

UTOPIA AND DYSTOPIA AS SUBGENRES OF SCIENCE FICTION

Vinnitsia National Technical University

Анотація

У даній роботі розглянуто різницю між утопією та антиутопією як піджанрами науково-фантастичної літератури. Виявлено особливості цих двох концепцій та їх можливий вплив на суспільство.

Ключові слова: утопія, антиутопія, антиутопічне суспільство, жанри, наукова фантастика, література, утопічний світ.

Abstract

The difference between utopia and dystopia as subgenres of science fiction literature is considered. The peculiarities of these two concepts and their probable impact on society are revealed.

Key words: utopia, dystopia, dystopian society, genres, science fiction, literature, utopia world.

For many years, literature has been under the influence of psychological pressure on humanity, which in turn lives in an unstable world. The genres of utopia and dystopia focus on political and social systems and capture the reader's attention.

The opposite of a dystopia is a utopia. "Utopia" was first mentioned by Thomas Moore in 1516 in his book "Utopia", describing a flawless fictional island in the New World. It is a play on the Greek prefixes "ou" meaning no or not and "eu" meaning good. So the utopia is literally "good place" and "no place" which implies that a utopia is perfect but does not and will not exist [4]. In general, when discussing a utopian world, people tend to focus on certain key characteristics. These may include compassionate, honest government, equality in all aspects for everybody, citizens being free to think independently, safe environment to live in.

The term "dystopia" was coined by English philosopher John Stuart Mill in 1868 in his political speech on the state of Ireland, where he used the word in contrast to the term utopia. In this speech, Mill sharply criticizes the government's policy on Irish ownership [1]. The term "dystopia" is made up of the Greek prefix "dys", which means bad or harsh, and the Greek root "topos", which means place. In contrast to a utopia, a dystopia is therefore a "bad place" [4].

A dystopian society is an illusion of a perfect utopian world, which characterized by miserable living conditions, including human suffering, poverty, oppression, violence, disease, and pollution [5]. Also, there are such characteristics, namely limited independent thinking and freedom; a protagonist who questions the society, eternal fear, a dehumanized state, being an individual and standing out is bad.

Authors known for their dystopian science fiction novels are the following [1]:

- Fahrenheit 451(1953) by Ray Bradbury.
- The Hunger Games Trilogy (2008- 2010) by Suzanne Collins.
- 1984, Animal Farm (1949, 1945) by George Orwell.

Let me give you a quick overview of the plot of the novels that have been presented above. Ray Bradbury's novel "Fahrenheit 451" reveals to the reader a rather pessimistic near future for humanity. People just exist following trends. There is no time for communication, thoughts, and feelings. The main and terrible enemy is books that make people think. Therefore, they are ordered to be burned. This order is carried out by firefighters, including the main character of the novel [7].

The Hunger Games trilogy, written by Susan Collins, has not lost its popularity. In addition, in November this year, we will see the film adaptation of the prequel "The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes" [2]. We see a post-apocalyptic world, in which the country of Panem was formed. The country is divided into districts where ordinary people live, and the entire elite and government are in the Capitol. To liven up the meager existence in a totalitarian-dictatorial country, the rich folks host the annual "Hunger Games". In this game children from 12 to 18 years old fight tooth and nail.

Orwell's "Nineteen Eighty-Four" dystopian novel tells about a future world that consisted of Oceania, Eurasia, and Eastasia. There is a war of all against all in this world. Humanity is subjected to the brutal control of the Party, led by Big Brother, who is watching you.

Most dystopian novels are distinguished by the common phenomenon that some of the events described in the work become reality in one way or another. For example, in Orwell's 1984 novel, some predictions were realized. Orwell describes television screens that are located in homes and public places. They convey messages to the Party and thus the thought police control the society. These TV screens can identify people and notice changes in their behavior. Nowadays, there are surveillance cameras that can recognize faces and emotions. Also, computers, phones, and smart TVs track our actions. A versificator is a tool that, without people's help, creates music, literature, which is essentially a part of artificial intelligence [9].

Ray Bradbury also has predicted some recognizable things for us. In the novel Fahrenheit 451, the characters were wearing Seashells, the thimble radios. They are a direct prototype of modern AirPods. The society described in Fahrenheit 451 is obsessed with parlor walls that look like TVs today [8].

The novel was first published in the U.S. in 1953 as a paperback by The Ballantine Publishing Group. A hardback version was also released, including 200 special editions of signed and numbered copies bound in asbestos [3]. The asbestos material used for this binding can resist heat and fire, which, clearly, is a play on the plot of the book [6].

The concepts of utopia and dystopia are more relevant than ever in our society. They affect many aspects of society and show the likely consequences of political, social, technological changes. Utopian ideas can become a good lever for achieving justice, equality and improving life. Dystopias can warn against the formation of a terrible cruel reality. These sub-genres of science fiction literature can be an inspiration for societal change. Their influence obviously depends on society's perception of them.

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Козакевич Анастасія Олегівна – студентка групи МР-216, факультет менеджменту та інформаційної безпеки, Вінницький національний технічний університет, Вінниця, e-mail: anastasia220503@gmail.com

Науковий керівник: Слободянюк Алла Анатоліївна – старший викладач кафедри іноземних мов, Вінницький національний технічний університет, м.Вінниця, e-mail: a.allavin@gmail.com

Kozakevych Anastasia O. – student, Faculty of Management and Information Security, Vinnytsia National Technical University, Vinnytsia, e-mail: anastasia220503@gmail.com

Scientific Supervisor: Slobodianiuk Alla Anatoliivna – Senior Lecturer of the Foreign Languages Department, Vinnytsia National Technical University, Vinnytsia, e-mail: a.allavin@gmail.com