
REVISITING THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY ENGLISH DYSTOPIAN NOVEL

Mamadou Seydou KANE

Université Gaston Berger of Saint-Louis, Sénégal, Faculty of Arts & Humanities, Department of English
Email: emeskane@gmail.com

Maurice GNING

Université Gaston Berger, of Saint-Louis, Sénégal, Faculty of Arts & Humanities, Department of English
Email : maurice.gning@ugb.edu.sn

<https://doi.org/10.59009/ijlllc.2025.0099>

ABSTRACT

Dystopian literature occupies a central place in the English literary landscape of the 20th century. This article examines this novelistic genre in order to identify its major features, specific orientation and various nuances. It is based on a corpus of 4 novels: *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by George Orwell, *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley, *A Clockwork Orange* by Anthony Burgess and *Fahrenheit 451* by the American writer Ray Bradbury. An examination of these novels, a fairly representative sample of 20th century English and Western dystopian literature, leads to the following two broad conclusions: There are a few differences in the focus of the main themes, which depend very much on the prevailing concerns of certain periods of the twentieth century and on the specific experiences of the authors. Despite these differences, the nature of dystopian fiction hasn't changed. The same themes can be found in all four dystopian novels, albeit with varying degrees of intensity.

Keywords: Dystopia, Totalitarianism, Control, Humanity, Satire.

1. INTRODUCTION

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a dystopia is "an imaginary place or condition in which everything is as bad as possible." On the basis of this definition, we can say that dystopian literature refers to works of fiction that describe a bleak future in which mankind's hope for a better life melt away, with a touch of irony. Also known as anticipation literature or science fiction, Dystopias somehow inherit their anticipatory nature from H. G. Wells's novels, namely *The Island of Dr Moreau* (1896), *The War of the Worlds* (1898) and *The Shape of Things to Come* (1933). It occupies an important place in the English literary landscape of the 20th century, particularly in the novel. The most outstanding dystopian English novelists of this period include writers such as Aldous Huxley, Sir Noël Peirce Coward, Anthony Burgess, Evelyn Waugh, and George Orwell, to name but a few.

What these writers have in common is a sense of disappointment. They are disappointed by the many promises of a better world. These promises are fueled in particular by the scientific and technological development of the modern era. With the bitterness inherent in the feeling of disenchantment, the dystopian novelists cast a critical eye over old ideals by picturing a frighteningly negative future. Therefore, the dystopian fiction is a harsh criticism of naive utopian ideals which are found dangerous for humanity, considering the corruptive nature of power. The latter is a reality which has been constantly illustrated by, and confirmed through history. The appropriation of ideologies for unconfessed purposes and its tragic outcomes,

namely the world wars, is one of the most convincing proofs of this trait of power and of the questionable capacity of man to act for the sake of his fellow men's welfare.

Dystopian literature encompasses a wide range of issues such as the threat of totalitarianism, the demographic risks that the world might incur, the danger that scientific progress might represent in the hands of oppressors, etc. This explains the rich variety of themes which can be found in this genre, despite an obvious common ground.

The aim of this work is to revisit the main features of the twentieth-century English dystopian novel by examining their themes, nature and orientation. The sampling of a few dystopian novels by separate writers and at different periods of the twentieth century is worthwhile since it allows the study of this variety within the same genre. Consequently, the choice of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty Four* (1949), Ray Bradbury¹'s *Fahrenheit 451* (1953) and Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange* (1962) seems to suit the purpose.

Brave New World pictures a futurist world managed by a scientific and totalitarian government which is in charge of every individual's absolute material comfort which stands for happiness by means of conditioning and drugs. As to *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, it reproduces, with a rare acuteness, the nightmare of totalitarianism and might be viewed as an exorcism of World War II and of the success of Stalinism. In it, a totalitarian state is shown as having reached perfection by crushing every aspect of individual freedom under the mythic image of Big Brother, and by virtue of Ingsoc (English Socialism), the faked socialism which works as the official ideology. *Fahrenheit 451* is about an equally strange, book-burning society in which firemen, aided by a Mechanical Hound, are in charge of tracking down the very few book-reading offenders and of setting fire to their houses. *A Clockwork Orange* describes a modern world as ruled by young delinquents whose violence suits the questionable purposes of a dictatorial government.

