Proverb Modification in Aldous Huxley's Brave New World[1]

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Abstract

Literary dystopias usually depict a distorted version of society, which is normally accomplished by means of certain stylistic modifications. These modifications must be obvious enough so that readers do not take the author's judgments too personally. Conversely, the distance that is created by literary estrangement cannot be such that the implicit contrast to actual society is entirely lost. Part of this dynamic tension is achieved by clinging to some real institution of humankind and, at the same time, that institution is modified to fit the atmosphere of the story.

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate how Aldous Huxley modifies well-known proverbs and proverbial phrases in *Brave New World* to create certain stylistic effects that support both the verisimilitude of its story and its implicit criticism of an excessively technological society.

Keywords
Paremiology.
Proverb.
Aldous Huxley.

Resumen

Título: «La modificación de los refranes en *Un mundo feliz* de Aldous Huxley».

Las obras distópicas suelen retratar una versión distorsionada de la sociedad mediante ciertas modificaciones estilísticas. Dichas modificaciones han de ser lo suficientemente evidentes de modo que los juicios emitidos por el autor no vayan en última instancia en contra del lector. A la inversa, las modificaciones sobre la sociedad real no deben ser tan grandes que se pierda por completo la conexión entre el mundo real y el de ficción. Uno de los medios idóneos para establecer una distancia creativa apropiada es realizar modificaciones de elementos de la realidad social en las que no dejen de verse los elementos modificados originalmente. Las paremias, por ejemplo, se prestan a este tipo de modificación. Este artículo trata de mostrar cómo Aldous Huxley modifica proverbios en su obra *Brave New World* (*Un mundo feliz)* para obtener ciertos efectos estilísticos que redundan tanto en la verosimilitud de la historia como en su crítica social.

Palabras clave
Paremiología.
Refrán.
Aldous Huxley.

Resumen

Titre : « La modification des proverbes dans *Le meilleur des mondes* d'Aldous Huxley ».

Les œuvres dystopiques dépeignent, en général, une version déformée de la société à partir de certaines modifications stylistiques. Ces modifications doivent être assez évidentes pour que les jugements émis par l'auteur ne deviennent pas à la fin des invectives contre le lecteur. À l'inverse, les modifications réalisées de la société réelle ne doivent pas être si grandes qu'on ne perde en entier la connexion entre le monde réel et celui de science-fiction.

L'un des moyens idéaux pour établir une distance créative appropriée, c'est de réaliser des modifications des éléments de la société réelle où on ne peut pas remarquer les éléments existants à l'origine. Les parémies, par exemple, se prêtent à cette sorte des modifications. Il s'agit de montrer dans cet article, la manière dont Aldous Huxley modifie des proverbes dans *Le meilleur des mondes* pour en obtenir des effets stylistiques qui se répercutent autant sur la crédibilité de l'histoire que sur le critique social.

Mots-clés
Parémiology.
Proverb.
Aldous Huxley.

[1] *Paremia*, 20: 2011, pp. 179-190.

1. UTOPIAN-DYSTOPIAN LITERATURE

Brave New World is traditionally listed amongst the milestones of dystopian literature in the twentieth century, which is the period that witnessed the birth of this genre in its full form. As Booker (2005: 218) has noted, although the genre of dystopian literature can be traced back to certain satirical works of the XVIII century, "the genre in its modern form was defined by three works: Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), and Zamyatin's *We* (1924)".

Any form of literature that is labelled "dystopian", as the very term readily conveys, is etymologically connected to utopian literature. Indeed, Thomas More's *Utopia* (meaning "nowhere", hence the illusionary ideas which are normally associated to this type of literature) is the root of this genre as we know it today, despite the fragmentary utopia-like stories that can be found in earlier works from all historical periods[2]. Therefore, from a strict point of view, literary dystopia is just one of the many varieties of utopia, a fact that has produced many terminological debates, as Marty (2003: 51) recalls:

> In his preface to *The Obsolete Necessity: America in Utopian Writings, 1888–1900*, Kenneth M. Roemer speaks succinctly to our need: «Utopia, outopos, eutopos, dystopia, kakotopia, Utopians, utopists, utopographers—the study of imaginary ideal societies is burdened with enough strange sounding names to convince an interloper to take a course in Greek cognates». Marty's words (2003:51)

If it is difficult to differentiate between the many utopian genres, utopia itself seems to escape definition as well. It is hardly surprising that utopian fiction presents problems of definition, especially if one takes into account that this genre is pervaded by ambiguity and contradiction. According to Fern (1999: 10),

> The very concept of utopia itself is an oddly slippery one, not only embracing a vast range of possible alternatives to existing society, but also often shading into kindred conceptions of a better world […] not only is there no real consensus regarding the definition of utopia, there is not even any general agreement as to the basis on which definition might be made.

Whereas it is beyond the scope of this essay to establish the limits of the different utopian genres, it is nonetheless necessary to set a series of general characteristics that connect proverbial modification to *Brave New World* as dystopian fiction. Therefore, I will outline the basic features of dystopian literature within the broader framework of utopianism[3]. After that, I shall focus on those aspects that are specifically relevant to them as opposed to other utopian genres.

Perhaps the most, if obvious, characteristic of dystopias (and of all utopian narrative in general) is its fictional nature. Utopias are, for the most part, an imaginary representation of society, a society that is idealized to some extent. This idealism does not necessarily imply impossibility. The main rationale of utopias is not to expose perfectly unreachable worlds. Utopia is a place that could plausibly exist and, in the view of the author, a place that should exist, since they represent the ideal that society must strive to attain. As Rothstein (2003: 3) notes "they are examples to be worked for. Utopianism creates a political program, giving direction and meaning to the idea of progress".

If all utopias are fictional worlds, dystopias usually include certain flaws in their imaginary societies. It is precisely these flaws that "satirize ideal utopian societies, or specific real-world

[2] Armitt (2005: 114), for example, indicates that "like most types of fantasy writing, utopia can be traced back to classical antiquity".

[3] This is just a statement of purpose, of course; such an effort is bound to fail because "there is a perennial problem of distinguishing between utopia and dystopia, illustrated by the reception by some of Huxley's *Brave New World* as utopian and Skinner's *Walden Two* as dystopian, in both cases in opposition to the author's intention" (Levitas 1990: 165).

societies, or both" (Booker 2005a: 32). Despite these blatant social ills that have become the trademark of the dystopian genre, one must not forget that they remain "visions of what should be, even if they show what shouldn't be" (Rothstein 2003: 3). In all, there always exists a certain link between Eden and Hell, between the dream and the nightmare. Thus Gottlieb (2001: 8) summarizes this twofold essence:

> The dystopian novel itself demonstrates the push and pull between utopian and dystopian perspectives. To a significant extent, each of these novels makes us ponder how an originally utopian promise was abused, betrayed, or, ironically, fulfilled so as to create tragic consequences for humanity.

Another feature that characterizes dystopias is their individualistic nature. The usual dystopian hero has to swim against the tide of an oppressive political system that deprives individuals of their fundamental rights, including the fulfillment of their personal goals. In this respect, it is tempting to regard dystopian fiction and utopian fiction as the two extremes of a continuum given that (Booker 2005a: 32) "fictional constructions of utopia have typically emphasized the community rather than the individual". Emphasizing individual matters, however, does not place a lesser emphasis on social issues, given that the struggles and ordeals of the protagonists of dystopias can only be seen against the background of social tyranny and collective nothingness.

Dystopian social chaos is indeed a caveat to readers, which leads to another defining characteristic of dystopian fiction: its moralizing intent. As Gottlieb (2001: 4) points out, "twentieth-century dystopian fiction reveals the underlying structure of a morality play". The morality that the author intends to "teach" can only be obtained by condensation and distillation, that is, by synthesizing the morals of the dystopia at hand and those of the society it criticizes.

