

# **The Aesthetics of Rebellion in the Literary Works of George Orwell: Visual Depictions and Philosophical Foundations**

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**Abstract:** George Orwell is a famous western writer in the last century. He created many classic works in the British literary circle, and his political thoughts and rebellious thoughts were widely concerned. From the perspective of George Orwell, there are many visual descriptions in literary works, which contain rich philosophy. He advocated to integrate political purposes into literary creation, and endowed literary works with certain political tendencies. This paper gives an overview of George Orwell's literary works, summarizes his literary views, takes his specific works as examples, explores the rebellious thoughts in his works, and finally analyzes the visual description and philosophical reflection in George Orwell's literary works.

**Keywords:** George Orwell's literary works; Rebellious aesthetics; Visual depiction; Philosophy

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

George Orwell spent his whole life in literary creation. Through rebellious aesthetics, he criticized totalitarian politics, and used literary works to reflect the real society, so as to alert the world. George Orwell depicted many artistic images, and the rebellious thoughts in his works were derived from his family background, childhood experience, social background, etc. Under the constraints of traditional education and the middle class, it was difficult for people to cross classes, so they firmly opposed totalitarianism, which created contradictions and rebellion in his thoughts.

## **2. OVERVIEW OF GEORGE ORWELL'S LITERARY WORKS**

George Orwell (1903-1950), who was born EricArthur Blair in England, worked as a policeman, librarian and columnist. George Orwell wrote and published many literary works under this pen name, as shown in Table 1 below. Among George Orwell's works, 1984 and Animal Farm are the most classic. They use a sharp style to describe the turbulent world and analyze the changes of social pattern through a keen sense of market, which

has a profound impact on the development of world literary history (Qi, 2020).

Table 1: Literary Works

Works of Art	Name In Chinese	Time of Publication
《Down and Out in Paris and London》	Down and Out in Paris and London	1933
《Burmese Days》	The Burmese Years	1934
《Keeping the Aspidistra Flying》	Let Ye LAN Flourish	1936
《The Road to Wigan Pier》	The Road to Wigan Pier	1937
《Homage to Catalonia》	Hail to Catalonia	1938
《Animal Farm》	Animal Farm	1945
Nineteen Eighty-Four	——	1949

### 3. GEORGE ORWELL'S VIEW OF LITERATURE

George Orwell believed that literature needs to have a high degree of independence, to describe the truth, and to show the author's concern for politics. In the early 20th century, many literary writers believed that literary works were ancillary to politics, but George Orwell did not agree with this view. He paid more attention to the independent value and aesthetic value of literary works. Although politics and literature are two different fields, they are closely related. There are obvious political characteristics. It fully shows the characteristics of the integration and unity of politics and art (Zhao et al., 2019). George Orwell said that the creation of literature needs to be kept at a distance from politics, because it is necessary to preserve the artistic quality of literature, and therefore, the independent character of literature. At the same time, George Orwell also believed that literary works cannot be completely separated from politics. As a carrier of reality, literature itself will have certain political tendencies. It is the author's attitude of artistic creation to keep literary works independent and away from politics (Sun, 2018). George Orwell regarded literary works as independent individuals, using words as carriers to display political thoughts in society. Born in the colonial class, George Orwell experienced the atrocities and evils of imperialism in his childhood. During his time on the streets of Britain, he truly realized the disadvantages of capitalism. He also participated in the Spanish revolution and experienced the darkness of totalitarianism (Bao, 2015). George Orwell advocated humanism, and under the influence of humanism, he was willing to find the truth through

literary creation. George Orwell once said that I write books because I want to expose lies and draw attention to the facts. What he expresses in his literary thought is that literature is not an accessory of politics, nor is it a mouthpiece of politics, but a free expression of truth, which is the real meaning of literary creation, that is, "the loss of freedom is the natural enemy of all literary forms". George Orwell's representation of the truth was also subject to political constraints, so he had a clear understanding that the era of independent personhood had passed. George Orwell hated political power even in his childhood. He believed that power was the key to killing the artistic and independent nature of literature. In order to protect the value of literary works, it was necessary to avoid the influence brought by religion and fascism. Political power is like an invisible hand, which can curb writers' throat and affect their freedom of speech. Writers cannot express their true thoughts through words, and the truth cannot be revealed in society (Chen, 2014). The creation of literary works should fully show the real facts and real emotions, so that the works can move the readers and make the readers feel the sincerity of the works. George Orwell believed that if everything emphasizes the thought, it will not be able to create excellent works. In George Orwell's literary works, the social status quo is revealed, just like a mirror to give feedback to the objective facts, which can guarantee the artistry of literary works and show the objectivity of works at the same time (Arciero, 2017). Therefore, in the process of writing, George Orwell's disclosure of social darkness is not his "hobby", but the embodiment of his social responsibility. George Orwell was able to face reality, analyze reality and attack reality (Sun, 2013). For example, in *Homage to Catalonia*, he restored the truth of the Spanish Civil War through visual description. At that stage, other writers in the British society were under social pressure, or the Soviet myth, or did not dare to disclose the truth. Compared with many others, George Orwell's courage to show the truth has surpassed many others (Colls, 2013).

