



DYSTOPIAN FICTION: AN EMERGING TREND OF LITERATURE

Dr. Ganesh Vijaykumar Jadhav¹ Alankar Gaikwad²

Department of English, D.G.College of Commerce, Satara (Autonomous)

Corresponding Author - Dr. Ganesh Vijaykumar Jadhav

Email- alankarg63@gmail.com

Abstract

Man has a great habit of looking to the future since the Stone Age, and it is in this nature that he laid the foundations of literature, art, society and tradition. It is because of this literature that human society today has been able to make such progress. Literature taught man social commitment, created social awareness. Among this literature a different type of literature has been gaining popularity for the last few decades. Its name is Dystopian fiction. Plato introduced the concept of utopia in his time and sir **Thomas Moore** was the first person to write of a 'utopia', a word used to describe a perfect imaginary world. According to him, utopia is a virtual world where there will be no law, where all citizens will live happily, where there will be no religion, no distinction, where there will be only happiness and pleasure, that is utopia (heaven of course). The complete opposite concept is dystopia, The English philosopher **John Stuart Mill** coined 'Dystopia' in 1868 Dystopia is a virtual world where the government has complete control over the citizens, where the citizens are forced to live a life of fear and bondage. In this fiction nature is deteriorating where law and order is completely crumbling.

Key words : Human misery, Oppression, Disease, Overcrowding, Environmental destruction, War, Future, Machines.

Imagine that you live in a world where the workplace is replaced by machines. The government is watching every movement of the common man. Where People do not have any freedom where there is chaos, strict laws, deteriorating environment. Is this situation sound like a Hollywood movie? This is called dystopia in the language of literature. Plato represents an ideal society and defines an ideal society in terms of justice, education, functioning and many other aspects of society. The word utopia, however, was coined by Thomas Moore. In his book "Utopia", he explained an ideal society differently. Sir Jonathan Swift brought utopia to the fore in his novel "Gulliver Travels". The very opposite concept of utopia is dystopia. Dystopia is a world in which the government dominates the common man, the control of technology over human beings, the unbearable living of mankind, the loss of individualism, the deprivation of human rights, the degradation of the environment, etc. The word dystopia is not new to literature. Many veteran writers have written novels and short stories on the subject of dystopia.

Advance learners dictionary defines Dystopia as "an imaginary place or state in which everything is extremely bad or

unpleasant". Also Encyclopedia Britannica defines dystopia as an imaginary place where people are unhappy and usually afraid because they are not treated fairly. Multiple Hugo Award-winning American author of science fiction and fantasy Ken Liu says " In every revolution, there are winners and losers. Every dystopia is a utopia for somebody else. It just depends where you are. Are you in the class that benefits, or are you in the class that's not?" Author of young adult and middle grade fiction Ally Condie says " When we read dystopia, we root for these people to break free because we are these people; hoping and fighting against things that are bigger than ourselves. Since the end of the 20th century, dystopias have become very popular on the Western literary scene. Undoubtedly, the proliferation of so-called dystopian novels in young adult literature, many of which have been made into movies such as the Hollywood blockbusters "The Hunger Games" and the "Divergent" trilogies, have contributed to this trend. However, dystopian narrative as a genre traces back to the beginning of the 20th century, and although researchers have not always agreed on a specific definition of the concept, they have almost unanimously declared dystopian fiction a literary tool for social criticism. For this reason,

discussions of dystopian literature usually reference Yevgeny Zamyatin's "We," Aldous Huxley's "Brave New World" and George Orwell's "Nineteen Eighty-Four," considered the classic defining texts of the genre. In his work "The Dystopian Impulse in Modern Literature: Fiction as Social Criticism," Keith Booker describes the three novels as seminal in terms of the "vividness of their engagement with real-world social and political issues and in the scope of their critique of the societies on which they focus."

