TWO DYSTOPIAN NOVELS: NINETEEN EIGHTY FOUR *AND* BRAVE NEW WORLD

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Abstract: *Totalitarianism as a form of government marked not only different societies, but it also created literary masterpieces. Among the writers that imagined the world ruled by totalitarian regimes, there can be mentioned Aldous Huxley and George Orwell, writers who were against this type of regime. Their novels envisioned the future in a prophetical way, criticizing the politics that were to come.*

***Keywords*:** *totalitarianism, utopia, dystopia, society, technology*.

Totalitarianism as a form of government marked not only different societies, but it also created literary masterpieces including poems and novels. Starting from the Italian fascism, Giovanni Amendola was the first to use the notion of totalitarianism as a system which was fundamentally different from common dictatorship. Among the leaders of such totalitarian systems, there can be mentioned: Benito Mussolini, Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin.

Alongside the writers that imagined the world ruled by totalitarian regimes, there can be mentioned: H.G.Wells, Aldous Huxley and George Orwell, writers who were against this type of regime as the last of them admitted in his essay entitled *Why I write*: "The Spanish war and other events in 1936-37 turned the scale and thereafter I knew where I stood. Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, against totalitarianism and for democratic socialism, as I understand it."

Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) and Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty Four* (1949), two novels that can be considered predictions or even warnings, became relevant many years later. Both *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty Four* belong to the genre of utopian literature.

The term *utopia* is supposed to denominate any place or society considered perfect or ideal. It was originally coined by Thomas More in his book written in 1516. On the other hand, the term *dystopia* represents the antonym of *utopia* and refers to a bad place. The word *dystopia*, as it was recorded by the Oxford English Dictionary, was first used in a parliamentary speech in 1868 by John Stuart Mill. There were different opinions regarding the use of the term *dystopia*. Some of the critics used *anti-utopia* or even *cacotopia*, a term which Anthony Burgess considered more appropriate in the case of Orwell's novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

The grandson of "Darwin's bulldog", as Aldous Huxley's grandfather was nicknamed, came from an illustrious family that had deep roots in England's literary and scientific tradition. The author of *Brave New World* mastered the English language just as well as the science and other fields of knowledge. This fact allowed Aldous Huxley to use the new scientific discoveries in his novels and essays in a way that only few writers of the time were able to.

At the age of 16, Huxley contracted an eye disease, keratitis punctate, which left him blind for a period. He partially recovered by using special glasses and, unable

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to pursue his career as a scientist or to fight in the World War, Huxley turned to writing. He succeeded in producing an impressive number of novels at an astonishing rate: *Crome Yellow* (1921), *Antic Hay* (1923), *Those Barren Leaves* (1925), *Point Counter Point* (1928), *Brave New World* (1932).

Most of Aldous Huxley's work deals with philosophical and ethical subjects. *Brave New World*, which represents one of the most important works of the author, contains the idea of a fictional future in which free will and individuality have been sacrificed in order to complete social stability. The same idea is to be found in George Orwell's famous novel, *Nineteen Eighty- Four*.

While Orwell wrote his novel after the society had suffered the tragic effects of the Second World War and during the struggle of the Cold War, underlining the role of technology in modern world, Huxley anticipated all these developments and seemed to prophesize the major themes and struggles that dominated life and debate in the second half of the 20th century.

George Orwell, a name that represents the pseudonym of Eric Arthur Blair, was a representative journalist, political author and novelist who became famous for his captivating quotation: *Big Brother is watching you*. Compared to Aldous Huxley, Orwell was born in India. He was the grandson of a wealthy plantation and slave owner. The writer's family moved to England and there, after earning a scholarship to Eton College, he met Aldous Huxley, who, besides the fact that taught him French, also had a great influence on his future writing.

In 1944 George Orwell wrote *Animal Farm*, a novel about the Soviet myth that could be easily understood, but which was not published until after the war had ended. A political satire, the novel describes *Man* as being *the lord of the animals*: "Man is the only enemy we have. Remove Man from the scene, and the root cause of hunger and overwork is abolished for ever. Man is the only creature that consumes without producing. He does not give milk, he does not lay eggs, he is too weak to pull the plough, he cannot run fast enough to catch rabbits. Yet he is lord of all the animals. He sets them to work, he gives back to them the bare minimum that will prevent them from starving, and the rest he keeps for himself."

