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Dystopian Government in Literature

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Abstract:

The authors of dystopian novels describe the future, where the government is the tyranny, which can do everything: vanish people, destroy facts and written records, transform the religion and transform the memory of population, pass the new laws, forget the olds. Dystopian government is a totalitarian government with limitless power and influence over people. It controls the people with the religion, force and drugs. Religion is some kind of socio-political institution that serves the government only, the only god in dystopian society is the leader of the country. The government uses different kind of suffer and drugs to persuade people that dystopian society is the perfect society to live in.

Keywords: government, totalitarian, tyranny, control, religion, drugs, screen, technology, dystopian, soma.

The term “Dystopia” is the Greek word “dis –topos” and means a very bad place to live in. so dystopian literature is the opposite of Utopian literature, which describes a very good place to live in. Dystopian literature is very popular today, as many critical essays and articles are written about this genre. Its popularity is due to the fact that the problems that depicts this genre are very close to the society we are living in: lack of freedom, overpopulation, government’s constant control, advanced technology and the lack of personal, real communication among people. Joseph Adams describes the dystopian society as the society that is controlled by the most repressive and totalitarian government:

„In a dystopian story, society itself is typically antagonist; it 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 par.1).

Dystopian literature is the prediction about the universe that is very close to us and we must not come it true. Dystopian government is the central theme is every dystopian novel, because the most dystopian novels were inspired by the government's activities.

Literary critic Erika Gottlieb defines the importance of politics in dystopian novels and highlights the role of government in creating the dystopian world. In fact, the government creates the dystopian world:

“Dystopia, whatever form it may take, is driven by a political engine. That is, the power of dystopia is that it takes real social problems and represents them pushed to an extreme as a tool to demonstrate the horror that would occur if current problems became writ large. It is a literary genre that examines oppression – that is: de-individuation, mind control, deprivation, lack of choice, lack of access to power, lack of access to resources, and so on (2).

Like other members of society, authors are involved in political situations, their literature more or less contains political elements. In many cases dystopian novels were the protest against the government, against wars and slavery, against mind controls. Olive Senior in her article “Literature is political because we are political animals”, says:

“We are all enmeshed in politics because we are all citizens of somewhere – even writers - and we cannot escape being shaped by political decisions, big and small. So instead of asking the question “should literature be political?” I would rephrase the statement: literature is political, because we, the creators of literature are political animals; it is part of accepting our responsibility of being human, of being citizens of the world” (par 7).

Political dystopia occurs when any type of political party, organization or ideology takes over. This also happens when an extreme religious organization controls the country. Political dystopia shows that in the future government will control every part of person's life. Heads of the government are “god-figures”, they have the mask of religion to control the country to control the thoughts of people. This tyranny copes with everything very effectively. That is why dystopian government is always totalitarian government. Totalitarian government in dystopia

works with many different units. In George Orwell's "1984", we have different ministries that solve different problems:

„Their names in Newspeak: Minitrue, Minipax, Miniluv, Miniplenty”(15)

Government works like this: happens this, but we must believe that. People vanish, written records are destroyed, facts are ignored from the memory, but we must believe:

“War is peace

Freedom is slavery

Ignorance is strength” (15)

The government works very quietly, an outsider cannot see anything strange at the first look. Everyone is happy; the government looks like the preacher, who is very helpful and preaches about what is good and what is bad. He preaches about the kind affairs that the government does and that's why everyone must adore it. He tries not to show any violence in public. So the government does every arrestment and punishment at night. They do not want to have the image of tyranny. They want to look like “the god-figures”:

„It was always at night – the arrests invariably happened at night. The sudden jerk out of sleep. The rough hand is shaking your shoulder, the lights glaring in your eyes, the ring of hard faces round the bed. In the vast majority of cases, there was no trial, no report of the arrest. People simply disappeared, always during the night. Your name was removed from the registers, every record of everything you had ever done was wiped out, your one – time existence was denied and then forgotten, you were abolished, annihilated: Vaporized was the usual word.” (32)

Dystopian government gains the perfect control with several mechanisms. One of the most effective mechanisms is religion, as the power in the hands of government. This religion is transformed and changed as it is suitable for the government. In “Handmaid's Tale” Margaret Atwood talks about the government which is extremely religious and which uses religious rituals, prayers and even the Bible to control the population, even the titles are from the Bible: Handmaids, Aunts, Marthas, Galaad, Bilhah, “Lilies of the field”, “Milk and honey” “all flesh”

and so on. The Government uses the Biblical admonitions to make the handmaids believe that they are pure vessels and they are blessed:

„And so on and so forth. We had it read to us every breakfast. Blessed be this, blessed be that. They played it from a tape, so not even an Aunt would be guilty of the sin of reading. The voice of a man’s. Blessed be the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed be the merciful. Blessed be the meek. Blessed are the silent. Blessed be those that mourn, for they shall be comforted” (28)

Biblical admonition “Woman shall be saved in childbearing” in “Handmaid’s Tale” is transformed like this: „woman shall be saved by childbearing”. When the government sees the danger in any prayer or admonition, they change it immediately. Dystopian society believes that they obey not the government, but the god, they do not realize that this is fit for the government, this powerful tool is so flexible that the population look like fanatics, they can kill somebody, they can commit suicide for this false religion, only small amount of people, protagonists, feel that something is wrong about this religion. In “Fahrenheit 451” Faber is the protagonist who knows that the government is a liar and they have changed many things:

