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SYMBOLIC UTOPIAS: HERBERT, ASIMOV AND DICK

João Filipe Correia Félix
DPhil
University of Sussex
September, 2014

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UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

JOÃO FILIPE CORREIA FÉLIX DPHIL

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SUMMARY

The body of work that we usually call science fiction has a rich and often ambivalent history. Its humble roots in pulp magazines and dime novels contributed to an image of disposable, low brow writing, unworthy of the title “literature”. Those incipient assumptions, which still remain, became themselves ways of establishing what we now call a genre. In part, due to this uncomfortable image of a bastardized literature, the history of science fiction criticism frequently reflected a sense of discomfort with the way this genre was perceived. As a result, there have been many readings that attempt to lift the texts under scrutiny from a perception of polluted beginnings. While this impetus has produced some of the most essential science fiction criticism, it has also stirred a level of controversy by inevitably inscribing a canon.

In recent years, we have begun to encounter a frontal discussion both on the literature itself and on the significance of these readings. These include further connections not only with theory, but also with their pulp legacy. In this regard, this study attempts to link utopia to science fiction, particularly in relation to how the roots of science fiction became enablers for a thoroughly utopian-driven genre. For this purpose, three authors are analysed: Frank Herbert, Isaac Asimov and Philip K. Dick. Their prominence has garnered an enormous amount of study, perhaps the biggest of any other author. Tied to this is the fact that all three have a background in writing for pulps and their work has become iconic on its own. Therefore, it seems productive to analyse the threads that run through their work, the links their writing might have to each other and to external input but, most of all, how utopia may be a fitting way to interpret the science fictional impetus.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SCIENCE FICTION

We are currently facing a curious point regarding science fiction, especially Science-Fictional criticism. The establishment of science fiction as a genre has not been met without a fair amount of controversy. As a name to describe a type of text that either accompanied catalogues for radio enthusiasts or was churned out in serial publications for quick consumption, science fiction soon became a term for something that is not to be taken seriously.¹ In fact, overcoming the idea that science fiction is not a credible genre, that it offers the lowest calibre of writing and that its readership is puerile in their literary tastes has been a major topic of contention even to this day. Authors such as P.D. James and Margaret Atwood openly reject their works being labelled as “science fiction” for fear of misleading readers who are looking for an “Eurotrash slutfest *in flagrante*” (Atwood 3). On the other hand, this particular field has seen a unique kind of paradigm shift both in its fiction and in criticism. It is understandably uncomfortable to reconcile, for example, that Kevin J. Anderson’s *Star Wars* derivative fiction should fall under the same umbrella as *Oryx and Crake*. However, out of what we may choose to call the science fiction “genre” there are voices from Fredric Jameson to Roger Luckhurst, from Doris Lessing to Jose Saramago, giving us pause to consider that science fiction (SF) may be more than a synonym for trashy fiction.

¹ According to Stableford “Most writers of scientific romance who felt called upon to write introductions to books, or look back over their careers, automatically went on the defensive. They worked from the assumption that the unspoken question facing them was why on earth they bothered to do it.” (qtd. in Westfahl, *The Mechanics of Wonder* 26)

Therefore, after more than a century of a sense of inadequacy and disquiet about what the genre is, what it should be or even if it was a genre at all, we have reached the stage of comfortably assessing the field from a now distanced and significantly authoritative stance. It is significant to observe that, in the last ten years, at least five major scholars have edited their own wide-ranging companion to science fiction, each with its own strong school of thought. Luckhurst's *Science Fiction* (2005) takes a sweeping glance at the genre from a Cultural Studies perspective, while Freedman's *Critical theory and science fiction* (2000), as the name suggests, takes a more Theory-based approach. A *Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction* (2003) was also edited by James and Mendlesohn during this time period, as was Seed's *Companion to Science Fiction* (2008). The list goes on, of course, with histories of the genre such as Robert's *Science Fiction* (2000) and *The History of Science Fiction* (2008). Previously, only Aldiss' and Windgrove's *trillion year spree* (1986) tackled such an intricate task of mapping the genre. In addition to these, there are now copious amounts of studies not only involved with literary criticism, but with theory as well and how the science fictional text can be productively used in other discourses or under new perspectives. As stated above, a cultural history of SF can be found in Luckhurst's work, who sees cultural history and SF as a particularly productive match:

SF is typically regarded as a very low literary form, often completely ignored or edged to the margin of literary study or intellectual history as rather juvenile. Cultural history, however, tries not to prejudge its evidence, and thus finds itself open to the immensely rich resources that a genre like SF offers to anyone interested in key aspects of the culture and history of the West in the last 120 years (Luckhurst 2).

In the same vein, Freedman sees deep connections to be made between SF and critical theory by unequivocally stating that "of all genres. science fiction is thus the one most devoted to the historical concreteness and rigorous self-reflectiveness of critical theory."

(Freedman xvi). It is curious to note, however, that while Freedman presents himself as a firm follower of Darko Suvin's seminal work (as we will later see), Luckhurst breaks away from it in many respects due to Suvin's inclination to being overly prescriptive and formalistic.

But it doesn't end here. It is not uncommon to uncover texts that confront Baudrillard's reading of Philip K. Dick side by side with detailed accounts on the pulp magazines and radio broadcasts of the beginning of the century and their contribution to SF.² The critical landscape has, indeed, taken strides towards a level of maturity and diversity of research that unquestionably consolidates any discussion on the topic. The work presented here, therefore, benefits from a significantly more comfortable standpoint than the seminal critical writing of only thirty to forty years ago. The fact alone that we now have not only a literary, but a critical canon to stand on is a testament to how the field has been opened by others for us to thrive upon.

If we were to draw a chronology of SF criticism, it would become clear that reflexions on the texts that compose the genre have not appeared at an even pace. When we consider that, before the 1970s, there is very little dialogue of note on SF, even when the period between the 1930s and the 1950s is regarded as the "Golden Age" of SF, we immediately have some a hint on how significant it was for the SF authors and their work to be put on the map of critical analysis after the 1970s. In a sense, it is as if these texts, up to this

² For an example of the first, see Rosa, Jorge Martins. "A Misreading Gone Too Far? Baudrillard Meets Philip K. Dick." *Science Fiction Studies* 35.1 (2008): 60–71. Print. An example of the second is DeForest, Tim. *Storytelling in the Pulp, Comics, and Radio: How Technology Changed Popular Fiction in America*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2004. Print.

point, were present and culturally relevant, but invisible. Two journals are clear evidence that a shift towards the genre was underway: *Science Fiction Commentary* saw its first issue in 1969 and *Science Fiction Studies*, indisputably the reference journal in the field, began its run 1973. Still, even an incipient critical platform such as this (or perhaps because of its incipency) has not been founded without controversy. One of the initial orders of business for this emerging critical thought was the defence of the genre, which proved to have led to a prescriptive stance regarding what should be allowed to be designated as SF. Darko Suvin and Stanislaw Lem, for all their substantive work as the founding fathers of SF theory, were two authorities that spearheaded this selection. In a notorious article published in 1973, Lem acidly writes that “in science fiction fandom rumour has it that science fiction is improving every year. If so, why does the average production, the lion’s share of new productions, remain so bad?” (Lem, “Science Fiction: A Hopeless Case - With Exceptions” 46). One might argue that this stance, albeit harsh, was just underneath the surface in others, such as Darko Suvin, Brian Aldiss or Damon Knight, as the tendency to critically rescue the genre from the gutter of pulp publication seemed to be on the agenda.

However, the initial prescriptive impulse seems to have simmered in subsequent years. After this period of ambivalence towards what SF is and what it should be, we are just now arriving at a point where we evaluate what has been said about it all. In this respect, the study here presented is not only a survey of how criticism has manoeuvred the concept of SF so far, but also an analysis of three instrumental authors for the development of SF – Isaac Asimov, Frank Herbert and Philip K. Dick. The selection of these three authors in particular lies in the fact that their courses intersect and parallel each other, both thematically and critically. The fruits of their respective works sway between critical acclaim and widespread acceptance through their own particular devices. This, of course,

begs the question whether the prescription of a canon was actually relevant and, more importantly for this study, why should we avoid the gutter anyhow.

The critical frontier is, first and foremost, at the peak of an on-going discussion on SF's past, current and future role in literature and theory. These texts, similarly to any other literary trend, are now considered to have been influenced by a number of internal and external factors. However, some of the key concepts that define SF are sometimes scattered or open enough for a revisit. In this regard, there is more than sufficient material to explore in criticism on SF alone and, faced with the risk of being too prescriptive, too formalist or too monological, one needs only to suggest that some of the concepts here explored are merely postulates of good interpretative practice, not necessarily assertions of what all SF must be all of the time.

Considering that the purpose of this project was to live in the space between the inevitable broad-stroked companions to SF and the invaluable but dated specialized studies within the genre, three essential authors were chosen to illustrate some of the concepts discussed in this study: Isaac Asimov, Frank Herbert and Philip K. Dick. Even though they are not alone, they are generally considered giants of the genre, which tells us that this not an innocent choice in itself. Firstly, all three authors offer substantially disparate literary conceptions, formal backgrounds and produced work. This is an advantage in the sense that, for all their dissimilitude, there is common ground to be gathered, one which will, hopefully, fall under the umbrella of what may tentatively be called "utopian textuality". In essence, defining a relatively broad utopian base and applying it as a textual mode for some of these narratives may be a possible way to avoid a prescriptive bias while productively talking about what is it that connects one SF text to the other. Secondly, their prominence is indicative of their relationship with a

somewhat massified audience. This aspect fits nicely with some of the premises here in discussion, as there is a visible return influence from readers back to the authors in most SF, a characteristic that can be pinpointed back to its pulp origins and is so relevant that it aids in figuring how SF may also be utopian in nature. In fact, the influence of the audience upon the work itself is as apparent as it is frowned upon or dismissed. What is proposed here is that this very influence is a decisive factor in shaping the tradition for a utopian narratology in SF, therefore it should be appropriate to explore it further in due course.

For the sake of practicality, these case studies are progressively introduced, with added layers and interconnectedness to the authors previously handled along the way. We start with Asimov, as his impact in SF, namely in his first writing period, is so great that it neatly coincides with Adam Roberts' "thumbnail definition" for the beginning and end of the Golden Age of SF.³ If we consider that in 1939 Asimov published his first story "Marooned Off Vesta" and that *The Naked Sun*, his last SF novel before a fifteen year break from the genre, was published in 1957, it is striking to note that these two dates closely match Roberts' period for the Golden Age of SF. Being under Campbell's editorial grip, which was notoriously tight, may, of course, assist in defining such a clear timeframe where all the relevant stories were indeed shaped by Campbell's veto. The fact remains that Asimov followed suit so consistently to become an eclipsing figure of the Golden Age. While it would be unwise to determine the beginning and end of an era with such finality, these sorts of boundaries demonstrate a trend or a curve; locating a specific period when the conditions were favourable for the likes of Asimov and others and

³ "That period when the genre was dominated by the sorts of stories that appeared in Campbell's *Astounding* from the late 1930s into the 1950s" (Roberts, *The History of Science Fiction* 195)

another period when these authors were either on the decline or moving away from this type of work. Factors such as Campbell's influence and a focus on aspects other than the strictly speculative or technological helped shape a counterpoint to such a strictly defined notion of SF. Clearly, the weight of marking the beginning and end of an era could not possibly fall upon a couple of writings alone; however, their presence is representative of the trend with other writers, publications, themes and cultural interest. The fact that Asimov was so prolific and successful within this period also shows how he became so fundamental in shaping the genre and even a specific trend within the genre. As he is frequently used as the one of the foremost examples of Golden Age writing, it is of little surprise that his works be used to establish the period which he so thoroughly represents.⁴

A good example of this can be seen in how we call for a redefinition of SF after Asimov and Campbell. After the Campbellian cohesiveness is eroded and dissipated by other kinds of writing, we come to rely on definitions that account for this shift, such as "hard" SF and "soft" SF. This can be clearly seen, for example, when there is a shift of focus from Asimov to Herbert to Dick. While it is common to consider Asimov as a fixture of "hard SF" and Dick the embodiment of "soft SF", these three authors overlap and were, to a great degree, not so dissimilar. In fact, thematically, Herbert would perhaps fall somewhere in the middle, as overlooking his attention to the technological intricacies of his universes would be a disservice to his work. For all their differences, Herbert and Asimov were both born in 1920, and Dick only eight years later. All three moved in similar literary circles, were published by the same editors and had a great deal of

⁴ Brian Aldiss goes as far as implying that Asimov and his contemporaries were even able to claim the "Golden Age" for themselves: "When Asimov and others talk of a 'Golden Age' of Science Fiction, it is those few years in which five of these writers emerged – 1938 to 1946 – to which they refer" (Aldiss and Wingrove 445)

influence on each other, at least as much as any other active contemporary author in the genre would. On the other hand, it appears problematic to set in stone abstract conceptions of periods and motivations. The familiar and comfortable dichotomy between “hard SF” vs. “soft SF” (a distinction based on the way the texts are written) or “Golden Age” and “New Age” (a chronological distinction) will invariably become problematic. How would one characterize, for example, the more metaphysical vein present in some of Asimov’s work? Therefore, it is not the intention of this dissertation to separate these authors by means of such distinctions, but rather to look at their similarities and differences irrespective of what subgenre they should be inserted into. Still, these designations are a useful form of shorthand from time to time.

A common definition for Hard SF goes along the lines of Gary Westfahl’s version that it is “a form of science fiction that displays an especially heightened [...] connection to science.” (Westfahl, “Hard Science Fiction” 188). As a result, it always seems somewhat unsatisfying to constrict Asimov to Hard SF, since stories such as “True Love” (1977), which can be best described as an Asimovian take on Cyrano de Bergerac are hardly “hard” in this SF sense. In fact, most of Asimov’s stories involving different incarnations of the Multivac supercomputer range in theme from considerations on subjectivity and free will to extrapolations on cosmogony and God. Two of the most notable examples of the latter appear in the story pair “The Last Question” (1956) and “The Last Answer” (1980), where the creation of the universe and the existences of God are directly addressed.⁵

⁵ “True Love” first appeared on *American Way*, “The Last Answer” on *Analog* and “The Last Question” on *Science Fiction Quarterly*. All three stories were reprinted on *Robot Dreams* (1986), among other short story collections.

On the other end of the spectrum we have the rich background of Herbert's works, with often complex incursions into new kinds of technologies and human dependencies. One of the key aspects in the *Dune* Series, for example, is the absurdly high level of detail given to the backdrops that drape the narratives. A seemingly secondary element such as a historical jihad against technology that seems barely relevant to the contemporary events in the texts, actually illuminates a society shaped by it. If we look closely, this is a world where virtually every technology is designed to avoid any offense to the fathers of the revolution that banished thinking machines, while providing all the comforts of a technologically dependant society. Another evidence of how such designations clumsily handle every aspect of an author's body of work would be Herbert's *The Dragon in the Sea* (1956), one of those notorious examples where the writer was so deep in hard SF that he was accused of disclosing military technology in his fiction. Timothy O'Reilly recounts the episode:

[...] the atomic sublug is described with such technical perfection that a friend of Herbert's received a letter from an anonymous "retired Naval officer" who denounced Herbert as a traitor and revealed McCarthyesque "evidence" of his communist connections. (O'Reilly 34)

In this respect, the critical standpoint we find ourselves in is marked by a tremendous amount of work that breaks through the barrier of critical theory. However, perhaps with the honourable exception of Dick, it is often the case that these authors aren't used outside Science Fiction Studies. It should also be worthy of note to observe, that, while abundant amounts of published articles and references in books can be easily found on all three authors, there are only a handful of either out of print or hard to find monographs to provide a more exhaustive account of the authors' work. Curiously, both Asimov and Herbert suffer from this problem. There are only two major monographs of each author,

which were written in the early 1980s.⁶ Considering that the authors themselves were not quite done yet, having published further novels in their respective series, it is regrettable that these invaluable studies have become so severely dated. Still, they are extremely useful if taken with the unavoidable constraints. For example, Timothy O'Reilly thoroughly manages to list and analyse most of Herbert's fiction in *Frank Herbert* (1981). Along with William Touponce (1988), it has become one of the most important sources for Herbert's own comments regarding his work, drawn from interviews and articles not found anywhere else. Similarly to Gunn (1982) and Fiedler and Mele (1982), O'Reilly only falls short when it comes to the second *Dune* trilogy, for the obvious reason that these books were published after his study. However, this can be aptly complemented by Brian Aldiss' chapter "how to be a dinosaur: seven survivors" in his *trillion year spree* (2001), and Touponce's own monograph on the author.

In the case of Dick, however, the critical landscape is slightly different. In the late 1960s and 1970s, the period where SF criticism emerges to validate and give weight to a maligned genre, Dick is promptly inducted as the pivotal author who would bring much needed respectability to the genre. As Kim Stanley-Robinson notes, "After 1975 Dick was firmly in the canon of major science fiction writers, and articles about him proliferated in the journals and in anthologies of science fiction criticism that were now being published" (Robinson 231). Indeed, this still holds true to this day. Even though Dick might not have had feelings on the matter either way, his work has largely been co-

⁶ For Frank Herbert, we have O'Reilly's (1981) and Touponce's (1988) homonymous monographs, For Asimov, we have Patrouch's *The science fiction of Isaac Asimov* (1974), Gunn's *Isaac Asimov, the foundations of science fiction* (1982) and Fiedler and Mele's *Isaac Asimov* (1982)

opted as a practical literary example for a functional postmodernist theory. Remarkably, his texts appear as illustrations for, among others Jameson's and Baudrillard's theories.⁷ In 1975, *Science Fiction Studies*, under Suvin's and R.D. Mullen's editorship, dedicated an entire issue to Dickian criticism and Dickian studies did not stop there, rather they branched out in numerous directions, from Taoism to schizophrenia. In 1992 Mullen edited the publication of no less than forty articles, 180,000 words of criticism on Philip K. Dick featured on *Science Fiction Studies* alone.⁸ Therefore, there is a very concrete issue of navigating through such a monumental range of uses and analyses for Dick to date. Still, the essential reading on Dick remains Kim Stanley-Robinson's published dissertation, *The Novels of Philip K. Dick*. Similarly to Herbert's and Asimov's monographs, even though it dates back to 1982, it remains the touching stone of an invaluable centrality for any study on Dick. What Robinson does not cover in this work, and, for the most part, is yet to be thoroughly studied, are ten of Dick's novels which were posthumously published. Of these, the most relevant and in need of further critical incursions are most of his non SF novels. Unfortunately, these will only be covered here in passing, in favour of maintaining the focus of this already wide-ranging project.

The appeal of analysing the three selected authors jointly, apart from the obvious relevance of studying the way each of them contributed and eventually shaped SF and fiction, lies a great deal in finding these important commonalities when the background, themes and result for their written work is so diverse.

⁷ Jameson, Fredric. "After Armageddon: Character Systems in 'Dr. Bloodmoney.'" *Science Fiction Studies* 2.1 (1975): 31–42. Print.; Baudrillard, Jean, and Arthur B. Evans. "Simulacra and Science Fiction (Simulacres Et Science-fiction)." *Science Fiction Studies* 18.3 (1991): 309–313. Print.

⁸ Mullen, R. D. *On Philip K. Dick: 40 Articles from Science-Fiction Studies*. Terre Haute, IN: S F - T H Inc, 1992. Print.

It is no coincidence that Asimov is analysed first, before Herbert and Dick. Firstly, as a starting point, examining Asimov's work makes sense by the sheer fact that he was already established and very much present when the two other authors emerged. In fact, we can easily trace the influences of Asimov on many of the writers that followed him. Being the golden standard for the Golden Age of Science Fiction, Asimov established a point of definition for the genre, which would have its proponents and detractors and later compounded into the "hard SF" / "soft SF" dichotomy. Secondly, and despite Asimov's own vocal concerns regarding where SF was heading, the latter writers were obviously influenced by readings of Asimov's own works. As we will see, these range from an assumed alternative take on the same issues to a wildly different narrative focus. Lastly, hopefully, the case here will be made that, even unwittingly, the influences from Golden Age SF to New Age SF are effectively present and can be traced back to the modest origins of SF in pulp magazines and dime novels in a variety of ways. That Asimov is chronologically closer to the source can become useful in establishing a starting point for certain tropes that will later emerge both in similar and different guises.

Still, since there is indeed a shift of tendencies and paradigms from Asimov to Dick, a comparative analysis of the three becomes all the more appealing. Even if we tread lightly on the dichotomy between Golden Age/New Age/hard/soft SF, especially in light of the confluences here discussed, perhaps an approach of their commonalities and divergences could produce productive insights into the history of what we commonly and comfortably refer to as SF. More relevantly to the discussion at hand, a certain degree of "localized" comparativism is helpful in determining the variegated interconnectedness between SF and utopian textuality.

1.2 *UTOPIA*

In addressing utopia, it is relevant to clarify certain points of its use here. This dissertation uses the term utopia in an expanded sense. For example, it is argued that the utopian and the dystopian are but iterations of the same thing. There is an attempt to redefine utopia's borders in order to accept and shed light over some of the topics here in discussion. However, the term is undoubtedly slippery. It has travelled to a multitude of fields, borrowed and redefined to name politics, philosophies, social and cultural models and even certain feelings.

Starting from More's work, where the term was created, one can clearly note the apparent contradictions of criticizing sixteen century Europe by contrasting it with a fictional socio-political order that at times seems to go against More's own beliefs. How can the "best state of a Republic", for a man with More's convictions, dismantle the catholic sacrament of priesthood or do away with the nuclear family? If it is clear that More's work comes in the Platonic tradition of exposing the faults of his society, it is less so as an actual model to be implemented. The same cannot be said, for example, of how Saint-Simon, Fourier or Owen viewed their proposals for an ideal state. These, whom Engels dubbed as "The three great Utopians" (Engels 61), ventured unequivocal attempts at addressing the faults of the existing socio-political models. This is one step farther than More in the sense that their utopias aren't just metaphors for contemporary social conditions, they are an actual goal to be reached.⁹

⁹ It is interesting to see that, even though the Reformation had already spurred a number of religious communities, a few dozen utopian communities were effectively founded within this surge of Christian socialism: John Humphrey Noyes founded the Oneida Community in 1848 under the premise that a millennial kingdom could be reached on earth; the Brook Farm was perhaps the most prominent transcendentalist utopian community, with visitors such as Hawthorne, Emerson and Thoreau; Owen

Still, as we know, this is not enough for Marxist thought. Utopia is negatively construed under Marxism as it remains a future ideal that may never be reached. For Engels, Saint-Simon, Fourier and Owen “wish to bring in the kingdom of reason and eternal justice, but this kingdom, as they see it, is as far as Heaven from Earth” (Engels 61). What is relevant here is that Engels used the “utopian” as a mostly derogatory term for an impulse that is not actualized where it matters. Thus comes Bloch’s transfiguration of where utopia may be found, which is perhaps the most prominent example not only of how utopia is present in all fields of knowledge, but also of the ways in which it is an ongoing process that can and should be concretely actualized. From the social utopias that strive to improve current conditions to the medical utopias that have a fundamental precept of adjourning death, Bloch sees numerous instances where these goals are actually realized in the now:

There are the medical utopias which contain the elimination of death - a completely foolish remote goal. But then there is something sober, like the elimination and relief of pain. [...] In other words, there is a reconstruction of the organism in exactly the same way as there is a reconstruction of the state. (Bloch, “Something’s Missing: A Discussion between Ernst Bloch and Theodor W. Adorno on the Contradictions of Utopian Longing.” 6)

Therefore, trying to map this diaspora for such a seemingly straightforward term weighs heavily over the shoulders of utopian studies. It has, in fact, been a major task to navigate through the myriad of possibilities that the utopian opens for interpretation in order to determine the most productive ways of viewing its connection with science fiction. Therefore, the purpose of this work is not, strictly speaking, to map all the utopian possibilities, a task that would stand on its own with more than enough merit and interest.

himself attempted to create an Owenite community in New Harmony, Indiana in 1825. For a more detailed account of these utopian communities, see Holloway (1966).

