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Bakalářská práce

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19th and 20th century British dystopias – Butler's Erewhon and Orwell's 1984

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Abstract

The following thesis focuses on analyzing and comparing two dystopian novels: a world-wide well-known *1984* (1949) by George Orwell and a relatively unknown *Erewhon* (1872) by Samuel Butler. Despite being written over a half century ago, and over a hundred years ago respectively, their significance and parallel is still to be found even in today's quickly-changing world. As a result of that, this thesis also tries to find equivalents from today's world. Last but not least, I intend to focus on the term *dystopia* itself as it might cause confusion to readers and the term is intriguing in its own right.

Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci vypracoval samostatně a použil jen uvedených pramenů a literatury.

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vlastnoruční podpis

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INTRODUCTION

George Orwell was a prolific author whose name should sound familiar to just about every child in the world. Having read both his major works, *1984* and *Animal Farm*, I have always appreciated the message he was trying to send. As a young pupil, I used to approach his *Animal Farm* purely as a fairy tale or fable, which is also possible.

However, after having read the political allegory later, I recognized the uniqueness of his writing. *Animal Farm* is an excellent choice when it comes to gaining better understanding of how the Russian Revolution worked. The book sends a strong message about power, manipulation and explains the reasons for failure of Communist regime.¹ Everyone probably heard of the famous line *All animals are equal, but some are more equal than others* which occurs repeatedly, in various shapes and alternatives, throughout the entire book. Orwell believed that those who hold the reigns use the power to manipulate language and facts to their own advantage. I think anyone would be hard pressed to deny such statement.

It could also mean, especially when applied to today's society, a comment addressing one's belief that he is better than others, or most of the society despite generally having no reason to feel good about himself. Such thinking speaks volume about one's morals and should not be generally accepted but today's world is full of immorality and lies. We are living in a world in which evaluating the behavior of people becomes increasingly difficult. What is good and what is bad? Someone might consider particular behavior immoral, whereas others might be perfectly fine with it. It is not clear to say where exactly we draw the line nowadays.

The similar logic might be applied to *1984* as well. It is fascinating, yet presumably not entirely shocking, that *1984* has recently emerged as the best-selling book yet again.² Donald Trump's reigning his office as the next US president might have to do something with it. There is no doubt that Donald Trump used facts, propaganda and media to his advantage, presumably manipulating the public which led to achieving his ultimate goal. That is what has been happening in today's world, and this particular behavior could be depicted in the *1984* as the Big Brother and Ministry of Truth were creating their own truth, and their own world. I found it appealing and alarming at the same time how the world changes, yet remains the same on so many levels.

¹ George Orwell's *Animal Farm*: A Study Guide, p. 2

² <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/art/george-orwells-1984-best-seller-heres-resonates-now/>

We should take into account the fact that the title of the book most likely derives from a reversed order of the last two numbers of the year (1948) in which George Orwell wrote his famous dystopia. As a result of that, he probably was not aiming at the year 1984, not trying to come up with a statement about what is going to happen long after his death. Additionally, Orwell was already ill at the time of writing the book (he died just one year after releasing the book), which contributed to the whole picture why the book was so gloomy and full of pessimism, probably even more had it not been for his illness³.

Samuel Butler might be considered a forgotten author by some, but he was in fact an intriguing man who was able to identify weaknesses of the Victorian society⁴. Not only was he a classic, philosopher or an art critic, Butler was also an intellectual who approved of science, which was rather unusual for a man living in that era⁵. He was a man who thought ahead of his time, which makes him, in my view, an interesting choice for further study. The idea of how the society works, thinking differently, standing out from the rest, and even possibly having the ability and knowledge to predict the future to some degree, always appealed to me. And as questionable as it is whether Orwell did use a prophecy for the future, it is still remarkable to think he was extremely close with regard to today's society.

³ CARTER, Ronald and DUROW, Valerie. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, viii

⁴ HARRIS F, John: *Samuel Butler, Author of Erewhon: The Man and his Work*, p. 15

⁵ HARRIS F, John: *Samuel Butler, Author of Erewhon: The Man and his Work*, p. 16

1 EXAMINING THE TERM DYSTOPIA ITSELF

Simply put, dystopian literature shows an alarming and unpleasant world⁶. Having read *1984* and *Erewhon*, I believe it might be also approached as an “*imaginative place where everything goes wrong*”. Just studying the term from the morphological point of view, the prefix dys means bad, negative or apart. When put together with utopia, we have the opposite of the term which used Sir Tomas More for the very first time. Thus utopia is an ideal place or state. In saying that, interpretations of what is a dystopia or utopia may vary. A novel regarded by some as a utopia might be viewed differently by other critics. What might sound like a dream society to some may sound like a hell to others.

Dystopia is a special kind of satire, typically with one emerging element in the center and such element distorts the entire system⁷. Additionally, dystopian novels typically study humankind on the whole, not focusing on an individual who might just be representing some typical features and bad habits of mankind. They show an exaggerated worst-case scenario painted in dark colors and typically point at a current trend or a political system not working properly or not working at all. Dystopias may also be concerned with plague, ecology or nuclear accident, among other things⁸. Provided such bad tendencies remain unchanged, we might very well expect those extreme consequences which occur in dystopias.

The protagonist, provided he recognizes the danger of the society in which he lives, usually feels trapped (Winston Smith in *1984*) and does not see the light at the end of the tunnel. He might be on his own, facing the unthinkable. Despite being generally aware of what is going on, he can only do so much. There is also the possibility that he eventually gives up, whether it is an action of committing suicide or finally buying in the lies and the world he has been surrounded by. In saying that, the reader should be able to realize the negative aspects of such society through his account of events.

