



THE INFLUENCE OF DYSTOPIAN FICTION ON MODERN POLITICAL THOUGHT

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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14375697>

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 9th December 2024

Accepted: 10th December 2024

Published: 11th December 2024

KEYWORDS

Dystopia, literature, political intricacies, social criticism, contemporary stories.

ABSTRACT

dystopian literature has developed into a potent prism that helps understand social concerns and political intricacies. The evolution of the genre is examined in this study, which also considers the profound social criticism found in contemporary stories, as well as new and repeating themes. This study highlights the subtle variations in dystopian representations across countries and ideologies by synthesizing ideas from various literary settings. The method emphasizes how multifaceted the research is and recognizes how literature and social reality can benefit from one another. When combined, the findings show how the genre may be utilized to both reflect and critique contemporary social issues.

Introduction: J. S. Mills first used the word dystopia in 1868 during a political speech concerning Ireland's situation, drawing a comparison between it and utopia. "What is commonly called utopian is something too good to be practicable; but what they [the government] appear to favor is too bad to be practicable," Mills bitterly criticizes the Irish property policy of the government in a speech. Just by coining the name to contrast with what was previously known as Utopia, he was able to identify its central premise.¹ Taking this speech into consideration, the Oxford English Dictionary defines dystopia as "an imaginary place or condition in which everything is as bad as possible." Despite the very long history of dystopian fiction, it will be argued that a more complex definition of the term than the one this entry proposes is not necessary.² The dystopian literary genre, which has long captivated readers, has undergone tremendous transformation in the twenty-first century. Rather than merely a shift in storytelling style, this metamorphosis reflects a profound engagement with the complex sociopolitical issues that govern our contemporary society. The goal of this research is to explore the intricate network of themes, patterns, and social commentary hidden in this growing genre of dystopian fiction in order to reveal the layers of significance inside it. Twenty-first-century problems are more tightly intertwined than ever before, ranging from political turmoil to rapid technological advancements and ecological crises. Dystopian literature is a cultural product that serves as a mirror and a prism, reflecting

¹ Engélibert, J.-P. (2023). Dystopian Fictions and Contemporary Fears The Routledge Handbook of Fiction and Belief (pp. 311-322): Routledge.

² Baldwin, M. (2019). The evolution of dystopian literature. Ramapo College Honors Program.

society's innermost desires and anxieties. The purpose of this research is to examine the evolution of dystopian themes, identify emerging patterns in the genre, and assess the societal allegories portrayed in these tales.³

Historical Evolution Of Dystopian Literature: To fully comprehend dystopian fiction's present situation, one must be aware of its historical background. Older books like George Orwell's "1984" and Aldous Huxley's "Brave New World" present future portrayals of oppressive regimes and the dehumanizing consequences of technology. These works are considered the genre's forerunners. However, dystopian tales from the twenty-first century depart from these conventional notions. Unlike the foreign threats that totalitarian regimes faced in the past, dystopias of the modern day usually focus on the erosion of human freedoms and internal decay within seemingly democratic frameworks. The evolution of storytelling approaches together with changing societal worries and concerns can be observed in the development of dystopian fiction. As the world community struggles with issues of environmental sustainability, economic injustice, and the moral ramifications of technological progress, dystopian writers have adapted their fiction to address these pressing concerns.⁴

The Significance Of Dystopian Literature In The 21st Century: Reading dystopian literature is crucial to providing a space for reflection and debate during a period of unpredictability and rapid change. The genre encourages critical discussion on the moral, social, and political facets of our shared future by giving readers a speculative lens through which to see the potential consequences of current developments. Dystopian fiction compels us to confront harsh realities, ponder alternative possibilities, and question established hierarchies of power. Moreover, the prevalence of dystopian fiction in popular culture underscores its significance as a cultural barometer. The success of novels like Margaret Atwood's "The Handmaid's Tale" and Suzanne Collins' "The Hunger Games" suggests not only a general public interest in themes of resistance, resiliency, and the consequences of unchecked authority, but also a fascination with dystopia in literature.⁵

