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**DYSTOPIA AS A FORM OF SOCIAL PROTEST (AS ILLUSTRATED BY  
ZAMYATIN'S "WE", GEORGE ORWELL'S "1984" AND COLLINS' "THE  
HUNGER GAMES")**

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**Abstract**

This article examines the distinctive features of the dystopian genre as a form of representation and a tool for social protest in 20th- and 21st-century literature. Drawing on the novels *\*We\** by Yevgeny Zamyatin, *\*1984\** by George Orwell and *\*The Hunger Games\** by Suzanne Collins, the article analyses the evolution of dystopian discourse from classical totalitarianism to the repressive mechanisms of consumer society and mediocracy. The author examines how, through the deconstruction of totalitarian and authoritarian systems, writers express protest against the suppression of human individuality, the standardisation of thought, and the manipulation of public consciousness. The study identifies common strategies of artistic resistance, such as the de-automatisation of the individual, rebellion against rationalism and the demythologisation of state ideology, and traces the transformation of the image of the rebellious hero depending on the historical context.

**Keywords**

dystopia, social protest, Yevgeny Zamyatin, George Orwell, Stephen Collins, totalitarianism, individuality, resistance, ideology, mediocracy.

**Introduction:** The turn of the 20th and 21st centuries was marked by a radical transformation of the global socio-cultural and political landscape, which inevitably led to a heightened interest within the humanities in the phenomenon of artistic representations of societal crises. In this context, the genre of anti-utopia (dystopia) takes on particular significance, transforming from a purely fictional form into a powerful tool for philosophical reflection and profound social protest. The

historical experience of totalitarian regimes of the last century, replaced in the 21st century by new, more sophisticated forms of digital control, media manipulation and the simulacrum of reality, renders the artistic warning of dystopian writers prophetic and acutely relevant to society.

Dystopia, by its very nature, is the creative mind's reaction to the dehumanising tendencies of the era. It does not merely model a negative scenario for the future, but also produces a detailed deconstruction of the political, ideological and technocratic systems contemporary to the author. Social protest in dystopian discourse manifests itself through the articulation of a profound conflict between the levelling state apparatus and human individuality, which strives to preserve authenticity. In this regard, there is an urgent need for a comprehensive literary and socio-cultural analysis of the evolution of this genre – from the classic examples of early Soviet and Western European modernism to contemporary phenomena in popular literature (young adult dystopia), which reflect the new challenges of the postmodern era.

**Methods:** The theoretical foundation for the study of the genre-specific characteristics of dystopia is laid in the works of such prominent Russian and international scholars as M. Bakhtin, Y. Lotman, E. Shatsky, B. Lanin, N. Kovtun, as well as F. Jameson, T. Moylan and R. Sargent. In their works, dystopia is defined as a genre complementary to utopia, possessing its own system of constant topoi (Leviathan, total control, regulation of daily life, isolation). However, despite the abundance of monographs devoted separately to the works of Yevgeny Zamyatin or George Orwell, a comparative analysis of classical dystopia with contemporary variations of the genre (in particular, the trilogy by Suzanne Collins) in terms of the realisation of its protest potential remains insufficiently studied. Most critics view \*The Hunger Games\* exclusively within the framework of the entertainment industry, overlooking the profound continuity of the socio-philosophical themes of Zamyatin and Orwell.

The subject of this study is the dystopian genre discourse in world literature of the 20th–21st centuries in its socio-philosophical and artistic dimensions.

The subject of the study is the specificity, strategies and artistic forms of representation of social protest in the novels \*We\* by Yevgeny Zamyatin, \*1984\* by George Orwell and \*The Hunger Games\* by Suzanne Collins.

The aim of this article is to identify, theoretically substantiate and compare the mechanisms of artistic embodiment of social protest in classical and contemporary dystopia, using the aforementioned works as examples, whilst tracing the evolution of the ways in which the individual resists state pressure.

To achieve this aim, the following tasks must be addressed:

1. To elucidate the philosophical and aesthetic nature of dystopia as a specific form of artistic and social protest.
2. To analyse the specifics of the suppression of the individual and the formation of a protest consciousness in Yevgeny Zamyatin's novel *\*We\** through the prism of a critique of rationalism.
3. To examine the discourse of totalitarian control and linguistic resistance (the issue of Newspeak) in George Orwell's novel *\*1984\**.
4. To identify the characteristics of the representation of protest in Suzanne Collins' novel *\*The Hunger Games\** as a reaction to the challenges of mediocracy and consumer society.
5. To conduct a comparative analysis of the evolution of the image of the rebellious hero in the texts under study.

