



## Contemporaneity of Language and Literature in the Robotized Millennium

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### Designing the future worlds: an exploration in the dystopian arenas

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#### Abstract

Future is not foreseeable but a pattern can be perceived through the present inclination of the world. In this era of high-tech and scientific advancements, artificial intelligence is taking over. Everything is becoming easy for the people while the consequences are also reaching dire levels. In a world where the gap between the rich and the poor is vast and where people are hoodwinked effortlessly by the higher-ups, an appalling dystopia is depicted by the writers in the contemporary fictions. The background is dull, deprived and bleak to the core. In the current robotized world where the Artificial Intelligence seems to be taking control of everything, there seems to be a highly vigilant surveillance throughout the universe. Plans and tales of planets and alien forms living in space has caught much attention that people seem to be reflecting on it. This paper proposes to study the patterns visible in the futuristic worlds which are envisioned by the contemporary writers and study the strategy of the future settings. It will also include the current blockbusters and games which have this dystopian design.

**Keywords:** Dystopia, Future, Surveillance, Insurgence, Survival, Technology.

*“Technique has taken over the whole of civilization. Death, procreation, birth all submit to technical efficiency and systemization.”*

*-Jacques Ellul*

#### Introduction:

In a world fraught with the ultimate turn of the century where technology has started to define life, a strange popularity to dystopian tales is taking over the pop culture. People seem to be widely keen on these kind of dystopian settings that writers have painted in many fictions. Even the blockbusters of today are rife with myriad tales of space, science fiction, dystopian and post-apocalyptic ones. All of these centre on the idea of how a power wielder is taking over the world through deception that finally it leads to utter chaos. It hinges on the dystopian background so it is abound in hunger, geographical destruction and umpteen troubles which can never be repaired. In the book, *Confronting Dystopia*, Eva Paus in the introduction says, “The predictions are that the conjuncture of advances in artificial intelligence, digital connectivity, processing speed, big data, software, and robotics will have a profound impact on the availability of jobs and working conditions over the coming decades, and may lead to dramatic changes in people’s lives.” (2)

These changes in this era, has grim consequences but there is always a panacea for it. This paper proposes to study the arena of the future worlds designed by the contemporary authors in their novels. Even movies and games provide these structures that the young adults are engrossed in it in a gripping manner. The contour of the future worlds will be explored through some dystopian fictions and movies and the patterns leading to these depictions will be divulged.

#### Shaping the Future:

The world today is bursting with fraudulence that people are easily being controlled and attuned to the wishes of the government. The media feeds lies after lies that people are deceived and made to conform to the society’s pattern. Isn’t it somewhat dystopian in structure? As war, destruction, conformity, poverty, negativity, all are integrated in a dystopian world; and people are having a glimpse of it in the real world that a world of horror and bleakness is imagined by the writers of today. The makings of the future is designed by calculating the precise happenings of the present world. A dystopian setting is dull and pathetic to look at as it is a confined world with too many rules that limit people from being unique. John A. Zukowski in his article, *“The Future is Now”* says, “Dystopias disguise the problems of the present in the future. Where it’s the opposite of utopia. Society appears to be a well-working machine of structure and organization. But in reality it’s an oppressive domination system. Only a radical change brought by the downtrodden — usually led by a messiah — can defeat the oppression.” The writers of today have wonderfully pictured a dystopia poignantly. The novel *Uglies* (2005) by Scott Westerfeld is built on world where all are said to be ‘ugly’ and they are made ‘pretty’ through surgery at sixteen. The irony of it is that it is an ugly system though people are pretty. There are limits to this change and people have umpteen disadvantages in this. And they don’t get to choose the next phase of their lives as the government has already pre-planned for them everything. When the downside of the system is disclosed to the protagonist, then a change occurs. *The Giver*, a 1993 novel by Lois Lowry talks on how an ultimate utopia can also be a disaster. In this milieu, one can only uncover the truth when the outer layers are unfolded. It is a world of sameness, with no memories or pain. But the truth of the matter is that people don’t realize the truth, they follow a total lie thoughtlessly. There are no choices and the pills given to them suppress all their emotions. In the *Matched* trilogy by Allyson Braithwaite Condie, one can see that the system of choosing a suitable spouse for the youths by the government is the backdrop. They are matched according to their abilities and compatibility. There are lots of problems in it that the characters realize it and eventually fight for the truth. Dystopia blends with science fiction as it is about the future and technology. These novels have all these elements in it. Lauretta Charlton in