#### 4. THE IDEA OF REBELLION IN GEORGE ORWELL'S LITERATURE

##### 4.1 The formation of George Orwell's literary thought

George Orwell's literary thought was influenced by Fabian theory, humanism and British social criticism, as follows: Fabianism, or progressive socialism, is a branch of the socialist honeycomb, which originated in Britain in the late 19th century. This idea is to improve and

optimize capitalism in a gradual way. In 1884, Edward Peath, Herbert Brown and others established the Fabian Society in Britain. The inspiration for the establishment of the Fabian Society came from the name of an ancient Roman general, who put forward the idea of "waiting for the opportunity" in the process of war to avoid confronting the enemy. Fabian doctrine said that capitalism had many disadvantages, so its transformation to socialism was inevitable, but it needed a slow transformation process and could not be overly radical (Zhang, 2017). Humanism, as a proposition from Western countries, has a long history. Since the beginning of ancient Greece, the humanism spirit has been revealed in the works of philosophers such as Socrates and Plato. In the Renaissance period of the West, humanism emphasized personal values, good deeds and enlightenment, etc. From the perspective of philosophers' thoughts, it was opposed to excessive worship of theocry, and supported people's pursuit of freedom. George Orwell's literary works fully show the humanitarian spirit. Take 1984 as an example, in the process of character description, it shows the process of individual pursuit of freedom and happiness, but eventually they all go to extinction. This is also his dissatisfaction with the vicious totalitarianism, but also the pursuit of human freedom and equality. Under the background of totalitarianism, George Orwell's works fully reflect the aesthetics of rebellion (Cushman, 2015; Tereszewski, 2019). Through the rebellion against totalitarianism, the deficiency and darkness in the society are revealed, which is also the shining point of George Orwell's literary thought. In the process of writing, George Orwell inherited the style of British critical realism, which is mainly reflected in the confrontation of individuals against the darkness of society and the disclosure of the truth. As a writer of critical realism, he conveys moral ideas through objects, which is carried forward by George Orwell. In his works, there are many depictions of individuals fighting against society, but they all end up in reality, that is, they end up in failure. Characters in his literary works often sacrifice themselves to express their dissatisfaction with society, so as to express themselves in the dark society. The little people are weak and incompetent and cannot influence the implementation of totalitarianism.

#### 4.2 1984 by George Orwell

Nineteen Eighty-Four is a dystopian novel, boldly expressing dissatisfaction with totalitarianism and using an ironic way to expand the narrative. It can be said to be a model in the same type of works. The novel 1984 tells the story of the future world. In the future, there are three totalitarian powers with constant war and social unrest. Under the control

of totalitarianism, the hero comes from Oceania. People's words, thoughts, etc. are out of their control, and totalitarianism has been developed to an absurd degree. In this social environment, Winston and Julia, the protagonists of the story, attempt to resist totalitarianism and try to dig out a ray of light in the dark and corrupt society (Rahman, 2002). In 1984, the visual description of the hero Winston fully shows the survival aesthetics. When he meets with the hostess, he has a certain adventurous spirit, and he knows that this is a kind of reservation regulation behavior. In totalism, the whole society is covered by darkness, and the whole person is in a depressed state, and Winston's demand is also suppressed. In the surreal world, the hero and heroine break through the shackles of society through unconventional methods and practice survival aesthetics in their "golden country". In the work, the process of meeting between the hero and the heroine is not elaborated too much, and the aesthetic experience from the hero's perspective is mainly presented through visual description. The ocean country constructed in 1984 has no legal basis, so the behaviors of the masters, lacking the constraints of "system", are all from the hero's own desire for love, and are based on "aesthetics". A celebration of beauty. In the second part of Nineteen Eighty-Four, the hero puts aside the constraints in the society and practices only from his own aesthetic perspective. He walks out of the path that he thinks is the most right and makes the behavior that he thinks is right, that is, he manipulates freedom. The heroine says, "I hate purity, I hate good quality, I don't want to see any virtue anywhere, I want to see people sink to the bone." From the heroine's words, it can be seen that she does not value truth, and even despises truth. Finally, she decides to escape from truth and morality and pursue freedom, which is also a manifestation of aesthetics (Rose, 2013).

