves a great deal more than expected, which explains why it takes so long to get any information about Rhyonon. Dyeth is

surprised at the length of time required to acquire information about Rhyonon and mistakes the cause to be information overload, "Information overload in a major GI sorting system is something that's supposed to stop after a second or two" (77). Dyeth's surprise draws our attention to the subject/product's lack of knowledge of the processes inherent within surveillance towards the beginning of the novel. Along these lines, the novel traces Dyeth's growing self-censorship as he processes the menacing psychological effect of surveillance in his society.

Information "revision" becomes a direct possible corollary of the integration of social information and different communication technologies. Such connected information spaces play an increasingly important role in the collection and management of information (Hara and Sanfilippo 2017). Delany invites us to explore the consequences of such control to explore the embedded social contexts in the management of information. Delany investigates the parameters of online knowledge spaces which espouse utopian goals of free access sharing of knowledge inviting us to explore the flip-side of such virtual knowledge spaces through the practices of knowledge monopoly practiced by the General Information Systems. However, Dyeth's own initial submissive attitude towards information reclassifications is quite contentious. Within Dyeth's submissive attitude we can trace how self-censorship becomes normalized through surveillance so that Dyeth feels no inhibition by the workings of GIS, "I know about security reclassifications. If I couldn't check out General Info about Rhyonon, then there was nothing to do but put it out of my mind" (98). Foucault stresses that it is distinctly through such normalization of judgement that discipline thrives (95). Dyeth is shocked when he discovers Rhyonon's fate, "You're telling me all references to an entire world have been removed from all the General Information systems on six- thousand-plus others?" (94). Within such a context, Dyeth becomes incapable of comprehending the inherent incarceration of his society.

In Dyeth's world information is a product, a commodity under control of those in power so that it is dispersed and withheld according to their "complex strategical workings" (96). The wide dispersion of information is displayed at the beginning of the novel when we are introduced to how subjects on Velm acquire knowledge through chips internalized in their bodies. Anne Goulding points out that many theorists argue for the centrality of the spread of information and information technologies (ICTs) to enhance the social, political and cultural life of citizens (1). However, we must always remind ourselves that

this power is productive as well as repressive. Dyeth is not completely aware of the workings of those in power. Upon being told by Clym the “free-agent professional”/ psychotic killer that Rhyonon had really undergone Cultural Fugue as he had heard earlier on the world Nepiy, he thinks that as an ID (a diplomat of Velm) he can request information about Rhyonon (89). Here Clym warns him that such a query could lead to Dyeth's untimely death. Clym informs him, “I've been called in now more than once this month to dispense a couple of folks who, among other things did” (94). In this threat we can trace the workings of physical punishment coming to the fore. Through the character of Clym we are introduced to the threatening factors imbricated with some forms of knowledge. Clym in Velm functions as an information censorship tool. This draws our attention to the fact that though in Velm knowledge is displayed as a means of social good with fairly attainable access, in reality it is a commodity exploited by the key power players in this society the Web, GIS and other unknown players.

In Discipline and Punishment physical modes of punishment are the modes of oppressive societies like those of the Middle Ages. However, here with Velm we have a self-identified liberal world where both race and sexuality are unrepressed. Yet, the power of physical penal punishment still remains through the existence of free-agent professional 1 killers like Clym. Despite the fact that there is no public scaffold or La Guillotine the sanctification of a killer profession within GIS worlds internalizes the scaffold scene within people and hence controls their actions along with the dictates of discipline. Though Dyeth is initially unaware of these workings of power, he is overcome by fear, which further censors his behaviour controlling any original inquisitiveness he might have had about Rhyonon. Dyeth says, “Clym are you telling me something I don't really want to know?” (94). Here Dyeth acknowledges that knowledge can be dangerous in a surveillance society. Moreover, after Clym informs him about Rhyonon and its only survivor he threatens him with “permanent disfigurement, mental and physical” (96). Hence, though in Dyeth's World physical punishment assumes different modes, this does not imply that it is absent. Instead of the public hanging, we have the publicly Web funded psychotic killer.

