POSTMODERN SPACES IN ALASDAIR GRAY'S *LANARK* AND PETER ACKROYD'S *HAWKSMOOR*

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Abstract: Postmodernism worked at constructing, deconstructing, reconstructing everything, including the literary setting, thus, postmodern spaces in literature became rewarding research topics, offering new insight into the way everything is reshaped and reorganized. This paper analyzes the re-imagination of Glasgow and London, the cities depicted in two postmodern novels - Gray's *Lanark* and Ackroyd's *Hawksmoor* - as well as the motivation of the authors in using and re-imagining these cities in their texts. The dystopian facet of the two cities as presented in the novels is discussed within the postmodern framework, in which dystopias become a tool in training the reader to adjust to the ugly, the painful and the shocking in order to form a survival instinct. The last part of the paper consists of a presentation of the images of the underground as a postmodern space of death and painful truths, a paradoxical place that promises redemption and offers death.
Keywords: postmodernism, space, city, dystopia, Lanark, Hawksmoor

1. THE POSTMODERN SETTING

There is a need of observing the real setting of life in order to comprehend the fictional setting of every literary text. In an article called *Re-imagining the city* Franco Bianchini and Hermann Schwengel speak abou the development and tendencies of the British cities. They speak about an "inner city" "which in the 1980's evoked images of alienation, disorder, fear, squalor and decay" and had problems of its own like "poverty, crime, disease and dirt." (Bianchini& Schwengel 1991: 213) This led to the desire of escaping such a place and created anti-urbanism. A decision to revitalize the British cities was taken but the result was not as expected. Even more, the proposed strategies for urban regeneration "can produce a city characterized by crisis of both urbanity and social cohesion."(Bianchini& Schwengel 1991: 226) Still, there is hope, as other possible strategies such as revitalizing the public real and the city centre, and developing local economy through an industrial network, which oppose privatization and individuality, could help improve the life of the urban setting.

Knowing such facts about the English urban space makes it not uncommon to read literature that deals with the problem of the urban or suburban space. The rise and fall of cities is seen in postmodern novels, and sometimes the fall of the city is imagined as the fall of the world. There is an apocalyptic view, cities appearing as ruined, destroyed, vanished of the face of the world. Brian McHale speaks in his book *Postmodern Fiction* about different worlds and different spaces, which resemble or are different, real or unreal, and which are parallel or opposed and which can contain one another. He also names the dystopian space and the outer space used in science fiction. For McHale there is an important postmodern space: a "kind of space is capable of accommodating so many incommensurable and mutually exclusive worlds" - heterotopia. (McHale 1991: 44) He explains that although spaces in fiction must be constructed for the characters that live in them, the characters being constructed as well, with heterotopia things are very different. "Space (…) is less constructed than deconstructed by the text, or rather constructed and deconstructed at the same time."(McHale 1991: 45) McHale also tells the strategies used in the postmodern fiction for constructing and deconstructing space, from which we remind juxtaposition, interpolation, superimposition, and mis-attribution.

From all these postmodern spaces, a famous one is the dystopian space. A short and simplistic definition for the dystopian space is the opposite version of utopia, a kind of negative utopia. Usually, the dystopian space is an urban one, where images of mastodontic architecture, asphalt, darkness and shadows are composing the environment.

Lidia Vianu deals with the problem of the dystopian space in her book *The Desperado Age*. In Vianu's opinion, dystopia is identified as the postmodern's author favorite space. Dystopia or black, negative utopia can trace its beginnings to Huxley's *Brave New World* and George Orwell's *1984*, but a great variety of authors have made use of it in their novels even from the beginning of the 1950's and it has become one of the most common genres. What this use of dystopia points to is a common sense of emotional estrangement. (Vianu 2006: 18) The dystopian place is usually present in science fiction. Still, science fiction must not always be present for the dystopian place to exist. In the postmodern fiction things are quite the reverse:

> the surroundings are most often than not apparently common. The dystopia begins insidiously, with a defamiliarization of the familiar. The familiar present, exaggerated and blackened, is projected into future indeterminacy. Defamiliarization is accompanied by a maximized fear. In a nightmarish, yet very real world, heroes live naturally. Gray even confesses that it was his aim to

> see how far he could go, how hard he could stretch the hero's rationality, and he placed his character in abnormal circumstances, boasting with the character's very natural reactions to the unusual. (Vianu 2006: 18)

Here are a few basic, fundamental characteristics of the dystopias as presented by Vianu: the victory of the imagination is so great that it makes the reader be quite involved with the story in a way that invites to the rereading of it, being hung up on the story and feeling the need to reread.

