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A DYSTOPIAN READING OF THE PRESENT TIME IN DAVID MITCHELL'S NUMBER 9 DREAM

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Abstract

With the intention to study the implications and their affinity with and deviation from reality, the present study will analyze Number9Dream (2001) in terms of its narrative style, ontological qualities, and certain conventions which lead to the particular genre of dystopian science fiction. It tends to settle the following questions: are the implications and contributions of categorizing Number9Dream as a dystopian science fiction significant in any way? What is the role and ontological significance of setting in the novel? Narratological approach and genre criticism are applied to the novel to analyze it from the perspective of its critical engagement with dystopia. It traces science fictional elements and then continues to examine their utopian or dystopian nature and the different functions of those elements. It also refers to the connection between the given ontologies and reality. The present article shows that the novel provides a range of multiple possible worlds through two layers of internal and external ontology which are the representations of the real world. Dystopian narrative and science fiction conventions are exploited to address today's world issues. Through a detached view toward the present societies, Mitchell gives the opportunity to criticize what is not otherwise visible. The novel warns about human's isolation, alienation, and dehumanization and calls people to action accordingly. It briefly refers to the reconciliation of past/ present and nature/ science as a solution.

Keywords: Dystopia; External Ontology; Internal Ontology; Science Fiction.

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1. Introduction

For its intrinsic capacities of form and content, dystopian science fiction has great appeal for many postmodern writers including David Stephen Mitchell. O'Donnell refers to the multiplicity and multiple worlds at several points: "Mitchell's novels are fluid, mutable, and granular: they register change over time both thematically and architectonically. They invite readers who want to engage with the novelist in generating navigable realms consequential for an understanding of how we

inhabit the world(s) that we have before us." Through his introduction in the book on temporariness of Mitchell's fiction, O'Donnell introduces him as a cosmopolitan, anthropological, encyclopedic novelist and as a novelist of globalization (2015: 1-9).

The choice of a Japanese setting accentuates the idea of scientific advancements. It is saturated with technologies. Simpson describes it as "the massive, chaotic postmodern city of Tokyo." He explains that it is "composed of various fantasies, dreams, memories and media-drenched narrative episodes" (2011: 52). Different ontological layers characterize Mitchell's works. These ontologies as possible worlds follow the certain rules and conventions of certain kinds of narrative and genres. The narrative strategies and genre conventions in each ontology offer different implications. Along with these implications, the utopian/dystopian nature of the ontologies will be studied. Another matter which will be scrutinized here is that how much the external ontology depicted as modern Tokyo and internal ontology including characters' dreams and imaginations are borrowing from reality.

Mitchell's fictions, for being the new academic subjects, have been recently used as case studies. One of the informative readings is William Stephenson's "Moonlight bright as a UFO Abduction: Science Fiction, Present-Future Alienation and Cognitive Mapping." In his essay, Stephenson traces the elements of science fiction in Mitchell's early works. He talks about novum, a "key device of all science fiction," "meaning a thing not found in the world of the reader" and he counts them: quasi-human Replicants, bioborges, virtual receptionists and digital life in *Number9Dream*. He believes that Mitchell's fiction is "plural, polyphonic, and interconnected, but this is not just because of the formally driven need to move beyond the generic and structural boundaries set by past literary and SF conventions. It is all these things because of the plural, polyphonic, and interconnected world of the globalized twenty-first century" (2011: 238). To establish a theoretical base, the present article refers to Stephenson's essay for its reading of Mitchell's novel as a reflection of the realities of globalization and the networked world, and pointing out author's own distinctive form of cognition, meaning the recognition of the resemblance between the fictional world and the reader's reality. This article tries to show that alongside with the globalization Stephenson talks about, the novel still has the classical concerns intrinsic to the genre, to warn and challenge of finding a solution.

This essay scrutinizes the mixture of science fiction and dystopia which reflect a fear of life in the future, particularly a fear of destroying our world and losing humanity to science and technology. Considered as a new direction of utopian literature, dystopia "has emerged in the revival in the 1980s of the inverted complement of eutopia" (Moylan 2000: 105). Death, misery, oppression, inequality, poverty and crimes are prevalent in a dystopian world. In the last decades of the 20th century "several writers took the utopian imagination into a "dystopian turn" that explored and negotiated closed and terrifying worlds that [...] were no more than "twenty minutes" into our own dangerous future" (ibid: 106). In a dystopian story the protagonist –if there is any – finds about the social hell he is living in and search for an alternative which is often "the recesses of memory or the margins of the dominant culture" (cf. ibid). Despite the name, dystopia is not exactly the opposite of utopia, it is not completely unplanned or planned to be awful; "dystopia, typically invoked, is neither of these things; rather it is a utopia that has gone wrong, or a utopia that functions only for a particular segment of society" (Gordin et. al. 2010:1).

