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DEMOGRAPHY AS A SEED OF DYSTOPIA

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Abstract.- *Demography as a seed of Dystopia*

In the annual *Global Risks* report presented at the World Economic Forum (Davos) in January 2012, its authors include demographic trends among what they identify as "three distinct constellations of risks" or "Seeds of Dystopia", which they define as the "opposite of a utopia" or "a place where life is full of hardship and devoid of hope". What I have elsewhere called "demodystopias" would define a literary subgenre which, along the lines of the classical works by Wells, Huxley and Orwell, appeared in the late 1960s in response to fears of a "world population explosion". Surprisingly perhaps, in recent years it has also come to represent serious concern in the political arena. From ecology activism to neoliberal discourse, in a setting of economic crisis, present population trends are ever more frequently presented as a real threat to the future of humanity. This new revival of demodystopias is related with the transformation by the neoliberal discourse of the concept of "resilience" as a new way of dealing with risk and managing populations.

Key words.- Demography, Dystopia, Population Policy, Fiction, Resilience

Resum.-

A l'informe anual *Global Risks* presentat al *World Economic Forum* (Davos) al gener de 2012, els seus autors incloïen les tendències demogràfiques entre el que ells identificaven com "tres diferents constel·lacions de riscs" o "Llavors de Distopia", que definien com a oposada a utopia, o "el lloc on la vida és plena de dificultats I sense esperança". El que en altres llocs he anomenat "demodistopies" pot definir un subgènere literari que, seguint la tradició dels treballs clàssics de Wells, Huxley i Orwell, va aparèixer a darreries dels anys seixanta, com a resposta a les pors de "l'explosió de la població mundial". Sorprenentment en els darrers anys, aquesta visió ha tornar al medi polític. Des de l'activisme ecologista fins al discurs neoliberal, a partir de la crisi econòmica, l'evolució de la població és presentada cada cop més com una amenaça per al futur de la humanitat. Aquest retorn de les demodistopies està relacionat amb la transformacióper part del discurs neoliberal del concepte de "resiliència" com una nova forma d'afrontar els riscos i la governabilitat de la població.

Paraules clau.- Demografia, Distopia, Política de Població, Ficció, Resiliència

Resumen

En el informe anual *Global Risks* presentado en el *World Economic Forum* (Davos) en enero de 2012 , sus autores incluían las tendencias demográficas entre lo que ellos identificaban como "tres diferentes constelaciones de riesgos" o " Semillas de Distopía" , que definían como opuesta a utopía , o "el lugar donde la vida está llena de dificultades y sin esperanza" . Lo que en otros lugares he llamado "demodistopias " puede ser definido como un subgénero literario que, siguiendo la tradición de los trabajos clásicos de Wells, Huxley y Orwell, apareció a finales de los años sesenta, como respuesta a los miedos de "la explosión de la población mundial". Sorprendentemente en los últimos años, esta visión ha vuelto al medio político. Desde el activismo ecologista hasta el discurso neoliberal , a partir de la crisis económica, la evolución de la población es presentada cada vez más como una amenaza para el futuro de la humanidad. Este retorno de las demodistopias está relacionado con la transformación del concepto de "resiliencia " por parte del discurso neoliberal como una nueva forma de afrontar los riesgos y la gobernabilidad de la población.

Palabras clave.- Demografía, Distopía, Política de Población, Ficción, Resiliencia

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"The future can never be truly predicted because there are too many variables. You can, however, dip into the present, which contains the seed of what will become the future."

Margaret Atwood, *In Other Worlds*, 2011[1]

1.- Demodystopia and the "What If" Question in Literature and Demography

Demography shares with literary dystopias their vocation for intervention in governability on the basis of trends observed in the present when these dystopias are heading in explicitly negative directions. What few people understand at times is that forecasts – like the horizons delineated by dystopias – do not profess to be an exercise in divining the future or some kind of sorcery but, rather, a way of seeking foreknowledge with the aim of being able to rectify things, which is a very different matter. Dystopias first made their appearance at the end of the nineteenth century. One of the most acclaimed among them was H. G. Wells' The Time Machine, which was published in 1895, although the coinage of the word "dystopia" goes back to the economist John Stuart Mill and a talk he gave in the British House of Commons on 12 March 1868 where, as a humorous touch, he contrasted "dystopian" with "utopian". However, it was not until around the 1930s and 1940s that dystopian writing consolidated as a literary subgenre with names that are not only still recalled but that – with the reflections they cast from their dark mirror of a future imagined as the worst of all possible worlds – have marked our way of understanding

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[1] While I always give the year of publication of the works referred to in the text, in the case of quotes used therein, in bibliographical references, and when access to the original edition has not been possible, I give the year corresponding to the reprint I have consulted. This explains the occasional divergence in dates for some works. However, I believe it has been necessary to adopt this course in order to remain true to the historical perspective as well as rigour in citing.

politics and transformations in the art of governing: Brave New World by Aldous Huxley (1942), Nineteen Eighty-Four by George Orwell (1949) and Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury (1953) are the most famous among them. Although in the subsequent series of film versions the theme of population has gradually been eliminated, it was present in all of these classical dystopias, even if not as the cause of the infernal futures that were being presaged. In those days, totalitarianism and the nuclear threat monopolised the concerns of European intellectuals. It was not after until the end of the Second World War that demography emerged as both an imminent danger – population growth – and a type of discourse – often tremendously conservative – about the imposition of a new world order in the context of the Cold War.

The publication in 1968 of Paul R. Ehrlich's The Population Bomb, in the midst of the demographic explosion and at the height of the debate between developmentalists and Malthusians over how to intervene in population growth, signalled the popularisation of a new literary subgenre: "demodystopias". These might be defined as literary works which, inspired by this debate, are presented as situations in which the population and demographic trends constitute the most imminent danger for governability and the future of humanity itself (Domingo, 2008a; 2008b). This is not just a matter of a book foreboding imminent catastrophe as a result of demographic growth, taking the form of famine and wars throughout the 1970s, but also the proclamation of a plan of action to put a stop to this growth. Ehrlich advocates an aggressive family planning campaign with the final aim of lowering fertility rates until the ideal of zero growth is reached and, at the end of his book (among many other measures), he makes an explicit case for promoting the subject in schools where, in Language or Theatre classes, the teacher "may be able to write novels or plays emphasizing near-future worlds in which famines or plagues are changing the very nature of mankind and his societies" (Ehrlich, 1968: 170). This challenge, in principle aimed at teachers, was also picked up by several science fiction writers who thenceforth took demographic growth as a central theme of their texts, some of which were dedicated to Ehrlich and, on other occasions, even had prologues written by him.

Ever since then, starting from dystopias which have taken population as their central theme, it has been possible to follow demographic evolution and the fears it has given rise to as being closely related with the discourse on governability. Notable here is the set of literary works that have continually dealt with the theme (Shriver, 2003) and thereby becoming a prime example of what Anton Kuijsten has called "Demografiction" (1999).