Though Clym's threat seems to be an integral part of his sadistic identity we cannot help but notice that Clym's sadistic desires and profession are intertwined in some way. Clym answers Dyeth who asks if his threat/invitation was a part of his job¹ and Clym answers, “Though my sexuality is not part of

my psychosis, they have been integrated carefully by some very clever people” (97). Hence, we have here the insinuation that some system controls and tampers with Clym's psychosis and personality, which raises the question of the pervasiveness of such control. This also raises the issue of the role of power in creating subject/objects in this society. In this sense, Delany troubles the notion of Western man's subjectivity and what Foucault refers to in *Subjectivity and Truth* as “a philosophy which sees the foundation of all knowledge and the principle of all significations as stemming from the meaningful subject” (26). Foucault reaches the paradoxical position that “Man has been subjected and reified as an object of knowledge, he has become a “body” in a field of forces, of power-knowledge strategies intent on effectively integrating the individual within the social scheme” (27). Along with troubling the subjectivity of the individual, Delany also troubles Foucault's notion in *Discipline and Punishment* of disciplinary units as widespread, impenetrable, and inescapable (209).

Though power permeates all of society it is not impenetrable because it is antithetically repressive as well as productive. Within this context, the power relations practiced by those in power could be seen as a productive attempt on their behalf to unite the great confederation of worlds under their control. To achieve such a unity, it is necessary to provide the members of these worlds with a univocal interpretation of all historical events, striking from the record any possibly disturbing information, which could question the power or knowledge of those in power. Hence Rhyonon's destruction or Rat Korga's survival are struck from the GIS record. Several experiences in the novel emphasize that power relations are never completely impenetrable through their antithetical productive and repressive natures. Though GIS controls the information channels of history, people like Dyeth are still aware of the inadequacies of GIS's presentation of fields of knowledge, like history: “History is one area that General Info is notoriously poor in imparting” (68). Moreover, how can GIS control perceptions of other worlds when Ids are allowed to travel from one world to another? Though they attempt to discourage interworld travel by raising its expenses, Ids like Dyeth are placed in direct contact with other perspectives of other worlds. Dyeth says, “Only now I'd had a year to see how unusual, in universal terms, my usual could be” (82). Furthermore, people who process information without the help of GIS are themselves a product of repressive/productive power relations. Connection to GIS is not obligatory, so Alsrod the Thant's daughter is shown to intellectually function quite well without it, to Dyeth's surprise. Rat Korga cannot be connected to it and yet can

function quite fine with the help of the rings, which help to induce intellectual thought.

As Dyeth uncovers the inner workings of power in his world he gradually gains

knowledge which leads to his disillusionment. He begins to question power relations in his world through attempting to analyse what information is and how we perceive it. This is why he conjectures “is information, some of it logical, some of it mythical, some of it error, and much of it, yes, no doubt merely wrong or right” (362). These words stand in stark contrast to Dyeth’s attitude towards the beginning of the novel when he could not accept the fact that he, an ID, does not know about the destruction of Rhyonon, though an alien not even connected to GIS does “I’m afraid I read it as something between a glitch in the translation and mere myth or misinformation” (71). Panopticism is one of the means through which those in power practice control over subjects/objects. Raceveskis argues that the increase of control over bodies is carried out with the ultimate motive of increasing socioeconomic integration, which seemingly is a productive motive (71-72). This idea of control over information through surveillance is further developed by Lyon when he introduces the concept of “social sorting”. Lyon suggests that disciplinary actions of control performed upon subjects in *Stars in My Pocket* which can ultimately lead to the erasure of a complete society like Rhyonon, “social sorting” is one of the ultimate results of surveillance. Social sorting according to Lyon is a tool of verifying identities but also of assessing risks and assigning worth, and the means through which such categories are constructed become central ethical and political questions (*Surveillance as Social Sorting* 1-4).

A great deal of “social sorting” occurs in *Stars in My Pocket*. Rhyonon, Velm and Human species are analyzed and assigned roles which they cannot change easily. Surveillance throughout Velm society, where most of the action of the novel takes place, facilitates this. The “social sorting” of surveillance plays a central role socially through which information can be used to create divisions by allowing some subjects access and denying others. Lyon argues that this does not necessarily make surveillance sinister but, “there are dangers inherent in surveillance systems whose crucial coding mechanisms involve categories derived from stereotypical or prejudicial sources” (*Social Sorting* 2). The contrasts between conformant Dyeth’s educated and privileged background and

non-conformant Rat Korga's enslaved life are the starkest example of this. Spatially architecture also plays a key role in surveillance.