The combination of the four novels mentioned above is of a particular interest in that it provides an overview of the dystopian fiction in the twentieth century. Besides, it allows us to deal with such various issues as the misuse of ideologies as tools for specific purposes, individual freedom, the place of knowledge in modern societies, etc.

These issues have been the source of endless debates in the twentieth century and are still conspicuous, considering the numerous challenges and crises that individuals, nations and states are facing and will certainly continue to face in the future.

Therefore, the study of the contemporary English dystopian novel unmistakably raises the debate on these issues. Our chief concern will be to examine the recurrent issues which are dealt with in this genre, with a particular focus on their satirical dimension. Accordingly, the outline of our study will hinge on two main points. The first examines the trap of ideologies, the second deals with how science and technology have been turned into a major stake in contemporary societies.

2. PERVERTED REVOLUTIONS: THE TRAP OF IDEOLOGIES

One of the main characteristics of science fiction is satire. Novelists of this kind of fiction use it essentially for a reason that Sutherland explains as follows:

it is /.../ the mark of the satirist that he cannot accept and refuses to tolerate.
Confronted with the same human shortcomings as the writer of comedy (and

¹ Ray Bradbury is not English. He is an American writer and therefore should not, theoretically, be included in this study, as indicates the title. However, his *Fahrenheit 451* is a benchmark novel in contemporary science fiction, and we thought it would be useful to refer to it to better illustrate the features of this genre.

with others more serious) he is driven to protest. For him those are not matters for pure contemplation; they must be exposed, held up to derision or made to look as hideous as he believes them to be (4).

The writers of dystopian literature cast an amused and sombre eye on the pretensions of modern man, his dashed hopes for a better world. Above all, they highlight the way in which politicians have perverted the ideals of democracy and progress, turning their dreams into nightmares. A fairy tale, *Animal Farm* (1945), is the most convenient way George Orwell found to satirize the way political leaders turned pure and humanist ideologies into means of securing their own power and privileges. "All animals are equal", says the last of the seven commandments that the animals have set as the principles of Animalism after they have overturned the dictatorship of Mr. Jones, their master and farm's owner. The later rewriting of this commandment, together with the six others, into 'All animals are equal but some are more equal than others' sums up the whole tragedy of contemporary perverted ideologies.

"The dictatorship of the proletariat", Orwell said, 'had to mean the dictatorship of a handful of intellectuals, ruling through terrorism (quoted in Steinhoff 60). Actually, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union discarded much of Marx's teachings to secure its dominant position in the State. The wish to destroy the old equalitarian version of Socialism might be suspected to have been there from the start and to have been kept secret.

In *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as well as in *Brave New World* - its brilliant predecessor of the early 1930s -, *Fahrenheit 451* and *A Clockwork Orange* the setting is a society where a large part of governments' domination is ideological.

The official ideology in Oceania is Ingsoc, meaning English Socialism (in "Newspeak", the sanitised language that the Party has created as a substitute for traditional English with its uncomfortable associations and undesirable connotations). The political regime which the novel presents is a continuum of the corrupted socialism of *Animal Farm*. Oceania, one of the three superstates which compose the world (the two others being Eurasia and Eastasia), is ruled by the oligarchical Party. The latter is embodied by the mythic and omnipresent image of Big Brother. A conspicuous issue in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is the way the subjects' thought and emotions are controlled. They are induced to practice "reality control", a wilful schizophrenia which consists in the ability of the mind to coherently and simultaneously holding contradictory beliefs. The "Newspeak" word for this psychological device is Doublethink, which Emmanuel Goldstein, the Trotsky-like official scapegoat of Oceania, explains as follows:

Doublethink means the power of holding two contradictory beliefs in one's mind simultaneously, and accepting both of them. [...] To tell deliberate lies while genuinely believing in them, to forget any fact that has become inconvenient, and then, when it becomes necessary again, to draw it back from oblivion for just so long as it is needed, to deny the existence of objective reality and all the while to take account of the reality which one denies – all this is indispensably necessary (223).

The reader is provided with an instance of the efficiency of such a mental process when the novel opens and Winston Smith, the main character and Orwell's doomed hero, sits and sets to writing his diary, a death-entailing crime in Oceania: "his mind hovered for a moment round the doubtful date of the page, and then fetched up with a bump against the Newspeak word Doublethink. For the first time the magnitude of what he had undertaken came to him" (9).