Morality always implies a dominant ideology. Not surprisingly, ideology pervades everything in dystopian fiction. From the "Newspeak" and the "thoughtcrime" of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* to the biologically engineered castes of *Brave New World*, all the inhabitants of these dystopias are almost extraterrestrial to readers because of their heavily conditioned frame of mind. On the whole, ideology plays a major role in the structure of dystopias. Ideology works, as it were, as the cobweb that keeps all the elements of the social system stuck together. On a more negative side, ideology performs a key function in legitimating (Einsohn 1995: 105) "the power interests of a dominant group whose claim to authority cannot be sustained without concealment or dissimulation. Here ideology distorts lived experience by substituting the illusory for the real". The relationship between language and ideology means that many of the proverbs Huxley creates are explicitly related to the "hypnopaedic" mechanisms of brain control, as we shall see in the section of example analysis.

A key feature of dystopias that can be easily forgotten is their near-future setting. Regardless of how long the world has known genetically engineering, *Brave New World* was originally envisioned as futuristic. And this time-gap had to be filled by something if the satirical social criticism have any effect. In Warrick's words (1980: 131):

> The individual works displaying a dystopian vision of man's future with his computers share some characteristics. These dystopian stories are almost all set in the near future, and they use techniques of extrapolation to get from the present to the future.

This "extrapolation" is often performed by means of modifying certain elements of present-day society and adapting them to what the authors assumes would be the hypothetical state of affairs in the dystopian near future. This exercise of manipulation and distortion lies at the very essence

of utopia. According to Rothstein (2003: 8), "any attempt to really create a utopia is necessarily revolutionary. The manners, morals, and convictions of the past have to be cast aside. The realization of a utopia requires destruction". As we shall see in the following section, one of the most powerful social institutions that can be creatively modified in dystopian[4] fiction is language and within the vast linguistic realm, proverbs are particularly suitable for stylistic modification.

2. WHY LANGUAGE?

Truly, this is the primary question that must be answered. In short, out of the many human institutions, why is language so powerful that it can create and sustain the illusion of a particular dystopian society almost by itself? And, most importantly for the purpose of this essay, how did Huxley create *Brave New World*'s linguistic dystopia?

To begin with, it is widely acknowledged that "the analysis of systematic linguistic variation is key to understanding the societies we live in" (Jaspers *et al*. 2010: 1). If people use language in different ways for different situations, and we can gather much information by analyzing those differences in language use, the same can be said of linguistic variation between the real and the fictional –especially if the fictional reflects a distorted *alter-id* of reality. This assumption is hardly surprising if the key role of language in ideology is borne in mind. Language is not an isolated phenomenon that takes place in a vacuum; on the contrary, it is permanently contaminated by context, social environment and its ideology. As Simpson (1993: 6) puts it "because language operates within this social dimension it must, of necessity *reflect*, and some would argue, *construct* ideology".

Therefore, a special, differentiated use of language must reflect and, given the omnipotent role of the author, also create a different ideology. In *Brave New World*, Huxley resorts to language manipulation to create a vivid portrayal of his own dystopia. This is one of the key elements that separate this novel from other members of the dystopian canon. As Witters (2008: 73) acknowledges

> His exploration of language and the mechanics of power in modernity foreshadows the culture theory of the Frankfurt School and poststructuralism and distinguishes the novel from its predecessors and the majority of its descendents.

The relationship between power and language is certainly one of the key motifs of Huxley's novel. Much of its narrative structure relies on a series of conventions and codes which are heavily supported by the ideological role of language. Take, for instance, the power relations that are established regarding the use of language and literature, or the unorthodox empowering of women by means of their sexuality.

