

# On Friends and Foes: Examining the Evolution of American White Supremacy Through Dystopian Literature

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## Abstract

This article aims to examine the evolution of white supremacist literature and rhetoric from the turn of the century to the present by looking to an under-examined area of political expression; dystopian literature. By examining a variety of dystopian works, ranging from *The Clansman: A Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan* by Thomas Dixon Jr., (1905) to *The Day of the Rope* by Devon Stack (2018), this article was able to distill a pattern in the evolution of white supremacist rhetoric. Ultimately it was found that while all the examined works were united in their belief about the superiority of the white race, how they expressed this belief changed dramatically over the years. Moreover, it was also found that white supremacist authors would frequently imagine any group that seemingly opposed their reactionary cultural values as tools of an ongoing anti-white plot. Groups or entities that were previously ignored would become seemingly eternal enemies despite not appearing in prior works. Therefore, we also see the growth of causes such as Islamophobia, sexism, and homophobia throughout the examined literature. Thus, this project provides an essential look into both the evolution of white supremacist rhetoric as well as how it is often formed in response to those who seek to drive social change as well as speak truth to power.

## Introduction

In theory, the definition of white supremacy is a simple one. One would describe it as the belief that the white race is superior to all others. And while this is a somewhat accurate definition, it fails to encompass the full threat that this ideology poses, as well as failing to show how it has changed to better "reflect" the world around it. While it has always been racist, it has

evolved both in how it expresses this racism, as well as what other groups fall under its purview as a supposed threat to the white race. This project aims to track this evolution using an often-overlooked area of political expression; dystopian literature. While often thought of as a trivial sub-genre of fiction, dystopian literature in many ways serves as an encapsulation of an author's era, showing what values they feel are under attack as well as who they believe is behind this supposed assault. Thus, by looking at these artifacts, one can see a clear narrative in the evolution and modulation of white supremacist rhetoric over the decades.

## Methodology

This project was done by reviewing a variety of white supremacist literature from the early twentieth century to the present and examining these works for what they portray as under attack, who they describe their dystopian overlords as, and what values their dystopian government hopes to instill. These values are then viewed considering both their contemporary historical currents, as well as how they compare with other white supremacist works. Ultimately, it was found that the examined literature showed a significant pattern of "evolution" on the topics of race, gender, religion, and LGBTQ+ equality.

The criteria for selecting these works were threefold. First, they must portray an objectively dystopian universe. The world that their author describes must be an oppressive or otherwise corrupted world that fits the common conception of a dystopia. Therefore, any work that suggested a utopia, either white supremacist or not, was not examined. Secondly, the considered work must also be explicitly white supremacist. As defined by the Anti-Defamation League, white supremacy is a multifaceted belief that includes support for the domination of non-whites by whites, support for segregation, a belief in the superiority of white culture, and a belief in the genetic superiority of white people (Anti-Defamation League). Works that may be

classified as being on the right, but not yet white supremacist were excluded from examination. Thus, works like *Atlas Shrugged* by Ayn Rand were not examined. And third, the work must have some kind of connection to American white supremacy.

The works examined were found mostly by looking to outside researchers as well as looking to the historical record. Some, such as *The Turner Diaries* by Andrew Macdonald, was cited as an inspiration for the Oklahoma City bombing (Jackson). Others, such as *The Camp of the Saints* by Jean Raspail, have had a significant influence on modern nativists both in America and abroad. Some of the more notable adherents of the book's belief in a coming horde of savage immigrants include Steve Bannon, Stephen Miller, and Marine Le Pen (Peltier and Kulish). Others, such as *Hold Back This Day* by Ward Kendall, were sourced from institutions like the Southern Poverty Law Center, which routinely examines the propagation of white supremacist literature (Jackson).

