



"DYSTOPIAN LITERATURE AND ITS MAIN CHARACTERISTICS, GENRE, MOVEMENT, TENDENCY AND STYLE"

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Abstract: The distinctions between utopia, dystopia, and anti-utopia delves into the nuanced realms of speculative fiction, philosophy, and political theory, illuminating the unique characteristics and implications of each concept. Utopia, derived from Sir Thomas More's eponymous work, represents an idealized society where social harmony, economic prosperity, and political stability culminate in the perfect human condition, often serving as a critique of contemporary society's failings.

Key words: Dystopia, anti-utopia, utopia, characteristics, types of dystopia, social and political structures.

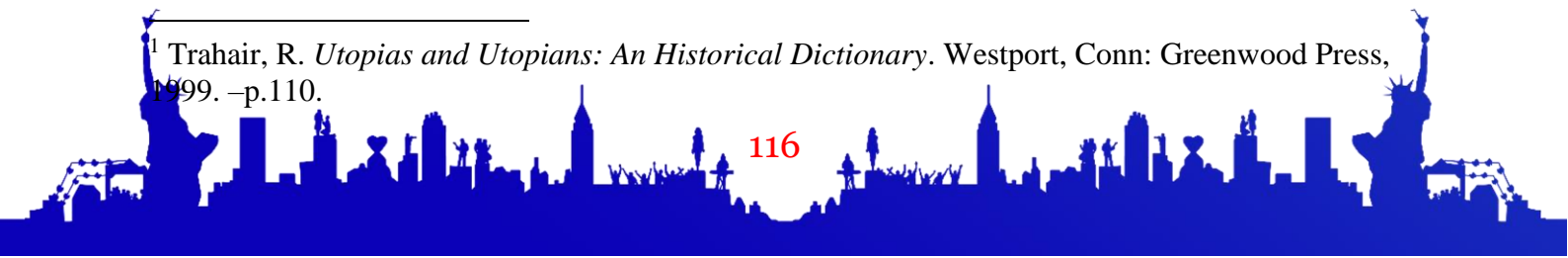
Introduction

The term dystopia was coined by English philosopher J.S. Mill in a parliamentary speech while he was speaking about the government's Irish land policy, and he took inspiration from Thomas More's novel "Utopia". "Utopia" was a Greek pun word ou topos means "no place" or "nowhere" and another word eu-topos means "a good place". He claimed that "If utopia was commonly seen as "too good to be practicable", then dystopia was "too bad to be practicable"¹. Dystopia means a "bad place" the polar opposite of utopia.

Most of the time the term dystopias is used equally with anti-utopia-ich means "against utopia", however, they are not quite the same except in sharing some elements.

So utopian, dystopian, and anti-utopian literature are connected sometimes, we see they may be used instead of another. Both dystopian and utopian literature has common characteristics of science-fiction and fantasy they are both set in the future in which technology developed but neither of them pays attention to the development of technology, the psychology of humans who live his condition, government structure, also, effects of technology to humans. While utopian literature shows the good part of these qualities in the end any

¹ Trahair, R. *Utopias and Utopians: An Historical Dictionary*. Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1999. –p.110.





utopian society turns into a dystopian society. Early written utopian novels include: “Gulliver’s Travels” (1726) by Jonathan Swift², “Erewhon” (1901) by Samuel Butler (“nowhere” spelled backward,)³ and “News from Nowhere”(1891) by William Morris⁴.

On the other hand, anti-utopian literature is differentiated from dystopian literature:

1) anti-utopian books are mostly non-fictional while dystopian literature is fictional;

2) anti-utopias do not reject Utopian ideas totally;

3) in anti-utopias criticisms are mostly subjective;

4) they pay attention to politics and ideology rather than human psychology.

“The Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited” by Lyman Tower Sargent stated that anti-utopia is commonly used as a substitute for dystopia, but as such it is often inaccurate, and it is useful to have a term to describe those works that use the utopian form to attack either utopias in general or a specific utopia⁵. He claimed that anti-utopia itself is a literary genre and each general or specific utopia should be given an appropriate description to prevent using one another. Antonis Balasopoulos in his essay “Anti-Utopia and Dystopia: Rethinking the Generic field” divided anti-utopia into five sub-categories: 1) Satirical anti-Utopias; 2) Dogmatic fictional anti-Utopias; 3) Dogmatic non-fictional anti-Utopias; 4) Pre-emptive anti-Utopias; 5) Critical anti-Utopias.⁶

Dystopia most commonly known as a “failed Utopia”, as a genre dystopia appeared in the eighteenth century after rapid development: urbanization and technological development as well as after two World Wars became popular. In modern dystopian fiction climate change, health problems, the economy, and technology are the main topic besides totalitarianism and anarchism.

