



# Artistic features of real and imagined in dystopian films

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## ABSTRACT

The concept of dystopia is one of the concepts that have been used for a long time, but it has been widely circulated in recent times in various types of arts and literature as a result of major global events and the outcome of political, social, economic conditions and others, which mainly reflected on human life and the nature of life, instead of life heading towards well-being And happiness with the development of science, thought and technology, you see, is heading towards hatred, despair and injustice, and because cinema is one of the arts that transmits phenomena and events experienced by society or that can be manifested in its ideas, even imaginary ones, many films have appeared that embody dystopia, whether at the level of form or topic and with treatments different cinematic.

The research was divided into three sections

The first topic: the general concept of dystopia

The second topic: dystopia in literature and the arts

The third topic: the manifestations of dystopia in the movie

## Keywords:

Dystopian literature, dystopian films, fantasy

## Research problem:

There is no doubt that cinematic art is one of the most extensive and flexible arts in dealing with life phenomena and events that pass on societies. It surpasses imagination itself, and thus cinematic art has been able to identify the real and the fictional and make it one body capable of receiving and persuading.

So, addressing the subject of dystopia needs this identification between the imaginary and the real, with the director's tools and artistic elements in order to create dystopian worlds and features in an effective and convincing manner, especially since dystopia usually talks about the futuristic and the imaginary bound in one way or another to a framework of realism. So, the research problem emerged with the following question:

What are the artistic features of real and imagined in dystopian films?

## Research goal:

Revealing the artistic features of the real and the imagined in dystopian films.

## Research importance:

The importance of the research is manifested in the fact that it deals with an important topic that began to appear clearly in the world cinema and was not satisfied with the research, and the researcher seeks to supply the cinematic library with a new topic.

## The first topic: the concept of dystopia

The concept of dystopia was not the result of the present and the living. Rather, this concept

goes back to ancient times. It was known in Greek as the malicious or bad place or (no place), so the expression (δυσ) which corresponds to it in English (dys) means (sick), (bad) or (unnatural), as for the phrase τόπος in Greek, which corresponds to it in English, topos, which means place, and the phrase (ου) means (no), and so the term refers to the bitter reality," (<https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org>), or it is "a world in which everything is imperfect and everything goes wrong" (Literary devices. net) and in which society is a corrupt fantasy. It is frightening, chaos and inhumanity reign, an imaginary world in which good has no place and is ruled by absolute evil in which people turn into a group of monstrosities, and society is "characterized by human misery from filth, oppression, disease and overcrowding." (Dictionary .com) , And dystopia, meaning "a bad place or a corrupt city."( John Griffiths,2005,129)

However, this concept has begun to take root and take root in our current reality as a result of a number of events that created reality and imagination that are closely aligned with the axes and dimensions of this concept.

In terms of the term, its first use appeared in an address to Parliament by Greg Weber and John Stuart Mill in 1868.

### Causes of dystopia

In fact, most societies and peoples have lived through oppression, divisions, persecution and displacement in all times and places. On the other hand, some societies or groups of people live a life of extravagance, luxury and prestige. economic, political, social or military.

In fact, man aspired to an ideal and happy life in which he enjoys justice, happiness and peace, and this ambition is an innate need that accompanies man in the stages of his life and the lives of others , This is what was expressed by many human ideas and philosophies, as it appeared in Plato in (Plato's Republic), in which he described the society (Utopia) or (the virtuous city) of Al-Farabi or among the later ones, as it appeared from Thomas More, who clearly formulated the term (Utopia).

