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**Depiction of Revolution in Joseph Conrad's *Under Western Eyes* and George Orwell's *Animal Farm***

**Abstract**

This research paper aims to express the depiction of revolution in Joseph Conrad's *Under Western Eyes* and George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. In detail, the research explores the role of the revolutionary intelligentsia and their utopian discourse in creating a collective consciousness of the revolutionaries and directing it towards personal interests. Moreover, the research explores the concept of counter-revolution. It explains the danger of the counter-revolutionary forces on the achievements of the true revolutionaries, and how these forces

play a demonic role in diverting the revolution from its original course and moving it entirely to serve personal interests and agendas.

**Key words:** Joseph Conrad, George Orwell, *Animal Farm*, *Under Western Eyes*, intelligentsia, discourse, utopianism, counter-revolution, revolution.

## تصوير الثورة في روايتي "تحت عيون غربية" لـ

## جوزيف كونراد و"مزرعة الحيوان" لـ جورج أورويل

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### ملخص

يهدف البحث لدراسة تصوير الثورة في روايتي "تحت عيون غربية" لـ جوزيف كونراد و "مزرعة الحيوان" لـ جورج أورويل. سيستكشف البحث بالتفصيل دور المثقفين الثوريين وخطاباتهم المثالية في خلق الوعي الجمعي للثوريين وتوجيهه باتجاه مصالح شخصية. ثم سيستكشف البحث مفهوم الثورة المضادة، حيث سيشرح البحث خطورة القوى الثورية المضادة على منجزات الثوريين الحقيقيين، وكيف تلعب هذه القوى دورا شيطانيا في حرف الثورة عن مسارها الأصلي وتوجيهها كلياً لخدمة أجندات ومصالح شخصية.

كلمات مفتاحية: جوزف كونراد، جورج أورويل، "مزرعة الحيوان"، "تحت عيون غربية"، المتقنون، الخطاب، المثالية، الثورة المضادة، الثورة.

This research paper seeks to depict the revolution as presented by Joseph Conrad and George Orwell. It digs deep into the significant role of intelligentsia in initiating any revolution: with their enthusiastic and revolutionary discourses, they succeed in forming public opinion and shaping the mentality of the masses. Moreover, this research paper tries to study the utopian nature of discourse and counter-revolution in light of George Orwell's *Animal farm*

and Joseph Conrad's *Under Western Eyes*.

The ideal discourse as referred to by Bateson connotes with something not currently present, and it is seemingly a returning to the notion of fantasy and imagination (208). The ideal discourse is essential in any revolutionary activity as it is considered the basis that galvanizes revolutionists in general and creates a reality which forces rebels to refuse compromise solutions. Bredo and Feinberg in their critique of ideal discourse note: "Such situations do not presently exist, or exist only locally and fleetingly, they remain an ideal" (284). Here, intellectuals and theorists play a significant role in formulating the ideal discourse which paves the way to create the ideal realm in the minds of revolutionists, who, in turn, try to put this ideal realm into action in a way or another. Before exploring the ideal revolutionary discourse and its impact on the rise of revolutions, this research paper explains the role of intelligentsia in shaping the revolutionary climate in any prospective revolutionary activity.

The word 'intelligentsia' first appeared in Russia in the nineteenth century, but since then it has acquired a world-wide significance (Kochetkova 11). The term was popularized by philosopher Karol Libelt, who defined

‘intelligentsia’ as “well-educated members of the population who undertake to lead the people as scholars, teachers, clergy, engineers, and who aspire for their enlightenment” (qtd.in Kochetkova 11). The previous definition demonstrates the leadership role of the intelligentsia in directing the masses.

When reading *Under Western Eyes* and *Animal Farm*, it cannot be difficult to find that Joseph Conrad and George Orwell refer to the role of the intelligentsia in formulating the ideal discourse of the revolution. In Conrad’s *Under Western Eyes*, the revolutionary activity would not have started without the ideal catalyst provided by the revolutionary elite based in Geneva. Similarly, the animals in Orwell’s *Animal Farm* would not have thought of igniting a rebellion against Man without the dreamy speech of Old Major.