The methodological basis of the work was a comprehensive approach combining comparative-historical, structural-semiotic and cultural-philosophical methods of analysis. The use of a sociological approach (in particular, Michel Foucault's concepts of sovereign power and Jean Baudrillard's theory of simulacra) has enabled a deeper interpretation of the nature of the institutions of power against which the authors' artistic protest is directed. [1]

The scientific novelty of this study lies in the fact that it represents the first attempt to trace a continuous line of continuity in social protest, from the rigid ideocratic models of Yevgeny Zamyatin and George Orwell to the flexible, yet no less repressive, simulacrum practices of Panem in Suzanne Collins' *\*The Hunger Games\**. It is demonstrated that in all three cases, protest is determined by humanity's ontological need for freedom; however, the tools of this protest undergo significant changes depending on the type of mediatization and the technological level of the society in question.

The theoretical conclusions of the article contribute to the further development of genre theory, broadening our understanding of the boundaries and functions of dystopia in the contemporary literary process. The practical materials of this work can be utilised in university teaching when developing lecture courses on the history of foreign and Russian literature of the 20th–21st centuries, specialised courses on the poetics of dystopia, as well as in the preparation of teaching materials for postgraduate students in philology and education.

The study of dystopian discourse as a form of social protest requires, first and foremost, a return to its classical foundations, which established the genre's conceptual framework and structure. In critical literature, particularly in the works

of the renowned dystopia scholar Tom Moylan (T. Moylan), classical dystopia is defined as 'a critical tool aimed at elucidating the latent threats of dominant socio-political narratives'. Social protest in such texts is not limited to the characters' plot-driven rebellion, but manifests itself at deep ontological and structural-semiotic levels. [2]

In Yevgeny Zamyatin's novel *\*We\** (1920), the protest is directed against scientism, radical rationalism and the Taylorisation of existence. The One State functions as a gigantic pan-mechanism, where human subjectivity is levelled out in the pursuit of absolute mathematical harmony. The philosophical context of Zamyatin's rebellion correlates closely with Michel Foucault's (M. Foucault) concepts of 'biopower' and the 'disciplinary society'. The institutions of the One State (in particular, the Glass Walls, the Tablet, the Keepers) exercise total surveillance over the body and spirit of the individual, transforming them into a 'number'.

The protest of the protagonist, D-503, arises as a psychophysiological anomaly – the emergence of a 'soul', which in Zamyatin's coordinate system is equivalent to a return to the irrational, natural essence of humanity. The social and metaphysical protest in the novel reaches its climax in the concept of the 'Single Interplanetary Revolution', developed by the character I-330. Zamyatin makes a radical epistemological breakthrough, asserting the idea of the infinity of the energy explosion in defiance of entropy:

'Revolution is everywhere, in everything; it is infinite; there is no end to it, no final number.'

Thus, Zamyatin's protest is a rebellion of living energy against dead form, of irrational freedom against deterministic complacency. [3]

Moving on to George Orwell's literary system (1984), we discover a different modification of the discourse of power and, accordingly, different forms of resistance. Whereas in Zamyatin's work the state appeals to the common good and reason, in Orwell's work the English-Soviet regime openly manifests power as an end in itself. Drawing on structuralist theories of language (in particular, Louis Althusser's concept of repressive state apparatuses), Orwell demonstrates that totalitarianism seeks to colonise not only physical space, but also the very cognitive matrix of the individual. [4]

The central form of social protest in *\*1984\** is the linguistic and mental resistance practised by Winston Smith. Keeping a diary is the first act of a political manifesto, an attempt to verify historical reality in defiance of the official doctrine of the 'malleability of the past'. Orwell describes in detail the mechanism of

'Newspeak' as a repressive linguistic construct that narrows the horizon of thought. The French philosopher Jacques Derrida pointed out that the deconstruction of the dominant discourse is possible only through the revelation of its internal contradictions. Winston Smith carries out this deconstruction in his own mind, clinging to the concepts of 'common sense' and objective truth:

'Freedom is the ability to say that two plus two equals four.'

The literary landscape at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries demonstrates a significant transformation of the dystopian canon. As the American theorist of Marxism and postmodernism Fredric Jameson notes in his work 'Archaeologies of the Future', the modern dystopia is compelled to respond not to classical industrial totalitarianism, but to the challenges of late capitalism, globalisation and technological control. A striking example of this shift is Suzanne Collins's trilogy 'The Hunger Games'. [5]

The state of Panem, as described by Collins, provides a vivid illustration of Guy Debord's (G. Debord) theory of the 'Society of the Spectacle' and Jean Baudrillard's (J. Baudrillard) concept of 'simulacra'. The Capitol's power rests not only on direct military and police coercion (the peacekeepers), but also on the total mediatisation of violence. The annual 'Hunger Games' are not merely a punitive measure, but a media product that legitimises power, a high-tech reality show designed to atomise the districts and block any possibility of solidarity.

