

Abstract

The objective of the present study is to identify and analyse the common themes of dystopian fiction in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and to trace the transformation of these themes, as well as the development of new thematic realizations, in contemporary British speculative fiction. The analysis involves prominent recent authors including Iain Banks, Ken MacLeod, Adam Roberts, Charles Stross, and Chris Beckett; and through the selected works of these authors it aims to explore the recent trends in science fiction and its utopian subgenres. Besides these goals, the study aims to provide the reader with a thorough definition of dystopianism and a concise overview of the historical development of this genre and its manifestations in the works of the above-mentioned authors. As the most prominent and recurring themes in dystopian literature, both traditional and contemporary, the thesis recognizes concepts such as the manipulation through language and media, the loss of individual freedom and privacy, and the abuse of power by elites, all of which are of special importance for the present-day social thinking and politics.

Structurally, the study is divided into three chapters, the first of them assuming the role of theoretical introduction, whereas the latter two represent the practical analysis. With the help of prominent critics such as Tom Moylan, L. T. Sargent, or Adam Roberts, the first chapter attempts to define the characteristics of dystopian writing and those of the related genres, descending from the general terms of "speculative fiction" and "science fiction" to the more specific ones concerning utopian literature and all of its variants, with a clear distinction between utopianism, dystopianism, and anti-utopianism. Following is a brief summary of the historical transformation of these genres, primarily throughout the twentieth century, which was especially rich in the various literary trends and styles as an answer to the frequently changing political opinions of that era.

Second chapter focuses on the classical authors and the depiction of the traditional themes in their influential novels, taking into account their non-fictional works as well, which include Orwell's famous essay on politics and language and Huxley's critical rediscovery of his own famous novel. For the purposes of this analysis, the depicted alternative societies are observed through three different perspectives: their use of language, the attitude they perform towards social relations and sexuality, and the solutions they employ to the issue of incompatibility of communal values with individual freedom.

The last chapter provides a close examination of the contemporary fiction through the works of the recent authors listed above. Even though these works are to be discussed separately, an identification of common themes among them takes place as well, and these findings are used in the following speculation about the further development of British fiction.

As for the choice of the primary texts, the selection provided is meant to represent both the traditional and highly celebrated works, as well as those that have not yet received such extensive critical acclaim. Whereas Orwell and Huxley are generally acknowledged as the founding fathers of the dystopian genre, some of the recent authors will yet have to prove their worth in order to secure their rightful places on the contemporary literary scene; a process to which this thesis contributes by analysing the following works: Iain M. Banks' *The Player of Games*, Ken MacLeod's *Intrusion*, Adam Roberts' *New Model Army*, Charles Stross' *Halting State*, and Chris Beckett's *Dark Eden*. These novels represent the contemporary British speculative fiction in all of its diversity, providing a spectrum of different alternative societies located all over the universe.

Key words: science fiction, utopia, dystopia, freedom, language, individuality, society, politics, manipulation, power, technology