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"The dystopian novel and its satiric message: the cases of *1984*, *Brave New World* and *Fahrenheit 451*"

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Abstract: This paper's aim is to analyze the dystopian and utopian novel through their characters, circumstances and scenarios, in order to show and demonstrate the peculiarities and overtly didactic purposes of this subgenre. Moreover, the analysis will highlight how both the serious and fictive aspects that *a priori* these novels may consist of, end up satirizing the contemporary world and issuing a warning for the future.

A series of distinguished novels by illustrative and representative authors to the subgenre of the dystopian novel supports the analysis meticulously carried out. In the same vein, the paper is arranged in six contrastive parts that are addressed at examining each of the minded characteristics in detail.

Conclusively, a final reflection concerning both the satiric message of the novels and whether the dystopian novel hides a deeper significance and warning intention or not is laid on.

Keywords: Dystopian, utopian, fictive, didactic, satiric, warning.

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The dystopian novel and its satiric message: the cases of *1984*, *Brave New World* and *Fahrenheit 451*

O. Introduction

According to The Oxford Dictionary, the word *Dystopia* refers to "an imagined place or state in which everything is unpleasant or bad, typically a totalitarian or environmentally degraded one. The opposite of *Utopia*." (Oxford, 2014) In this regard, the dystopian novel encompasses a very rich literary genre that might also include the *utopian novel*. Accordingly, looking at John Joseph Adams definition, "In a dystopian story, society itself is typically the antagonist; it is society that is actively working against the protagonist's aims and desires. This oppression frequently is enacted by a totalitarian or authoritarian government, resulting in the loss of civil liberties and untenable living conditions, caused by any number of circumstances, such as world overpopulation, laws controlling a person's sexual or reproductive freedom, and living under constant surveillance." (Adams, 2011) Furthermore, dystopian writers try to design a society and plot that not only entertain the readers with the fictitious elements and the action typical of dramatic novels, but also, make human beings understand what the possible consequences of their acts could be in case society loses its bearings or makes poor collective decisions.

This paper's aim is to analyze the dystopian and utopian novel through their characters, circumstances and scenarios, in order to show and demonstrate the peculiarities and overtly didactic purposes of this subgenre. Moreover, the analysis will highlight how both the serious and fictive aspects that *a priori* these novels may consist of, end up satirizing the contemporary world and issuing a warning for the future.

In order to achieve a thorough and broad analysis, the novels consulted have been *1984* by George Orwell, *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley and *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury. In addition, some other manuals and novels such as *The Space Merchants* by Frederick Pohl and Cyril M. Korblyth, *We* by Yevgueni Zamiatin or *A Clockwork Orange* by Anthony Burgess have also been considered in quest of ideas.

1. Background to the concept of Dystopia/Utopia

As broad as their meaning may be, dystopian and utopian novels have been present almost since the existence of human beings. These concepts have not only been attached to literature but also to society and human life itself. Indeed, one way or another, nearly everything is included in these two words. Furthermore, history has brought us plenty of examples such as peculiar governments along with their strange forms of governance. Thus, an existential question arises: how do people know they are being ruled under the most suitable system or, on the other hand, by a system that needs much reform? With a view to this thought, Peter Edgerly Firchow sheds shows uncertainty to the experimental quality of utopian and dystopian novels perdurability: "The question posed is, ultimately, always the same, though it may look superficially different, namely, given certain social conditions, how would human beings react, change, develop?." (Firchow, 2007: 10)

From a philosophical point of view, just as Allan Bloom argues in his *The Republic of Plato* (1968: 24) through the Plato and Socrates' words, (Plato, 380 BC), humans do not know what is in fact better for themselves. In fact, during the 5th century, Athens came up with the idea of having some tool to govern society in order to let them know what was better for them as the individual was somehow ignorant of what is truly in his best interest:

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...That I said a moment ago that no one willingly chooses to rule and get mixed up in straightening out other people's troubles; but he asks for wages, because the man who is to do anything fine by art never does what is best for himself nor does he command it, insofar as he is commanding by art, but rather what is best for the man who is ruled. (Bloom, 1968: 24)

Here, Plato, through the voice of his alter-ego, Socrates, asserts the importance of having a simple figure or institutions in making decisions because, as he states, these institutions look for the advantage of the weaker and decides what is best for the 'subject'. For this, he uses words such as 'art', 'rule' or 'subject', which refer to governments and institutions and immediately, to population itself.

