

مجله علوم اجتماعی و انسانی دانشگاه شیراز
دوره هیجدهم، شماره اول، تابستان ۱۳۸۱ (پیاپی ۳۵)
(ویژه نامه زبان انگلیسی و زبانشناسی)

زنان حزبی و زنان کارگر: ادامه دیدگاه سنتی در ۱۹۸۴

دکتر فریده پورگیو
دانشگاه شیراز

چکیده

در این مقاله شخصیت های زن در رمان هزار و نهصد و هشتاد و چهار جورج اورول بررسی شده است. این شخصیت ها بر اساس پس زمینه خانواده، ازدواج، عشق و موقعیت اجتماعی مطرح شده اند. بر خلاف شهرت اورول به عنوان یک یاغی زمانه خویش و بر خلاف تأثیر شگرف هزار و نهصد و هشتاد و چهار بر شاخه های دیگر علوم مانند ادبیات، زبانشناسی، جامعه شناسی، سیاست و جرم شناسی وی در حقیقت دیدگاهی سنتی در این مدینه فاجره/ حرمان شهر (dystopia) ارائه می دهد. تصویری که از زنان در کتاب هزار و نهصد و هشتاد و چهار ارائه می شود چندان تفاوتی با رمانهای سنتی وی، روزهای برمه، دختر کشیش، تنفس و درخت زندگی ندارد. در این رمان، مانند رمانهای دیگر اورول دیدگاه سنتی مرد طبقه متوسط انگلیسی را نسبت به زن نشان می دهد.

**Party Women And Prole Women:
Keeping up Tradition in *Nineteen Eighty-Four***

Dr. Farideh Pourgivi*
Shiraz University

ABSTRACT

This study is an analysis of female characters of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in the context of family, marriage, love and social status. References are made to other works of Orwell to show that, in contrast to his fame as a rebel and the huge impact of this novel on many different branches of literature, linguistics, sociology, politics, and criminology, he is an upholder of tradition, even in dystopia. It is argued that, except for Julia, the major female character of the early part of the novel, the portrayal of female characters in this novel is not much different from Orwell's other novels such as *Burmese Days*, *A Clergyman's Daughter*, *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, and *Coming Up For Air*. Marriage, love, family and women in all these novels follow Orwell's traditional view of a middle-class man towards women.

Key Words: 1. Dystopia 2. George Orwell 3. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* 4. Female characters

1. Introduction

George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is a dystopia, which is the representation of "a very unpleasant imaginary world, in which certain ominous tendencies of our present social, political and technological order are projected in some future culmination" (Abrams, 1981: 206). In most dystopias such as Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) and Zamyatin's *We* (1920-21), the setting is put several centuries beyond the date of the composition of the novel, and ultra-modern technology and scientific discoveries are used. Moreover, family is usually abolished, the relationship between men and women has nothing to do with love, family or affection and women are presented as rebels or instigators, while *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (written in 1948) is a prophesy of only 36 years later and family is still a traditional unit of the society. As in his other novels, men in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* are leaders in rebellion or in consent to the dictatorship. Women, whether in family or at work, play a subordinate role; that is, they complete the picture of the male characters.

2. Discussion

Nineteen Eighty-Four depicts a world divided into three parts (Oceania, Eurasia, Eastasia) in constant war with one another. The first/ third person narrator presents the story from Oceania that is ruled by the Inner Party, a secret body of men led by Big Brother. The

* Associate Professor of English Literature.

political system is that of the Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia, and Big Brother is described as a true patriarchal ruler very much similar to Stalin. The traditional institutions of any western society such as the family, different classes, marriage and child-raising are depicted. The society is generally divided into the Party members (Inner and Outer) and the Proles (proletarians or the lower class). The government is divided into four ministries: the Ministry of Peace, which directs the war against Eurasia/Eastasia, the Ministry of Plenty, which is in charge of rationing the limited food supply, the Ministry of Truth, which falsifies old documents to show that the party is always right, and the Ministry of Love or miniluv, which tortures and executes the so called criminals.

Nineteen Eighty-Four has been considered as a blatant attack on Communism and Socialism, "a composite nightmare, fusing the worst elements of our world, East and West, Left and Right, in one hideous scenario, one monstrous collage" (Reilly, 1989: 7). Critics agree that the pre- and post-war conditions of Europe and Britain are portrayed in the novel. (Aldiss, 1984 and Calder, 1974). The only difference is the existence of telescreen which checks every moment of the life of any man, woman and child in Oceania.