With the swing to neoliberalism starting from the oil crisis of the mid-1970s, the harshest critics of the powers that be wielded dystopias increasingly often, thus recovering the original function of utopian literature. By depicting the hell towards which we were careening, they tried to restore sense to the project of upholding the principle of Hope or the utopian impulse as defined by the philosopher Ernst Bloch in his The Principle of Hope (Das Prinzip Hoffnung, which was written between 1938 and 1947 and published in three volumes between 1954 and 1959) as something inherent to humanity's longings, a power capable of transforming reality. The slowing down of population growth beginning with the last fifteen years of the twentieth century meant that works inspired by fear of a worldwide population explosion and its consequences were slowly superseded by other more urgent writings that soon became prominent not only in literary works but also scientific and political writings. In these, deterioration of the environment, climate change and technology-turned-against-humanity were to emerge as new threats which spread from literature to the domains of film, comics and, later, videogames.

With globalisation and the world population figure of six billion reached by 2000, demography has gained ground so that, with the economic crisis and a global population now exceeding seven billion, it is once again in the forefront of dystopia-shaping fears, although it is also adapted to the evolution that dystopian scenarios have undergone and the appearance of new problems in the form of the other conspicuous, more recent, threats I have mentioned above. The transformation in the domain of fiction, however, has come hand-in-hand with the genre's promotion to being the focal point of scientific and political discourse, which is sometimes even more terrifying than fictional imaginings, to such an extent that the literary dystopias enunciated last century might even look like puerile entertainment. Politicians and scientists are making statements related with demographic policy which seem to be reflections of works of fiction. The Global Risks 2012 report presented in Davos by the World Economic Forum in January 2012 literally portrayed demographic trends as "Seeds of Dystopia" conditioning the future of the world. A clear example of the politicians' statements is that of Taro Aso, the Japanese Finance Minister, who said on 21 January 2013 that old people should "hurry up and die" (sic) and thus cease to be an unnecessary drain on the country's finances. The same month, the naturalist David Attenborough also made sensationalist declarations when he described human beings as a "plague on the Earth" and called for limits to world population growth.

At this point, I would formulate my starting hypothesis as being that the different forms of enunciation, whether they are literary (or artistic in general), scientific or political, derive from a single social imaginary and they all influence each other. It is a self-nourishing spiral, feeding on its own fictional, scientific or political discourse and can be analysed as a case both of intertextuality (circulation and transformation of small units of meaning endowed with diffuse acceptability within a particular doxa) and as interdiscursivity (interaction or mutual influence of the set of axioms of a certain discourse), as defined by Marc Angenot (2010).

To stay with demography, on the one hand one finds the catastrophist type of discourse which keeps stressing population size, mainly linking it with the environment. This is a more or less direct legacy of the Malthusian vision, which draws attention to the difference between population growth and the finite nature of resources, with sustainability as the crux of the debate. On the other hand, are discussions that give priority to distribution and composition of the population, also taking size into account but with the focus more on security so that the notion of sustainability extends beyond the environment to embrace governability. I shall now go on to analyse the debate generated by these two standpoints with the threefold aim of : 1) explaining why the discourse used by some politicians, scientists and the mass media has taken on dystopian features when referring to demographic trends; 2) showing how this dystopian perspective can be explained by the intrinsic relationship between demography and governability; and 3) demonstrating that the onset of the economic crisis has triggered a change in neoliberal discourse about governability in which it is dystopia, precisely, that constitutes the frame of reference.

2.- Population Growth

The slow-down in world population growth at the end of the twentieth century had the temporary effect that demography would be consigned to the background of literary dystopias where the foreground was now occupied by fear of the consequences of climate change or losing control over technological, and especially biotechnological, advances. Hence, floods, droughts, plagues of synthetic viruses and genetic manipulation fill the pages of the dystopias of the new millennium in books by T. Coraghessan Boyle (2000), Margaret Atwood (2004 and 2009) and Kazuo Ishiguro (2005). In brief, arguments

regarding the bleak future in store for the planet as a result of the total number of inhabitants and growth in an unchanging demographic structure are sufficient but also seen as redundant when compared with the resource problem and the devastation being inflicted on the planet by the present model of economic growth. It is not surprising, then, that dystopian thought which continues to take excess population as its main theme, in both literature and politics, should appear as prominently represented among ecologists and biologists, although it also continues to be the battleground of neo-Malthusian thinkers.

From the standpoint of the dialectics between utopia and dystopia, it should be noted that the two main currents that are still true to the most alarmist Malthusian tradition in terms of the effects of population growth, are situated at opposite poles. First, there is the ecologist line, which is close to utopianism and, second, is the neo-Malthusian line, which is consolidating as an anti-utopian position. It should be recalled that some of the first declarations of environmentalism were fully-fledged utopias. These include Walden; or, Life in the Woods (1854) by Henry David Thoreau, or Ecotopia by Ernest Callenbach, which, published in 1975 and adopting the classical form of the nineteenth-century type of utopia, set forth a complete ideology for the ecologist movement. This was followed by his Ecotopia Emerging in 1981. Meanwhile, taking root in Karl Popper's philosophy, especially The Open Society and Its Enemies (1945), neo-Malthusianism, which is not necessarily identified with environmentalism whatever concerns it may express about the environment, advocates Malthusianism as a counterproposal to the utopianism of William Godwin and Nicolas de Condorcet. One might say that the – quite diverse – kinds of arguments one finds in the ecologist movement are concerned with conserving Nature while the economist neo-Malthusians are concerned with preserving the capitalist system even though they may start out from, or claim environmental motives for their own ends.

2.1.- The Limits of Growth and Sustainability

One of Ehrlich's aims when he published his famous book was to establish a lobby working in favour of population control. This eventually took the form of the Zero Population Growth (ZPG) society, which he co-founded with Richard Bowers and Charles Remington. This, in turn, was the inspiration for the Club of Rome, which was founded the same year, 1968, with the aim of halting population growth. The best-known product of the Club of Rome was the report The Limits to Growth (1972) which, funded by the

Volkswagen Foundation and entrusted to Massachusetts Institute of Technology, was written by Donella H. Meadows and other authors. This work set out a series of future scenarios on the basis of the evolution of a number of environmental factors although the mainstay of its argument was the unsustainability of population growth. This viewpoint was to engender a whole tradition. If Paul R. Ehrlich and his wife Anne H. Ehrlich brought the catastrophist predictions up to date in 1990 with The Population Explosion, and the team consisting of Donella Meadows, her husband Dennis Meadows and Jorgen Randers did much the same with their reports on the limits of growth in 1992 and 2004, there has been no lack of followers for the line which is exclusively based on population growth.

