

The Creation of Dystopian Fear in Park Eun Kyo's *The Silent Sea* (2021)

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Abstract

Dystopian is a dark side reflection of human society. This study aims to investigate the dystopian fear in series "The Silent Sea" (2021) written by Park Eun Kyo. The data were collected from the subtitles and focus on the dystopian fears and the effects on characters that appeared in the series. The present study employs M. Keith Booker's theory (1994) as its analytical tools. The analysis shows that dystopian issues is always highly related to the issues in real world, even though the setting of time and place for dystopian world is far distant from nowadays society, but the real reference of dystopian issues are concrete and near-at-hand. The analysis also reveals that in the series citizens lived below moderation and they also contributed to the existence of rebellion. However, because of how strong government impact in dystopian world is, all kind of attempts against the government is impossible to be achieved. This study is expected to provide an alternative analysis and reference to literary works belong to dystopian genre.

Keywords: *Dystopian Fear, Drought, Aquaphobia,*

Introduction

The development of moving pictures in this era is undoubtedly massive. One of the reasons is because of the development of cinematic technology. This era of advanced technology allows humans to make something that previously has only existed in their imagination, to picture a fictional world. Movies are also one of the most interesting things to entertain humans and this is also one of the reasons that makes the development of movies growing rapidly.

A television drama series is a show that appears on television, is one of the development of movies. In the television shows, drama in this case is a genre of narrative fiction or semi-fiction, the tone of this genre was intended to be serious rather than comedy (Merriam Webster, 2023). A television drama usually runs in a series of episodes. A series is a show with a continuous plot that is told

in a sequence of episodes, it usually follows the main story plot created in the entire series (Gidding & Shelby, 2001). The series originated in the United Kingdom as direct adaptations of well-known literary works, usually containing 3-12 episodes.

Television drama series is a unique type of show because it cannot be finished in one time of watching. TV drama series usually come in one episode each week and it makes the audience left hanging and questioning “What is happening next?”, the curiosity is the thing that makes TV drama series unique.

In this era, when there are so many fictional literary works, people tend to find it hard to distinguish the difference between fictional and non-fictional literature work, especially a drama series. Since drama series has moving pictures and sound, it becomes very realistic and viewers may think that the fictional literary work really happens in real life.

Literary Review

Sociology of Literature

Literature is a representation of human existence as it is lived by individuals. Literature is reflected by humans and it cannot be separated. Literature is one of the many sources that sociology, which is the science of social connections, uses to study society. Literature as a social product, represents human society, human relationships, and the environment in which human exist, engage in activity, and move. The relation between literary work and social structure, reveal the reason why the existence of literary work has determined the social situations. H.M. Johnson (1960) states that sociology is the branch of study that studies social groups, their internal organizational structures, the mechanisms that tend to sustain or alter these structures, and the relationships between groups.

Science Fiction and Technology

National Science Foundation (NSF) (2000) said that the dispersion of fact and fiction in visual media has negatively affected the public's capacity to think critically and impeded the growth of scientifically educated citizens. This dispersion is particularly visible, for natural occurrences that have never actually been personally observed. Whether or not the science in today's visual fictional

renderings of science in cinema and television has anything to do with scientific evidence, it goes beyond simple entertainment and focuses on creating and presenting an image of science. The audience frequently mistakenly believes these visuals to be realistic despite the fact that they are not. This is because of the "realism" of these images.

Korean Science fiction and Literature

The development of Korean science and literature started in 1971 in a serial novel *Heartless* by Yi Kwang Su. He describes that science is the successor to the premodern category of "knowledge", he positioned science in the same position as literature because science has its exceptional capacity to convey the feeling of the newly emerging modern theme. Chung-kang Kim in his "Monstrous Science: The Great Monster Yonggari (1967) and Cold War Science in 1960s South Korea" demonstrates how a popular sci-fi movie that was initially made for a young audience represented the kind of top-down ideological propaganda that was a component of the Cold War worship of technology in South Korea.