This idea has a close relation with the novels proposed in this paper. The societies described in *Brave New World*, *1984* and *Fahrenheit 451* are not the most appropriate for human beings, but how does the reader know this? The answer seems to be evident: by only having lived under the rule and authority of other laws, in this case, more benevolent and liberal, which allow these readers to freely inquire into and read about their political and moral condition. That is, in a free society, with no censorship, the publication of these types of books can serve as a catalyst for reform.

Stepping back in time, the human race has always lived immersed in or controlled by sorts of 'dystopias'. Indeed, considering this idea from a logical point of view, every form of governance has a minimum of either utopia or dystopia. Taking a quick look over history, monarchies for instance, have ruled every country and even whole empires under the premise of limiting people to the low classes and expecting them to be happy and resigning themselves to their subservience with little resistance. It was only the king, his divine power and his close followers, who enjoyed privilege.

As time passed, the idea of being a simple and plain slave was dismissed and then modern times arrived with its authoritarian regimes such as Fascism, Nazism or Communism. Once again, these notions of how to govern a country are related to the concept of utopia and dystopia since one authoritarian leader imposes a doctrine that in the end may result to be chaotic and impossible to accomplish. Considering Hitler's ideology for instance, perpetuating the 'Aryan race' was an unreachable idea, that is, a dystopia, since it involved mass slaughtering and the coercion of an unwilling country to carry out the 'perfection', just as in *Brave New World*.

Subsequently, to exemplify this idea, the case of the Third Reich in Germany, for example, constituted a rigid example of a dystopia. Regardless the murders, it could be said that there are some similes between some passages in *Nineteen Eighty-four*, *Brave New World* and even *Fahrenheit 451* with respect to the madness of having control over every citizen, even to the point of killing –in the Third Reich- or to the point of exiling and expelling in *Brave New World*, -a 'crime' also, but of different kind. Giving voice to these ideas, Josef Goebbels stated before committing suicide that "We shall go down in history as the greatest statesmen of all time, or as the greatest criminals"

In the end, there seems to be an attempt to change drastically what nowadays are considered to be the human civil rights –that is, for instance, voting and living in a democracy. This idea is intended by means of setting individualistic 'wrong' thoughts, impositions and nonsensical ideals that make countries fall back on errors which force people to live under a regime held by a selected minority.

2. Literary approach

With respect to its literary representation, the beginning of the dystopian novel dates back to 1895, when H.G. Wells published *The Time Machine*, which is conceived as the first "scientific" romance novel. In fact, *The Time Machine* is one of the best-known precursors of the futuristic setting and science-fiction genre. In this novel, Wells creates a stratified society

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destroyed by and immersed in chaos due to its destructive nature and character. In this novel, the Time Traveler, the main character, visits a far-off future in which he contemplates another world. The main character's home has been transformed into a dystopian world and thus, Wells depicts an obscure planet where some other races have come to life. *The Time Machine* contains science fiction aspects presumably present in all utopian and dystopian novels and thus can be seen as a precursor to the subgenre.

In this sense, the publication of *The Time Traveler* was the first apparition of a kind of subgenre that would revolve around science fiction and implausible extreme situations in which the characters feel oppressed. What these novels do is not so much focused on one characters' routine but also, on the other hand, on telling the readers a story as a strategy to make them understand that living such a life would entail, at least, the problems depicted in the novel.

2.1. Dystopian approach and common characteristics

The motives that lead authors to decide whether or not to write one type of dystopian novel and another are very broad. In *1984* for instance, the perception that there had emerged an aggressive and intrusive control of society is the driving force behind such drama. Nonetheless, there are other models too. While *Fahrenheit 451* deals with the death of important cultural and societal values such as a love of reading, in *Brave New World*, it is the dehumanization of society and the dominion of science that rule the fictitious dystopian worlds created by the author. In the end, though the strategies for creating such novels might be different, the outcome is always the same.

In dystopian novels, non-conformism or outright rejections of societal norms are punished through annihilation. Rules are thought up and formulated to be fulfilled and not doing this causes indeed enormous problems for the governments. So, this is in fact what happens to the three main characters in the novels analyzed. That is, each one is a 'non-conformist' who is punished severely by a government that sees universal obeisance as an existential necessity.