While, at times, certain appropriations of utopia must be discussed, this is done insofar as it is necessary to frame them in relation to the remaining concepts pertaining to science fiction, the texts in analysis and perhaps their cultural history.

Broadly speaking, as a crude way to clarify the scope of the utopian used here, it is more of a hermeneutical study, pertaining to its textual and cultural uses, rather than a toponym for a political manifest. The distinction can undoubtedly be seen as tenuous, as even More's *Utopia* denotes a call for effective change. Indeed, creating a fictional space as a metaphor for current issues or projecting a blueprint for a socio-political direction has more commonalities than disparities. Differentiating the two merely serves the purpose of avoiding the charge of a literal reading of science fiction, which would imply that the genre was concerned with either predicting the future or presenting a viable alternative social order. As these aren't common concerns in much of SF, and most certainly aren't in the authors here discussed, it would be unreasonable to use utopia in such a manner as well.¹⁰

In this respect, as even the more normative utopianisms are textually constructed, this particular aspect may be a productive means to refigure certain elements present in SF. Connecting, for example, Asimov's "psychohistory" – a fictional science that purports to predict future social events based on statistical data – to Marx's historical materialism is certainly useful in a number of ways. At the very least, it motivates a deeper look at a particular trope that Asimov puts at the forefront of his main series. It motivates a discussion regarding historical materialism while perhaps demonstrating that psychohistory possesses as much narrative elements as any other. At the same time, this

¹⁰ It is worthy of note that, even in literature, a genre such as Speculative Fiction seems to more closely embrace this literal vein of the utopian.

connection does not compromise either, since neither one strictly follows the other or even exists for each other's benefit. Having in mind Asimov's example once more, as we will later see, stating that psychohistory has certain affinities with historical materialism is not the same as saying that one is the perfect literary representation of the other. In fact, the same can be said of Herbert and Dick. When we make the connection between Herbert's *The Santaroga Barrier* and Jaspers' philosophy of existentialism and transcendence, it is more relevant to note how Herbert explores the trope of stretching the limits of the human mind rather than searching for a strict adherence to Jaspers. In the same regard, Dick was as vocal regarding his many sources of inspiration as he was inconsistent in using them. In any of these examples one can understandably establish a connection between specific theories and the SF authors who liberally use them without necessarily concluding that their works are gross misrepresentations of the source material.

On the other hand, there is the already mentioned issue of inscribing individual authors into such a broad concept as utopia. While this is not the central concern for this study, some of the authors used here notably provide their own theoretical framework for conceptualizing the real and the imaginary, the textual and the "actual". A possible reading of how utopia is actualized in Dick's work, for example, would necessarily give account of the displacement of the real, which is a central theme in most of his work. As Palmer describes,

Dick is not the sort of SF writer that introduces his readers to some new, alternative reality and then meticulously and clearly describes it, [...] instead

he introduces a new reality, often without pausing to describe it in any orderly way, and then shows it dissolving [...]. (Palmer 391)

When Dick's work is so intensely focused on questioning and disproving the real, one must undoubtedly move away from an interpretation of his paradigms as utopian representations in the traditional sense of establishing an alternative no-place to mirror our own. In this particular sense, Dick is far removed from More and Orwell, as the utopian/dystopian trope isn't offered as a fictional "other" for theoretical contrast. Rather, Dick's trope points towards an actual schizophrenic reorganization of reality that eventually reaches a point where reality is seen as a forgery, a constructed proxy for something that is no longer there.

When we consider that this may be seen as a symbolic use of the utopian (where the no-place is actually represented by our own faux social constructs), it is unsurprising how Dick's work became such a useful tool to illustrate postmodern theories in authors such as Jameson or Baudrillard. If one regards Dick's utopias as overlapping iterations of a dilapidated reality, then his interest in propping up worlds on top of worlds in the same narrative, most notably when a palpable reality no longer seems to exist, may, in fact, be seen as Baudrillardian hiper-real concepts. The copy of the copy generates a reproducible pastiche that eventually loses its real referent, thus making the fiction as valid or invalid as a potential real. This is very much present in Dick's work, in the dilapidation of the real as just another narrative with no real referent. His most prominent example of this type of theme is, of course *The Man in the High Castle* (1962) which, again, questions the validity of the real by presenting a dystopia through alternate versions of our historical past and present.

But even moving away from Baudrillard and a narrow use of his theory, there is the question of how some of these critics and thinkers, who understandably do not directly concern themselves with matters of SF criticism, can usefully and reasonably be applied in the discussion here presented. Even though the field of SF criticism has successfully branched out and crossed borders onto the more canonical fields of literary studies, the fact remains that establishing a connection between utopian or post-utopian ideologies and the symbolic utopias of SF must be selective. The answer lies in the position that there isn't, in fact, a unified and unequivocal sense of utopia, as much as there is no single and universal use for it. In fact, most SF doesn't seem overly concerned with following a set of rules that would place it under the umbrella of utopia, and the same can be said regarding the theory. Are Jaspers or Marx to be deemed as utopian? Not necessarily. What is being posed here is that the appropriation of these theories by SF writers is, in fact, utopian in nature. While the original concepts may be, at times, divergent from a narrow interpretation of different utopian trends, their use as an inspiration for narratives under the SF banner is eminently so. As it is attested by some of these authors' biographies, where their creative endeavours are often described, the appropriation of political, sociological and even ontological theories by SF is by no means straightforward and thorough. Instead, key concepts are loosely used and combined in free form, insofar as they spark some sort of interesting idea, but taking a wildly different nature after that. As we will see here, Asimov's inspiration for his psychohistory may indeed originate as a conflation of historical materialism and Spengler's views on a cyclical pattern to historical civilization, but goes no further to represent the concepts from which it originates. Furthermore, it even takes on other sources, such as the overarching narrative influence of the "whodunit" or the reshaping of the series in tandem with readership expectations. Similar examples with Herbert and even Dick can be also made, all of which

relate to the following point: while exciting and productive as it is to flesh out their work in connection with established theory and philosophy, it would be imprudent to regard these texts as beacons for such theories and overlook that the authors themselves often took their inspirations lightly. In this regard, the same can be said for the utopian representations and how the word “utopia” can stand for many theories, not all of which are synonym to SF.

2. UTOPIAN CONFLUENCE

When Thomas More coined the toponym that would embody his criticism regarding the political, social and religious structures that surrounded him, a set of structures with unambiguously similar devices and comparable purposes that existed in literature and political thought were given a name as well. These were inevitably linked with similar narratives that have consistently emerged to this day, where they are actively called upon in multiple forms and for various purposes. Although More coined the designation, the utopian drive and its textual expressions were certainly present well before utopia itself. As Bloch describes, “the *word* utopia emerged here coined by Thomas More, though not the philosophically far more comprehensive *concept* of utopia.” (Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, Vol. 1 14) The toponym “Utopia”, then, tends to designate a type of text that precedes its own birth in a curious way – More was certainly not the first to discuss the possibilities of a different, but non-existent, political and social structure, owing as much to Hesiod and Plato as to St. Augustine and the Judo-Christian cosmogony. Louis Marin is acutely aware of this question:

It is a complex problem to decide whether “utopia” can characterize texts or images produced before More's *Utopia*. For example, is Plato's *Atlantis* described in *Critias* a utopia? Or Plato's *Republic*? Should we think, as I do, that Utopia as such, through the sophisticated model constructed by More at the beginning of the sixteenth century, defines certain modes and modalities of literary, political, and philosophical imagination and thinking in modern times, modes and modalities themselves related to specific historical and ideological contexts in Europe? (Marin 408)

One could, therefore, effortlessly make the same case for St. Augustine's *The City of God*, since it performs a similar modality to that of More's and Plato's examples. By extension, the sources from which St. Augustine and Plato draw their respective ontologies – Judo-Christianity in St. Augustine's case and Hesiod's *Theogony* for Plato –

may already demonstrate these modalities, since, for all purposes, they represent a model of contrast between our reality and the mythos for our origin.

In this sense, there is some relevance to the fact that More's sources are often dubbed as "utopian" in nature or in construction. This circumstance alone attests to the presence of a type of textual construction that remained unnamed until utopia's notoriety, one that has been frequently reinvented in numerous ways to fit a particular time or agenda, but one that has had at its core the same structure – the depiction of an alternative social, political or even spiritual state, one that is at the same time comparable to another, "real" structure and yet, somehow impalpable or out of reach. Whether utopia retroactively came to mean a religious cosmogony, the optimal kind of state or a socio-cultural state of harmony, it is relevant to emphasize that these expressions played analogous roles until More's take on utopia and have been doing so, even more intricately, until today. Going back, Plato's *Republic* is, perhaps, the most notable example of a text centrally concerned with socio-political criticism through the utopian model of contrast between the actual present and an inexistent social order. Moving forward, science fiction seems to frequently assume the same stance.

The relevance of More's contribution to the textual construction we now call utopian can, therefore, be regarded as the foundation of a paradigm that offered a unified approach to those texts and concepts that were so closely related to each other but had been unnamed as purveyors for this sort of structure that we now call utopia. Perhaps it is for this same reason that, after More, the concepts based on utopia became so diverse and even antithetical at times. For example, utopia is now, more than ever, open to the perception that, in attempting to impose a perfect state of affairs, is all but idealistic from the reader's perspective. Even in describing "positive" utopias, there is a sense that they

are somehow dystopian, as if reality possesses precedence over the constructed analogy. In More's *Utopia*, for example, the abolishment of personal possessions resonates more as an exaggeration critiquing contemporary greed than an actual plausible proposal. It almost seems that, after the familiar structure gained its name, the door was open to deconstruct it as such and let the dystopian in. In fact, it may be argued that this aspect was a fundamental aspect in the transition from a modernist utopian framework to a postmodernist anti-utopian one. As DeKoven explains:

Where Modernism was lodged in a powerful desire for utopian transcendence, postmodernism is suspicious of the failed, oppressive utopias of modernity, and represents its persistent utopian desire in displaced, limited, post-utopian or anti-utopian terms. Where modernism embraced meta- or master narratives – universal syntheses premised on hierarchical self-other dualisms – postmodernism rejects them, emphasizing the diffuse, antihierarchical, antidualistic, local, particular, partial, temporary. (DeKoven 16)

By putting the utopian desire in such a dichotomy between modernism and postmodernism, DeKoven essentially demonstrates how it became possible for the utopian as a term to represent seemingly contradictory things. For example, as soon as the totalizing utopian narratives of the utopian socialists were deemed oppressive, these were now considered dystopias. In the wake of a postmodern age, the lack of a common political outlook participates strongly in the lack of agreement of what a perfect world may look like.

Although it may seem trivial to debate how a single toponym has come to remain meaningful while being used in such diverse ways, there is an inference to be drawn from the evidence that utopias were being built long before the name existed (which is the same as saying that utopian writing existed long before utopia itself). Despite not having a unifying designation, this type of narrative expressed the need to construct an ambivalent type of fiction that is simultaneously both plausible and yet entirely textual. That is, a

substantial part of utopia has as its referent the social, political or religious status quo. This dichotomy is interesting in the sense that an eminently fictional construction such as the utopian narrative demonstrates a propensity towards realism. It is as if there is the need for a utopian narrative that connects to a kind of irrational realism, both of which preceding their own formal emergence.

Still, by being an imagined structure describing some kind of order, the utopian construct gives form to some sort of desire that, while addressing concurrent socio-political issues, remains as an unlikely practical solution to the problems at hand. This act of proposing the plausible but unrealizable is essentially what has characterized the utopian narrative. It is curious, then, that the political, economic, social, moral and even subjective issues of a certain society have been finding a complex and often ambiguous type of answer in what More came to define as utopia.

The primary concern regarding the construction of a utopian narrative is one of binary systems, or, as Jameson delineates, “the dialectic of Identity and Difference:

The fundamental dynamic of any utopian politics (or of any political utopianism) will therefore always lie in the dialectic of Identity and Difference, to the degree to which such a politics aims at imagining, and sometimes even at realizing, a system radically different from this one. (Jameson xii)

The utopian sphere implies a certain structure, political, social or otherwise, that is fundamentally different from the one in which it is created. In this respect, the utopian assumes a discourse of opposites by contrasting parts of the order that is its source with the created one. A certain narrative construction, by emerging within the utopian sphere, is necessarily negated as its “real” counterpart, so that this discourse of difference is able to generate a system of alien values and estranged social, religious or political priorities. By, at some level, being what we are not, the utopian emphasizes precisely that difference.

It is as much a proposal for how things could be as a mirror to how things are at some point.

In this sense, by imbuing an imagined socio-political structure with certain types of values that demand particular responses on its virtual inhabitants, the act of generating a utopia, to borrow Greenblatt's concept, is not dissimilar to the act of perceiving one's own reality:

Utopia depends upon the simple circumstance [...] that there are not two forms of language, one referential and one nonreferential, one for truth and one for fiction. Morus and Hythlodæus speak the same language; England and Utopia are present by virtue of a single methodology of representation. If this circumstance licenses the realistic description of "no-place", it licenses at the same time the perception that... the reality we assume in our daily existence is also a construction, as is the identity we deploy in our relations with power. (Greenblatt 57)

Taking in consideration Greenblatt's views on the referentiality of narrative and the real, in the relationship between utopia and reality one can argue that what we consider as "factual" structures are actually another form of artificially constructed realizations, and the individual, subject to the inner workings of such constructions, is indeed surrounded by a utopia of sorts. Greenblatt's point that the language of the utopian and the language of the real share the same nature as constructs is inevitably related to the notion that we are as much a part of our own utopian formula as the characters of some fictional society are of theirs. The fictional utopia that feels so alien to the reader can be regarded, from a functional point of view, as a valid system to the hypothetical inhabitants that populate it. By only predicting a reality within the confines of its own structures, utopia is self-contained and actual. Greenblatt's case that, in defining "reality", we use the same methodology of representation that is presented by a utopian fiction shows how any given social "reality" enforces a great deal of narrativization. From the theatricality

of “playing one’s part” in society to the manifestation of what Greenblatt calls “signs of secular worship” (141) that reinforce the positions of power through the imposition of mores, all can be argued to contain an element of fiction. Greenblatt argues that they are real in the sense that they are used to produce familiarity and acceptance of an internal social structure. However, in accepting this notion, we are equally implying that, in fact, utopia works as an isolated construction as much as the “real” works by expressing itself as a naturally isolated form.

It then seems clear that the utopian text is the perfect example of the narrative attributes of history itself. After all, utopia is written in a “historical” tone. Here we have an overtly fictional form that employs all the necessary devices to describe and propose a system for human beings that, if it were not for empirical evidence or historical narratives themselves, one could consider to have happened in the sphere of the “real”. The characteristic of “realism” in utopia is, indeed, one of the most prominent aspects of its construction, as it is this aspect in particular that makes the reader pose utopia as possible or not, question the validity of that utopia and of the “real” itself. Utopia, then, becomes a form of defining, or redefining, its other half, the “real”.

Borrowing Greenblatt’s concept, this could be regarded as a form of modulating one’s own identity, a type of “what-if” scenario with diverse purposes in mind that could go from the intention to problematize and enact change within one’s “real” system to the purpose of questioning history and socio-political structures as narratives that are in a constant state of reconstruction to accommodate for new realities and ideologies. Under this flag reside the seldom mentioned cosmological and theological utopias, which, by faith alone, become actual. The work of Augustine attests to this, by having refigured

several aspects of the Judo-Christian cosmology through a utopian type of discourse that would encompass the sociological and even political concepts of his time.¹¹

In fact, the theologies that purport to organize the relationship between god and humanity within a contained system are the most prominent examples of utopias before More's text. One example of these would be theologies that describe a past state of bliss or golden age that was lost, a use that is handed down from Hesiod to the Judo-Christian anthropogenesis.¹² If we bypass their allegorical meaning for a moment, they are analeptic narratives, or utopias of the past that mythically establish the values of the present. For example, it seems clear that the level of morality that the Judo-Christian utopian cosmogonies act on is trading the guilt of having squandered the privilege to reside in the utopian paradise with the promise that a life led according to a set of values will be rewarded with the return to that previous state. As Suvin puts it, "Eden is the mythological localization of utopian longing". (Suvin, "On the Poetics of the Science Fiction Genre" 373)

On the other hand, a text such as Dante's *Divine Comedy* (1308-1321), while having similar utopian elements to the Judo-Christian cosmogonies, breaks away from the analeptic model of establishing a theological framework in the distant past to have Dante as the protagonist actually visit and witness first-hand this system in his own time. This is an important movement towards the idea that the utopia/dystopia of heaven and hell can be brought closer to the intended purpose of defining present actions. In this sense,

¹¹ Although this "utopian" quality is inevitably present in most theologies and throughout Augustine's work, the main text that demonstrates what is here referred to as utopian discourse is *The City of God* (1470)

¹² Hesiodus, Apostolos. *Theogony. Works and days Shield Hesiod*. Baltimore [u.a.]: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983. Print.

by virtue of establishing heaven, the purgatory and hell in the concrete now, Dante creates a system more based on a different geography rather than on a different time.¹³ While deeply rooted in the Judo-Christian cosmogony, this is more akin to a locational type of utopia, one that establishes borders within the society of its time.

To a degree, the locational utopia can even project a desire of expansionism, rather than escapism, as the solution to the problems of one's own system – for example in the way that the Portuguese in the fifteenth century heralded the colonization of other continents based on the narrative that there were lands of limitless resources that would ensure Portugal's dominance as an empire. The utopian here is supported by the fact that there are important travel narratives being produced in this period which detail how these exotic and faraway lands have riches ready for the taking.¹⁴ It is perhaps telling that More's *Utopia* not only deals with European expansionism, but it can also be read as a travel narrative itself, based on the idea of how new worlds were being discovered from the fifteenth century onwards.¹⁵

It is in this tradition that More's *Utopia* can best be framed. As an account of an improved civilization in an unreachable land rather than a past state of bliss, it is eminently locational. It implies the intention of serving as a moral measuring rod of some distant society that has somehow resolved all of the issues of our own "imperfect" one. More's *Utopia* as locational is presented in a faraway land; an actual place in More's

¹³ While these texts are obviously allegorical, it is telling that the tropes of heaven, purgatory and hell in Dante are described as actual places – from the center of the Earth to a mountain in an island at the antipode of Jerusalem to outer space.

¹⁴ The two most notable of these types of narratives are João de Barros' *Décadas Da Asia* (1552) and Fernão Mendes Pinto's *Peregrinação* (1614)

¹⁵ We now recognize that the Age of Discoveries was designated as such when, in fact, there was nothing to be discovered. In the context of utopian narrativization, this consolidates the point that this period was predicated on a narrative of its own that validated colonialism.

present where certain key issues of sixteenth century British society are addressed and resolved. The utopian in More resides in the fact that this place is physically somewhere other than here. Therefore, it is only obtainable by proxy, a contrast that should spark an inward look by More's contemporaries.

However, as Bloch argues, another type of utopia emerges after More:

[...] At the very beginning Thomas More designated utopia as a place, an island in the distant South Seas. This designation underwent changes later so that it left space and entered time. [...] With Thomas More the wishland was still ready, on a distant island, but I am not there. On the other hand, when it is transposed into the future, not only am I not there, but utopia itself is also not there. (Bloch, "Something's Missing: A Discussion between Ernst Bloch and Theodor W. Adorno on the Contradictions of Utopian Longing." 3)

This new kind of utopia set in the unreachable future that Bloch describes can be designated as proleptic, since, in a way, it opposes the analeptic described above – its unrealized nature is accomplished by virtue of being placed ahead in time, as opposed to the supposed state of bliss that the analeptic recalls. On the other hand, Bloch's central concern is, of course, to demonstrate how a utopian mode of thought is actually a present narrative for change, or the urge to actualize productive elements of the utopian spirit. In this sense, even to Bloch there is a redeemable element to the proleptic utopia. Since there is the possibility of it becoming actualized, the most relevant aspect of how the present is addressed makes the proleptic utopia a way to signpost the processes for current change even if the end goals become meaningless and ideological in the long run. As even the analeptic utopias of the religious cosmogonies purport to offer a moral compass for the present, it would be safe to state that all utopias bear the traces of their own times and the anxieties of their age. Augustine's work, as the title *The City of God Against the Pagans* suggests seeks in a large part to address the paganism present in his time. In Dante's *Divine Comedy*, we can clearly find that one of the uses for outlining heaven and hell is

to place Dante's political antagonists in hell. Similarly, More's attack of several aspects of his society, such as the feudalist political system which surrounded him and the rampant corruption in English aristocracy, is a prevalent issue that is directly addressed in *Utopia*. In the first section it is brought up in the form of actual accusations of the faults of England's political values and in the second it presents the utopian solutions to some of these problems.

Again, all of the three types of utopia outlined above seem to project some of the central issues of their period onto their utopian construction. Whether by depicting a previous state of harmony or envisaging an estranged social organization, the utopian forms address, as we have seen, a desire for the alternative as a way to define what lacks in the very system in which it emerges. Throughout the utopian discourse, this desire to address the "imperfections" of its surrounding structures by means of constructing a kind of unattainable otherness has been present. Ultimately, utopia can be regarded as a psychological expression – the desire that remains unfulfilled. The utopian construction substantially relies on its position as the other, the alternative or the direction that is contrasted by not being the actual, the presently realized. In this respect, utopia embodies a form of desire, as it concurrently projects the subjective conception of a system's own shortcomings and places their fulfilment in the narrative object, the utopian model that possesses the desired qualities.

However, the utopian narrative relies on the notion of unattainability. The utopian is consistently organized around the premise that it is either a past state of bliss that has been irreparably lost or a system projected onto a distant future or space. This form of presenting a particular structure is vital to the utopian text – it is necessary for it to be unattainable so it can project its desires onto a foreign construction, a process that science

fiction emulates in many respects. Indeed, the “what if” scenario afore mentioned that is so representative of utopian language is parallel to SF. By calling upon the utopian language, SF is able to perform a similar connection to the “real” universe and position itself alongside it, comparing modes of figuring and refiguring the world through text and establishing yet another “referential” language. If one can posit the idea that the utopian text is able to, at least partly, define reality by being a representation of it that is projected outside the boundaries of what we would call our reality, then SF can as easily be integrated into its contemporary structures in using a narrative that, for this purpose, must be called utopian. When, for example, an author such as Herbert purports to explore the idea that “heroes are painful, superheroes are a catastrophe” to humankind (F. Herbert, “Dune Genesis”), the utopia that ensues is set in such a distant future that it escapes any possibility of being analysed as speculative fiction. However, Herbert sees no trouble in connecting a narrative set over 20.000 in the future with his belief that current political conditions dangerously disenfranchise individuals as they weave the heroic upon their leaders:

Personal observation has convinced me that in the power area of politics/economics and in their logical consequence, war, people tend to give over every decision-making capacity to any leader who can wrap himself in the myth fabric of the society. Hitler did it. Churchill did it. Franklin Roosevelt did it. Stalin did it. Mussolini did it. (F. Herbert, “Dune Genesis”)

It is curious to note that More himself addresses a similar issue in the form of attempting to address the individualism and self-interest of the aristocracy in his political system. For More, the ruling class is deemed as generally corrupt, and sycophantic, which is done away with in the provisions of the Utopian system that is based on a communal type of living.

