

THE POLITICAL ROLE OF MEMORY AND IDENTITY IN DYSTOPIAN SOCIETIES

Mihalache Delia Doina

PhD Student at Doctoral School of Literary and Cultural Studies
University of Bucharest
ROMANIA

ABSTRACT

Memory, both individual and collective, has always played an extensive role in maintaining the core and unity of the society, as it constituted the binder, the common denominator that "glued" together a nation. This concept is closely related to that of identity, which justifies its importance that much in the spaces deprived of these two structurally inherent components of the individual, seen as an entity that defines himself through its "adherence" to certain values. But human identity cannot be outside or in the absence of memory, as a continuity factor. We discuss in this paper these two extensively problematized concepts, in relation to dystopian fictions presenting the world as a totalitarian universe, among which we enumerate "We" by Yevgeny Zamyatin, "1984" by George Orwell, "Brave New World" by Aldous Huxley, but also more recent creations like "Fahrenheit 451" by Ray Bradbury, or even "Divergent" by Veronica Roth. We have chosen here some of the most prominent fictional stories, centered on totalitarian societies, pertaining to different time periods – from the post-World War I dystopian fiction of Yevgheny Zamyatin, a declared dissident against the Communist Party in Former Soviet Union to present film adapted novel of Veronica Ruth: "Divergent" – to explore the role of the memory (and implicitly the identity) in an attempt to discover the manner in which they can be exploited in order to reconfigure the society according to the necessities of a totalitarian government.

Keywords: memory, identity, totalitarianism, dystopia.