## Race

White supremacist authors hold genuinely bigoted views when it comes to the topic of racial equality. It was found that an ardent belief in white supremacy remains a defining feature in almost every work examined, whether it be from the turn of the century to the present era. However, it is important to note both how this belief in white superiority has evolved over the ages and why it has changed. Starting at the turn of the century, works like *The Clansman: A Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan* and *The Leopard's Spots: A Romance of the White Man's Burden*, both by Thomas Dixon Jr., showcases a distinct and transparent form of white superiority that was common for the era. The former work, which was adapted for D. W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*, serves as a sort of "alternate history" aimed at reconciling the KKK with modern society (Lehr and Pfeiffer). Much like the film, formerly freed slaves are portrayed

as rapacious brutes obsessed with petty revenge and white women. But after the assault of a local teenager and her mother by these former slaves, a group of virtuous Southern men form the KKK and begin a campaign of terror in order to protect their women and their homeland (Thomas Dixon 320).

*The Leopard's Spots: A Romance of the White Man's Burden* is not as well-known as *The Birth of a Nation*, but also echoes Dixon's blatantly white supremacist world view. Intended as a rebuttal to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe, the novel portrays what Dixon believed to be a more realistic version of the American South (University of North Carolina). The titular Tom is not an oppressed slave, but rather a poor white farmer desperately trying to make a living in South Carolina (Dixon 3). But with the end of slavery after the Civil War, Tom's life rapidly becomes a nightmare. He and his neighbors are abused by violent former slaves, who are then, in turn, supported by anti-white Radical Republicans and other former slaves they have placed in positions of power (Dixon 194). In one of the more difficult sections of the novel, a group of former slaves randomly kidnap and murder an African American child seemingly for the fun of it (Dixon 93). This was aided by the fact boy's father is a former slave who "turned into a drunken loafer at the time of Independence" and thus was incapable of taking care of his child (Dixon 93). Much like in his other work, Dixon seeks to promote the view that African Americans are by and large savages, and thus strict measures of control are needed to contain both their supposed barbarism as well as protect the white race.

While extreme to a modern audience, it is essential to view Dixon's work in the light of broader American opinion at the time. And to that end, Dixon's views were representative of a fair amount of the American populace. American segregation, which was considered brutal even by the standards of nations such as South Africa, was fairly popular among even those who

identified as progressives (G. M. Fredrickson 111). Also popular was the now-defunct field of eugenics. Believing that it was possible to improve American society by regulating who can reproduce, eugenics was hugely popular at the time of its introduction to American culture (MacKellar and Bechtel 27). States rapidly began to adopt laws stating that all marriages must first be approved by local authorities to ensure genetic hygiene (MacKellar and Bechtel 27). In some cases, this escalated to include forced sterilizations of criminals, the mentally ill, and “imbeciles” (MacKellar and Bechtel 28).

The catalyst for America eventually turning away from these blatantly racist policies was its entry into World War II. Having to combat the openly genocidal Third Reich, America suddenly needed to define itself in opposition to Germany's system of white supremacy (G. M. Fredrickson 129). Concurrently, to maintain its place on the world stage, America also began to liberalize its segregation policies to preserve the moral high ground (G. M. Fredrickson 130). Eugenics, which had previously been viewed as the cutting edge of science, now was considered worthless in the scientific community. American white supremacists, by extension, suddenly found themselves in a political bind (G. M. Fredrickson 130). Whereas their beliefs regarding the superiority of the white race had been previously accepted, they now were viewed as political liabilities (G. M. Fredrickson 130). Ergo, white supremacists now had to reckon with the fact that America had lost its appetite for any ideology that did not at least pretend to be egalitarian (G. M. Fredrickson 128).

As a result, there began a shift in how white supremacist authors began to present their ideas to the general public. While they still believed in the same anti-egalitarian viewpoints that they held before the war, they now had to find a way to make these views at least somewhat presentable to the American public. And to that end, there began a large-scale shift of white

supremacist authors from presenting the white race as a force that triumphs over the non-white ones, to seemingly being an oppressed race themselves. Modern white supremacist works like *Hold Back This Day* by Ward Kendall, *Utopia X* by Scott Wilson, and *The Camp of the Saints* by Jean Raspail all imagine worlds where the government is now part of a massive anti-white conspiracy that seeks the extinction of the white race while elevating the interests of the non-white people. *Hold Back This Day*, for instance, implies that non-white government officials have led a covert campaign of genocide that involved the forced extermination of white people, followed by censoring any evidence of such an act (Kendall 41). *Utopia X* imagines a world where white people are routinely banned from reproducing in a form of retroactive justice for their role in racism (Wilson 20-21). *The Camp of the Saints* suggests that not only the government is aligned with non-white antagonists, but also the entire Catholic Church (Raspail 141).