Conrad tries to shed light on the role of the intelligentsia by presenting some revolutionary characters living in Geneva and controlling every aspect of the revolutionary project against autocracy in Russia. These characters work on fueling any revolutionary attempt in Russia and providing protection as well as refuge for the revolutionists fleeing the oppression of autocratic authorities. Conrad tries to criticize the “intelligentsia myth” which is

expressed by Inna Kochetkova, who argues that “The myth of the intelligentsia creates a God-like portrait of a hero and hardly any living individual can live up to it” (33). Thus, the revolutionary intelligentsia in Russia contribute directly to the creation of a God-like portrait of the Russian revolution, prompting Conrad to present the character of Haldin, who murders Mr. de P, a prominent statesman, in his pursuit to terminate the hegemonic autocracy. Haldin says:

You suppose that I am a terrorist, now a destructor of what is, but consider that the true destroyers are they who destroy the spirit of progress and truth, not the avengers who merely kill the bodies of persecutors of human dignity. Men like me are necessary to make room for self-contained, thinking men like you. (Conrad 15)

Here, it can be noticed that the "myth of intelligentsia" has left a deep imprint on Haldin's convictions. In other words, the revolutionist Haldin is victimized by ideals which have turned him into a murderer.

In fact, the ideal discourse which is propagated by the intelligentsia has a lot of dangers on the revolutionary course and on the mindset of revolutionists in particular. Conrad's portrayal of intelligentsia is apparent through presenting the

character of Peter Ivanovitch. Peter Ivanovitch is a "great feminist" (166). Conrad describes the character of Peter Ivanovitch saying: "The civilized man, the enthusiast of advanced humanitarian ideals thirsting for the triumph of spiritual love and political liberty" (91). Peter Ivanovitch appears here as an idealist with political ambitions. Peter Ivanovitch "Must direct, inspire, influence" (Conrad 176). Conrad aims at drawing attention to the political role of the intelligentsia, regardless of their enlightenment claims. Conrad in his letter to Edward Garnett explains his portrayal of the Russian exiles saying: "These persons- most (not all) of them people who left Russia voluntarily- constitute the so-called party of propaganda as opposed to the terrorists who risk their lives" (Garnett 233).

In his criticism of revolutionaries, Conrad presents the whole revolutionary enterprise as being corrupt. Peter Ivanovitch is not presented as a hero; he is an "Awful despot" (171). Also, Conrad presents Madame de S, another member of the intelligentsia in Geneva. Madame de S is a "Lady of advanced views" (93). Madame de S is an "Intellectual woman worthy to be watched" (106); she leads the revolutionary enterprise in Geneva. Madame de S "Built great hopes on some complication in the peninsula for arousing a great

movement of national indignation in Russia against 'these thieves—thieves' " (Conrad 161). Through his presentation of the characters of Peter Ivanovitch and Madame de S, Conrad emphasizes the deviation of the enlightenment role of the intelligentsia towards political complications. In other words, the main goal becomes political, which drives the revolutionary movement completely off track.

The term “discourse” has become popular in recent times, but it has branched out and has nowadays diverse implications and contexts. Hence, introducing a consistent definition of discourse becomes quite complicated. The word “discourse” can be traced back to Latin origins as in Late Latin. This word meant “exchange of ideas” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). Linguistically speaking, “discourse” can be defined as “a mode of organizing knowledge, ideas, or experience that is rooted in language and its concrete contexts” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). Discourse can be simply expressed as language in use (Brown and Yule 1).

The discourse of the intelligentsia plays an important role in fueling the rebellious flame and idealizing the masses. Michel Foucault, a pioneer philosopher in discourse studies, points out that “[T]he intellectuals spoke the truth to those



who had yet to see it, in the name of those who were forbidden to speak the truth" (207). Intellectuals act in the name of the will of the masses; such intellectuals contribute in a way or another to creating the collective consciousness of the masses and directing them wherever they want. In a conversation with Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault asserts that "Intellectuals are themselves agents of this system of power – the idea of their responsibility for 'consciousness' and discourse forms part of the system" (207).

The argument lies here in the utopian nature of discourse. Conrad warns of this nature in the words of the protagonist Razumov. Razumov criticizes the Russian intellectuals in Geneva as he says: "Their Utopias inspire in the mass of mediocre minds a disgust of reality and a contempt for the secular logic of human development" (Conrad 71). In a conversation with General T, Razumov also adds: "I am a man of deep convictions. Crude opinions are in the air. They are not always worth combating. But even the silent contempt for a serious mind may be misinterpreted by headlong utopists" (Conrad 37). Razumov's words demonstrate the attachment of utopian nature to the discourse of revolutionists; revolutionists as utopists inspire and even lead the project. In other words, the need for change is

misinterpreted by revolutionists.