In this sense, utopia, perhaps as much as any other narrative, is essentially a textual construction that mirrors and plays on the inter-subjective desires and identities of the collective. Nevertheless, such connections do not necessarily presuppose that the utopian construction acts on a predominantly subliminal level. Although this position may be defensible in many ways, the utopian text in general, as we see it here, and particularly in science fiction, overtly demonstrates the play on desire and the dichotomy between the unfulfilled self and the desired other. If both More and Herbert seek to stage current concerns of leadership and power, they are essentially exposing what their desires entail. In More's case, there is an attempt to offer an alternative that meets the desire for egalitarianism. For Herbert, the concern lies in cautioning against the desire to resign oneself from self-reliance in favour of a seemingly heroic leadership. If the utopian is, as Bloch suggests, a lack only reachable by means of the imagination, then perhaps the utopian textuality is precisely that imagination in written form.¹⁶

In addition to other possible readings, utopian narratives tend to focus on what we ought (or oughtn't) to do and have in our own conceptual scheme. They pose themselves as alternatives that exploit what we lack, whether that is something we regard as positive or negative within ourselves. In either case, whether utopian or dystopian, the end result is the same: these narratives are active in connecting the reader with parts of itself that aren't realized under its original individual narrative. What is striking here is that, underlying utopian textuality, a certain lack of completion, or a sense of plenitude is apparently present, one which the utopian clearly attempts to fulfill by constructing the unattainable. To some extent, this could explain why utopia seems to be created out of

¹⁶ (Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, Vol. 1 88). Not to be confused with Lacan's concepts for "lack" and "imagination".

the desire to express and represent that unrealized part of the subject. Curiously, this interpretation is substantiated by More's choice to pun on the toponym: Utopia is, simultaneously, the "good place" and the "no place". If the first etymon defines a text with the manifest desire to question values and systems, the second determines that quality of unfulfilled desire that makes some kind of otherness so appealing. While the "good place" naturally stems from the intention to constructively criticize a system and offer alternatives, however feeble they may be, the "no place" poses a more covert characteristic present in utopia – the structure being offered does not really exist or it is out of reach. It is a vacuum, empty of self-sustainable meaning. It only makes sense in the extent that it exposes what someone – the reader, the narrator, the society to whom the text addresses – seems to be missing. In other words, as the desires of the collective are projected onto the utopian, so is the utopian a mirror of the collective's desires. In this sense, utopia is manipulated into different types of meaning, often in the direction of validating one's own systems, which can be accomplished through the promise of utopian rewards by following a certain path or by opposing an unwanted state of affairs that may be eerily analogous to the collective's. In either case, utopia is asserting itself as a place with no inherent meaning, much as any historical representation, some critics would argue. Jameson has described this aspect of utopia in a somewhat similar fashion:

The presumption is that Utopia, whose business is the future, or not-being, exists only in the present, where it leads the relatively feeble life of desire and fantasy. (Jameson xv)

By regarding utopia as a "mixture of being and not-being", Jameson is validating the notion of a no-place that is somehow granted a specific form as a speech act. In this sense, if one may extend Jameson's argument, utopia is realized merely by being stated. Whether by comparison with what already exists or by attempting to warn against or wish a certain

path, it seems that it is never reached. In the end, it is the speech act itself that has an effect and puts into perspective the models that are actual. The utopian text is its own fulfilment, both by being an act of desire and the only possible realization of its own textual condition.

An important aspect of the utopian drive is that, while being externalized in textual narrative and language, it transverses the psychological and individual realm through those manifestations. Although utopia is traditionally a construction on a manipulated social, economic, political or theological status-quo, the prevailing agent and the ultimate object of change is, as in mostly any type of communication, the individual. By altering the axioms in which the individual exists and defines itself, it sets the conditions for a desired (or undesired) type of identity, one which aligns itself and, in turn, aggregates with others according to the predetermined values. Instead of analysing the utopian text merely as social in the sense that it poses a collective order that is somehow different from the “factual” one, we can also regard it as acting within the subjective sphere. In fact, the subjective nature of utopia, while clearly present and addressed in narratives like Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1932) or Orwell’s *1984* (1948), is often underplayed in favour of the societal implications on how the human individual is represented. The effects of utopia on the narrated individual become symbolical, the subjective acting as a metonym for the collective. In other words, the protagonist is now an inhabitant of utopia and not an external narrator.

Perhaps it seems common to argue that a reading of a text should attempt to immerse itself in the conceptual scheme of the narrative. However, as a consequence of having narratives enclosed in the utopian structure itself, the reader is now projected inside those alien structures. However diverse these texts may be, it is difficult to escape that they

require the reader to equate and confront another conceptual scheme with his own. The utopian, seen through the eyes of Winston Smith or Bernard Marx, may pose a very different perspective from that of More's Portuguese sailor, which is not to say that the connection with the reader is not the same. The type of narrator present in More's work may be considered closer to the reader in the sense that it represents it as a stranger to what is put in front of him. On the other hand, those characters that don't meet the utopian as some sort of oddity, but are, in fact already in it, perhaps seem to add an additional layer of representation, where the reader is thrown into the mind of something altogether foreign. Still, it is not unusual to find that these protagonists who seemingly inhabit the constructed utopia are misfits and eventually struggle to break the status quo (such is the case of the protagonists in Huxley's and Orwell's novels). This device can also be seen both in the Gothic as a precursor to Fantasy fiction and, of course in science fiction – the text is internally consistent and actively attempts to normalize the reader onto the textual world.

In essence, all these characters fully embody the utopian vision that is being represented and, by virtue of their proximity to the reader, those structures are imposed upon us as well. The possibilities then become endless in manoeuvring the reader into a utopia that is, at the same time, foreign and a reflection of what is obscured in the familiar. The notion that the reader identifies with the characters of the narrative is particular meaningful here, as it encompasses a level of cultural recognition. When the utopian texts are themselves clear social constructs, the readerly identification with the narrative can become a powerful means of mapping and understanding one's own social space. Although this is often the case in any type of literature, it is given a particular emphasis when the subject matter of utopia is to immerse the reader in a no-place where social identification is, to some extent, disrupted.

2.1 FROM UTOPIA INTO DYSTOPIA

Perhaps one of the most fertile bases for the emergence of the dystopias that succeeded More's system is the idea that they actually offer this same type of social identification than that of utopias. While dystopias, to some extent, offer the counter-argument to the utopian state, the condition of the individual in relation to the structure remains one of comparison and recognition. In this sense, even the most innocent and humanist varieties of utopia, after More, came to be characterized as both a blessing and a curse by addressing societal conflicts and inevitably rearranging the position of the individual. While Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (1888), by all accounts, attempts to represent a positive socialist utopia where private property is replaced by communal possessions and a welfare state, elements such as the virtues of Taylorism or the elimination of emotions and irrationality would certainly cause uneasiness among Bellamy's detractors. One of these was William Morris, who made such a dystopian reading of Bellamy's utopia that he felt the need to respond with a naturalistic utopia of his own in the form of *News From Nowhere* (1890). In essence, Bellamy's socialist utopia was a dangerous misrepresentation of socialism. As we have seen, one man's utopia is another's dystopia:

I think it necessary to state these objections to Mr. Bellamy's utopia, [...] because this book, having produced a great impression on people who are really enquiring into Socialism, will be sure to be quoted as an authority for what Socialists believe. (Morris, "Bellamy's 'Looking Backward'")

Therefore, stemming from the plurality of utopian interpretations, what the dystopian visions came to focus on was the alienation of the traits we recognize as subjective in favour of the political, religious, economic or social whole. Such is the case in Huxley and Orwell, but it is also prevalent in many other dystopian works. In Jack London's *The Iron Heel* (1908), this is represented by the capitalist Oligarchy made up of bankers and landowners who proceed to divide society into casts and oppress the disenfranchised;

Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* (1921) focuses on the idea that free will runs the risk of being obliterated and industrialism will reshape humanity into yet another cog in the technocratic machine; Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* (1953) takes a step towards what would be best described as a cultural dystopia by offering an anti-intellectual society that considers personal opinion and critical thought as antisocial and hedonistic behaviours.

Although the birth of the dystopian awareness seems to come in contrast to the more positive uses apparently present in the utopian desire, the textuality of both is undoubtedly the same. While the dystopian underscores the expendability of the subjective, it is using the discourse of difference and similitude present in the utopian. Proof of this is the fact that, more often than not, the dystopian narratives offer an oppressed protagonist, or a representative of the reader in this harsh environment. While the dystopian system works according to its own internal logic, the reader must be alienated from this system in order to reject it and, ultimately, establish the symbolical links between dystopia and reality. What is relevant here, whether we are addressing utopian or dystopian narratives, is the difference, the comparison to our own concepts by contrast. The difference, at this point, between the dystopian and the utopian can safely be put aside, as they are essentially two types of narratives that exist in the same sphere and are even interchangeable. Both lean towards the tantalization of an enclosed system and, as we have already seen, can be construed in either way depending on the expectations and referents of different readers. More's or Plato's utopia can easily be deconstructed into dystopias, as even considering their incipient criticisms, it isn't unreasonable to put into question their sincerity as workable models.

We can, then, safely assume that, similarly to utopia, dystopia plays on the identification of the self as not-the-other. This aspect of utopia/dystopia becomes

significant if we regard it in comparison to Bloch's argument of the no-place and no-time in utopia. If we expand the argument, in addition to an unattainable place or time, we find that utopia seems to establish an unattainable sense of identity, or a no-self. Again, the utopian drive can be regarded as the textual expression of the unfulfilled desires that so intimately define a structure. Transposed to the micro-structure of the individual, the no-place tends to represent the identity of the subjective by mirroring what it is not – the no-self. A good example of a possible reading for the utopian body would, in fact, be Asimov's robot. As we will see here, the idea of creating artificial sentience in humanity's own image, paired with the desires for what humanity should be – not necessarily what humanity actually is – results in a concept of the robot as an ambivalent trope. It is both a technologically perfected version of ourselves and something alien to us. For Asimov in particular, the robot encompasses the virtues of acting according to an established set of metaphysical/mathematical rules and the unsettling nature of being a mirror to the inconsistencies in our own values. The robot, in this regard, can represent the utopian desire for the self and the dystopian actualization of what the human lacks.

Therefore, if our identification of the utopian individual lies in a comparative model, its similarities to the dystopian mode become evident. While the utopian tradition textualized the "real" by playing on the desire to attain an improved state, or what Bloch would refer to as "hope" in utopia, the dystopian now defines it by validating what we already are. Or if, on the other hand, the utopian purports to expose the faults of contemporary society by presenting an ideal state where these faults are resolved, so does the dystopian pinpoint and amplify key problematic elements of our collective experience. Despite one appearing to be negativistic in opposition to the positivistic other, dystopia and utopia are clearly, through narrative, representing the actual, whether that representation is interpreted as a socio-political scheme, a teleological doctrine or an

individual template. The fact that we, ourselves, as has been already suggested, organize our own reality in a social order that makes sense, much in the same way utopias are constructed, attests to the idea that any social structure is a utopia itself, with utopian individuals populating it.

A practical example of how social structures can possibly be seen as narratives inhabited by us lies in Althusser's thoughts on the ideological: we subject ourselves to ideologies with which we feel a sense of identity and, at the same time, we are immersed in a variety of ideological and material experiences that define us. Even if we decide not to take Althusser's approach to its fullest, we must recognize that the ideological is more tightly knit into the science fictional utopias than we may realize. As texts that somewhat stray away from socio-political aspirations, science fictional utopias still retain the ideological elements of the cultural identities of their time. The assumption therefore would be that, from an in an Althusserian perspective, the ideological and cultural elements are already there. However, considering that Althusser saw the processes of ideology as an inherent element of reality, how, then, can this be a productive way to discuss how the individual is both an integral part of the ideology within a utopian narrative and outside of it?

Since social structures, as in utopia, do not assume the awareness of the individual in relation to any external representation, the question of the individual being oppressed in utopia is thus eroded when one is enveloped by its structure, as the individual ceases to identify himself with any particulars outside it. The question of whether or not this is a type of Althusserian interpellation may be invoked here. According to Althusser, "[T]hose who are in ideology believe themselves by definition outside ideology: one of

the effects of ideology is the practical denegation of the ideological character of ideology by ideology.” (Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses")

In the case of utopia, by establishing a contained system, one is effectively setting up the ideologies that concurrently produce a definition of the individual. Therefore, it is expected that the inhabitants of the utopian texts, by virtue of being circumscribed to their utopias, are inherently hailed into the ideologies of the texts. However, this is not always the case. Particularly in dystopian narratives, an element of opposition is often included for the sake of reader identification, a character that, while immersed in the utopian ideologies, opposes and rejects it. Although one could argue that the characters who rebel against their utopias are merely opposing the repressive state apparatus, it seems appropriate to suggest that these characters are actually interpellated by the ideologies of the reader. In turn, the reader may believe himself to be outside his ideology when travelling into the utopian text while, in fact, the text is merely addressing the reader's ideologies in a symbolical way.

Possibly what makes utopia so compelling is the fact that the reader is outside it while being inside a similar structure himself. This is a central issue, for example, in most of Philip K. Dick's work. As we will later see, the alienation from the real is a key concept in Dick. His protagonists are often faced with the disturbing fact that the reality they live in is actually faked – a world with utopian elements that crumble in front of the protagonist's and the reader's eyes. The interest, to a great extent, lies in this realization, the movement where the protagonists' relation with their ideologies is put into question by presenting alternates within the narrative. Among other aspects, there is a strong propensity for estrangement and horror or, as Freud would call it, the uncanny:

[A]n uncanny effect is often and easily produced when the distinction between imagination and reality is effaced, as when something that we have hitherto regarded as imaginary appears before us in reality, or when a symbol takes over the full functions of the thing it symbolizes, and so on. (Freud, sec. II)

Dick's texts demonstrate that there are grounds to connect the idea of the uncanny to science fiction and, more broadly to utopia. Considering Freud's work on the uncanny, this is an element that may be at play in the dichotomy of drawing from outside and inside forces at the same time – the social structures in which the reader lives are generally familiar and mundane. However, in transporting oneself onto the utopian unfamiliar, there is the possibility of reinterpreting the familiar structures as unfamiliar as well. As Royle states, “it can take the form of something familiar unexpectedly arising in a strange and unfamiliar context” (Royle 1). In this respect, the uncanny can best be seen in those elements of utopia/dystopia that echo familiarity with the social spaces. In essence, both utopia and dystopia are able to represent the structures of the social imaginary through the uncanny. Whether they are utopian or dystopian is inconsequential here, since both have the means to signal the familiar in an uncanny way.

To some extent, and echoing Greenblatt's thoughts, the utopian can easily be characterized as dystopian and vice-versa as much as the “real” social structures of the past and present are textually characterized. If utopian constructions have a component of social structuring and reordering in them, on which the uncanny plays a part, then any textualization of a social structure has the unavoidable tendency to resemble the utopian/dystopian. The social imaginary, whether literal or literary, is the referent to

which utopia, as symbol, relates.¹⁷ The former is, in the end, realized through the textualization that the symbolic utopia, in this broad concept, provides.

Upon taking stock of the branches and possibilities that the utopian narrative poses us, based on the already discussed propositions, it becomes apparent that some of these elements come very close to theories on desire and even on ontology itself. Let us consider the proto-utopias of Hesiod, Augustine or Dante. These texts include an inevitable ontological element to how the world is structured and how human beings are placed in the grand scheme of their theologies. This is transposed to later utopias in the sense that beneath the surface of creating other worlds entails, at least in part, some ontological assumptions on how this world can exist, in what way can people exist in this world and so on. As these utopias are symbolical of our own constructions, the ontological can be transposed onto our worlds. For example, if the central concern for a text such as More's *Utopia* is to offer an allegory for his own time, the utopian alternative is at least for a moment questioning the ontological validity of the systems that he sees around him – in this case institutional irrationality. The aspect of questioning one's reality in utopia is perhaps the key motivator for the proliferation of utopias and dystopias after More and, ultimately, an element that reaches postmodernism in an important way. McHale's famous assessment that "postmodernist fiction differs from modernist fiction just as poetics dominated by ontological issues differs from one dominated by epistemological issues." (McHale xii) opens the door for the possibility of placing the utopian within the context of a postmodern reading of certain science fictional texts.

¹⁷ The role of the social imaginary in representing reality is not in question here. However, utopia, as a productive source of imaginary representations, can be considered as a very much "real" system.

In this aspect, an analysis of utopia in light of these theories is certainly productive, not only in order to assist in understanding key elements in utopia, what it is performing as text and how it is touching the reader, but also, at the very least, to enrich and give a fresh perspective to a literary approach on a certain type of text (utopia) and its relation to other types of text (science-fiction). In *Archaeologies of the future: the desire called utopia and other science fictions*, Jameson pursues this very connection – that of desire and utopia - often coming close to what arguably would be a Lacanian refiguring of utopian constructions, whether they are social or literary.

A collective wish-fulfilment, then – the Utopian text – would have to bear the marks of this inner reality principle as well, by which alone it manages to represent its successful achievement. Can we speak here, as Freud might have of dreams, of a compromise between the wish and what contradicts it? That would certainly trivialize the process, and reduce the political content and import of Utopian fantasy to an easily deluded satisfaction. We need a nobler word than *frustration* to evoke the dimension of Utopian desire which remains unsatisfied [...]. (Jameson 84)

Much of what is presented to us by Lacan, namely some aspects of desire, does fit into some of these concepts of utopia and science fiction. In fact, by entering in the realm of the psychoanalytic, the utopian longing may be particularly clarified in connection with Lacanian theory. Since, according to Lacanian terms, the desire resides primarily in the Other or on that which is outside ourselves, then one can argue that the Lacanian concept of desire may be read as utopian. As Žižek puts it, “The core of a Lacanian notion of utopia is: a vision of desire functioning without objet a and its twists and loops.” (Žižek, “The Liberal Utopia”) The utopian construction substantially relies on its position as the other, the alternative or the direction that is contrasted by not being the actual, the presently realized. In this respect, utopia embodies the Lacanian desire, as it concurrently projects the subject’s conception of its own shortcomings and places their fulfillment in the object, the utopian model that symbolizes the desired qualities. Lacanian desire is

further linked to the utopian in the sense that it is unattainable. Its position lies beyond the reach of fulfilment.

Further connections between Lacan and the utopian discourse could be made, not the least being the fact that utopia is essentially a textual construction that mirrors and plays on the desires and identities of the subject, which clearly fits the Lacanian agenda. This is particularly clear in the utopian body of the Asimovian robot, for example. By being bound by an absolute set of laws (The Three Laws of Robotics), the robot is able to act in a perfectly ethical manner. As Roberts puts it “Asimov imagined artificially constructed and intelligent robots as not only humane but in many ways as *more* humane than humanity.” (Roberts, *The History of Science Fiction* 198). The Asimovian robot, in this regard, very much symbolizes the human desire for flawless ethical coherence, a goal that may drive human action without ever being reached. These elements of the desired unattainable, or what Jameson would call wish-fulfillments,¹⁸ are a constant in utopia and even more so in SF.

Notwithstanding, it is important to note that Lacan showed opposition to the possibility of connecting utopia to desire. However, Johnston has effectively unpacked this issue by noting that Lacan only mentions utopia in four instances throughout his seminars and always using a particular kind of reading of utopia, seen as “that of an entirely happy set of sustainable circumstances in which all serious dissatisfactions are resolved without remainder. (Johnston 71) According to this very strict interpretation of utopia as an actual realizable blueprint, the desire-driven *jouissance* becomes an impossibility.

¹⁸ See Jameson, Fredric. “How to Fulfill a Wish.” *Archaeologies of the Future : The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions*. London: Verso, 2007. 72–84. Print.

However, such a connection does not necessarily presuppose that the utopian construction acts as interpreted by Lacan. Beyond the already discussed possibilities, a utopian text may also be seen not as a real attempt to offer a viable alternative for the real, but as a means to produce a type of *jouissance* that Barthes connects with the pleasure of the text itself:

the text that imposes a state of loss, the text that discomforts [...], unsettles the reader's historical, cultural, psychological assumptions, the consistency of his tastes, values, memories, brings to a crisis his relation with language. (Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text* 14)

In this dichotomy between the text of *jouissance* and the text of pleasure, it may be argued that the similarities between the above definition for the text of *jouissance* and the utopian text cannot easily be dismissed.

Therefore, if the utopian text can be seen from a wider perspective of not necessarily aspiring to actually be brought to fruition, Lacanian thought becomes an interesting avenue to pursue in connection to the utopian. The utopian text in general, as we see it here, and particularly in SF, overtly demonstrates the play on desire and the dichotomy between the unfulfilled self and the desired other. Under a Lacanian understanding, the self lacks completion, or a sense of plenitude, one which the utopian clearly attempts to exploit, even if only symbolically. To some extent, this could explain why utopia seems to be created out of the desire to express and represent that unrealized part of the self. Curiously, this interpretation is substantiated by More's choice to pun on the toponym: Utopia is, simultaneously, the "good place" and the "no place". If the first etymon defines a text with the manifest desire to question values and systems, the second determines that quality of unfulfilled desire that so closely resembles the Lacanian. While the "good place" naturally stems out of the intention to constructively criticize a system and offer

alternatives, however feeble they may be, the “no place” presents a more covert characteristic present in utopia – the structure being presented does not really exist or it is out of reach. It is a vacuum, empty of self-sustainable meaning. In other words, as the subject’s desires are projected onto the utopian, so is the utopian a mirror of the subject’s desires. In this sense, utopia is manipulated into different types of meaning, often in the direction of validating one’s own systems, which can be accomplished through the promise of utopian rewards by following a certain path or by opposing an unwanted state of affairs that may be eerily analogous to the subject’s.

In either case, utopia is asserting itself as a place with no inherent meaning, much as any historical representation, some critics would argue. Jameson has described this aspect of utopia in a somewhat similar fashion by essentially envisioning the utopian text as a sort of historical trace of the future – it neither represents it nor is meaningful by itself. However, it does take the place of the future within the present:

Utopia is philosophically analogous to the trace, only from the other end of time. [...] Utopia, which combines the not-yet-being of the future with a textual existence in the present is no less worthy of the archaeological paradoxes we are willing to grant to the trace. (Jameson xv)

Although this approach compares the utopian sphere of influence to Ricoeur’s discussion of the trace,¹⁹ Jameson does regard it as a “mixture of being and not-being”, which is at the core of the notion of a no-place that is somehow granted a specific form as a speech act. In this sense, if one may extend Jameson’s argument, the way in which utopia is realized is merely by being stated. Whether by comparison with what already

¹⁹ Although Derrida’s concept of the trace may also be a consideration, the central point in this particular case is to consider that historical narratives, which are seen by Ricoeur as traces of the past, are analogous to equally immaterial futures represented by their own trace which is the utopian text. See Ricoeur, Paul. *The Reality of the Historical Past*. Marquette University Press, 1984. Print.

exists or by attempting to warn against or wish a certain path, it seems that it is never reached. In the end, it is the speech act itself that has an effect and puts into perspective the models that are actual. The utopian text is its own fulfilment, both by being an act of desire that follows Lacanian terms and the only possible realization of its own textual condition.