„It’s been a long time. I’m not a religious man. But it’s been a long time. Faber turned the pages. It’s as good as I remember. Lord, how they have changed it – in our “parlours” these days. Christ is one of the “family” now. I often wonder if God recognizes his own son the way we’ve dressed him up, or is it dressed from down?” (37)

In “Handmaid’s Tale” true religion is kept and now one can see it, people are even banned to read The Bible and some characters identify this device:

„The commander’s Bible is kept locked up, the way people once kept tea locked up, so the servants wouldn’t steal it. It is an incendiary device” (89)

Another mechanism to control the people for dystopian government is drugs. In “Brave New World” Aldous Huxley talks about Soma that is an ideal medicine if you want to feel always happy, if you want to forget everything and if you want to die young. In the book we see the society, studded with Soma, they cannot think about anything, cannot judge anything. This is the perfect society for the dystopian government, as they are very easy to control:

“The president made another sign of the T and sat down. The service had begun. The dedicated soma tablets were placed in the center of the table. The loving cup of strawberry ice-cream soma was passed from hand to hand and, with the formula, “I drink to my annihilation” twelve times quaffed. Then to the accompaniment of the synthetic orchestra, The First Solidarity Hymn was sung.

“Ford, we are twelve; oh make us one,

Like drops within the Social River,

Oh, make us now together run,

As swiftly, as thy shinning flivver.” (47)

In “Brave New World” we also see a very interesting method to make people identical to one another. This is “Hypnopedia” – teaching is sleeping. As the human’s mind is a clear board, they write on them what they want, from their birth. Babies hear the same sounds, the same music, and the same ideas every day. Their mind is full of this information, you can’t add anything, you can’t change anything, they are the same – one. We see the government as a very big laboratory, where they create humans, but not individuals. The government seeds stability without individuality. They know that stability is achieved when people think and look identically. They know that stability means robots and not individuals, and they have done this – they have a lot of identical robots in brave new world. This is the new world where the government controls the people’s emotions. This is the world where the government is creating numerous identical twins from the same ovule. This is very simple and fast:

“Eight minutes of hard X-rays being as much as an egg can stand. A few died; of the rest, the least susceptible divided into two; most put out four buds; some eight; all were returned to the incubators, where the buds began to develop; then, after two days, were suddenly chilled, chilled and checked. Two, four, eight, the buds in their turn budded; and having budded were dosed almost to death with alcohol; consequently burgeoned again and having budded-bud out of bud out of bud – were thereafter- further arrest being generally fatal-left to develop in peace. By which time the original egg was in a fair way to becoming anything from eight to ninety-six embryos – a prodigious improvement, you will agree, on nature.”(18).

The authors of dystopian novels predict that this will be the uncured disease for the future world. They say that people all over the world will be infected with this disease and it will be the most powerful weapon for the government to control people. We cannot escape from this fact – it is a very advanced technology. In most dystopian novels we see that technology is gradually changing people. They can do everything. They can teach, they can reproduce people, they can make food and the most important they can control people. There are screens and microphones everywhere in dystopian universe. They are the best spies. People live in the houses with screens instead of walls and they are addicted to these screens. Government controls everything with this technology. In “1984” there are hidden screens everywhere, there are screens in every house, and they control every movement of people, even every unusual thought. Government knows everything. In “Brave New World” screens cover the houses. Montag’s wife is so addicted to this technology, that she is not logical any more, she is surrounded by enormous screens in the house with small microphones in her ears, she can’t think and speak about other things, and she is spellbound with the same synthetic music and the ocean noises. Montag cannot communicate with her. She is not a sociable person any more:

„Without turning on the light he imagined how this room would like. His wife stretched on the bed, uncovered and cold, like a body displayed on the lid of a tomb, her eyes fixed to the ceiling by invisible threads of steel, immovable. And in her ears the little Seashells, the thimble radios tamped tight, and an electronic ocean of sound, of music and talk and music and talk coming in, coming in on the shore of her unsleeping mind. The room was indeed empty. Every night waves came in and bore her off on their great tides of sound, floating her, wide – eyed, toward morning. There had been no night in the last two years that Mildred had not swum that sea, had not gladly gone down in it for the third time.”(10)

People are afraid of hidden screens and microphones in dystopian universe. They don’t trust to one another. They feel that someone is watching them all the time, Big Brother is watching them, but Big Brother has the eyes of the Christ, so he must be very kind. Government must be very kind, they must believe this.

In Dystopian novels government uses of course other means to succeed like many kind of punishment, imprisonment, suffer and spy institute, but these mentioned mental methods are the most successful, because with this methods government does not need too much effort to control

people, they are just the same, they don't need to check, because mental control means – control of individuality.

Conclusion

Dystopian government is the totalitarian government that works very tellingly. They make the society as a very automatic system to operate. Among many ways, the most useful for them is the religion, as the power, as a very painless method to control, because they say that they don't want this – the God wants this. Drugs and technology are the second powerful weapon, because they make people addicted, like robots, with the same thoughts, with the same opinions, even with the same appearance. By these mechanisms, they make the illusion of perfect happiness, stability, equality and solidarity. In fact, reality is the opposite. Dystopian authors predict, that in the future there will be no individuality, no religion, no equality and solidarity.

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