

Title: *Chevengur*: Andrei Platonov's Utopian Humanism
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Andrei Platonov's *Chevengur* explores the ultimate utopian question: what will be the experience of people actually living in utopia? *Chevengur* is a very rare example of a utopian novel which focuses on the human experience of the ideal society.

Most Western canonical utopian literature falls into one of the two categories. Firstly, the conditional utopias, such as in Thomas More's eponymous *Utopia* or in Tommaso Campanella's *City of the Sun*. These works focus on the social structure of an ideal society. The people who live in these utopias are assumed to be happy as long as they abide by the terms and conditions of the society. Secondly, there are unconditional utopias, such as the Cloud-Cuckoo-Land in Aristophanes' *Birds* or the land of Cockaigne in folkloristic tales. These are happy places without any conditions; one simply needs to find the place.

When depicting the communist village of Chevengur, Platonov combines both elements of these two kinds of utopias. Chepurnyi the Chevengurian confirms that "there is Communism in Chevengur" (Platonov 178) without any further explanation of the social structure. However, once people gather in the town of Chevengur, they do need to abide by certain rules, such as leading a communal life style (Platonov 188, 197).

How people feel in Chevengur and how they interact with each other is what decides whether Chevengur is utopia or not. By focusing on the human experience, Platonov explores human nature: the ability to hope and dream for an ideal society, and the human limitations such as greed, selfishness, stupidity, and mortality that ultimately brings an end to the ideal society. Platonov's *Chevengur* is an important contribution to utopian literature which bridges the gap within the genre.

Bibliography

Platonov, Andrei. "Chevengur." Proiskhozhdenie mastera: roman, povesti. Sverdlovsk: Sredne-Uralskoe Knizhnoe Izdatelstvo, 1989.