It is very interesting to notice a shift in purpose from the traditional dystopias. While the traditional dystopias were rather warning about a seriously worrying possibility of the nightmare becoming reality, postmodern authors do not draw their story immediately from reality, they have the freedom to imagine worlds and dangers we have not necessarily experienced yet. This time around dystopias are political in character, so appealing to just about everyone, science fictional (the fear of mis-use of advanced modern technology), moral and philosophical (always going back to the failures of human nature, violence), apocalyptic (by possibility human race extinction by means of nuclear weapons). The purpose of dystopias is not merely that of inducing terror or helping with experiencing it, but by it reinstating a rehabilitation of ugliness in which life, either good or bad in quality, still matters, life, existence matters.

Lidia Vianu explains that dystopia flows directly from the author's instinct to shock and and his message is not one of despair or terror, but training the reader to adjust to the dystopic world and to form a survival instinct. But desperado's instinct to shock will always find new ways, new fears to hunt in their story, new genres to sneak into for his purpose.

> Dystopia is the result of the Desperado instinct to intrigue and shock the reader at all costs. From defamiliarization, through imagination, the reader comes to accept a multitude of alien worlds. The message is not fear or despair; the reader learns to adapt himself to the dystopic world, whatever that may be, and his mind practises survival in this way. As so many times and in so many ways before, the Desperado author finds his way across despair (despair of existence, or creation), towards hope. A Desperado never despairs of anything. A Desperado hunts the unusual (and not only), he is a mind in progress, ceaselessly discovering new literary and even existential modes. (Vianu 2006: 19-20)

When postmodern times brought with them the need of escaping the current space, they made way for the appearance of a new space and setting: the underground. After thorough study Keith Tester(1993) writes about technology and in this context he explains that the underground is an artificial environment in which human beings must use mechanical devices to provide the necessities of life like food, light, so on and so forth. Comparing the underground with nature Tester explains that "nature has ceased to be an overwhelming reality which reminds humans of their insignificance and instead, it has become nothing more than a passive, disenchanted resource."(Tester 1993: 89) Moreover, Tester explains that the underworld is in fact a replacement of the natural environment by a technological one in which human life is lived in a manufactured world. As a conclusion, Tester explains that in fact there is both a construction and a deconstruction of space, construction of a technological space set in the underground as a result of the disenchantment and deconstruction of the natural environment. (Tester 1993: 89)

2. POSTMODERN SPACE –FROM THE CITY TO THE UNDERGROUND

The city, according to Bell and Haddour (2000: 1) is a symbol, becoming "the medium through which modernity (and then post-modernity) gets expressed, worked through, concretized." This paper analyzes the re-imagination of Glasgow and London, the cities depicted in two postmodern novels, Gray's *Lanark* and Ackroyd's *Hawksmoor*, while also discussing the possible motivation of the two authors in using and re-imagining these cities in their texts. It also deals with the dystopian facet of the two cities as presented in the novels, ending with a presentation of the images of the underground as a postmodern space of death and painful truths.

2.1 IMAGINING GLASGOW AND RE-IMAGINING LONDON

The city is a central place in the two novels: *Lanark*'s city is Glasgow, while *Hawksmoor*'s city is London. However, Gray and Ackroyd depict their cities in very different ways and from very different reasons. If Ackroyd has a passion for the landscape of London, Gray's presentation of Glasgow has a more profound reason: we are confronted with two cities, an imagined one and an unimagined one.

As a Scottish author, Alasdair Gray expresses his nationality and the need for cultural revival in Scotland by presenting Glasgow and arousing the interest of people. Shaffer (2006: 19) states that "*Lanark* attempts for Glasgow and Scotland what Joyce's *Ulysses* does for Dublin and Ireland: to be an epic-encyclopedic novel that explores the ways in which the modern artist can help engender national renewal." After *Lanark* other writings centered on Glasgow appeared and due to its imagination of the unimagined Gray's novel "became an instant classic on

publication in 1982."(Addison&Jones, 2005: 435) The passage that best describes Glasgow as the unimagined city is the one where Duncan Thaw and McAlpin, two students from Glasgow School of Arts are viewing the city. Their observations are very different:

> They stood under an electric pylon and looked across the city centre. The wind which stirred the skirts of their coats was shifting mounds of grey cloud eastward along the valley. Travelling patches of sunlight went from ridge to ridge, making a hump of tenements gleam agianst the dark towers of the city chambers, silhouetting the cupolas of the Royal infirmary against the tomb-glittering spine of the Necropolis. "Glasgow is a magnificent city," said McAlpin. "Why do we hardly ever notice that?""Because nobody imagines living here," said Thaw. McAlpin lit a cigarette and said, "If you want to explain that I'll certainly listen."
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> "Then think of Florence, Paris, London, New York. Nobody visiting them for the first time is a stranger because he's already visited them in painting, novels, history books and films. But if a city hasn't been used by an artist not even the inhabitants live there imaginatively. what is Glasgow to most of us? A house, the place we work, a football park or a golf course, some pubs connecting streets. That's all. No, I'm wrong, there's also the cinema and library. And when our imagination needs exercise we use these to visit London, Paris, Rome under the Caesars, the American West at the turn of the century, anywhere but here and now. Imaginatively Glasgow exists as a music-hall song and a few bad novels. That's all we've given to the world outside. It's all we've given to ourselves." (Gray 1985: 243)

McAlpin sees Glasgow as magnificent and he is very intrigued in the reason that is behind the fact that people do not see its magnificence. Duncan Thaw, who explains that people do not see the magnificence of Glasgow because they do not imagine living there, Glasgow being an unimagined place, gives the answer to McAlpin's intrigue. Duncan Thaw, thus, stresses the need of writing about Glasgow, by this expressing Gray's motivation when choosing to write about the city. In *Imagining a city*, Dorothy Porter (1991: 42-50) finds another motivation for Gray's choice to imagine Glasgow. She explains that "Thaw's perception of Glasgow as an unimagined city is necessary as a validation of Alasdair Gray's epic ambitions: the method of *Lanark* is premised on the belief that everything is yet to do."(Porter 1991) Because Glasgow is unimagined, Gray has the freedom of imagining the city according to his wishes. The author actually imagines multiple Glasgows, different kinds of cities that can be viewed from different perspectives. In this city, Duncan is in search for his identity given by his relationships. It is interesting to observe that his identity is closely linked to the city in which he lives as well. Dorothy Porter also states that Glasgow "is a city which Thaw, even as a child and adolescent, often looks down upon." (Porter 1991) At one point in the novel Thaw tries to escape his pain and fear through imagination:

> Tonight he came to a piece of waste ground, a hill among tenements that had been suburban twenty years earlier. The black shape of it curved again the lesser blackness of the sky and the yellow spark of a bonfire flickered just under the summit. He left the pallid gaslit street and climbed upward, feeling coarse grass against his shoes occasional broken bricks. When he reached the fire it had sunk to a few small flames among a heap of chattered sticks and rags. He groped on the ground till he found some scraps of cardboard and paper and added them to the fire with a torn-up handful of withered grass. A tall flame shot up and he watched from outside the brightness it cast. The imagined other people arriving one at a time and standing in a ring round the firelight. When ten or twelve has assembled they would hear a heavy thudding of wings; a black shape would pass overhead and land on the hilltop, and the messenger would walk down to them bringing the key. The fire burned out and he turned and looked down on Glasgow. Nothing solid could be seen, only lights – streetlamps like broken necklaces and bracelets of light, neon cinema signs like silver and ruby brooches, the ruby, emerald and amber twinkle of traffic regulators – all glowing like treasure on the blackness. (Gray 1985: 170)

In his imagination Duncan Thaw searches for a key that would bring him the escape which he needs. The escape is found at the cost of the loss of solidity.

If Glasgow is the unimagined city, London is a re-imagined city in Ackroyd's novels. Ackroyd's task is more difficult, because as Dorothy Porter puts it: "the problems of living in and writing about an over-imagined city are possibly more inhibiting." (Porter 1991) But this does not affect Ackroyd at all. His interest concerning London makes him write about it several times, and completing a job well done. Moreover, about Peter Ackroyd and his connection to London, the following was stated:

> To begin understanding Peter Ackroyd, it is perhaps helpful to reverse the methapor of the city-as-human and to consider this English writer as if he were a city. He has his landmarks, his suburbs, and his neglected boroughts. As with London, he is very difficult to grasp entire.(…) The

> darkness and disorder of Ackroyd and London – and Ackroyd's London – can only be captured in glimpses and echoes. (Lewis 2007: 2)