Before further discussing this tendency, I should like to examine the significance of their work and the transformations that resulted from its different offshoots. While the Ehrlichs repeated their judgements and moved back the horizons over which dark dystopian clouds still loomed, the Meadows team, even while upholding population growth as the linchpin of their arguments about the undesirable kinds of evolution threatening the future, insisted on the need for constructing the discourse around sustainable growth, while temporarily shelving the dystopian scenario. In their most recent publication, Limits to Growth; The 30-Year Update (2004) the sustainable society was defined as that which has sufficient informative, social and institutional mechanisms to manage the positive feedback loops causing the exponential growth of population and capital. From this standpoint, the common denominator of twenty-first-century, population-based catastrophism would be the centrality of management, which would include information, innovation and government supervision. This does not mean that they have stopped being dyed-in-the-wool Malthusians who, as such, see population as the cause of poverty. Indeed, their catch cry is "the bigger the population the more the poor, and the more poverty there is the bigger the population".

One good example of this kind of thinking is the work of Giovanni Sartori and Gianni Mazzoleni, which was published in 2003 with the eloquent title La terra scoppia. Sovrappopolazione e sviluppo (The Earth Explodes: Overpopulation and Development). It starts out from the hypothesis that Ehrlich was wrong only with the horizon of his forecasts but not in his analysis of the consequences of overpopulation and how to counteract it. This updating of the Ehrlichs' arguments means returning to the framework of the confrontation between developmentalists and Malthusians, which marked the debate on population growth and Demographic Transition Theory from Frank Notenstein (1945) through to the

1984 International Conference on Population in Mexico, at least, but adding the extra ingredient of environmental deterioration to neo-Malthusian arguments. The accent has now shifted from a purported deficit in productivity and the food crisis as the most alarming version of the sword of Damocles hanging over the future of humanity to refocus on energy consumption. According to Sartori and Mazzoleni, the most effective way to reduce consumption would be to reduce the population. From the environmental perspective, the energy problem is presented as one of the main proofs of the existence of a point of no return after which excess population destroys the conditions for life on the planet and confronts humanity with its own extinction. The limits of technology as a solution are stressed because technology has become an essential part of the problem. Like Paul Ehrlich, they make the position of the Catholic Church a target of their criticisms, together with international organisations like the FAO which, in their view, have succumbed to pressure from energy lobbies conspiring to conceal evidence of the demographic threat. References to the Club of Rome and the first report of 1972 situate the authors in the dystopian framework, which Meadows and her colleagues seem to have tempered in the latest version.

Finally, I'd like to stress that discourse on security is already hinted at in the work of Sartori and Mazzoleni who focus more on the effects of structure, as we shall see below. Their concern about governability may be summed up in the statement, that the more serious the environmental scarcity, the greater the social turbulence caused by it and the smaller the probability that society will be able to bring about the regeneration necessary for it to adapt. They share the fear of the multitude and social revolt that once inspired demodystopias like Don Pendleton's 1989: Population Doomsday, which first appeared in 1970, and The Edict by Max Ehrlich (1972). The development of the arguments of the Italian sociologist and economist should not be sought in these clearly conservative-tending sources. Their fear should be understood as a reaction to social agitation in response to globalisation, as seen in the demonstrations against the 1999 World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference in Seattle and, in July 2001, with the counter-summit held in response to the G8 Summit in Genoa, with a massive presence of Black Bloc anarchist-leaning militants and a toll that included the killing of the activist Carlo Giuliani (who was shot by the police), two hundred wounded and more than fifty detentions.

2.2.- From Utopia to Ecologist Dystopia

The ecologist gaze is cast basically as an attempt at restitution: the evil has been done, humanity is a plague. This metaphor is at the heart of some of the more successful literary dystopias, for example Lionel Shriver's Game Control (1994) and others situated directly within the ecologist movement, such as The Tide Turners by Colin Macpherson, which was published in 1999. The most recent update along these lines is Dan Brown's latest best-seller Inferno (2013), in which his hero's adversary is a "mad scientist" who, convinced that humanity is a plague and fed up with the failure of birth control, hatches a plot to cull the human species by means of a biological attack. The issue in this, as in other works, is that the scientist's madness has two sides. One is the ethical unacceptability of his method and the other is that, as a lunatic, he is telling the truth that the international institutions hide or do not want to see. The crowning point is that, since the affliction is hereditary and will render infertile a fifth of world's population in every generation, the ensuing pandemic is taken to be a catalyst for global renovation, comparable with the Black Plague, which made the Renaissance possible. The villain thus becomes the hero, the saviour of humanity. Together with the plague, cancer is one of the favourite metaphors used in this type of approach, from the biologist Julian Huxley – founder-member of the British Population Society in 1928, who exerted considerable influence on the work of his brother Aldous Huxley, author of Brave New World (1932) and, more notably, the essay published twenty-six years later, Brave New World Revisited (1958), especially with regard to his reconsideration of population within the dystopian framework – through to the more recent James Lovelock (2009), whom I have singled out as an exponent of environmentalism in the construction of the new demodystopian discourse.

Meanwhile, we also have the abovementioned declarations with a great media impact and representing the belligerent environmentalist position, for example that of David Attenborough and his plague-on-earth thesis calling for more control of world population growth. This stance is popularised in documentaries about nature and incessantly repeated, as in the statements by the famous Commander Cousteau more than twenty years earlier (Cousteau, 1991), advocating not just limiting but drastic reduction of the human population. After his participation in the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, Cousteau was appointed as an environmental adviser to the United Nations and the World Bank. The ecologist's gaze tends to see the

humankind as a species of voracious planet-consuming moth that, having destroyed nature's balance, will bring about the extinction of the whole world.

In his disquisition on population, the geophysicist James Lovelock's main influence is the Gaia theory dating from the end of the 1960s, which sees planet Earth as a self-regulating evolutionary system. This has been criticised by scientists who question the more philosophical aspect whereby the planet is anthropomorphised as some kind of self-aware system, or is even given divine status with teleological arguments about its history and development. In biological terms, the great challenge has been the fact that the Gaia theory does not fit with the theory of evolution of the species as formulated by Charles Darwin. Here, I shall only discuss the details that are directly concerned with population growth and human interaction with Gaia in its most recent formulations. Lovelock's starting point, then, is Malthusian, via Anne and Paul Ehrlich, which is not so surprising if one bears in mind that the first ponderings of the Gaia hypothesis go back to the time when The Population Bomb was first published and Lovelock was working at NASA, researching into the possibility of life on Mars. Hence his demographic ponderings are totally steeped in the discourse on the demographic explosion, then in the context of the Cold War. The interesting point about Lovelock's views on demography is that, having given (but without explaining how) an optimal population figure of around one billion inhabitants on Earth, when the real figure had already exceeded six billion, the whole rhetorical unfolding of his argument in the first of his books published in the new millennium, The Revenge of Gaia (2004), revolves around the idea of restitution while, when he wrote the second, The Vanishing Face of Gaia (2009), the world population was nearing seven billion and he had given up the idea of attaining balance as impossible, even if immediate measures were taken. In his first book, he claimed, as I have said, that it was still possible to escape the dystopian scenario caused by out-of-control population growth, even while criticising the now-hegemonic thesis of "sustainable growth" promoted by the Club of Rome as a fallacy backed by the energy lobbies, and declaring the need to learn how to achieve de-growth, as well as advocating moving on from limiting fertility to acting on life expectancy (restricting it to one hundred years, for a start, he proposes). Significantly, he conjures up a scenario something like the desert landscape of the Mad Max saga, directed by George Miller (1979, 1981, 1985); "So is our population doomed, and will this century mark its end with a massive decline in population, leaving an impoverished few survivors in a torrid society ruled by warlords on a hostile and disabled planet?" (Lovelock, 2006: 194). In