Literature Review: Perspectives on literary dystopia have varied widely during the course of the 20th century. Notable writers from numerous eras, such as Huxley, London, and Orwell, were inspired to create these painstakingly researched works of fiction by the world's constantly altering political scene, which was always turbulent but also inspiring. "Dystopian fiction rose to prominence largely as a result of the horrors of the twentieth century," writes Moylan, capturing the milieu in which these masterpieces were produced. After a century of war, sickness, famine, ecocide, despair, debt, exploitation, repression, governmental violence, and the slow but steady extinction of mankind due to the exchange of daily goods, this fictitious underbelly of utopian imagination found more than enough fertile ground. Because of these events and the literature that has sprung from them, dystopia may now be understood on a wider spectrum of complexity. As Gottlieb notes, the author provides a forceful critique of certain aberrations in our current social-political structure by drawing attention to their potentially horrific long-term effects. Gottlieb attempts to define "the Western model of dystopia" more meticulously. This formulation in essence refutes (or more precisely distorts) the core premise based merely on contrast with utopia. Prophecy cannot be included in the general definition of the opposite, dystopia, because More's utopia did not propose the idea for such a system to ever be realized (or at least, it is generally not comprehended in this way and, on the contrary, is rather perceived as an ideal and therefore

³ Dillman, D. (2020). Resistance in dystopian fiction.

⁴ Paul, J., & Criado, A. R. (2020). The art of writing literature review: What do we know and what do we need to know? *International business review*, 29(4), 101717.

⁵ Seeger, S., & Davison-Vecchione, D. (2019). Dystopian literature and the sociological imagination. *Thesis Eleven*, 155(1), 45-63.

impossible state of society). Although most of the western dystopian writing of 20th century is commonly viewed as predictive, numerous counterexamples can be identified, notably in popular works of modern fiction. For instance, the Batman's environment – Gotham City – rife with crime and crooked police is not viewed as holding any portent and is rather made for pleasure, joy and amusement. Another example may be seen in the Matrix Trilogy — the system, although arguably based on the fear of AI, is too unimaginable to be prophetic.⁶

Not many of the motivations for dystopian writing have altered now, while some new ones have evolved with the current social development. One of the subjects that currently attracted massive amount of attention is air pollution and global warming. Other social ills, such as obesity, developed as a result of hedonism - the theme that was touched upon in dystopian literature already more than half a century ago. Due to this and several other factors, the humankind has become more and more self-critical. Claeys suggests that – the addition of perceptible global warming to the list of the world's political problems and the drastic exaggeration of individual anxieties about obesity played a major role in switching the emphasis of popular rhetoric to the magnification of individual responsibility and the careful cultivation of an individual sense of ecological sin.⁷

The complexity of contemporary civilizations is reflected in the heightened activity and thoughtfulness of the dystopian writing genre in the twenty-first century. Growth in the genre attests to its ongoing significance as writers traverse the intricate interplay of themes, trends, and sociopolitical reflections that characterize our times.⁸

Technology-induced paranoia and narratives of surveillance. The widespread fear of technology and monitoring is a recurring topic in dystopian fiction published in the twenty-first century. Authors who examine the effects of a world growing more interconnected and in which privacy is compromised for efficiency and security include Dave Eggers (*The Circle*) and Jennifer Government.⁹

Climate Change Dystopias. In dystopian fiction written in the twenty-first century, the threat posed by climate change is real. Novelists with vivid dystopian scenarios, such as Paolo Bacigalupi ("*The Water Knife*") and Claire Vaye Watkins ("*Gold Fame Citrus*"), highlight the struggle for survival in a society transformed by climate change, resource shortages, and environmental collapse.¹⁰

Authoritarian Regimes and Political discontent. The themes of authoritarian rule and political discontent are commonly explored in contemporary dystopian literature. Books such as Ling Ma's "*Severance*" and Omar El Akkad's "*American War*" explore the consequences of conflicting ideologies, social unrest, and the erosion of democratic standards. They act as cautionary tales about how susceptible political institutions are.¹¹

Gender and Social. Control In dystopian literature published in the twenty-first century, gender dynamics and social control are regularly examined. The sequel to Margaret Atwood's

⁶ Soltani, F., & Khodadadi, N. (2023). A Comparative Study of the Components of Dystopian Literature in the Novels "Terrible Tehran" and "Handmaid's Tale". *Journal of Comparative Literature*, 15(28).

⁷ Gultom, E. S., & Salsabila, S. (2023). THE PORTRAIT OF DYSTOPIA SOCIETY IN FLAWED NOVEL. *SEMAR: Jurnal Sosial dan Pengabdian Masyarakat*, 1(01), 76-83.

⁸ Moylan, T. (2020). *The necessity of hope in dystopian times: a critical reflection*: Pennsylvania State University Press.

⁹ Williams, T. (2020). Tenth Graders' Response to Dystopian Literature: An Exploratory Ethnography.

¹⁰ Krøijer, S. (2020). Civilization as the undesired world: radical environmentalism and the uses of dystopia in times of climate crisis. *Social Analysis*, 64(3), 48-67.

