

# The importance of the concept of dystopia in modernism

Hayotxon Usmonovna O'rinova  
hayotxon9507@gmail.com  
SamSIFL

**Abstract:** Why is dystopian literature important to modern society? In our article, we tried to answer this question. "The importance of the concept of dystopia in modernism" Dystopian novels help to understand the essence of the feeling of real fear. Dystopian fiction stands out because it helps us understand why our fears about certain things are valid. For example, some people may believe that the mass surveillance of citizens by their governments creates a necessary concern. The article talks about it.

**Keywords:** perception and concepts of art, artistic concept, dystopia, anti-utopia, Dystopian fiction, Orwellian

Dystopian literature, such as Huxley's "Brave new world", Orwell's "1984" and Atwood's "The Handmaid's Tale", combines social, political, and technological/ecological trends from the past and present and projects their gravest and most plausible dangers into the (sometimes near) future. Writing dystopian literature - also called speculative fiction - takes knowledge of history, sociology, politics, psychology, and quite a bit of imagination and foresight. Dystopian literature also engages branches of science, often in a more interesting and relevant way than even science fiction.

Why is dystopian literature important to modern society? In our article, we tried to answer this question. "The importance of the concept of dystopia in modernism" Dystopian novels help to understand the essence of the feeling of real fear. Dystopian fiction stands out because it helps us understand why our fears about certain things are valid. For example, some people may believe that the mass surveillance of citizens by their governments creates a necessary concern. The article talks about it.

Because it critiques society... including its sacred somebodies...and makes readers think critically about the world they want to live in. An example could be Simon Edge's latest book which explores the tensions between different people, women, the right, the left, feminism, and science when it comes to aspects of trans ideology and queer theory that are antithetical to reason. It's arguably more satire than dystopia, but it is reminiscent of '1984' (which most assuredly is) in that it forces readers to look at ideology from a more critical perspective. Edge is essentially exploring the idea of thought crime, which Orwell so presciently described, but in a current context. He encourages readers to consider whether if  $2+2=5$  is tyranny then is not different (genetically) women are women equally the mantra of a Big Brother or

The Party. Activism that aims to force society to accept something they know is not true and pretend they do through fear of ending up in the memory hole is a dystopia and literature is there to help readers think about it.

Different (genetically) women are women and are also worthy of respect. But the anti-scientific ideology that claims the Earth is flat or that says a person can change biological sex and everyone has to say it's true when biology can prove it is not is Orwellian, is the stuff of science fiction, is the stuff of a dystopia<sup>1</sup>.

#### Exterior detail on the Board of Education Building in Philadelphia

The buildings in my neighborhood, Logan Square in downtown Philadelphia, fall roughly into two categories. Some offer visual pleasure, whether they are modest run-of-the-mill brick row houses or the rather grand Board of Education Building, an Art Deco-ish pile topped by busts of Sir Isaac Newton, Ben Franklin, and Alexander Graham Bell. "How nice that someone took the trouble," I think as I walk by. And then there is the second category: utilitarian apartment slabs with unrelieved gridded façades, infill condo housing that looks as if it had been trucked in from the suburbs, a grim precast concrete retirement home that takes up a whole block. "I wish they hadn't built that," is my all too common reaction. The Board of Education Building dates from 1932. That's the approximate cut-off date. Before the 1930s, the buildings are pretty good; after that, not so much. What happened?

The answer to that question is the subject of James Stevens Curl's controversial new book, *Making Dystopia: The Strange Rise and Survival of Architectural Barbarism* (Oxford University Press, 2018). Curl is a British architectural historian, professor emeritus at De Montfort University in Leicester, and the author of more than 40 books, including the well-regarded *The Victorian Celebration of Death* (most recently updated in 2004) and *The Oxford Dictionary of Architecture* (1999). According to Curl, what happened was "architectural barbarism," which is how he characterizes modern architecture. He does not mince words. Describing the emergence of the International Style in the 1920s, he writes: "It became apparent that something very strange had occurred: an aberration, something alien to the history of humanity, something destructive aesthetically and spiritually, something ugly and unpleasant, something that was inhumane and abnormal, yet something that was almost universally accepted in architectural circles, like some fundamentalist quasi-religious cult that demanded total allegiance, obedience, and subservience."<sup>2</sup>

What are the disadvantages of a dystopian society? We try to explain with some questions below.