"The novel", Ben Pimlott rightly points, "works for us in the same way that Emmanuel Goldstein's heretical book, analysing and attacking the political system, works for Winston" (viii). The novel unmasks the totalitarian ideas and practices and does so in a coherent way that

impresses and helps contemporary man. The latter is overwhelmed by deceiving and alienating arguments which make it impossible for him to consistently put any order in his thoughts.

Nineteen Eighty Four's account of 'a system based on ideological and psychological manipulation, as Pimlott describes it, is as pervasive as Goldstein's venomous strikes against the Party. The latter also, of course, contrives to show him as the primal traitor, the earliest defiler of [its] purity' (14):

Winston's diaphragm was constricted. /.../[Goldstein's face] resembled the face of a sheep, and the voice, too, had a sheeplike quality. Goldstein was delivering his usual venomous attack upon the doctrines of the Party /.../ He was abusing Big Brother, he was denouncing the dictatorship of the Party, he was demanding immediate conclusion of peace with Eurasia, he was advocating freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, freedom of thought, he was Crying hysterically that the revolution had been betrayed... (14).

Actually, the claims of Goldstein are the tenets of Socialism. Yet, not only does the Party discard this, but it uses Socialism to reject it more efficiently ('Freedom is slavery' is one of the slogans of the Party): Ingsoc, the ideology of the Party, is a perversion of English Socialism, and is perceived in Oceania as the Newspeak synonym of the latter in "Oldspeak" (Standard English). So, Socialism and its warped alter ego are shown as the same ideology with two names. Thanks to doublethink, the Party infringes every socialist principle in the very name of Socialism.

A similar image is found in Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* in which the task of firemen is to set fire on books and houses. *Fahrenheit 451*, like the other three novels, pictures a technocratic social order which is maintained through regimentation, yet with a difference in terms of focus. The novel does not portray ruling elites and dictators as *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Brave New World* do, but rather stresses the different means of ideological domination and oppression in the light of Guy Montag's life, the personal experience of a virtuous working-middle-class hero. Montag lives in a society of the twenty fourth century where the citizens' perception of their history has been tragically altered by means of entertainment and governmental propaganda. In this society, a book-rule claims that books have always been burnt and Montag is unaware of everything up to the fact that once in the past, firemen like him used to prevent fire instead of burning houses and books. The lack of interest in literature, in books in general, is a dominant trait of this society, as explains captain Beatty, the chief fireman: "it didn't come from the government down. There was no dictum, no declaration, no censorship, to start with, no! Technology, mass exploitation and minority pressure carried out the trick, thank God" (65). The claim laid on the materialistic, futile happiness through heedless and relentless entertainment is the very source of the book-burning spirit. "The fact is we didn't get along well until photography came into its own. Then - motion pictures in the early twentieth century. Radio. Television. Things began to have mass ... And because they had mass, they became simpler', points Beatty" (61). The point of the government, very similar to that of the World State in *Brave New World*, is that without ideas, everyone conforms and leaves no room for dissatisfaction, unhappiness and social disorder. The use of parlour walls has discarded the need of casual conversation and epitomizes the control of the masses through the media. The deep estrangement which exists between Montag and his wife, and their awkward attempts at making their point clear to one-another, are perfect illustrations of the pervasive nature of ideological suggestions:

'Will you bring me aspirin and water?'

'You've got to get up',

' she said'. 'It's noon. You've slept five hours later than usual.'

'Will you turn the parlour off?' he asked.

'That's my family'.

'Will you turn it off for a sick man?'

'I'll turn it down'

She went out of the room and did nothing to the parlour and came back. 'Is that better?'

'Thanks' (56).

This discursive discomfort is suggestive of the clumsy efforts of Beckett's characters in their vague dialogues. *Waiting For Godot* (1953) and *Endgame* (1957) are full of similar passages which are characteristic of the Theatre of the Absurd. Montag and his wife talk to each other, but talk about different things. Subsequently, the reader is filled with the sense of disconnectedness which the dialogue conveys, and which results from the clash between the husband's tortured conscience and moral concerns, and the wife's materialistic addiction to the shallow entertainment.

The glittering and attractive world which *Brave New World* deals with is actually not less hellish than Orwell's and Bradbury's dystopias. Yet the disguise is perfect: material comfort, drug addiction and conditioning combine to produce an illusion of happiness. Huxley's world is an artificial society based on biological engineering and psychological manipulation, six centuries in times to come, in a future London.