It ensues then that the many secret passages and rooms of Dyetheshome construct it as a surveillance arena where the private and public meet through the integral role of the building as both a museum and Sygn research institution. Yet as Raceveskis argues one cannot overlook the role of architecture in the process of subjection:

Architecture plays a most important role in this context, and the spatial configuration of places that train, correct, discipline, or utilize bodies for productive purposes has become a significant element in these processes of subjection. (100)

Panopticism as a phenomenon can hence be traced in Dyetheshome and its surroundings. In such a context, Dyetheshome becomes an institution of power where students flock to study the art, architecture, and history of the sygn ripples of Dyeth people. It is also the home of Marq Dyeth and his other Sygn relations. Hence, it is a home and an institution. This blurs the lines between private space and public space challenging privacy, but what is privacy to subjected objects. Delany here plays with the various meanings of home undermining in the process the boundaries of the private and public. In this, he once more draws our attention to the far-reaching limits of surveillance which can redefine cherished beliefs related to home, privacy, and security. The architectural configuration of Dyetheshome suggests its relation to the panopticon. There are several surveillance rooms in the home where people can enter to see all without being seen. In the Dyetheshome ampitheatre, there was a "polarized chamber built with the ampitheater for those people who wanted to see the performance or landscape but did not want to be seen seeing" (188). Rat Korga watches the orientation session from this invisible space and Dyeth is very aware of his invisible gaze, "And from the invisible chamber, he watched me with his invisible eyes" (191). Dyeth's knowledge of this invisible room of surveillance like the watch tower of the panopticon ingrains within him the constant possibility of somebody watching him, which has its effects on his actions, inherently leading to self-censorship. After completing orientation Dyeth wants to return to the invisible chamber to meet Rat Korga without meeting anybody and hence uses many of the secret passages of the house. Dyeth within this context describes Dyetheshome saying that Dyetheshome, "is a hive of mentally activatable intricacies" full of secret passages here and there (205). Outside

Dyeth's home, Dyeth and Rat Korga stand on a platform and watch some students of Dyeth's home without their knowledge. Rat is surprised by this constant surveillance and Dyeth explains to him, "that's the chance you take, wandering the local countryside. You never know when you're chatting about your innermost feelings right under somebody's front porch" (221). We cannot help but wonder if this is what is happening to Dyeth and Rat since it seems that everyone knows about their relationship. Due to the overwhelming surveillance of this society information when it leaks spreads quickly. However, one wonders if it was initially part of the plans of those in power for information to leak about Rat Korga.

Another panopticon environment in the novel is the colonizing ship referred to towards the end. At the end of the novel after his "Good morning" termination/beginning Dyeth is portrayed as drugged on some sort of colonizing vessel bereft of any power, will or motivation. It seems he has lost the individual will to perform actions and hence must be ordered to perform all daily acts "Marq Dyeth, please continue your morning exercise," "Marq Dyeth please fold your arms around in front of you" (368). The similarities between the environment of the colonizing ship and that of the prison are quite disturbing. All actions are regulated and scheduled "The timed drugs had released me from deep-suspension coma long enough for these bodily exercises" (368). Furthermore, it seems that physical motion is somehow limited since "Strung up in webs, each thirty-five centimeters from the next, two thousand humans hung in drugged sleep" (367). This could be the dreaded Cultural Fugue referred to throughout the novel. The Canadian Oxford Dictionary defines Fugue from a psychological perspective as loss of awareness of one's identity, often coupled with flight from one's usual environment. The environment described on the colonizing ship is unlike any environment described throughout the novel hence fulfilling the criterion of unusual environment. Moreover, Dyeth on this ship experiences the ultimate form of surveillance since he is completely confined under an invisible gaze. Whenever he stops his morning exercise on the ship a voice on a speaker orders him, "Marq Dyeth, please continue your morning exercise" (368).

Yet we are never completely sure if this is really his Fugue since Dyeth refers to the possibility of waking and experiencing day, performing his job, and departing to another world away from the other colonists. It is interesting to consider the use of the words colonizing ships, colony ships and colonists here.

