



Orwell's Satirical View of Romantic Love in the Terrorized World of Nineteen Eighty-Four

Mohammad Hossein Besharati (Corresponding author)

Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Foreign Languages, Yazd University, Iran

E-mail: Abesharati88@gmail.com

Golnar Mazdayasna

Affiliation: Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Foreign Languages, Yazd University, Iran

Email: Golnamazdayasna@yahoo.com

Sayed Mohammad Anoosheh

Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Foreign Languages, Yazd University, Iran

Email: sanooshe@yazd.ac.ir

Received: 06-04-2017

Accepted: 27-05-2017

Advance Access Published: September 2017

Published: 01-11-2017

doi:10.7575/aiac.ijalel.v.6n.6p.78

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijalel.v.6n.6p.78>

Abstract

The beginning of twentieth century was accompanied with the prevailing current of technology in different aspects of human life. At first, it incited a positive stimulus which could build a utopian world on the advancement of technology. However, the bloody World Wars averted this view and the technological utopia was replaced by Orwellian dystopia. Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is a satirical work which moves against Wells' utopian toward the reflection of a distorted technological society. Undoubtedly, satire is the best literary mode for dystopic depiction of the world specifically the one portrayed in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Winston Smith, the central character of this novel, is lower from his society in terms of intelligence and power of action. Therefore, he is put under rigid controls and brainwashing. And at last, he awfully rejects his love in favor the principles of the Party. Thus, in this study, we try to investigate Winston's romantic life in a satiric manner with respect to Northrop Frye's theme of romance which includes the three phase of agon, pathos and anagnorisis.

Keywords: George Orwell, Satire, Romance, Dystopia, Northrop Frye

1. Introduction

The entire situation in the opening decades of the twentieth century was thus a welter of new and powerful ideas which not only shook the foundation of the older value-scale world but made the problem of choice extremely difficult by being antithetical to each other. The result of such move was uncertainties in every sphere of life. H. G. Wells (1866-1946), who once strongly believed that a utopian achievement of science was possible which was a shift of optimistic view of life which later became pessimistic. The euphoria did not last for a long time, and he died as a disappointed man. Initially, wells vehemently held the view that science and education would outlaw war, poverty, and squalor. But his view remained only a glorious and unrealizable dream. As a new dark age emerged out of the wars the dream was almost permanently eclipsed.

A group of satirical novelists who were the products of the age of total disenchantment and disillusion, came up and exposed Well's optimistic scientific liberalism as a sham. Among them were Aldous Huxley, Norman Douglas, Ronald Firbank, Evelyn Waugh, George Orwell, Anthony Powell, William Golding and many others. Not only did they deny the march and progress of life but also were fully conscious of the tremendous achievements of the science and technology. Yet, they were appalled by the application of the technological achievement to life and its potentiality for evil uses. The new scientific advancement brought about utter disorder and disharmony in its wake. Technological progress unfolded the possibility of a nightmare world which continually haunted the imagination of these writers. Behind this nightmare lay an acute crisis of thought.

These novels endeavored to make a proper diagnosis and prescription for the agonized spasms of the disenchantment and troubled world. To majority of the novelists, satire seemed to be the exact mode through which they could proceed effectively along their chosen path. Satire as a vehicle to depict the shell nuts of the society has a very formidable and celebrated tradition in literature. It is a literary mode, in verse or prose, in which human folly and vices are held up to scorn, derision, or ridicule. Its ultimate purpose is to induce a desire to reform society, even though it does so by exposing vices. Northrop Frye thinks that "the satirist commonly takes a high moral line" (1957: 225). In this sense, the

satirist tells the truth in order to help his fellowman. By striking a note of warning he makes us think about a way out of the situation. That satirist has usually a bilinear objective. The optimist in him writes in order to heal; the pessimist in order to punish. On the one hand, he is a physician; on the other, an executioner (Highet, 1972: 234-237). Highet says that "all satirists are at heart idealist" (243). A delightful satire requires two elements as essential; one is irony which "is consistent both with complete realism of content and with the suppression of attitude on the part of the author" (224) the other is fantasy, "a content which the reader recognizes as grotesque"(224). Fry's illuminating comment on this point is that "most fantasy is pulled back into satire by powerful undertow often called allegory" (1957, 225).