As a result, many white supremacist authors now rhetorically seek to align themselves with and receive protections associated with marginalized groups such as Native Americans or African Americans. *Utopia X*, for instance, draws a connection between a Native American whose tribe has been wiped out with the supposed extinction of the white race (Wilson 191). Others, such as Ward Kendall in *Hold Back this Day*, seek to imply that the white supremacist goal of preventing interracial relationships is beneficial to all races. At the climax of the novel, a Japanese scientist who is also the last of his kind aids the protagonists in their escape from government security forces out of a perceived sense of solidarity (Kendall 226). Of course, his actions also eventually result in the death of both him and every other non-white person in existence (Kendall 263). *Victoria: A Novel of 4<sup>th</sup> Generation War* by Thomas Hobbes, while not quite as genocidal, similarly suggests racist policies to be a “help” to marginalized peoples.

Following the collapse of the United States, African Americans that remain in New England are given a probationary period where they are reduced to sharecropping and subjected to intrusive policing to win back the trust of the white population (Hobbes 243). After five years, there will be a referendum to decide whether they are allowed to stay or will be deported back to Africa (Hobbes 245). This decision seems to be a moot point, though, as Hobbes claims that these now segregated African Americans prefer this arrangement to their prior freedom (Hobbes 247).

This shift is unique in the sense that it marks a stylistic change that has come to define much of modern white supremacist thought. While there are some exclusions, it is more likely to see current white supremacists adopt this form of cynical egalitarianism, where they claim that white people are the victim of discrimination or that they just want to help all races. But while they present their arguments differently than previous iterations of white supremacists, they nevertheless believe the same things. Modern authors, like those in the works previously discussed, show the white race as being under attack by an onslaught of non-white plotters and brutes. The governments of both *Utopia X* and *Hold Back this Day* are made up of entirely anti-white politicians who are consumed with a burning hatred for white people. They're also portrayed as being stupid and selfish, such as working to censor all examples of white achievement and claim those achievements for themselves. Others, such as *The Camp of the Saints*, suggest that they will destroy entire nations given a chance (Raspail 310-311). But in a stark contrast to earlier works, the white race is now portrayed as the persecuted minority in these worlds to avoid a direct connection to the white supremacist authors of old.

## Gender

Gender, as a concern of white supremacist authors, shows a similar rhetorical “evolution.” Early works, such as those by Dixon, show women in a distinctly Victorian light.

They are delicate, pure, and in constant need of male attention. As part of this innocence, they are also portrayed as the frequent victim of sexual assault by African American men. This trope makes up a significant part of *The Clansman: A Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan*, with the formation of the KKK being done in response to the rape of a young white girl and her mother (Thomas Dixon 327). While this trope did somewhat falter in the intervening decades, its influence can still be seen even in modern works. *The Day of the Rope* by Devon Stack portrays a female clubgoer being assaulted by an African American man in what Stack likely intends to be punishment for her promiscuous behavior (Stack 45). *Hold Back This Day* features the assault of a young white girl by the government's non-white security forces (Kendall 240). *The Camp of the Saints* portrays the migrant armada as being rapacious brutes who keep French women in sexual servitude (Raspail 269).

However, white supremacist authors "evolved" in their overall opinion of women throughout the examined literature. While women around the turn of the century were treated as delicate creatures who seemingly existed only to help men, they eventually became to be associated as tools of the supposed anti-white conspiracy. Although subtle, this shift is first seen in *The Camp of the Saints*, where "Women's Lib" protestors are described by the narrator as indicative of the political left's weakness (Raspail 216). One of the novel's antagonists, an anti-white journalist named Clement Dio, is portrayed as a supporter of the fleet who also is a champion for women's causes (Raspail 69). While not as blatant as later works, these events nevertheless serve as a contrast to the work of Dixon. Though not as extreme as ensuing authors, we start to see here the idea that anything related to feminism or the interests of women is viewed as a malign force counter to the white supremacist ideal.