Perfection, in the *Brave New World*, holds in three key elements: Community, Identity, Stability (xix). These are the motto of the "World State", the political system of the dystopia. Actually, most of the ideological subtleties which are encountered in dystopias are not necessary in the World State. Conditioning provides individuals with a full-time table which leaves no room for critical thought. And any circumstance which is likely to induce the latter is deeply interwoven in the minds of the individuals with the sleep taught proverbs and prejudices working as rules of conduct. The similarity with the complex Orwellian phenomenon of Crimestop is obvious.

The emphasis of *Brave New World* is less laid on the atmosphere of moral laxity of the 1930s - itself largely a consequence of World War I - which encouraged the rise of totalitarian ideologies, than on their success. The latter is conspicuous in the novel and works as a warning, the possible consequence of the heedless attitude of this period. Yet, more noticeable seems to be the criticism of economism whose tenants advocated a more exhaustive organisation of the productive system after the Economic Crisis. Their viewpoint was perceived by Huxley as a way of prioritizing economic organisation as an end, rather than a means of a better social order. To this extent, the adaptation of standardization to biology in *Brave New World* informs on his concern with the possible outcomes of this economist vision. The rejection of the essential components of humanity for the sake of economic stability is a conspicuous issue in *Brave New World*, and bears a particular satirical dimension in the light of Huxley's assertion that

The first question to be asked and answered in every contingency of life is: 'how will this thought or action contribute to, or interfere with, the achievement, by me and the greatest passible number of other individuals, of man's Final End? (xix)

Yet, in *Brave New World*, the means are turned into the final ends. The Fordian assembly line is applied to biological engineering for the production of identical human beings who, in addition, are psychologically conditioned.

The Brave New World is therefore a society with interchangeable human beings in which the existence of the individual is only justified by his role in the huge productive machine. This organisation in its turn guaranties the stability which gives to the dystopia its appearance of perfection. In the World State thus, the final end is relentless production and mass consumption, and the individuals of the different castes are the means of reaching such a purpose: 'they're the gyroscope that stabilizes the rocket plane of state on its unswerving course', says Mustapha Mond, one of the ten World Controllers. These are administrators at the top of the hierarchy and are scattered in ten areas of the World State.

The presence of conflicting visions about political and social issues is a common pattern in dystopian literature. Anthony Burgess's works bear the stamp of the various moral influences which have shaped the author's vision. *A Clockwork Orange* shows an unsuspected depth in the light of this philosophy. Burgess's belief in the Original Sin survived his divorce with Catholicism, and is essential in his theory of the opposites which he partly drew from Manicheism. God and the Devil, Manicheans say, are equally powerful and in constant struggle. The opposition between Pelagius's optimism and Augustine's pessimism as to the potential of man is also consistent with Burgess's themes and concerns. Whereas Augustine sustains that man is bound to evil by the Original sin and can only be saved by Divine Grace, Pelagius rejects any determinism and advocates the individual's total freedom of choice. Besides, he stresses the natural bias of man toward acting for the common good, hence he is perfectible. Yet Burgess's half-hearted stance between these fundamental clashes makes of his vision a rich and well balanced synthesis: the notion of "duoverse". The latter consists in a cyclical struggle for reconciling the constant and inevitable contradictions in man. Burgess's duoverse involves the Original Sin as well as man's ability to cope with it and find his way to salvation and happiness, across Manichean dead ends.

Nonetheless, the ideological clash, on the political scene, between tenants of Augustinian Conservatism and Pelagian Liberalism is cuter, each group striving to impose its vision. Consequently, a particular importance is bestowed on such means of ideological domination as the "worldcasts" (wide-reaching television networks) and the press. These essentially serve to manipulate consciences, that is to interfere with people's thoughts, perception, beliefs, language, desires and so on. The ideological manipulation is destined for purposes which vary depending on whether the conservatives or the liberals are in power. The reader is provided with an instance of this difference through the way each of them deals with teen violence, the main plot of the novel. As Alex and his "droogs" (mates) run the streets at night torturing, robbing, raping and killing, the measures that the Liberal government takes reveal a laxity and optimism which are consistent with its tenets: the worst he undergoes is imprisonment. However, things change as soon as Conservatives avail themselves of a climax in social turmoil to seize the reins of power and take radical measures on such delinquents as Alex, namely the Ludovico's Technique, an experiment of behavioural conditioning:

He [the Conservative Minister of Interior] just sort of looked right through us poor plennies, saying, in a very beautiful real educated goloss: 'the

Government cannot be concerned any longer with outmoded penological theories. Cram criminals together and see what happens. You get concentrated criminality, crime in the midst of punishment. Soon we may be needing all our prison space for political offenders'. (73)

In all the dystopias therefore, ideologies and political ideals eventually turn out to be traps either because of the corruptive nature of power or because of unconfessed purposes from the start. In both cases the ruling entities of these societies of the future have at their disposal various tools and devices which make the task of manipulating consciences easier, and endanger the integrity of the individual.