An important aspect of the utopian drive is that, while being externalized in textual narrative and language, it transverses the psychological and individual realm through those manifestations. Although utopia is traditionally a construction on a manipulated social, economic, political or theological status-quo, the prevailing agent and the ultimate object of change is, as in mostly any type of communication, the individual. By altering the axioms in which the individual exists and defines itself, it sets the conditions for a desired (or undesired) type of identity, one which aligns itself and, in turn, aggregates with others according to the predetermined values. Instead of analysing the utopian text merely as social in the sense that it poses a collective order that is somehow different from the “factual” one, we can also regard it as acting within the subjective sphere, one which, as we have already seen, can be further supported by the Lacanian concept of desire.

3. SCIENCE FICTION AS GENRE

An introduction to any discussion involving science fiction frequently includes some consideration on its boundaries and its validity as a literary genre. Attempting to define science fiction or, at least demarcate both its literary relevance and its uniqueness has even become an object of contention in its own right. In fact, out of five of what are considered the authoritative anthologies on SF there is one conclusive argument that invariably appears – there is much discussion on the matter without any agreement in sight. For example, before arriving at a reworked definition of Darko Suvin’s definition of SF as “cognitive estrangement”, Freedman unpacks a few other alternatives and concludes that they suffer “not only from general critical inutility but from immense self-contradiction.” (Freedman 14). At the same time, Luckurst insightfully demonstrates that Suvin’s almost sacred paradigm is not without its faults either by noting that “Even within SF, apparently, 80 per cent of books are “debilitating confectionery” and Suvin warned that the genre must be rescued from the low intelligence of the average reader” (Luckhurst 7). That this debate often comes to light in the introductory part of works that are principally concerned with the genre does not seem surprising in itself. If one is to delve into the various traits and themes that are common to a group of written works, surely it is relevant to acknowledge the importance of considering these works jointly as belonging to a genre.

Nevertheless, when we analyse some of the established books on science fiction as a whole, a key topic is invariably brought to light by the criticism in its attempt to pin down their subject matter: Decisively defining science fiction as a genre is either a pointless exercise or a task with severely misleading results, one which has all the pitfalls of circumscribing the genre into narrow categorizations. This is, of course, a problem to

which these authors are sensitive, as describing the subject matter is obviously a necessity, but creating a definition that sacrifices texts in favour of tidiness will impoverish the discussion. Still, the topic of determining the various possibilities in which SF should be approached is a curious subject in itself. Below are a few of the more prominent contributions.

Roberts begins his work *science fiction* by stating that “The term ‘science fiction’ resists easy definition. This is curious, because most people have a sense of what science fiction is.” (Roberts, *Science Fiction* 5), focusing on the fact that many critics either dismiss the relevance of such a definition or view it as a purely material categorization reserved for grouping books together in a bookshelf. Mendlesohn addresses the problem along these lines by writing that “The structure we have adopted makes a number of assumptions: it assumes that you, the reader, know what SF is, and that everyone who has contributed to this book shares the same criteria.” (James and Mendlesohn p.1). This assumption implies a clear concept of the genre that must be the same, both individually and collectively, which is somewhat debatable. In all likelihood, it would be impossible to prove or refute that one reader knows what SF is more or less than the next or that critics share exactly the same concept. Freedman in his *Critical Theory and Science Fiction* (2000) also acknowledges the complications of genre discussion:

It is symptomatic of the complexity of science fiction as a generic category that critical discussion of it tends to devote considerable attention to the problem of definition. [...] Indeed, not only the question of definition proper but even the looser matter of *description* – of deciding even in the most rough-and-ready way, approximately which texts are to be designated by the rubric of science fiction – is a matter of widespread disagreement. (Freedman 13)

In one stroke, Freedman perfectly summarizes the problem at hand. It is as if there is an unwillingness to set in stone the laws that determine what science fiction is. Such a

task certainly has its entrapments and falls short of an all-encompassing genre definition. Still, we seem to be overwhelmed by the necessity of affirming that there is something called science fiction, to which certain themes and tropes specifically belong.

Even when the starting point in genre discussion is that SF is indefinable or subjectively defined, the fact alone that these and other prominent critics are compelled to discuss the topic attests to Derrida's assertion that the taxonomic categorization of the written work is at the same time an imperative of inclusion and exclusion:

[...] a text cannot belong to no genre, it cannot be without or less a genre. Every text participates in one or several genres, there is no genreless text; there is always a genre and genres, yet such participation never amounts to belonging. And not because of an abundant overflowing or a free, anarchic, and unclassifiable productivity, but because of the *trait* of participation itself, because of the effect of the code and of the generic mark. Making genre its mark, a text demarcates itself. (Derrida et al. 65)

Derrida's deconstruction of the genre, incidentally, answers some of the issues involved in defining SF as such – which may not be that surprising since Derrida's lecture is not focused on any genre in specific, but on the concept of genre itself. Foremost is the mentioned principle of participation. Following Derrida's concept, the trait of pure participation, as with pure presence, is an impossibility. There is no pure form of a genre where these texts that we want to call SF would perfectly fall, to the exclusion of all others. For Derrida, this would be true in any genre designation, but is all the more clear in SF if we consider that it is an eminently promiscuous "genre". Let us take the concurrent examples of Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend* (1954) and Jack Finney's *The Body Snatchers* (1955). The first presents a post-apocalyptic world ravaged by a plague that has turned most of the world's population into vampires. The second tells the story of an alien invasion where people are replaced by ersatz humans, the infamous "pod people". Both seem to be comfortably within the scope of the SF genre; both are set in an

unknowable future; both employ scientific tropes that make the text seem “cognitive”; both seem to embody the anxieties of the “communist menace” of America in the fifties through the use of people who are not actually people, but living among us and set on destroying our society. However, it is unquestionable that these novels come in the greatest Lovecraftian lineage of horror fiction – or what Derrida would deem as a “parasitic economy” – with uncanny antagonists such as these. Lovecraft himself could be considered an author of contaminated genres, since texts such as "At the Mountains of Madness" (1936), which tells the story of a group of scientists who uncover an ancient alien civilization in Antarctica, effortlessly hinges between the SF of the space invaders, the fantasy of a quest into an ancient civilization and the horror of the killing monster. All of these genres can be considered as categories of participation in which all texts, particularly those in the SF tradition, are “taking part without belonging – a taking part in, without being part of, without having membership in a set” (Derrida et al. 59)

In fact, the designation itself that Gernsback invented to found the genre can be seen as the ultimate expression of contamination. Gernsback commitment to produce a new breed of literature according to distinctive traits of his own was such that he even took upon himself to determine that “the ideal proportion of a scientifiction story should be seventy-five per cent literature interwoven with twenty-five percent science” (qtd. in Westfahl, *The Mechanics of Wonder* 39).

Considering SF’s inconvenient genesis, due mostly to the connection of the designation “Science Fiction” with Gernsback and the pulp magazines popular in the early twentieth century, the defence of this kind of writing as legitimate literature has become a quest of sorts in the late twentieth century up to this day. There is still some concern whether a text should be branded as SF or not, lest it be deemed as inferior

writing. Clute addresses this problem by underlining the stigmatization that SF has had since its pedestrian beginnings and how this preconception does not affect other genres: “They can be read in public by adults, not because they are particularly worth being read in public by adults, but because they carry no mark of Cain.” (Clute). Clute gives striking examples of how the conception of the genre is so ingrained as something of lesser worth. As has already been mentioned, authors such as P.D. James and Atwood reject entirely that their work should be classified as SF and certain publishers can only conceive marketing SF novels as an impulse purchase of pubescent male teens.

Atwood’s controversial stance that her science fiction novels do not belong in the science fiction genre is perhaps the more notorious. In an attempt to tackle LeGuin’s criticism that “She doesn’t want the literary bigots to shove her into the literary ghetto.” (Guin “The Year of The Flood by Margaret Atwood”), Atwood frames the problem as one of categorization. Atwood’s conception of science fiction has been, for the most part, that of “things that could not possibly happen”, a trait that she opposes to “things that really could happen but just hadn’t completely happened when the authors wrote the books.” (Atwood 6). It is curious to note then that, according to Westfahl, Gernsback’s definition of SF as a genre precisely what Atwood considers to be the opposite of SF: “science fiction consists of fiction, fact, and a third element which is itself a mixture of fiction and fact.” (Westfahl, *The Mechanics of Wonder* 40).

These kinds of oppositions in defining the genre actually reinforce Derrida’s law of genre and Atwood eventually comes to this conclusion on her own without the help of Derrida, which further validates the strong presence of promiscuity in SF: “Bendiness of terminology, literary gene-swapping, and inter-genre visiting has been going on in the SF world – loosely defined – for some time.” (Atwood 7)

Still, in Atwood's defence, Clute does note that "All SF, good or bad, is marketed in the same way, so the trash is just as visible as the good stuff." (Clute), which, in itself, somehow denotes a sense of a genre called science fiction that may be problematic to "serious" writers. More than a historical or stylistic delimitation, it becomes a category of quality.

Perhaps a direct consequence of linking genre to quality is the struggle to oppose this same perception. If trash is one of the traits of science fiction, then it follows that any author aspiring to write something other than trash will not be writing science fiction. It is, therefore, unsurprising that, in order to escape this premise, critical theory focusing on SF directs so many of its efforts into establishing a genre. Aside from the already mentioned need to set the boundaries of its object of study, there is additional instigation to dismiss the charge of lower quality as a trait inherent to the genre. These two aspects seem to have brought a level of polarization in inscribing the genre. On one end, defining SF in the broadest terms lacks consensus and becomes, for the most part, contradictory and ineffective, as authors like Freedman (2000) note. On the other end, critics such as Mendlesohn (2003) and Roberts (2000) offer the premise that the concept of the genre is universally defined. The result of these perspectives is similar: We begin with the now unavoidable task of defining science fiction as genre and reach a conclusion that any such definition will either be too restrictive to be consensual or even usable or so broad that it becomes impalpable.

What is in fact being accomplished – and perhaps rightly so – is the structuring of the genre itself by its definition. As Derrida explains, "genre-designations cannot be simply part of the corpus" (Derrida et al. 65). Under this view, although definitions of SF – or of any other genre – attempt to establish a corpus, they are external to it. Their purpose, in

the example given by Derrida can easily be applied to any genre: the designation science fiction is not science fictional, “it does not, in whole or in part, take part in the corpus whose denomination it nevertheless imparts. Nor is it simply extraneous to the corpus. [...] It gathers together the corpus and, at the same time, in the same blinking of an eye, keeps it from closing” (Derrida et al. 65). As Derrida explains, to create and define the genre is a necessity, since a text cannot go “genreless”. However, any attempt to define it – such as the one being made here – declasses it, as we have already seen. The reason why it seems that SF in particular fits so well with what Derrida puts forward may be connected to how the genre was “invented” by Gernsback. In a similar way to More’s “Utopia”, “scientifiction” created a name for a group of traits that were clearly already present in authors such as H.G. Wells, Edgar Rice Burroughs and Jules Verne. The term then bears the mark of fluid concepts that leave nothing but a trace by being used in this manner – After all, science fictional texts are only scientific in the most fluid sense. By finding the pragmatic solution of attaching the word “science” to name the desired genre is yet another confirmation that this may be a trace that holds open a generic category for texts to pass through.

Nevertheless, however debatable concurrent definitions of SF may be, Suvin’s contribution to the characterization of the genre has become generally consensual and is a common reference to any discussion on the subject. Suvin’s most productive concept lies in his observation that science fiction often demonstrates a unique propensity in employing what he termed as the novum (Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* 17). As Tom Shippey defines it, Suvin’s novum is “a discrete piece of information recognizable as not true, but also as not-unlike-true, not-flatly-(in the current state of knowledge)-impossible.” (Shippey 14). The central narrative trait of the science fiction narrative is, in fact, its descriptive and “realistic” discourse on an evidently imagined

subject matter. The use of these narrative traits that resound as alien but plausible to the reader, however predominant or subdued, seem to be a productive way of creating a sense of alienness, or a particular set of imagery that plays an important symbolical role in the dynamics of the science fictional text.

This often results in creations that present utopian constructs either as a pivotal aspect of the narrative, on which all other elements depend, or as a form of setting that enhances the foregrounding narrative. Utopia, in its strictest sense, resembles a form of exercise, with political and/or socio-cultural message to be drawn. We are presented with a social order that is superficially different from our experience. While we may be drawn to the exotic nature of this wholly different society, there is the inevitable comparison with our own realities. At the core of any utopia, therefore, there is both the *novum*, signaling the reader that the described topos is indeed foreign, and the symbolical undertones of self-representation, which project the narrative to the plane of a metaphor. Consequently, we can view the presence of utopia in science fiction in a broader and more prevalent sense, since science fiction itself may be defined by its maneuvering of non-existing/metonymical realities. In this sense, science-fictional utopia is not only an alien society or a future world order, but also its individual elements against which we measure ourselves. Utopia, science fiction and the *novum* alike work by comparison.

One of the most significant aspects in studying the SF text is precisely the paradox of its attempt to be concrete while describing the unreal. Again, as before, Suvin's contribution in this matter was essential. The main element of the *novum* and a central trope present in SF is what he denominates as "cognitive estrangement": "In the following paper I shall argue for a definition of SF as *the literature of cognitive estrangement*." (Suvin, "On the Poetics of the Science Fiction Genre" 372). According to Suvin, SF

generally and purposefully places the reader in a foreign context in the Brechtian sense, as it asks the reader to invest in the employed imagery “as if” it were consistent with our empirical experience. In this regard, the SF text, through its unique devices, connects the palpable to the illusory, which is clearly visible when a particular narrative, which, by any standard, would essentially be defined as belonging to some type of realism, presents some non-existent reality or empirical impossibility. The “science” in science fiction is but a denomination of the type of discourse that the reader seems to expect from the text: an eminently empirical and rooted textual form, one which is then conversely paired with the estrangement that the genre also develops. It is not, in this regard, the embodiment of clinical rigorousness in a fictional extrapolation of the future (as much as the history of science fiction is entwined with that of Speculative Fiction). In essence, the term “science” itself seems a discursive marker rather than a true category.

At this juncture it is relevant to point out that Suvin’s seminal concepts, while embraced and built upon by many in the field, haven’t been unanimously met without any detractors. The central trouble with a concept like cognitive estrangement is that, in its role as the defining trait of a genre it essentially glosses over a significant portion of texts and even relevant aspects within a text. According to McGuirk, with Suvin’s model, characterization is downplayed in favour of the setting, which quickly becomes problematic when we look at texts with a predominance of characterization:

Darko Suvin’s model of the “novum” as the narrative element producing the essential characteristic of sf (“cognitive estrangement”) also results in turning critical attention not only predominantly but well nigh exclusively to the ideas (rather than the people) in a story. (McGuirk 150)

There are numerous examples where McGuirk’s misgivings could be noted, not limited to space operas and character driven texts. Indeed, if one takes this concept to the

extreme, character development can only emerge out of some encounter with the novum, which certainly must not be an absolute observation. While a concept like the novum is invaluable to create new ways of figuring a key element present in most SF, it seems clear that it needn't be the *only* element, or the definable trope whose presence or absence alternatively grants or denies entrance into a certain genre. As we have seen, Luckhurst prominently indicates that this has been the case by assessing the evolution of SF criticism and what he views as Suvin's "double legacy" of both conceptualizing SF in a critical way and imposing a "one size fits all" prescription unto a possibly more variegated genre:

Suvin's definition is, however, a profoundly prescriptive and judgmental formulation that often berates SF works for failing to measure up. Books are policed for the rigour of their cognition: they must avoid tropes of the Gothic or Fantasy. (Luckhurst 7)

Luckhurst's reservations are central to the ways SF has been conceptualized as a genre. A proponent of the necessity of analyzing SF under a more historicist light, Luckhurst legitimately argues that "Historians of SF need [...] to be less judgemental and prescriptive" (Luckhurst 9). His criticism is based mainly on the way SF literature is advocated by those concerned in studying it. As we have seen above, Clute addresses this issue directly when talking about the editorial perception of SF as a bastardized genre that drains credibility out of anyone who touches it. It is also fairly common to find some sort of defense or rationalization – or even denial – by authors writing fiction best described as science fiction. Phillip K. Dick himself expressed his feelings regarding this matter on more than one occasion:

In reading my stories, you should bear in mind that most were written when science fiction was so looked down upon that it virtually was not there, in the eyes of all America. This was not funny, the derision felt toward SF writers. It made our lives wretched. Even in Berkeley – or specially in Berkeley – people would say 'but are you writing anything serious?'. We made no money, few publishers published science fiction [...]; and really cruel abuse

was inflicted upon us. To select science-fiction writing as a career was an act of self-destruction [...].(Dick, *The Shifting Realities of Philip K. Dick* 93)

In this regard, it becomes apparent that the issue of defending SF from “high culture” judgment is still fertile ground and, moreover, has always been at the tip of the tongue of those involved with the genre – from writers to readers. Therefore, Luckhurst’s argument also holds true regarding how, in defining a SF genre, critics can become proponents of only the traits that give it mainstream credibility. Strictly delineating where the genre ends and begins is a legitimate concern, as it is often done at the expense of writing that does not fit neatly under the proposed definition. This is the case when we dismiss the relevance of pulps and their contribution to the genre’s style and themes. This is also the case when we consider that, as Luckhurst points out, Suvin’s conception of cognitive estrangement, flatly rules out any science fiction text that has a hint of the Gothic or Fantastic (since it violates the rule of being cognitive, i.e. empirically plausible).

Still, these concepts do not become less useful by virtue of having themselves been created within a certain context. It may even be compelling in its own right to analyze how a corpus of literature has motivated the introduction of concepts that act as strong forms of protection and backlash against such a dismissed genre. Luckhurst states that “it is time we stopped doing this” (Luckhurst 9), implying that rigidly defending a specific notion of the genre in order to make it “worthy” was only appropriate when the SF text was emerging out of the pulp magazines and into the realm of “serious” literature. More recently (*Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* was written in 1979), Suvin himself has, himself, acknowledged some of the criticism directed towards his concept over the years:

Why bother describing just *this* matter from just *that* aspect. I have been quite rightly accused of committing this heinous sin in *Metamorphoses*. I hope it makes that book similar to what every fiction writer does: a narration with a

barely concealed system of tropes subtending both description and evaluation.
(Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* 5)

Suvin constructs, after all, a utopia of his own – the desire for a perfect model. Therefore, while it is adequate not to be prescriptive in positing one's own readings of the text, notions such as Suvin's novum may still prove useful in linking SF to other theory. Clearly, the position taken here so far is one somewhere in between Suvin's prescription of the novum and Luckhurst's stance based on cultural history. On the one hand, using key concepts is indeed essential, since it establishes a starting point in reading these texts. On the other hand, it is incredibly relevant to delve into aspects such as pulps, their readership, how both created and shaped what we now call science fiction and, in this case, the way in which they can be analysed within a broader notion of utopia as the one here posited. We can, therefore, now recognize the substantial SF theory produced from the 1950s onwards while still not overlooking the relevance of what a historicist view may have to add. Since cultural history is closer to a materialist approach of how these texts reflect particular ideologies, its resources in looking at the texts might show us something about the evolution of the form, rather than asserting principles of inclusion or exclusion in a genre.

Tracing an evolution of the "genre" and how we have talked about it is but a starting point in connecting SF to other theory and utopian studies in particular. However, in the process of analysing utopia and science fiction in their use of symbolism, metonymy and the novum, it seems relevant to examine what distinguishes SF from other forms, or what we mean when we say something belongs to the science fiction "category". Clearly, as we have seen, this discussion is still being held today by the criticism concerned with pinpointing and defining science fiction as a genre. We may now be at fault for addressing an issue whose end results have proven debatable and concerning ourselves with the

activity of defining the genre. Still, one can reasonably argue that concepts such as the novum are particularly useful in connecting science fiction to other strands of thought and texts in Theory. It is, as we have seen from Derrida, a necessity in order to work with the material, position it and differentiate it from others. It is a mark of participation and not of exclusive inclusion.

When we delve into SF texts and ask what their main concerns are, we often find common ground in the unusual way they attempt to connect with the cultural mindsets of their time. SF seems to be the genre that most overtly (and even copiously expositive at times) concerns itself with ontological questions in a broad sense. It is regularly credited of analysing and manipulating ideas of existing under different sets of conditions while using outlandish images of estrangement (to borrow Suvin's term) to do so. However, we must not overlook the fact that, when SF appears to be universalizing ontological issues, there are always contextual aspects to be considered. For example, we may rightly consider that Asimov's texts often attempt to identify human actions and interactions as yet another equation that will be resolvable by science. However, in doing so, it would be ill advised to overlook his strong bias towards the technocratic in an age marked by the idea that science and engineering would be the purveyors of utopias.

Even though this may be, of course, somewhat of a generalization, estrangement in its broader sense may be a productive way to formalize some of this genre's particularities. As mentioned above, most SF does not straightforwardly imply an extrapolation of things to come, but a representation of assorted conditions that exist at the time of the texts themselves. Whether or not SF criticizes its contemporary structures, it certainly addresses them symbolically, much in the same way that More's *Utopia* is more connected to the political outlook of sixteenth century Europe rather than an

imagined island somewhere in the Americas. However, critics like Clute suggest that the general cultural perception of what SF is seems to be the opposite – that SF is more principally concerned with fancies of the imagination projected into the future. At the same time, we rely on that unspoken definition of SF that Mendlesohn (2000) outlines to frame the genre and, as Clute would argue, artificially impose a cultural and creative barrier by doing so: “So genres do exist because frequent users of any large bookstore can instantly tell what any piece of fiction is supposed to be about by its title, its cover and its location in the shop.” (Clute) This less elegant albeit more practical solution to the problem of defining SF actually comes closer to Derrida’s law of genre. There are traits for which a significant portion of readers has a good grasp, enough to expect the participation of certain books in certain shelves instead of others. Surprisingly, this would not only give a certain validity to Atwood’s concerns – after all, Atwood is simply identifying certain traits upon which to build a genre that she calls science fiction – but would also pose no hindrance to the more critically oriented attempts to create a conceptual framework for science fictional texts.