In an interview Ackroyd explains his interest towards London as a city and as a place for his characters and he does not only refer to the London of his time, but goes back to the past and describes a past London of the plague and of the Great Fire with its dark sides. Ackroyd uses Nicholas Dyer, a character, to describe London after the plague of 1665 and the Great Fire a year after. London is depicted as a living and lively place, although consumed with death and pain. Although Dyer's presentation of the city is a very dark one, all this darkness is full of greatness in Dyer's point of view:

> Here I rambled as a Boy, and yet also was often walking abroad into that great and monstrous Pile of London: and as I felt the City under my Feet I had a habit of rowling Phrases around my Head such as "Prophesie Now", "Devowring Fire", "Violent Hands", which I would then inscribe in my Alphabeticall Pocket-Book along with any other odd fancies of my own. (Ackroyd 1985: 13)

His descriptions do not stop here. Referring to the sick people he calls them *Hollow Men* (Ackroyd 1985: 16), but as part of a setting which is fit for them:

> I believe now those Holow Men to be a Recreation of all the Exhalations and Vapours of humane Blood that rose from the City like a general Groan. And it is not to be Wonder'd at that the streets were mighty Desolate; there were in every place Bodies on the ground, from which came such a Scent that I ran to catch the Wind in my Nostrils, and even those who liv'd were so many walking Corses breathing Death and looking upon one another fearfully. (Ackroyd 1985: 16)

These two passages from the text present an apocalyptic London that transforms every breathing being who lives in it. All the death brings fear and desolation and gives the perfect opportunity for a child like Dyer to become a murderer, because death is not a novelty. Besides presenting a city that groans, Ackroyd goes beyond and describes the odors of London. Other passages as well tell of the smells that people felt when walking the streets of London and this characteristic of the city humanizes it. London is presented both as constant and changed in different times and by different characters and the description of the present London is a brighter one. When describing present London references to its appearance in literature are given, thus, Ackroyd emphasizes not only the difficulty of his task, but also the greatness of London. The present London is a different place in which people travel differently so when the reader is confronted with a technologized image of London after what was depicted before a moment is needed to get accustomed to the new setting and to realize that it is the same place that suffered from the Great Fire and the plague. However, it is also an older place, with buildings that need restoration not because of the Great Fire, but because of the greatness that lies in the passing of time.

2.2 THE CITY AS A DYSTOPIAN PLACE

Although dystopia is a complex term with a lot of compounding elements, this part of the paper focuses on three main elements of the dystopia: the restoration of ugliness, viewing the city as a dark and macabre place where death is not unnatural, the defamiliarization and alienation of the familiar and the presence of the place of salvation which is exactly the opposite.

Gray's novel, *Lanark*, has as a setting two places, the industrial city of Glasgow and the dystopian city of Unthank. The city of Unthank is a clear dystopia, having all the elements that a dystopia should have. Ackroyd's setting is not such a powerful dystopia, dystopian elements being present but not at the same level as in the case of Unthank.

When referring to the first element of the three that are being analyzed, Unthank is a perfect situation. The city is described as a futuristic one in which nature does not exist. There are descriptions of streets with vehicles and of coffee shops and buildings, but green as colour is not used. In this city, people are interested in having fun and surviving death. Lanark is the character who lives in this city. Lanark arrives in the decaying world of Unthank, where happiness and humanity seem to have vanished. A very strange thing about Unthank is that there is no daylight, darkness being a constant in this world. In this darkness, people suddenly disappear and are never found again. Lanark searches a mysterious light he sees in the distance and finds a mouth on the ground and enters it, thus reaching the Institute. Described by others as a place where people are healed, the Institute is a place where Lanark sees another face of death. Death is presented like a means of survival, due to the fact that the dead bodies are used as food and fuel. This image of death is a new one, more disgusting and terrible than others known until then. Lanark's journey in the dystopian place is not over. He is in a constant move from one place to another, every place being dystopian and dark.

> In what could very well be understood as a metaphor for the intellectual and spiritual void which characterizes this alternative world, movement is always centripetal: Lanark enters the mouth in the Necropolis and falls into the Institute; there he discovers an immense pit; he leaves the Institute and through the Intercalendrical Zone reaches Unthank, which now lies in complete decay; after a self-consuming trip and an spiral landing he descends into Provan, where he

> discovers vanity and fails in his political mission; and finally Lord Monboddo offers him the possibility of abandoning Provan through a tunnel which leads him back to Unthank, by now almost turned into an apocalyptic place, where he will acknowledge his failure as a husband and father and sit to await death. (Hatchard 2002: 112)

Unthank, a world of darkness and oppression, is also a place represented by a continual narrowing and confinement, in which there is no possibility of expansion. This reduction is evident in the lack of motivation that the people who live in it prove. They are contempt with very few things like having fun or watching the sky from the balcony.