Literature is, indeed, one of the logical links between society, language and ideology. The role of literature cannot be underscored in *Brave New World*. In Smethurst's (2008: 99) words:

> The Controller's argument here is that there is no need for a literature that is concerned with common human emotions, because scientific utopia has eradicated the triggers for those emotions. […] The people of this Brave New World are conditioned to be incurious, so there is no interest

[4] It must be said that, for practical purposes, the word "dystopia" will be used henceforth as an umbrella-term to refer to literary works of fiction that share the above-mentioned characteristics and "exhibit the essential themes and motifs of the dystopian genre: a totalitarian state that uses technology, modern compartmentalized bureaucracy, total surveillance, and engineered sexual norms to control every aspect of people's lives" (Booker 2005: 218). Notwithstanding some general remarks, the argument of this essay shall only relate to *Brave New World* and the traits Huxley's novel shares with the other members of the dystopian canon.

> in how people were or how they might otherwise be. Scientific utopia is no place for poetry or history, because in ideal times, alternatives are unconceivable.

Literature, as a major area of language and culture, relies on the human transmission of knowledge from generation to generation. This cultural heritage requires a permanent (or, at least stable) storage of cultural information. That is why the absence of memory –both personal and social– plays a key role in the oppressive atmosphere of dystopian fiction. As Gottlieb (2001: 12) notes

> probably one of the most typical "messages" of dystopian fiction is that access to the records of the past is vital to the mental health of any society... In *Brave New World*, *Farenheit 451*, and *Nineteen Eighty-four* the protagonists pursue what each considers the most important books from the past: Shakespeare and the Bible in *Brave New World*.

While language is an adept weapon for modifying the mental state of society and its individuals, thus creating an oppressing *statu quo*, it also possesses an immense liberating potential. As Witters (2008: 75) argues:

> Because language must be controlled, it must have equal power to liberate the subject. […] we grant *the word* (whether in speech or literature) inherent subversive power in the dystopian narrative.

It is therefore necessary to recognize the traps set by language use, so that the knowledge of its rhetoric enables the user to destroy linguistic constraints. Muschamp (2003: 34) summarizes this idea in the following terms:

> Wittgenstein believed that modern philosophy was little more than the working out of word games that did not refer to reality as such but betrayed an imprisonment within a framework of concepts developed by classical philosophy. The way out of the prison was to recognize the rhetoric. Once you did that, the framework would drop away, like the vines around Sleeping Beauty's castle.

Finally, it cannot be forgotten that the systematic distortion of ideology, language and literature is also a manifestation of parody. It is not difficult to see how some satirical distance may strengthen the critical component of *Brave New World*, given that an overt exaggeration of certain patterns is sometimes the most effective means to make people realize the mental manipulation that is being exerted on them. It may also be relevant to remind the reader that Huxley himself acknowledged his original intention when he set out to write the novel. As Matter (1983: 94) records: «in an interview with a representative from the *Paris Review*, Aldous Huxley once commented that he began *Brave New World* as a parody of H. G. Wells's *Men Like Gods*».

3. WHY PROVERBS?

Language can be classified according to a myriad of parameters into many different units. Amongst them, proverbs have been recognized as an autonomous category from the earliest surviving records of mankind's literacy. Indeed, as Mieder (1997: 3) succinctly summarizes:

> The fascination with proverbs can be traced back to the earliest written records. The Ancient Sumerian people included small proverb collections on their cuneiform tablets, and rich Greek and Latin proverb collections illustrate the high regard for this formulaic wisdom in classical antiquity.

Proverbs possess a series of characteristics that make them an optimal resource for the type of linguistic manipulation that dystopian literature makes use of. That seems to be the case, as we shall see, in Huxley's *Brave New World*.

First of all, proverbs are part of folklore and, as such, they are a social construct. Different societies create different proverbs, even if they share a common language[5]. Moreover, there exist proverbs in restricted use within the individuals who belong to a trade, an ethnic group, an area, and so on. This suggests that a proverb is a reliable token of the type of social group in which it is currently in use.

Apart from their social nature –or because of it, some would argue– proverbs are a vehicle of ideology. Many proverb definitions stress their experiential and didactic meaning (see Norrick 1985: 36 *et passim*). Thus, it is hardly surprising that speakers understand many proverbs as a moral or categorical imperative (Barley 1972). After all, as Kerschen (1998: 2) states "one of the functions of folklore is that of propaganda, as folklore is the perpetuation of tradition". Therefore, proverbs (Mieder 1997: 4) "become a two-edged sword, employed both as a positive and negative device to influence, if not manipulate, citizens".