⁶ CARTER, Ronald and DUROW, Valerie. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, vii

⁷ CZIGÁNYIK, Zsolt. *Satire and Dystopia: Two Genres*, p. 306

⁸ VARSAMOLOPOULOS, Maria. *Before Utopia: The Function of Sacrifice in Dystopian Narratives*, p. 30

Furthermore, individuality is non-existent, propaganda controls all citizens by means of various ways. People are scared, they are probably under constant surveillance and eventually surrender as a result of never-ending pressure and manipulation. The suppression of the human potential is probably the scariest part, as far as I am concerned. It is the beginning of an end. Not only it eliminates hope or love to some degree, it also constrains human creativity and ability which otherwise could help to change the situation for the better. Loss of freedom helps to utilize that society should soon lose hope, and without hope, there is only little motivation for the fight, attempt trying to improve the situation. All of this obviously favors the propaganda, leaving the society out dry.

Unfortunately, dystopias have a strong connection to today's reality. We should not put ourselves in a position to avoid or ignore such reality. Our culture and beliefs have certainly been at least partially damaged. Dystopias help to remind us that our reality is not good enough, could get even worse, while utopias remind us that a change, even though it would be difficult, is possible too. Dystopias should cause disgust and horror in the eyes of the public, helping to see the world from a certain perspective and get a better picture of what might be happening or what might happen in the future and not get completely caught off guard. Authors usually react to bad trends and habits, with regards to the future, and such a wake-up call might prove to be invaluable.

I personally believe that dystopias offer an enormous value, not only for students but for adults as well. For instance, a student who is eager to do a Politics degree shall find inspiration and comparison which may come in handy.

2 ABOUT THE AUTHORS

2.1 George Orwell

George Orwell was born on June 25, 1903, in the eastern part of India. He was actually born as *Eric Arthur Blair* (he adopted the pen name *George Orwell* in 1933)⁹. His family has mostly been described as *middle-classed*,¹⁰ Orwell's father was a British civil servant in India and he served in that capacity until his retirement in the early 1910s. His mother, Ida Limouzin, was of French descent and she met Richard Blair while she was on a trip to India. Blair was eighteen years older and their personalities could have been a worse match,¹¹ however, they still married in a typical Victorian fashion. Young Orwell did not spend much of his childhood in India, as his mother took young George and his sister to England. As a result of that, Orwell would see his father occasionally. One of the reasons why Orwell's mother decided to move was the plague which was spread out at the time in the area.

As a young boy, Orwell became a keen reader. He admired the works of Jack London, Rudyard Kipling, and particularly H. G. Wells. On the whole, Orwell had a happy childhood during which he enjoyed hunting or fishing, and most importantly, young George developed his love for the simple things of nature. That being said, it is worth noting that Orwell's life had not been all that simple since he hated a boarding school where he was sent to, and the relationship with his father was complicated¹².

At a young age, Orwell filled his notebooks with poetry, short stories and essays¹³. He was not even afraid to say that one day he would become a successful writer. He certainly lived up to his own expectations.

Orwell faced much adversity along the way, though. As single-minded Orwell was, he was not sure what direction to take when it came to the inevitable: planning the future. He was considering studying at Oxford or Cambridge, but given his mediocre school record, it was not realistic. Thus he decided to follow his father's footsteps and joined the Indian Civil Service. He

⁹ RODDEN, John and ROSSI, John. *The Cambridge Introduction to George Orwell*, p. 6

¹⁰ VENTURA, Michael in *The Disappearances of George Orwell*

¹¹ BOWKER, Gordon. *George Orwell*, p. 18

¹² VENTURA, Michael in *The Disappearances of George Orwell*

¹³ RODDEN, John and ROSSI, John. *The Cambridge Introduction to George Orwell*, p. 9

probably did not have a true desire to become a police officer, some even believe he chose this path to earn his father's respect¹⁴. Nevertheless, being a policeman meant prestige and a well-above average salary.

When it comes to assessing his Burma days (a place where Orwell served), though, Orwell used words such as *five wasted years*¹⁵. It probably was not the happiest time of his life but at least something positive came out of the whole experience: he became truly motivated to reach his ultimate goal, and his Burma days inspired him in creating his first novel, fittingly-called *Burmese Days* (1934).

Unfortunately, after returning to England, several years of poverty followed. The post-war situation took a toll on Blair's family's financial stability, and Orwell's father was disappointed in his son after having found out he would try his very best to become a full-time writer, which seemed unlikely at the time. Nevertheless, Orwell was dedicated to follow his heart and reach his ultimate dream. His standard of living became even lower as he was willingly surrounded by low-class citizens in order to find inspiration for his future works.

Orwell moved to Paris in 1928 since he thought he could use a change of scenery and a little bit of peace and freedom for his writings¹⁶. As much as he benefited from spending time in the intellectual center, living in a cheap hotel did not improve Orwell's health condition. In 1929, he suffered from bronchitis and was forced to spend two weeks in a hospital whose equipment and conditions were extremely poor. To make matters worse, Orwell was presumably already dealing with tuberculosis, a fatal disease at that time which eventually killed him in 1950.

Taking into account that his financial situation was not improving at all, he returned to England. Orwell faced some adversity yet again. His father was already seventy, and he certainly was not happy that his son did not have much of a success. Having limited options, Orwell became a private tutor and a school teacher.

Orwell finally caught a break in 1933: his *Down and Out in Paris and London* was published in more than a thousand copies. It might have been a real turning point in Orwell's life. He earned trust from his publisher, Victor Gollancz, to the degree he was sent to areas of mass unemployment in Lancashire and Yorkshire to record what he saw. The *Road to Wigan Pier* is a direct result of Orwell's efforts. This piece eventually meant some financial stability.