This pattern escalates in later works such as *Hold Back This Day* and *Utopia X*. While some members of the pro-white resistance movement are white women, the governments of these worlds are portrayed as vehemently anti-male and tilted towards the interest of women. The government of *Utopia X* seemingly supports the “World Chapterhouse Movement,” a radically feminist faith that condemns all men as irrevocably sexist (Wilson 7). *Hold Back This Day*, which portrays a single unified world state as being under the thrall of feminism, shows how liberal divorce laws are responsible for the end of the protagonist’s marriage to his non-white wife (Kendall 129). Perhaps as a result of these generous laws, women in *Hold Back This Day* are also portrayed as being toadies of the anti-white world government. The main character’s wife is an ardent supporter of the government and refuses to believe the protagonist’s claims that they may be engaging in a campaign of white genocide (Kendall 41). His multiracial daughter, who he never really connects with, is so loyal to the government that she forgoes higher education to serve as a member of the “Junior Euth Corp,” a government force dedicating to euthanizing poor people to alleviate world hunger (Kendall 128).

This stage, in an escalation of *The Camp of the Saints*’ portrayal of feminism, now shows women as well as feminist groups as being tools of the enemy. While some may seemingly transcend their gender and still be considered as part of the pro-white resistance movement, this is usually a result of the author placing more of a value on their race than their gender. But this pattern further escalates again in works such as *The Day of the Rope* and *Victoria: A Novel of 4<sup>th</sup> Generation War* by Thomas Hobbes. Published almost over a century after the works of Dixon, these novels begin to showcase women as lost to destructive non-white forces. In *The Day of the Rope*, Stack portrays women as a not only as an incompatible with white supremacy, but seemingly incompatible with civilized society. As alluded to earlier, they are often described as

immoral pleasure-seekers who will gladly offer men sexual favors in exchange for attention (Stack 114). They also are portrayed as foolish and overly sensitive. After being assaulted by an African American man, one female character is so concerned about being accused of racism that she apologizes to her rapist for being possibly racist (Stack 46-47). And at the novel's conclusion, a different woman is quickly radicalized into killing one of the protagonists after a short interaction in an "Antifa" chatroom (Stack 130).

*Victoria: A Novel of 4<sup>th</sup> Generation War*, on the other hand, is unique in its violent opposition to seemingly any instance of gender equality. The novel's protagonist, a former Marine named John Rumford, is discharged from the service after refusing to recognize the enrollment of women in the Marine corps (Hobbes 8). Working as a "military advisor" to a post-American successor state known as the Northern Confederation, Rumford is eventually assigned to a resistance group operating in the Pacific Northwest (Hobbes 418). Upon arriving, Rumford is disgusted to find that the leader of the resistance group is a woman (Hobbes 418). Out of a mixture of disgust that they would allow a woman to be a leader and a belief that she is a secret agent for environmentalists, Rumford has her and all her fellow leaders killed in a bombing run (Hobbes 429). Concurrently, he also approves the massacre of over a hundred students at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire after learning that there is a resurgence in "political correctness" and gender studies on campus (Hobbes 293). This massacre is carried out using ancient Roman short swords to reflect a return to tradition and reactionary thought (Hobbes 293).

This shift in how women are perceived is closely tied to how much of a "threat" feminism is imagined presenting toward the overall world view of white supremacists. White supremacists are overwhelmingly social conservatives, and thus they are deeply dedicated to the idea of traditional gender roles and the preservation of the nuclear family. Therefore, it makes

sense that at the turn of the century, they were not represented as much of a threat. But as Suffrage came to pass, and later feminist groups sought to increase gender equality, we see the advent of them as an enemy (Rampton). In the process of trying to combat gender inequality, they are labeled enemies by white supremacists for their attempts to promote social change. Moreover, this also shows how white supremacist thought encompasses more than just bigoted views on race.