Utopia and dystopia represent two contrasting types of speculative fiction that envision the organization and values of society in fundamentally different ways. A utopia depicts an idealized world or society where social, political, and moral aspects are designed to create perfect harmony and contentment among

² Jonathan Swift . *Gulliver’s Travels*. Dover Publication, 1726. -p.240.

³ Samuel Butler. *Erewhon*. Audible Studios:2013. -P.246.

⁴ William Morris. *News from Nowhere*. Penguin Classics.1994.- p.480.

⁵ Lyman Tower Sargent. *The Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited*. USA: Penn State University Press. 2022.-p.120.

⁶ Antonis Balasopoulos. *Anti-Utopia and Dystopia Rethinking*. -Athens: School of Fine Arts Publication. 2011. –p.4-5.





its inhabitants. It embodies an optimistic vision of the future, where problems are solved through equitable systems, fostering peace, justice, and prosperity. On the other hand, a dystopia presents a society that has deteriorated into a state of oppressive control, misery, or chaos, often as a consequence of failed utopian aspirations or other societal flaws. It reflects a pessimistic outlook on the future, highlighting the potential negative outcomes of current social, political, or technological trends. While utopias are built on the hopes for a better world, dystopias serve as cautionary tales about the dark paths society could take if its issues are left unchecked or mishandled.

Gregory Claeys divided dystopia into three groups: political dystopia, environmental dystopia, and technical dystopia.⁷

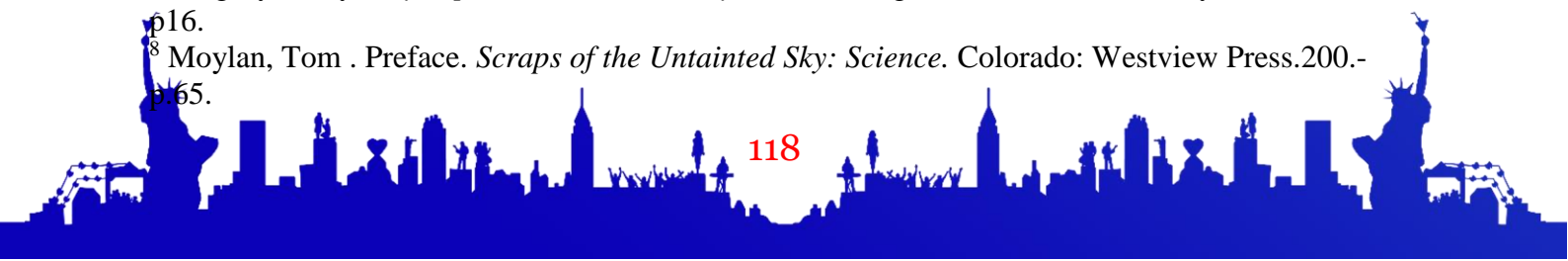
This radical shift from the utopian propensity to the dystopian tendency in this century occurred under the enormous influence of such events, incidents, and developments as the rise of totalitarian and fascist regimes in the countries such as Germany and Spain, the First and Second World Wars, the gradual advancement of technology, and social movements. When the promoted utopian politics failed, the utopian ideals and ensuing belief in these notions were drastically shaken since these monolithic regimes turned Europe into an uninhabitable and unbearable place and diminished the likelihood of a more ideal world. Moreover, Prof. Tom Moylan also elucidates the preponderance of literary dystopias in this century: "A hundred years of exploitation, repression, state violence, war, genocide, disease, famine, ecocide, depression, and debt ... provided more than enough fertile ground for this fictive underside of the utopian imagination"⁸. Consequently, the feasibility of utopian alternatives was heavily challenged by the projections of a dystopian narrative.

Characteristics of dystopia are, firstly, humans are not allowed to feel anything, loss of spirit to do this people are given only a small chance to survive, totalitarian government and technology versus humans are the most famous characteristics of dystopia. We can see these characteristics in every dystopian novel.

Dystopian literature is a genre that explores social and political structures in a dark, nightmare world. It is characterized by the depiction of societies that are in some way undesirable or frightening, often under the guise of being

⁷ Gregory Claeys. *Dystopia: A Natural History*. United Kingdom: Oxford University Press. 1999.- p16.

⁸ Moylan, Tom . Preface. *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science*. Colorado: Westview Press. 200.- p.65.





utopian. Dystopian literature serves as a critique of existing social conditions or as a warning about the dangerous directions in which society may be heading.

Conclusion: This article offers a brief description of the development of dystopian fiction and its current trends. The genre of dystopia appeared in the middle of the 20th century as a reaction to the turbulent changes in society and it has since become an indispensable part of literature. It seems to be especially popular for its apt analysis of global problems and the genre continuously expands to cover various emerging and pressing issues such as technological development, ecological threats, and, religious or political radicalism. The theoretical and practical part provides an insight into the world of dystopias, especially dystopian fertility fiction revolving around the impact of infertility on society.

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