According to *The Korea Times*, the development of Korean science fiction started in the 2000s when Korean literature began to explore, it started from the science fiction novel, This development continued to grow until in the 2017 science fiction writers launched an organization called Science Fiction Writers Union of Republic of Korea (SFWUK) with 52 writers as the member, the goal of this organization is to promote the growth of the science fiction sector and associated literary projects.

According to the Korean Film Council, the covid 19 epidemic was a significant factor in the growth of science fiction movies in Korea. Due to the effects of COVID-19, Korean citizens will read more science fiction books in 2020 than ever before, and the number of science fiction films produced there has increased significantly.

Dystopian

Dystopia is a term of the exact opposite from the perfect place utopia, dystopia also known as an anti-utopia. First known use of dystopia is in 1962, dystopia is relating to, or being an imagined world or society in which people lead dehumanized, fearful lives (Merriam Webster, 2023). Dystopia is an imaginary

universe in which oppressive societal control keeps the illusion of a perfect society through control held by someone as their leader. Dystopia also known as the idea to criticize a political system or current social phenomenon, natural disaster also known as a famous subject in dystopia. M. Keith Booker in his book *The Dystopian Impulse in Modern Literature* said that dystopia is a picture of pesimistic future.

Aquaphobia

Aquaphobia is one of the specific phobias, American Psychiatric Association (APA) said that aquaphobia is fear of water, people with aquaphobia live with an abnormal anxiety and fear that prevents them from getting close to water.

There are differences between aquaphobia in real life and in the series *The Silent Sea*, the main aspects are the symptoms and the cause of aquaphobia. In *The Silent Sea* aquaphobia was caused by artificial water created by the researcher in order to solve the drought problem on earth, when the artificial water enters the human body it will turn human blood into water and it will make the person have the same symptoms as being drowned in the water.

Drought

According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2023), a drought is a prolonged dry period that can happen anywhere in the world. It is a slow-onset condition brought on by a lack of rain. According to World Health Organization (WHO), there are some chronic health effects caused by drought.

Research Methodology

This study applied a descriptive qualitative method. This method is chosen because the objective of this method is to produce descriptive data through a subjects' spoken or written words. Cresswell (1994:152) stated that the research is based on the method giving a description and explanation of the matter related to the supporting material in addition to offers for data analysis.

The object of the research is a Netflix series entitled *The Silent Sea* (2021) written by Park Eun Kyo. The researcher focuses on subtitle of the series. The types of data used in this research is the subtitle of the series. The method of collecting data in this research is by applying the procedure such as watching and

reading the subtitles of the series, identifying data, classifying data, and selecting data. After the data are collected, the next step is analyzing data by displaying data, explaining data, and interpreting data.

Findings and Discussion

Dystopian fear in the silent sea

1. Drought

a. Ocean Dried Up

Since rain no longer fell, water became a nonrenewable source and at that time technology could not produce water by itself. As time went by, oceans dried up and humans no longer had water source to consume. The only water source had been monopolized by the government, and citizens did not have free access to water sources.

Reporters: “The average annual rainfall hit another low. Rivers in major cities around the world are revealing dried up riverbeds, and sea level are falling posing sea challenges to desalination plants. The World Water Resource Council predicts the world’s water will be reduced by 40 percent in the next 10 years”

(The Silent Sea, Ep. 01, 00:04:41)

The dialogue appears showing a reporter made a report about the earth's condition which was the worst drought in a generation causing wildfire to rage on earth. Seabeds revealed what was underneath and the seawater desalination facility was shut down due to the lack of seawater.

b. Waste Problem

In the series, the government did not have a proper waste disposal, so people had been throwing garbage especially plastics to the ocean.

Reporters: “Among the main causes mentioned are various infections and diseases caused by the consumption of contaminated water.”