## Religion

White supremacist authors, by and large, were extremely prejudiced regarding religion. Many of the examined authors were anti-Semitic, although to varying degrees. *Hunter* and *The Turner Diaries* by Andrew Macdonald, considered hallmarks of white supremacist literature, are two of the most blatant examples of this (Jackson). The first work, which follows a genocidal Air Force veteran's quest to rid America of what he regards as a racial "sickness," suggests that Jews are responsible for the decline of white civilization through their promotion of "cultural degeneracy" (Macdonald, *Hunter* 112). *The Turner Diaries*, also by Macdonald, features a massacre of Jewish people, non-white people, and "race traitors" in what he refers to as "The Day of the Rope" (Macdonald, *The Turner Diaries* 213).

*The Day of the Rope* by Devon Stack, which takes its title from Macdonald's massacre, is similarly anti-Semitic. American politics are portrayed as being under the control of a shadowy cabal of elites with ties to Israel (Stack 67). In a seeming allusion to blood libel, these elites also routinely engage in the ritualized abuse of kidnapped children, as well as engage in human sacrifice (Stack 123). *Victoria: A Novel of 4<sup>th</sup> Generation War* by Thomas Hobbes, while not openly genocidal, expresses an admiration for the work ethic and order of Nazi Germany (Hobbes 363). Rumford also seems to suggest that the Holocaust is not a particularly big deal as

the Jews have engaged in numerous Holocausts of their own (Hobbes 364-365). What these supposed acts of genocide are, and when they happened, is not explained.

Islam, which is now considered a significant boogeyman of the modern far-right, is unique for the way that it suddenly became an enemy in a relatively short period. In the examined literature that existed before September 11<sup>th</sup>, Islam is a mostly ignored topic. *The Camp of the Saints*, which focuses on the eventual destruction of France at the hands of immigrants from South Asia, lumps Islam alongside Hinduism as a foreign but not exceptionally evil faith. The author, Jean Raspail, later admitted this was an oversight on his part (*The Camp of the Saints* xli). The protagonist of *Hunter* even seems to express sympathy for the fact that he manipulated Jewish agents into a battle with “the poor Arabs” (Macdonald, *Hunter* 180). But after September 11<sup>th</sup>, this dynamic rapidly changed. Islam was suddenly described by right-wing politicians and religious figures as a constant force that had always been at odds with the West and Christianity (Tamney 621).

As a result, white supremacist literature rapidly embraced Islam as an enemy. *Victoria: A Novel of 4<sup>th</sup> Generation War* shows a literal Caliphate invading Boston while carrying out forced conversions and crucifixions of Christians who resist (Hobbes 203). *Utopia X* implies that a massive Islamic invasion destroyed all of Europe before the novel’s events (Wilson 193). And in one of the most egregious examples of Islamophobia, *In the Year 2050: America’s Religious Civil War* by Ira Tabankin employs countless harmful tropes while imaging the descent of America into an Islamic theocracy. America’s first openly Muslim president, Osama bin Mahomed, is portrayed as a despot who uses a religious police force to crush any trace of Western culture (Tabankin 86). His campaign of terror is supported by America’s now sizable Muslim population, who far outnumber non-Muslims through increased birth rates and

immigration (Tabankin 39). And in a seeming nod to birtherism, it is stated that a release of “secret records” revealed that President Barack Obama had been a Muslim all along (Tabankin 7).

This sudden and extreme evolution in how Islam is portrayed in white supremacist literature is indicative of white supremacy’s tendency to rapidly “evolve” when faced with social changes. While they often claim that the supposed agents of anti-white and anti-western campaigns are eternal enemies, they are usually only adopted after significant historical currents bring them to their attention. Whether it be the rise of second-wave feminism in the mid-twentieth century or the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>, white supremacist authors quickly modulate their world view to make these entities their eternal adversaries. Concurrently, as shown with *The Day of the Rope*’s belief that liberals and women will bring about their end through their support of Muslim immigration, we also see the notion that anyone who seeks to support these marginalized groups will likely be labeled an enemy and part of an anti-white conspiracy (Stack 80).

## The LGBTQ+ Community

Much like Islam, white supremacist opinions on the LGBTQ+ community have been shaped mostly due to a realization of their existence rather than an eternal opposition to them. In the examined literature, the first instance of a white supremacist featuring an LGBTQ+ character as an antagonist was seen in *The Camp of the Saints*, which was written in 1970. Granted, this appearance is limited; it is confined to some protestors from LGBTQ+ activist groups voicing their support for the approaching migrant fleet (Raspail). Nevertheless, it still precipitates the way that later works will begin to feature the LGBTQ+ community as a primary antagonist.