Therefore, despite all possible questioning of assumptions made regarding science fiction, in the study of Science Fiction Studies we can at the very least acknowledge that the contributions of scholars such as Suvin and Luckhurst have given considerable reason to shift away from Clute’s concerns that SF has been treated as a lesser genre. Fortunately, there is now a vast field of criticism to choose from and the area of Science Fiction Studies has become a solid critical stage to stand on. Unsurprisingly, these critical high standards that we now see ourselves in have taken care of providing a vast support in linking SF to theory which enables us to reference Marx, Lacan or Fourier when talking about Galactic Empires, robots and precognition. A number of other theories are now available to enhance the conceptualization of science fiction and where it figures as a contemporary

genre. Therefore, the path of linking Utopia to Science Fiction has been made much less turbulent than a mere thirty years ago. Aside from the theory that can be invited in to analyse the relationship between the utopian and the science fictional modalities, there are, in fact, critical authors who touch on this matter. Jameson's *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (2005) would be a prominent example.²⁰ Additionally, and in connection to the politics of utopian texts, SF might be reasonably conceived under a counter-historical approach, as it frequently envisages a "fictional history" that relates more to our own past and present than to some alien or future civilization that gives us some sense of detached awe. Notions of Realism and History, such as those presented by Lukács, among others, can bring to light how the science fictional narrative clearly demonstrates by practice what historicizing is. Finally, the image of humanity, in SF offers renewed possibilities of investigation within recent theory, particularly in the conceptualization of the human as unknowable to itself, continually searching for its identity in the Other, for which the construction of utopia is the definitive example.

Perhaps, in defining the genre, we have brought it closer to other genres. This tendency can be seen in authors such as Kurt Vonnegut and Doris Lessing that wrote works which could straightforwardly be considered SF, regardless of any pressure to be classified otherwise:

When a revered non-SF writer such as Doris Lessing publishes a series of books -- the "Canopus in Argos" sequence -- which she is perfectly happy to

²⁰ Incidentally, Jameson's work did not prove as fruitful to this dissertation as was initially thought, mainly due to the fact that it is, for the most part, a collection of previously published essays and a revisit to his fundamental article "Progress versus Utopia; or, Can We Imagine the Future" (1982).

call SF, reviewers on both sides of the Atlantic rush to her “defense” insisting that it's anything but. (Clute)

The fact that the notion of SF has been reworked into a “respectable” object of discussion is further supported, when contemporary criticism and theory has been consistently used not only to chart the emergence of the type of literature we tend to designate as being SF, but also to examine the relevance of SF in contemporary critical literary theory. Notably, SF has served scholars by illustrating certain aspects of their theories. Jameson has been involved with the study of SF authors as Dick or Le Guin to elaborate on his own thinking. Moreover, it is inevitable to consider that Jameson’s deep-rooted investment in discussing the position of utopia in SF and their political and cultural values stems from his work on Marxism and the postmodern.

Postmodern criticism has indeed shown plenty of interest in SF from the outset, as it offered a much needed source of literary illustrations to the themes that postmodern authors attempt to address. Still, a postmodern reading of the SF novel is not without its inconsistencies, the prime example being how Baudrillard actually uses Dick in *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981) to illustrate some of his assertions on the simulacra and the hyperreal. The problem arises, as Rosa (2008) sees it, when Baudrillard chooses *The Simulacra* (1964) to substantiate his point, which, despite its title, may not be the best example of the baudrillardian simulacra in Dick. In fact, for a novel that centrally focuses on a dystopia where the political status quo is maintained by a collusion between corporatism and the political apparatus, the matter of having a fake First Couple in office is somewhat downplayed in the scope of the narrative. Rosa notes that “[t]his is even more perplexing if we take into account the fact that other novels, such as *Ubik* and *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (1965), could have served as finer illustrations for his expression “the hole of the real” (“trou du reel”).” (Rosa 64) Still, the fact remains that

the concepts that Baudrillard attempts to capture in *The Simulacra* are indeed strongly represented not only in Dick but in other SF writers as well. “Sloppy reading” aside, as Rosa surmises, the link between the postmodern and SF remains.

Possibly a more fortunate example of how Dick is used in the postmodernist camp is McHale’s own influential work, *Postmodernist Fiction* (1987), where he devotes a large portion of the book to the deep connections between SF and postmodernism. For McHale, as stated here, science fiction in general is centrally focused on the ontological dichotomy between real conditions of existence and the fictionalized ones that serve as a counterpoint to reality. This is appropriately useful, since the ontological narrative is precisely what McHale considers to be the fundamental concern for the postmodern text (as opposed to the epistemology of modernism). In fact, McHale holds such a strong belief in the contamination of the SF genre by postmodernism (and vice-versa) that it leads him to consider that they have the same fundamental issues at their core, to the point of deeming them as “sister-genres” (McHale 59). More specifically, it is because of the approach to an estranged narratives in a sort of play on reality that the genre lends itself to the discussion of whether or not it has a propensity towards the postmodern.

Clearly the ontological motivation may vary depending on the text, and SF is no exception – a novel such as Asimov’s *The Caves of Steel* (1953) may demonstrate a level of interest in the ontological by pitting human morality against its robotic counterpart, but it is also somewhat connected to the epistemological trace of the detective novel: With two detectives investigating a crime, one human and one robot, the text is linear in the quest to find who did it, but strays away when toying with the human detective’s worldview. But the fact remains that the estrangement is still present, and not merely as a consequence of the text being literary, as McHale points out, but because it offers a

“projection of a world different from our own yet, as Suvin and Scholes both specify, in confrontation with our world” (McHale 60).

This is perhaps the main reason why Suvin’s conceptualization of SF became so fundamental from the outset, as it stirs a discussion between SF, utopia and the postmodern. Notwithstanding, Suvin’s attempt at defining the genre through cognitive estrangement is not without its limitations, as we have seen by Luckhurst’s criticism. The problem lies in the way that Suvin uses Shklovsky’s concept of defamiliarization and Brecht’s estrangement to define his own application of the term in connection to SF. The issue lies in the fact that the original estrangement as used by Shklovsky and, later, Brecht is somewhat divergent from Suvin’s appropriation of the term to describe an aesthetic device that produces a prolonged artistic experience (for Shklovsky) or that forces the audience to critically acknowledge that the fiction is fiction and not actually taking place (for Brecht). However, this is not how Suvin appropriates the term, focusing on the idea that the worlds described in SF are estranged from the reader’s perspective, rather than the textual mode or literary devices themselves. As Parrinder notes,

For Suvin, by contrast, estrangement in fiction is first and foremost a matter of choosing a plot that is non-realistic in the sense that it is determined by the *novum*. [...] What has popular fiction about spaceships to do with the dynamics of artistic innovation using experimental shock tactics to defamiliarize perception? (Parrinder 39)

Even though Parrinder is exaggerating the concept of SF as “popular fiction about spaceship” to illustrate his point – not all SF is popular fiction nor exclusively about spaceships – the fact remains that is the essential difficulty with Suvin’s cognitive estrangement. As much as it would be encouraging to imagine that SF incorporates a stylistic level of estrangement following a programmatic intention, most examples of SF are far from the poetics of Russian Formalism. Suvin’s theory makes sense only as a trope

in the narrative and, even then, there is room to consider that the plot does not estrange the reader in the Brechtian sense, instead it asks the reader to immerse himself into the strange. When, in Asimov's *The Caves of Steel*, the reader discovers an imagined future world where agoraphobia and overpopulation determine the interactions of every character, there is a play between the author and the reader where Asimov deliberately teases the reader with the desired strangeness. For example, in the beginning of the novel, it is not entirely clear that the letter R. in some characters' names stands for Robot. What we are offered are the interactions that demonstrate feelings of resentment and uneasiness by their human counterparts:

“The boss wants you, Like. Right away. Soon as you come in.”

“All right.”

R. Sammy turned on his heel and left to go about his duties. Baley wondered irritably why those same duties couldn't be done by a man. (Asimov, *The Caves of Steel* 9)

As we can see, although the poetics of Asimov is structured around the intention to “hook” the reader, rather than to make him problematize the very substance of the text, there is indeed an estranging element in deliberately presenting something outside of the reader's empirical experience. Suvin actually touches this topic as one of the elements of SF, calling it an “interest in a strange newness, a *novum*”(Suvin, “On the Poetics of the Science Fiction Genre” 373), a designation with an equally large foothold in SF Studies as that of cognitive estrangement.

Spiegel's solution to this question is to consider that the mode of the SF genre is actually one of inclusion, or “naturalization”, as he calls it. In opposition to Suvin, Spiegel asserts that “[o]n a formal level, sf does not estrange the familiar, but rather makes the

strange familiar.”(Spiegel 372). Spiegel’s argument is, indeed compelling, as it is true that an author such as Asimov shows interest in creating a world that pleases the readers and makes them want to return for further instalments. Therefore, there may be, at least on a certain level of negotiated expectations between the author and his reader base, a familiarizing effect. However, what Spiegel and, to a lesser degree, Parrinder, deny to Suvin’s cognitive estrangement is the possibility that both Shklovsky and Brecht saw estrangement as a process of a wider breadth in their cultures. The fact that Brecht created a productive means of formally expressing estrangement in his plays, does not preclude that estrangement should be expressed, even if with a diminished sense of aesthetical intentionality. In “Art as Technique”, Shklovsky states not only that “The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known”(Shklovsky 16) but, more crucially, that “I personally feel that defamiliarization is found almost everywhere form is found” (Shklovsky 18). These two statements illustrate Shklovsky’s position that defamiliarization can also be an organic consequence in art to cope with habituation, a process that, for example in Tolstoy, is found when describing an object as if it were seen for the first time. In SF, that object *is* seen for the first time by the reader or, in alternative, an object that is familiar to the reader is defamiliarized in the context of the narrative. To use *The Caves of Steel* once more, Baley’s superior, the Commissioner, is described as an eccentric who collects artefacts from the reader’s time:

The Commissioner smiled. ‘I had this arranged specially last year, Lije. I don’t think I’ve showed it to you before. Come over here and take a look. In

the old days, all rooms had things like this. They were called ‘windows.’ Did you know that?’

Baley knew that very well, having viewed many historical novels.

‘I’ve heard of them,’ he said.

‘Come here.’

Baley squirmed a bit, but did as he was told. There was something indecent about the exposure of the privacy of a room to the outside world. Sometimes the Commissioner carried his affectation of Medievalism to a rather foolish extreme.

Like his glasses, Baley thought.

That was it! That was what made him look wrong!

This is a very conspicuous example of Shklovsky’s point. In this excerpt, windows are thoroughly defamiliarized as “indecent” openings that expose people’s homes. The fact that our contemporary objects appear on the future world of this fiction immediately defamiliarizes them to us. And this is a process that runs in both directions, since the unfamiliar landscape of the SF novel can be seen as disruptive of our own. The SF text may not have these political projects in mind, which is not the same as saying that they have no influence in the texts at all.

Finally, in addressing the problem of rejecting Formalism in SF, we run the risk of circumventing the possibility that there may be level of estrangement going on between the reader and the text in SF. Spiegel states that “Formalism, as well as structuralism, both have a blind spot when it comes to fictional worlds; they do not provide proper tools to describe the ontology of a fictional universe. (Spiegel 372)”. While this may be true and, in fact, the core issue with Suvin’s prescriptive nature, the ontology of the SF text is

not isolated from the ontology of the author or of the reader. As readers – more so as fans – we may become familiar with the ontology of the text, but this does not interfere with the willingness to feel estranged, or the pleasure of the uncanny, as Royle would put it. It can be in the interplay between these two concomitant ontologies that the estrangement, or diegetic estrangement, to use Spiegel's term, can be drawn. This is particularly true in SF texts that are serialized into several novels set in the same world. We may understandably consider that defamiliarization wanes as novels progress and the novum wears off. However, what, in practical examples, can often be found is a world-building process, a grand narrative that attempts to prolong the desire for the utopian as far as the reader is willing to bear. Therefore, even though one would imagine that these texts would decrease in their estrangements, the motivations behind the texts may actually be of maintaining the estrangement for as long as possible, thus falling in line with Shklovsky's assertion that art should increase the length of perception "because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged." (Shklovsky 16)

3.1 SCIENCE FICTIONAL SERIALIZATION AS UTOPIA

Many authors in addition to the already mentioned have become extremely prominent in their own right due to their construction of a cohesive and structured world, using recurrent themes and settings and building on them over numerous novels. Of the authors in discussion here, both Asimov and Herbert accomplished this with three of the most successful series in SF: Asimov's *Foundation* and *Robot* Series and Herbert's *Dune* Series. There are numerous other examples, of course. Aldiss adds Arthur C. Clarke and Robert Heinlein to a list of "an SF Super League" (Aldiss and Wingrove 444) and, incidentally, both authors have their contribution to the SF Series, Clarke with the *Space Odyssey* series and Heinlein with an ongoing process of connecting different novels in the same world. In a sort of tribute to Edgar Rice Burroughs' *Barsoom* Series, Heinlein

recounts the adventures of Lazarus Long throughout five novels which connect to the larger scope of his *Future History* Series and other standalone novels.

Other examples of serialization include Dan Simmons' *Hyperion Cantos*, a collection of four novels and various short stories, and Iain M Banks' *Culture* Series, spanning nine novels from 1987 to 2012. But the construction of a consistent world spanning hundreds of thousands of pages in an almost encyclopedic fashion can be seen in more extreme examples such as in Larry Niven's *Ringworld* Series, a collection of thirteen novels and assorted stories written between 1965 and 2012 and Lois McMaster Bujold's *Vorkosigan Saga*, which spans across fifteen novels and six novellas spanning between 1986 and 2012. Bujold's example is of particular interest, since it largely thrives on deliberately allowing assorted genres to contaminate the novels. Therefore, while the series as a whole could be considered a space opera in the vein of *Star Wars*, some novels lean towards the adventure novel, while others are more strongly concerned with the militaristic components. *A Civil Campaign* (1999), for the most part, can be considered a play on the historical romance novel that would best be described as a Jane Austen novel on an alien planet, while many of the other novels in the series focus on the socio-political issues of the Saga's worlds. As we can see, the postmodern is in full effect within this series alone. There is self-referentiality, fragmentation of the novel, historiographical metafiction, parody and even a transhistorical party. Concurrently to all of this, Bujold consistently employs the utopian by constructing a different utopia for each new planet ushered in across the novels. As a grand scale narrative, the *Vorkosigan Saga* partly becomes a taxonomy of utopias under the same universe.

In this regard, the serialized science fiction novel seems to have a devoted interest in consistently presenting other social and political orders and revisiting that setting across

as many volumes as possible. As the authors further contribute to a continually expanding narrative set under the original background and based on the same principles, one cannot overlook the impact of reader demand and influence on the publication history of these serialized works. As Nicholls notes:

The popular slicks and the pulps were both part of a magazine-publishing revolution beginning in the 1880s, in which mass-distribution techniques and greatly increased advertising allowed the dropping of prices. [...] literacy was becoming nearly universal, population was increasing at an alarming rate [...], modern technology was on the whole leading to more leisure, and there were as yet no cinema to offer opposition in the telling of stories. As a consequence, magazine circulations became massive towards the end of the century, over half a million in the most successful cases. (Clute and Nicholls 979)

This type of serialization with further novels as a constant work in progress is a well-established tradition in science fiction and owes a great deal to the SF magazine format. As pulp publications required a steady stream of original writing, it would not be uncommon to commission stories that would spread across several issues. In this respect, marketing concerns clearly become the priority: If a given type of short story sells more copies, then certainly others will follow. Readership can always be assured by extending a narrative into a serial, distributed in instalments. This process is unsurprisingly straightforward and established itself both the pulp magazines and the radio serials that had their height during the same period. Perhaps the most well-known example of a juxtaposition of novel and radio serialization in SF is Orson Welles' infamous adaptation of H. G. Wells' *The War of The Worlds* (1898) as a series of fictional newscasts during his radio serial "Mercury Theatre On The Air" (1938) that generated widespread panic. However, this radio show in particular focused on the adaptation of renowned novels, from Dickens to Conrad. This type of transition was not at all unusual in other forms, and indeed both plays and serials removed from mystery, detective and horror pulps were readily translated into radio broadcasts. There was a fast moving shift in demand for this

particular type of outlet and the adaptation from text to radio completed the package of music, entertainment and news broadcast. Early examples like these demonstrate the already growing trend at the time, due to what was then the birth of multimedia content.

As Greb and Adams describe:

[...] radio stations sprang up everywhere and audiences sprang up with them. It was a boom of a new industry. People were astonished by radio broadcasting, which like magic brought news and entertainment into their homes no matter where they lived. Talk, music and entertainment came through the air, it was free to everyone and it could be picked up simply by procuring an easy-to-operate receiving set. (Greb and Adams 145)

As public interest grew, so did the variety of broadcast material. Here, the radio drama emerges as a way to broadcast plays, adapted to abridged versions and even serialized to suit this new medium. According to two magazines of the time, by the end of 1923 the first regular radio drama is being broadcast, directed by Edward H. Smith on WGY and focused on translating theatre into this new medium:

Edward H. Smith, an actor of professional experience, conceived the idea of adapting a play to meet the specific needs of play broadcasting and to solve the problems it presented. He suggested this to Kolin Hager, studio director of WGY, the General Electric Company's station at Schenectady. The idea appealed to Mr. Hager, who stipulated, however, that the play must not take more than forty minutes, as it was to be only one of several features of the program, and the interest of the radio public in such an effort was problematical. (Huntley 25)²¹

These incursions gained a satisfactory public appeal, as the articles attest, WGY claiming that the players' rendering of Wilson Barret's *The Sign of the Cross* granted

²¹ Huntley, C. H. "Tricks Used in Staging Invisible Shows." *Radio Broadcast* Nov 1923 : 24-28. Print. There is another strikingly similar article in Meenam, W. T. "Backstage with 'Radio Mike' *Popular Science*" Sept 1924 : 68. Print. It may be relevant to note that Huntley's article is unapologetically self-promoting, since Huntley is billed as a representative from General Electrics, the owner of WGY. However, Meenam's article does not suffer from this possible bias.

them 6.000 letters during Christmas week. The adaptation, therefore, became a remarkably productive means of serializing written work.

Although the emergence of radio broadcast as the forerunner of mass media is well established, its relation with pulps in general, and SF pulps in particular is what concerns us specifically. While it is clear that an exponentially growing number of listeners requires readily available content to fill the airwaves with, it might be less straightforward to conclude that pulps in general, let alone SF pulps, would so directly be adapted to broadcast. This was, in fact, the case. Pulps generally contained serialized narratives, offered in installments mainly to gain readership loyalty and motivation to buy the following issue. This, magazines shared with radio, as serialization fit neatly with the need to pull consistently large numbers of listeners with what were the precursors to television series. Therefore, it is no wonder that more than a few crossovers were made, from pulp to broadcast and back. Even Tarzan and Sherlock Holmes, who had already been adapted from novels to film, were given their radio serials, thus branching out in all accessible formats.²² Regarding science fiction in particular, characters such as Buck Rogers, who is first seen in two short novels published in *Amazing Stories* during 1929, translated well into this new medium.²³ Similarly to Sherlock Holmes, value was found

²² Burrows' character was extensively adapted into all types of outlets, the first film being *Tarzan of the Apes* (1918); Doyle's was first adapted to Broadway in *Sherlock Holmes: A Drama in Four Acts* (1899) and the following year into film in *Sherlock Holmes Baffled* (1900). Both of these and others, such as *The Lone Ranger*, *Nero Wolfe* and *The Shadow* followed the norm of transitioning between radio, print, comic and screen. For an extensive account of notable American serials in the early twentieth century and their multiple reincarnations, see DeForest, Tim. *Storytelling in the pulps, comics, and radio: how technology changed popular fiction in America*. McFarland, 2004. Print.

²³ Nowlan, Philip Francis. "Armageddon-2419 A.D." *Amazing Stories* Aug 1928. And Nowlan, Philip Francis. "The Airlords of Han." Mar 1929. Reprinted as a single novel in Nowlan, Philip Francis. *Armageddon 2419 A.D.* Wildside Press LLC, 2008. Print.

in the character that warranted a crossover onto comic strips, radio and, later, television. It is worth of noting how quickly these types of crossovers were made, particularly in SF. Buck Rogers, in particular, was retooled as a comic strip after six months of “Armageddon-2419 A.D.” and adapted to radio two years later (Montandon 16). The central aspects to this frequent adaptation from one media to the other seem to be, firstly, the availability of material that could be easily adapted in serialized form and, secondly, the appeal of a certain type of content or character that would instil public interest and increase audience numbers.