As a result, the main aim of this paper is not to trace the history of satire as a genre, but to pass references to satire, simply because the novel that have been taken up for analysis is a satirical pieces clothed in fantasy. Our study is centered on George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as the most discussed dystopian which seem to present an alternative direction to the society. It is a satirical fantasy of certain contemporary tendencies; it gives us "a prophetic Wellsian nightmare of events in the future" (Lewis, 1952: 154). The novel tells the story of Winston Smith, the hero who is cast in the ironic mold. He is obviously inferior to his power of action and intelligence to his society or to the ordinary reader (Frye, 1952: 34). When the reader looks at such a hero, he has the sense of looking down on a person impounded in a scene of bondage, frustrated, and absurdity. Therefore, this study aims at studying and commenting Winston Smith's romantic love through Frye's three phases of agon, pathos and anagnorisis but with a satirical perspective.

2. Discussion

Fantasy has its roots in primitive mythologies and fairytales. Right from the very earliest times when man started telling stories, his fecund imagination has led him to create fantasy. Some of the highly imaginative products, such as religious myths, served to the purpose of binding the community into unity by means of ultimate concerns about his situation and his final destiny. The other products of imagination and fantasy only aimed at entertainment. Beyond affording thrills and sensations some of the early fantasy narratives contained no special meaning, that is, in them fantasy was not fully functional. But in the course of the history of verbal arts, fantasy, as a mode of apprehending reality, has come to acquire a definite purpose and become one of the most significant elements of the modern novel. Fantastic is only the very highly imaginative.

Fantasy as a literary mode may be defined as a deliberate and purposeful delineation of human reality in terms of what is unusual, impossible and apparently impossible under ordinary and familiar circumstances. Fantasy is the creation of a hypocritical world which is far removed from the existing familiar realities; yet the writer can imbue it with a definite vision of contemporary life. As means of access to reality, fantasists have often created nightmares which amazingly prove to be the very world their contemporaries are actually living in. Rudolf B, Schmerl defines fantasy as: "The deliberate presentation of improbabilities through any one of four methods - the use of unverifiable time, place, characters, or devices - to a typical reader within a culture whose level of sophistication will enable that reader to recognize the improbabilities" (1962, 382).

Fantasies have used one or the other or a combination of the four variables- unverifiable time, place, characters and devices- to project their vision of reality. Fantasy is a phenomenon of very considerable cultural and literary importance. It is employed today as a technique of satirical exposure, of rendering an apocalyptic vision of society. E.M. Foster's concept of fantasy as one of the essential aspects of the novel deserves careful attention. He has devoted a full chapter to fantasy in his book *Aspects of the Novel* (1927). Before giving a formal definition of fantasy, Forster thinks it necessary to find out the sort of demand this mode of writing makes on reader. Fantasy, according to Forster, has special types of stimulus-response effect over readers "because of the oddness of its methods or subject matter" (Forster, 1962, 114). This oddness of method or subject makes the readers not acquainted with it "thrilled"; some readers feel "choked off". Fantasy, therefore, "compels us to an adjustment that is different to an adjustment required by a work of art, to an additional adjustment" (113). Forster means that fantasy demands something more from the readers than what may be called ordinary and usual.

It is, therefore, expected that the readers of fantasies should be intelligent and competent enough to recognize and accept the chain of incredible events in the narrative as well as other allied devices used by the writer to make the fantasy effective. Fantasy requires the readers to be endowed with a sense of value, well stocked and sharp intelligence. In a fantasy-based narrative the writer may start on a clear note of plausibility and naturalism. But subsequently he will proceed to elaborate, exaggerate, and even invert everything in order to reach the point of fantasy, the point where the reader must mentally accommodate himself in the midst of a set of floridly incongruous associations. In this case, the writer of fantasy enjoys a greater freedom and has a wider range of choice of selection in front of him, than it would be the case in regard to a conventional type of narrative. In a fantasy the novelist may introduce fanciful creature of other territories or even unidentified flying objects and make them believe like human beings and normal appliances of the modern world the fantastic creature may assume the form of the ordinary living beings of this very earth. Forster has listed the devices that writers with the fantastic turn of imagination have used:

Such as the introduction of god, ghost, angel, monkey, monster, midget, witch into ordinary life; or the introduction of ordinary men into no men's land, the future, the past, the interior of the earth, the forth dimensions; or diving into dividings of personaliy; or finally the device of parody or adaptation. (118)

In this respect, Orwell is digging into future to create a whole new fantastic world to apply his satirical vision of the world. Orwell saw the dangers of brainwashing, rigid social control, and political blackmail threatening the individual's

freedom; he placed his nightmare state only thirty-five years into the future. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, in spite of its setting in the future, does not seem to be a mere prophecy of what the world will be like in thievery or forty years' time. It is a satire on what the world is like now. The element of fantasy is inherent in the structure of the society presented. "*Nineteen Eighty-Four* is an attempt to confront and to express specifically and unrelentingly the nature of modern experience," (Alldritt, 1969: 154) says Keith Aldritt.

Nineteen Eighty-Four tells the story of Winston Smith, the hero who is cast in an ironic mold. He is evidently inferior in his power of action and intelligence to his society or to the ordinary reader (Frye, 1957, 34). When the reader looks at such a hero, he has the sense of looking down on a person impounded in a sense of bondage, frustration, and absurdity. Though Winston Smith is intelligent as far as his departmental work is concerned, he is, in a way, more helpless than Julia whom he loves. Julia is smart and quick, assertive and of a devil-may-care type. As against her, Winston in his supineness becomes glaringly loutish. He often gets himself entangled in a mess; the society in which Winston is placed is a closed Iron-curtain society. The controlling authority is excessively vigilant; no one can escape its lynx-like piercing eyes. In this society various means are employed to watch and control every action of the individual. Even the thoughts of each party member are, as it were, under powerful x-rays. All loopholes are carefully plugged. There is the Big Brother watching; the telescreen is ever ready to receive and transmit simultaneously all information; the Thought Police with its invisible omnipresence cannot be given a slip; the microphones are always ready to catch and blare out every accent of the conversation held at any place or time.

In spite of all these severely restrictive deterrents, Winston and Julia manage to meet secretly, defy the laws of the party, and make love in an atmosphere of fear, suspicion, and repression. The structure of Winston's story is that of an ironic tragedy. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is the story of an individual who suffers the most. Winston Smith is a man of thirty-nine. He is a member of the Party that is almost synonymous with the state apparatus. Winston finds himself in a society where there cannot be any love, privacy, of friendship. He has normal human urges and chafes against constraints. He finds himself in a place where chilling fear, hatred, and pain constantly stalk his path; where there is no dignity of human emotions, no deep sorrows. Inwardly he nurses a sense of revolt against the well-established principles of the Party. On the surface, he blindly believes in the coercive measures to gain individual freedom however he fails and becomes a failure that lacks any courage to defend his love. As a result, his situation can fully express the satirical side of a romantic love.

As already indicated, the structure of romance, according to Frye, has three phases, the agon phase, the pathos phase and the anagnorisis phase:

Agon or conflict is the basis or archetypal theme of romance, the radical of romance being a sequence of marvelous adventures. Pathos or catastrophe, whether in triumph or in defeat, is the archetypal theme of tragedy. Sparagmos, or the sense that heroism and effective action are absent, disorganized or foredoomed to defeat, and that confusion and anarchy reign over the world, is the archetypal theme of irony and satire. Anagnorisis, or recognition of a newborn society rising in triumph around a still somewhat mysterious hero and his bride, is the archetypal theme of comedy. (192)

Nineteen Eighty-Four involves a satiric parody of all these three phases. The quest includes a perilous journey in a demonic world, almost an odyssey in its own parodic way. Various preliminary minor acts of defiance are performed by Winston Smith as an expression of his disgust and revolt against the Party. Some of these activities are maintaining a diary, writing atrocious phrases (such as "Down with Big Brother (Orwell, 1970:23)"; "If there is hope it lies in the proles (89)", meeting the old man in the pub for the proles, who can give him a truthful account of the condition in the early part of the century.