In the examined works, the LGBTQ+ community is portrayed both as a threat to the physical safety of white supremacists while also suggesting that they are the secretive puppet masters behind people's increasing acceptance of LGBTQ+ activism. As a danger, they are implied to be secretive pedophiles. In *Victoria: A Novel of 4<sup>th</sup> Generation War*, it is suggested that the goal of placing gay guidance counselors in schools is to provide them with sexual access to children (Hobbes 146). *Hold Back this Day* implies that a similar pedophilic conspiracy has infiltrated the government, and is now engaging in a global campaign of child abuse (Kendall 30-32). Others, such as *Hunter*, suggest that the LGBTQ+ community is filled with violent radicals who aim to douse crowds with AIDS-infected blood (Macdonald, Hunter 204).

In a manipulative sense, the LGBTQ+ community is often portrayed as either a sort of scheming cabal or working at the behest of other organizations. *Victoria: A Novel of 4<sup>th</sup> Generation War* implies that the governor's sudden push to promote LGBTQ+ presence in schools is actually because of blackmail by local activists (Hobbes 84). In *Hunter*, the LGBTQ+ community is shown as being puppets of the Jewish conspiracy to wipe out the white race. They also make up a key voting block on the censorious "Board of Review," which they use to prevent any criticism of themselves or their Jewish overlords (Macdonald, Hunter 204). In a related sense, *Utopia X* portrays LGBTQ+ activists as working alongside the government to depress white birth rates by promoting medical treatments that manipulate people's sexual orientation (Wilson 52).

Much like Islam, this evolution shows how white supremacists designate an entity an enemy despite only just learning about it. Whereas LGBTQ+ people had existed throughout all of history, it is only after the Stonewall Riots did they attract seemingly any attention from the broader American community (Hall 562). White supremacist authors, by extension, paid no

attention to them beforehand. And even then, they only slowly came to realize their supposed danger. *Hunter*, as mentioned previously, makes the LGBTQ+ community a significant part of the supposed threat to the white race. But *The Turner Diaries*, written in 1978 by the same author, barely even referenced them. As a result, we see the way that a reaction against cultural change is a significant motivator when white supremacists consider what threats are.

## Conclusion

In summary, white supremacists hold deeply retrograde views on virtually all social issues. However, as this project found, those views are often tied more to a reaction against change rather than the examined group posing any serious threat to the author. Whether it be Islam, the LGBTQ+ community, or gender equality, white supremacist authors often come around to view these entities as a threat despite them existing well before entering their consciousness. However, due to their obsession with the white race, they then perceive these groups as part of an anti-white conspiracy.

This pattern of “realizing” an issue as a threat despite existing for much of the previous history also can provide an insight as to what groups will likely be the next subject of white supremacist ire. Any group that exists contrary to their ideal, regardless of their race, will probably be considered as confederates of an anti-white or anti-Western campaign. Concurrently, as the examined works also showed, white supremacists will likely paint anyone who voices support for these groups as anti-white. Even white lead groups would probably be considered toadies for an anti-white conspiracy if they show support for concepts such as LGBTQ+ equality. Therefore, we see how white supremacy serves as both a racist ideology, but also an inherently reactionary ideology that goes beyond simply race in its bigoted worldview. Moreover, it also

suggests that white supremacy is an ideology based on suppressing change and will conflate any attempt at doing so as anti-white.

Furthermore, the gaps in what is considered a threat also encourages an examination into what if any correlation there is between his phenomenon and authors of different political stripes. Whether it be more moderate conservative authors, Socialist authors, or authors of various social and political identities, this work suggests that there is a possibility that there could be a similar tendency to ignore groups that are outside the mainstream. For instance, while advocating for improved working conditions and better treatment in the workplace, early labor unions would exclude women from membership as well as seek to use them as a form of leverage against their employers (Helmbold and Schofield 503). Therefore, it is important to honestly and openly reckon with these histories, while also making sure to not repeat these mistakes in modern movements when speaking truth to power.



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