Another example of the revolutionists is Julius Laspara, who is an intellectual and an advocate of revolutionary justice. In one of his meetings with Razumov, Laspara denotes: "We must educate, educate everybody--develop the great thought of absolute liberty and of revolutionary justice" (Conrad 213). Here, intellectuals are trying to position themselves as a representative of the aspirations of the masses, and for that, Laspara passes an attractive message which carries within it a lot of exaggeration and utopianism. For Laspara, revolutions will educate "everybody" and bring about "absolute" liberty. The use of these words denotes the utopian nature of the revolutionary discourse. In fact, using such language is a kind of irrationality as it creates an imaginary situation that is difficult to be achieved taking the logical circumstances of reality into consideration. Karl Mannheim explicitly refers to the utopian mentality when he affirms: "A state of mind is utopian when it is incongruous with the state of reality within which it occurs" (173). Conrad in the words of the narrator of *Under Western Eyes* depicts the revolutionary enterprise as "Pretentious intellectual failure" (100). This failure lies in the destructive results of the revolution. Conrad clearly states in "Author's Note" that "The ferocity and imbecility of an

autocratic rule rejecting all legality and, in fact, basing itself upon complete moral anarchism provokes the no less imbecile and atrocious answer of a purely Utopian revolutionism encompassing destruction by the first means to hand" (45). According to Conrad, the revolutionary response to the autocratic rule has not produced the desired goal. On the contrary, it has created utopists who, in turn, has created a "[P]ainful gap between an ideal world and the real one" (Pomper 39).

The situation of the rebellious animals in Orwell's *Animal Farm* is no better. Orwell, in turn, refers to the central role of the intelligentsia in the Russian Revolution through his depiction of the pigs in *Animal Farm*: "The pigs represent Manor's Farm intelligentsia and they prime the animals for revolution" (Bloom 22). Orwell describes the pigs as the smartest animals of the farm as he reveals: "The work of teaching and organising the others fell naturally upon the pigs, who were generally recognised as being the cleverest of the animals" (Orwell 35). The representation of the intelligentsia is particularly evident through Orwell's presentation of Napoleon and Snowball. Napoleon says: "The education of the young was more important than anything that could be done for those who were already grown up" (Orwell 50). Here,

Napoleon focuses on educating animals and considers it the most important task of anything else. Just as Laspara in *Under Western Eyes* wants to educate everyone, Napoleon is keen to do the same. In a letter to Randall Swingler, Orwell denotes: "Nothing is gained by teaching a parrot a new word. What is needed is the right to print what one believes to be true" (53). For Orwell true intellectuals should speak clearly, independently, and courageously (Rodden 31), and this what Orwell highly suspects in *Animal Farm*.

Orwell mentions the incident of Sugarcandy Mountain; the raven Moses, who is a clever talker, claims to know of the existence of a mysterious country called Sugarcandy Mountain. Moses describes: "In Sugarcandy Mountain it was Sunday seven days a week, clover was in season all the year round, and lump sugar and linseed cake grew on the hedges" (Orwell 10). Indeed, Moses is a clever talker. Moses is deluding the animals on the farm into believing in a heavenly place where everything is perfect. Orwell denotes: "Eager intellectuals built emotional superstructures over events that had never happened" (qtd.in Stansky and Abrahams 73). Frankly speaking, Orwell criticizes the irrationality of utopian discourse. For him, utopian discourse seeks perfection, which could be unreachable just as Sugarcandy Mountain.

Machiavelli agrees with Orwell in his depiction of utopianism. Machiavelli says: "Many writers have dreamed up republics and kingdoms that bear no resemblance to experience and never existed in reality" (60).

