‘Anthem’ By Ayn Rand As A Socialist Anti-Utopia

When Thomas More published in 1516 his infamous novel ‘Utopia’ he could not think that he founded a new stream in the literature which was called after his novel. The genre of utopia is peculiar for depicting an ideal society without poverty, crimes, abuse of power, etc. All the people are equal, rational and happy. However, both writers and readers understood that such world order is impossible and even may be dangerous. As the contradiction to the genre of utopia, the genre of anti-utopia became very popular among the writers. In this genre, the society is also ideal, people are equal but miserable. They are deprived of their personalities, families, their lives are the same. One of such anti-utopia novel is ‘Anthem’ by Ayn Rand where the lives of main heroes are ruined by ideal socialist order.

Ayn Rand is famous for the novels which proclaim capitalism as the main driver of progress and people’s welfare. In the novel ‘Anthem’, the author criticized the ideas of socialism as the ones which make all the people equal and ruin individuals and their personalities. Even though socialism is aimed at making all the people equal and fighting poverty and enormous wealth, the author showed in the novel that people just not become equal, they lose all the attributes which make them be special. The characters of the novel do not have normal names, they do not know the pronoun ‘I’, etc. Thus, the author shows that capitalism and individualism as the contradiction to socialism may save people’s personalities.

Anti-utopia ‘Anthem’ shows the world which rules by socialism and looks more like the communist order. The author spent her teen years in the Soviet Union after which she moved to the USA and thus could compare two paradigms of social organization, communism, and capitalism. In her novels Rand depicted typical representatives of the business class who managed to create something new and become rich, thus, she supported the ideas of capitalism as the order which can pay people according to their efforts, not needs. On the contrary, she condemned communism as the ideology that does not allow people to develop and progress, but disposes them of their peculiar features and makes these people identical.

Electricity found by Equality 7-2521 is one of the brightest allusions in the novel. This episode is very symbolic in the context of the novel as far as this invention of affordable electricity and the light bulb made a significant contribution to the process of industrialization and development of capitalism which was strongly supported by Rand. But the main hero just reinvents the bulb as far as he knows that people had already used his device “I have learned that my power of the sky was known to men long ago; they called it Electricity.” (Rand). In this way, he comes back to the time when people could make mistakes and inventions. Perhaps, at this moment he realized that imperfect world is better.

Rand spent a few years living in the Soviet Union and many allusions to this regime as well may be found in the book. For instance, the Councils who ruled the world in the novel may be an allusion to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union as far as they obtain the complete power in the country. What is more, all the people that confronted the regime or were not loyal to it were sent to the distant areas of modern Russia which are covered with forests. The Councils acted pretty the same way: all the people who did not fit into the society were sent out of the City into the Forest: ‘It is whispered that once or twice in a hundred years, one among the men of the

City escape alone and run to the Uncharted Forest, without call or reason. These men do not return. They perish from hunger and from the claws of the wild beasts which roam the Forest." (Rand). The people of the USSR knew that being sent out by the government meant that they have little chance to survive because of the terrible living conditions and exhausting working hours.

Another bright allusion to the USSR is the first great event of history. In the case of the Soviet Union, this point was the October Revolution of 1917 when the Bolsheviks came to power. In the book, there is a pretty similar event which is called the Great Rebirth: 'We did not listen well to the history of all the Councils elected since the Great Rebirth.' (Rand). The Soviet historiography identified the October Revolution as the date when the new order was set, therefore, it was the point of the beginning of new epoch as the Great Rebirth was the beginning of the new world in the novel.

To make a conclusion, 'Anthem' by Ayn Rand is a good illustration of the world rules by complete socialism. Being equal does not only mean equal income and opportunities but only depersonalize people. There are bright allusions to the history of the USSR as the biggest experiment with making people equal with the use of force, death penalties and depersonalization.

Works Cited

1. Rand, Ayn. Anthem. The Project Gutenberg, 2013. http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1250/1250-h/1250-h.htm