As an ID Dyeth never referred to ships, he used for transportation as colonizing ships. Hence, his job¹ has either changed and possibly his psychosis along with it or his interpretation of an ID's roles have changed. It would seem here that Delany is taking his analysis of knowledge/power relationships to a new level as he troubles the notion of colonial power. Dyeth's musings about the meaning of termination/good morning are an important key to understanding this panopticon environment on the colonizing ship which ends the book. Nowhere in the novel do we see Dyeth so involved in studying and analyzing meaning/knowledge as when he considers the meaning of "good morning". He has far surpassed the state of submissive acceptance of information. In a sense, this is the productive effect of power/knowledge relations on him. As Foucault indicates, attempts of those in power to repress have productive outcomes. The attempts of those in power to control Dyeth through GIS, the Web or depriving him of, Korga, drive him to deeply question the workings of knowledge in relation to surveillance. He becomes aware of the fragility of any possible conclusions because there are so many intellectual perspectives related to the words "good morning" or in fact any word ID, GIS or the Web. On a world like Klyvos for example which is surrounded by an unmoving band of half-light there is no concept but that of morning, since night can only be seen on the other half of the planet. This is why Klyvos is often used as a metaphor for chaos, violence, or Cultural Fugue. Hence, the terminating phrase of "good morning" could be the moment Dyeth comprehends the subversive workings of the surveillance of knowledge, which at the same time usher his production/redefinition of his job¹ as a colonizer not an Interworld diplomat, or again is he both. Again, Delany refuses strict dichotomous conclusions leaving room open to various possibilities.

As we approach the end of *Stars in My Pocket Like Grains of Sand*, Delany brings us to the end of his display of possible worlds shaped by technology, though we cannot completely perceive it as an end since this is the first book of a diptych, which has to this day not, been completed. Moreover, this end is also a beginning because Dyeth is portrayed on a spaceship sailing towards some unidentified destination. In *Language, Counter Memory Practice* Foucault argues that writing is like a game not concerned with the act of composition or an insertion of a subject into language but "with creating an opening where the writing subject endlessly disappears" (116). The writing subject here can be interpreted on two levels. It can refer to the subject of this writing who is Dyeth. According to this interpretation, throughout *Stars in My Pocket Like Grains of Sand* we find ourselves hunting for clues to better understand Dyeth's

subject/object fragmented identity amidst the puzzling and yet intellectually challenging format of the novel, only to have it dismantled in the end by Delany. However, on a second level the writing subject could refer to Delany himself who as an author “endlessly disappears” in his writing so that we never are quite sure of where he is leading us as readers. If Korga’s world underwent cultural fugue as it was erased from the records of all the knowledge systems in Velm, Dyeth by the end of this text experiences a personal psychological fugue as a result of his disillusionment with regards to the surveillance tools shaping his world and reclassifying them in the process.

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شروود ديلايني: تحدى قوة المراقبة على عقل Dyeth و Dyethshome في رواية النجوم في جيبى مثل حبات الرمل

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المستخلص

يمكن أن يُنظر إلى رواية الخيال العلمي لسامويل ديلايني (نجوم فى جيبى كحبات الرمال) على أنها محاولة لتغيير مفاهيم الوصول الى المعرفة من خلال تطبيق وجهة نظر فوكو في كتابه: (الكتابة في علم الآثار والمعرفة) والنظر اليها كمحاولة شبيهة باللعبة للنتشت واللامركزية – ومن خلال هذا يتم إبراز العديد من الأسئلة المتعلقة بمفاهيم المعرفة فى الرواية مثل إلى أي مدى نعرف أي شيء؟ وكيف يكتسب الآخرون المعرفة عنا؟ وكيف يتم تصفية المعرفة؟ ولماذا يتم تصفية المعرفة؟ ومن خلال هذا يتناول ديلايني كل الأسئلة السابقة متحديا مفاهيمنا لما يشكل المجتمعات الليبرالية.

الكلمات الدالة: الخيال العلمى، دراسات ثقافية، الادب والعلم، يوتوبيا، خيال المستقبل، دراسات الرقابة.