order to bring about an urgent application of the measures he deems necessary to contain the greenhouse effect and, with that, to check population growth, he comes up with a disturbing alternative, which was repeatedly explored in the literary dystopias of the 1970s: an argument ringing with bellicose rhetoric, calling for the temporary disbandment of democracy and introduction of a state of emergency. "Can the present day democracies, with their noisy media and special-interest lobbies act fast enough for an effective defence against Gaia? We may need restrictions, rationing and the call to service that were familiar in war time and in addition suffer for a while a loss of freedom" (Lovelock, 2006: 196-97).

As I have said, his second publication of 2009 is more pessimistic: it is now impossible to turn back. The advanced state of environmental deterioration means that adaptation to the catastrophe becomes the recommended strategy. He laments that we should have responded more rigorously in the seventies, when Ehrlich's cry of alarm brought the problem of population growth to public attention. Ever since humanity began to develop technology, human beings have been an infection for Gaia, but this would have been kept in the state of incubation until the quantitative leap of the exponential population growth that came with industrialisation. Now we are living in the era of death throes. We should change our lifestyle, renounce contaminating industries and promote the use of nuclear energy – which, according to Lovelock, is one of the more efficient and less contaminating forms – limit stockbreeding (because of methane emissions) and impose vegetarianism. However, even if we adopt these measures, it is too late. So what should we do?

He then launches into his discussion of governance which, as we shall see, directly links up with proposals that appear in the discussion about security. This, he writes, means thinking about measures for a world of survivors in which saving humanity means saving civil values and a certain kind of governance. The matter of who these survivors might be and how they are selected is left floating, sensed by the horrified reader as an insinuating but hair-raising draft of icy air. Nothing is openly specified but only hinted at, perhaps because it is not morally acceptable … yet? This theme was explored in the mid-seventies in Time of the Fourth Horseman by Chelsea Quinn Yarbro (1974) and, later, in Disposable People by Marshall Goldberg and Kenneth Kay, in 1980, with a plague-caused dystopia reproducing the social segregation of the United States, which was based on race and class at the time. I shall return to this. Lovelock has three main proposals: the temporary suspension of democracy (as for example, acceptance in Great Britain in 1939 of a state of emergency), leadership and a return to dogma (in a representation of beliefs giving priority

to the environment and moving somewhere in a terrain shared by science and religion). What are the practical implications of this plan? His book is addressed to an Anglo-Saxon readership and bears in mind the fact that, according to his calculations on global warming, Great Britain could escape from desertification. Lovelock's proposal is isolationist and regressive and he himself describes it as tribal. Great Britain is a kind of large vessel, one that millions of ecological refugees would want to assault. The first step is to shed the burden of being a member of the European Union and of any other international institution, and to commit to stockpiling the country's weapons so that British people can defend themselves and ensure their survival – in which he sees the chance to speed up technological evolution so as to find a solution to the environmental problems presently facing us. Finally, there is the issue of selection and the ecological refugees who will want to attack the vessel. Without coming up with answers, he returns to the analogy of illegal immigration from Africa to the shores of the Canary Islands in order to assert that the fighting spirit and the weeding-out that inevitably occurs in a crossing of this type would already be acting as a form of natural selection (sic), in a situation where when planned selection is not to be trusted. Is it possible to imagine a more dystopian horizon? The problem is that, in his account, there is not the slightest trace of irony and, as we shall see in the next section, he eventually links up, from a rather different standpoint, with the discourse on population and future governance. This is how the utopian project that started out from environmentalism turned into a twenty-first-century dystopia: this or, at least the last resort of hoping to survive and come up with sufficient technological advances so that we can spread throughout the universe.

The latest and one of the most desperate contributions to this way of thinking might well be the pronouncements made by Stephen Emmott, head of Computational Science at Microsoft Research, in his book Ten Billion (2013), a kind of memorandum in which he reels off his doubts as to the possibility of salvation from our headlong slide into the catastrophe caused by population growth. His arguments are along familiar ecologist lines. It's too late. It's not a matter of the gap between the increase in production and that of population but of trying to deal with rampant consumerism, for which he sees no possibility for applying measures or techniques, or for any change of lifestyle that might reduce consumption by the necessary degree. His first conclusions are very similar to those set out by Lovelock and can be summed up as militarisation of the First World as a defence against migrations brought about by climate change. What is new, here, is that, denouncing

the gulf between what is said and what is done, he directly accuses politicians of being major part of the problem because they have manipulated public opinion. The only hope we have now is to prepare for survival in a world immersed in violence.

3.- Population Distribution and Composition

Once the premise of slowing down population growth is accepted, the loss of specific weight of the developed world in relative terms – and, specifically, that of Europe – opens the door to a reconsideration of geopolitics based on the trends of demographic evolution and, with this, population distribution and composition (mainly structure by gender and age and increasing population diversity owing to migration) take on greater importance. The conceptual framework that attempts to adjust governability to a time of globalisation is that of security and the risk society, establishing the axiom that the more complex the system becomes, the greater is the global risk and the greater the need to take preventive action against it.

This framework of the "risk society", a term coined in 1986 by the German sociologist Ulrich Beck, refers to anticipation of catastrophe and co-responsibility of the State and individuals, in which the State must take on the task of far-sighted containment and "just" distribution of the consequences and costs deriving from individual decisions (Beck, 2009). In this regard, it might be considered as deriving from utopian thought, as Beck himself (2013) has stated: "There is a certain affinity between the theory of the risk society and Ernst Bloch's Principle of Hope". By means of this, what might be seen as a dystopian ontology (in which anticipation of the catastrophe can free us from it) becomes an imperative call for intervention. A decade later, we would witness how this utopian scheme was replaced by the worst of dystopias. The makeover of the discourse is inseparable from political changes that began with the meteoric rise of the neoliberal creed, from the purported oil crisis through to the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, which led some pundits to speak of the "End of History" as a metaphor for the undeniable triumph of capitalism (Fukuyama, 1989).