¹⁴ RODDEN, John and ROSSI, John. *The Cambridge Introduction to George Orwell*, p. 10

¹⁵ RODDEN, John and ROSSI, John. *The Cambridge Introduction to George Orwell*, p. 10

¹⁶ BOWKER, Gordon. *George Orwell*, p. 107

After getting married, Orwell went to Spain to fight for the Republicans. Orwell initially thought he would gain some information and inspiration with regard to his writing, but he eventually entered the army, despite his poor health and having little to no experience. Against all odds, Orwell still managed to earn respect. However, one day, Orwell was severely wounded during the battle. Had the shot gone few inches aside, Orwell probably would not have survived. Orwell therefore returned back to England because he would not be much useful anymore. *Homage to Catalonia* is the account of the Spanish Civil War as Orwell saw it. As someone who had been there, he was able to deliver a believable story.

In order to improve his health, Orwell spent six months in Morocco, where he wrote the novel *Coming Up for Air*. Despite his bad shape and increasing risk of worsening his health, Orwell was disappointed when he found out he would not enter the Second World War. However, he started working for the BBC and as a literary editor of *Tribune*, he was a regular contributor to political and literary issues.

Last but not least, Orwell's strong anticommunist beliefs were expressed in his late masterpieces *Animal Farm* and *1984*, which brought him well-deserved world-wide fame. While working on *1984*, Orwell was very ill, suffering from aforementioned tuberculosis. His illness along with the sad fact that he had lost few family members, including his wife, might have contributed to the overall tone of the novel. Nevertheless, George Orwell has generally been recognized as a leading figure of the twentieth-century English prose and one of the most influential writers of all times. His works, essays and opinions have still been discussed by numerous critics from many different perspectives and angles.

2.2 Samuel Butler

Samuel Butler was born on 4th December in 1835. His father was the Reverend Thomas Butler and his grandfather was Dr. Samuel Butler, headmaster and later Bishop of Lichfield¹⁷. Butler had to deal with weight of expectations. And young Butler got off to a good start as he went to St. John's College, following his father's steps. He was expected to enter the church, but unlike his father, his problem with Christianity would make that irreconcilable¹⁸. Butler was a man who stood out from the rest: he attacked Christianity and Victorian morals in his *The Way of All Flesh*, which was not released until his death in 1902.

Early satire *The Fair Haven* followed. Butler questioned whether there is any difference between boys who had been baptized, and those who had not – such thinking certainly did not help to forge a complicated relationship with his religion-based father. Young Butler felt almost as if he did not belong at all. As a result of that, he decided that a change of scenery would be welcomed. He found home in New Zealand where he made a decent living as a sheep farmer. The beauty of the country was a great source of inspiration to the writer in writing his famous *Erewhon*.

One might argue that Samuel Butler was indeed born in the wrong era for his own opinions and beliefs. He stood outside of the Victorian convention with regard to his sympathies were not directed at those of his age, and he was able to see the weaknesses of the society and criticize them¹⁹.

After going through multiple sources, I am inclined to say that Samuel Butler was a fascinating man thinking outside the box. His lack of produced work might play a role in general ignorance of his name and contributions. In a way, Butler's advancement of his own time cost him a world-wide fame. What makes us different makes us unique and beautiful. Ultimately, those who happen to study some of Butler's work should find a real value of a man who had been too shrewd to have been fully comprehended back in the day.

¹⁷ HARRIS F., John. *Samuel Butler Author of Erewhon: The Man and his Work*, p. 37

¹⁸ HEFFER, Simon. *Samuel Butler: Victorian Atheist and Controversialist*

¹⁹ HARRIS F., John. *Samuel Butler Author of Erewhon: The Man and his Work*, p. 14

3 ANALYSIS AND COMPARISON OF THE TWO DYSTOPIAS

3.1 1984

1984 is an excellent example of a dystopian novel which portrays a totalitarian society in which people live, or rather struggle on a day-to-day basis. The story line of the book is supposed to be set in Oceania and evolves around Winston Smith, an ordinary man working in the Ministry of Truth. I personally found Winston an intriguing man and a good fit for what Orwell was arguably trying to accomplish. I got a notion that Winston was a fine man who was not exactly a rocket scientist but at the same time, he was well-aware of what was going on and which steps he should take in order not to get caught. He is smart enough not to commit crimes against the Party's laws and beliefs, however, he commits so called *thought crimes* while keeping a diary. In saying that, he keeps the risk of being spotted at the minimum, given the circumstances. After falling in love with Julia, it was unavoidable they would eventually be caught, sooner or later, though.

Orwell uses a psychological phenomenon known as the *Stockholm Syndrome*²⁰. This phenomenon can be described in a sense that leaders of a country use humiliation and fear to reshape a personality, the people holding the reigns in turn gain power so that no individuality remains. In other words, such process takes out our identity. Everyone might very well be looked upon as a number. That is precisely what was happening in Oceania as the Party took life of all its citizens.

As the citizens were being constantly watched, the Party eliminated the idea of freedom while forbidding sex, controlling language and history, among other things. Even children were raised in such manners that if the opportunity arises, they should turn in a family member, even though it might happen to be their own mother or father. It has really happened in Oceania as a boy, supposedly a neighbor of Winston, identified his own father as an enemy of the regime. The Party then took appropriate steps.

What I found particularly insane was the Party's ability to control the language and writing, thus controlling the past, present and the future. They were constantly changing the name of its enemy, they fought against Eurasia one day and allegedly fought against a different enemy

²⁰ BROWN-WYATT, Bertram. *George Orwell and the Question of Humiliation in Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 1

the other day. It is obvious what was happening. They were messing with people's heads, doing exactly what they wanted to accomplish. The following extract from the novel defines those principles and thought process of the Party: "*The Party said that Oceania had never been in alliance with Eurasia. He, Winston Smith, knew that Oceania had been in alliance with Eurasia as short a time as four years ago. But where did that knowledge exist? Only in his own consciousness, which in any case must soon be annihilated. And if all others accepted the lie which the Party imposed – if all records told the same tale – then the lie passed into history and became truth*²¹".