Orwell's views on women are very clearly presented in his other novels as well as in his essays and journals. In *Burmese Days*, *Coming up For Air*, *Keeping the Aspidistra Flying* and *A Clergyman's Daughter*, he portrays lower middle class women. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four* three types of women are presented: unmarried ones such as Julia, married ones as Mrs. Parsons and Katherine, all three Party women, and Prole women. Such division of Women in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* into socially distinct groups (Party members equal the middle classes and the Proles are the working class), as in his other novels, is in accordance with Orwell's outlook and his preference for Edwardian life in which the husband is more intelligent, practical and understanding than the wife (Pourgiv, 1989: 74).

One highly interesting characteristic of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is that all its women are without proper or complete names while men are introduced with their surnames. Julia and Katherine, the two women of Winston's life, have only first names and Mrs. Parsons, Winston's neighbour, is only presented through her marriage. All other woman are described through their physical or ethnic features such as the Jewess or the Prole women.

Marriages in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* seem to be worse than that of Orwell's other novels. One cannot expect any better, as there is hardly any choice in Party marriages: the Party does not permit divorce but if there are no children it encourages separation rather than divorce. Marriage is considered to be one's duty to the Party in order to continue the race. The Party's unofficial doctrine is to make men and women hate and despise each other. Winston understands the situation clearly when his thoughts are narrated as:

By careful early conditioning, by games and cold water, by the rubbish that was dinned into them at school and in the Spies and the Youth League, by lectures, parades, songs, slogans, and martial music, the natural feeling had been driven out of them (Orwell, 1984: 62).

Men and women in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* are meant to produce children for the Party. Any feeling of love or friendship between men and women is called sexcrime committed without the permission of the Party. Winston and his wife, Katherine, live together only for fifteen months. Winston's nickname for his wife is "the human sound-track" since she reproduces whatever the Party forces down their throats. Winston considers his wife stupid because she does not react to the Party's propaganda. Yet that is the only way of survival as the telescreen controls every movement of any person. People learn to hide their feelings and

even their thoughts. Lack of children has been the official reason for their separation but Winston considers her frigidity as the cause. Winston hates the women of the Party; yet, for the first time, a male character in Orwell does not put all the guilt on women's shoulders, as he knows that Party propaganda is extremely instrumental in the way women think.

Mrs. Parsons, Winston's neighbour, is another married woman presented; she is only a housewife, though a Party member. One is supposed to use the title "comrade" when addressing men or women. As Winston, the main male character of the novel, explains, "Mrs.' was a word somewhat discountenanced by the Party--you were supposed to call everyone 'comrade'--but with some women one used it instinctively" (22). She is not much different from Hilda Bowling, another lower middle class female character in Orwell's *Coming Up For Air*; she is more hopeless and terrorized by her two children. Mrs. Parsons is thirty, but as the case is with Orwellian married characters, she looks much older and has dust in the creases of her face. She is burdened by housework as well as her two nasty children who are members of the Spies. She is presented as a woman who has to be afraid of even her own children. Horror and fear are her constant companions and there is no doubt that very soon her children will hand her and their father over to the Ministry of Love as it is the usual routine of life in Oceania. Her frustration and hopelessness is best presented by the fact that her kitchen sink is usually blocked and she does not know what a spanner is.

The party is more successful with women than men; women are more vulnerable to the Party's brain-washing. They are the consumers of the Party's propaganda produced by men like Winston and Syme who are the most instrumental in implementing the Party's ideology and the day to day affairs of the Party. No woman in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* holds an important job in the hierarchy of the Party. Although they perform their duties competently, they never boast about it, while male characters very obviously enjoy the job they do: "Winston, Syme and Ampleforth are so enamored of their work, so smitten with the fascination of the difficult--the specialist's occupational hazard--that they miss or ignore its nefarious aims" (Reilly, 1989: 36). Winston is truly happy when he has finished making up the fictional story of comrade Ogilvy's life. Winston, Syme and Ampleforth are proud of the jobs they do as they regard them as challenges to test their own intelligence. Later this product is presented to women that have to accept it as nothing but truth. On the other hand, Julia, the only woman who works in an office producing porno books sold on the sly to the Proles, never discusses her job or boasts about it.