On the other hand, the bad events that ravaged the societies made the human being, despite the tragedies he is experiencing, not only to give up his dream of a virtuous society, but also made him forget this dream as a mere dream and establish future fears that are worse than the reality in which he lives, so he seemed to describe societies that are more miserable, oppressive and unjust poverty and displacement, and establishes in his collective memory of this reality, especially in our modern age as a result of many changes that occurred in the modern era that overthrew the elements and foundations of the classical society and its ideas and even its techniques, which were the foundations of societies Idealism at the level of thought or at the technical level, especially after the emergence of scientific theories, which was followed by a tremendous development in communication, information and service systems, and this technical development was apparently in the service of humanity alike, and it is also if it is in safe hands or invested in a way conducive to achieving Justice, peace and love, but its investment was mostly in the interest of the controlling and ruling parties that possess the sources of power, so the result was mostly the spread of wars, the exploitation of peoples, divisions, the spread of poverty, diseases and others Therefore, the society felt that drawing the image of the ideal society or the ambition towards the formation of a happy future life is a kind of (opium) that the peoples drank and became in the idea of waiting without tools to achieve this society, especially after the successive collapses of the regimes that saw in themselves and convince the other that they are YouTube societies or seeking To that with a few modifications and practices, from here the trend towards dystopia has become an explicit and clear orientation for a collective mind that is aware of the crisis experienced by humanity on adequate levels.

So, it is possible to summarize some of the reasons that led to a cultural intellectual orientation towards dystopia

1- Excessive growth and great acceleration in the pace of life as a result of scientific progress

at the communication, information, service and other levels, which has benefited many advanced societies intellectually and materially, but it has harmed societies that are overpowered and suffer underdevelopment, corruption and poverty.

2- The emergence of class differences in a large way as a result of the emergence of large multinational companies and the change of the global economic system and the accompanying major technical changes.

3- The emergence of tyrannical and dictatorial governments invited by world powers that have persecuted the peoples they rule and exhausted their human and material resources.

4-The growth of materialistic ideas and philosophies and the growing logic of human exploitation away from humanity, which made man a commodity in the hands of governments or a productive machine for owners of capital.

5- The large number of wars, whether regional or global, and the accompanying destruction of infrastructure on the material or human level, as well as the remnants of those wars (diseases - poverty - displacement - oppression - killing - ruin - pollution).

Therefore, among the most prominent issues or features that can be established for dystopia, which are based on class differences at all levels, are:

1- Political issues: totalitarian governments (the ruling class and the ruled class).

2- Economic issues: hunger and poverty (the rich class and the poor class).

3-Environmental issues: pollution, ruined lands and dwellings (luxury places and endemic places).

4- Social: family disintegration, loss of individuality and loss of societal cohesion (nobility and slave class).

5- Religious: the domination of religious ideologies that are ideologically linked to totalitarian governments.

### **The second topic: dystopia in literature or dystopian literature.**

There is no doubt that the totality of literary and artistic works is the result of cases and

events experienced by society for these events, or that many writers and intellectuals transcend their imaginations of reality to make out of it a new (imagined) reality, although to some extent it is based on reality in some form, the interesting thing is that dystopian works were looking at realistic societal foundations and foretelling the coming days. The imagined, however, seemed to be realized in its realistic form within multiple levels.

There is no doubt that writers are people whose concerns and ideas are usually more sensitive to the changes that the world is witnessing at all levels, and they are the most capable of anticipating the future and the fate of the world, says Margaret Atwood, who is one of the most famous authors of dystopian literature.

" If you are interested in writing a speculative novel, one way to create a plot is to take an idea from current society and move it further down the road, even if people are long-term thinkers, short, imagination can anticipate and read in multiple versions in the future." (Margaret Atwood ,2019) Although the coordinates depict the features of a happy life and prosperity from technological progress at the economic, social, industrial and other levels, and this is the central point around which dystopia revolves, it does not mean the absence of utopia, but in reality It is a utopia on the surface level. On the level of the human being, he lives a luxurious life characterized by speed and ease, but it is a formal life on the external level, rotted from the inside and encrypted from the future point of view. This may be a fundamental point and a dividing line between apocalyptic literature and dystopian literature. Apocalypse literature talks about the end of the world on a biological, nuclear, or natural disasters or other levels, while one of the most important actors of dystopian literature is human degeneration and alienation. Therefore, one of the tasks of dystopian literature is to explore the dangerous and significant effects of political and social systems on the future of humanity, especially the human condition.