Obviously, Winston was smart enough to know where the truth lies as the extract shows, however, how could he prove it? There was no evidence, no data, one could rely purely on his own intelligence and memory. While it is probably possible to carry on like that for quite some time, people are bound to lose track and possibly start questioning whether the Party is not saying the truth after all. It is not difficult to imagine that people would easily lose sanity in such society. After some time, Winston seemed to be baffled, he might have given up – it did not make any difference whether Oceania was in a war with Eurasia or whichever enemy Oceania fought, if any enemy at all. Having said that, the citizens did not know better. They might have considered it normal as they were raised, especially the young ones, in such circumstances and have no awareness nor knowledge to make good judgment. Nobody should put the blame on them.

This is certainly one of the ways of the Party how to control the society. If they eliminate the knowledge and common sense of people to a minimum (particularly of those young ones), there is probably just an outside chance of people starting rioting. To give the Party some credit, the society is extremely well-organized²², obviously according to those ludicrous beliefs. Intelligent people such as Winston stood only a slim chance of beating the party. They did not know who they could trust, had only limited options and usually knew few people, if any at all, who were on the same page. Yet there were rumors or beliefs that some kind of *Brotherhood* exists – a secret society which intends to destroy the Party. At the very least, it gave the likes of Winston or Julia some sort of hope that the party might be eventually overthrown, even though it probably would not be in their lifetime and they were more than aware of it. In a way, Winston

²¹ ORWELL, George. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 34

²² WILLIAMS, Raymond. *Ideology in the works of George Orwell*, p. 58

and Julia prove that some individualists always try²³ but it is not enough to make some noise. The party has successfully foreseen that – power is collective²⁴.

Furthermore, capturing an enemy did not mean an end to the party. As long as the enemy resists, they never kill them. They convert them, reshape them and take all evil, at least according to their principles, by using violence and confronting enemies with their biggest fears inside the room 101: *"Do anything to me!" he yelled. "You've been starving me for weeks. Finish it off and let me die. Shoot me. Hang me. Sentence me to twenty-five years. Is there somebody else you want me to give away? Just say who it is and I'll tell you anything you want. I don't care who it is or what you do to them. I've got a wife and three children. The biggest of them isn't six years old. You can take the whole lot of them and cut their throats in front of my eyes, and I'll stand by and watch it. But not Room 101!"*²⁵. They eventually all surrender. It is fascinating to see that prisoners are willing to sacrifice their loved ones in order not to struggle in the room 101. As a result of that, there is not any hope for revolution as there are no rivals alive to revolt. The Party thus created the ‘perfect’ society as far as their intensions are concerned, and a nightmare society for the citizens. Nobody can say it did not work, no matter how awful the society was. They obviously used power, violence and identified human mind as a weak spot which made the Party only stronger and helped them to achieve their ultimate goal.

²³ WILLIAMS, Raymond. *Ideology in the works of George Orwell*, p. 60

²⁴ WILLIAMS, Raymond. *Ideology in the works of George Orwell*, p. 61

²⁵ ORWELL, George. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 215

3.2 Brief description of main characters in 1984

Winston

As already hinted, Winston represents an ordinary citizen who is a victim of the system. He is desperate to know how the Party executes its calculative moves, and how the system could be overthrown for good. He accepts the fact that the probability of being caught is high and that the Party would likely not be overthrown in his lifetime, but he fights hard nevertheless which speaks volume about his character. Had most of the citizens possessed a similar attitude, the odds of the Party being eventually overthrown would have been significantly higher.

Julie

Julie and Winston complement each other very well. Not only do they have one person they could trust, they enjoy spending valuable time together. While Julie seems to be more concerned with living the life to the fullest, given their options, Winston thinks more long-term. However, Julie seems to be smart enough not to get caught by making a stupid mistake, either.

O'Brien

I found O'Brien the most fascinating character of the book. Orwell leaves a lot to be desired as far as development and space given to O'Brien is concerned, which probably makes him even more mysterious and powerful man. It is whale of a task to read much into his quotes, decision-making process as he is extremely bright and seems to be at least three steps ahead of Winston in their conversation towards the end. Manipulative and tricky, O'Brien represents a good vocal leader for the Party which aims to gain full control of the entire society. An example of O'Brien's manipulative behavior will be shown and examined in the following chapter.

3.3 Pressure and terror

As previously suggested, terror is one of the main principles of Oceania. The Party makes sure that people are scared of the regime and its supposed leader called the *Big Brother*. Inhabitants do not encounter the Big Brother in a human shape, but seeing him everywhere on big posters, telescreens and even coins is certainly more than enough. People know they are being constantly monitored and the Big Brother might be a symbol of that.

The question is, does Big Brother exist or not? At the end of the day, I do not think it make a great difference. However, O'Brien implies to Winston that Big Brother exists just as embodiment of the Party and that he will never die.

"Does Big Brother exist?" 'Of course he exists. The Party exists. Big Brother is the embodiment of the Party.' 'Does he exist in the same way as I exist?' 'You do not exist,' said O'Brien. Once again the sense of helplessness assailed him. He knew, or he could imagine, the arguments which proved his own non-existence, but they were nonsense, they were only a play on words. Did not the statement, 'You do not exist', contain a logical absurdity? But what use was it to say so? His mind shriveled as the thought of the unanswerable, mad arguments with which O'Brien would demolish him. 'I think I exist,' he said wearily. 'I am conscious of my own identity. I was born, and I shall die. I have arms and legs. I occupy a particular point in space. No other solid object can occupy the same point simultaneously. In that sense, does Big Brother exist?' 'It is of no importance. He exists.' 'Will Big Brother ever die?' 'Of course not. How could he die? Next question'"²⁶

The entire sequence is significant: O'Brien proves to be extremely bright and manipulative and even though Winston seems to be aware of that, he still has difficulty putting O'Brien into an inferior position which very well might be impossible.