her article, “*When Dystopia Is Too Close For Comfort*” endorses what Anna deVries has said, “Dystopian and science fiction has always been a way for writers to play with reality, stretching some truths into extreme form — worldwide pandemics, space travel — while creating new ones — aliens — all the while highlighting basic truths about humans and society,” Also, M. Keith Booker in his book *The Dystopian Impulse in Modern Literature* says: “In our time the utopian impulse has been largely replaced by dystopian projections of disastrous current trends. Science has played a major role in the history of utopian thinking and in the modern turn from utopia to dystopia.” (Booker, 5) Due to this, a lot of changes can be seen in this era. One such novel, talks about the how the government can create disorder. *The Maze Runner* series by James Dashner is built on a world of disarray as the environment is depleted through solar flares and the virus sent by the government to reduce population goes haywire. This creates zombie-like creatures called cranks and in a hurry to find a cure, the immune kids are experimented on and tortured to the core that it leaves a major scar in their lives, but in the end they make it through to a new world, free of the virus. As Thomas Moylan says in the Preface to his book, *Scraps of Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia*, hope flickers at the end no matter what, “Again and again, the dystopian text opens in the midst of a social “elsewhere” that appears to be far worse than any in the “real” world... In some form, a utopian horizon, or at the very least a scrap of hope, appears within the militant dystopia.” (Moylan, xiii) Thus, dystopias can be forbidding and full of disgust and perils but there is always hope in the dire situations. It teaches one to survive amidst a menacing fallout. Current movies are ubiquitous with dystopian and Sci-fi genres. One can see Artificial Intelligence taking control of the human race, the depletion of man through environment disasters, confining people into groups and ruling over them like totalitarian government, living in outer space and many more. The science fiction, dystopian and futuristic movies like *Oblivion*, *Total Recall*, *I, Robot*, *Elysium*, *WALL-E*, *Book of Eli*, *Alita: Battle Angel* and the like have been submerged in the dystopian design. Recent video games which the young adults are interested in are all about survival. They are put in an arena where they have to kill to win like in *The Hunger Games* trilogy, or they are set in a place where they have to escape through skills. All these have this dystopian framework and therefore one can see its rise in the new pop cultures. There have been real-world dystopias too in the past and in the present it is hidden from view but once it bursts free, then the upheaval begins. These real-world dystopias, with their millions of real human victims, also lend a poignancy and an urgency to the warnings of dystopian fiction. On the other hand, the many fundamental similarities between the regimes of Hitler and Stalin suggest that the real political dichotomy in the twentieth century societies is between totalitarianism and democracy, where “democracy” implies the individual liberty (real or illusory) presumed in conventional bourgeois societies. Many dystopian fictions, meanwhile, suggest that even these “democratic” societies can have their nightmarish sides. (Booker, 20). Dystopias thus, makes one comprehend the future and the present. In helps in making the future of humanity different from the ones depicted and even though, these situations ever come in the future, humanity will always survive. Though horrid, they caution people and make people think over life and future. Gregory Claeys in his book *Dystopia: A Natural History* questions and makes the readers think, “Shall we be monsters, humans, or machines? Shall we be enslaved or free? Can we be ‘free’ or only conditioned in varying degrees? Shall we preserve our individuality or be swallowed by the collective?” (Claeys, 498)

### Conclusion:

“But one thing is for sure: much like the world’s temperature and sea levels, the popularity of the dystopian novel continues to rise.” says Greg Boose in his article, “*Are Dystopian Novels Here to Stay.*” In this era of advancements, there is a lot of change in the culture, individuality and the patterns of the world that people are in a dilemma and this has led to mass dystopian trend. Thomas Moylan explains that “Indeed, with its unfashionable capacity for totalizing interrogation, dystopian critique can enable its writers and readers to find their way within-and sometimes against and beyond-the conditions that mask the very causes of the harsh realities in which they live.” (Moylan, xii). Dystopian literature and its other renditions have provided a way for people to confront reality with courage and truth. Before this era, dystopian literature was not at all in the picture but now due to the present conditions of people, there is a lot of scope in this area. As Gregory Claeys puts it, “Such nightmares nonetheless clearly indicate the centrality of dystopia to our times. Dystopian literature may have fallen short, in the face of so much horror, in describing the genocides of the twentieth century. But now, particularly where science and technology are central, its projections have much to offer.” (Claeys, 501)

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