

THE TRADITIONAL AND NEW FEATURES OF MODERN YOUTH DYSTOPIAN FICTION

(on the material of “The Hunger Games” trilogy by Suzanne Collins)

In recent years the genre of dystopia has become extremely popular among teenagers and young people. On the one hand, the genre is not new. On the other hand, modern dystopian novels are so different from the ones of the previous centuries that some literary critics claim that they make a new genre.

The problem is there are misunderstandings and confusion in defining the genre of the novels in question. There exist different terms for this kind of literature, but “young adult dystopian fiction” and “modern youth dystopian fiction” are the most widely spread.

Thus, **the aim** of our research was finding out if modern youth dystopian fiction is a new genre or it is just a derivation from the classical dystopia basing on the material of “The Hunger Games” trilogy by Suzanne Collins.

Our **hypothesis** was that modern youth dystopian fiction is not a new genre, but a derivation from the classical dystopia modified according to the needs of the new generation of readers.

To achieve the aim of the research we have used the following **methods**:

- 1) studying literature on the topic;
- 2) analytical reading;
- 3) stylistic analysis;
- 4) comparative characteristics.

The dystopia is a literary work about an imaginary future representing a critical description of a utopian society.

As it follows from the definition, the classical dystopia opposes **the utopia** – the literary genre describing an ideal society. Initially the genre of dystopia appeared as a parody to utopian fiction and was designed to bring to the reader the idea that no society can be ideal. There are always problems and contradictions, and the dystopia shows them in an exaggerated way. In most cases a dystopian society is shown as terrifying and anti-human.

A Russian philologist B. A. Lanin in his work “The anatomy of dystopian fiction” points out the following **features of the dystopia**:

- 1) a contradiction to the utopia or utopian ideas;
- 2) pseudo carnival as a structural basis for the dystopia;
- 3) theatricalization of life;
- 4) an eccentric protagonist;
- 5) ritualization of life;
- 6) anthropocentricity, a conflict between the protagonist and the society;
- 7) allegorical meaning;
- 8) “frozen” time, a feeling of timelessness;
- 9) double space, monitored and controlled by the authorities.

«The Hunger Games” trilogy describes the dystopian society of an imaginary country Panem in which the authorities inflict their power and keep the people in terror with the help of a cruel and anti-human reality show.

In the 3 novels we have found all the features of the classical dystopia. This have been proved in the research work with providing a sufficient number of examples from the text.

Nevertheless, the trilogy possesses some more prominent *features* that are not present in the classical dystopia, but *typical for modern youth dystopian fiction*:

- a bright and unique personality of the protagonist, Katniss Everdeen; a female protagonist; a protagonist-teenager;

- symbolism (*fire*, *the mocking jay* and *the arrow* are symbols of fair fight for justice; *the rose* is a symbol of luxury and power; *the primrose* and *the dandelion* are symbols of regeneration and life);

- a parody to the realities of modern life (“The Hunger Games” are very similar to the popular reality-show “Survivor”, or “The Last Hero”);

- optimistic implication, a possibility for positive changes (in the end the characters manage to build a better world and begin a new, peaceful life in a new Panem).

All the facts mentioned above prove our hypothesis that modern youth dystopian fiction is not a new genre, but a derivation from the classical dystopia modified according to the needs of the new generation of readers. In other words, the dystopian genre has been given a second birth in new surroundings.

The recommended sphere of application of the results of the research work is literary genre classification. We believe the work will be helpful for eliminating the existing confusion with genre definition.