Proverbs are not only relevant for Huxley's dystopia because of their ideological density. In addition, they are closely connected to every form of literary expression[6]. This is a consequence of the cultural resilience of these linguistic units, demonstrated by the fact that (Johansen 2007: 62) "they have survived the transition from oral to literary cultures".

Another characteristic of proverbs that fits the needs of Huxley's when creating his dystopian society is their memorability. Proverbs usually contain certain prosodic or poetic features that facilitate their use and transmission, as well as their storage and retrieval in the area of linguistic memory. These features range from rhyme (*Finders keepers, losers weepers*) to alliteration (*Live and let live*), from truism (*Boys will be boys*) to parallelism (*out of sight, out of mind*). In sum, the traditional roots of proverbs and their status as a fundamental part of social and individual[7] frames of mind, create the appropriate conditions for them to be used in dystopian fiction, as noted in the previous section.

3.1. Proverb Modification

Proverbs, for the most part, reveal themselves as optimal tools for dystopian writers, since they are ubiquitous elements in folklore and most other cultural phenomena worldwide. Their canonical form, however, belongs to a particular society with a particular culture in a specific period of history. If authors are to create a fictional society in the near future, they need new proverbs of their own.

Making up a completely novel proverb is not a simple thing. For a proverb to be recognized as such, it must have undergone a long process of institutionalization before it is definitely stored in the collective proverb inventory of a social group. Although some authors have actually added

[5] Hence the differences, for example, in the collections of British and American proverbs. The same can be said of the differences between the varieties of Spanish in South America and Spain.

[6] What else can explain the 2,654 entries in Mieder and Bryan's (1996) *Proverbs in World Literature: A Bibliography*? A closer look at the data reveals that (Mieder 2004: 143) "early scholarship consists primarily of annotated lists of the proverbs found in literary works, while more recent publications address the problems of identification and interpretation of proverbial language in poetry, dramas, and prose". Furthermore, proverbs can be said to be a literary genre in its own right. See, for example, the Sumerian collections that have already been mentioned; or the *Book of Proverb*s in the *Bible*.

[7] As Hernadi and Steen note (1999: 3) "While the mental existence of proverbs situates them in brains, their circulatory existence situates them in the collective consciousness of a culture or subculture. Such an amphibious mode of being calls for a resolutely dual perspective in the study of proverbs".

proverbs and proverbial phrases to the stock of their respective languages, they have had to wait for the newborn proverb to catch on. This is something that Huxley could not possibly have done when writing *Brave New World*. In addition to the above difficulties, one must also bear in mind the implicit social criticism of dystopia. In short, there must be some sort of connection between the real world and the fictional dystopian society so that the reader can make some comparative assumptions. These assumptions are the gate to a critical reading of any novel like Huxley's.

Proverb modification is one of the ways in which the real-world society is linked to the work of fiction in *Brave New World*. The workings of proverb modification[8] can be summarized as follows: the author chooses a canonical proverb with a suitable meaning[9]. Then, he alters one or more of its constituents in a way that changes its interpretation in view of its new wording. Yet, the original proverb can still be recognized by readers, thus making both versions of the proverb overlap –at least mentally.

The processes by which a proverb can be modified are numerous. Most authors, however, group them into a few categories. Fernando (1996: 33-4), for example, mentions four mechanisms for modification (replacement or substitution, addition, permutation and deletion). Partington's (1998: 126-128) taxonomy is equally divided into four categories which, for the most part, overlap with the previous (substitution, insertion, abbreviation and rephrasing).

Regardless of the type of modification performed, there is yet another aspect to be considered; namely, creativity. The modified proverbs that can be found in *Brave New World* add to the stylistic effect of the novel because they introduce a creative shade of meaning to the canonical proverb. Any language user may modify proverbs or proverbial phrases in everyday usage; a display of what Naciscione (2001) calls "instantial use". For example, one may speak of "the clean sweep of the proverbial new broom". In this case, although the structure of the original proverb "a new broom sweeps clean" has been modified, its meaning does not change. In the examples that will be analysed presently, the creative modification brings about a change in meaning that, as was said before, overlaps to a certain extent with the canonical meaning of the proverb.