3. SCIENCE AND POWER: KNOWLEDGE AT STAKE

The threat of contemporary societies, for man, arises to a large extent from the alienating powers of technology. The latter is all the more dangerous as it serves the different purposes of the ruling entities as portrayed in the dystopias.

Leisure, one of the most attractive aspects of the contemporary technological world, is targeted in *Brave New World* as one of the supreme dangers. It is used by the managers of the World State as the motive power of excess consumption:

We condition the masses to hate the country,' concluded the Director. 'But simultaneously we condition them to love all country sports. At the same time, we see to it that all country sports shall entail the use of elaborate apparatus. So that they consume manufactured articles as well as transport...'
(17).

But also, technology serves the different purposes of ideological manipulation of the Brave New World. These span from the eugenic manipulations to psychological conditioning and permit the establishment of a stable caste system as well as the genetic continuity between the generations of each class (Erre 24). The society is divided into five main categories of individuals, each with further subdivisions. These castes are designated by the first five letters of the Greek alphabet and span respectively from the Alphas at the top of the scale to the Epsilons at the bottom of the hierarchy through Betas, Gammas and Deltas. The individuals within these castes undergo a specific conditioning which corresponds to the needs of the social role for which they are destined.

Huxley, like Bradbury in *Fahrenheit 451*, stresses the culturally soporific powers of a technological society, imagines the use of chemical sedatives and tranquilizers as traps for palliating moral dissatisfaction and making up for the individual's alienation. This is the case of soma in *Brave New World*. Called the essence of happiness, soma is a euphoria-inducing drug which dissipates any feeling of anxiety or anger. The awareness of the outcomes of such inventions is central in Huxley's thought. In a letter he wrote to his father in August 1931, he evokes "the devising of some harmless but effective substitute for alcohol, cocaine, opium, etc.!" (*Brave New World* vii). Technology therefore contributes in many ways to providing the illusion of a bearable reality, which is essential to the perpetuation of dystopias.

In *Fahrenheit 451*, all the people's sense of the past is obliterated by the intrusion of technology in their lives. The individuals do not understand the importance of the past in their lives because the characters of the wall parlours give them the possibility to create substitutes for the past and the present through the story lines of the programmes. Mildred, Montag's wife, is one of the most representative of the ideological manipulation of the individual by the State. Throughout the novel she is portrayed as living only through the exchange with the characters of the TV parlour: "the parlour was dead and Mildred kept peering at it with a blank expression as Montag paced the floor and came back and squatted down to read a page as many as ten

times, aloud” (79). As Beatty asserts, the censorship performed by firemen is mere spectacle. Actually, the small Seashell radios (tiny wireless sets) and the TV parlours, which people feel life-giving, rob them of the essential parts of their lives by overwhelming them with sound and colours: " "now," said Mildred, "my "family" is people. They tell me things; I laugh, they laugh! And the colours!" (80). This addiction is insignificant, compared to her dependence on tranquilizers, the overdose on which is telltale of the dangerous social climate.

The infallibility that the Party conveys in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* arises essentially from its discourse thanks to the huge daily enterprise of forgery which technology allows. Orwell's perception of the dangers which would certainly spring from the use of the media at the service of the totalitarian regimes' need for efficiency and infallibility is acute through his work. His experience in the Spanish Civil War contributed to a large extent to shaping his cautious attitude toward the political regimes and their use of technology to interfere with history and information. He explains in "The Prevention of Literature" that "since no one is infallible, it is frequently necessary to rearrange past events in order to show that this or that mistake was not made, or that imaginary triumph actually happened" (Orwell 86). This issue is one of the most conspicuous ones in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and it doesn't seem to be a chance that Winston Smith, Orwell's controversial hero is "a routine falsifier of records" at the Ministry of Truth (meaning of lies). One of the most impressive illustrations of the technological power of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes is the telescreen, a double-edged tool which the party uses for the ideological purposes of propaganda as well as for the constant spying that the terrorist thought Police performs on individuals:

The telescreen received and transmitted simultaneously. Any sound that Winston made above the level of the very low whisper, would be picked up by it; moreover, so long as he remained within the field of vision which the metal plaque commanded, he could be seen as well as heard. There was of course no way of knowing whether you were being watched at any given moment (4-5).