In this way he gains courage and takes the risk of moving to the room of Mr. Charrington even if it were for a couple of hours. The room is seedy but comfortable, and best of all, has not been equipped with a telescreen. It becomes the place for an occasional rendezvous for Smith and Julia. By these minor activities, Winston gains a new vigor, although he is never very hopeful. Little by little he moves towards taking dangerous steps along with Julia: "Both of them knew-in a way, it was never out of their minds- that what was happening could not last long" (124). Winston knows the probable consequences of their actions:

What was happening was only the working-out of a process that has started years ago. The first step had been a secret, involuntary thought; the second had been the opening of the opening of the diary. He had moved from thoughts to words, and now from words to actions. The last step was something that would happen in the ministry of Love. (130)

In their several meetings, Julia and Winston discuss the Party, express their hatred of its policy, and show their disbelief in its propaganda. To Julia the much talked of specter of Emmanuel Goldstein and his underground army is simply a lot rubbish and nonsense: "In some ways she was far more acute than Winston and far less susceptible to Party propaganda"(125). To Julia all the strategies adopted by the Party are more or less a paper tiger, "just to keep people frightened". She is rather rash in her statements about the Party as compared with Winston. As an expression of their freedom, they greedily feed upon real sugar, coffee, milk, jam, bread, tea and chocolate. These have better taste and flavor that those filthy synthetic stuff supplied by the Party to its members. In Mr. Charrington's room they indulge in love-making, sleep for a while and enjoy the bliss of having some privacy.

These are very ordinary and simple things with nothing very heroic about them, but they do constitute Winston's adventure, his perilous journey, which parodistically corresponds to the agon phase of romance. Winston's story is not a

romance but a parody of romance, because his power of action is very limited and experiences take place in a perverted and demonic context.

The agon phase of Winston's story is followed by the pathos phase, the crucial struggle of the hero, his encounter with O'Brien, the most powerful agent of the Party. Winston is caught reading the book entitled *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism* by Emmanuel Goldstein, which the agent gave him to read as a ruse for facilitating Winston's arrest. Then comes Winston's arrest, and imprisonment in the Ministry of Love where he is brutally tortured. The Ministry of Love is located in an unknown place where all the enemies of the Party are kept in severe servility in a concentration camp as it were. The arrested person can never know where he has been brought because there is no way of making certain about its location.

When Winston Smith is arrested and imprisoned, he presumes, despite the iron-curtain all arouse, that the room where he is confined might be a part of the Ministry of Love. The building is a terrible windowless fort, heavily guarded and filled with scientific instruments of torture. There he is kicked, clubbed and bludgeoned for days until he is in the most abject state of atrophy. He no longer knows what and where he is. He is subjected to weeks of "conferences" with O'Brien, during which he is given electric shocks, and kept barely alive so that he can confess the error of his rebellion. O'Brien, however, wants to extort more than a confession. He insists that Winston must be most thoroughly brain-washed. He (Winston) must realize in the depths of his soul that Big Brother is all powerful and all good, that individuals have no right to private ideas, and that if the Party says two plus two equals five that should be unhesitatingly accepted as correct. He tells Winston that he himself wrote Goldstein's book as a trap for rebels. After a long, dreadful and nerve-shocking persecution Winston is completely converted. He is reborn. This again, is ironic parody of the death and rebirth theme of the romance.

The converted Winston is a new being altogether, one who has lost all his individuality and become more or less a robot in the hands of the all-powerful Party. He is indoctrinated; he "understands," and lastly accepts the Party. In the background of this catatonic aftermath one can measure how he struggles and then lost his individual identity which once he wanted to assert. He wanted to remain human like the poles. The atavistic spirit inspired him. He wanted to relearn by conscious effort the basic human emotions- love, concern for one another, private loyalties, etc.,: "What mattered were individual relationships, and a completely helpless gesture, an embrace, a tear, a word spoken to a dying man, could have valued in itself"(134-135).