As for modern Arabic literature, prose narrative has seldom made use of utopian or dystopian stories for social and political criticism, opting instead for other literary devices like realism, symbolism and surrealism. So far, Arabic research has mainly focused either on Western classic utopias like the works of Thomas Moore, Tommaso Campanella and Samuel Butler, or on 20th century Western dystopian fiction. In the Arabic literary research field, experts have yet to agree on the proper Modern Standard Arabic terminology to discuss dystopian narrative. This has resulted in different designations, for example *adab al-madina al-fasida* (literature of the corrupted city), as opposed to *adab al-madina al-fadila* (literature of the virtuous city), *naqid al-yutubia* (the antithesis of utopia) and *alam al-waqi al-marir* (the world of the bitter reality), together with *al-yutubia al-didd* (the opposite of utopia), *al-mudun al-tahdhiriyya* (the cities of warning) and – last but not least – the English word transliterated into *distubia*.

The best example of dystopian literature is the world-famous novel "Animal Farm" by George Orwell. In this novel, he has written a very touching piece on the subject of dystopian literature. He used animals instead of human actors in the characters in the story to show his anger against the Nazi government, and the experiment was a success. People loved this genre.

Here are other reasons why dystopian fiction is significant in literature:

- 1. Dystopian fiction can be a way to educate and warn humanity about the dangers of current social and political structures. Margaret Atwood's 1985 novel *The Handmaid's Tale* takes place in a futuristic United States, known as Gilead. It cautions against oppressive patriarchy.
- 2. Dystopian stories may convey an author's beliefs. For example, H.G. Wells' 1895 novel

The Time Machine reflected Wells' socialist views. The story follows a Victorian England scientist who builds a time machine and witnesses the pitfalls of a capitalist society.

- 3. Dystopian stories require a greater suspension of disbelief and can be very imaginative. For example, George Orwell's allegory *Animal Farm* is about a group of pigs who stage a rebellion against their human farmer. The farm animals' rise to power is based on the Russian Revolution.

But a closer look reveals that many of the features of dystopian fiction are reflected in the everyday life of today's 21st century. And in my opinion the present human society is either moving towards dystopian culture or it is living in dystopian culture to some extent now. The war in Russia and Ukraine, the government's seizure of information on social media, global warming, rising unemployment in the industrial sector, corruption, and deprivation of basic human rights are just some of the distant conditions of the 21st century. A special characteristic of this type of literature is that it warns Human being, makes people aware and also entertains them. In recent times, dystopian literature has become increasingly popular. People are becoming aware of future crises. Many writers have used this material to express their anger at the system, their protest against false traditions. The best example of this is George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. The novel is a masterpiece of political cartoons and dystopian fiction. George Orwell wrote *Animal Farm* to draw people's attention to the misuse of Stalinism.

Orwell wrote the novel in the context of World War II, when Britain and the Soviet Union formed an alliance against the Nazis, and the strongest support for Stalin and the Soviet Union. All this he presented to the world in the form of an animal fable. People began to compare Conway's phrase with Orwell's "Newspeak", a language that limits free thought. Real world events heavily influenced his work, he witnessed atrocities of fascist totalitarian regimes in the Spanish Civil War, as well as the rise of Hitler and Stalin; his experiences and surroundings also inspired his politically driven novel, *Animal Farm* which expressed his concerns about communism. One can also relate 1984's extreme surveillance with the present day whereby in 2013, following Edward Snowden's story regarding the NSA's mass surveillance, the novel saw a huge rise in sales of over 5,000%. In this case, one could argue that in light of recent

political events, dystopian literature can be used as an object to draw comparisons with society's problems today. The rise in sales for such dystopian fiction is also a reflection of our fears whether that is surveillance or lies being given by the government. How do audiences perceive such novels? Perhaps these novels offer an unusual sense of comfort to their readers that despite all society's faults, it is not that bad as the world depicted in the novel; or perhaps it is to raise awareness to the possible future if we leave these issues unresolved.