Additionally, it suggests that Big Brother is just a symbol of the Party and the true leader (whether he communicates through Big Brother) remains unknown. Having said that, citizens of Oceania cannot know for sure – and that uncertainty might be a part of the terror by the Party. People deal with uncertainty on a regular basis, yet they even do not know who is truly in charge, which in turn makes the system even scarier. Goldstein himself claims that is easier to feel emotions towards a person than towards an abstract thing, such as a political party, which is

²⁶ ORWELL, George. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 234-235

likely true. In the end, it is yet another calculated move by the Party how to make sure the society is being terrorized more than enough.

Another example of terror might be found in such regard that family members or friends could have been vaporized overnight²⁷. All of a sudden with no warnings at all. People could easily wake up in the morning only to find out that their loved ones are missing. And even though they had a general idea about what had probably happened, they still never get to figure out what exactly happened to that person, where they were held or whether they suffered or not. This obviously makes it even harder for the citizens if they did not struggle enough already. I can only imagine that for many people such feeling of hopelessness as they had no chance of finding a trace was among the absolutely worst.

One would think catching the enemy should do it, not for the Party, though. Yet, at the first glance, it does not make much of a sense. Why would the party waste their time to try to change the thinking-process of the enemies and turned them into pro-party believers when in the end, they kill them nonetheless? It is hard to pinpoint what exactly Orwell had in mind. However, religiously speaking, one of the possible interpretations may be the elimination of the rising of the dead. Another reason could be simply the Party's belief that their thinking and opinions were the only ones which should be justifiable, acceptable and everyone should be on the same page as them. Despite all these points I remain skeptical that the Party believed in such shift in philosophy considering the eventual and inevitable execution of a murder. They did not take even the slightest risk.

²⁷ WILLIAMS, Raymond. *Ideology in the works of George Orwell*, p. 64

3.4 Where does the truth lie?

The establishment of the so-called Records Department, which is in charge of constantly reshaping the past, plays a key role in the Party tenure, as far as I am concerned. It enables them to control the society and go from there. It is impossible to citizens to prove whether a certain decision was good or bad, no matter how ridiculous it may sound. If there is no evidence, there is no case. The lie could become the "truth" in the blink of an eye. As already mentioned, even Winston eventually started questioning his memory. What if the mind deceived him? O'Brien was just playing with him as far as the photograph of him and Goldstein is concerned, but Winston reached a personal lowest-point and was not able to think straight. And all things considered, it is understandable. If we take into account the fact that Winston arguably belonged to the more sophisticated part of Oceania's citizens, the overall picture looks even more concerning. There is a good reason to believe that most citizens would lose their minds more easily than Winston, without fighting or at least without thinking about fighting against the Party.

Having said that, I believe there are parallels to be found in today's world as well. Unlike citizens of Oceania, we are offered unlimited options and possibilities which in turn brings problems, too. People holding the reigns can manipulate the truth almost as easily as the Party – by using money, power, identifying the weak spots of the society, which might seem easier than back then, and especially by using media such as the press or the internet. We may be unsure about whom we can trust and what should be considered a reliable source and what not. It is easy to get lost in a flood of information as certain people tend to manipulate the facts to their own advantages. And if someone does not think critically about the issues they read about, it can lead to some false beliefs about the society itself. Different scenarios, situations and possibilities but when everything is said and done, a rather similar thinking and intentions of those presented with such power and options.

3.5 EREWHON (analysis, comparison with 1984)

When we take a close look at *Erewhon*, the first several chapters do not indicate we are dealing with a dystopia at all. Samuel Butler gives quite a colorful description of the nature, its mountains or valleys. *"With this bay of land, however, the case was different. The harbours were sufficient, the country was timbered, but not too heavily, it was admirably suited for agriculture, it also contained millions on millions of acres of the most beautifully grassed country in the world, and of the best suited for all manner of sheep and cattle. The climate was temperate, and very healthy, there were no wild animals, nor were the natives dangerous, being few in number and of intelligent tractable disposition"*²⁸. In other words, Butler chose a very different approach than Orwell who from the very beginning started to depict a nightmare society by using lines such as the famous one 'BIG BROTHER is watching you'. That is the first most distinguishable and obvious difference between the two novels. *Erewhon* obviously is not Samuel Butler's ideal state, though²⁹.

Butler uses a realistic narrative, especially in that beginning, which is also one of the charms of *Erewhon*³⁰. As previously stated, Butler was familiar with New Zealand, so the description consists of certain parts of this beautiful country which does correspond with vocabulary Butler used as Higgs was trying to find Erewhon. I am not trying to take anything from Orwell, who did not really focus on such aspect (and that is not the point of a dystopian novel anyway) but Butler also showed a sense of adventure by describing natural scenery and little things we are surrounded by. In other words, Orwell's readers are thrown into the fire while *Erewhon* offers a little contrast and versatility of a realistic tale which just then changes to a dystopian narrative. Butler might have used such entry on purpose with good intentions since he once claimed that books of travel into unknown countries are one of the most offensive forms literature can assume³¹. Moreover, adventure stories of the unknown have always been popular among reader, so it was smart of Butler to use such concept even if it were to be applied for only the first few chapters of the book.