3.1.- Security: Huntington's Imprint

One of the most influential and renowned precursors of this dystopian stance was the political scientist Samuel Huntington and his thesis on the Clash of Civilizations (1993; and 1996). His prolix account, a detailed description of which is beyond the scope of this paper, is linked with the new geopolitics which, rising from the ashes of communism and taking as its symbolic landmark the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, and the three-sided logic of a West (capitalist) being symmetrically confronted by an East (communist) and a Third World. His theory is set forth something like a chessboard on which to play out the confrontation between superpowers in a two-part scenario divided into North and South, with several foci of conflict, which Huntington dubs "civilisations". In contrast with Francis Fukuyama's triumphalism, he sums up the process as follows: "The Velvet Curtain of culture has replaced the Iron Curtain of ideology as the most significant dividing line in Europe". Demography moves to the forefront in three aspects: 1) the differential growth of populations both in international politics – which would mark the relationship between the so-called "civilisations" – and in the domestic sphere, relations among groups within the society, especially with those labelled as "minorities"; 2) the problem that is seen to lurk in an interpretation of structures by age – aging in the North and too many young people in the South; and 3) the negative – or at least suspect – role foisted on to migrants (who swell the ranks of the minorities). These three themes are perpetuated in dystopian thought carried through to the neoliberal-driven, bellicose politics of the George W. Bush Administration, in which the idea of "preventive" even includes military campaigns. What is pertinent here is how this dystopian vision is backed by demographic forecasts in which the "what if" question brings catastrophe into view: a West that has turned into a minority; aging as the biologistic metaphor for the lack of drive in its countries; the question of the collapse of the pension system (encouraged by banks and insurance companies all over the world) owing to the declining proportion of working-age people; and youth seen as the flashpoint of upheavals – and, more specifically, as the driving force of the rise of Islamic extremism until 2033, by which time it is believed that young people in the Islamic world will cease to be so influential. Notable with regard to migration, is an insistence on how the white (protestant) population of the United States is becoming a minority mainly challenged by the growth of the Hispanic population.

Huntington's conflict-ridden vision fitted neatly with that of the French demographer Jean-Claude Chesnais who, in 1995, published the book Le créspucle de l'Occident.

Démographie et politique. Despite the fact that his account drew on historical French pro-birth sources, he and Huntington coincided in seeing the problem as being the new distribution of the world's population with the progressive loss of dominance in the developed countries – especially the European ones, a matter of concern for Chesnais – and the composition of the population, with particular regard to the different demographic behaviour of immigrants and nationals, which brought to the fore the question of denaturalisation (which had previously cropped up in eugenicist debates around the world in the 1930s). For Chesnais, low fertility in the developed countries which, in turn, led to increasing immigration and fast-rising aging, condemned them to ethnic fragmentation and demographic distress. As a good Frenchman, he did not miss the chance to attack the postulates of the aforementioned Jean Yves Cousteau, who advocated limiting the human population (by inverting its trends), labelling them neo-ecologist and anti-humanist since they clashed head-on with his own pro-birth stand.

The new world order proposed in Samuel P. Huntington's theses, together with increasing waves of migration in the early years of the twenty-first century, inspired several dystopias which include Jean Christophe Rufin's Globalia (2004) and Michel Houellebecq's La possibilité d'une île (2005). These works are inspired by classical dystopias, notably the work of Aldous Huxley, in overhauling the chief features of present-day demographic change, among them geopolitics and immigration. Leaving aside their tenuous worth as literary works, the books by Huntington and Chesnais should concern us because their ideas are being wielded as arguments by increasingly influential ultra-right movements in the liberal democracies, just as happened much earlier (in 1973) with the views of the demodystopian Jean Raspail in the book Le Camp des Saints – cited by Huntington and acclaimed by ultraliberal writers like Matthew Connelly and Paul Kennedy (2004) – which upholds what he calls the "legitimate use of violence" by white French society besieged by the poverty incarnated in Third World (unarmed and peaceful) immigrants. In 2004, in a campaign of newspaper articles, Raspail revamped his arguments and, making their ideological background explicit, warned of an alleged concealment, by the Institute Nacional d'Études Demographiques (INED) of the results of population forecasts that would demonstrate the irreversible processes by which the French (read: ancestral) population was becoming a minority and disappearing. He took as his reference the Spanish Reconquista, a paradigm also adopted by Anders Breivik, perpetrator of the Utøya

killings in July 2011 and also author of the dystopian screed 2083: A European Declaration of Independence.

Apart from its influence among the extreme right, the imprint of Huntington's theses concerning population is even recognisable among those who challenge him or openly disagree with him, and chiefly in the field of political science. Hence the link between demographic transition and talk about security in the framework of a future marked by polycentric confrontation becomes crucial for some writers like Richard P. Cincotta (Cincotta, Engelman and Anastasion, 2003; and Cincotta, 2004) and so much so that the rise in the number and dimensions of conflicts after the second half of the twentieth century is directly attributed to those countries that are right in the middle of a demographic transition wherein population is declining at the same pace as fertility rates. They have no problem about inverting causality, thus blaming population for the economic inequalities that lie at the root of these conflicts. In order to make their point, they contrast the situation in some countries of Southeast Asia where fertility has markedly dropped (South Korea, Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia) with others elsewhere in which fertility rates are still high (Iraq, Afghanistan and Nigeria). Among the purely demographic risk factors threatening security, they highlight eight (which, to greater or lesser effect, have been repeatedly cited by other authors): 1) the high proportion of young people aged between fifteen and twenty-nine; 2) rapid urban population growth; 3) low levels of per capita cropland and/or fresh water; 4) high mortality rates among the working-age population (with particular reference to AIDS); 5) Differential growth rates among ethnic and religious groups; 6) migration; 7) age and population decline; and 8) highly imbalanced sex ratios (populations where men outnumber women). Of all these trends, perhaps, the changing ratios of young and old people, and urban settlement, are those most frequented by demodystopias, especially urbanisation, with density and segregation as its inseparable characteristics. The cityscape is thus turned into a sinister Unconscious, where no one can feel secure. Yet, there is no lack, either, of people exploring the imbalance between male and female members of the population (Maalouf, 1992). In security terms, then, the most notable demographic trends in all countries are seen as problematic, whatever phase of demographic transition they are in. One of the solutions advocated as the fastest, and also in accordance with the conclusions of the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo in 1994, is empowerment of women as a guarantee of achieving a reduction in fertility rates and, with that, a slowdown

in population growth. However, as already noted, this downtrend in fertility is already happening and, by itself, it is not the way to respond to the structural growth that is also taking place

3.2.- The Risk Society: From Prevention to Resilience

Faced with the recent economic crisis and awareness of the evident rise of the so-called emerging countries, the neoliberal model was swiftly overhauled and a version that had long been incubating was now hatched. This came under the general headings of Security and the Risk Society but the concept of "prevention" was now dismissed and replaced by the newly emerging notion of "resilience", as pointed out by the geographer Ash Amin (2012). Instead of a welfare economy – already weakened after the earlier crisis of 1973 and the onslaught of deregulation policies introduced by neoliberal governments – which emphasised economic progress and a fair distribution of the fruits thereof, the new version viewed populations and individuals more narrowly, from the standpoint of their contribution to world-wide competition and their cost. Terrorist attacks (11 September 2001, Madrid 2004, London 2005), natural disasters (the tsunami that devastated the shores of Southeast Asia in December 2004, Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans in August 2005, the eruption of the Iceland volcano in 2010 and the nuclear crisis caused by the battering of Japanese coasts by a tsunami in March 2011), together with the crisis of the financial system, starting with the fall of Lehman Brothers Holdings Inc. in 2008, all came together in triggering this change of discourse.