Moreover, the revolutionary discourse itself is marked not only by utopianism but also by violence. In fact, the utopian characteristic of the revolutionary discourse collides with the violence of the revolutionary thought and, herein, lies the whole point. This kind of paradox is the cornerstone of the critical analysis of the revolutionary discourse advanced by revolutionary intelligentsia in *Animal Farm* and *Under Western Eyes*. The utopian climate surrounding the concept of revolution is basically to "imagine some ideal state in which there was no misery and no greed, no danger or poverty or fear or brutalising labour or insecurity" (Berlin 21). Paradoxically, the revolutionaries themselves radically contradict this kind of discourse and show violent and malevolent behaviour. One of the most important incidents in *Under Western Eyes* is the conversation between Razumov and Haldin, the revolutionist. Haldin says:

This is not murder- - it is war, war. My spirit shall go on warring in some Russian body till all falsehood is swept out of the world. . . The Russian soul that lives in all of

us. It has a future. It has a mission, I tell you, or else why should I have been moved to do this- - reckless- - like a butcher- - in the middle of all these innocent people- - scattering death - - I! I! ... I wouldn't hurt a fly! (16)

Haldin is not a murderer by nature since he wouldn't kill a fly. The problem here is that violence is no longer just an incidental event, but rather it is rooted in the core of revolutionary discourse. Violence is essentially excused and justified for the sake of a better future as Haldin explains. However, legitimizing violence is fundamentally a Machiavellian principle whereby Machiavelli considers that "[An] antagonistic political culture based on extra-institutional manifestations of popular hatred and violence ensures the preservation of liberty and the accountability of leaders to people" (14). Razumov's opposition to Haldin's mentality and beliefs demonstrates Conrad's vision of revolutions in the words of Razumov, "Fanatical lovers of liberty in general. Liberty with a capital L, Excellency. Liberty means nothing precise. Liberty in whose name crimes are committed" (50). Liberty is abused by revolutionists. Liberty becomes an excuse to practice violence and commit crimes.

The case goes beyond that to transform the

revolutionary discourse into hate speeches and exclusion of the other. Revolutionaries attempt to employ hatred for political ends. In other words, hatred helps to create the other as Carl Schmitt explains: “He is, nevertheless, the other, the stranger; and it is sufficient for his nature that he is, in a specially intense way, existentially something different and alien” (27). Here, Schmitt is defining the political enemy assuming that the enemy is something alien. Likewise, the revolutionary discourse enlists hatred to create the enemy and, hence, employ the other to divert attention from the flaws of the revolution to concentrate on the evils of the other.

In *Under Western Eyes*, Madame de S, one of the leaders of the revolutionary movement in Geneva, clearly says: “The discontent should be spiritualized” (Conrad 163). Madame de S’ words indicate the importance of stoking up hatred in the revolutionary action. On the other hand, in *Animal Farm*, Old Major delivers a speech stating: “Is it not crystal clear, then, comrades, that all the evils of this life of ours spring from the tyranny of human beings? Only get rid of Man, and the produce of our labour would be our own” (Orwell 5). Old Major is developing hatred into a process of exclusion and demonization of the other. For him, the other is

the ultimate enemy. However, defining the political enemy in such a vague and broad way makes anyone qualified as an enemy.

The significance of exploring counter-revolution lies in the fact that it has been associated with many revolutions throughout history. Nick Bisley asserts that “counter-revolution is so pervasive in histories of revolution that it should be thought of as fundamental to the idea of revolution itself” (50). In fact, counter-revolution in the literal sense of the word can be defined as “[A] reaction. That is to say, it is an action directed against another action” (Oliveira 51). Furthermore, Fred Halliday refers to counter-revolution as “[A] policy of trying to reverse a revolution, and, by extension, to policies designed to prevent revolutionary movements that have already gained some momentum from coming to power” (207).

Given this, Orwell and Conrad place a lot of emphasis on counter-revolution in both *Animal Farm* and *Under Western Eyes* as they are eager to highlight the dangers of counter-revolution on the revolutionary process as a whole. In both novels, true revolutionaries make the supreme sacrifices in order to obtain their usurped rights. On the contrary, many



of the beneficiaries of the revolution are riding on the wave of the revolution to achieve their narrow interests. In *Under Western Eyes*, The best description of counter-revolution is introduced in the words of the narrator: “In a real revolution—not a simple dynastic change or a mere reform of institutions—in a real revolution the best characters do not come to the front. A violent revolution falls into the hands of narrow-minded fanatics and of tyrannical hypocrites at first” (Conrad 100). If we consider the previous quotation, we can see that Conrad presents Haldin as a character who does not come to the front. Haldin sacrificed his life to serve the revolutionary enterprise; however Haldin literally gained nothing. On the other hand, Peter Ivanovitch, the great feminist, abuses women whenever he has the chance; he is a hypocrite who comes to the front.