What do I wear? The same jumpsuit as everybody else

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.quora.com/Why-is-dystopian-literature-important-to-modern-society>

<sup>2</sup> THE JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS Posted on: February 05, 2019 Modernism and the Making of Dystopia

Bad hair day? Well, you're shaved bald like everybody else  
What should I watch? The Government Channel, all government all the time  
What should I listen to? Government Radio  
Where can I go? Only areas that aren't restricted  
What do I do? The government shall assign you accordingly  
What about my health? If it isn't worth treating you, you get euthanized, no worries about complications.

Where do I live? Your assigned habitation  
What about the stuff I dream of owning? Don't be silly, you don't need that stuff  
Who's in charge? That's not your concern  
What about a family? It will be determined if you're genetically fit and you'll be matched with an approved partner.

What about how my child is raised? That's not your job anymore, no more nuclear family, just schools and juvenile facilities.

What do I eat? The approved diet.

Dystopian literature has been around for a long time, and some great writers published dystopian works: Aldous Huxley, H.G. Wells, George Orwell, and Ray Bradbury.

But SF and fantasy used to be publishing niches, and the people who read those genres (like me) were despised or ridiculed as nerds. Now SF&F is mainstream, and works like *A Handmaid's Tale* get turned into successful TV series. Popularity draws more creative energy. Writers want to be successful, you know.

Post-apocalyptic novels and movies are also a vehicle for gory horror and violence, as in *Road Warrior* and countless zombie movies and TV shows.

In conclusion, I think dystopian literature has achieved mainstream acceptance and is an outlet for the frustrations and anxieties that many people feel.

What makes a work of dystopian literature great? It is not merely, I think, the writer's ability to create a topsy-turvy world in which everything is turned on its head - repression is freedom, misery is joy, and meaninglessness is meaning. Rather, as Shelley once remarked, "The great instrument of moral good is the imagination." Great dystopian literature, in dreaming up worlds that are so different (but not so different as to be incomprehensible) to our own, reflects on humanity's frailty, warning against hubris, and reminding that the road to hell is paved with good intentions. No dictator in a great dystopian novel ever thought he was doing badly; ironically, most dystopias are supposed to be utopias. The best dystopian novels are still (chillingly) relevant today.

With that in mind, I think that the following qualify as great works of dystopian literature -

Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, for its ruthlessly incisive satire of a dysfunctional class system, and for its prescient critique of a world where consumption becomes man's greatest purpose.

George Orwell's *1984*, for its disturbing portrayal of a society gripped by war, in which individuals are subject to constant surveillance by the state, their beliefs policed and regulated. Some of Orwell's coinages - doublethink, thoughtcrime, Big Brother - are now used to refer to elements of modern life that might best be described as "dystopian".

Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange*, for its vivid evocation of a world in which meaningless violence begets more meaningless violence, and for Burgess's creation of Nadsat, a Russian-influenced argot spoken by the hooligans.

The word is Dystopian.

This word is the antonym of Utopia.

A Utopia is an imaginary place, where everything is perfect. In contrast, Dystopia is an imaginary place where things are abnormal, generally as an aftermath of a tremendous calamity or apocalypse. This sort of a society generally has a social class that has usurped power, and the rest of the population faces severe hardship, suffering, and pain due to arbitrary and unnatural rules and regulations.

If you want to get an idea, about what such a society feels like, you can read

*1984* (George Orwell)

*Animal Farm* (George Orwell)

*The Handmaid's Tale* (Margaret Atwood)

*Brave New World* (Aldous Huxley )

You could also watch *Equilibrium*. It is a nice movie, somewhat similar in story to *Fahrenheit 451* (Ray Bradbury)

*Are the arts important in modern society?*

“Art is not a mirror to hold up to society but a hammer with which to shape it”—  
Bertolt Brecht

Art encompasses every aspect of our lives; the clothes we wear, the buildings we live in, the music we listen to, the medicines we take, the books we read—all these would be nonexistent if it were not for the creative capacity of humans. A form of communication as old as humankind itself; art is how humans have communicated, celebrated, recorded, and described our lives since the beginning of time. It's always been a central part of our humanity. So why wouldn't it be important in modern society?