(The Silent Sea, Ep. 01, 00:05:00)

From the dialogue, it is viewed that people started to drink water that had been contaminated by the waste because of the lack of clean water. The dialogue also shows the effects of drinking contaminated water in newborn babies. Newborn babies were born with the disease caused by contaminated water consumed by their mother during the pregnancy.

The sentence of “...*various infection and disease...*” shows that the impact of the lack of clean water supply leads to the meaning of how human population is really at stake.

c. Extinction of Animals

The Silent Sea pictures how aquatic animals are already extinct due to the climate change that caused the lack of water. Drought also affected animals mainly through effects on their habitat. Animals that were on the edge of extinction, preserved in the terrarium by researchers.

SAA Employee: “Why do we need an ethologist for this mission?”

Mr. Kim : “She used to be a big-name astrobiologist.”

SAA Employee: “Then why did she quit and go into ethology?”

(*The Silent Sea*, Ep. 01. 00:07:17)

The dialogue appears when Mr. Kim and SAA Employee entered the Environment for Human Survival Research Center (EHRSC) where the main character, Dr. Song Ji An was working in. At that time, Dr. Song Jian was in the terrarium together with a lion, the terrarium was built similar to the lion's original habitat.

In the sentence “*Why we need an ethologist for this mission*” Song Ji An an ethologist work at EHRSC to examined animal in terrarium because animal's original habitat is extinct.

2. Aquaphobia

a. Water is Dangerous

Water is the essence of the human body to function properly, more than half of the human body is made from water and the human body has no way to store

water. Based on *The Silent Sea*, water which is the essence of human life turns into something dangerous. Once the water contaminated human body, it would multiplies itself and turned all the blood in human body into water, human contaminated by the water would be dying due to excessive loss of body fluids.

Kim Hee Sun : “You found one?”
Gong Soo Chan: “It is empty”
Kim Hee Sun : “All that for nothing”
(*The Silent Sea*, Ep. 03, 00:38:09)

In this dialogue, a crew member named Gong Soo Chan found a sample held by a corpse but turns out it was an empty sample. The infected water entered Gong Soo Chan's body through his eyes, but due to the small amount of water, as the result he died.

b. Fear of Water

After the crew mission knew about the danger behind the Luna water's existence, they became afraid of the worse possibility of making any contacts with any kind of water, this triggers aquaphobia. Aquaphobia or fear of water has an irrational fear of something that does not cause much danger.

Han Yoon Jae : “Tae Suk, why are you doing this?”
Lieutenant Ryu : “Captain, You don’t know anything.
You have no idea what happened here
and what Lunar water is”

(*The Silent Sea*, Ep. 07, 00:33:45)

In the middle of the fight between Captain Han and Lieutenant Ryu, water seeps through pipes above them because the Lunar water was too much to be purified by water purification in Balhae Station, the water broke out through the pipes and hit Lieutenant Ryu. Lieutenant Ryu knew what would happen to him and he ran away.

3. Advanced Technology: Cloning

Initially, human created technology to make easier for human to live, but in the series it became a true disaster. Human nature was greedy that they never felt enough with everything. Technology had killed hundred people in the series, one of the proofs is through cloning. To create further advanced of technology, human

had to hold an experiments on living human. In order to prevent that case, they created a cloning system so they could do experiments on human as much as they wanted.

Han Yoon Jae: “Doctor Hong, what’s going on?”

Doctor Hong : “Captain, I fell from the ventilation shaft”

Han Yoon Jae: “Where are you?”

Doctor Hong : “I’m not sure where I am, it seems like a storage room”

(*The Silent Sea*, Ep. 07, 00:15:00)

Captain Han and Doctor Hong found a storage room full of cloning children. Technology had been misused as it is created for wrong purposes, one of them is cloning. The finding of the storage room as Doctor Hong said “...*a storage room*...” shows how the technology in the experiment room is used to kill human. Therefore, technology that should be used to create opportunities for human living is used to do deadly experiment instead.