Similarly, Bradbury in *Fahrenheit 451* imagines a Mechanical Hound, a device of terror, the refined technological version of the trained killer dog which, set on the alleged criminals' biological code, inexorably tracks them down and captures them by stunning them with a tranquilizer. It is, in captain Beatty's words, 'fine bit of craftsmanship, a good rifle that can fetch its own target and guarantees the bull's eye every time' (35).

Anthony Burgess, like the others, managed to stress an important point concerning contemporary societies and technology. It clearly appears in *A Clockwork Orange* that the evils which spring from the media are not inherent in the "world casts" - whose description is a brilliant anticipation on the present (Camara 2004) - but rather resides in the conflicting interests at work through the programs that are proposed to the masses. The image is that of addiction and perfectly restores the ideologically pervasive nature of mass media.

Various devices and practices are used to give an appearance of sense to the purposelessness of life in Dystopia. In *Brave New World* it is essentially achieved by means of hypnopaedia, in addition to soma. The latter consists of the use of sleep-taught prejudices and rules of conduct. The World State whispers into the ears of its subjects at the vulnerable time during sleep to fix loyalty to the system or aversion for what it represses in their minds. "The more stitches, the less riches" for instance is a sleep-taught proverb which prompts people to the enjoyment of consumption which is the basic principle on which the stability of the world state rests.

A similar role is played in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by the manipulation of language through the progressive narrowing of meaning to the point of turning Standard English

(Oldspeak) into a mechanical stripped of all conscious process and "dangerous" connotations. Newspeak is aimed at eradicating the thought process that is at the core of human linguistic performance, and is triggered off by the latter. Syme, a philologist, Winston's colleague who works in the Records Department on a Newspeak Dictionary, explains:

"Don't you see that the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought? In the end we shall make thought crime literally impossible, because there will be no words in which to express it I.../ Every year fewer and fewer words, and the range of consciousness always a little smaller. I... / The revolution will be complete when the language is perfect. Newspeak is Ingsoc and Ingsoc is Newspeak", he added with a sort of mystical satisfaction (55).

The evolution of Newspeak is a recession, as the American philosopher John B. Searle would say, from an "institutional level" to a "brute level", through a progressive limitation of perception. Newspeak makes possible Doublethink the induced schizophrenia that breeds blind faith in the sayings of the party.

In any of the four novels, censorship is performed at various levels, either through biological/psychological conditioning (propaganda) or through terror, or else through both methods. Knowledge is viewed as a source of instability and a threat to the questionable interests of ruling entities. In the society of *Fahrenheit 451*, the point of the state is that without ideas, everyone conforms, and should be consequently happy. When books and new ideas are put at people's disposal, they infallibly breed conflict and unhappiness. Captain Beatty, the fire chief and apologist of the dystopia puts it this way: "A book as a loaded gun in the house next door. Burn it. Take the shut from the weapon. Breach man's mind. Who knows who might be the target of the well-read man?" (65).

A Clockwork Orange, according to Blake Morrison, is a novel which takes brainwashing as its subject. Brainwashing actually is aimed at reconciling the contradictions between the ideological claims of governments and their concealed ambitions. "Political language", explains George Orwell, "and with variations this is true of all political parties, from Conservatives to Anarchists - is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder responsible and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind" (2270). Hence the paradox of the Ludovico's technique which is named after Beethoven and suggests a beneficial cure by means of awakening the subject to the virtues of music. Actually, the reforming method kills Alex's taste for Beethoven together with his criminal instincts in the end. The true objective of the conservative government was in reality to safeguard its privileges by discarding a threat rather than to beneficially restore a potentially useful element to the society.