The last phase of romance is the exaltation of the hero, the anagnorisis phase. Anagnorisis means discovery; this phase expresses the hero's self-realization. It is the recognition of the hero truly as a hero even though he may suffer death or defeat in the course of the crucial conflict. Contrary to this the, structure of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* parodies the process of anagnorisis. Winston Smith is degraded; he succumbs and sells off his soul. Yet a streak of humanity is reflected to the reader from his situation, from the epiphany of the evil which overtakes him. For he still feels, howsoever weakly, that he has betrayed Julia. The reader can understand that the betrayal is due to his fear of torture. When O'Brien threatens to let loose the rats on him, Winston cries out: "Do it to Julia! Do it to Julia! Not me! Julia! I don't care what you do to her. Tear her face off, strip her to the bones. Not me! Julia! Not me!" (230).

After this great betrayal, Winston is set free. Many days later he sees Julia, who is in an equally bad shape after having been beaten up and dulled by her ordeal. The two have nothing to say to each other after they confess that they have betrayed their love. In the place of exaltation they have a demonic self-discovery of their own weakness. Winston Smith slips back into the undignified servile existence. Raymond Williams has remarked:

Winston Smith is not like a man at all – in consciousness, in relationship, in the capacity for love and protection and endurance and loyalty. He is the last of the cut-down figures through whom rejection and defeat can be mediated. (1971: 81)

3. Conclusion

Northrop Frye is of the opinion that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* encompasses the satirical and ironical structure which presents human life in terms of largely unrelieved bondage. Its setting presents prisons, madhouses, lynching mobs, and places of execution. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is the most telling portrait of the present day nightmare of social tyranny. It presents a lurid picture of modern society which diminishes the individual freedom. The novel parodies certain religious symbols, suggesting some form of Antichrist worship. The parody of religion in the final scenes is very elaborate. There is a parody of the ritual of atonement, for instance, when Winston is tortured into urging that the torments designed for him be inflicted on Julia instead. We have an instance of vicarious expiation turned upside down. The lust for sadistic power on the part of the ruling class is strong enough to last indefinitely, particularly with the aid of modern technology. The devils of the Christian Hell are eternal. The "telescreen" device brings into irony the tragic theme of derkou theama, the humiliation of being constantly watched by a hostile or derisive eye.

The central theme of the novel is life under a totalitarian regime, which is a tendency in all technological advanced societies today. Orwell tries to warn people that a passive submission to the alluring appeal of a repressive government run by a handful of dictators would irrevocably lead to the nightmare of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Reading *Nineteen Eighty-Four* today, when the year *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has passed off, one will perceive with dismay the increasing signs of a deteriorating social condition which Orwell's warning gave a foretaste of. His was a timely alarm-signal in as much as one may see that "Airstrip One Society" as outlined in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has actually emerged in many parts of the world. Political expediency has given license to projecting lies as truths. When an official communique states something the underlying idea is just what it professes not to be. Undeclared wars are raging incessantly around

the globe. Repressive measures to stifle and emasculate the weaker people are no less hideous than those described in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The world has fully realized the staggering impact of the emergence of super-powers, the super-states- competing with the threatening one another, but actually ravaging the weaker peoples of the world.

References

- Alldritt, Keith (1969), *The Making of George Orwell: An Essay in Literary History*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Frye, Northrop (1957), *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Frye, Northrop (1970), *The Critical Path: An Essay on the Social Context of Literary Criticism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Higbet, Gilbert (1972), *The Anatomy of Satire*. Princeton: Princeton University Publication Press.
- Lee, Robert A (1969), *Orwell's Fiction*, Indiana: University of Norte Dame Press.
- Lewis, Wnydham (1952), *The Writer and the Absolute*, London: Methuen and Company Ltd.
- Orwell, George (1970), *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd.
- Meyers, Jeffrey (1975), *A Reader's Guide to George Orwell*, London: Thames and Hudson.
- Schmerl, Rudolf B (1962), "The Two Future Worlds of Aldous Huxley", *PMLA*, Vol. LXXVII, No. 3.
- Walsh, Chad (1962), *From Utopia to Nightmare*, New York: Harper and Row Publishers.
- Williams, Raymond (1971), *Orwell*, London: Fontana/Collins.