The following section contains a series of examples that will illustrate how Huxley makes use of modified proverbs in *Brave New World*. These modifications are used as stylistic devices with several purposes throughout the novel.

4. ANALYSIS OF EXAMPLES

This section contains the most relevant examples of modified proverbs from *Brave new World*, which will be explored for analysis. When two or more occurrences of the same modified proverb exist, all of them will be included, with a reference to the chapter in which they are found. The first example of proverb modification that I will discuss is located in chapter six:

> "I'd rather be myself", he said. "Myself and nasty. Not somebody else, however jolly".
> "*A gramme in time saves nine*", said Lenina, producing a bright treasure of sleep-taught wisdom.

[8] It is important to note here that only structural (also called "internal") modification will be addressed here; whereas contextual (also called "external") modifications do not apply. That is to say, only those modifications that change, exploit or otherwise alter the structure of the proverb will be taken into consideration. For further discussion on the differences between both types of modification, see Oncins Martínez (2005: 30-1).
[9] Meaning is always elusive in a proverb, but in this essay it is assimilated to its Standard Proverbial Interpretation or SPI (see Norrick 1985).

The proverb that Lenina is modifying, by means of lexical substitution, is *a stitch in time saves nine*[10]. As one can see, the rhyme and rhythmic pattern of the proverb is not altered substantially. If anything, the addition of more /m/ sounds adds to the overall memorability of the proverb.

From a semantic point of view, interpretation is only altered on the referential level, since the proverb specifically refers to taking "soma"[11]. However, the metaphorical and, to some extent, cognitive value of the proverb remains unaltered. Both the conventional and the modified proverb advise to attend a problematic situation as early as possible, so that you have fewer problems in the future. Of course, *a stitch in time saves nine* potentially applies to a wider range of situations than Huxley's creative exploitation of it. The fact that it is the canonical proverb which carries the most comprehensive meaning supports the argument that *ad hoc* modification usually performs a likewise *ad hoc* function such as supporting background information in the plot, as is the case here.

It is worthy of note that this piece of "sleep-taught wisdom" has been learned by Lenina in is fetal learning process, in a way that reminds one of subliminal conditioning. Although proverbs are not acquired by language users in an identical manner, it is nonetheless true that the wisdom that we see in proverbial statements is to a great extent a consequence of social pressure. In other words, we are subtly conditioned to believe the truth contained in proverbs, in a process that somewhat parallels what Huxley portrays in *Brave New World*.

Another example of proverb modification can be found in chapters three, six and seven.

> "And do remember that *a gramme is better than a damn*". They went out, laughing. Chapter 3.
>
> -
>
> Lenina shrugged her shoulders. *"A gramme is always better than a damn",* she concluded with dignity, and drank the sundae herself. Chapter 6.
>
> -
>
> "A gramme is better than a damn", said Lenina mechanically from behind her hands. "I wish I had my *soma*!". Chapter 7.

This dystopian proverb has, at least, two proverbial sources, in the form of productive proverb templates in the English language. First, it is easy to spot an identical structure in proverbs like *an ounce of discretion is worth a pound of learning*, or *a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush*. All these proverbs, like the version Huxley uses, suggest that a smaller amount of a desirable asset is preferable to a larger amount of something less convenient or harder to attain.