"Orwell", Ben Pimlott points, "reminds us how shaky is our hold on objective knowledge, and how uncertain our grip on the past [...] Oceania's unceasing war on memory, in which every shred of evidence that conflicts with the latest official line is systematically destroyed and a false trait is laid in its place, is one of the novel's most ingenious and terrifying devices". (xii). Accurate history and linguistic purity are then the chief targets of dystopian rulers, the alleged inheritors of the twentieth century. Newspeak reflects trends which could already be observed in Orwell's times:

Even in the early decades of the twentieth century, telescoped words and phrases had been one of the characteristic features of political language; and it had been noticed that the tendency to use abbreviations of this kind was most marked in totalitarian countries and totalitarian organisations.

Examples were such words as Nazi, Gestapo, Comintern, Inprecor, Agitprop (Appendix, 320).

This serves as a good illustration of the ideological indoctrinations to which the individual of the modern times is exposed. The misrepresentation of ideals and of such notions as perfection and happiness, which illustrates the tragic ideological cant of the contemporary times, is a significant issue in dystopias. These compel the reader's watchfulness through a restorative distortion.

4. CONCLUSION

Political commitment and moral concern are at the heart of dystopian literature. The satirical distortion of utopian premises is a convenient and efficient way to denounce the excesses of a drifting world. After all, Shaw once wrote that "the salvation of the world depends on the men who will not take evil good-humouredly, and whose laughter destroys the fool instead of encouraging him" (quoted in Sutherland 4).

Despite the differences in focus on the main issues, which vary depending on the prevailing concerns of particular periods of the twentieth century and on the specific experiences of the authors, it clearly appears that there hasn't been any change in the nature of dystopian fiction. The same themes are found in all four dystopian novels with varying intensity.

Huxley's dystopian world is made plausible by the proved possibility to achieve, through scientific progress, a "civilised" totalitarianism free from terror, but equally tremendous in terms of freedom and more alienating for humanity.

The conviction of the corruptive nature of power is at the heart of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The oppressive atmosphere of the novel and its continuous message remains the individual that he is not under shelter from the selfishness and greed for power which are inherent in human nature, and which guides the practices of political rulers, the guardians of his happiness. It is undeniably significant that of the many words and concepts which are now commonly used, most, for instance "Big Brother", "Doublethink" or else recent and controversial "Fahrenheit 9/11", relate to the deceiving power and ambitions of governments. Anthony Burgess's point in *A Clockwork Orange* is, as the prison chaplain claims, that choice is the essence of humanity. Man's power as an individual and even the awareness of his own existence, necessitates free-will, the possibility of choice, no matter what the outcome. Alex, the heroic hoodlum of the novel, perfectly illustrates the radicalism of this standpoint.

Fahrenheit 451 is explicit in its warnings and moral lessons. It makes plain that Bradbury views social organisation as something which might become easily oppressive, unless some of the threatening tendencies of the modern world are controlled. The threat, it seems, takes shape in the questionable policies of the states but also in the individual's lack of watchfulness with regard to an alienating environment. The latter equally alters his freedom of imagination which is an essential component of individual freedom.

REFERENCES

- Beckett, Samuel. *Waiting for Godot*. Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1952.
..... *Endgame*. Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1957.
- Bradbury, Ray. *Fahrenheit 451*. London: Harper Collins Publishers, 2004.
- Camara, Mamadou. "La dystopie anglaise et les grands défis politiques et moraux de notre temps : *L'orange mécanique* d'Anthony Burgess ». *Groupe d'Etude Langues et Littératures*, Université Gaston Berger de Saint-Louis, N°8, Janvier, 2004, 121-146.
- Burgess, Anthony. *A Clockwork Orange*. Harmondsworth: Longman, 1991.
- Erre, Michel. Profil d'une œuvre : *Le meilleur des mondes, Huxley*. Paris : Hatier, 1986.
- Huxley, George. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. London: Longman, 1991.
- Orwel, George. *Animal Farm*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1954.
..... *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Classics, 2000.
..... "The Prevention of Literature". *The Collected Essays. Letters and Journalism of Orwell, vol IV: (In Front of your Nose 1945-1950)* (ed. Sonia Orwell & Ian Angus). Penguin, 1968.
..... "Politics and the English Language". *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* (Ed. Stephen Greenblatt, et.al), 1946.
- Pimlott, Ben. *An Introduction to Nineteen-Eighty-Four*,
<https://www.orwellfoundation.com/the-orwell-foundation/orwell/articles/ben-pimlott-introduction-to-nineteen-eighty-four/> accessed 18 January 2024.
- Steinhoff, William. *The Road to 1984*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1975.
- Sutherland, J. *English Satire*. Cambridge: CUP, 1962.