3. The dystopian novel seen as a warning and its symbols

Starting on the main idea throughout this paper, the dystopian novel is regarded as a compilation of different themes as it deals with politics, philosophy and a wide range of themes that in the end provoke a reaction in the reader. The basic thought to which these novels lead us is to fear science and progress. On this issue, Richard A. Posner declares:

Once viewed as a political novel, a warning about the totalitarian actuality of the Soviet Union and totalitarian tendencies that Orwell discerned in the West, it is nowadays more often viewed as a warning against the dangers that technocratic modernism poses to privacy and freedom. Many people believe that the relentless advance of science and technology in recent decades have brought us to the very brink of the Orwellian nightmare. (Posner, 2000: 1)

As formerly stated, this research revolves around deciphering and labeling the dystopian novels not as science fiction as it could be thought at first glance but as a warning for readers and for society to understand the dangers that would be entailed in making bad choices or letting third, non accountable elements, to make the choices.

In other words, these novels hold that there is a high threat that human beings could end up living in chaotic and disordered societies headed to failure and unhappiness if humans are nothing but simple cogs of a vast and incomprehensible system. Consequently, this idea implies that the way we live in this time could get worse and at the same time, that this futuristic societies depicted in these novels reflect in a grotesque manner real issues that remain at a deeper level in the contemporary society.

Thus, there are crucial aspects and features to examine that should be made evident, in order to demonstrate the nature and the intentions of these novels. In addition, some

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philosophical questions are also raised too when judging whether living in a kind of society and resigning oneself is more convenient than rebelling against the system.

The following is a thorough analysis of the common characteristics of *1984*, *Brave New World* and *Fahrenheit 451* which will try to examine the bizarre similarities that link these three novels of the same subgenre. Accordingly, each novel functions as a future and hypothetical exemplification of a world gone mad in order to warn human beings of the dangers of acting incorrectly.

3.1. All powerful states and Totalitarian Regimes

To begin with, the sort of government or manner in which society is built and ruled is a key to understanding the major themes of these novels. These novels happen to occur in totalitarian regimes that oppress people. Starting with *Fahrenheit 451*, the government censors and forbids 'information' that could imply a growing knowledge and consciousness of one's 'oppressed' condition. That is to say, books:

Surely you remember the boy in your own school class who was exceptionally 'bright,' did most of the reciting and answering while the others sat like so many leaden idols, hating him. And wasn't it this bright boy you selected for beatings and tortures after hours? Of course it was. We must all be alike. Not everyone born free and equal, as the Constitution says, but everyone made equal. Each man the image of every other; then all are happy, for there are no mountains to make them cower, to judge themselves against. So! A book is a loaded gun in the house next door. Burn it. Take the shot from the weapon. Breach man's mind. Who knows who might be the target of the well-read man? Me? I won't stomach them for a minute (2003: 76-77)

As it can be seen, the quote describes the terrible jealousy and fear of intellectualism, which is perceived as an extraordinary powerful weapon. In this case, the totalitarian system imposed in *Fahrenheit 451* justifies violence as a means of repression since words have a profound effect on the political structure.

The world depicted in *1984* appears to be rather worse. While in Ray Bradbury's novel the only prohibition are the books, in George Orwell's novel there is a general sense of prohibition since the government survives through mass repression, indoctrination and some might say outright brainwashing. Liberty does not exist.

Down in the street little eddies of wind were whirling dust and torn paper into spirals, and though the sun was shining and the sky a harsh blue, there seemed to be no color in anything, except the posters that were plastered everywhere. The black mustachioed face gazed down from every commanding corner. There was one on the house-front immediately opposite. BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU, the caption said, while the dark eyes looked deep into Winston's own. Down at street level another poster, torn at one corner, flapped fitfully in the wind, alternately covering and uncovering the single word INGSOC. (2008: 4)

The motto 'Big brother is watching you' is constant all throughout the book and is analogous to the idea of forbidding books present in *Fahrenheit 451* a novel which depicts an absolutist government that not only bans and abolishes natural rights but also watches over everyone. But, additionally, the world of *1984* is even bleaker. The control over citizens is not only reduced to a stifling surveillance but also to controlling information and history. This repressive brand of mass manipulation is maintained through the entire story. In this repressive world, Winston, the protagonist, works as an 'editor' or 'speakwrite' of news, manipulating, deleting and modifying all the information that might cause havoc for the authorities.