As a dystopian place characterized by death and darkness London follows the image of Unthank. By describing the plague and the Great Fire and by emphasizing that even children were witnesses to such horror, Ackroyd creates a place of death and suffering. Images of blood that pours are not unnatural in the city described by Ackroyd were people dye everyday and if they are still alive, it is a miracle and a reason to be afraid. Nevertheless, if presenting death in a time of plague is not such an amazing thing, the present London in which people are far more educated and they have means of treatment, is a place where death should not be present as much. Still, as in the past, death is brought to our attention repeatedly.

The darkness and terror that show the dystopian ugliness have their foundation not only in the image of death, but in the place where death strikes and in the manner in which it does. There are seven churches in the past with seven deaths. The church as a place and the symbolistic of number seven are not randomly chosen, and must be further analyzed. The church is a place of light and life, which should bring peace and restoration to our souls and number seven in seen as a perfect number. Its perfection refers to God and the Bible (just as it is the case of the space of the church) and the book of Revelations (last book of the Bible) abounds with the image of this number: there are seven angels, seven stars, seven spirits and seven churches. The churches from the book of Revelations have many interpretations, and one of them is the spiritual state of the church from the coming of Jesus until the end of the world. The chapters about the seven churches from the Bible give hope because they treat a range of different subjects like apostate Christians, apathy of the church in contrast to devoted Christians, with a possibility of redemption in every case. The perfection of the image of the church and of the symbolic number seven is turned upside down due to the odd things that take place in Ackroyd's depiction and their constant link with death. Therefore, the utopian space of the church and the peace brought by the connection with God and by the fellowship with others is transformed into a dystopian place characterized by pain, separation and death. Moreover, the oddness that characterizes these places and the smells that are sensed there also turn the natural image upside down. A place of godly miracles, the church becomes the image of the satanic influence that needs to satisfy its thirst for blood.

The second dystopian feature is the defamiliarization and the alienation. Lanark arrives in Unthank being a stranger with no past and with an uncertain future. He is not familiar to anything having to get accustomed with living in a new environment. He is defamiliarized by moving constantly from one place to another. Thus, he accepts a multitude of places and gets accustomed to each of them, but he still does not feel that he completely belongs in any of them. He willingly enters the mouth, accepting to leave one place and go to another and when he escapes the Institute, he does this consciously. All the other travels are conscious decisions, and he always returns to the same place. This is an evidence of his lack of belonging and alienation. Even more, although returning to Unthank in the end, Lanark understands the alienation from his family and that he failed as a husband and as a father and he awaits his death. This death is a symbol of the last going away, one that is forever, being a proof that he never really belonged and alienating from life as well as he did from everything else. It might be proper to state that Lanark's death is his ultimate alienation, one that was expected/foretold from the beginning.

Defamiliarization and alienation are also felt by Ackroyd's character, the detective Nicholas Hawksmoor. Being a detective, thus a man used to see dead people and investigate their deaths, Hawksmoor is faced with the struggle of investigating some strange murders.

> On an occasion such as this, he liked to consider himself as a scientist, or even a scholar, since it was by close observation and rational deduction that he came to a proper understanding of each case; he prided himself on his acquaintance with chemistry, anatomy and even mathematics since it was these disciplines which helped him to resolve situations at which others trembled. For he knew that even during extreme events the laws of cause and effect still operated; he could fathom the mind of the murderer, for example, from a close study of the footprints which he left behind – not, it would seem, by any act of sympathy but rather from the principles of reason and method. (Ackroyd 1985: 152-3)

All his knowledge and use of scientific methods lead nowhere and all that the detective knows is turned upside down. These unfamiliar situations eventually bring Hawksmoor to complete defamiliarization and alienation of self.

Hawksmoor is alienated from his time being drawn to the past due to the connections of the murders. This recurrence of the past and his lack of understanding make Hawksmoor loose contact with other people and become a

stranger for his time. His incapability to solve the murders leads to his change in function alienating him more from all that he knows.