Considering the inventions and discoveries of the present time, the future is near enough to be observed and judged. David Seed indicates that "whatever we think of SF, we live science fiction in our daily lives. From at least the 1950s onwards, writers such as Ray Bradbury have insisted that we live within the very technological environment of robotics and cybernetic devices that many SF writers describe" (2005: 1). Regarding these devices Tom Shippey asserts that "as well as recognizing data, you recognize nondata; but since these are data within the story, they are well labeled *nova data*, new things given" (2005: 13). Vita Fortunati believes that in approaching the millennial change there are enough of those certain events and signs connecting the present to the future as depicted in science fiction. He counts the problems and issues of the present time and adds "in world politics the apparent failure of Communism as a viable alternative leaves us face to face with the terrifying vision of a single world power that is now free to operate unchecked, unopposed" (1993: 81). Kumar names the issues of a near future world: "population, poverty, ecology, bio-technology, computer-mediated communication, the spread of nuclear technology, AIDS and other global epidemics, the financial markets" added to the challenges of religious parties (2005: 5). Like Kumar, Samuel Gerald Collins also believes that the predicted future for the world and humanity has already come. He studies the history of anthropology by drawing on connections and relationships between anthropology and science fiction: "Subject to the time compressions of advanced capitalism, much of our contemporary horizon seems to precede into the future; from the perspective of a public that only tenuously differentiates between image-laden spectacle and reality, we are *already* living in the future" (2003: 181).

This research investigates the extent of novel's accordance with dystopian science fiction elements, their implications and their affinity with reality of the present. To this end, it tries to answer the following questions: are the implications and contributions of categorizing *Number9Dream* as a dystopian science fiction significant in any way? What is the role and ontological significance of setting in the novel? To study narrative styles and strategies in terms of both form and content, narratological approach and the genre criticism, significant in narrative interpretation, are applied to the novel. The elements of both science fiction and dystopia, their connection, and the so-called *nova data* or *novum* are studied in the external ontology of the novel. After the plot summary, "Science Fictional Dystopia" examines the "External Ontology" and "internal Ontology" levels of the novel to find generic signs of the narrative. The section "Fictional Ontology as a Realistic Possible World" points out the boundaries between real and unreal according to the novel's text. The sections entitled "Reconciliation of ontologies: narratives of the present and the future" is dedicated to the common issues of the fiction's world and real world. The last part touches upon the role of identity and dehumanization in the depicted society.

2. Science Fictional Dystopia

Eiji Miyake, the main character of *Number9Dream*, is raised by his grandmother since he is the illegitimate child of an affair between his mother and a married man who has abandoned them. Eiji travels from his island home of Yakushima to find his father's identity. When he was a child, he made a deal with thunder god to take him anything it wants in return for making him the greatest soccer player in Japan. He won the trophy but when he came back, he was informed that her twin sister was gone – drowned while swimming. Eiji starts a relationship with a waitress, Ai Imajo. Ai helps him to find a job in the pizza kitchen and when Eiji is at work, they receive an order from a man by the same surname as his grandfather's. Eiji delivers the pizza himself and finally he meets

his father who is not an honorable man, as his grandfather already told him. Disappointed with his father, Eiji decides to go and see his mother to start again their relationship.

Seeing and knowing about his father was not what he has expected; but through this search he reconnects with his mother and finds new friends in Tokyo. When he arrives at his grandmother's place, no one is there. He falls asleep until the radio news about a massive earthquake in Tokyo wakes him up. He tries to call his friends but he cannot reach Ai or any other of his friends. This is a repetition of his childhood when he was eleven. He went to a trip, when he came back, the house was empty, he fell asleep and when he woke up he found out that his twin sister was drowned.

Mitchell's novel displays different kinds of ontologies. In the following sections ontologies created by the author as well as the character in *Number9Dream* will be investigated.