Winston's job was to rectify the original figures by making them agree with the later ones. [...] As soon as all the corrections which happened to be necessary in any particular

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number of the Times had been assembled and collated, that number would be reprinted, the original copy destroyed, and the corrected copy placed on the files in its stead. This process of continuous alteration was applied not only to news- papers, but to books, periodicals, pamphlets, posters, leaflets, films, sound- tracks, cartoons, photographs- to every kind of literature or documentation which might conceivable hold any political or ideological significance. (2008: 41-42)

This detailed description and explanation illustrates not only the dangers of totalitarianism but also reflects on the devastating consequences for humanity of such control as humanity loses contact with reality or even its ability to have an awareness of this reality's being constantly tracked, and sometimes even changed or blotted out completely.

Simultaneously, the novel also contains and exhibits two different kinds of psychological manipulations. On the one hand, the 'mind control' is present constantly throughout the novel in the form of banners with mighty slogans telling Winston what to do. As an example, one banner states: "War is peace. Freedom is slavery. Ignorance is strength." (2008:6). Here, the psychological manipulation is disproportionate. The party has its citizens thinking what the party think should be the law through the use of a compelling and oft- repeated slogan. The habit that is universally inculcated seems to be simply to obey and be silent. So the question is: How long would anyone living in 2014 resist such oppressive behavior and psychological strangulation?

On the other hand, a physical manipulation is easily recognizable too. Whether it is true that there are many physical manipulating elements in *1984*, such as signs that read "...A trumpet call floated from the telescreen just above their heads" (2008: 60- 61), the physical manipulation, called "Conditioned/ing" which refers to a fixed determinism that impedes human beings from refusing or eluding their natural-born condition, is substantially easier to observe and detect in *Brave New World*.

Reducing the number of revolutions per minute, Mr. Foster explained. The surrogate goes round slower; therefore passes through the lung at longer intervals; therefore gives the embryo less oxygen. Nothing like oxygen-shortage for keeping an embryo below par. Again he rubbed his hands [...] The lower the caste, said Mr. Foster, the shorter the oxygen. The first organ affected was the brain. After that the skeleton. At seventy per cent of normal oxygen you got dwarfs. At less than seventy eyeless monsters. (2007:10)

This idea can be also seen in this other quote. Physical manipulation is repeated over and over: "Every one works for every one else. We can't do without any one. Even Epsilons are useful. We couldn't do without Epsilons. Every one works for every one else. We can't do without any one." (2007:50)

Nevertheless, in the same way we might affirm that these societies with all their strange trappings are obviously inconceivable, there will always exist the heroic character that struggles against this mad world. So let us now focus on the main characters of the three novels and the responsibility and implications these figures have.

3.2. The Heroic 'savior' figure. The Protagonist: Ideals and Strategies

Although this essay focuses on the differences among the three works, the main qualities of the character is a phenomenon of the similarities that all three have in common. These 'didactic' novels cannot help society if they lack a hero that will, ultimately, realize what the destination of humanity will be if the situation remains the same. Nonetheless, even though the reader understands and identifies with this heroic figure, it appears tough to be in his/her place. For readers reading the story, it looks simple to react and create plans against the difficulties that the protagonist faces constantly. However, the 'savior' figure must be valued. In reality, these heroes are the ones who represent the rightness, they remove the blindfold from everyone else's eyes in the story and thus make everyone else see –including the reader- that living under the circumstances he/she lives, bearing cruel conditions, is

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inhumane and unfair.

There is something in society that is a mess, and this character has a special vision or talent for sensing this problem along with an inner energy, which accompanied by his powerful personality, gives him the courage to denounce and protest it. This ability is related to the "doublethink" phenomenon in *1984* by which Winston Smith:

(...) felt as though he were wandering in the forests of the sea bottom, lost in a monstrous world where he himself was the monster. He was alone. The past was dead, the future was unimaginable. What certainty had he that a single human creature now living was on his side? And what way of knowing that the dominion of the Party would not endure forever? (2008: 28)

That is, by even considering that he is not a happy man, he is guilty at "doublethink". This "doublethink" is what indeed starts the rebellion in which certain character rebels against the 'system', a system already terrifically described by the novelist. Presumably, by this time the reader already acknowledges his circumstances but still wants a savior to protest against them or, in the same sense, begs for anything to fight the injustices and fallacies depicted in the dystopia. Thus when and if the hero prevails, the reader feels a certain 'release' from the 'anxiety' caused by the initial frightening depiction of the dystopia.