Another character that is faced with alienation, maybe only to foretell the ending is Ned: "He had a recurring vision in which he saw his own shape, watching him from a distance. And then when sometimes he sat, bewildered, alone, he glimpsed shadows and vague images of others who moved and walked strangely." (Ackroyd 1985: 84) This image of the shadow as a motif is recurrent and it implies alienation and death. Ned leaves his life at the fall of the shadow, presenting the utmost alienation, that from life itself.

An interesting characteristic of Ackroyd's novel is the alienation of two characters at the same time. As previously explained, Hawksmoor feels alienation from his own time and space, even his own life. At the same time, Dyer feels it too, being constantly drawn to the future - Hawksmoor's present – therefore both characters experience images of shadows, implying the other. This attraction continues until the end of the novel that finds the two characters face to face and presents their fusion: "They were face to face, and yet they looked past one another at the pattern which they cast upon the stone (…) and who could say where one had ended and the other had begun?(…)and I am a child again (…)."(Ackroyd 1985: 217) Their fusion creates a new "I", an unknown one, leaving the reader with unanswered questions, but with a certainty that both of them have seen alienation of self as a path to merging in a new self at a point in life (childhood) that gives the opportunity for a new start.

2.3 IMAGES OF THE UNDERGROUND

The underworld is present in both novels, with more common features then differences. The difference, however, is given by the presence of technology in the case of the Institute in Gray's novel. The Institute is a place where technology is presented as the source of life. Nature is no longer needed to provide the necessities of life, everything being done by technology. Nature is neither acceptable nor accepted in such a place and the blinds of the windows are never raised:

> "What's outside the window?"
> "Just scenery. Miles and miles of scenery."
> "Why are the blinds never raised?"
> "You couldn't stand the view, Bushybrows. We can't stand it and we're perfectly fit" (Gray 1985: 50-1)

At one point in the novel, a doctor fulfills Lanark's wish and raises the blinds and Lanark is faced with sunlight and a magnificent landscape of lakes and mountains, but soon that transforms into the image of the war and he puts his hand on his eyes. This desire for sunlight is also seen in the case of Hawksmoor. The people who enter the under the church, a dark and wet place, try to go towards the light, which symbolizes the outside, the escape.

It is interesting to observe that the characters that enter these underworlds go in them willingly. In Lanark's case, a moment of uncertainty is seen, but a when the mouth closes he expresses his will to enter:

> He shouted, "Stop! I'll come!"
> The mouth grew distinct again. He asked humbly, "How should I come?"
> It replied. When the sound stopped hurting his ears he found it had said "Naked, and head first."
> (Gray 1985: 47)

In *Hawksmoor*, Thomas enters the underground willingly as well. He wants a safe place and he thinks that the safest place is the underground of the church. Thus, Thomas enters in it and although he knows horror stories take place in underground parts of houses, he does not feel fear.

In both situations the way down is a hard way. It is more a fall than a going down, Lanark falling due to the lack of stairs and Thomas falling due to the lack of knowledge of the existence of stairs. In both cases the thing preceding their fall is the disappearance of light very evident in the next two paragraphs: "Blackness closed over him with a clash and he fell" (Gray 1985: 48) and "the light from the opening of the tunnel, which he half-glimpsed as he lay sprawled at the bottom of the steps, then disappeared." (Ackroyd 1985: 39)

The image of this false place of salvation is the greatest paradox that exists in both novels. The two characters enter the underground in search of escape. The mouth tells Lanark that it is the way out and Thomas finds his way out from a supposed chase. The escape place is not what it looks like from the outside. In fact, death is the central feature of the escape place. Lanark finds out that although a place of recovery and salvation, the Institute does not save everyone and the ones that do not survive are used as fuel and food. This image is very different from the one that existed previously, in which death seemed less bad. The use of death as an element for survival is a contradiction maximized by the fact that it takes place in a space where everyone believes that salvation can be found. In Thomas's situation the place of salvation brings death. His attempt to escape in the underground is the reason that brings death. Again, death is seen as an element of survival. We have the needed sacrifice for the survival of the work of art. Both novels present a paradoxical image of the underground.

3. CONCLUSIONS

The way space is created in the two novels is in accord to the theoretical framework of the postmodernist features of fiction in the eighties. The novels depict spaces that are not only different, but contradictory to the previous settings, becoming statements of the new literary trend. Thus, a redefinition of terms like "dystopia" is asked for, to embound the novelty and reconstruction that the two postmodern works bring forth. The study of the literary setting remains, therefore, vital in understanding the complexity of the evolution of the novel in the eighties.

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