²⁸ BUTLER, Samuel. *Erewhon*, p. 3

²⁹ F. HARRIS, John. *Samuel Butler - The Author of Erewhon: The Man and his Work*, p. 72

³⁰ F. HARRIS, John. *Samuel Butler - The Author of Erewhon: The Man and his Work*, p. 73

³¹ F. HARRIS, John. *Samuel Butler - The Author of Erewhon: The Man and his Work*, p. 74

As soon as Higgs, the protagonist, enters Erewhon, that is where many things seem to go wrong and laws do not make much of a sense, either. The strict medical examination of Higgs already brought suspicion which was confirmed: Erewhonians took a rather intriguing approach to those who suffered from illness as they consider disease a crime. Thus, everyone who is sick is expected to be put in jail.

On the other hand, Erewhonians, interestingly enough, felt no shame whatsoever for having committed a robbery, murder or for betraying someone's trust. *"But if a man forges a cheque, or sets his house on fire, or robs with violence from other person, or does any other such things as a criminal in our own country, he is either taken to a hospital and most carefully tended at the public expense, or if he is in good circumstances, he lets it be known to all his friends that he is suffering from a severe fit of immorality, just as we do when we are ill, and they come and visit him with great solicitude, and inquire how it all came about..."*³² Such people were treated sympathetically and were given hospital care and everything one needs almost as if they did the society a favor by committing acts generally considered unacceptable, immoral and illegal everywhere else.

Erewhonians even conceived a worker called the straightener who would take care of such issues such as disease. If someone struggled with tuberculosis or appendicitis, they would actually prefer the death over the embarrassment and complications families and the society should have dealt with. Measles made a slight exception provided the sick were young enough. All things considered, even catching a simple cold (everyone has experienced battling with flu at least once) could result in a prison sentence. One might reduce the risk of catching the flu to the minimum, yet there is no guarantee that he will never get sick. There are things we can and things we cannot control. The arguments the authority was trying to express were certainly not compelling to me. Butler put the famous Darwin's principle of the survival of the fittest into operation: those who suffered from a disease were suddenly in a deep trouble. If we try to find some positives as well, the system helped and encouraged to shape healthy and athletic people.

At first glance, such rules obviously do not make any sense at all. Butler emphasized the importance of human race being in a great shape³³. In order to flourish, the State needs healthy and strong citizens as they are the best index of a nation's prosperity. To some degree such angle

³² BUTLER, Samuel. *Erewhon*, p. 84

³³ F. HARRIS, John. *Samuel Butler - The Author of Erewhon: The Man and his Work*, p. 72

should be acceptable. We should take into account the fact that *Erewhon* was written in the 19th century and Butler criticizes the Victorian society where diseases and infections were certainly more common and particularly more threatening than nowadays.

If we start from the scratch, Butler was undoubtedly inspired with Great Britain, which had started obtaining colonies in order to conquer the world. Higgs was thinking similarly: as soon as the shearing was over, he set off with the obvious goal to find a new sheep country. He enjoys looking at the countryside, and accepts the monotony of his job as a trade-off for a prosperous life. Despite being soon left alone by an old native nicknamed Chowbock, Higgs was brave enough to continue in his journey even though he did not know what he can really expect as he was approaching a distant country of uncertain latitude and longitude³⁴. One of the ideas of *Erewhon* is that one cannot possibly live in a normal society if there is literally something that is considered defective in terms of how you are³⁵.

Even Patrick Parrinder, an academic and Professor of English, believes that *Erewhon*'s elusive secret lies in its narrative entry³⁶. The introduction into Butler's dystopia is lengthier and more elaborate than that of any other comparable late-nineteenth century dystopia³⁷. Yet *Erewhon* has generally been considered baffling, with unclear message which has not been cleared up yet. At the same time, *Erewhon* has been among the most popular 19th century dystopias, particularly to its unusual setting and approach.

The arrest itself is interesting in its own right. Having been thrown into the jail for possessing a watch, Higgs should still consider himself lucky. Had he not possessed fair hair, the consequences might have been of a greater magnitude. As suggested in the previous line, one of the key factors in Higgs's positive reception has been his overall appearance. It might have saved him a life or at least imprisonment for a long period of time. For the most part, we do not get a choice in how we look, though. And it should not make any difference anyways, in terms of how we judge others. As we know, it does not work that way, even after more than a hundred years *Erewhon* was written. People often still do not evaluate others properly while basing their opinion on appearance, gender or race. I believe that Samuel Butler was criticizing this common phenomenon.

³⁴ BUELL, Leonard. *The Satire of Samuel Butler*, p. 16

³⁵ WILSON, Jane and Louise. *Erewhon*, p. 335

³⁶ PARRINDER, Patrick. *Entering Dystopia, Entering Erewhon*, p. 9

³⁷ PARRINDER, Patrick. *Entering Dystopia, Entering Erewhon*, p. 10

Additionally, I believe a theme which the story supported was the idea of social adaptability. When someone enters a different system and society, such individual should adjust to it and behave accordingly. It should not work the other way round. In case of *Erewhon*, Higgs adjusted extremely well to that strange Erewhonian system which obviously helped him throughout the entire process. Had he not behaved according to those odd Erewhonian laws, his fate might have been different. Ironically, today's society works the other way round. As much as we should feel for the refugees, they ought to be the ones who should respect our culture, customs and rules. Why should we tolerate this exact opposite? Erewhonians did not submit to Higgs either. Nothing good will ever come from this.

As Winston Smith in *1984* at the very least started questioning his own mind, memory and beliefs, whether the Party might be eventually saying the truth, a similar logic could be applied to Higgs, too. After having spent some time in Erewhon, he starts seeing things a bit differently: he recognizes some value in the idea of punishing citizens in order to prevent the spreading of diseases. The point is, however, if Higgs had never entered Erewhon, such shift in his opinion would have been unrealistic. It is therefore obvious he was influenced by his surroundings which often play a fundamental role in how we see things.