Surely, it cannot be a mere coincidence that our greatest innovators and scientists were also gifted hugely in the arts. Newton and Einstein to name but two, reached scientific breakthroughs because they were creative—they possessed the innate ability to “think outside the box”. Modern-day essentials, such as the internet, which

revolutionized human thinking and how we live our lives, were thought up by creative thinkers. Many of the theories of science, which is the “study of the structure and behavior of the physical and natural world through observation and experiment”, would not have been able to be investigated and then proved if the theory had not been suggested in the first place: which would have required an ability to think imaginatively to come up with explanations for observations. Modern society should value and encourage creativity: as we hurtle into this age consisting of Snapchat, rocket ships, and the ongoing battle against cancer, the 21st Century calls for more innovative thinkers, not less. We cannot even begin to imagine what the careers of the future shall entail, just as previously the internet and mobile phones would have been unreachable goals. Modern society brings forth modern issues. Thus, we need creative thinkers to bring us forward.

There are some more obvious reasons for the importance of the arts in modern society. From the Palaeolithic cave drawings in Lascaux, France to the early tools and pottery of native people, to the great Egyptian pyramids; art has been intertwined with our existence. It has evolved with the growth of mankind. Art has been a favored medium to express what cannot be said - with which we uncovered nearly all we know of the early existence of man. Art is not merely a tool with which to express, but also a way to capture moments of celebration, of happiness to share with the world of today, as well as the world of tomorrow. Art is timeless; people will pass away, fade into the pages of history books - but books, plays, poetry, priceless pieces of art, music, choreography... they shall never fade. Art is your key to immortality. So are the arts important in modern society? Yes, because we have so much we wish to record, capture and celebrate - to share with future generations, through art.

A final reason why art is important in modern society is the fact that art is, above all, a means of expressing the way one thinks, a manifestation of what you believe and how you think, in a form that can be shown to others, to enrich them. It has been, for centuries, a way of manipulating the masses, of manipulating the human conscience itself. Art is more than just self-expression and self-communication; it allows us to escape into the refuge of our fantasy, to leave behind the stress of the modern-day world. It possesses inexplicable, almost sublime qualities, that feeling of being able to create something beautiful to share with others - it enhances our imagination, with which we can do anything: we can escape the human world and experience that which is impossible for us to experience. And in this day and age, where people are becoming far more accepting of each other's differences as they realize there is no such thing as “normalcy”, art is revered. No matter how different, strange, or isolated you are... it doesn't matter. Indulging yourself in the art will take away the pain, as you realize many others feel the same way as you. And creating art will help you embrace the pain, as you help to reassure others around you that nobody is perfect. Art has major

importance in modern society because it defines us as individuals and makes us better people. "The artist is not a special kind of person; each person is a special kind of artist."

To conclude, art is important in modern society, for a whole range of reasons, of which I have only scratched the surface; the need for creativity to progress, the ability to express our views to those in the future, and finally, the refuge art offers away from the stresses of the modern world.

### References

1. <https://www.quora.com/Why-is-dystopian-literature-important-to-modern-society>
2. THE JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS  
Posted on: February 05, 2019 Modernism and the Making of Dystopia.
3. Bedford, Sybille. Aldous Huxley: A Biography. London: Chatto & Windus, 1973.
4. Booker, M. Keith. The Dystopian Impulse in Modern Literature: Fiction as Social Criticism.  
London: Greenwood Press, 1994. PDF e-book.
5. Claeys, Gregory. "News from Somewhere: Enhanced Sociability and the Composite  
Definition of Utopia and Dystopia." History 98, no. 330 (2013): 145-73.
6. Claeys, Gregory. The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature.  
Cambridge: Cambridge  
University Press, 2010. PDF e-book.
7. Davidson, Peter. George Orwell: A Literary Life. Houndmills: Macmillan, 1996.
8. "Dystopia, n.". OED Online. Oxford University Press. March 2016,  
<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/58909;jsessionid=48980D2837EF5F213D07A67618F436D4?redirectedFrom=Dystopia>.
9. Gottlieb, Erika. Dystopian Fiction East and West: Universe of Terror and  
Trial. Montreal:  
McGill-Queen's Press-MQUP, 2001,
10. <https://books.google.cz/books?id=gmABBAAAQBAJ&>
11. Huxley, Aldous. Brave New World. London: Penguin Random House, 2007.
12. Kasmó et al., "The Perception of Human Cloning: A Comparative Study