Taking root in the idea of risk multiplication and limited predictability, this new way of thinking, understanding that risks are inevitable so that is preferable to adopt strategies of minimising and mitigation rather than prevention and avoidance, gave rise to the concept of resilience, which is generically defined as a capacity for resisting setbacks and recovering from them. Deriving from engineering and architecture this notion, originally applied in calculation of structures and building materials, was now being employed for complex adaptive systems ranging from the individual, to nations, to the planet as a whole. According to the World Economic Forum (2013) the concept "…has the capability to1) adapt to changing context, 2) withstand sudden shocks and 3) recover to a desired equilibrium, after the previous one or a new one, when preserving the continuity of its operations". The shift from prevention to resilience is one notable example of the radical

modification undergone by the mode of exercising state power, not to mention the doctrinal references that have been ushered in with new changes to the rules of capitalism, as Christian Laval and Pierre Dardot (2010) have pointed out. This, of course, has its effects in the way the population is perceived in its dynamics and structure.

One of the leading exponents of this perspective when applied to population as a risk for geopolitics as a complex system is Jack A. Goldstone, who wrote a piece called The New Population Bomb (2010) which, with more than evident reference to the work of the Ehrlichs and coming from the Huntington stable (the journal Foreign Affairs) but fifteen years on, claims that we should leave the North/South dichotomy behind and return to a three-sided strategy based on the demographic characteristics of countries, which are classified as developed (notable for their aging populations), emerging (temporarily taking advantage of the array of opportunities offered by a demographic structure notable for a large number of working-age people and relatively few dependents, old people and infants) and, finally, the poorest group (with a surplus of a young, uneducated population and a job market that is unable to absorb them). Even if only in passing, I should point out, too, that this article bears remarkable similarities with John Brunner's literary work Stand on Zanzibar (1968), which divides the world into regions in conflict as a result of the particular phase of demographic transition they are in (and in close relationship with economic development): pre-, fully- and post-transitional. Some of these elements, as described above, resort to old arguments or redefine them so, for example, fear of young people now conflates with fear of the masses – an argument used by Goldstone to explain the eruption of the Arab Spring – while a further claim is the fragility of the state threatened by demography. Other points are totally new. These include the integration of the emerging countries as political agents (this representing a complete break with Huntington's thesis), recommending the inclusion of Turkey in the EU, recognition of the centrality of the G20 (as opposed to the G8) and the enlargement of NATO beyond "western" countries. Nevertheless, these are not the most important innovations because, in adapting his arguments on governability to demographic change and always within the "Security" framework, Goldstone does a complete about-turn when it comes to the earlier views on migration. From Huntington's and Chesnais' presentation of migration as a threat, he turns it into a solution. "Correctly managed, population movement can benefit developed and developing worlds alike. Given the dangers of young, underemployed and unstable populations in developing countries, immigration to developed countries can

provide economic opportunities for the ambitious and serve as a safety valve for all" (Goldstone, 2010). His reasoning, then, is not based on the economic benefits host countries might glean from immigration but, rather, set out in terms of security.

The Global Risks reports (2012 and 2013) published by the Davos World Economic Forum offer the clearest evidence for understanding that, as I suggest, the sea change is one veering from prevention to resilience, explicitly using the dystopia framework. The report of 2012, which claims to be aiming at world governance, identifying, supervising, managing and mitigating all possible risks, starts out from dystopia, which it defines as, "Dystopia, the opposite of a utopia, describes a place where life is full of hardship and devoid of hope. Analysis of linkages across various global risks reveals a constellation of fiscal, demographic and societal risks, signalling a dystopian future for much of humanity." These risks, designated "seeds of dystopia" call the reader's attention to the treatment of demography and its implications. The impact of population growth and the changes in its distribution are analysed in keeping with the same division as Goldstone prescribes, relating degree of economic growth with stage of demographic transition. Each of the three groups of countries faces population-related risks that are different, or are the same risks but differently translated. Hence, for the first group of developed countries, coming under the post-transitional heading, the main risk is population aging and the challenge this represents for the sustainability of the pensions system, which increases the fragility of the state, as do austerity-based policies that are producing a population of well-educated young people who are ever more frustrated as they see their opportunities vanishing. In the emerging economies, which are making the most of a beneficial demographic situation that does present a so-called window of opportunities because of the proportion of working-age members and relatively small number of dependents, the main problem, apart from satisfying the demand for work, is the abysmal economic inequality that is only exacerbated by present growth and that could take the form of insecurity and a challenge to the state as social unrest. Finally, the very viability of the poorest, pre-transitional countries, which have growing numbers of poorly educated young people with no hope of finding work other than unskilled jobs, is in jeopardy. Specifically mentioned in this category are Afghanistan, Pakistan, East Timor and most Sub-Saharan countries.

Migration appears in this context, as it does in Goldstone, as a demographic nexus between different regions (populations) and, simultaneously, as a solution, in two different ways. First, migration is the cause of the intensive urban settlement that is foreseen for the

coming decades and, here, Goldstone praises improved training systems which, together with technological skills, will furnish young people with the aptitudes they need to join an increasingly demanding job market together with learning the right attitude (sic), which is to say an entrepreneurial philosophy of knowhow. This predisposition could be translated as a neoliberal habitus in the sense given to the concept by Pierre Bourdieu as a system of schemes of perception, appreciation and action that delimit acts of practical knowledge – in taxonomy and recognition – on the basis of which strategies are deployed, circumscribed to the structures that define them and of which they are the product (Bourdieu, 1997). It is this instrumental knowledge that neoliberalism requires of the coming generations, according to the thesis of Christian Laval and Pierre Dardot, whom I have mentioned above. It is clear that, in the case of international migration, it will be necessary to find legitimate channels for satisfying market demands, as the Global Risks report points out. Demographic evolution forecasts, both in terms of accelerating urbanisation and structural changes (aging in a particular state, or lack or surplus of young people) are juggled with the impact of adjustment policies thereby producing two dystopian risks that directly threaten governability: the discontent and frustration being incubated among the so-called "lost generation", namely those young people who have no chance of joining the job market, however well trained they might be, and what the authors of the report describe as a disconcerting sensation of downward social mobility looming over many wide-ranging strata of society and coinciding with increasing economic inequality which threatens social upheaval and thus represents a serious problem for states that are unable to change the situation for the better.