It is also important to recognize that beyond the recent rises in sales for dystopian fiction, there has been a significant amount of young-adult fiction being published in this genre. This includes series such as "*The Hunger Games*", and although much more action-packed, socio-political matters are still being raised. Dystopian literature can be seen as a tool to educate the younger generations and therefore make them more responsive to political issues, and with the huge access to information from social media for example, this may be likely.

An important function of dystopian literature is to create awareness in society, to present a vision of the future that challenges readers to reflect on the current social and political environment in which they live. Due to its excellent presentation, clear structure, and strong opinion about the system in the society, this genre has started gaining immense popularity in the society. And that kind of literature is sorely needed in the 21st century. Man, obsessed with modernity and perfection, is becoming emotionless, transforming into global warming, famine, rising crime, oppression, a weakened justice system, etc. caused by the rampant use of nature

The reader is able to realise their worst fears as a citizen of a developing world through pulp-populars and literary apocalypses. These fears include the dangers of knowledge and fears of where technology might lead us in a climate sensitive world. In realising our worst fears and anxieties, the dystopian and science fiction literature provide the unique quality of enabling writers and readers to explore the negative aspects of our humanity: greed, betrayal, cowardice and where these characteristics may lead humans in the future. In addition, the perverse attraction to dark story lines, violence and horror cannot be ignored as a significant factor that engages our interest in both the pulp-populars and literary post-apocalypses. "*The Walking Dead*" series is

particularly merciless when it comes to sparing its characters' happiness. One might expect the characters to find a refugee shelter or underground government compound that has survived the zombie apocalypse. The show plays with the viewers' expectations by continually throwing obstacles in the way of their characters. It raises the question of why do the viewers expect there to be a refugee shelter? What if the world really was overrun with zombies leaving only a handful of survivor groups? It is a horrible future to consider, and yet many viewers are still looking for a happy ending in this post-apocalyptic TV series. It seems that the search for a happy ending and desire for the characters to achieve their goal of survival is what draws viewers back to the show episode after episode.

Finally, with most dystopian and post-apocalyptic novels and films, there is the element of familiarity. No matter how far into the future the stories propel their readers, there is often the ability to relate with the characters and social system in place. In *1984* one might connect with the sense of paranoia Winston feels that the government is always watching and attempting to control its citizens. Regardless of how horrifying the concept is, one might be able to relate to the fascination the citizens of the Capitol have with watching the hunger games in comparison to how fascinated people are with reality TV today.

The growing market for young-adult dystopian nightmares is a great success for the genre. Some critics and sci-fi fans have been disappointed with many of the post-apocalypse novels that are churning their way out of bookshops at such a rapid rate. They argue that emphasis on political conflicts and the dying intellect of humanity are elements that are slowly being traded in for love triangles and young ditzy female heroines. However, one might argue that not all of these bestsellers should be written off so quickly. It would be unfair to expect an Orwellian level of writing from every novel. Indeed, why should any author *want* to write a dystopian novel like Orwell? Times have changed and true originality is such a rare achievement that one should never stop striving for it.

This thematic overview derived from a sample selection of Arabic dystopian fiction clearly illustrates the need for more research focusing on dystopian trends in modern Arabic literature. This proves especially true when considering the authors' own personalities, views and experiences, and how they may exercise decisive

impacts on the origins and the outcomes of their stories. The diversity in social and political backgrounds of the Arab countries also proves significant. With the media defining as dystopic Ibrahim Nasrallah's "Dog War II," winner of the 2018 International Prize for Arabic Fiction, the interest of the reading public, both Arabic and Western, has grown significantly, doubtlessly stimulating some interest by Arabic literary critics in a near future.

References :

1. Emerging trends of Dystopian Nightmares, the-artifice.com
2. What is Dystopian fiction, www.masterclass.com
www.aljadid.com
oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com
3. www.britannica.com
4. www.brainyquote.com