

DYSTOPIA AND RETROPIA AS ARTISTIC PARADIGMS IN ALDOUS HUXLEY AND GEORGE ORWELL, A COMPARATIVE APPROACH BETWEEN ALBANIAN AUTHORS AFTER THE 90s

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Abstract

The original artistic aesthetics of Orwell's and Huxley's fiction are not accidental. It stems from the imperative of approaching literary art with the modern philosophy of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Kierkegaard that this thesis draws upon, but also the very significant concept of retrospection by sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, which is closely related to Bauman's analysis of modern society and its crisis and uncertainty about the future.

The problem of human existence, of human destiny from birth to death, of the human enigma, of the good and bad aspects of life, and the tragedies and comedies of human life, have been a permanent preoccupation in Huxley's prose. This research paper enriches the critical analysis of Huxley's dystopian fiction. Furthermore, it contributes to the study of extratextual, historical, and psychological factors that have influenced and will continue to influence the creation of a dystopian and totalitarian society.

Albanian authors: Ridvan Dibra, Besnik Mustafaj, Kasem Trebeshina, etc, use retropie as an aesthetic paradigm in their literary works. Creation is a serious job and, especially those of the communist period, have often paid for it with prison or life. Orwell and Huxley, in their novels, compare economic wealth with spiritual poverty, while in Albanian authors, it is reflected through allegory, absurdity, and a deeply anti-totalitarian feeling. Retropie is represented as a means of literary resistance to communist censorship. It is a loss of faith in the future; therefore, it must be analyzed and reconcondensed conceptually.

Totalitarianism, which is present in both English and Albanian authors, is a terrible, repressive red holocaust, but post-communism is also depressive; the situations of collective drama are described with psychological truth and artistic coherence. This study examines elements of dystopian and retrogressive fiction as well as social problems that are also subjects of examination in the novels. The absurdity forces of life confront man with many either-or situations. Thus, the character must decide whether to distance himself and stop seeing them, playing the role of Hamlet, a humanist who, paralyzed by doubt, is unable to act or react, and pay for it with his life.

Keywords: *Dystopian, retropic fiction, existentialism, resistance, totalitarian holocaust.*

Introduction

Dystopia can be interpreted as a dysfunctional version of scientific and technological progress, which falls victim to the inherent order and excessive control in utopian thought. While scientific utopias are extremely global in their approach, social utopias are fragmented

into a billion small pieces, the political basis of which is analyzed in this paper. The vision of social totality seems to have changed and been lost forever.

In modern dystopia, in the works of Orwell and Huxley, the utopia of Bentham (as a representative of utilitarian philosophy) appears, which Michel Foucault calls the “Bentham structure.” It is a “functional model capable of generalization that defines the relationship between power and people's everyday lives” (Foucault, 1979: 263). In the contemporary negative utopias of Huxley and Orwell, Bentham's panopticon model becomes a principle of governing power, and some 19th-century utopists categorize it as a utopian structure. Big Brother enforces this utilitarian rule through his subordinate, O'Brien, who, as the chief inspector in the novel 1984, is responsible for interrogating prisoners:

We control everything because we control the mind. Reality is inside the skull. You will learn slowly, Winston. There is nothing we can do about it. Invisible, buoyancy, nothing. If I want, you will float out of this room like a soap bubble. But I do not want, because the Party does not want. You must get rid of him 19th-century ideas about the laws of nature. ALL THE LAWS OF NATURE. (Orwell, 1949: 213)

Results and Discussion

Through allegory, Orwell impressively portrays the superiority of those who wield strong influence in public and political life, mocking them with sardonic satire and dramatically exposing them. The author, with great courage, uniquely exposes a failed management system. The basic models of his works are mockery through powerful satire, irony, demasking, sarcasm, use of grotesque names, and grotesque juxtapositions, which depict characters, actions, and the names of ministries, etc.

In his works, Orwell draws important parallels between oppressive dystopian governments and the historical abuses of institutional religion; it is clear that one of the reasons religions are banned in these dystopias is in the same space as the dystopian governments themselves. The modern skeptic can easily envision the nightmarish future in his imagination. In support of this claim, Eliot points to George Orwell's “anti-utopian” vision in 1984 (1949). In his novel, Orwell implies that he agrees with this claim, through one of his characters in 1984, who describes the imaginary society of Oceania as “the exact opposite of the foolish, hedonistic utopias imagined by the old reformers” (1984, 220).