#### 4.3 The manifestation of rebellious aesthetics

First, the double bondage of totalitarianism to human body and soul. In the later part of 1984, Winston is captured and tortured by the party, mainly in order to make Winston give up his normal feelings for Julia. At that time, the party said, we have cut off the family bond between parents and children, the relationship between men and women, there is no trust between people, the interpersonal relationship based on nature is destroyed, the body and spirit of people, They are all framed by totalitarianism, and a virtual reality is constructed at the level of human thinking to realize the long-term rule of totalitarianism over society. Under this thought, people re-establish world outlook, thinking mode, etc., and even erase social standards and re-establish a new order through the

control of language (Pelissoli, 2008). Second, the rebellion and struggle against society in people's thoughts. When George Orwell created *Nineteen Eighty-four*, he originally named it the Last Man in Europe, implying that Winston was the last man. In the process of description, Winston and Julia's rebellion against the totalitarian system was also vividly demonstrated. Winston's behavior and spirit are in the spirit of Western traditional humanism, who believes that objective facts are true existence, so he is very disgusted with the behavior of tamper with history. In the process of pursuing the truth, Winston finally put his hope on the proletariat, who believed that there were 85% of the proletariat in Oceania, and they had the power to destroy the totalitarian party. While placing their hopes on the proles, they also have a disdain for them. They hate the "indifference" of the proles and believe that the proles lack "consciousness", so they will not make "resistance" to the society. It is not difficult for the proles to resist in time (Sidney, 1957). Third, hope betrays despair. In 1984, Winston, the hero, has independent thinking and a clear mind, which is his own advantage. Both Winston and the heroine belong to the proletariat. Finally, Winston spent his life smoothly in the alleys of the back street, and developed a naive idea. For example, in the description of Winston's love for the old man's drinking, the old man and Winston started a dialogue. In order to blend in, Winston also said "old words" as the people do in the country. However, there was a big difference between Winston's old words and the old man's old words. But Winston's old words were very precise, and very standard in pronunciation and usage (Marks, 2015). George Orwell was born in a middle-class family with conservative ideas. In the process of his creation, he went deep into the bottom of society, integrated with the proles, and experienced their lifestyles and dilemmas. George Orwell once said that the class of British people was engraved on the "tongue". Hiding in a small alley, although the ideal is very beautiful, but the language difference is impossible to cross, its way of thinking is difficult to become a real proles (Hitchens, 2008).

## 5. VISUAL DESCRIPTION AND PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTION IN GEORGE ORWELL'S LITERARY WORKS

In George Orwell's literary works, there are many visual descriptions, among which fable is his favorite subject. In the *Dictionary of Western Literary Terms*, fables are elaborated and defined as a kind of literary subject. Fables, as the name implies, can give multiple meanings to affairs,

and generally have two kinds of superficial meaning and deep meaning. The superficial meaning is the intuitive description of things, and the deep meaning is an extension, which is the point that the author really wants to express. Allegory is also a kind of artistic technique, which can be applied in any kind of literary work. At the beginning of the last century, fables often appeared in political language and religious language. Under heavy political pressure, writers prefer to express their opinions through allegory. In George Orwell's works, *Animal Farm* and *1984* are both allegorical novels, and their creation is fundamentally against totalitarianism. Take *Animal Farm* as an example, it opposes the Soviet mythology through allegorical means. In the field of English literature at that time, the literary atmosphere of free speech was not enough, and its ingenious allegorical use, It implicitly expresses a political purpose. For another example, in his work *1984*, he also expresses his thoughts of redemption through fables. A fable is a kind of implicit expression, but also composed of truth. George Orwell once said: "Only the fragments of works of art, which reject the aesthetic appearance and the total sexual allure of the symbol, can hope to express truth and justice by keeping them absolutely sunk, highlighting their suffering and status temporarily unsalvaged in secular time." Fragments expressed in George Orwell's literary works are allegorical intentions and symbols of destruction, marking that such subjects will inevitably go to destruction (Acheraïou, 2023).

Therefore, in George Orwell's thought, there is a certain advance and philosophy. Through his own idea and mission of redemption, George Orwell created *1984*, which mainly describes the chaotic scene in the world. In the chaos, the order of human life is gradually restored to calm, and people are about to usher in a better life. Human nature is sunny, but all the good affairs have disappeared under the totalitarian ruling ideology. In George Orwell's works, the last remaining "human nature" of the resistance against war and totalitarianism is also exhausted, and finally becomes a puppet walking alone under the shadow of totalitarianism. Summary: To sum up, George Orwell was a British rebel writer who dared to expose the dark side of society, face up to the real inequality, and worry about the country and the people. His thoughts were radical and conservative at the same time. On the one hand, he dared to criticize colonialism, capitalism and totalitarianism, and on the other hand, he was full of nostalgia. Imagine the good life subjectively. George Orwell's literary works have a great influence on the British literature of the last century, and his works have political characteristics. As a writer with conscience and social responsibility, his works also have a certain sense of reference in

contemporary society. By integrating political purposes with literature and art, he can not only innovate art forms, but also reflect the philosophical basis.

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