A lot has been written about dystopian literature, and some of them believe that this

type of literature belongs to postmodern literature because of what it depicts of melancholy and pessimistic view of life, perhaps dystopia has increased as a result of nuclear fears, environmental pollution, genetic changes and multiple collapses, but in fact the literature Dystopian has a long history. With a careful look man finds himself in front of a large number of literary works that have been concerned with dystopia, especially in the field of the novel. "Dystopian literature presents a nightmarish picture of what is happening to the world in the near future, and it deals with themes of rebellion, repression, revolutions, wars, overpopulation and disasters." (Literary devices. net), Rather, it is a means of educating and warning societies of the dangers of class and authoritarian regimes and the main dependence on the machine. It is also a kind of scathing criticism of such regimes. It is also a kind of cultural, intellectual and social resistance that breathes from societies and delivers their rejecting voice, especially if this type of conflict is mixed. Writings with sarcastic comedic phrases.

Some may disagree about the early beginnings of dystopian literature, especially in the field of fiction and fiction, but the researcher found that most of the writings indicate that the first writings in dystopian literature are the novel (The Other World and the Same World) by the English writer Joseph Hall in 1607, which describes a future world divided into provinces that cross Each province for a lock of corrupt qualities.

Then this novel was followed by a set of novels, which could be a reaction to the industrial revolution and its repercussions in society and among the intellectuals in particular. In the novel (Paris in the Twentieth Century) by Jules Verne, which was written in 1863 and was not published at that time until 1994, 131 after it was written after one of his grandsons found it by chance in one of the boxes, it talks about the future of life in Paris and how it becomes overcrowded. By cars, machines, and other means of transportation, and Samuel Butler's (Erewhon) novel in 1872, Where he depicts a

fictional city in which machines are brought, and disease is a crime punishable by law, as is the novel of (the time machine) by science fiction pioneer Herbert George Wells in 1895 is one of the most important novels of that period and is considered a source of inspiration for many of the novels that followed it. Therefore, this type of futuristic fiction literature was established, and the number of works increased remarkably. It presented a miserable and frightening futuristic picture of a world in which people are divided into (Morlocks), the working class that lives in tunnels and does not see the light in difficult conditions, while (Eloi) they are the other class of people who live a luxurious life characterized by advanced technology and control the destinies of the first class. He followed it with the novel The Sleeping Man in 1910, and that novel depicts the city of London after a man slept in it for two hundred and three years, and he woke up in the year 2100 and found that that city had great changes during his sleep, especially since he became very rich as a result of the increase in his money from bank interests, so he tries Achieving his dreams that used to preoccupy him, but he collides with a set of obstacles that he did not expect as a result of those changes that occurred in society while he was sleeping. After that, novels based on this type of literature followed, such as the novel (The Iron Butt) of Jack London in 1908 and the novel (The Machine Stops) by Forster, which talks about a period of time. After the destruction of the world, where the earth becomes uninhabitable, people live underground and depend on a machine that provides them with their needs.

And if most of the previously mentioned accounts talk about the domination of the machine over humans, overpopulation, or the class differences experienced by society, the early twentieth century witnessed another type of topic, especially after the major countries invested in scientific progress in harming humans, so technology became a tool for control and domination. The world has world wars in which weapons of all kinds were used, including nuclear weapons, in addition to the emergence

of dictatorships and bloody parties that do not believe in freedom of thought, and from here a pessimistic intellectual current arose in that period that spread literature, culture, philosophy and art. So novels appeared that reflected this reality or were based on this reality, and if they gave space to the imagination in future perceptions, the novel "We" appeared in 1924 by the Russian writer Yevgeny Zamyatin, who is considered one of the pioneers of dystopian literature in the modern era. It is a satirical novel that talks about the thirty-second century in which the control of the members of society are from the ruling authority where individuals are numbered instead of names and privacy is largely abolished and the authority depends on practical management and the denial of every other value and society is based on an ideological basis, and these novels clearly influenced the writings of other writers who came later, including George Orwell in the most important Two of his novels, the first (Animal Farm) in 1945 In it, he describes totalitarian regimes and how they enslave societies in a symbolic way. Animals are a symbol of man, and they are inside one of the farms rebelling against the owner of the farm and want to achieve a society of their own, so the pigs are the ones who have leadership and advice, and they incite the rest of the animals to revolution. And when the animals control the farm, the pigs take advantage of this change and take Leadership is for her and the pig (Napoleon) becomes the ruler of the farm and the house and begins to imitate humans in drinking, eating and smoking. The second novel is his famous novel 1984, which he wrote in 1949, and it talks about an authoritarian party run by the older brother who does not appear, but there are posters and advertisements indicating it and the media controls it and information on the people, and imposes on them the type of food, clothing, and arrangement of time, and prohibits them from thinking, love, friendship, or any emotion. This novel criticized the totalitarian regimes that ruled Germany, the Soviets, and others.