2.1. External Ontology

Number9Dream is set in Tokyo which is described as follows: "a six story can of KIRIN LAGER BEER pours dandelion neon, over and over. Across a light year of streets, buildings, and neon murk I can see aircraft warning lights pulse on Pan Opticon's crown. Altair and Vega fade in and out on either side of the Milky Way. Traffic noises ebb up" (*n9d*, 80). Eiji watches the media screen on the NHK building: "missile launchers recoil, cities catch fire. A new Nokia cellphone. Foreign affairs minister announces putative WW2 Nanking excesses are left-wing plots to destroy patriotism" (*n9d*, 87). The lights, crowds, advertisements, and destructive forces cooperate to make a dark technological picture of the world.

Eiji's other comments on the city amplify this darkness and filthiness: "I never expected Tokyo to be this dirty. It needs a good flooding to clean it up" (*n9d*, 2), "smoking rubble of Tokyo" (*n9d*, 68), "Tokyo suburbs are demolition dumps or construction sites" (*n9d*, 136), "everything in Tokyo is nearly full, full, or too full" (*n9d*, 240), "Tokyo is the color of a dirty eraser" (*n9d*, 251).

The scientific and technological entities of Tokyo are named in different places; Eiji thinks of the modern Tokyo's utilities such as miniature TVs, spherical stereos, intelligent microwaves, digital cameras, cell phones, ionizing freezers, dehumidifying heaters, hot rugs, massage chairs, heated dish racks, 256-color printers. The public transportation vehicle with the quality to be a submarine wherever needed, super-modern torpedo, and virtual bank tellers are among other entities presented in the novel. Electronics and technology have spread in all aspects of people's life. They keep using their cell phones all the time; "as cell phones take over the world these old-fashioned booths will become as rare as gaslights" (*n9d*, 175), "Pretty soon people will download all their videos via the net" (*n9d*, 205). These technological concerns about which people are worried have already happened in reality; "The technology is already here, just waiting for marketing to catch up" (*n9d*, 205).

After all these scientific changes in the world, is Japan a better place? Eiji reads his granduncle's diary when he was a soldier; He thinks: "what would Subaru Tsukiyama say about Japan today? Was it worth dying for? Maybe he would reply that *this* Japan is not the Japan he did die for. The Japan he died for never came into being. It was a possible future, auditioned by the present but

rejected with other dreams" (*n9d*, 207). Here he suggests the idea of possible multiple universes and the present dystopian world.

2.2. Internal Ontology

The main character of the novel constantly resorts to imagination, dreams, and videogames to tolerate the real world easily. These escapes from reality which are basically related to it and have also a reality of their own, include science fiction elements as follows.

To explain why nine years have passed and Akiko Kato has not aged a single day, Eiji thinks that "doubtless she can afford the latest DNA reravelers from certain Chinese labs" (*n9d*, 6); before the movies begin, facial correction advertisements are played (*n9d*, 20). Regarding the idea of modifying human's condition, ugliness and aging are two concerns solved by science.

In addition to the science fictional elements, there's a sense of dystopian consequences in these ontologies. Dystopia is characterized with totalitarianism in many examples. One of the significant issues in totalitarian states with which they exercise power is the role of surveillance in such societies through panoptical means –as Philip Bounds puts it (2009: 146). People absorb the ideology simply because they are watched and monitored all the time. In *1984*, the high tech panopticon device was a telescreen, in *Cloud Atlas* it was a soul ring installed on consumers; here a whole building is named after it.

PanOpticon building is a "zirconium gothic skyscraper" in Kagoshima where Eiji hopes to see his father there. No one from the outside knows anything about the inside, even "its upper floors are hidden by cloud" (*n9d*, 1) to make it more opaque and out of touch with ordinary people. When Eiji is sitting in the Jupiter Café and daydreaming about going there or about Ms. Kato's coming to the café, he thinks "it must have its own restaurants, to spare its employees the hassle of descending to ground level. Who says you even eat lunch, Ms. Kato? Maybe your slaves bring you a human heart to tide you over until supertime" (*n9d*, 1). The idea of slavery and a powerful strict control is repeated again in this novel. Eiji continues the description of the building as he imagines it to be: "PanOpticon's lobby is as cavernous as the belly of some futuristic robobehemoth. Which is a fair description of the whole PanOpticon organism, only Tokyo moves around it instead of it needing to move around Tokyo" (*n9d*, 3). PanOpticon is the center of Tokyo and the world; in the flood "only PanOpticon appears safe" (*n9d*, 13). Eiji's description of the building also shows the significance of the concept of *other* in science fiction; Eiji thinks that PanOpticonians look at the other people with hatred and he himself looks at them with a combination of fear and prejudice. This *other* can be any group in the society: women, the disenfranchised, the poor and the disabled, people belong to any particular religion who are not members of dominant social classes, who do not have the privileged sexualities, national values. But the anti-totalitarian texts tend to invert the binary and somehow remove the boundary; that is why the novel builds readers' sympathy with Eiji.