Still, if radio reached an increasingly larger scale of audience as it became ubiquitous after the 1920’s, perhaps this might not be the only justification for it to prove as a logical extension of SF in particular. There was already present a coupling between technology and written material for pulps that tightens this partnership. The established mail-order commerce that relied on regularly published catalogues and a consolidated curiosity about technical innovation brought forward a desirable target audience for the sale of electronic equipment and schematics. People imbued with the Edisonian spirit that inaugurated the twentieth century would find in these publications the possibility of simultaneously taking advantage of these innovations and sharing the feeling of being themselves “inventors”, as much as Edison and Tesla as they possibly could.²⁴

Even before the first licensed radio stations of the 1920s, magazines such as *Modern Electrics*, created in 1908 by Gernsback, provided the latest developments in technological advancement and offered its readers schematics and mail-ordered radio

²⁴ The term “Edisonian”, in this sense, is used by Luckhurst (93)

components.²⁵ The inclusion of fiction and specialty news articles within these publications can be easily observed in many cases, such as *Modern Electrics*, *Popular Science*, *Radio Broadcast*, *The Wireless Age* and others. Gernsback in particular had several publications in this particular field, no doubt due to his own interests. The articles shifted widely from radio schematics in the early *Modern Electrics* to presenting specialty news and eventually culminating in pure SF, with dedicated publications such as *Amazing Stories*. In this sense, the connection between broadcast and pulps is one of self-reference. One is the extension of the other, both serve as a combined enterprise. Gernsback's case is particularly interesting, since the subject matter with which he was concerned was the technology itself. If magazines such as *Modern Electrics* existed to fulfil the interest in radio advancements and fuel Edisonianism in general, radio broadcast was the most palpable materialization of that same Edisonianism. As Massie & Perry explain:

Many publishers who started radio stations in the 1920s thought of them as subsidiaries of the publishing business. For Gernsback, the connection was perhaps more symbiotic. First, the radio station programs covered topics on which the magazine had published. Conversely, the magazine published word-for-word reprints of interviews heard on the station. Second, Gernsback used WRNY as a broadcasting laboratory to evaluate the usefulness of various radio inventions and reported these inventions to listeners and readers. (Massie and Perry 275)

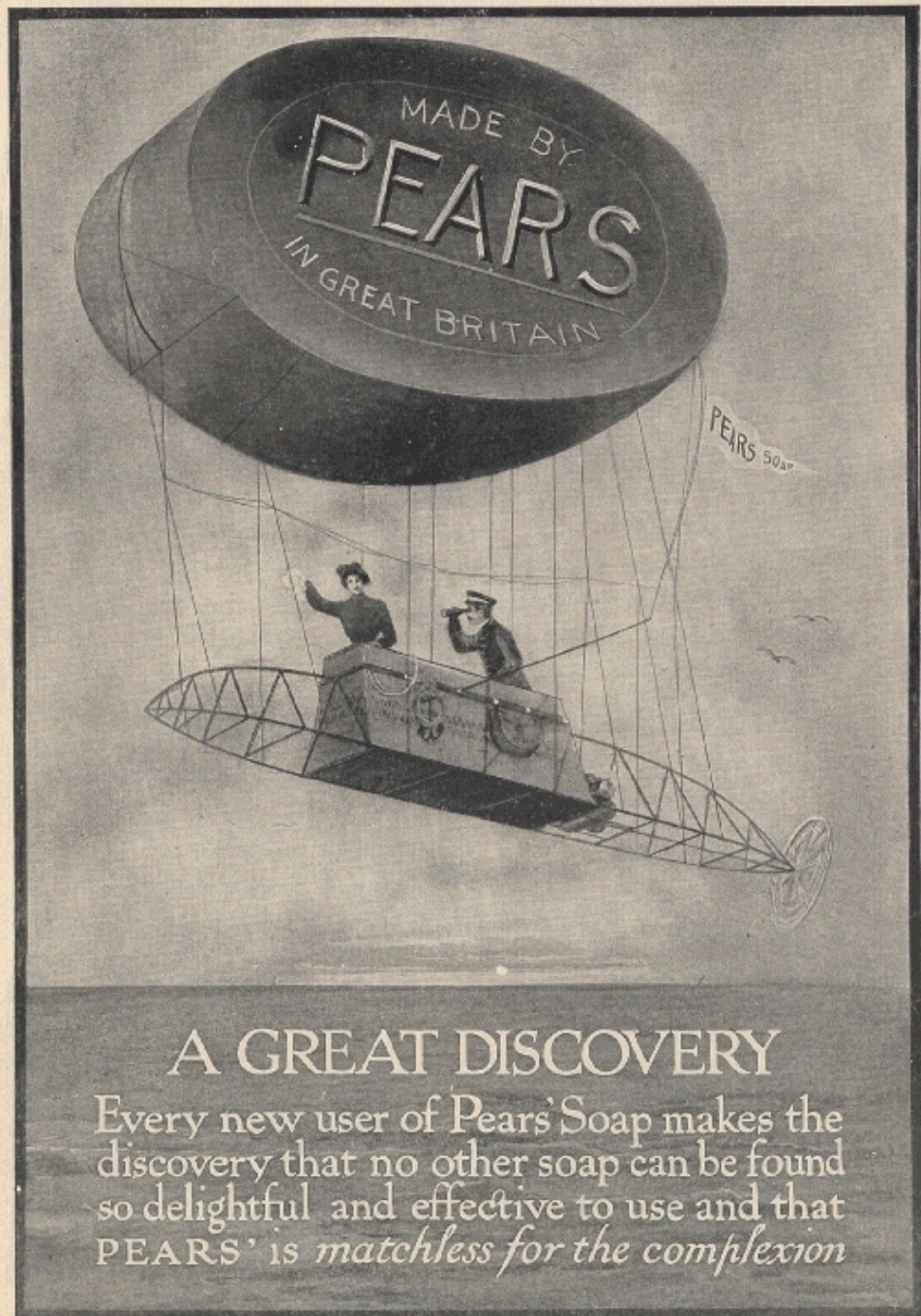
Here, there is a distinct sense that Gernsback and other publishers took advantage of the conditions before them. There was readily available technology that offered the production of massified content and a newfound sense of audience with a variety of interests, hence the multiplication of offerings to match. Gernsback alone published over fifty magazines and pulps, from *Sexology* to *French Humor*, which attests to the

²⁵For a detailed account on Gernsback's endeavours and his influence on the course of science fiction, see Ashley, Mike, Michael Ashley, and Robert A. W. Lowndes. *The Gernsback Days*. Wildside Press LLC, 2004. Print.

emergence of both a publishing/broadcasting industry and an exponentially growing readership/audience.²⁶ Texts became increasingly specialized in scope, ranging from murder mysteries to horror texts and creating a variety of sub-genres in between, with the unavoidable contamination of themes (a good example of this was the case of the Weird Menace sub-genre that was a combination of murder mysteries and horror stories).

These are, perhaps, the main forces behind the serialized narratives that translate so well from pulp to comics to broadcast, therefore, the impact of these circumstances on narrative itself must not be overlooked. On one hand, there was an extremely small step between reporting news on technological advancements that were now miraculously available to the common person and creating extrapolations on what would briefly come next. These are only two types of texts of the many that can still be commonly seen as interchangeable. The fictional was not just in company of an almost indistinguishable factual or speculative text, this was notably pervasive across all other outlets from print to broadcast and cinema. The Edisonian spark was ubiquitous, even in adverts that had little to do with technological advancement. Such was the case with an 1900s ad for Pears' soap clearly in the hopes of cashing in on the spirit of the time, complete with an illustration of two explorers gliding on a Pears' shaped flying machine: "A GREAT DISCOVERY: Every new user of Pears' soap makes the discovery that no other soap can be found so delightful and effective to use" (see Fig. 1).

²⁶ An extensive list of Gernsback's publications can be found in Hugo Gernsback Papers, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library and, alternatively, "<http://www.magazineart.org/publishers/gernsback.html>." *Magazine Art*.



OF ALL SCENTED SOAPS PEARS' OTTO OF ROSE IS THE BEST.
 "All rights secured."

JULY 1906

Fig. 1 "Pears Soap Flying Machine (1906)." Web log post. *Paleo-Future*. N.p., 2 July. 2007. Web.

It is, therefore, unsurprising that the literary narratives should follow suit on this generalized mode.

On the other hand, the attempts to experiment in new narratives that would somehow reach a yet untapped public is inherent to this setting in publishing. Here, once more, the proximity between themes and “genres” in similar publications is exceptionally short and contamination between types of narratives was not only frequent, but even promoted. This can be attested by the proliferation of subgenres such as the ones already discussed. As we have already seen, Lovecraft’s work, although less sought after during his lifetime than today, is still one of the most prominent examples of how horror, fantasy, mystery and science fiction could contribute to a publishable story. A story like “The Dunwich Horror”, complete with an abnormally precocious protagonist, his sorcerer grandfather and the half-alien monster that terrorizes the town, embodied many of Lovecraft’s interests and would find its first publication on the more horror driven *Weird Tales*. “The Colour Out of Space”, which focuses on an alien entity crashed on Earth, was perhaps more suited for Gernsback’s own *Amazing Stories*.²⁷ These and other well-established texts were publishable in many publications that differed only in the attempt to establish a distinct readership.

But, more significantly, they validate Luckhurst’s argument on SF’s more complex heritage and are a clear example for Derrida’s assertion that the genre is inescapably contaminated (and, in turn contaminates) other genres. We can, unquestionably, see these

²⁷ Lovecraft, Howard Phillips. “The Dunwich Horror.” *Weird Tales* Apr 1929 : 481-508. Print. and Lovecraft, Howard Phillips. “The Colour Out of Space.” *Amazing Stories* Sept 1927 : 557-567. Print. Both can currently be found in Lovecraft, Howard Phillips. *An H.P. Lovecraft Anthology: More Than 50 Weird Tales*. Forgotten Books. Print.

foundations even in writers with looser connections outside of the SF canon, as is the case of the ones here in analysis. Asimov's *Robot* Series is clearly influenced by the detective novel, both in its "whodunit" structure and in the investigator characters that resolve the crimes by interrogation techniques and reason alone. Herbert's *Dune* Series is teeming with inhuman creatures and medieval settings that could easily be considered more akin to the horror or gothic novel. Even Dick curiously shares many aspects of Lovecraft's sensibilities for the uncanny, such as the alteration of consciousness and the influence of alien entities in one's reality. The conclusion that must be taken here is not whether these authors were actively attempting to establish their work as a broader type of SF or not.

However, it seems clear that these influences are present and that they stem from the fact that all of these texts coexisted in the same environment as the murder mysteries, weird menace tales and adventure stories. This is yet another aspect that points towards the postmodern in SF. Whether deliberate or simply a constitutive part of the genre's legacy, the contamination process between SF and its neighbouring categories such as the detective novel or the gothic is frequently interfering to and from these extant genres (we have already noted how Bujold employs these extensively and freely in her *Vorkosigan Saga*). Therefore, even from the outset of categorization, SF is eminently intertextual.

The same can be said of the utopian novel. As we have seen, the mode that More establishes with *Utopia* opens the door for intertextuality – something that obviously had always existed, but which More compiled onto an estranging ontology. As Wegner describes,

Fortunately, a great deal of scholarly energy has been devoted to enumerating the specific literary institutions within which More operates and to which he responds in the writing of *Utopia*: among them, the Platonic dialogue, the

pastoral romance, the dialogue of counsel, the satire, and the travel narrative.
(Wegner 28)

The more direct example of this lies in Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (1888) and Morris' *News From Nowhere* (1890). Bellamy's work negotiates some of the realities of his present by throwing a nineteenth century man in the year 2000, where he is faced with a socialist state that would take care of problems such as capitalist-motivated individualism. As a response, Morris, is less than forgiving of how Bellamy attempts to find a middle ground in his utopia, countering with his own, more radical version of a utopian socialist state with the complete dissolution of private possessions and class distinctions.

Another aspect of influence in how the SF text was shaped is the serialization. Dividing novels across magazine issues was common practice since Dickens in order to increase sales. Notable examples of this type of serialization were Burroughs' "Under the Moons of Mars", published between February and June 1912 in *All-Story magazine* followed by most of his Tarzan novels, often serialized in similar publications.²⁸ In this particular example we can see how sectioning a novel rapidly shifted into the serialization not of a single, divided work, but the multiplication of characters and settings that would recur regularly in magazines, radio dramas or comic strips, catering to the precursors of a fan base. While pulps reached mass circulation by the end of the nineteenth century, the proliferation of titles under such a variety of themes, science fiction included, became widespread between the 1920s and 1950s. As we have seen, this period exhaustively refined the concept of target audience, with smaller print numbers (according to

²⁸ Hillman, Bill. "Pulp Magazines 1912-1913." *ERBzine*. 20 May 2011.

Gernsback, *Astounding* sold around 125,000 copies in the 1920s.²⁹) and an increased sense of genre. All of these concepts would later translate from radio and pulp magazines to television in the 1950s, which would, in turn, be one of the main reasons for the loss of interest in the former means.

At this point, pulps shifted, for the most part, into digest form. The mere change into a format that is closer to a paperback than to a magazine may seem trivial. However, it is precisely in this transition that arguably a reversal begins to take effect. Parallel to holding its readership captive of a novel delivered in instalments there were standalone stories with recurring themes and characters. Although the concept seems similar, the transition into digests brought the short story writer closer to book publication. In essence, this is the opposite of cases like Burroughs' *Tarzan* sectioned novels, it is the congregation of individual popular stories. This is particularly true with a number of serials turned into novels (as opposed to novels turned into series). Asimov's initial *Foundation* Series is serialized into eight individual parts in *Astounding Science Fiction* between 1942 and 1950 that eventually come together as a whole in the first trilogy of novels, published between 1951 and 1953. Herbert's *Dune* (1965) was first published as a two-part serial in the same magazine between 1963 and 1965. Many of Dick's SF novels, although never serialized, were published as one half of Ace Doubles, a two-for-one format that has obvious commonalities with the digests in delivering narratives in bulk. This aspect present in many SF authors, and the three in discussion here, is particularly noteworthy. In this regard, their works are inevitably shaped by the requirement of writing in a serialized fashion. Characteristics such as recurrence of themes and tropes, revisiting

²⁹ Clute, John, and Peter Nicholls. "SF Magazines." *The Encyclopedia of science fiction* Nov 1995 : 1067. Print.

narratives, the expansion of short stories into novels and the serialization of novels into narrative arcs are a direct legacy of the very circumstantial publication history in pulps onto digests and paperbacks.

The tradition of serializing novels is, obviously, not exclusive to science fiction. If it is true that we can already see in the 19th century early forms of serialization, this type of publication angle has its roots in pulp magazines and dime novels. These publications were not exclusive to America, and a clear example of this are crime fiction serials with protagonists like Doyle's Sherlock Holmes and Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot or Old West fiction like Karl May's Winnetou. In Europe, as in America, with these and other types and, to some extent, with science fiction as well, the popularity of a certain character ruled its revisit in further publications. As DeForest explains, "There were many recurring characters in the pulps, such as Tarzan, Conan the Barbarian and the Continental Op – characters whose popularity with readers brought them back regularly for additional adventures." (DeForest 92) Therefore, with the rise of popular fiction and the extension of successful characters and plotlines, the control over narrative was, at least indirectly, turned over to readers as a whole. The publication was focused on the appeal of an archetype that would go through a new set of adventures in each new work to please readers. Perhaps the most cited example of this is Sherlock Holmes, even though any of the above-cited protagonists were granted additional adventures due to this phenomenon. A prolonged existence of a character or narrative promoted repetition of themes and settings with enough change as to make it different but familiar. Whether unwittingly or deliberately, the addition of new instalments into a strictly defined *canon* effectively created a system of an ever-growing text. Stanislaw Lem would certainly cringe at this explanation, possibly regarding this influence as the least common denominator, which would inevitably drag a genre struggling for respectability down the gutter. In his

notorious essay “A Visionary Among the Charlatans”, Lem augurs that “the independence of literature from fashion and demand may vanish outside SF as well, and then whatever reaps immediate applause as a best-seller will be identified with what is most worthwhile. That would be a gloomy prospect.” (Lem, “Philip K. Dick” 55)

Nevertheless, valid as Lem’s concerns may or may not have been, one cannot ignore the presence of such readership and their make-or-break impact on the available publications. Regardless of the quality of the text themselves, which is an altogether independent problem, the fact remains that the act of buying a certain text in detriment of another influenced the longevity of both. Therefore, the serialized fiction unavoidably produced the grand scale fiction, for the lack of a better term, of which many great utopias emerged. This is another tradition that still endures in the fantasy, horror and SF genres and, curiously, long fiction owes its dilation to much of the short fiction published in these magazines.

There are two implications that directly concern us regarding the practicality of extending narratives for as long as readers demand them. Firstly, there is the mentioned active participation of the reader in the construction of a structured and consistent body of work. If a certain text is maintained and expanded based strongly on reader reception, the text being serialized will surely follow a pattern considered to be successful. It is a narrative that both reflects the reader’s desires and repeats them for as long as they are in play. We can observe an analogous interchange in a contemporary narrative that draws its relationship with its audience from these roots: the soap opera. In a compelling study on how audiences interact with soap operas, Jennifer Hayward draws a direct line from radio and magazine serials onto soap operas and concludes that these are particularly susceptible to reshaping based on audience reaction:

“audience expectations guide producers in the kinds of texts they create and the marketing strategies they employ. [...] While soap opera does seem to be one of the few mass cultural forms where viewers feel at least some degree of power over the fictions they consume [...] the kind of power they wield is a highly mediated one.” (Hayward 84)

While the concept of an abstract entity with a distinguishable set of expectations may be debateable, the fact that reader reception determines whether a narrative continues being built or not is relevant to the progression and development of the text as a whole. Following Doyle’s example, in catering to audience expectations, each new Sherlock Holmes story would, however inadvertently, add to character development and even background and setting. This can be easily seen by the considerable amount of bibliography on this fictional character, with more than a few extrapolations on his “life” and even an unauthorized biography.³⁰ This, in fact, is not at all uncommon with these types of serials and characters that particularly obtain popular interest, and this may be related to size. By sheer quantity alone, a serial has “space” to spare, enough to provide the expected repetition of a successful formula and provide new aspects for the reader to revisit it anew. We can, then, argue that the serial constructs a conceptual scheme similar to More’s utopia in the sense that it transports the reader to a foreign space. The serial succeeds at this in allowing for as many visits as an abstract readership desires.

At this point, we arrive at the second implication that may be drawn from these extended narratives. In varying degrees, these serials had the conditions and motivation to build upon developing setting as well. Matching the appeal of the protagonist there is

³⁰ Rennison, Nick, and Nicholas Rennison. *Sherlock Holmes: The Unauthorized Biography*. Grove Press, 2007. Print.

the often bizarre, exotic or unreal backdrop. When the character is carried over multiple instalments, the setting benefits from the added incursions. It is here that the reader most literally visits the text as in More's travelogue. Despite most settings in serials being by no means political critiques, they work predominantly as a counterpoint to the mundane. Additionally, there is already a set of expectations on the reader's part, which not only work for the protagonist but also for the place itself. Burroughs' John Carter is expected to inhabit a specifically stylized version of Mars. His adventures, similarly to Tarzan's, play an equal role as the mythos of Barsoom-Mars. DeForest explains how, given the ample room of a successful serial, Burroughs constructed his setting:

What makes Burroughs' success at building a fictional Africa so amazing was his complete ignorance of the real Africa. He knew nothing of African wildlife. In fact, Tarzan fought tigers in the original version of "Tarzan of the Apes" because Burroughs didn't know there weren't any tigers in Africa. So he built his own Africa and created a species of apes from scratch. The result was as much a fantasy world as John Carter's Mars – a perfect fit for Burroughs' style of storytelling. (DeForest 83)

In this regard, setting is fundamental and thoroughly explored in its idiosyncrasies. In fact, it is in science fiction that this aspect holds particularly true. While there are certainly many examples of noteworthy characters in science fiction, such as John Carter, Buck Rogers and the case of Asimov's Elijah Baley and Daneel Olivaw or Herbert's Paul Atreides, on many occasions the setting is indeed at the forefront of the narrative. As Mendlesohn notes, "No novelist in mainstream fiction would expect description to stand in for characterization, but SF, in making cognitive estrangement storyable, insists that the world be treated as character." (James and Mendlesohn 8). In essence, the precedent for SF interest in other worlds and important estranging backdrops comes partly from this investment in colonizing them for our own reassurance, in an almost colonial fashion.

In all its diversity, it is unquestionable that SF has an investment in presenting the novum which is mostly visible in the construction of a society apparently detached from the reader's experience altogether. In essence, the utopias where the narrative is set become the central archetype to be developed: a "brave new world", to borrow Huxley's term. Gwyneth Jones further develops this concept:

More than any other fiction, in sf the imaginary setting is a major character in the story – and this fictional surface is held together by the highly foregrounded description of unreal objects, customs, kinships, fashions, that can be identified and decoded by the reader." (Jones 163)

This, of course, should not be taken as a characteristic that uniformly overshadows character development. Without memorable characters such as Tarzan or John Carter, these texts would certainly not have the appeal they did. In the end, the reader turned to yet another instalment of any of the most prominent serials in order to see what happened to that particular hero as much as a particularly estranged setting, and the same can hold true for the more cohesive novels in the wake of the pulp era. Aside from character as setting, protagonists such as Daneel Olivaw, Paul Atreides or Bob Arctor are fully developed and unquestionably significant within the scope of the novel – they are certainly relevant and represent themes that would be impossible to stage based on setting alone. What we possibly have in these texts is a relevant contribution of these two basic elements.

Still, regarding the novum in particular, one aspect that the three authors in discussion here have in common is not only the fact that they were unequivocal masters in performing this "character development" of the setting, but also their serialization in delivering their "worlds". In the same way that Old Shatterhand would become a richer and more detailed character with each new publication, so would the socio-political

concepts embedded in Asimov's, Herbert's and Dick's places. The three authors conceptualized very different worlds from each other, having entirely different projects and sources of inspiration. Their main concerns and focus was not at all the same and even the publication history, which could account for the transition from a standalone novel to what would be considered a series, diverges from one author to the next. Still, they manage to present setting as character in such a way that it becomes recurrent – and even central – to a sequence of novels.

As we can clearly see, this common process present in pulps translates itself into the SF novel, since authors like Asimov, Herbert and Dick were familiar to the publication environment described above. All three consistently published short stories and saw their works serialized on different levels, which granted them the benefits of the grand scale fiction. Aspects such as recurring character types and borrowed tropes from the mystery, the gothic and the adventure drama were as unapologetically present as the more intricate sides of socio-political commentary and utopianism. In fact, SF's heritage explains to a great degree why it is so closely related to utopia and why one acts as a metonymy to the other.

4. ISAAC ASIMOV: TECHNOLOGICAL REVERIES AND CONFLATIONS

4.1 "MORE HUMAN THAN HUMAN"

Isaac Asimov has been widely acknowledged as the foremost, albeit not the first author to make use of the robot in narrative as a concretization of the man-made and self-reliant individual that is inherently benign. Apart from his *Foundation* Series, Asimov is predominantly recognized for his short stories and novels involving robots and their interaction with human beings. From the end of 1939 onwards, Asimov was a consistent contributor to SF pulps, particularly *Amazing Stories* onwards. His first robot story, written in 1939, was "Robbie" and follows a little girl's painful separation from her robot.³¹ Many of the key elements that would characterize Asimov's robots for over forty years are already present in this story: the uneasiness of human beings towards technology and, in contrast, the predictability of the benign robot. There is the ontological question of what the robot is and what it should – or shouldn't – represent to the child. Finally, there is an essential conflict between the robot and the human beings, which is resolved by humans understanding the comforting existence of a robot's perfect predictability. These elements were to be repeated in dozens of variations and, in this regard, Asimov would reiterate a number of issues that translated themselves onto different scenarios of conflict and cooperation between humans and robots. Notwithstanding, in "Robbie", as in subsequent robot stories, for the most part, the narrative interest and care falls manly

³¹ Asimov, Isaac. "Strange Playfellow." *Super Science Stories* Sept 1940 : 67-77. Print. The title was changed changed by Pohl, the editor and reverted to "Robbie" in later publications and anthologies.

onto the characterization of robots and the ways in which human beings attempt to define them.

The concept of the robot, much in the same manner as the concept of utopia, precedes its formal designation. Although Karel Čapek coined the term to designate the man-made slaves that eventually rebel against their human creators in his 1920 play, *R.U.R.*, the notion of anthropomorphic beings that are, in some way, constructed as opposed to biologically created, emerges frequently in different literary traditions. A prominent example of constructed beings in literary expression is Hephaestus' bronze slaves, namely Talos, a bronze giant “programmed” to protect Europa and guard Crete.³³ However, it is with Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) that the trope of the ethical boundaries of science is transposed onto the robot, one that Asimov himself defined as the “Robot-as-Menace” figure used to explore the idea that “there are some things man was not meant to know” (Asimov, *The Complete Robot* 9).

While this type of use of the robot is largely divergent from what Asimov eventually explores, it does raise a few curious points. The transition of the merely functional mechanical being to a potential menace in a single stroke brings together two major themes in SF. On the one hand the concept of the antagonist or the “other” will be intensively used with the Alien either to decentralize or to reinforce the anthropocentric systems – the use of an abstract antagonist can be traced back to the biblical demons that have an ambivalent relationship of desire/destruction with humans. For example while the serpent in Genesis incites Adam to sin, the Synoptic Gospels offer accounts of demon possessions, suggestive of a level of eagerness by the antagonist to contaminate the

³³Rhodos, Apollonios. *The Argonautika*. London: University of California Press, 2008. Print.

human.³⁴ From the devil that attempts to acquire human souls to the demons that try to erode humanity from its qualities, the underlying notion is that human beings are in themselves, a precious concept, a utopia of sorts that is to be envied by the other. The alien or robotic antagonist in SF somehow takes this deeply rooted role. It is an actual physical entity that has its own agenda which invariably collides with humans and their otherwise idealistic societies. Such is the case, for example, in Wells' *War of the Worlds* (1898) or Heinlein's *Starship Troopers* (1959).