Moreover, this concept of "doublethink" that represents the phenomenon of being intellectual, of thinking and finally, being distinct, is much more observable in several characters in *Brave New World*. Bernard Marx, the protagonist, combats his society, with the addition of being vigorous enough to make the world see in the end that he/she was right and the rest of the world must uncover their eyes. In the end, it is Helmholtz Watson, one of his best friends, to whom he can talk very openly and who ends up being rewarded:

He is being sent to an Island. That's to say, he's being sent to a place where he'll meet the most interesting set of men and women to be found anywhere in the world. All the people who for one reason or another, have got too self-consciously individual to fit into community-life. All the people who aren't satisfied with orthodoxy, who've got independent ideas of their own. Everyone, in a word, who's anyone. I almost envy you, Mr Watson. (2007: 199-200)

3.3. The importance given to Technology and Literature in the book's symbolism

One of the common symbols on the three novels that strikes the reader at first glance is the use of technology. Also, the determinism imposed in some novels such as *Brave New World*. Subsequently, determinism has various branches and different types of dystopian novelists. According to Gorman Beauchamp:

Technological determinism is the dominant philosophy of history found in the dystopian novel and that dystopists are generally technophobic, viewing the technology of dystopia not as a neutral tool misused by totalitarian rulers but as intrinsically totalitarian in itself, a futuristic Frankenstein's monster. (Beauchamp, 1986: 55)

In this sense, the telescreens in *1984* for example fulfill perfectly the function of being a repressive and burdensome instrument. They turn on automatically and are kept on for long periods of time, reminding people of their obligations to fulfill their daily purposes and harassing them into behaving appropriately. Beauchamp proceeds:

No one would, I suppose, be tempted to claim that the telescreens had produced Big Brother or his kind of rule: without them Oceania would be a less efficient totalitarian state but no less a totalitarian state. In other words, ideology controls technology in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, rather than issuing from it as in, say, Zamyatin's *We* or Huxley's *Brave New World* or Kurt Vonnegut's *Player Piano* (Beauchamp, 1986: 55)

Alternatively, Beauchamp mentions *Brave New World*. In this particular case, it is true that the novel by Huxley focuses much more on science right from the beginning in order to perpetuate and preserve a well-ordered and fixed ideology of a hermetic world in

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which everyone has a specific function that cannot be altered or interchanged.

Why don't you make everybody an Alpha Double Plus while you're about it? [...] Because we have no wish to have our throats cut... [...] We believe in happiness and stability. A society of Alphas couldn't fail to be unstable and miserable. Imagine a factory staffed by Alphas [...] Imagine it! [...] It's an absurdity. An Alpha-decanted, Alpha-conditioned man would go mad if he had to do Epsilon Semi-Moron work. [...] Alphas can be completely socialized – but only on condition that you make them do Alpha work. Only an Epsilon can be expected to make Epsilon sacrifices, for the good reason that for him they aren't sacrifices; [...] His conditioning has laid down rails along which he's got to run. He can't help himself; he's fore- doomed. [...] You cannot pour upper- caste champagne-surrogate into lower-caste bottles. (2007: 195- 196)

Another fundamental symbol to take into account that makes dystopian novels function is literature, -namely, its most immediate platform: the book.

Books are not regarded as recreational and educational entertainment, but on the contrary, are seen as tools. Despite the fact that books appear in different forms in each novel, in the end, the sensation that the reader extracts is that the novelists use books to demonstrate a widespread and common idea at least in these three novels. This idea makes reference to knowledge and to the fear that books provoke among governments. In the novels, the authorities seem to fear what the citizens could do or what their reaction would be if those who read could make good use of books. That 'making good use of books' means learning and realizing that it is not fair and right to live the way people do in these books. Hence, forbidding or burning literature is the safest way to avoid a reaction that would entail an eventual fall of the system and ruling party. As a matter of fact in *Fahrenheit 451*, books are the major theme.