Julia is the major female character in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. She is the only modern woman in all Orwell's novels. She is very different from other female characters. Julia is an expert in analyzing the Party's attitude towards marriage and sexuality. She is a practical character, not caring much for anything other than herself and her immediate needs. She is an athletic and competent woman of twenty-seven. She wears the sash of anti-sex league proudly, though she does not believe in the propaganda of the Party. She is the one who initiates the affair with Winston and this action makes her more like female characters of other dystopias such as *We*. Julia seems as dangerous and at the same time as alluring as E-330 the female rebel in *We*. Like Julia, E-330, initiates their affair, takes D-503, Winston's counterpart, out of their usual environment to "the house of Antiquity" (Zamyatin, 1960: 24). Both seem to be able to outwit the ruling party: E-330 is able to obtain cigarettes and liqueur just as Julia is able to obtain real coffee and chocolates.

These modern rebellious women have one more common characteristic; they prefer to dress in old-fashioned clothing rather than the uniform of the present time. In *We* there are some examples of E-330's wish to return to the past. With the blinds down she takes her uniform off and dresses herself in old beautiful clothes in the House of Antiquity which has wardrobes full of old clothes. But in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Party women neither wear frocks nor use make-up. It is only the Prole prostitute whom Orwell portrays as having used make-up. Julia manages to buy make-up and uses a cheap scent that reminds Winston of an old Prole prostitute. Julia wants to become a woman by dressing up in a frock and wearing silk stockings and high-heeled shoes.

Orwell seems to distort the picture of Julia, the rebel, by his comparison of the prostitute and Julia, but things have so much deteriorated that a prostitute of the old days is now envied; she is too young to remember anything from the old times. The present Prole women cannot afford to dress in frocks, nor buy the make-up and the scent even though they are as very crude as those the Burmese women use in *Burmese Days*. What is significant about Julia is that she is aware of her own wishes and does not hide them from herself. She is still a modern dystopian woman that cannot reveal her wishes.

More has been written on Julia and her relationship with Winston than any other female character in Orwell. Julia has been considered a "stereotypical sex object" (Sperber, 1980: 216) and most critics, even the feminists, usually consider her together with Winston rather than alone and independent:

she is the instrument by which he is brought out of his total isolation and comparative safety into the danger of feeling. She appears from nowhere, she has no history, and in her rather dubious femininity she is perhaps not much more for Winston than an extension of himself. (Small, 1975: 15).

The word "nowhere" is reminiscent of Utopia, which means nowhere. Thus, in Orwell's dystopia some sign of Utopia emerges. More favourable accounts consider her intelligence "pragmatic and cunning" (Calder, 1974: 49); she is a wife to Winston rather than a mistress (Reilly, 1989: 63-64). That is why she does not belong to the male intelligentsia of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and very soon she fills the status of a wife.

Julia has a flair for ordinary things; she is a survivor. She knows how to find real tea, coffee, sugar, and chocolate. She seems to understand some of the policies of the Party; yet, she does not care much about Goldstein's book or the Brotherhood. Their first meeting in "the Golden Country" looks very romantic with him picking bluebells to offer her and her bringing real chocolate. However, Winston praises Julia because she is "corrupt to the bones." That is why their rebellion is considered corrupt (Campbell, 1984: 133). It is not a rebellion of intellectuals against a dictatorial government, it is rather a physical reaction to limitation and personal control. Later on his feelings change and he feels more like a married man. By sanctioning the relationship of Julia and Winston into unofficial marriage, Orwell is giving his approval to their affair. Marriage suits Winston. Julia is mentally and physically good for him; she is all he has wished for but the relationship turns into a marriage in which Julia is unconsciously fattening him up for slaughter because she lacks intelligent companionship. For such intelligent companionship Winston turns to O'Brien who takes him to his final downfall.

Julia is not considered intelligent enough to be an agent of the Thought Police. It is Julia's lack of intelligence, understanding, intellectuality, and interest in political matters that supposedly leads Winston into deeper entanglement with O'Brien, and thus hastening the

arrest of Winston and herself and their subsequent torture. Winston, Julia and O'Brien comprise the usual triangle of Orwell's characters. Winston, who was fascinated by Julia at first, is drawn to O'Brien because O'Brien is Winston's hero who seems to have the intelligence, charm, and physical strength. Although Julia seems unpredictable and her role is rather complicated, the triangle is the same: the brainless girl versus the intelligent man (Macy, 1985 and Patai, 1984). Even if Julia had been intelligent enough, Winston's fascination for O'Brien would not have ended. The mental discourse in every one of Orwell's novels occurs between man and man; it is a masculine business (Reilly, 1989).