As for the novel, Brave New World, by the English writer Aldous Huxley, it is also one of

the important novels in this type of literature, and it was influenced to some extent by the novel "We" that he wrote in 1931 and published in 1932. Humans are divided into levels according to intelligence and beauty, which was controlled and controlled by electronic incubators, where there are no mothers or fathers, but rather genetic control with giving tablets (soma) that the people became addicted to and made them completely subject to control by the government. In fact, he lost emotions and freedom (freedom of choice).

### **The third topic: the manifestations of dystopia in the cinema**

Everyone may agree that cinematic art is the most art capable of embodying different themes and ideas, so we are not surprised when we find that many literary works, especially in the field of novels and stories, were later turned into cinematic works, including dystopian literature, and the most special thing in this harmonization between cinema and literary works Dystopianism is that there is a convergence between the emergence of cinema and the consolidation of these works clearly, although those works preceded the cinema by a period of time after the cinema took some time to establish its tools and methods and develop its techniques in order to engage in the experience that later became the most interesting, credible, imagination and fun experience.

Perhaps cinematic art in its early beginnings may not be compatible with this type of literature, since this art relies on technology in its simplest works and this was not available in the beginning, while dystopian literature in one of its most important features is its adoption of imagination and the introduction of future incidents, and this needs to be Technical development and creativity in order to achieve this atmosphere, but despite that, the film director was able to create what he could create and what he possessed of tools based on the imaginary strange theme in order to achieve a work that attracts the masses, and it was one of the most important of those works, which I started with Cinematic dystopia is the movie Metropolis directed by Fritz Lang 1927, Despite

the simple technical capabilities at that time, the director was able to present a rich work with his cinematic means and present many scenes that were difficult to verify at that time, as the director begins through the montage by mixing some clips that opened It has the film between different machines and steam machines with a group of shots depicting large groups of workers entering and leaving the factory automatically programmed, with possibilities in decoration and spaces that depict the factory at the bottom and the high place that contains the luxurious and dominant class and the virtual imaginary city that gave the impression of imagination Wide for future predictions of what the world will be like next, High-rise buildings, bridges, tunnels, streets full of cars, metro and planes flying between buildings and others. With these capabilities, the director was able to depict the atmosphere of the ruling and tyrannical regime, but he compared him with a YouTube world when workers were able to kill the witch and save the children, so the film emphasized this future conflict. Between two worlds is a world based on technology and harnesses all its progress for the sake of prosperity and power together at the expense of simple people who cannot catch up with this development, that is why many films that dealt with living in the future and take revenge on technology as in the movie (Fahrenheit 451) directed by Francois Truffaut 1966 , where the film depicts a tyrannical government and a tyrant in the future controls people and burns their literature to prevent thinking and leading a revolution. Despite the simple technical capabilities shown by the film compared to what is witnessed in the current cinematic production, it was able to depict that world and its oppressive regime, but it was not possible to achieve in some scenes, especially the scenes of burning books and burning women, that fear and cruelty in the punishment imposed by that authority , while the movie (Fahrenheit 451) Directed by Ramin Bahrani 2018. presented these scenes with the most cruelty and emotion, as it relied heavily on technology and expressed the regime's control and domination through

the use of large screens in the streets to transmit the events of the daily burning of books and people who hide those books in their homes and libraries, as well as Diversities of color and light and visual effects that suggest the progress of the country On the technological level, people suffer from a tyrannical regime that apparently uses technology, but it is fighting thought and culture. Therefore, the director highlighted the presence of all forms of surveillance devices and the presence of computers and screens, even in the bathrooms, Due to digital technology that adopts several methods, "digital images can be made with three types of techniques sniping, computer creation and drawing" (Beasley Livingston,2013)