These issues, of course, are directly reflected in bourgeois dystopian novels, such as Huxley's *Brave New World*. The treatment of this novel suggests that the privilege of change in capitalist society may, in fact, be only a superficial mask for a deeply rooted resistance to genuine historical progress. Totalitarian dystopias, together with bourgeois ones like *Brave New World*, reveal the complexity and harshness of the main problems of modern society.

The study of the colonizer's colonial relationships with the subordinate, i.e., of the political elite toward the people, through the characters of Big Brother, Mustafa Mond, and others in the authors' novels, explains and illustrates the concept of a vision for the future of peoples living under philosophical/religious control in a society governed by philosophical and religious ideology, combined with dictatorial or theocratic power. The protagonists of the dystopia (Winston Smith, Wild John, and others) are often trapped and trying to escape. They are a kind of rebel who intuitively questions the political and social system.

These characters believe that something terribly is happening in the society in which they live, and readers become acquainted with the negative aspects of the dystopian world through the perspective of the present. Also addressed are themes that cast a shadow over the relationship between knowledge versus ignorance the latter being a tool for the mass subjugation of the proletariat and community versus the individual, the search for identity, action versus inaction, and science for science's sake (*Brave New World*, 1984), *Hate Minutes*,

the role of technology, social status, law and justice, the beauty of simplicity, the effect of capitalism on the individual, change versus tradition, and more.

The novels of both authors explore themes of social determinism, physiological determinism, and Freud's motives. Social determinism sometimes has fatalistic (pessimistic) overtones, but in general the human characters in both authors' prose are not chess pieces in the hands of blind, unknown forces. For Huxley, evil is not unknown. This kind of social determinism is presented on a relative level: it stands on the brink of destroying old, existing relationships and is a kind of fantasy composed of the past and the future. For Huxley, the emotional and the rational are in a kind of synthesis. By comparing the novels of the two authors, the analysis addresses existentialist themes, sociological relationships, and the exploration of personality according to Freud, with a focus on Carl Gustav Jung's sexuality, lust, sleep, the unconscious, and analytical psychology.

Including a comparative analysis of the works of Orwell and Huxley and focusing on the similarities and differences between the respective novels, we observe that the themes of dehumanization and fear are common to all the novels, but in each novel, they are developed separately, in the appropriate historical, sociological-existentialist, and psychological context. They address the general characteristics of dystopian societies, as well as the specific traits of each individual character. In the works of both authors, the concepts of envisioning the future as a form of social critique are evident, often referring to both the social and the individual context.

Human nature in Orwell's *Animal Farm*

Animal Farm, along with *1984*, is a representative work of Orwell. In this dystopian novel, the animals have human characteristics and personify humans. Inspired by Aesop, La Fontaine, and Andersen, Orwell alludes to well-known historical figures through the characters in his novel. The farm owner, Mr. Jones, is overthrown by the animals who established their own animal government with two leaders. The animal's rule by using their power and the ignorance of the masses.

Christopher Hitchens Explains the Importance of Characters in Orwell's Novel: He believes that all the main characters in *Animal Farm* are labeled in his book:

“What Orwell is concerned with is continuing the allegory of the Russian Revolution and Stalin's totalitarian rule. According to Hitchens, Old Major could represent Karl Marx, because Marx provided the framework and the true vision for utopian communism. He could also embody” (Hitchens, 2001:203)

Vladimir Lenin, after the skull of the Old Major is shown to the animals, just as Lenin's dead body was displayed publicly. The most famous is Napoleon, who clearly resembles Joseph Stalin in many ways, focusing on his growing power and the subsequent reign of killings. Also, Snowball, who has a brief, masterful managerial role on the farm, may be based on Trotsky as the leader of a successful revolution. Finally, Mr. Jones may represent Tsar Nicholas II, as his rule led to the inevitable Russian Revolution, just as Jones's did on *Animal Farm*. (Hitchens 2001: 187–188)

While among Albanian authors such as Rexhep Qosja, Besnik Mustafaj, and Ridvan Dibra, we find dystopian, utopian, and especially retrotropical elements, in: *Triumph of Gjergj Elez Alia*, *The Locusts of the Heat*, *Death Comes to Me from Such Eyes*, express nostalgia, even though it was not so good, but compared to the present, the current, in the eyes of the characters, it seems ideal. [Retropia: The inability to see the present clearly, because the gaze is fixed on what happened before.