How can risks for Security be avoided? This is where migration appears again as a solution. We are told that appropriate migration policy can ease social tensions while also satisfying market demands. The priority inclusion in the European Union agenda for 2015 of "mobility", notably in the form of migration of young people might be seen as the culmination of this strategy. The second solution, then, must be sought in new leadership and investing in mechanisms of power to equip the population with the necessary skills for confronting the risks to come. How? By increasing resilience! Hence, the second part of the report (World Economic Forum, 2012) is devoted to analysing the consequences for governability of the earthquake in Japan in March 2011. Natural disasters, a heading under which terrorism and crime in its virtual version are also assimilated, justify this call for new leadership and also a new attitude among the governed, namely good "followership",

which is defined as "the capacity to avoid two extreme forms of group behaviour – excess conformity and excessive conflict – that can impede the capacity for effective crisis response" (World Economic Forum, 2012). The 2013 report devotes a whole section to building resilience in actions to confront global risks. In its demographic section, when summing up the increased risks with regard to the previous year, it only identifies two factors: population growth once more, and management of population aging. Not a word about migration. In order to gain better understanding of the orientation of this interpretation of global risks, one only needs to glance at the other risks, classified as technological, economic and geopolitical and emphasised in the following order: unforeseen consequences of new life science technologies and unforeseen consequences of climate change; unforeseen negative consequences of regulation; hard landing of the emerging economy and chronic labour market imbalances; and, finally, unilateral resource nationalisation. In other words, anything that directly threatens capitalism (regularising the market and nationalisations), or indirectly, for example, the social unrest it might cause (by rising unemployment), the response channelled by the mass media, or simply the breakdown of the system as a result of anti-ecological growth (World Economic Forum, 2013, p. 48).

4.- Coming back to Imagery: the Zombie Attack

What to some people might look like the disappearance of the demodystopia was actually its popularisation and change of audience and support material whereby it spread into literature for young people, comic strips, B-series films and video games, followed by a return to more prestigious literature and film formats once its commercial success was assured. This change of format came hand in hand with a drastic change of theme although this entailed bringing together and synthesising the earliest elements of demodystopias from a new standpoint. I refer to the zombie genre. To come back to the social imaginary, I would suggest that stories about the living dead have become a metaphor par excellence for concerns over governability related with population growth. It is a version of a kind of demophobia in which dehumanisation of the political opponent and of the mass come together, while also reflecting the shift from the prevention paradigm to that of resilience, as described above. It is a dehumanisation of humanity, in a system that makes the

population redundant, in contrast with the biopolitics described by Michel Foucault (1976, and 2006) in the wake of a nineteenth century that was obsessed with producing life and conserving it.

The evolution from the besieged house, presented with the genre's film-version origins in 1968 with George A. Romero's Night of the Living Dead, through to shopping malls and open spaces which, together with fortresses, are offered in the more recent productions, describes a progression from beginnings in which the racial problem and the struggle for civil rights in the United States were a central sub-theme where, besides a post-apocalyptic setting, there was a sharper, sometimes self-parodying criticism of consumerism drawing on resources from the tradition that the genre itself had already created. This is a process of progressive identification with the zombie (Fernández Gonzalo, 2011), reaching its apogee with the success of Michael Jackson's Thriller and Zombie Walks as entertainment. However, the main concern here is, as I have said, a return to the classical post-apocalyptic scenario and, with that, to the fate of the survivors, as happens, for example in productions coming under the heading of Biohazards, a good example of which is the Resident Evil saga of videogames, which began in 1996 and generated the well-known film series, starting in 2002, with four sequels to date (Resident Evil: Apocalypse, 2004; Resident Evil: Extinction, 2007; Resident Evil; Afterlife, 2010; and Resident Evil: Retribution, 2012). More recently, the rising popularity of the genre is even more evident with the adaptation of the 2003 comic collection The Walking Dead by Robert Kirkman, Tony Moore and Charlie Adlard for a television series of the same name, directed by Frank Darabond and beginning in 2010. In this, the zombies continue to be a horde in which any social bonds among its members have disappeared. This new plague of surplus population, now threatening to eat, not the available resources (which they contaminate anyway), but human beings (those people defined as "survivors"), tends to spread from an out-of-control virus or an escapee from an experiment, this being one of the classic themes of dystopias and demodystopias. The cannibal orgy symbolises the process in which individuals are bestialised and the destruction of political society, as was also evoked in the recent (non-demographic) dystopia, Cormac McCarthy's The Road (2006). This return to the state of nature highlights the canine nature of humans.

The guilty parties? The well-known triangle consisting of the state (army), corporations and the scientists working for them, with all possible variations with regard to responsibility. The mission? As in all post-apocalyptic scenarios, the reconstruction of

(besieged) civilisation. In other words, it shores up the foundations of governability using the dark mirror of dystopia to scoff at the defects of society (ours) but also to propound a new kind of ethics based on values favouring neoliberalism. Therefore, in order to achieve this, the state of exception is legitimate and, so too, are the suspension of democratic rights, permissiveness with regard to some kinds of illegality and discussion on the limits of legitimacy. As I've hinted, this return to nature is Hobbesian owing to competition between different groups of survivors for scarce resources and this scarcity is caused by rising insecurity and the collapse of production. This is poles apart from a Rousseau-style understanding of the state of nature. A return to this state of competitive nature is then used to introduce some thoughts on leadership: the form of political organisation. This theme is also present in the earliest dystopias. What happens when there is no going back, when in contrast with what happens with a crisis, the risk society installs us in "another" normality? Since the majority of these productions are American, the theme of diversity is inevitably imposed from the standpoint of racial representation, as well as ideology (white supremacists, democrats) and a redefinition of roles by age or gender as a constant related with the political structuring of the survivors. Hence, once again, the roles of men and women are discussed within the gender framework. There are three main models: 1), violence as a result of a shortage of women (bands of male survivors searching for women reduced to sexual objects); an equalising of roles on the basis of a masculinisation of women and their use of weapons; and 3) a reaffirmation of the gender division based on the reproductive role of women as the last hope for the regeneration of the human species (the most common version). Now the cause of fear is inverted, from demographic explosion to demographic implosion. Significantly, in this new frontier society, sexual orientation is not addressed, so homosexuality is sublimated into cultivation of the virile epic.

Nevertheless, more than anything else, the zombie genre has become a hymn to resilience, to the capacity to rise again from catastrophe. It is no longer about prevention, the goal of the warning cry of the classical dystopia. In this sense, it links up perfectly with the change in governance signalled by the geographer Ash Amin, in which the culture of risk has inserted us into a post-apocalyptic future. However, any fan of zombie tales knows that the survivors' nightmare is one in which they are constantly wondering if this is life, or whether they, too, have not turned into the walking dead (with echoes of the American western).