¹¹ Shames, S. L., & Atchison, A. L. (2019). *Survive and Resist: The Definitive Guide to Dystopian Politics*: Columbia University Press.

"The Handmaid's Tale," "The Testaments," explores the subject of women's subjugation in patriarchal cultures in greater detail, while Naomi Alderman's "The Power" imagines a society in which women have achieved physical supremacy and are subverting traditional power structures.¹²

Refugee Stories and Global Migration. Authors that address the topic of global migration include Emily St. John Mandel in "Station Eleven" and Edan Lepucki in "California." These dystopian tales illustrate how challenging it is for individuals to survive in a world when pandemics, natural calamities, and the disintegration of social structures have brought about anarchy.¹³

Combining Speculative Technology with Biopunk Aesthetics. The narrative inclinations seen in 21st-century dystopian literature are characterised by this combination. The novels "The Windup Girl" by Paolo Bacigalupi and "Snow Crash" by Neal Stephenson examine the darker side of technological innovation as well as the ethical dilemmas and societal effects of unchecked scientific advancement.¹⁴

Resistance and Rebellion. The examination of resistance and rebellion under repressive regimes is a recurrent theme in dystopian writing today. In the face of overwhelming authority, the characters of Pierce Brown's "Red Rising" series and Suzanne Collins' "The Hunger Games" trilogy challenge existing orders and inspire movements for change.

Intersectionality and Diverse Perspectives. Writers that approach dystopian stories through an intersectional perspective include Octavia Butler in "Parable of the Sower" and N.K. Jemisin in "The Fifth Season." These pieces highlight many viewpoints while exploring how race, gender, and identity intersect with the complexity of dystopian environments.¹⁵

Thoughts on Modern Society. Dystopian fiction from the twenty-first century offers a potent perspective on the concerns, unknowns, and moral quandaries of the day. These books offer both cautionary tales and glimpses of resilience in the face of dystopian circumstances, engaging readers in critical observations on the condition of the world through a variety of themes and storytelling styles. The genre is still evolving and serves as a profound reflection of our ever shifting global culture.¹⁶

Research Methodology: The researchers adopted a qualitative research approach to investigate the themes, patterns, and social allusions found in dystopian fiction published in the twenty-first century. The researchers have carried out an extensive assessment of the literature, examining a wide range of dystopian books released after 2000. Inside the genre, Cormac McCarthy's book "The Road" offers a wide range of topics and literary forms. Finding recurring motifs, monitoring narrative patterns, and critically analyzing how these works interact with and reflect present sociopolitical realities were all part of the analytical process. A comprehensive grasp of the cultural, political, and philosophical ramifications of dystopian literature is made possible by the qualitative approach, which permits an in-depth investigation of the complex layers of meaning contained within the work. Cormac McCarthy's

¹² Hinchliffe, J. L. (2019). *The Representation of Surveillance in Dystopian Fiction of the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries*. University of Huddersfield.

¹³ Hurley, M. M. (2019). *Comply to Resist: Agency in Twentieth and Twenty-first Century Feminist Dystopian Texts*. Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

¹⁴ Cornils, I. (2020). *Beyond Tomorrow: German Science Fiction and Utopian Thought in the 20th and 21st Centuries* (Vol. 214): Boydell & Brewer.

¹⁵ Hampshire, K. M. (2019). *Power, Resistance, and Transformation: A Leadership Studies Analysis of Dystopian Young Adult Literature*.

¹⁶ Parker, B. C. (2020). *Speculative Satire in Twentieth-century Utopia and Dystopia*: Northern Illinois University.

novel "The Road" was examined in order to examine the themes, motifs, and sociopolitical allusions found in dystopian fiction of the twenty-first century. This outstanding book offers a moving examination of a post-apocalyptic society and serves as a prism through which to examine the complex strands of dystopian fiction from the twenty-first century.

Conclusion: 20th-century dystopian literature was heavily influenced by the tumultuous political climate of the time. Writers like Huxley, London, and Orwell responded to this era of war, famine, and societal decay by creating fictional worlds that mirrored and exaggerated real-world problems.

While dystopian fiction often serves as a warning about potential future dangers, it's important to note that not all dystopian works are strictly prophetic. Some, like Gotham City in the Batman series or the Matrix, are more focused on entertainment and exploration of ideas rather than predicting specific outcomes.

Modern dystopian literature continues to address pressing issues like climate change, overconsumption, and societal decay. However, it also reflects a growing sense of individual responsibility and the need for personal action to combat these challenges.

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