On the other hand, from a more internalized perspective concerning Huxley's fictional social mirror, stimulants or narcotics (soma seems to have both effects[12]) are a "good" thing that can prevent "evil" things from happening, thus establishing a parallelism with proverbs such as *better safe than sorry* or *better late than never*. In the heavily conditioned minds of the characters, this modified proverb is an almost innate admonition, which clearly states that it is better to evade problems by taking soma than suffering the ailments of one's conscience. The first of the three occurrences of this modified proverb (chapter six) is particularly relevant for my argument since it combines with other examples of modified proverbial utterances to conform an almost "hypnopaedic" passage. In it, we can identify some of the mantras for the sort of mind control and brainwashing that are routinely exerted on all members of the population before birth. Other modified proverbs from the above-mentioned passage –based on productive proverbial structures rather than on a concrete proverb– are the following:

[10] All the canonical proverbs that are quoted in this essay can be found in Strauss (1998). See references.

[11] Soma is a tranquilizing and, at the same time, stimulating drug that all citizens in Brave New World take on a regular basis.

[12] In the novel soma is described as «euphoric, narcotic, pleasantly hallucinant».

Ending is better than mending.
- -
The more stitches, the less riches.

Ending is better than mending is plausibly a modified version of proverbs such as *half a loaf is better than no bread*, *a good name is better than a golden girdle* or *brain is better than brawn*, whereas *the more stitches, the less riches* can be traced back to such popular formulas as *the more you heap, the worse you cheap*, *the more hurry, the less speed* or *the nearer the church, the farther from God*. Although these two proverbial expressions appear a number of times over a four-page span, they are always used as compulsive behavioral maxims that advocate for frantic materialistic consumption. Indeed, the extremes of consumerism are another major topic in *Brave New World*. In Combs's words (2008: 161) "the crisis explored in Brave New World is that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to experience the self in a world driven by consumerism and its attendant narcissism"[13].

Chapter thirteen provides another modified proverb which, in Henry's words, runs as follows:

> "Anyhow, you ought to go and see the doctor" said Henry. "*A doctor a day keeps the jim-jams away*", he added heartily, driving home his hypnopædic adage with a clap on the shoulder.

It is relatively easy to see that this proverbial expression exploits the well-known *an apple a day keeps the doctor away*. Its most intriguing feature, however, is the particular type of lexical substitution that has been performed in order to create stylistic deviation. First, the canonical version contains two basic lexical components ("apple" and "doctor"), one of which is specifically used to replace the other. Therefore, a healthy diet ("an apple") is no longer the advisable guardian of our well-being. On the contrary, a strict and regular amount of prescription drugs ("a doctor a day") is recommended. This shift in the ideological gravitation centre transforms the dystopian proverb in another supporting device for the machinery of social and psychological engineering.

It is nonetheless surprising to observe that the therapeutic effort of "doctors" serves the purpose of preventing the sheer consequences of human nature, that is, trivial peculiarities and recurring states of depression-euphoria[14].

To finish with this sample of modified proverbs in *Brave New World*, the following words by Lenina seem an appropriate closing:

> Lenina shook her head. "*Was and will make me ill*", she quoted, "*I take a gramme and only am*".

Much like it happened with the previous examples, the author makes a deliberate effort to signal all his modified proverbs in the novel. That is why certain stylistic elements, such as reporting verbs or metalinguistic vocabulary, usually emphasize the indirect nature of proverbial language. Sometimes the characters are said to "quote" or "remember" their proverbs. On some occasions, however, these modified utterances are classified within their paremiological genre ("maxims" or "adages", for example).

[13] One must not forget that the Henry Ford, the American tycoon who was one of the forefathers of modern consumerist economy, is a demi-god in Huxley's dystopian society. That is why the novel is full of phraseological expressions that substitute Ford for a deity or some other form of respectful form of address. *Thank Ford*, *His Fordship* or *in Our Ford's day* are obvious examples.

[14] The OED entry for "jim-jam" reads as follows: «2.2 pl. Fantastic ways, peculiarities. Colloq." […] "b.3.b The fidgets, jitteriness; a fit of depression. colloq.»

The canonical source of the above example must be found in those proverbs that deride hypothetical language as a useless way to entertain thoughts. Typical examples would be *If ifs and* ands *were pots and pans, there'd be no trade for tinkers*, or *if wishes were horses, beggars may ride*. One may also consider the possibility that the second part of the proverb "I take a gramme and only am" may be a manipulation of the Cartesian maxim "I think, therefore I am". Consequently, by substituting drugs for reasoning, Huxley vividly portrays the fundamental cognitive ills of his dystopian world.