In relation to this, professor Faber, a friend of Guy Montag -who is the protagonist of *Fahrenheit 451* and a humble fireman-, makes him reflect on the idea of preserving books as they are vital to store information and knowledge. In this manner, these 'speeches' are given to Montag in order to convince him to fight for books: "Do you know why books such as this are so important? Because they have quality. And what does the word quality mean? To me it means texture. This book has *pores*." (2003: 108)

We see this same feature in the next following passage. It is curious how all characters, regardless how different they are to each other, have an opinion on the issue. As such, the following passage illustrates this very clearly: " I've heard the rumours about hate, too, once in a long while, over the years. Do you know why? I don't, that's sure! Maybe the books can get us half out of the cave. They just might stop us from making the same damn insane mistakes!" (2003: 96)

In this next quote, it is Faber, the wise English professor explains Montag the reason for which people hate books. He uses his wisdom to explain this fear as well as describes himself regretful of having avoided defending books: "So now do you see why books are hated and feared? They show the pores in the face of life. The comfortable people want only wax moon faces, poreless, hairless, expressionless." (2003: 108)

With respect to *Brave New World*, it is the figure of William Shakespeare more than books that represents this danger. Conditioned citizens, that is, current people living in London, which is the setting, do not read, as if Huxley had some intention to say that people who read are the real danger in the dystopia he has created. This conception relates again to the relation between knowledge and freedom. And yet, it is people in 'The Reserve', specifically John -one of the main characters-, who read. These people are considered indigenous by the natural inhabitants of London, to the point of visiting them as if they were animals or some kind of attraction of interest. In fact, the World State that rules the country even experiments with them. Nonetheless, going back to the reading matter, it is John who reads and loves Shakespeare, having *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* hidden by

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his mother:

One day (John calculated later that it must have been soon after his twelfth birthday) he came home and found a book that he had never seen before lying on the floor in the bedroom. It was a thick book and looked very old. The binding had been eaten by mice; some of its pages were loose and crumpled. (2007: 113)

The fact that his mother has the book hidden means that books notwithstanding their having been forbidden, are a powerful instrument that might undermine the government. Thus again, we go back to the premise that books and literature are symbols in these novels that stand for a kind of breaking of chains and release from oppression.

Concerning *1984*, we find Winston writing a diary which is forbidden as well, as writing anything is deemed to be against Big Brother:

The thing that he was about to do was to open a diary. This was not illegal (nothing was illegal, since there were no longer any laws), but if detected it was reasonably certain that it would be punished by death, or at least by twentyfive years in a forced-labour camp. (2008: 8)

Later on, we see the same use of books/diaries to accomplish the same rhetorical purposes:

His pen had slid voluptuously over the smooth paper, printing in large neat capitals: DOWN WITH BIG BROTHER [...] . Whether he went on with the diary, or whether he did not go on with it, made no difference. The Thought Police would get him just the same. He had committed [...] the essential crime that contained all others in itself. Thoughtcrime, they called it (2008: 20-21)

As it can be seen, in these novels, books represent nothing but danger. Governments even have to burn -in *Fahrenheit 451*- or forbid and hide books -as in the case of *Brave New World*-, as the leaders are afraid of them being in the hands of citizens. But why is this? As these novels are based on a futuristic world, where everything is in ruins, books are a way of going back to the past and learning from a society that in the end may have not been so terrible. In this sense, John, the savage in *Brave New World*, only understands the world through the words of Shakespeare in his *Complete Works*:

'Do they read Shakespeare?' asked the Savage as they walked, on their way to the Bio-chemical Laboratories, past the School Library. 'Certainly not,' said the Head Mistress, blushing. 'Our library,' said Dr. Gaffney, 'contains only books of reference. If our young people need distraction, they can get it at the feelies. We don't encourage them to indulge in any solitary amusements. (2007: 109)

This reflection can be made not only because of the prohibition of books but also because of society's corruption and degeneration. Governments are afraid of people reading books as they might find knowledge and a way to protest and react to what is essentially a monstrous and repressive system. Just as Richard A. Posner states "that truth shall make us free, and that ignorance is weakness (to reverse one of the slogans of The Party), have been rarely been as powerfully shown as in *Nineteen Eighty-four*". (Posner, 2000: 26)

When the reader starts reading the novels it is noticeable the sensation that the characters seem to be in a kind of sleep. They just work as machines, and machines do not read, indeed, they do not even have this ability. The reflection to be made out of this feature is perhaps that 'imperfection is perfect'. The modern society, in which we live, which is in fact the same society in which the authors lived was not anywhere near as oppressive as the fictitious ones. And that is the ultimate and most important lesson that these novelists want us to learn. Only after having understood that we do not live in misery-as many might affirm- can any warning be useful. By pointing out some similarities between the 'Idyllic' present and the 'dystopian' future society can 'escape' its 'ruin' by being cognizant of where it is going, and thus take preventive measures.