3.6 Is there any chance for us?

Even though we are dealing with two respective dystopias, I believe that the Erewhonians' system was not nearly as bad as the Party's in 1984. If it came down to 'picking your poison' - I would certainly choose Erewhon despite its obvious major flaws. While the citizens of Oceania did not have any options or hope at all, certain citizens of Erewhon stood a decent chance of living a decent life after all. Especially those healthy and rich ones - and is not a similar issue taking place in today's society? There is absolutely no doubt that the rich ones should feel somewhat privileged, whether generally speaking or applying it, for instance, to the US health care system where one's salary makes a huge difference.

If I were to pinpoint one aspect I disagree heavily with, it is the arguments the judge used when explaining whether it was a man's fault that he is ill or not: while being sophisticated enough, and actually acknowledging that such things one cannot control, the judge still highlighted that the problem lies in the man himself. It almost feels like as if the Erewhonian authority holds the values of card counters at the blackjack table and turn the odds on the casino whether a man or woman deserves to be alive. Such metrics do not apply to human life, though. In saying that, Oceania's citizens were working with probability close to 0% of living a normal life, while Erewhonians still held probability between 25-50% range, analytically speaking.

All players of *Snakes and Ladders*³⁸ have an equal chance of winning, it does not apply to citizens of Erewhon or Oceania, though. Determination does not seem to matter anymore. One might argue they might have had a chance of eluding arrest had they behaved differently, according to how the Party wanted them to conduct themselves. But what is the meaning of such games which symbolize hopelessness and predomination³⁹? I am still fairly convinced that Winston and Julie would have been vaporized, sooner or later no matter what. The result would have been the same. It makes you wonder how many citizens could survive and carry on. It seems like the Party would identify all thought-criminals and there would be no one left.

³⁸ DILWORTH, Thomas. *Erotic Dream to Nightmare: Ominous problems and Subliminal Suggestion in Orwell's 1984* in Papers on Language and Literature, June 2013, p. 297

³⁹ DILWORTH, Thomas. *Erotic Dream to Nightmare: Ominous problems and Subliminal Suggestion in Orwell's 1984* in Papers on Language and Literature, June 2013, p. 298

3.7 Another thought in Erewhon

Another intriguing aspect could be the fact how Erewhonians approached the act of birth. While children in Oceania are expected to be raised in the pro-party manners, Erewhonians are supposed to live happily in the World of Unborn and just then decide to be born or not. Children who happen to be born must accept unthinkable conditions. After going through that, they are delivered to parents chosen at random. Yet again we are describing a situation one cannot control. To make matters worse, children of poor parents are expected to start earning money at a very young age, while those of rich ones are enrolled to the College of Unreason. Children might be benefiting the society as they become independent early on. Additionally, they will not put pressure on the parents, nor the parents on them, which should result in a healthy relationship, possibly a happier one if it not were for their independency⁴⁰. I assume it makes some sense and if children do not intend to study, they do not have much of a choice anyway. As for the latter, the young people waste their efforts and parents' money by studying hypotheticals which prove to be useless with zero practical usefulness.

It is quite possible that Butler was directly criticizing English academic life. I was also caught off guard by Erewhonian tax policy: "*... so strongly are the Erewhonians impressed with this, that if a man has made a fortune of over a 20.000£ a year they exempt him from all taxation, considering him as a work of art, and too precious to be meddled with*"⁴¹. There is that belief that rich people do the society a favor and by exempting them from paying the taxes, the system returns the favor. Even if we pretend that such system could work, should not it be the other way round with some possible adjustments? It still is not flawless but those rich citizens are the ones who could afford to pay taxes.

⁴⁰ F. HARRIS, John. *Samuel Butler - The Author of Erewhon: The Man and his Work*, p. 87

⁴¹ BUTLER, Samuel. *Erewhon*, p. 171

3.8 The Book of Machines vs. Usage of Surveillance

I have long awaited this sequence since I find *The Book of Machines* as probably the most significant part of Butler's satirical novel. There is a clear correlation between Erehwon and 1984 with its surveillance system. Whether intentionally or not, both authors identified that machines play and will play a huge role with regard to the present and future. Erehwon involves a dystopian idea of dehumanization. It describes how Erewhonians relied on machines heavily, and it might have reached a point where machines could have gained a consciousness of their own. Such scenario would obviously put mankind in an inferior position. Having said that, we are witnessing a similar situation, are not we? As much as technology can be helpful and can make our life much easier (e.g. in case of disabled people), it could also put us to an enslaved position with human skills not needed or barely needed anymore. Butler certainly was not completely off. However, considering the age in which Erehwon was written, it was more of a reflection of the ongoing industrial revolution and things moving too fast to Butler's own liking. And if we take a look at today's world, things are moving extremely fast in terms of technology, indeed.

Is it going to stop some day? Probably not as there are no limits as far as technology is concerned and new items and gadgets can always be developed. Stephen Hawking points out that we possess the technology which could destroy our planet, yet we have not found a way how to escape from the earth. As beneficial and fascinating technology undoubtedly is, it could lead to some serious consequences for all mankind if it were to fall into wrong hands. Even if we omit such a catastrophic scenario, the disappearance of folk culture or face-to-face communication might already be, partially, taking place. That is just the way it is, though. It is not fair to compare a 19th, 20th century society with today's fast moving era. I can see the point in Butler's message as he claims that machines should be destroyed nonetheless. *"This fact precludes us from proposing the complete annihilation of machinery, but surely it indicates that we should destroy as many of them as we can possibly dispense with, lest they should tyrannise over us even more completely"*⁴². The danger of servant conquering the master should not be entirely dismissed. Unfortunately, there is no point in arguing that it is arguably impossible to find the balance and which chain of actions would be appropriate to take.