The stark contradiction in which the spectator inserts the film is that the firefighters, instead of being a tool to extinguish the fire, their job in the dystopian world is to burn books and arrest their owner. The blaze of Hell, for this reason, dystopian thought overshadowed the collective imagination of the controlling world, and the focus became towards (returning utopias) That is, it tries to guide the recipient that the future is bleak and dark and that the return to the present ideal society - which the Western citizen lives in is the ideal society. Therefore, there is no reason in the film world that calls for societal progress at the intellectual level, there is dissolution, regression, backwardness and destruction, except for scientific progress in the field of communication Medicine and other sciences, and that the issue of change seems undesirable for the world to remain under the authority of a YouTuber, according to their claim, of a new type (the utopia of reality), and thus the individual is separated (for time and place) imaginary.

The movie (Planet of the Apes) expressed the reality of the world when it has technology and does not care about people's feelings and their true feelings through the dialogue between the leader of the apes army and his father, where the father says (the Great Ape) while showing him a gun he had hidden for a while, but when he wanted to die, he revealed to him The truth, he says to him (that humans were masters and

we are slaves, but now we are the masters and they are slaves, this gun in your hands is a proof of their strength, a proof of the technology they have reached against this, our strength means nothing, I warn you that their creativity is in line with their brutality there is no A deceitful and violent creature like them. It is an expression that man, although technically advanced, has regressed in humanity, and this characteristic is often demonstrated by dystopian thought, which is poverty, alienation, and emptiness of the inner man with the increase of external manifestations.

The follower of contemporary film production finds that there is an increasing production in dystopian films compared to films that present utopia, and this is due, according to what the researcher sees, to the general trend that frames the human view of the accelerating events witnessed by the world, in the movie (Paradise), which is considered by the researcher as one of the most important films Which tried to establish a kind of rapprochement between two worlds, the earthly world in which the tormented and the poor remain, and the heavenly world inhabited by the rich who are blessed with money and technology, until the case reaches that these people control the inhabitants of the earth by sitting on screens and looking at their intentions and behavior, The director's making of this spatial disparity and the temporal disparity it contains (even if they lived in one time) reinforces the idea of controlling man through an advanced world that finds justifications for his control and his possession of the power he possesses. Healing the sick and filling their other needs, so the place that depicts the world of dystopia becomes a YouTube world imagined by the inhabitants of the earth, while the inhabitants of this planet do not feel it.

Cinema has contributed to directing the world towards the future and leaving the past, even if something, by creating an ideal world or a world full of fears , Naturally, Hollywood and its forefront and influence in global film production contributed to this creation, which has become in contemporary cinema a clear orientation and

presentation of a number of issues that seem fateful by which they shape the imagination of global thought, especially when it wants to issue a culture and thought that expresses a general situation experienced by the American individual. As (Ketterer) describes the American imagination as "obsessed with dreams of utopia" (Ketterer , 1976, p23), as some films wanted to confirm this hidden obsession of the American imagination that America is the second Garden of Eden, as it usually combines between grass and skyscrapers and between the heavens and the heavens of the earth in the movie ( Tomorrow land) Once the girl presses the pin button, she enters another world , A world completely different from our terrestrial worlds where life is consistent within a strict technological system, electronic glass bridges and planes that fly between people and missiles that launch near the metro station, everything is glass, people look through the metro at the planes that pass behind and above them, multiple swimming pools frequented by people, and people travel to space by subway in a journey of minutes, a man reads in a light book, people move with advanced devices, that this world was made by the American imagination that is based on A YouTube world, but it is a perfect American-style world. The thought that opposes this ideal and liberation from a unilateral approach is absent in the movie (Equilibrium) directed by Kurt Weimer, production 2002, where the third world war occurs and fears of the possibility of a fourth war begin, so the ruling world order prevents everything that generates feelings and feelings, music and literature are prohibited, a military force enters into A place where a group hides books and paintings, then kills them, then they extract paintings for the leader from the basement, and the Mona Lisa is the first of those paintings, So the commander orders the burning of the paintings, and the director shows the Mona Lisa, which is a clear indication that the dystopian world is a world of domination and cultural and intellectual assassination. On the security of the country, in the movie (The Giver) directed by