Julia accompanies Winston to O'Brien's house as a wife and is treated as such. Based on the Party's principles it is impossible for them to marry, though Winston yearns for it. Julia and Winston try to escape Oceania by going back in time in the room above Charrington's shop. The room is like a time-capsule, and it is under the magnifying glass of the Thought Police. Their marital happiness does not last long but becomes the source of their ultimate defeat in Room 101. The marital chamber where their innermost thoughts are bared is under the constant focus of the Thought Police who, like a camera, records every single word, movement, and even thought. The sanctity of privacy in love has been destroyed by installing telescreens in every imaginable corner. There is no lowering of the blinds because Big Brother cannot tolerate privacy; he wants to be present all the time.

Critics have reacted differently to Julia. Her courage has been praised, but she has also been considered as a spy (Miller Gulati, 1985: 80). She is not the typical hopeless woman, like Mrs. Parsons, as she is quick to find solutions for household problems such as that of the rats. It is the reversal of role; the man being afraid of the rat and the woman thinking of a solution and doing the household maintenance. In comparison with Orwell's other female characters Julia looks more like a young man about town than a girl. Yet she certainly has one thing in common with the other female characters of Orwell and that is her hatred of women: "Always in the stink of women! How I hate women!" (115). This reaction is without any specific reason other than supporting Orwell's view that women are no good for intellectual companionship. Her outburst seems to be an authorial intrusion. Her hatred for the Party does not stem out of any moral or philosophical point of view; it is instinctive. She wants to have a good time, while the Party wants to stop her. In contrast to every other female character of Orwell, she is sexually uninhibited. Her sash of Anti-Sex League is only a ploy, "The frigid ice maiden who provokes Winston's dislike turns out to be Messalina" (Reilly, 1989: 42). She uses the crudest and coarsest words for the Party and the Inner Party. Even when Winston persists in explaining Ingsoc, Doublethink, and Newspeak, she becomes bored, confused, and falls asleep. She produces books, but shows no interest in them. She is a champion of love and dares to defy O'Brien in his house, breaking the hypnotic influence he is exerting over Winston. But that is the scope of her rebellion and means nothing more.

When Winston and Julia meet again, one knows instantly that she has been through the same process as that of Winston. Through O'Brien one gets a picture which may or may not be true, indicating that she has gone through the same process. The last time Winston sees her, she has a scar across her forehead and temple.

Winston and Julia have both changed but for Winston the important change is her waist which has become thicker and stiffened. She had more or less a Prole kind of mentality, now she is physically like the Prole women. Instead of a feeling of love, Winston feels disgust

towards her. Julia also glances at him with contempt and dislike. It is not very important whether her torture has taken as long as Winston's or not. She has reached the same conclusion after going through the same process. This is one of the very rare times when Orwell lets the female character have the same feelings as that of the male character.

Pain and suffering are not gender bound. The male hierarchy of the Party hands out suffering irrespective of gender. Julia had to go through her torture by herself and reach her own conclusion which is very much like that of Winston; this is a great change in Orwell to consider a woman independent of a man, while suffering as much as she can and reaching the same conclusion which his male character had reached. Love is changed to dislike, if not outright hatred. Big Brother triumphs by destroying love: "We despise what we betray. Winston betrays Julia and himself" (Reilly, 1989: 72). It is the defeat of human beings regardless of the process and the easy confession of Julia or Winston.