⁴² BUTLER, Samuel. *Erehwon*, p. 199

On one hand, machines serve as a means which along with human comfort level helps to eliminate or at least reduce what makes us human after all. We tend not to think as much as our ancestors probably did because we have that technology to back us up. On the other hand, technology eliminates the human factor in instances such as flying an airplane. Humans will always be prone to making mistakes, biased and unpredictable. Technology keeps us honest and will potentially help us to save a desperate situation should the worst come.

As far as I am concerned, we should take control of things we can control and not overthink the rest. For instance, parents have a strong influence on their children and should be responsible for the raising so that they fit in. Parents ought to realize where the limits are and expose their children with technology accordingly. Otherwise children might turn into incapable beings without their own opinions while relying solely on technology.

As already suggested, both authors identified technology as a potentially huge problem. Butler managed to accomplish that in the 19th century which I found extremely impressive, regardless of the industrial revolution. George Orwell displayed multiple examples of surveillance with the one through the telescreens as probably the most significant one. I believe the extract from the very beginning of the book sets the mood and summarizes the situation Winston and Julie were facing: *"The telescreen received and transmitted simultaneously. Any sound Winston made, above the level of a very low whisper, would be picked up by it, moreover, so long as remained within the field of vision which the mental plaque commanded, he could be seen as well as heard. There was of course no way of knowing whether you were being watched at any given moment. How often, or on what system, the Thought Police plugged in on any individual wire was guesswork. It was even conceivable that they watched everybody all the time. But at any rate they could plug into your wire whenever they wanted to"*⁴³.

We live in an age where saying that one enjoys spending time on his own just does not feel right. Privacy happens to be a valuable asset and certain people have trouble of getting hold of it. We are (or might be) constantly being watched, tracked or investigated behind the scenes. We never know who might have bugged our cell phone. One bad move or honest mistake could easily lead to us being exposed: in terms of losing our password etc. We could not be cautious enough. In saying that, millions of people voluntarily expose their private information on facebook, often without realizing what consequences it could have. Some people do not even

⁴³ ORWELL, George. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 6

need to be watched since they make it easier to anyone who intends to gain their private information. They are not capable of holding themselves accountable.

Where exactly do we draw the line? It seems to me that the line which should have been drawn has been long crossed and there is no way back. Nevertheless, if someone is not exactly a high-profile person, it is probably still possible not to attract much attention by taking smart actions, regardless of the fact we cannot control nor predict government's actions should they decide to bug us. What is the future of this uncontrollable phenomena? It is hard, possibly impossible to pinpoint what is to come next, however, the future arguably is not bright. Smaller and more advanced equipment will be developed so that if it is tough to spot such devices nowadays it will only get harder. And who is to say that someone would not come up with a completely new system which may seem unthinkable as we speak? Scary and fascinating at the same time.

CONCLUSION

Both 1984 and Erewhon send a powerful message about hypothetical societies which might have initially intended to create a utopian world but clearly produced a dystopian one instead. People holding the reigns will mostly take advantage of their power and adjust the system according to their beliefs. 1984 as well as Erewhon offer a great insight about what happened in the past, what is currently happening and what might happen in the future. It gives us an in-depth perspective how we could approach politics, mass media and much more.

As for Erewhon specifically, I found the novel intriguing in terms of number of expressed thoughts. I have probably yet to read a book which is comparably so full of philosophical aspects and thoughts. Samuel Butler expressed countless opinions, views and beliefs about weaknesses of society, questionable thinking or old manners. I honestly do not think reading just once should be enough as catching most of the thoughts for the first time seems improbable. However, concentrating on the plot-line seems to be meaningless which in turn should help the readers to catch more of Butler's message. Taking into account all these points, I only focused on chosen points and aspects which I found the most significant or unique ones. Had I attempted to cover more, the thesis would have been considerably longer.

1984, on the other hand, seems to be less philosophical and probably more clear and one-dimensional in Orwell's intentions. Orwell focuses in-depth on power, terror and physical pressure while Butler offers a rather more versatility and comments on multiple issues which may seem unrelated. I particularly appreciate Orwell's efforts in showing how data and information can easily be manipulated and changed for good which is certainly one of the issues of the 21st century society. People get easily lost in what is relevant or not, what might be considered a reliable source and what not. The gap is often marginal, though.

From the personal standpoint, I feel fortunate I was given a chance to analyze these particular dystopian novels. I was not entirely sure which topic to choose but in the end it worked out for the best. Not only did I hopefully fulfil the task, but I enjoyed working on it and as of now, I cannot rule out reading other Orwell's and Butler's works in the future as I feel I benefited greatly from reading and analyzing them.

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ANOTACE

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Rok obhajoby:	2017

Název práce:	Britské dystopie 19. a 20. století – Erewhon a 1984
Název v angličtině:	19 th and 20 th century British dystopias – Butler’s Erewhon and Orwell’s 1984
Anotace práce:	Tato bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na analýzu a srovnání dvou britských dystopií – <i>Erewhon</i> Samuela Butlera a <i>1984</i> George Orwella. Rozebírá přitom jejich důležitost, zároveň hledá i paralely v dnešním světě.
Klíčová slova:	dystopie, Orwell, 1984, Butler, Erewhon, manipulace
Anotace v angličtině:	The following thesis focuses on analyzing and comparing two dystopian novels: <i>Erewhon</i> by Samuel Butler and <i>1984</i> by George Orwell. Additionally, the thesis intends to found the significance, and parallel to today’s world.
Klíčová slova v angličtině:	dystopia, Orwell, 1984, Butler, Erewhon, manipulation
Přílohy vázané v práci:	-
Rozsah práce:	33
Jazyk práce:	anglický