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“Hope in Speculative Literature: Utopia & Dystopia on the Screen”

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Speculative fiction offers a possibility to look beyond the reality and to imagine alternative world scenarios, which enables us an opportunity to question the existing social order through its potential to break existing boundaries of normality and imagine the impossible and the unknown. Therefore, the figures who have been traditionally accepted as “abnormal” or socially excluded are given a voice in the imagined or fantastic realms of speculative works. Speculative texts, which have become especially popular with the COVID-19 pandemic, have a strong potential to function as warnings through their worldbuilding capacity, as they draw particular attention to numerous problems and issues such as ecological crisis, climate crisis, population problem, and the use of technology.

In this regard, utopia and dystopia, which can be categorized as the subgenres of speculative literature, have gained popularity both in academia and among the general public, as people are attracted more and more by dystopian futures and quests to discover utopian dreams. Dystopia, which the eminent utopian scholar Lyman Tower Sargent describes as “a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as considerably better than the society in which the reader lived” is traditionally considered to be lacking in hope, as dystopian narratives illustrate nightmarish world scenarios but hope in dystopian fiction can be ascertained through a close reading of such relevant works (“The Three Faces,” 1994: 9). In this regard, the aim of this paper is to seek hope and utopian impulse in speculative fiction through the discussion of selected utopian and/or dystopian works, especially critical dystopias, and their screen adaptations.

Keywords: speculative literature, utopia, dystopia, critical dystopia, hope, media

Emrah Atasoy Biography

Emrah Atasoy is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English Language and Literature at Cappadocia University, Turkey. He completed his PhD at Hacettepe University's Department of English Language and Literature in 2019 with a dissertation on twentieth-century dystopian fiction entitled "From Ignorance to Experience: Epistemology and Power in Katharine Burdekin's *Swastika Night*, Anthony Burgess's *The Wanting Seed* and P. D. James's *The Children of Men*." He spent an academic year as a visiting scholar under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Jennifer Wagner-Lawlor at Penn State University between 2015 and 2016. His most recent publications include the article, "Pandemics and Epidemics in Speculative Fiction" (2020), published by *Ankara University Journal of Languages and History-Geography* and the chapter "Epistemological Warfare(s) in Dystopian Narrative: Zülfü Livaneli's *Son Ada* and Anthony Burgess's *The Wanting Seed*" in *Speculations of War: Essays on Conflict in Science Fiction, Fantasy and Utopian Literature* (2021), edited by Annette M. Magid. He is a member of both Utopian Studies Society-Europe and the Society for Utopias Studies (SUS). His fields of scholarly interest include speculative fiction, dystopia, utopia, science fiction, apocalyptic fiction, Turkish utopianism, and twentieth-century literature.