Last Man in Europe or, as it was renamed, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was both appreciated and criticized by the reviewers of the time. The dystopian satire of totalitarian regimes and the prophesy on the downfall of humankind made *Nineteen Eighty-Four* a profoundly meaningful work.

The main difference that the totalitarian regime imposes is related to how it temps to control virtually all aspects of the social life: economy, education, art, science, the citizens' private life and morals. A similar type of regime is described in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and Huxley's *Brave New World*. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* tells the story of a man named Winston who considers that he can deceive the system. Winston lives in Airstrip One, a place which was known as Great Britain, and is a member of the Party whose leader is Big Brother. The Party's most important slogans are: *War is peace*, *Freedom is slavery* and *Ignorance is strength*.

Winston was raised in a Party orphanage and was integrated into the system because he lost his parents during the Revolution. He works in one of the departments of the Ministry of Truth, which handles all Party publications and propaganda which are never questioned. Alongside the Ministry of Truth, there are three other ministries: the Ministry of Love, that has in charge all Party prisoners, the Ministry of Peace, which handles war and the Ministry of Plenty that manages the production of Party goods. All

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party members are watched with the help of a telescreen that is placed in everyone's house and which allows the Thought Police to listen to any of their conversations.

Winston meets Julia, who is also a rebel that can not accept the Party rules. They fall in love and their story seems to be the idyllic note that is totally in contrast with the nightmare vision of the novel. But, because Winston wishes for privacy, intimacy, freedom and love, he will be arrested and tortured till he becomes nothing more than a *sack of bones*, able to accept even the fact that *2+2=5.* He will finally love Big Brother: "He gazed up at the enormous face. Forty years it had taken him to learn what kind of smile was hidden beneath the dark moustache. O cruel, needless misunderstanding! O stubborn, self-willed exile from the loving breast! Two gin-scented tears trickled down the sides of his nose. But it was all right, everything was all right, the struggle was finished. He had won the victory over himself. He loved Big Brother." (*Nineteen Eighty-Four*)

On the other hand, *Brave New World* deals not only with advanced technology that can control people's mind and spirit, but also with medical discoveries which can change the human destiny.

The novel opens in Central London Hatching and Conditioning Centre, where the embryos of five categories of castes: Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta and Epsilon are kept in bottles. The Alpha embryos are those meant to become leaders and thinkers of the World State. The infants are programmed to like or dislike things like books and flowers, for example. In another room, there are children napping, children who are constantly hearing a voice that repeats a lesson in *Elementary Class Consciousness*. This voice can be compared to the telescreens in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, while the Director Mustapha Mond, one of the ten World Controllers, has almost the same role as Big Brother, trying to remove strong emotions, desires and human relationships from society.

While in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the control of human-beings was achieved by torture and permanent surveillance, in *Brave New World*, the same control is obtained by using *soma*, which is a kind of drug, or is maintained through technological inventions that start before birth and last until death. The strange thing in the World state is the fact that people do not grow old.

Lenina and Bernard, two of the main characters in the book go outside the World State, in the so-called Reservation, and are shocked to see how aged and ill are the residents there. They meet John, who tells them about his childhood and about his mother Linda, that was ostracized because of her behaviour and as a result John was raised in isolation from the rest of the village. The boy wishes to see the *other place* and is finally taken from the reservation, but in the new world he becomes the Savage.

John can not understand life without art, science and religion, things without which human life is not worth living. Although he retreats to a lighthouse, people keep haunting him and not being able to adapt himself to the new world, after a one night's orgy, he finally hangs himself: *"The door of the lighthouse was ajar. They pushed it open and walked into a shuttered twilight. Through an archway on the further side of the room they could see the bottom of the staircase that led up to the higher floors. Just under the crown of the arch dangled a pair of feet."* (*Brave New World*)

As is the case of *Nineteen Eighty-Four, Brave New World* is also a satire of the society in which Huxley lived. The same idea of destruction of all human truths, such as: love, friendship and personal connection is to be found in the two novels which are strongly related to Mussolini's idea who considered that the system politicized

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everything that was spiritual and human: *Everything within the state, nothing outside the state, nothing against the state*.

Recalling Jonathan Swift's works, both Aldous Huxley and George Orwell can be considered masters of wit and satire, critically observing the politics of their time and prophetically envisioning the future.

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