The circumstances of the revolution of Orwell’s *Animal Farm* are not better than those of Conrad’s *Under Western Eyes*. In fact, the animals start the revolution against Mr Jones and throw him away. Through this victory a lot of animals have made serious sacrifices. Without those sacrifices the revolution would not have gained victory. After that, Napoleon and Snowball come to the lead. They have not made as sacrifices as the other animals, yet they capture the

leadership. They set themselves up as representatives of the revolution. Orwell says: "Somehow it seemed as though the farm had grown richer without making the animals themselves any richer- except, of course, for the pigs and the dogs" (121). Then Napoleon turns on Snowball and takes over the farm.

As a matter of fact, the force of counter-revolution is mainly represented by the opportunist character of Napoleon. During the revolution of the animals, Napoleon has not made any crucial sacrifice and has set himself as a spectator; rather, Napoleon has been plotting to gain control of the resources of the farm and to remove Snowball, the partner of the revolution, from the revolutionary forefront. After the animals have made great sacrifices, Napoleon takes control of the farm, addressing the animals: "There is work to be done. . . This very morning we begin rebuilding the windmill, and we will build all through the winter, rain or shine. . . Forward, comrades! Long live the windmill! Long live Animal Farm!" (Orwell 48). Orwell illustrates that sacrifice and hard work rest with those who believe in the core principles of the revolutionary recommendations, not with those who exploit them for personal interests. Through his critique of the deviation of the course of the French Revolution, Edmund

Burke chimes with Orwell in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* that “Their whole march was more like a triumphal procession, than the progress of a war. . .Not one drop of their blood have they shed in the cause of the country they have ruined” (37).

Going back to *Under Western Eyes*, some revolutionary characters offer a lot of theory and little work. For them, revolution is a means to achieve political and social positions in the Russian society, “Bearers of the spark to start an explosion which is meant to change fundamentally the lives of so many millions in order that Peter Ivanovitch should be the head of a State” (Conrad 255). To be more specific, Peter Ivanovitch, the revolutionist, seeks to find a foothold in the political process and thus acquires as much power as possible throughout his adoption of revolutionary activity. On the other hand, for true revolutionaries such as Haldin and his family, revolution is a source of suffering, harm, and disappointment. Conrad writes:

At the sight of the two lighted windows, very conspicuous from afar, I had the mental vision of Mrs. Haldin in her armchair keeping a dreadful, tormenting vigil under the evil spell of an arbitrary rule: a victim of tyranny and revolution, a sight at once cruel and absurd. (244)

Here, counter-revolutionary forces have the ability to alter true revolutionaries into mere victims of their legitimate demands of freedom and justice. Conrad also adds describing true revolutionists: "They are not the leaders of a revolution. They are its victims: the victims of disgust, of disenchantment- often of remorse. Hopes grotesquely betrayed, ideals caricatured- that is the definition of revolutionary success" (100). Conrad warns of the need to preserve the gains of a revolution and not to fall into the trap of the opportunists. Otherwise, those opportunists will reverse the original course of the revolution and turn true revolutionists into victims of their revolution.

In conclusion, this research paper reveals how the idea of revolution is first enforced and encouraged by a group of intelligentsia or intellectuals in order to overthrow a dictator. By their embellishing words and revolutionary discourses, those experts or intelligentsia do shape public opinion and create mighty revolutionists who are ready to do anything for the sake of fulfilling their dreams. Unfortunately, such dreams turn into nightmares, i.e. the revolutionists follow the path of violence and cruelty just like their dictators. In other words, what happens is that history repeats itself, and the rebels

themselves become dictators. In short, by portraying revolution in *Animal Farm* and *Under Western Eyes*, Orwell and Conrad take great care to expose the obstacles that may encounter the revolutionary enterprise. Both authors want to provoke political awareness among those of revolutionary aspirations. In fact, a revolution does not end with the overthrow of a dictator, but rather the preservation of the revolution against opportunist should be the main concern. I conclude quoting Orwell words: "It is the liberals who fear liberty and the intellectuals who want to do dirt on the intellect: it is to draw attention to that fact I have written this preface" (17).

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