In the end, referring to the quote about the figure of Shakespeare, the virtuosity of reading, which is only found in some characters, is not beneficial. Those who are able to read

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and reason are sent to a 'punishment' place. Because of this, as these citizens are not expected to think critically, they are punished and so, being expelled out of the country is their 'sentence'. But, this observation appears to be ironic: being ousted to another world where people are, supposedly, more similar to our contemporary people, makes, for the modern reader, the 'familiar' to be the 'other'. What would be normal people in our world are the 'weirdoes' in *Brave New World*. This inversion of reality and contemporary ideals, where people that do not think for themselves and protest against injustices, is what makes these novels a satire in the fullest sense of the term.

4. The authoritarian system reflected on the 'disorienting' dystopian elements

'Disorientation' is also one of the main issues in these novels. *Brave New World*, *1984* and *Fahrenheit 451* are characterized by depicting authoritarian regimes in which the characters can do nothing but obey commands. In the case of *Brave New World*, citizens are created out of test tubes so it is rather rare to find an isolated case such as Bernard Marx. However, neither in *1984* nor *Fahrenheit 451*, do we see humans conditioned, altered genetically, or handicapped. Due to this idea, if it is true that finding heroes in *Brave New World* appears to be harder because of the genetic conditioning from birth, it should be more plausible to find a 'hero' or an anti-system figure that rebels against injustices in both *1984* and *Fahrenheit 451* since they are natural citizens and have been not altered.

However, not being conditioned or genetically altered does not seem to vary the problem in any way. Notwithstanding the nature of characters and their reactions against the encountered problems, we still find archaic and totalitarian forms of governance having dominion and control over the population. Again, being independent and capable of thinking is useless. There are various sorts of control:

In case of *1984*, this form of total 'control' is the major topic around which the novel revolves. Orwell depicts a regime that would be impossible to maintain in the real world but that, stretched to the limits of plausibility, works perfectly through the device of the Big Brother. Big Brother, an abstraction, is fundamental because there is no flesh and blood leader to rule. Concerning this, Posner affirms:

The Orwellian nightmare is unstable in a second sense as well. Neither Stalin nor Mao, the greatest practitioners of the kind of thought control depicted in Orwell's novel, was able to institutionalize the system of thought control, which disintegrated rapidly after their deaths. Their tyrannies were personal, while that depicted in Nineteen Eighty-Four is collective. Big Brother is not a living person, but a symbolic fabrication. The collective leaderships that succeeded Stalin and Mao in their respective nations were authoritarian, but they were unable to maintain the degree of control that Stalin and Mao had achieved and that Nineteen Eighty-Four parodies. (Posner, 2000: 18)

But, on the other hand and in reference to *Brave New World*, one finds a different type of command over people. The figure of "Ford" is somehow a totalitarian leader, but not as much as that of Big Brother in *1984* since in Huxley's novel, Ford seems to be merely referential. There is no evidence that this 'god' or referential figure physically exists, nor that he does something such as punishing or establishing limits. Rather, it is humans, and most precisely scientists and 'controllers' that are the creators and see to it that the law is obeyed. In consequence, Brian Smith theorizes:

In the first place, reading Huxley's text with an eye to political strategy might enable us to more accurately identify our current conceptions of freedom, which is a novel way to reevaluate how we have historicized the concrete details of our culture in which the understanding of freedom has emerged; but also, this may generate new insights that one could then use to articulate more cautious and precise inspiring narratives for the future. (Smith, 2011: 357)

This reflection leads us to reflect on the idea of stiflingly compelling and oppressive

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reality that the characters live under. As cruel and appalling as the world is in these stories, there must be something for characters to relax and disconnect from reality -although 'disconnect' may not be the most suitable word as it entails some kind of pleasure.

4.1. Drugs and Sex

When reading certain novels, one finds one, or even several, main topics, and then some briefer topics and symbols that help the plot to be not only plausible but also amusing. The importance of these symbols is incalculable as they are crucial in creating the hermitic world of the novel. Correspondingly, in these concrete dystopian novels, drugs and sex are essential and indispensable for the stories to make sense.

On the other hand, as far as sex is concerned, while in *1984* it represents a release once Winston meets Julia, in *Brave New World*, is regarded differently. Aldous Huxley's novel treats sex in a similar way to many people, that is, as an 'escape route' to fight routine. Moreover, sex has some components of adrenaline in *1984* since Julia and Winston have to look for places in order to give free rein to their passion and hide from the Party. So, sex then, like books, becomes an anti-establishment 'release', other view of the role of sex. Given its significant role, its survival is paramount and thus, sex has to be institutionalized.