What about migration? Zombies are presented as vagabonds (drifting mindlessly, with the sole aim of feeding themselves). They have evident features in common with the barbarian drifters who assailed the limes of the Roman Empire. No wall is high enough or thick enough to defend us from the horde. Incessant movement is the key to survival. The strategy is resilience, as we are constantly reminded by the character played by Brad Pitt in World War Z, the latest zombie-based planet-wide success, directed by Marc Foster in an adaptation of Max Brooks' bestseller (2006) and premiered in 2013. If the rallying cry of demodystopias can be summed up in the title of the novel by Harry Harrison, Make Room! Make Room! (1996), that of the new millennium could be boiled down to Brad Pitt's intoning of, "Move! Move!" Hence, migration has gone from being the threat to being the solution, as I have suggested when discussing Jack A. Goldstone's article or the World Economic Forum's Global Risk 2012 report. In the film, this inevitably means moving with the family, the constitutive nucleus of the (new) society. Or the motor driving the action of individuals. Or perhaps it is a compensatory response for the destructive effect on the family of compulsive mobility offered as a means of escape. Can capitalism be advanced by maintaining the institution of the family? Marx and Engels thought not. Capital, they said, tends to destroy all the intervening institutions between capital and the individual for more efficient appropriation of surplus value. This, then, gives rise to one of the great contradictions of the right: being the guiltiest parties in the erosion of the institution of the family at the same time as they're championing its most traditional and retrograde forms.

5.- Conclusions: Being Left out of the Future

If the classical dystopia could be seen as a wake-up call in an attempt to escape a turbulent future, the resilience mindset represents a turnaround of 180 degrees situating human prospects in a post-apocalyptic setting. Now it is no longer a matter of trying to avoid the End of Time but of surviving Armageddon. The worst fate is being left out of the future. The dystopian genre (like Utopia) is located in the preliminary round of what is still unsaid. It is the terrain of Utopia in which the framework of what is thinkable and utterable for a particular society can be forced. It inevitably introduces scandal by smashing the clichés or stock phrases of social discourse. The fascination for dystopian scenarios has an

explanation: it allows us to be simultaneously executioners and victims while enjoying the end-of-the-world show and cathartic identification with violence from a front-row seat even while beholding the horror deriving from the entropic tendencies thus being denounced. At the end of the day, the reader or spectator identifies himself or herself as one of the survivors even if it is in one of the worst of all possible worlds. However, what in literary fiction can be comfortably terrifying is absolutely horrendous in real-world politics and science.

One can identify different factors that explain the return to demodystopias in the new millennium: first, is the upward correction of the average estimates produced by the United Nations Population Division; second, is the institutionalisation of alarmism over population growth (even when this takes the form of rhetorical denial), spurred on by the need of the Population Division for more funds and, thanks to these, more media attention; and, third and finally, is the most relevant factor in my view, namely the economic crisis and the new model of governability being pushed by neoliberalism, as exemplified in the Davos "Masters of the Universe" discourse where one finds, as was ever thus, that demography offers the perfect excuse for smoother imposition of their disciplinary project and for finding their economy not guilty of the destruction of the environment, while distracting our attention from the increasing economic inequality it is bringing about.

This second return, however, gives rise to a certain unease because the aim of the exercise is to become installed as a topos and new horizon embracing the set of possibilities that will shape the future or, in other words, what may be opined, what may be plausible and yet acceptable, as is suggested by the political discourse employed. From the transgression that dystopia represented by creating a field in which the unthinkable could be uttered there has now been a shift to a situation in which it has become legitimate, creating a space for possibilities for what was once rejected as grotesquely impossible because it was intolerable, morally speaking, starting with the delegitimisation of democracy. The demodystopias of the seventies, which focused on the dangers of the explosion of the world population, did their work in a time of economic development by presenting scarcity as a demographic problem rather than as one of redistribution of wealth, which is essentially an economic issue. Twenty-first century demodystopian thinking shows the recurrent friction between capitalism and democracy, where market demands cast doubts on the viability of the democratic system (Streeck, 2011) as a result of the situation of exception created by catastrophe – not only demographic, which now embraces, apart from

the growth in size of the world population, the distribution and composition of this population – and calls for new leadership in the image and likeness of neoliberal management.

What is worrying is that dystopia no longer appears as a literary game that enables us to denounce the unutterable but as a possible mutation emerging from the turmoil of social discourse. In other words, it is something looking for a foothold and hence its own coming into being, establishing a new space of credibility, which is no eu-topia, but a real topos. The social imaginary requires its material fulfilment. The eccentricity of some of the pronouncements I have cited above cannot be reduced to the futility of gobbledygook or, let's say, to individual inanity that has nothing to do with hegemonic social discourse. In my opinion, they could come to be the sign of a rupture in discourse, appearing in the guise of heteronomy and preparing the ground of the acceptable in a post-apocalyptic scenario of the neoliberal dystopia. Scientists and politicians with their catastrophist disquisitions are going back to the well-trodden paths of labyrinths pertaining to literary dystopias. The logical solutions they apply, rather than being inspired by the dystopian readings of their childhood, should be viewed as the result of an exercise carried out by writers in the genre during the latter half of the twentieth century. What for some is prophecy for others, however, is writing that remains in the realm of provocation or the "laughable". In their dystopias about old age and old people, neither Bioy Casares (1969) nor Kurt Vonnegut (1953; and 1958) could have begun to imagine the televised statements of the Japanese Finance Minister Taro Aso. Acceptance of a principle like resilience as expressed in population terms means being willing to opt for catastrophe before changing a capitalist system based on ever-increasing consumption or maintaining unsustainable levels of consumption. In the dystopian times in which we already live, such compliance is the fertiliser that will bring about the germination of the seed of the idea of surplus population, or oversupply, according to market dictates. In other words it is expendable. This, in a nutshell, amounts to consent to genocide.

Of course there are other voices that tone down or radically oppose this dystopian mindset from a very wide range of political positions. Hence, one finds the most over-the-top hymn to optimism with the ultraconservative economist Julian Simon who claimed that every forecast had to take limits into account when imagining innovations in production (Myers and Simon, 1996) and, accordingly, that the concept of carrying capacity did not reflect the real evolution of the relationship of human beings with the environment, which is much

more complex, he said, than mere numerical proportion. Others strive to open up a third channel of possibilities, shunning catastrophist horizons and denouncing ideologically loaded pessimism. It has therefore been pointed out how the Davos reports are an example of the fact that "Uncertainty about the future was used to fuel discrimination" (Dorling, 2013: 155). If demography as a discipline is not to continue being treated as a sort of ancillary population statistics source to be used by other disciplines or, still worse, wielded instrumentally in ideological discourse, it will need to uphold and construct a strong theoretical edifice underpinned by solidly grounded methodology. It is our responsibility, our professional responsibility not to let the fans of recreational demography use it for making up political fables about demographic realities.

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