In a story within the story, a woman appears "wearing a Technicolor crown and a power suit [...], she seemed two-dimensional because she was. The wall was a giant screen that lit a chamber strewn with electrical cables". She introduces herself as Queen Shrouds and boasts: "the future is my empire", "my army is the media" (*n9d*, 164). She mutes creatures with a double click of her

fingers or drag them to the recycle bin (*n9d*, 168). She claims that science is able to heal any kind of defect, "On this side of the screen awaits the future! Paper is dead, have you not heard? [...] You shall compose your untold tales in a virtual heaven, and I, as your cyberagent [...] Goatwriter, digitize yourself to my loving embrace, and we shall iron out that troublesome speech dddddddefect! Imagine, you uttering sentences at the speed of charged particles instead of an amputee marathon!" (*n9d*, 165). But Goat writer likes that defect of stammering, he believes that is what discerns his "true friends from the false". While he likes the natural with all its disadvantages, science offers him advantages which he refuses. The queen lists several common concepts in science fiction: virtual human, future, role of media, power gained through science, healing aspect of science, and generally virtuality.

The goat writer who has been offered those options tries to preserve the reality as a combination of defects and perfects. For him a pure paradise or utopia does not exist. The idea behind the novel is that a utopia always includes a percentage of dystopia.

3. Fictional Ontology as a Realistic Possible World

Regarding the author's worldview extracted from the signs within the novel, this section tends to find out the extent of connection between fiction and reality. The struggle between reality and illusion is evident from the very first pages and through all Eiji's stream of consciousness: "How do you smuggle daydreams into reality?" (*n9d*, 1). Watching pregnant women Eiji asks himself some questions: "At what age did Anju and I learn that the world is actually two: one outside, and one inside, which we call *imagination*. A stupendous discovery, you would have thought, but I have no memory of the day. For babies in womb, imagination must be reality" (*n9d*, 15). He gives credit to the particular reality of the imagination.

In a story within a story within a story, Eiji follows Akiko Kato down a narrow side street to a kind of cinema. The movie is "a feature movie called, oddly, PanOpticon. The poster shows only a row of screaming Russian dolls and tells me nothing of what the story might be about" (*n9d*, 18). Here, using the words PanOpticon and Russian dolls, Mitchell just described his own novel. He passes through the posters of previous presentations among them is *Fahrenheit 451* a dystopian novel speculating the future. He is waiting for the movie to begin, advertisements for driving school and plastic surgeon are played (*n9d*, 18-20). The movie is about a prisoner named Voorman who believes is a God whose profession involves post-creation maintenance and everything around was born in his imagination. He proves his claim by making Belgium disappear. Even the warden does not know of what crime is Voorman convicted. Doctor Polonski is a psychiatrist who has to examine Voorman to ascertain whether his madness is an act or is he clinically insane (*n9d*, 24). With disappearance of Belgium on the map even the real world is under question. Mitchell sees the world as God's imagination. He plays several word games with *reality* and *imagination* among which this one is the most perfect example.

His most obvious hint is when a writer of the stories within the story tells Eiji "we are all of us writers, busy writing our own fictions about how the world is, and how it came to be this way. We concoct plots and ascribe motives that may, or may not, coincide with the truth" (*n9d*, 167). Eiji forms the thought that "reality is an unedited script performed once; that the truly untold tale is life

itself" (*n9d*, 175). The relationship between reality and fiction also brings up the relationship between present and future: the futuristic fiction and present reality.