Brave New World differentiates from *1984* in rather stark ways. Giving voice to this thought, Brian Smith avows:

The fact that we can imagine the existence of brave new worlds speaks to this point; what we call drug *abuse* and sexual *addiction* are not only accepted by brave new worlders, these are their cornerstones of social convention and political viability. Recall that Huxley claims 'the soma habit [the recreational drug of choice in *Brave New World*] was not a private vice; it was a political institution (Smith, 2011: 355)

As Smith explains, the inhabitants of the futuristic London not only accept the practice of taking drugs as a recreational but also as a political instrument. Successfully explained by Smith, sex addiction is nothing but the habit borne out of a practical necessity to 'escape' repression. Sex is not perceived as the act of love and emotional unity or link by two people but instead as something only physical to be done in order to achieve some sort of release.

Drugs fulfill a similar role. Anytime a character feels depressed, pressured, overwhelmed, or 'suffocated' by any sort of thoughts going through his/her mind, he/she takes a dose of *soma*, the drug of choice in *Brave New World's* drug, in order to escape:

Swallowing half an hour before closing time, that second dose of soma had raised a quite impenetrable wall between the actual universe and their minds. Bottled, they crossed the street; bottled, they took the lift up to Henry's room on the twenty-eighth floor. (2007: 19-22)

However, ironically drugs end up being as nothing more but another form of 'imprisonment' and self-restriction, just the same way telescreens are. The role of drugs is also related to that of chocolate in *1984*, though this sweet does not have such bad connotations. It isn't as pernicious -certainly not healthy- addiction. But curiously, chocolates in *1984* are measured in "grams" -the same way drugs are- and not in ounces or pieces. Thus, "chocolate" has obtained the status of a physical/chemical commodity to be measured accurately and scientifically and economically. It has become a banal substance to be consumed like a drug.

(...) the Ministry of Plenty had issued a promise (a "categorical pledge" were the official words) that there would be no reduction of the chocolate ration during 1984. Actually, as Winston was aware, the chocolate ration was to be reduced from thirty grammes to twenty at the end of the present week. (2008, 41- 42)

In all three novels the results of all of these oppressive measures through the use of instruments and devices in order to guarantee a correct functioning and its maintenance

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through many years in a futuristic scenario and setting is what creates a fictitious dystopia. And its most immediate effect is to make us reflect on the idea that co-exists between the state and the individual, which is in fact what this paper deals with.

Posing a final consideration, the party and Big Brother, Ford, the Controllers and the World State, Captain Beatty and the Firemen, and subsequently, Orwell, Huxley and Bradbury, create robotic, programmed, conditioned and inhumane societies where the characters are seen as only products. Society is trapped into an already fixed and established system that does not allow any ray of light and hope into a dark room. Feelings are not forgotten but even worse, unknown. And in the end, it is the lack and of emotions and feelings the idea that these dystopian novelists want to get across. That is, human are controlled and conditioned in a world of science where there is no room for feelings.

5. Conclusion

Even though we might think that this kind of future is something utopian and unrealistic, it is now human beings' moment to act and persist in order to let current reality continue its course. Staying home and not protesting the current situation we are living in is much more likely to produce these kinds of futuristic dystopian societies proactive. All three societies seemed to be plagued by a universal apathy and indolence and as such, people allow themselves to be oppressed. The message of these novels is that this kind of indifference - already present today- is a 'slippery slope' towards a future that none would countenance.

These novels are built on basis of science fiction. However, we must not remain in the surface but look into and understand that perhaps, this type of genre has other hidden, real and profound meanings too. The satire in which these novels are modeled tries to make the human understand what the earth could turn into, thus being a warning.

That is to say, a warning, a 'subliminal message' that is full of didactic messages. Do not let authorities, governments and the upper echelons do what they choose or want and then, humanity will never be lost or in the middle of a chaotic situation as in these novels.

In the end, this is the power of thinking, the power of the dystopian novel, and the power and reach of literature that this essay has dealt with. The three novels analyzed, as well as the quotes selected, demonstrate that literature can have an immeasurable power and influence over whole nations and their inhabitants. Living in a chaotic and dystopian world seems to be a choice rather than a natural circumstance. For this reason, reading is the key to escape ignorance and being controlled.

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