4. Fear of Corporate Control and Beaucratic Control

a. Governments are More Concerned With Their Own Business Rather Than Citizens

The government monopolized the human source and other resources and used them for their own business, the government even threatening citizens in order to keep citizens obey the government. In the series, the government controlled all of the regulations including the water distribution.

Reporters: “Meanwhile, the Fair Water Distribution Act was rejected yet again in the assembly as inequalities in water access intensify. So do demands for the abolition of supply regulation.”

Citizen : “Abolish the regulation! “

(*The Silent Sea*, Ep. 01, 00:05:47)

The dialogue shows the scene when citizens held a protest towards government regulation. The sentence “*Abolish the regulation!* “ in this dialogue, shows that the citizens hold a protest related to the abolition of the clean water distribution policy. The citizens want clean water to be managed by the government and be distributed equally to all people.

b. Battle for Power

In the series, the government held absolute power to the citizens but there were also battles for power over the country, the battle was between the government and the private corporations called RX.

Reporters: “In the midst of this global food shortage caused by water shortage, many anticipate the possibility of mega vertical farming become the solution of this problem.”

(The Silent Sea, Ep. 01, 00:05:13)

RX competes with the government in vertical farms, which is built to solve the shortage of food problem. Not only that, RX also competes with the government in the term of accusing Luna water. The food produced by vertical farms was not fairly distributed to the citizens just like what they had done to the clean water distribution.

c. Secretive Government

In this series, the government repressed the information, they hid the truth. When the government held a meeting with the crew mission, the government only gave a brief of information regarding the mission, when the crew asked about the details of the mission, the government said that that was all they knew.

Song Ji An : “Why does it have to be transported under such low temperature?”

Director Choi: “That information was lost in the accident, we do not know for sure”

(The Silent Sea, Ep. 01, 00:15:42)

The dialogue appeared when the crew mission held a meeting in the Space and Aeronautics Administration (SAA) building with the government. The meeting talked about the details of the mission. In the middle of the meeting, Song Ji An asked about the details of the sample that the crew mission had to retrieve from the Balhae Lunar Research Base, but the government did not give a clear answer. In the dystopian world, the government has the absolute power to control the information about the country, including hiding the truth from the citizens

d. Sole Ruler

Another characteristic of dystopia appeared in the series is the appearance of a figure head that held an absolute power towards the citizen. In the series, the figurehead was a woman called Dr. Choi. Dr. Choi was the mastermind.

Dr. Choi : “Three died and one of them was a spy?. It's the worse report can imagine.

Captain Han: “You're the one who approved the co-pilot to be changed right before we departed.”

Dr. Choi : “Once the Inspection Department hears of this, they'll conduct a thorough investigation on the reasons for the replacement. Of course it'll include me. Is there a possibility that other members could be in league with him?.”

Captain Han: “It cannot be excluded.”

(The Silent Sea, Ep. 04, 00: 22:42)

The dialogue “*Three died and one of them was a spy?*” stated by Dr. Choi, she already knows that there is a spy in the crew mission because she works together with RX private corporation to take the samples, when she hears about the report made by Han Yoon Jae, she pretends to be shocked and disappointed.

Conclusion

The study reveals that dystopian fear is revealed in four different kinds throughout the story: drought, aquaphobia, advanced technology (cloning), and sole ruler. These representations have been able to uncover through the character's attitudes and actions which depict dystopian fear. It is interesting to note that the idea of fear appearing in a dystopian world does not refer to the same concept of fear in the real world, but at the same time, the fear appearing in a dystopian world is the reflection of possibility that might happen in the real world.

With regard to the dystopian story, the analysis revealed that in the series, the characteristics of a dystopian society are very close to human society as the main conflict in the series. The beginning of the dystopian fear starts at the same time as the existence of the dystopian fear drought in the series. It keeps growing until the drought becomes the root of the government's action and slowly deteriorates into aquaphobia at the end of the story. In the dystopian genre, the government as the figurehead has absolute control over the citizens. This

condition is the result of the idea of the citizens as the oppressed party will never win the battle in the dystopian world.

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