4. Reconciliation of ontologies: Narratives of the Present and the Future

Mitchell employs science fictional tropes at the present time to show that future is happening now. Today is the very future science fictions warned us to avoid. The common features of dystopia and the real world is discernible as follows:

Consumerism: Eiji sat down "in the shade of a giant NIKE sneaker. I hate this world. NIKE. THERE IS NO FINISH LINE. Across a weed-strewn wasteland I could see Xanadu and Valhalla" (*n9d*, 150). The world of brands is a wasteland which he hates; "Our ancestors built temples for their gods. We build department stores and theme parks" (*n9d*, 128). Wealth and power are the new gods, department stores and theme parks are the new temples, consumers worship by spending money and yet capitalism is a hollow religion.

Media: media is the state's powerful tool for brainwashing people even more. It is a mean of oppressing and nothing more. Eiji explains what happened when he was with Yakuza members,

"What amazes me," I say, "is that none of what happened has been reported. How can forty people get killed—not quietly, either, but action-movie deaths—and it not be reported?"

"Yakuza wars make the police look useless and the politicians look corrupt. Which, as everybody knows, is true. But if the authorities admit it, the voters of Tokyo may be prompted to wonder why they bother paying taxes at all. So it gets kept off TV."

"But the newspapers?"

"Their pet journalists are fed reports of battles already won and lost higher up the mountainside. Original, story-sniffing journalists get black-listed from news conferences, so newspapers can't keep them. Subtle, isn't it?"

"Then why bother with the news at all?"

"People want their comic strips and bedtime stories. Look . . . a dragonfly. The old poet-monks used to know what week of what month it was, just by the color and sheen of dragonflies'—howd'ya call'em? — fuselages." (*n9d*, 156)

The media shows the world the way authorities want it to be shown. People are ignorant enough to become satisfied with lies and covers. Watching news, Eiji thinks: "Trade talks, summits, visiting dignitaries. This is how to control entire populations—don't suppress news, but make it so dumb and dull that nobody has any interest in it" (*n9d*, 246).

Slavery: the detective writes to Eiji "You may doubt that sexual enslavement is practiced in twenty-first century Japan" (*n9d*, 223), "my son was murdered in order to sell his organs to extremely rich, desperate parents of the elite in Japan" (*n9d*, 224). Enslavement has always been practiced and will be in different forms of sexual or technological slavery or any other. In the kitchen Eiji works in, "there is a gunk-smattered world map to tantalize us slaves of the inferno with thoughts of all the countries in the world—and their many-tinted women—where we are not free to go" (*n9d*, 217). Eiji is a member of the working class who work and inferno motivated by a hollow promise of paradise.

God: Whoever has the power is God. "Tsuru is God. God is Tsuru" (*n9d*, 237). God as a divine spiritual concept and figure is not needed and believed in anymore. Tsuru has money and scientific weapons; he is the real god.

Mitchell tries to give a solution: he offers a combination as solution; "Shrubs, autumn trees, kids in strollers, today they defeat the ugliness of Tokyo" (*n9d*, 222), nature has to thrive along with science to help dispose of dystopia. Eiji constantly thinks that he is in a nightmare which is not his own. He is made to believe that "nightmares are messengers, sent by who, or what, we *really* are, underneath. 'Don't forget where you come from.' The nightmare tells us. 'Don't forget your true self'" (*n9d*, 132). The dystopia, in which people are living now, is the direct results of what they did in the past. Science has made people fatter and more modern but deep inside they are different. This is not the way human race's true nature wants them to live. Mitchell sees a slight hope in keeping the past along with the present and the future as well as the balance between science and nature.

5. Dehumanization

Proving that the novel uses science fictional dystopian elements in order to represent the real world and address its concerns, the research looks for the place of human in the world. Cavallaro points out: "What makes it [Frankenstein] a classic in the field is its focus on the question of what constitutes humanity in a world that both promises opportunities for the enhancement of human powers via science and dehumanizes people through technology" (2000: 2). The human's identity formed as a result of today's societies' governing system mentioned in the previous parts, are discussed in this section.

The stratification of the society, a common element in both utopias and dystopias is obvious in *Number9Dream*. The extent of how human are people is under constant questioning in the world of constant competition among apes, humans, and bioborges. In addition to the stratification of society in terms of their power and money, individuals are classified based on their natural characteristics. Eiji believes that money determines one's class and talks about Tokyo as a superpower of capitalism, "playing with coffee is the only pleasure I can afford in Tokyo" (*n9d*, 11). Dronehood is another name for working class in the novel; When Eiji is forced to live in the metropolitan Tokyo all by himself is the time he realizes how these classes are created: "Now I understand what fuels dronehood. This: you work or you drown in debt and the underclass" (*n9d*, 11). Underclass is the lowest level of class distinction. People work all the time to avoid ending up there and this keeps them busy. Not just money and power, Eiji's ideas on class distinction also includes eugenics. Drones do not have a name and Eiji talks about them with types and generalized names and to justify their existence he believes God the vivisectionist is going to need monkeys for his experiments" (*n9d*, 106).