The Proles, true to the Party's teaching, are presented as inferior to Party members. They are creatures of instinct. The most exciting thing for them is lottery and drinking. Orwell's way of describing them reminds one of the yahoos of Swift. They seem to be immune to Party propaganda. They go on producing children, and they have kept some old-fashioned ideas of decency like the Prole woman who protests against the atrocious film being shown in front of the children. There are two female Proles who are the center of attention. The first one is singing outside the room where Winston and Julia lead their hidden affair: "a monstrous woman, solid as a Norman Pillar, with brawny red forearms and a sacking apron strapped about her middle. ..." (122-123). The Prole women have Brobdingnagian massiveness without their intellectuality or rationality. Winston is clearly fascinated by the woman's strength. As usual, Winston is wrong in his assumptions about people's strength. The Prole woman is crying with pain at the moment of Winston's arrest. She is not the "block of granite" Winston perceived. The only person who seems to have an everlasting source of power is O'Brien. The last time Winston meets a Prole is at close quarters in a Miniluv cell where a huge mass of a drunk woman is thrown on his lap. These Proles are the descendants of what Orwell presents throughout his fiction and non-fiction, the monstrous shape of the Prole or working-class women, accompanied by the explanation that they are dull, unintelligent creatures who have lost their physical attraction, like Katie and Elsie in *Coming Up For Air* or those in Orwell's diaries and notes. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four* their prolific child-producing is first presented as the hope for a better future, but O'Brien dismisses this notion and belittles them.

Two other women are presented in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. One is Winston's mother whom we meet in his diaries; she had been a Madonna-like, self-sacrificing and very patient woman betrayed by Winston to the Thought Police. The other woman is seen through a film who tries to shield a child from bullets with her body and is called a Jewess by Orwell. She is blown into pieces by the explosion. These women are the traditional portrayal of selfless, loving mothers who belong only to the memories and the golden past; there is no place for them in a dystopia.

Nineteen Eighty-Four starts with a man and it ends with a man. Winston, an unimportant Outer Party member, fills the corner table in the Chestnut Tree Cafe where the three important Inner Party members--Jones, Aaronson, and Rutherford--sat after their disgrace from the leadership. Like them, his glass is always filled, and the chessboard is always waiting for him. Julia is a speck in the crowds. Her only difference with the other

female characters has been her freedom in expressing her physical needs. She is as unintelligent as her predecessors. There is no real intellectual discourse between Julia and Winston; he has to turn to O'Brien for what turns out to be torture but at the same time intelligent and stimulating conversation. Julia is converted to a modern housewife who does not nag like other female characters in Orwell's novels.

3. Conclusion

Orwell as a middle class writer follows the tradition of portraying women as wives, mistresses and objects. His negative look that he throws at women in his other novels continues in his last novel. He starts with a better picture of Julia but very soon he makes her turn into an ordinary woman.

In *Nineteen Eighty-Four* women that are good are actually dead; women like the Jewess and Winston's mother. They are part of memories that must be forgotten. Orwell starts *Nineteen Eighty-Four* with the presentation of a modern woman that is suitable for dystopia but very soon recasts her in the traditional role of a wife. At the end of the novel, we have defeated Winston and the victorious Big Brother. It is the evil victory of a man, Big Brother, over another man, Winston, which closes the novel. Women's defeat does not count.

References

- Abrams, M. H. (1981). *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, New York: CBS Publishing
- Aldiss, Brian W. (1984). *The Downward Journey: Orwell's 1984*, *Extrapolation*, 25, 1
- Campbell, Beatrix. (1984). *Orwell--Paterfamilias or Big Brothers?* In Christopher Norris (Ed.), *Inside the Myth, Orwell: Views from the Left*, London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Calder, Jenni. (1974). *Orwell's Post-war Prophecy*, in Raymond Williams (Ed.), *George Orwell, A Collection of Critical Essays*, Ed. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall.
- Macy, Samuel. L. (1985). *George Orwell's 1984: The Future That Becomes the Past*, *English Studies in Canada*, XI, 41 December.
- Miller Gulati, Basia. (1985) *Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four: Escape from Doublethink*, *International Fiction Review*, 12, 2.
- Orwell, George (1984). *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Patai, Daphne. (1984). *The Orwell Mystique, A Study in Male Ideology*, Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Pourgiv, Farideh. (1989). *The Portrayal of Women in Orwell's Novels*, Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Glasgow, Scotland.
- Reilly, Patrick. (1989). *Nineteen Eighty-Four, Past, Present, and Future*, Boston: Twayne Publishers.

Small, Christopher. (1975). **The Road to Miniluv, George Orwell, The State, and God**, London: Victor Gollancz.

Sperber, Murray. (1980). *Gazing into the Glass Paperweight: The Structure and Psychology of Orwell's 1984*, **Modern Fiction Studies**, 26, 2.

Zamyatin, Yevgeny. (1960). **We**, Trans. by Bernard Guilbert Guerney, Harmondsworth: Penguin.