In the novel *The Told Secrets*, the author mentions Umberto Eco's work *The Prague Cemetery*. The novel begins with the narrator's dream, which resonates with the author of *The Prague Cemetery*, the anxiety he felt before writing that great novel. In both works, there are

parallel threads about the Simonians whom Eco mentions in his novel. As the epicenter of Eco's work, we have hatred and the constant incitement to hatred.

The narrator's *anima*, which converses at these moments, drives him to write, regardless of the unease and disgust he feels: "You decided to write about One great spiritual distress and Two social distresses, so I don't know why you forgot that it's better to write when you're distressed than when you're happy" (Qosja, 2020:12)

The work centered on two narratives, the narrator and the two protagonists, who will be remembered, as has always happened: the authors have remained immortal, while the leaders have been forgotten. Kasëm Trebeshina's work, *Odin Mondvalsen*, tells the story of a "madman" who cannot escape "political crime," not even as a madman. The novella was written three years after Trebeshina's *Prememoria*, an open letter to the head of state, in which a courage unseen by anyone until then is revealed. He fulfills the role of an intellectual, not a traitor, to demask the dictator's figure.

In Besnik Mustafaj's novel, if we follow the trail of a careful researcher in short, the Jungian method of interpretation, elements emerge dramatic and chilling, a kind of Albanian Holocaust that lasted more than fifty years. The drama within the novel unfolds throughout the work, as the circumstances suggest, the villagers are at the bottom of a collective tragedy, but this is the most unbearable part of their lives. The heat is a symbol of mental and spiritual drought and of all other aspects of human life; it is not a heat that has left the fields parched and the streams dry. "The terrible drought was creeping in slowly but surely, right into people's mouths, down beneath their tongues, to the hidden springs of saliva! People understood each other with a long sigh that came from the depths of their chests. Then came the need to accompany the sigh with a mumbled curse through their teeth, like a muffled growl. (Mustafaj, 2017: 35)

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In Andrić's work, George Elez Alia is presented as wild, primitive (*homo primitives* in Jungian terms), ignorant, and manipulated by instincts. It can be said that this portrayal is not neutral, but carries an ideological and cultural charge, with stereotypes and a contemptuous approach, especially in the context of such a sacred Albanian myth. His portrayal is insulting, a cultural slight, and an attempt to trivialize Albanian heroes, as part of a broader trend in Balkan literature where Albanian figures are depicted as ugly, violent, or uncouth and turned into a clown for others' amusement. Compared to the Albanian version, this narrative is in how it tears down the hero's figure and turns him into a symbol of shame, failure, and self-delusion. Grotesque description: Unusually short and stocky, he walked slowly and with a wide stride... his arms were disproportionately long.

This is a distorting portrayal that not only diminishes his heroism but turns his figure into a caricature. We can find comparisons of the figure of Alija Đerđelez with Don Quixote, Kafka's Gregor Samsa, Muj in Kadare's works, etc. Andrić builds the narrative as a dark comedy where: the figure of the Balkan epic is refracted into the grotesque, he is not a hero but a victim of his time, the breakdown of the myth, i.e., a blow to ethnic and cultural pride. As for the retro-topical elements in Kasëm Trebeshina, we find them throughout his prose and especially in the *Odin*

Mondvalsen. Trebeshina's political courage surpasses his artistic one. The author places the protagonist against a socio-political backdrop enervated by the dictatorial spirit of the times. The Odín resembles a modern Hamlet, confined to a prison hospital for many years and pretending to be insane, having “lost touch with reality.” He tells the medical staff that he is Danish, that his grandfather was Italian, his grandmother French, and that his mother married a Dane.

His responses that madness is better than concentration camps reveal the sufferings of those persecuted in communist prisons, representing a dystopia meticulously arranged down to the smallest detail, tailored to the parodied mindset and anthropology of a people. He speaks with the courage of a naive man and the sincerity of a child about the dehumanization of man, the figure of the dictator, collective guilt, class struggle, the oppression of intellectuals, and all the vices that emerge as a result of a deranged dictatorship! From this dystopian situation, Odin, with the cunning of a psychiatric patient, speaks of retropia (a counter-utopia of the future, according to Bauman the idealization of the past, the rejection of modernity, etc. While the author, through Odin Mondvalsen, reveals the world through memories, nostalgia, and skepticism and distrust of the future. And to this corresponds the first line of the poem Four Quartets by T. S. Eliot:

“The present time and the past
Are both perhaps present in the future,
And the future contains the past.
If all time is eternally present
All time is irreversible”.
(Eliot, 1943: 20)

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