Katniss Everdeen's social protest is initially devoid of any reflective political ideology, which distinguishes her from I-330 or O'Brien (in his supposed guise as a rebel). Katniss's protest stems from the ethical imperative to protect her family (voluntarily taking her sister's place in the Reaping). However, the logic of the narrative's development inevitably transforms this private gesture into a global symbol of resistance. [6]

Collins demonstrates that, under the conditions of a mediaocracy, social protest is also compelled to take the form of a media text. The symbolic gesture of Katniss and Peeta with the poisonous berries in the finale of the first Games is an act of deconstructing the rules of the show, subverting the Capitol's script. The protest here lies in the restoration of subjectivity: the characters refuse to be represented as simulacra; they reclaim their right to die.

**Results and Discussion:** In the subsequent instalments of the trilogy, Collins explores the nature of revolutionary protest in the postmodern era. The image of 'The Mockingjay' becomes a simulated brand used by the leaders of the Rebellion (District 13) for counter-propaganda. The author comes to a bitter conclusion, resonating with sociologist Zygmunt Bauman's ideas on 'liquid modernity': protest

in the 21st century risks being appropriated and commercialised by the media system itself, which demands the utmost ethical vigilance from the rebellious subject.

The trajectory of the rebellious hero's evolution moves from the intellectual scholar (D-503), attempting to reconcile mathematics with inner freedom, through the existentially lonely 'little man' (Winston Smith), who makes a knowingly doomed attempt at epistemological rebellion, to the pragmatic, traumatised teenager (Katniss Everdeen), whose strength lies in representing the pain of the people.

Foreign researchers of the phenomenon of neo-dystopias (in particular, K. Sambson) emphasise that whilst the classic protest of Orwell and Zamyatin unfolded within the realm of 'high modernist themes' (God, Reason, History, the State), the protest in 21st-century literature centres on the concepts of corporeality, identity and the right to escape the dictates of the mass media. Nevertheless, the general ontological basis of dystopian protest remains unchanged: it is always an affirmation of the heterogeneity of human nature against the homogenising pressure of the system. Protest in dystopia fulfils a vital therapeutic and preventive function in culture, acting as the Lacanian 'real' that bursts through the imagined ideological constructs of the era.

**Conclusion:** An examination of the genre-specific nature of dystopia from a diachronic perspective leads to the conclusion that this phenomenon is not merely an artistic representation of crisis scenarios for the future, but constitutes a fundamental form of socio-philosophical protest. This protest is of a profound ontological nature, arising as an inevitable reaction of human subjectivity to attempts at total unification, dehumanisation and alienation of the individual. Throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, as the institutions of repressive power themselves have transformed, strategies of artistic resistance in literature have undergone a significant evolution, whilst retaining a single core value: the defence of human authenticity.

In turn, George Orwell, in his novel \*1984\*, shifts the focus of analysis to cognitive and linguistic mechanisms of suppression. Under the conditions of Angsoc, protest takes on the character of mental and erotic sabotage. Winston Smith resists by verifying historical memory and affirming objective truth in defiance of the repressive linguistic constructs of Newspeak and the practice of doublethink. The classical tradition shows that even when the hero is physically defeated, the very fact of his thinking deconstructs the totalitarian myth.

The contemporary stage of the genre's development, represented by Suzanne Collins's 'The Hunger Games' trilogy, reflects the transition from industrial ideocracy to post-industrial mediocracy and the 'society of the spectacle'. The Capitol's power is maintained through the simulacrum of reality and the total mediatisation of violence. Consequently, Katniss Everdeen's social protest, originally rooted in the micro-society of the family and the ethics of survival, inevitably transforms into a macrosocial rebellion employing partisan semiotic strategies. Collins's heroes break the system's script, fighting for the right to escape the simulated space of the reality show and reclaim their agency.

A comparative analysis of the texts reveals a consistent trajectory in the evolution of the rebellious hero: from the modernist intellectual, torn between mathematical duty and emotion, through the tragically doomed 'little man' of the totalitarian era, to the pragmatic, psychologically traumatised teenager of the postmodern era. Changes in the technological level of control alter the tools of struggle, yet the core of dystopian discourse remains unchanged. The genre continues to fulfil a vital preventive and therapeutic function in culture, acting as a socio-cultural mirror that verifies humanity's indomitable striving for freedom and the preservation of the human spirit in the face of any systemic pressure.

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