Philip Noyce, production 2014, it depicts a developed country that possesses all the elements of luxury, but it is under the control of a woman called (The Chief of the Adults) who knows everything about people and is aware of their conditions, so as soon as a young man touches a girl's hand because he feels feelings for her, he announces Through loudspeakers, feeling love is forbidden , Therefore, this young man aspires to a simple life far from the hustle and bustle of the city, but there is a human feeling in it. The director, through the montage, compares this with that through the dream of the young man in a scene where a man plays the piano and the young man is surprised by this instrument that he has not seen before, and through that music the film moves To an atmosphere charged with music and joy between people dancing and having fun and kissing each other while they are happy, and in another dream the young man moves to another place where tall trees and snow fall, and the director intentionally uses music that adds an atmosphere of joy in that temporal transition to confirm that difference.

The important thing in dystopian films is the construction of the characters and their nature based mainly on the mixture between reality and imagination, " "One will soon be unable to distinguish between what is created by a computer and what is depicted by a cinematograph, and the ramifications of this technical feat will be realized in all aspects of filmmaking, make-up, clothing, production design, role distribution, budgeting and presentation"( John Horne,2000 )A kind of building, as the hero's benevolent personality and resistance to bad reality is always stemming from the miserable reality of life and the bad environment, materially and morally, which lacks the most basic necessities of life, surrounded by all the arbitrary measures of the state and is killed by government red tape and administrative and moral corruption, It is violently monitored by a dictatorial authority that possesses power, money and technology. In the movie (The Hunger Games), directed by Gary Ross, which talks about events in the

future, the Panem County Authority called (Capitol) holds a competition for 12 controlled provinces as a punishment for them for having previously made a revolution, where a boy and a girl are chosen from each province to compete in some games, and as a result, only one contestant is left alive. The sixteen-year-old girl (Katniss) volunteers to replace her chosen younger sister (Prim).

Mostly, the characters in dystopian films are youthful or boyish characters, as is the case in the character (Katniss), and they possess this strange dimension. The authority, including their technical ability, imposes (as a matter of balancing) that these characters have those imaginary abilities in competition, strength in throwing, climbing, overcoming all obstacles, and bearing all burdens and hard work. Therefore, the viewer usually accepts this fiction and sympathizes with it in order to confront the dictatorial authority or in order to escape from this difficult test , In order to vent a grudge and rejection of this reality experienced by the individual in the film on the one hand and the viewer on the other, and thus this type of film becomes a release for the viewer from pent-up desires as dreams are, and as some researchers see that "the brain may not distinguish between the imaginary and the real." Humans usually incorporate lessons from fictional stories into their beliefs, attitudes, and judgments, sometimes unintentionally or unconsciously. (<https://www.alfaisalmag.com>)

So, it can be said that cinema and its technical and expressive capabilities can embody a state of extreme contradiction in (dystopian) reality, which is the basis for it, that is, the expression of the contradiction experienced by humanity at the individual and collective level, and at the material and moral level. The psychological contrast that embodies class differences Between the ruler and the ruled, and between the oppressor and the oppressed, and between the poor and the rich, it can be embodied by space, lighting, color, dialogue, sound, or digital technologies that were one of the main pillars in the spread and growth of such kind of films based on the subject and technology, Which



inspired many directors to adopt this kind of films, in addition to the great developments in the philosophy of montage and its techniques, cutting techniques, sound and light effects, techniques of the actor and fashion industry, in addition to the intellectual and philosophical transformations and the global cultural scene of societies. The intellectual change of the audience is what contributes to the continuous production of new scenarios for this A type of film mixed with technical development that contributes to increasing the gap in successive societies and between downtrodden societies, which contributes to increasing cases of authoritarianism and producing a miserable reality, and this is what gives cinema its permanence and its natural cycle in life, Cinema is a reality production of scenes that is the product of this reality. The themes of dystopian films, although imaginary, stem from reality, but are very realistic. Nuclear wars, environmental pollution, bacterial wars, the aggravation of human industry and machine control, the aggravation of the authority of government or international media, the suppression of freedoms and the control of poor communities, Rampant poverty, pollution, murder and homelessness are all real-life themes that are exaggerated to be valid for dystopian films.

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