On the other hand, the "Robot-as-Menace" is more than a mere revision on the antagonist, since it is not an external force over which humanity has no control or responsibility. The Frankenstein-type robot that was so popular in the late 19th century and early 20th century SF novellas and stories was humanity's own work and may very well be a product of the Industrial Revolution.³⁵ In many ways, the concern that humanity can destroy itself by delegating too much of his work to a machine – in effect its autonomy and identity – reflects a world in the process of industrializing itself and, even more so, using this new found efficiency to improve on warfare as well. In this regard, the "Robot-as-Menace" can become the perfect trope to define an entire social scheme. It is, for the most part, a mass-produced machine that, in being created to aid humanity, is either misused or becomes too autonomous to have any use for humanity itself. Interestingly, what makes the robot useless as a mechanized tool is its course of development which moves towards anthropomorphism, one which is picked up by Asimov authors as a metaphor for civil rights and socio-political emancipation by the end of "The Bicentennial Man" (1976).

³⁴ Twelftree (1999) indicates four of these instances in Mark's Gospel (Twelftree 282)

³⁵ "It is from this changeable cultural climate that science fiction emerged." (Aldiss and Wingrove 8)

As machines are introduced in industrial labour throughout the nineteenth century, a paradigm shift takes hold in terms of refiguring the role of the human labourer within the production process. Questions such as worker efficiency and optimal productivity are inevitable consequences of an age that has the industrial means to address economic efficiency. Therefore, human labour under this banner must be reshaped to fit the mechanized environment of the production line. In a sense, the human is another piece of the industrial process, and it is inevitably treated as such.

Chaplin's *Modern Times* (1936) is a landmark that pinpoints this specific concern by having the Little Tramp mechanize his specific job as a factory worker so completely that he becomes unable to "switch off" his movements. In effect, while the "Robot-as-Menace" narratives uphold the notion of it becoming too human, the human society that underlies it becomes ever more mechanized, not only through mass production, as the Little Tramp caricatures in the factory line, but also encompassing mass consumption, since the two are inevitably intertwined. If the Little Tramp in the factory line is an absolutely Capekian Robot, when he is transferred to the department store, he is equally mechanized, albeit through a different set of choreographies and mishaps. What becomes clear here is that the concept of mechanization that *Modern Times* upholds is more encompassing than merely showing the technological threshold of the time. The fear of humanity "losing its way" relates to a certain type of consumer society that can, in many ways, be described as parameterized and mechanized as much as to the instrumentalization of human labour.

What is perhaps most curious about this approach to the robot figure is that the robot, in order to be more anthropomorphic, is given too many of humanity's own traits. The issue here seems to be one of identity. The "Robot-as-Menace" is so because, similarly

to the Alien invaders, it equals and even surpasses human beings, which in itself is a reinforcement of humanity. The robot, in rebelling against its creator, somehow demonstrates the desire to be more than its predetermined role. This clearly implies that the robot, to become fully emancipated, needs to somehow acquire a human status. More relevant than being a machine that escapes its maker's control and design is the fact that its free will allows it to have the desire to replace its maker. The robot, in a movement that resembles an Oedipal recognition, would necessarily possess the desire to replace its creator.

In this respect, the development of an autonomous and free-thinking individual cannot be conceived in any other way by human beings themselves. It is as if certain traits exclusive to mankind would become disastrous if given away, since the logical consequence of becoming human would be to replace humanity. In a sense, the implication would be that the robot, unlike the Little Tramp in *Modern Times*, could never be a robotized worker once it becomes autonomous: it would be a being exempt from the system that entraps working class workers.

This is a pressing concern for Asimov in dealing with robots and artificial intelligence, chiefly because his robots are, in fact, represented as a slave-like working underclass. As we will see below, namely in *The Bicentennial Man* (1976) where the robot is hindered from becoming human, not because of technological constraints, but due to the human unwillingness to grant him his wish. Traits like free will, self-reliance and the ability to desire some type of self-improvement become the core elements of an objective notion of mankind, or "human self". Therefore, such a notion of humanity more closely resembles a conceptual representation of mankind and not the object in itself, a kind of individual utopia which all others desire to be. Or, as Baudrillard would put it, "the de-

realizing of human space, or the reversion of it into a simulated hyperreality.” (Baudrillard and Evans 31). In attempting to define the robot’s dangerous desires to become human, mankind is imposing, to a degree, a utopian self-image onto the robot. We can observe this device clearly in narratives where the robot fails to become human due to its “perfective” nature by holding itself up to that non-existent image of humanity and usually failing in not being able to be “flawed” in some way. As the principal device of the conflicting nature between humans and robots, this is present in many of Asimov’s robot short stories. In the “Robot AL-76 Goes Astray” (1942), the robot protagonist achieves a ground-breaking discovery, but eventually destroys it beyond recovery because it has to follow orders. In “Risk” (1955), a robot pilot mishandles the controls of a ship due to its inability to account for the subjectivity in the orders of his human superiors. But in stating that robots are perfectly finite constructions, Asimov also employs the flawed robot in his stories to reach the same conclusion. In “Liar!” (1941), a robot lies to human beings to avoid causing psychological harm to them due to a defect that allows him to detect what people are thinking. In “Light Verse” (1973), a robot with an error in its programming is able to express himself in art. The list continues, covering all possible permutations of robots that objectively threaten humanity and robots that only briefly question the value systems of the humans they encounter.

In all, Asimov’s robots are superior to human beings, however they can never be human precisely due to their perfectible nature. As we can see above, Asimov only offers an approximation when robots are flawed themselves. In fact, fallibility seems to be the characteristic that the humans hold onto in order to find their ontological identity. By virtue of being fallible, the human is aware that the ethics of social life are full of the need to extemporize and think outside of an established model. This, of course, is at the core of the symbolization of a utopian identity, as we will later see.

But perhaps one of the most telling stories of Asimov's infatuation with robotic perfectibility is "Victory Unintentional" (1942), where robots are sent to survey a hostile alien civilization which logically concludes that these are what human beings look like. Considering the superiority of robots in every way, the aliens then decide against invading Earth. In closing, the story offers an insightful exchange between the robots where it is plainly made clear that robots will obviously always be perfected versions of humans:

'They never asked us,' said One.

'Exactly. So they thought we were human beings and that all the other human beings were like us!'

He looked once more at Jupiter, thoughtfully. 'No wonder they decided to quit!' (Asimov, "The Foundation of S.F. Success" 116)

Strikingly, Asimov, while having a distaste for the "Robot-as-Menace" stories, came to deal with these issues himself. However, instead of riddling the objective robot with moral undertones, Asimov puts the spotlight on those who would actually offer a conflicted morality – human beings. In Asimov, the robot is indeed a thoroughly perfect construction. As the author himself explains, "I began to think of robots as industrial products built by matter-of-fact engineers. They were built with safety features so they weren't Menaces and they were fashioned for certain jobs so that no Pathos was necessarily involved." (Asimov, *The Complete Robot* 9). Asimov is, of course, talking about the "Three Laws of Robotics", first stated in full in his 1942 short story "Runaround", which state the following:

One, a robot may not injure a human being, or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm. [...] Two, [...] a robot must obey the orders given it by human beings except where such orders would conflict with the First Law. [...] And three, a robot must protect its own existence as long as

such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Laws. (Asimov, *The Complete Robot* 269–270)

These “rules”, so deeply ingrained in Asimov’s robots that their brains cannot be conceived without them, are, in essence, a variation on the Ten Commandments that predetermine how the Judo-Christian society should function. The Three Laws, in a way, are the fictional embodiment of a Kantian categorical imperative applied to robots. As machines following an established set of rules, robots are then able to enact them regardless of context. However, the essential difference between any human deontology and this robotic one in particular is its imperative status. One might argue that Asimov, in limiting the robot to a compulsory set of guidelines that precede all thought, eliminates from it the possibility of rebellion. While, for the most part, this is so, he does not remove the conflict between robots and humans. If Asimov’s robots are limited by their imposed deontology, human beings have no such restraints or safeguards. Therefore, it is frequent in Asimov’s robotic universe to have humans as the direct purveyors of conflict between what robots are and what humans want them to be. Here is where Asimov’s contribution to SF and the robot in particular is perhaps more innovative and ground-breaking.

In his *Robot Series*, Asimov charges mankind of the creation of the robot in its own image and for specific purposes. Human beings, in a kind of post-Frankenstein backlash, produce a deontologically flawless individual, one who is forever bound to the hierarchy that is implanted onto it. As Broderick notes,

this entire galactic epoch was shaped by a single rule-deontological (and therefore, for Asimov, ‘ethical’) machine. The best that can be said is that

Asimov bequeaths this robot a certain measure of moral choice and subjective responsibility. (Broderick 28)

In this regard, the robot becomes a material, albeit literary, representation of the Baudrillardian simulacra, as it is constructed in the image of what mankind is supposed to be. It is a true pastiche of a non-existent model.

In fact, the dichotomy between creator and creation is self-evident from the Frankenstein model itself. Frankenstein imagines the creature as an exercise in beauty and purity. As the creature states,

Remember that I am thy creature: I ought to be thy Adam; but I am rather the fallen angel, whom thou drivest from joy for no misdeed. Everywhere I see bliss, from which I alone am excluded. (Shelley 207)

Notwithstanding the end result, Frankenstein's concept of the creature before he actually creates it is a utopian construction on humanism and the abilities of science in Shelley's time. Conversely, despite the horror and regret of the creator, the creature is born in a pure state, a "Lockean *Tabula Rasa*", as Roberts describes.³⁷ It is then by emulating human behaviour, using humanity as his own model, that the creature learns how to perform his role as the monster. Curiously, Moretti provides a similar reading of dichotomy to that of the robot as described above:

Frankenstein's invention is this a pregnant metaphor of the process of capitalist production, which forms by deforming, civilizes by barbarizing, enriches by impoverishing - a two-sided process in which each affirmation entails a negation. And indeed the monster – the pedestal on which

³⁷ (Roberts, *The History of Science Fiction* 94)

Frankenstein erects his anguished greatness – is always described by *negation*. (Moretti 87-88)

As with many of Asimov's robots, the creation and the created eventually reflect each other, by virtue desire something of their counterpart. Shelley's resolution here is dire, as neither element can find peace in becoming the other, both becoming less of their ideal in their struggle to reach it.

If Asimov's robot is essentially a utopian representation of humankind, its conflict with the real may also be inevitable. As the perfect simulacra, the robot is fundamentally at odds with the actual social constructions, and Asimov explores this extensively. Both in his short stories and his robot novels, Asimov seems to be particularly interested in the many ways that humans either misuse robots or force them to bend their Three Laws. Even more interestingly, Robots are, in essence, the perfectly ethical self, but, by following their moral base so completely, they become the imperfect Other, since their actions can always be manipulated into an imperfect end result.

In these stories there is often the paradox between humans' expectation to find in the robot a perfect construction and their desire for it to act outside the impositions established by themselves. In "Evidence", one of the ten short stories featuring Susan Calvin, this question is addressed directly. The main character, Stephen Byerley, is a candidate for Mayor and becomes the target of a smear campaign questioning his humanity. The story culminates when doubt is cast aside by when, during a speech, a man demands that he strike him in order to prove that he is able to do harm to a human being (which robots cannot): "Hit me! You say you're not a robot. Prove it. You can't hit a human, you monster." (Asimov, *The Complete Robot* 542). Curiously, what makes the robot unnatural is not that it resembles humans too much, but that it doesn't resemble us

quite enough, namely in our own faults. According to this concept, only a machine would be able to follow our own abstract code of morality so completely but, in doing so, it would be substantially less of what we are.

In a way, Asimov seems to suggest that our own utopian not of self is nothing human at all. If we regard utopia as a perennially unattainable goal, the more Asimov's humans approach such a goal, the less human they become. A good example of this are the Solarians, a faction of human settlers first introduced in *Robots of Dawn* (1983) and further developed in *Foundation and Earth* (1986). The Solarians become so dependent and committed to the improvement of Robots that they eventually become more like them than Earthpeople. In *Foundation and Earth* all traces of gender have been removed from them and they are even able to interact with their robots through the development of biological organs for that particular purpose. In any case, Asimov's proposals for the robot and its interaction with mankind are complementary. By physically representing utopia, the robot is either embraced, in which instance humanity moves toward the robotic utopia, or rejected because it demonstrates that humanity has "crossed the line" in creating an improved version of himself. In either instance, the narrative construction is parallel to that of acceptance or rejection of utopia/dystopia by comparison and/or contrast to a predefined notion of self.

Although Asimov explores the conflict between the robot's predictability and its inherent conflict with human reason throughout dozens of short stories and quite a few novels, it may be productive to analyse more closely a short story in particular that not only breaks the norm of the benign robot but also offers perhaps one of the most anthropomorphic robots in the Robot Series. The short story in question is the 1941

“Reason” from the Powell and Donovan series of shorts.³⁸ In this short story we are presented with a QT1 (Cutie) type of robot functioning in an isolated space station with Powell and Donovan as its only human companions. The familiar situational conflict between Cutie and Powell and Donovan in this instance isn’t triggered by any unreasonable demands or a failure to act within Cutie’s value system on Powell or Donovan’s part, as is customary in Asimovian narratives. In this particular instance, through sheer reason, Cutie concludes that human beings cannot possibly be its creators:

‘Look at you’, he said finally. ‘I say this in no spirit of contempt, but look at you! The material you are made of is soft and flabby, lacking endurance and strength, depending for energy upon the inefficient oxidation of organic material – like that.’ He pointed a disapproving finger at what remained of Donovan’s sandwich. ‘Periodically you pass into a coma and the least variation in temperature, air pressure, humidity, or radiation intensity impairs your efficiency. You are *makeshift*.

‘I, on the other hand, am a finished product. I absorb electrical energy directly and utilize it with an almost one hundred percent efficiency. I am composed of strong metal, am continuously conscious, and can stand extremes of environment easily. These are facts which, with the self-evident proposition that no being can create another being superior to itself, mashes your silly hypothesis to nothing.’ (Asimov, *The Complete Robot* 285–186)

This is, of course the basis for a “Robot-as-Menace” narrative that Asimov rejected, but visited from time to time. However, in materializing the ingrained fear of the Other – the realization that the inferior beings cannot possibly be in charge – Cutie becomes progressively more human in nature. Since it is isolated from all other input, and being essentially a robot that seeks a valid cosmogony which explains his existence and duties, Cutie eventually constructs a reality that makes more sense than the one provided by

³⁸Asimov, op. cit. pp. 280-301

Powell and Donovan, one that is based on empirical evidence and reason alone. What makes Cutie even more human is the transition of its reasoning from hypothesis into faith. Cutie's conception of the real becomes a belief that is impossible to deconstruct. Powell and Donovan's inability to interact with Cutie is circular in the sense that any description of the real by them is interpreted differently by Cutie:

'If you were to read the books in the library, they could explain it so there could be no possible doubt.'

'The books? I've read them – all of them! They're most ingenious.'

Powell broke in suddenly. "If you've read them, what else is there to say? You can't dispute their evidence. You just *can't*!"

There was pity in Cutie's voice. "Please, Powell, I certainly don't consider *them* a valid source of information. They, too, were created by the Master – and were meant for you, not for me' (Asimov, *The Complete Robot* 205–206)

Cutie still acts according to the Three Laws on an unconscious level, though, a detail that was later added to have Cutie adhere to the canon, according to Patrouch, this short story "was written before Asimov had worked out the Three Laws of Robotics. In this revision he tries to incorporate them into the story, despite the fact that one of the story's major elements is in clear-cut violation of the Second Law." (Patrouch 42). Patrouch concludes that having Cutie adhere to the Three Laws of Robotics proves to be one of the plot's inadequacies. While this may be true, without this important revision all traits of the benign and harmless nature of robots would be entirely removed from Cutie's characterization. It seems imperative that the Asimovian robot be limited by these axioms in order to be predictably benign. Still, in spite of having Cutie adhere to the Three Laws of Robotics in order to fit the Asimovian robot, this one in particular diverges from the subsequent ones, as it quickly becomes, for the most part (and unintentionally), human in

reasoning. In a curious reversal of roles, it is Powell and Donovan who are desperately compelled to accomplish their designated tasks.

In spite of the atypical attributes present in this early short story for an Asimovian robot, which have been attributed to the early stage of development regarding robots in Asimov's conceptualized worlds, one essential aspect remains in the relationship between Cutie and its human counterparts – the particular kind of dissension between the former and the latter. In an attempt to escape the reification of humanity's fears in the "Robot-as-Menace" type and having it represent a kind of dystopia itself, Asimov establishes a dichotomy of sorts between humanity and robots which combines the post-industrial moral concerns of "taking technology too far" and the matter-of-fact reality of the human workforce in the factory production line. Cutie, as much as any other robot in Asimov, is progressively unresponsive to what is expected of it as an anthropomorphic tool, while Powell and Donovan, as most humans particularly in the short stories, become ever more frustrated by not being able to produce the intended results with such finite rules. In Asimov, these rules are incessantly used because they create such a vast ground for narrative dissension between humankind's deontology and the robotic axiology.

Asimov's play on this conflict is recurrent. It becomes the basis for most of his robot short stories and constitutes a dominant aspect in the robot novels. The robot that perhaps better encapsulates Asimov's concept is NDR-113, or Andrew, from the 1976 short story "The Bicentennial Man" and the 1993 novel *The Positronic Man*, co-written with Robert Silverberg, which is largely an expansion of the original short story. "The Bicentennial Man", in effect, serves as an "answer" or epilogue for Asimov's robot short stories up until then and is more than adequately anthologized in *The Complete Robot* as one of the "Two Climaxes" therein. Moreover, Asimov himself states that "Of all the robot stories I

ever wrote, “The Bicentennial Man” is my favourite and, I think, the best. In fact, I have a dreadful feeling that I might not care to top it and will never write another serious robot story. But then again, I might. I’m not always predictable.” (Asimov, *The Complete Robot* 603). Asimov did not, in fact, keep this promise and eventually published a second series of robot novels in an attempt to tie-in his Galactic Empire, *Foundation* and *Robot* Series together as one enormous lifework story arc.

This story in particular describes the development of a robot “manservant” from his initial activation in the Martin household in order to perform his assigned tasks into his struggle to be legally considered as “human”. Andrew’s story is told in bildungsroman fashion. Although Andrew takes important steps towards his goal of becoming increasingly “human” with the aid of the human beings that cross paths with him, there is a significant amount of peripeteia to illustrate Andrew’s plight and efforts to be granted the civil liberties given to a human being.

The foremost textual aspect that evidences how significantly different this robot is from the archetypes created is the subjective point of view that the narrative takes. While Fielder and Mele note that “[...] this is the first time Asimov has used a robot to narrate its own story, and ironically Andrew Martin is Asimov’s most consistently human character.” (Fiedler and Mele 52), the choice of viewpoint for the narrative is astutely employed to give full weight to Andrew as a robot, that particular kind which consistently attempts to emulate as closely as possible their role models – human beings. However, compelled by its own Three Laws through Reason alone, Andrew eventually discovers that human action cannot be rationally determined by its own laws. It is at this point that Asimov’s robot rises as the true utopian body. While the narrative outline is mostly straightforward, there are a few aspects in the way the story is tackled which are extremely

useful to illustrate the rift between the concept of human and robot bodies. Andrew begins by demonstrating creativity on his wood carvings which, in turn, make him economically self-sustainable. In a combination of self-sufficiency and uncommon artistic prowess, Andrew becomes progressively more human-like in appearance, firstly by wearing clothes and then by replacing his body with an organic one that emulates that of human beings. These steps are accompanied by a social and legislative struggle to, initially, institute Andrew's freedom, rather than to establish a law that prevents human beings from harming robots and finally to legally proclaim Andrew as a "human being". It is at this climatic point where the two facets of Andrew's story converge – He can only be politically considered a "human" if he dies, since the unpredictability of death is the encompassing trait of mankind. This is an interesting existential dimension to the definition of humanity – in previous eras, the closeness to God, or the ability to reason would have been the overarching criteria. It's worth noticing this an almost post-Heideggerian, notion about humans. As Gunn acutely notes:

[...] the final distinction is Andrew's sentimental and hard-to-rationalize desire to be human when he is so clearly superior to humans in every way. The sentimentality that threatens the story is essential to the argument: robots are always rational and humans are not. Humans act for emotional reasons, and, ultimately, so does Andrew. Andrew, indeed, has become human. (Gunn 77)

What Gunn refers to as "the sentimentality that threatens the story" is, of course, the paradox of Andrew's robotic nature and his "sentimental" desire to be human. While Andrew performs on a rational level throughout most of his pursuits for self-sufficiency, independence and political freedom, the "threat" begins to emerge as Andrew moves from the visibly mechanical body to the android and then to a fully organic, human-like physiognomy. The initial argument for this transition is that Andrew, in being indistinguishable from a human being, can be of less political harm by "blending in", but

it is Gunn's interpretation that ultimately emerges in the narrative. However, what Gunn misses is the fact that, in acting for emotional reasons, humans themselves become profoundly unsentimental in the way they perceive death: the human is ultimately defined by its own end.

More importantly, what Asimov seems to be affirming is the paradox between the robotic structure and the robotic desire. As a man-made industrial "being", the robot is at its safest when limited by its predetermined tasks and machine-like appearance. However, in being designed to project and desire a different self, the robot, inevitably it seems, desires humanity or the utopian other that we set ourselves to be. What makes Andrew so special is the focus on his growth and his active part in attempting to become human. If other Asimovian robots have this desire as a consequence to other aspects of the narrative (a glitch, a manipulation of the Three Laws, misleading outside input, etc.), Andrew is his own direct agent of change. This is even emphasised in the short story by opening with a prolepsis where another robot struggles to distinguish Andrew from a human being, thus being more inclined to grant Andrew a human status rather than a mere robot's. As Andrew becomes more human in his biology, he is faced with the transition of his own identity, from the utopian human, which he already symbolized, into the effective human, which is dependent on the recognition by others of the same kind. What Asimov seems to identify is the disjunction between humans as contingent beings and clusters of beings, and "humanity" or "human-ness" as a Platonic ideal which is both embraced and disavowed at the same time. It's this particular positioning between the particular and general – a certain eccentricity to the logos of humanity – that actually "defines" or characterizes humans.

Although Andrew Martin personifies the desiring robot, the most consistently used character in Asimov is given precisely these same attributes as early as 1953 upon the publication of *The Caves of Steel*. This robot is, of course, R. Daneel Olivaw, a character that plays a significant role in seven of Asimov's novels, including all of his *Robot* novels and many of his *Foundation* novels. It is also through Olivaw that Asimov effectively links the two story arcs. If this robot initially serves as the counterpoint to the human character Elijah Baley in *The Caves of Steel* and *The Naked Sun* (1957), Olivaw quickly acquires more depth and complexity than Baley. It is perhaps for this reason that the subsequent novels in the series, which link the first two novels to the Galactic Empire series and the *Foundation* Series, have Olivaw either as the main character or as the central figure that motivates the momentum of the narrative. Between the initial novels written in the 1950s and the latter ones in the 1980s a good portion of the robot-centric short stories was created, including "The Bicentennial Man". Therefore, although Olivaw's general traits as a character are defined alongside the early robot short stories, the determining feature of individual self-improvement is much more emphasised in the latter works that have Olivaw as a character.