A concentration of two or more modified proverbs in a single passage usually signals a strong ideological density. In the following example, however, two different modified proverbs are used in conversation to stress the opposite social systems of the savages and the people of Brave New World.

> "But *cleanliness is next to fordliness*", she insisted.
> "Yes, and *civilization is sterilization*", Bernard went on, concluding on a tone of irony the second hypnopædic lesson in elementary hygiene.

This time Lenina uses a modified version of a popular proverb (*cleanliness is next to godliness/ kingliness*) to complain about the people's lack of hygiene in the "savage reservation". These "savages" are castaways, aliens who have been expelled from society; they furthermore serve as a necessary dystopian counterpoint from a literary point of view. After Lenina's remark, Bernard cannot help but go on with the "hypnopædic lesson", which again consists of several proverb-like structures. Bernard's words echo such proverbial phrases as *appreciation is motivation* or *constant occupation prevents temptation*. This follow-up move is conversational proof of the ubiquitous nature of conditioned speech.

In the discourse of the novel, it is not striking that when the author employs an ordinary proverbial expression in his narrative diction, he incorporates it to the narrator's voice, whereas all the modified proverbs are contained in the literal words of the characters. This proves the selective use of modified proverbs as a means to separate the dystopian from the real[15].

It is equally worthy of note that –much like it has been explored in the case of proverbs– other phraseological units are also modified in the novel. This gives additional evidence as to the author's plan to use fixed expressions as a fundamental element of style. Therefore, "repeated discourse" reveals itself as an essential device for characterization, both individually and collectively. The list of modified phraseological units includes Lord-Ford substitutions (see note 12) like "Thank Ford –His Fordship– In Our Ford's day" and other phrases that emphasize how reliant *Brave New World* is on technology ("safe as helicopters" instead of "safe as a church/the bellows/houses").

CONCLUSIONS

A few tentative conclusions can be drawn from the above analysis. First, it is clear that wordplay and other ways of exploiting linguistic devices are an integral part of dystopian fiction, as can be seen in *Brave New World*. Proverbs, in particular, are modified systematically throughout the novel in order to achieve a series of stylistic effects.

[15] See, for example, how Huxley describes the Savage's reaction when he is laughed at for reading Shakespeare (chapter twelve): "the Savage looked at him over the top of his book and then, as the laughter still continued, closed it indignantly, got up and, with the gesture of one who *removes his pearl from before swine*, locked it away in its drawer".

From a structural point of view, lexical substitution is by far the most common form of proverb modification in Huxley's novel, whether the canonical reference is a specific proverbial formulation or a general proverb template.

As regards the ideological foundation of this instance of dystopian narrative, modified proverbs are fundamental means to strengthen the importance of drugs and mental evasion, on the one hand; and extreme capitalistic consumerism, on the other. These two aspects are chosen as an escape route from emotional reality, hence being essential elements for the overall stylistic scaffolding of Huxley's fictional society.

In terms of social criticism, it is clear that modified versions of canonical proverbs serve as a permanent link between the social reality of the reader and that of the novel. In all, it is the exploitation of well-known expressions that ultimately symbolizes the final twist in the critical foregrounding of social evils.

On the whole, the stylistic effect of modified proverbs in the novel is unquestionable. The author himself must consider these expressions a very valuable stylistic mechanism, since almost all instances are surrounded by linguistic and/or situational cues that draw attention to their proverbial nature. Furthermore, other supporting devices (modified phrases, difference between *dystopian* and *real* proverbs) highlight the centrality of modified proverbs in the novel.

As a way of conclusion, it can be said that proverbs are a productive source for Huxley in his attempt to create a dystopian society that emphasizes the vices already present in reality without losing touch with reality. Much like the image in a curved mirror, distortion is actually caused by ordinary rays of light, reflected in an unusual way.

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