An important premise of utopian literature is stated through the mouth of characters: "one man's shit hole may be another man's paradise" (*n9d*, 41); it refers to the stratification characterizing totalitarian states; and also consequently to the relativity of concept of utopia. In such a stratified society where under a same government, happiness is relative, individuals find relative importance as well and human's identity is defined differently. Lack of Privacy and individual rights and controlling the most personal aspects of people, question their identity as humans.

The lower-class humans include "brainless ape", "subhuman" and "submammalian" as ordinary people call them and converse about them. The middle-class is the standard human with average intelligence and the upper-classes are highly intelligent computers, androids, and machines; Saying that he has "lost track of who is human and who is a replicant in *Blade Runner* is his best depiction of the fact that the boundary between human and non-human is blurred (*n9d*, 197). Referring to the state's power to define humanity, Ai, Eiji's love, says once upon a time "people used to build Tokyo. But that changed somewhere down the line, and now Tokyo builds people" (*n9d*, 220). It is implied that these virtual humans are taking the place of real humans completely.

As a result, ethically and morally speaking, the world has turned into a waste land due to the immoral use of technology, wealth, and power, "why is it always money, money, money with the kids nowadays? Little wonder Japan is becoming this moral and spiritual graveyard" (*n9d*, 126).

6. Conclusion

Number9Dream presents the elements of dystopian science fiction in two levels: the immediate world of the fiction which McHale calls external ontology and the character's daydreaming, video games, and imaginations which make the internal ontologies. Reading the novel's both external and internal ontologies, the following subsections proved that the novel can be classified into the dystopian science fiction genre. *Number9Dream* emphasizes on the role of individuals in the fiction and the society. *Number9Dream* does not happen in a far-fetched future or even any near future. The story is happening at the present time. It takes place in Japan which is advanced enough to show the results of advancements in science and technology. The story is full of technological examples which although are invented now but are not used widely; limited countries, limited parts of those countries and limited people use them. This advanced world is even more advanced in Eiji's mind who is the lead character of the novel. It is potentially a convenient context to study the role of science in making a utopia/ dystopia out of the world.

The novel offers two kinds of reality or two kinds of fantasy. The first layer of narrative is the immediate world around Eiji. The second layer is his "escape attempts" (to use Cohen and Taylor's expression in McHale 1987: 38) from everyday life which refers to the daydreams, illusions, games, and so on. Everyday life is the real world which the character escapes from. The nature of novel's world is judged and decided in terms of both external and internal ontologies introduced in the novel. The relationship between this kind of science fiction and reality is that it truly conveys the modern human feelings and experiences: isolation, alienation, and self-exile. Because human beings' thought, knowledge, and consciousness are always ideologically controlled by the power while they are ignorant of what happens around them.

The opposition of nature and science is always one of the recurrent themes of science fiction especially when the world turns out to be a dystopia. In the novel, nature and science are destructive almost in a same level. But Mitchell's solution to survive is their combination. He insists on hybridity all over his works: his divergent techniques and genres, combining past and present and future, blurring fiction and reality.

Dystopian science fiction creates a powerful sense of the real place which is not visible by naked eyes. It is not concerned with the future, it studies the present society. In his "The End of Socialism? The End of Utopia? The End of History?", Kumar is concerned with the millennial endings, "what we thought to be new has failed. It was, in any case, a bundle of delusions, unnecessary and destructive deviations. There is no need to imagine anything new. We already live in the millennial new age, the last age" (1993: 63). George Orwell saw Huxley's *Brave New World* as "a brilliant caricature of the present" (quoted in Hitchens: ix). The present is distorted and disguised in this type of literature to give the opportunity of seeing and criticizing it from a detached point of view. What Mirra Ginsburg in the "Introduction" of her translation of "We" about the novel says is also true here: "though it speaks on many levels and of many things, its political message is unmistakable. It is a warning, and a challenge, and a call to action" (1972: xvii).

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