Still, Olivaw, from its initial conception in *The Caves of Steel* is an atypical sort of robot. It is human-like in such a way that it can become physically indistinguishable from human beings and it is even particularly fitted with the ability to "blend in". This trait in specific is perhaps the earliest expression in Asimov that the robot can, in fact, be so anthropomorphic that it becomes indistinguishable from humans themselves, and is certainly a precursor for Andrew Martin. Olivaw's intellect and desire evolves similarly to Andrew's as the character is reused in every robot novel. Olivaw diverges from Andrew, however, in its reasoning for self-improvement. While Andrew simply desires to be human as an end in itself, Olivaw does so for the sake of mankind. Olivaw believes

that he is able to understand humankind better than anyone, particularly since he is able to hold more information than a human being. In good Asimovian fashion, the problems of the world are resolvable by inputting enough data into an interpretative machine. Asimov solidifies this by imbuing Olivaw with a supra-human perceptiveness and reasoning coupled with a computer-like memory that gives it insight onto historical probability. Olivaw is, therefore, in a god-like position, manipulating society into a course of action that better fits Olivaw's own Three Laws. It is strikingly elliptical that Olivaw by working through humanity's notion of what a robot should be, would be so committed to act upon human history.

The trait of relentless self-improvement, holding humanity as its standard, is perhaps one of the main reasons why these two particular characters became so famous. While struggling with self-improvement, they embody the classical hero. By the sheer fact that their nature programs them to be unyielding in their goal, they follow a path of enlightenment with an objective that is ultimately unattainable. However, it is the fact that their programming holds them to the desire to be human that sets robots to be the human utopia. One cannot help but empathize with Olivaw in its struggle to save humanity from itself or with Andrew when he obediently follows the Three Laws even when they are so coarsely misused. There is no question about how Asimov regards his robots. As Susan Calvin, a character that Asimov admittedly identified with, puts it:

I like robots. I like them considerably better than I do human beings. If a robot can be created capable of being a civil executive, I think he'd make the best one possible. By the Laws of Robotics, he'd be incapable of harming humans, incapable of tyranny, of corruption, of stupidity, of prejudice. And after he had served a decent term, he would leave, even though he were immortal, because it would be impossible for him to hurt humans by letting them know

that a robot had rule them. It would be most ideal. (Asimov, *The Complete Robot* 544)

Asimov would eventually develop this idea further and, combined with Andrew Martin's plotline, write an appropriate end to Olivaw and his project of merging most of his SF stories into one swooping arc. In *Foundation and Earth* (1986) Olivaw eventually embodies the perfectly benign robot, limited by the Laws, but all-knowing in what is best for mankind as a whole. Strikingly, although he is pointed out as the god-like force behind previously written stories, in the end he has to sacrifice himself and become fully human in order to continue to perform his task. The outcome is essentially the same as Andrew Martin, where a virtually omniscient and immortal being is still short of human, since it does not share its finite nature.

Asimov's conception of the robot in general, and even more so with Olivaw and Andrew Martin, is, in many respects, the textual materialization of the utopian body. While the limitations of the robot are that it isn't deontologically flawed, the robot plays off of the readers' empathy regarding its limitations paired with its stoic resoluteness. As a textual construction, Asimov's robot works flawlessly as a utopia. It is limited by its Laws and its reality. As in Cutie, it is shaped by its particular perception of the world. It works as a model for humankind precisely because it emphasizes our shortcomings inasmuch as it reassures us of our qualities. Similarly to Stanislaw Lem's ocean that materializes the astronauts' repressed desires in *Solaris*, "We are only seeking Man. We have no need of other worlds. We need mirrors. [...] We are searching for an ideal image of our own world." (Lem, *Solaris* 75)

4.2 FOUNDATION

If one were to point out Asimov's most recognizable literary accomplishment, the *Foundation* Series would undoubtedly be at the forefront, along with his *Robot* Series and his 1941 short story "Nightfall". While the latter has the particularity of having been granted the subjective award of "The best science fiction story ever written" by the Science Fiction Writers of America in 1968, Asimov's work around and concerning his concept of the Robot effectively redefined the Robot itself and set, to a great extent, the canon for future characterization and development of the robotic identity in fiction. Therefore, Asimov's robots, setting aside both peer recognition and popular demand, set the "foundations" for a new generation of SF writing, quite literally and in concrete ways. Still, the *Foundation* Series can be easily regarded as the other prevalent contribution to literature in Asimov's diverse and prolific career.

Curiously, both his work on the *Robot* Series and the *Foundation* Series, while using very different topics, settings and archetypes, are intrinsically connected in many respects. As we have seen, "Robbie" was the first of numerous short stories and four novels in the *Robot* Series that culminated with *Robots and Empire* in 1985. The longevity of the *Robot* Series may be partly explained by popular demand, which was notoriously high. This was a determining factor throughout Asimov's work. The series grew in scale and complexity over a forty-five year period from a few short stories intended to be published in "pulp" SF magazines to the later Robot novels conceived not only as a unit in themselves, but also as a unifying vessel for the work that had come before. It is in this respect that the *Foundation* Series seems more similar to the *Robot* Series than one would initially consider. The first Foundation novel to be published in 1951, titled *Foundation*, is a collection of four serialized stories published between 1942 and 1944 and a fifth story that acts as a prologue to the novel. This format is consistent with Asimov's experience

as a writer and contributor to *Astounding Science Fiction*, therefore, in effect, *Foundation* may be regarded as an anthology closer to *I, Robot*, published in 1950 as a collection of nine robot stories written up to that date. The two major series in Asimov's work, if for no other reason, are connected by this very mundane evolution in narrative scope. As Gunn explains:

“The *Foundation Trilogy* is a basic work upon which a vast structure of stories has been built. Its assumptions provided solid footing for a whole city of fictional constructions. The way in which it was created, then, and the way in which it came to prominence may be useful examples of the process by which science fiction was shaped in the magazines.” (Gunn 27)

Although the process mentioned by Gunn is largely the same for both series and follows the movement here described from pulp serials to grand scale narratives, the shifting format from serialized short stories to complete sets of novels seems extremely appropriate in the *Foundation Series*, perhaps more so than with the *Robot Series*. While the latter began as a series of episodes that became connected by the unifying concept of Asimov's robot and the Three Law of Robotics, the *Foundation Series* had a different conceptual basis altogether. If the *Robot Series* is largely driven by a “puzzle” narrative, where a particular problem is presented and dealt with in the space of the short story or the SF murder mystery novel (which, in itself, is a puzzle solving type of text), the *Foundation Series* has the ambition of sweeping across a vast amount of time and events, with the purpose of somehow portraying humanity as a mass, regardless of any singular narration. In a way, while Asimov's *Robots* became a Series by being a collection of individual stories focusing on and experimenting with the same premises, the *Foundation* project was conceptualized as a whole from its initial eight stories that eventually became the first two novels in the series. These eight stories, all initially published in *Astounding*, offer continuity from first to last, and onwards to the later novels that expand the Series

and connect it with the Robot Series.³⁹ The motive behind making a series of sequential novelettes is clear. Aside from popular demand and editorial requirements regarding the format, Asimov is “playing” both with the concept of the historical novel as a literary form and the idea of history itself as cyclical, influenced by readings of Gibbon, Spengler and Toynbee.

It has been widely acknowledged that the Galactic Empire narrated in the *Foundation* Series is loosely inspired by Edward Gibbon’s *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Asimov himself, in his comedic poem “The Foundation of S.F. Success” references this source, along with Thucydides’ *The History of the Peloponnesian War*: “With a tiny bit of cribbin’ from the works of Edward Gibbon and that Greek, Thucydides” (Asimov, “The Foundation of S.F. Success”). Although Asimov light-heartedly acknowledges these influences, they represent the essential structure and concept behind his Galactic Empire and the Foundation Series.

The connection is clearly developed on a historically self-reflexive level, as the various narratives that have the Galactic Empire as their backdrop are notoriously fashioned after Gibbon’s image of the Roman Empire. Similarly to Gibbon, Asimov delineates a socio-political structure that is crumbling under the weight of an unmanageable diaspora. The inspiration goes as far as having certain narrative elements emulate episodes from the Roman Empire. In the segment “The General” that constitutes the first half of *Foundation and Empire*, the reader is presented with the general Bel Riose, a character that threatens the political equilibrium of the Galactic Empire by being overly effective

³⁹ “Foundation” was published in May, 1942; “Bridle and Saddle” in June, 1942; “The Big And The Little” in August, 1944; “The Wedge” in October, 1944; “Dead Hand” in April, 1945; “Blind Alley” in March, 1945; “The Mule” in November and December, 1945; “Now You See It...” in January, 1948; “...And Now You Don’t” in November and December, 1949 and January, 1950.

in his conquests. This character's resemblance with Roman generals like Belisarius from the early Byzantine Empire, whose military achievements would grant them a political popularity that could be considered excessive, is clear and deliberate. According to Patrouch,

Asimov got the idea for Bel Riose and what happened to him from the historical precedent of Belisarius as Belisarius is presented in Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* [...] Damon Knight has accused Asimov of merely copying history and therefore of not writing science fiction in the *Foundation* Series. Asimov has defended himself by arguing that history does repeat itself in large sweeping ways and that therefore it is perfectly legitimate to plot stories of the future by referring to the past. (Patrouch 84–85)

In fact, Ducem Barr's summation in the novel could easily have passed as a consideration on some of the power structures present in the Roman Empire – a weakening, centralized government riddled with power struggles in face of an unmanageable diaspora:

But, what keeps the Emperor strong? What kept Cleon strong? It's obvious. He is strong, because he permits no strong subjects. A courtier who becomes too rich, or a general who becomes too popular is dangerous. All the recent history of the Empire proves that to any Emperor intelligent enough to be strong. (Asimov, *Foundation and Empire* 85)

Still, what further underscores the parallel between the Roman Empire and the Galactic Empire is the narrative scope itself. We are looking at a narrative that recurrently employs a historical mode that closely resembles our own historiography and substantiates the existence of this world. What, in fact, comes clearly across in the *Foundation* Series is the attempt to diachronically register the course of a civilization, as if it were an individual entity. In this regard, Asimov does indeed emulate Thucydides or Gibbon. The view that one can narrate the “actions” of a society and organize historical events into a structure of cause and effect is at the base of the historical methodology that Asimov adapts onto

the Foundation Series. Where Gibbon organizes a narrative to explain why the Roman Empire fell and Thucydides sets up the causes and consequences of the Peloponnesian War, Asimov offers the events that instigate the shift from a declining Galactic Empire to the subsequent political order. The subject matter in Asimov is, of course, fictional, but the narrative structure and purpose are similar to the historical model, particularly in the frequent didactic diatribes when Hari Seldon appears.

The novels in which the Galactic Empire is constructed and presented are “historical” in nature most notably by their style but also by Asimov’s organization of the narrative flow in what could be described as a kind of historical materialism. This relationship is most apparent in the use of psychohistory, a fictitious combination of ethnology and mathematics that produces a kind of scientific precognition. While the relationship between certain topics that emerge in the *Foundation* Series and classical Marxism has been frequently acknowledged, Elkins has effectively established the connection between psychohistory and historical materialism in particular, having made a visibly negative estimation of Asimov’s use of a “vulgar Marxist version of historical materialism” (Elkins 32). Still, this type of influence that Asimov is inspired by, rather than following in the strictest sense, is frequent. If Asimov openly produces a work of fiction as a historical material, the fact that it is plot driven and creates character based narratives that go beyond historical necessity demonstrates how the extent of Asimov’s source material for inspiration is relative. The same can be argued for historical materialism and Marxism in the *Foundation* Series.

Throughout the series, the main plot device that invariably drives the narrative forward is this concept of a dwindling social order under the Galactic Empire and the struggle to minimize the inevitable political chaos that ensues. More than drawing his inspiration

from Gibbon's structuring of a specific historical narrative, Asimov seems to follow a cyclical theory of History, which is proposed not by Gibbon, but by historians such as Toynbee and Spengler:

Mathematics and the principle of Causality lead to a naturalistic, Chronology and the idea of Destiny to a historical ordering of the phenomenal world. Both orderings, each on its own account, cover the *whole* world. (Spengler 6)

When Spengler or Toynbee propose a predictable and cyclical History, the leap towards projecting the same model onto a future "History" is a small one. One of the purposes behind these popular views on History is precisely to "learn from past mistakes", since History tends to "repeat itself", which obviously implies a certain degree of belief in causality. Through this general concept, Asimov can articulate the notion of history as an exact science with a very real application to future actions. Although the justification behind a type of sociology that operates as an exact science incarnated in psychohistory is garbled and questionable at best, one must not forget that Asimov seems to use these sources freely, without any apparent concern with any one theoretical accurateness. Always the biochemist, when in need to explain the fundamentals of any social science turned exact, Asimov resorts to the word "mathematics" as a *deus-ex-machina* to resolve the matter:

Please. It was necessary. You were not picked for any personal reasons. You must realize that Dr. Seldon's plans, which are laid out with the developed mathematics of over eighteen years include all eventualities with significant probabilities. (Asimov, *Foundation* 27)

Curiously the reason that might have led Asimov to regard psychohistory as the exact science that History should be is his predilection for scientific rigour even when creating a strictly fictional work. An example of this particular way of regarding his fiction can be read in his afterword to the 1985 edition of *The Currents of Space*: "Still, the Universe

goes its own way and won't bend merely to pay homage to my cleverness, so I can only ask you to suspend your disbelief in respect to nova-formation and enjoy the book (assuming you do) on its own terms." (Asimov, *The Currents of Space*). This is a trait commonly attributed to "hard SF" writers and it seems that Asimov's conception of a perfect historiography could only mean that it could be factored as a "hard" science: fundamentally determinable. It is, in fact, in this respect that historical materialism can be of use in deconstructing psychohistory. Elkins effectively traces Asimov's historical materialism back to the socialist works that circulated among American radicals in the thirties, sources from Bukharin to Stalin that pursued "an interpretation of history containing built-in contradictions and producing psychological as well as political tensions." (Elkins 29). Still, the fact remains that psychohistory uses materialism in the form of human actions – economic, political and social struggle – as the foundation for its model. While, for Marxists, "history is neither determinable nor determined by a set of abstract equations." (Elkins 33), it is, in fact determinable and determined by human beings awaking from their situation, realizing their interests and shaking off false consciousness. The distinction might seem circular, since psychohistory does plunge into the realm of abstract constructions on where society should go, finding its solutions watching, as if at all possible, society from outside. Still, this conception of a social "hard" science is a consequence of the way Asimov regards all sciences and the acquisition knowledge in general. Science, for Asimov works by inputting raw data onto a scheme. The scheme becomes more and more useful as the quantity of data increases. Therefore, a social study that aims to predict human action can only be worked out precisely by being isolated from the humans under scrutiny. In this state of isolation, it must then receive the necessary raw data – unhampered human interaction. Though this view is eminently mechanistic, as Elkins suggests, it does regard human actions in a materialist perspective,

since it presupposes that there are measurable causes that motivate individuals to produce change.

What does not correlate with a strictly Marxist historical materialism is indeed the cyclical nature of history that Asimov so clearly adopts. Humanity in the *Foundation Series* is, indeed, a faceless mass that can be counted upon to act in this or that way. This is the main reason why psychohistory functions so constantly. Here, one might argue, Asimov misses the point from a Marxist perspective. In Marxism, the ability to shape history lies in individual action. As Elkins explains, “For Marx and Engels, the choices people make about their lives, their morals, their praxis (creative action) and their knowledge of their particular situation—all of these are included in the ‘laws’ of social development.” (Elkins 33). In Asimov, the ability to “read” history, anticipate future outcomes and reshape them is taken away from the subject and left to an academic elite, an inconsistency that Elkins also points out. However, Marx saw history as a class-related process, where class structure contained within itself and its contradictions its inevitable and inherent fate. In this respect, considering that the class struggle is a prominent aspect within the *Foundation Series*, Asimov would be closer to Marx than Elkins allows.

For example, *Foundation* (1951) is divided into five sections, each constituting a moment of crisis in the Foundation’s history, and each describing the ways in which a paradigm shift is necessary to avoid stratification. “The Encyclopedists” represent a symbolical utopia centred on the accumulation of knowledge. When this system no longer provides for the changing social circumstances, a coup d’état establishes “The Mayors”, a more formal political structure to cope with the surrounding nations. This state is, in turn, threatened by the Actionists, a political party that favours military expansionism. The two systems that follow, “The Traders” and “The Merchant Princes” establish the

eventual expansion through their dominance of the modes of production in the region. All of this is ushered in by the reassurance of psychohistory. As Luckhurst states,

The science of psychohistory, which Asimov argued could be the only basis for what he termed a serious ‘social science fiction’ and which he partly based on scientific models of history current in 1930s Russia, rises above weaker political or historical interpretations. (Luckhurst 72)

In the end, Elkins does tend to skip the fact that, much like Asimov, many socialists before and after Marx and Engels tended to reshape concepts like historical materialism for their own particular purposes. Bukharin and Stalin surely regarded themselves as contributors to Marxism-Leninism, which, in itself, is no testament to their rigor in using Marxist concepts. The same might be said among other contributors to Marxist thought.⁴⁰ For Geoghean (1987), while mapping utopianism and the way it is viewed by Marxism and its vanguards, recurrently notes the frequent opposing positions under the same banner of Marxism. Kautsky is a prominent example of this. As a figurehead for orthodox Marxism after the death of Engels in 1895, Kautsky was considered one of the most faithful interpreters of Marxist doctrine. However, Kautsky often took a revisionist stance. Looking at Kautsky’s writings, Geoghean notes that for him, “Socialism is [...], in some mysterious fashion, to be distilled from objective scientific laws and then injected into the proletariat – a conception diametrically opposed to Marx’s own.” (Geoghean 37). The necessity to create branching (and sometimes opposing) schools of thought in order to refigure new realities and ways of thinking is self-evident. Geoghean points out in this and other examples that there have always been “marxisms” rather than a uniform Marxist canon, even when talking about the most orthodox stances.

⁴⁰Stalin, Joseph V. “Dialectical and Historical Materialism.” *Marxists Internet Archive*.

For instance, while the individual may be at the centre of the revolution, it is through the collective action of class struggle that revolution is accomplished. The relationship between the two is, thus, a complex one. Whether some individuals should contradict current modes of production or follow the conditions of material life is a matter of debate. Marx, for example, saw class war, not individual interests, as the engine of history. For orthodox thinkers like Kautsky or Plekhanov, Historical factors are an abstraction that gathers what certain people, under certain socio-political circumstances do and how they relate to others:

A historico-social factor is an abstraction, and the idea of it originates as the result of a process of abstraction. Thanks to the process of abstraction, various sides of the social complex assume the form of separate categories, and the various manifestations and expressions of the activity of social man – morals, law, economic forms, etc. – are converted in our minds into separate forces which appear to give rise to and determine this activity and to be its ultimate causes. (G. Plekhanov, sec. II)

Still, as we know, both men were fundamentally at odds with Leninism, mainly due to their opposition to a revolutionary “elite” halting the modes of production that were already in effect and leaping towards the revolution without the universal support of the working class.

In Asimov’s terms, this would perhaps be the equivalent of Seldon’s Plan itself. In the Foundation Series, Hari Seldon is presented as the founding scientist of psychohistory, using it as the tool to establish a plan that will address the needs of the people on defining moments of social struggle along their future history. Its ultimate goal is to curtail 30.000 years of dark ages by founding a civilization that is certain to prosper, based on the study of history and human actions contemporary to Seldon. This, of course, diverges from orthodox Marxism in the sense that it seems that an external oligarchy defines the conditions for success. In *Second Foundation* this is further emphasized, as we learn that

the scientific oligarchy actually nudges civilization towards prosperity. However, if this model diverges from what Plekhanov defends, it slightly resembles what Geoghean states about Kautsky. Furthermore, clearly, Marxism-Leninism departs from the mode of a universally propelled revolution and requires an oligarchy of its own to gear society into its projected state. Elkins concludes that, as opposed to Seldon's Plan, freedom comes with individual recognition and enlightenment without any external influence.

In striking contrast to Asimov's depiction of Seldon's Plan, it is the possibility that all men can ultimately comprehend those hidden and complex forces at work on them that gives Marxism its vision of hope. It is this comprehension which creates the conditions for freedom. (Elkins 35)

Still, as we have seen, this is not always the case with different "marxisms", to use Geoghean's term. Geoghean posits that "the historical experience of Marxist-Leninist vanguards has shown a strong tendency towards authoritarian utopianism – the formulation by party élites of one and only one vision of the future. This has involved disregarding the aspirations of most ordinary people" (Geoghegan 135). In this regard, to side with Elkins' criticism for a moment, the defence of Asimov's Foundation becomes troublesome. In the end, the Seldon Plan is indeed monist in its utopian vision. It aspires for the coming of a Second Empire of prosperity, but not just any empire. It accounts for class struggles and aspirations, but it tugs them in the chosen direction. Even if considered as a process, in the end, it is indeed a single worldview as defined by an elite of scientists. In *Second Foundation* (1953) Asimov removes any doubt regarding this aspect:

‘The First Foundation supplies the physical framework of a single political unit, and the Second Foundation supplies the mental framework of a ready-made ruling class’

‘I see. Fairly adequate. Do you think that *any* Second Empire, even if formed in the time set by Seldon, would do as a fulfilment of his Plan?’

‘No, Speaker, I do not. There are several possible Second Empires [...], but only one of these is *the* Second Empire.’ (Asimov, *Second Foundation* 116)

We must then conclude that whether or not Asimov transforms the Seldon Plan into a totalitarian dystopia by the time we reach *Second Foundation*, is secondary to his overarching belief in science as the purveyor of truth and the end-all solution to any human problem. It seems that, unlike the ontological nature of his *Robot Series*, at the core of his *Foundation Series* there is an epistemological concern.

Therefore, the departure here from Elkins lies in the fact that Asimov didn’t profess to create the Seldon Plan and psychohistory in a manner inspired by historical materialism. In fact, he stated quite the opposite: He was inspired mostly by Spengler, who held that social progress would be obtained by the cyclical emergence of extraordinary circumstances controlled by a select few. As Elkins exposes, “the rest of mankind are ignorant counters in the grip of an idea which stands over against them as universal, immutable, external law.” (Elkins 34). This aspect is, indeed, present and follows Spengler. If we are willing to attempt to fit Spengler in one of the marxisms stated above, perhaps he would be as close to historical materialism as to utopian socialism. For him, the conditions of change are effectively predetermined in their cyclical pattern. He goes as far as predicting the future from observations of the past. This theory could be a page taken from Saint-Simon, who was another firm believer in the power of scientific

knowledge as the catalyst for change and industrial progress. Still, the connection to Spengler is diminished due to the fact that Spengler focuses on material aspects of history rather than ideological ones.⁴¹

Regarding the *Foundation* Series, it does, in fact, depart from a strict concept of historical materialism. As in Spengler and Saint-Simon, the population inhabiting the Foundation is generally a faceless mass riding on the coattails of historical inevitability. Plekhanov had already exposed the inadequacy of this model by stating that, under a Saint-Simonist notion, “humanity is absolutely subordinated to the law of its own intellectual development; it could not escape the influence of that law, should it even desire to do so.” (G. V. Plekhanov). His exposition of Saint-Simon’s faults could very well be an argument against the Seldon Plan. When Hari Seldon determines a path for humankind to follow and overcome all of their future troubles, however benign this idea may be, it inevitably poses a question of how future generations are bound by this law. In fact, this dichotomy is actually presented throughout the texts, mainly with the recuperation of the series twenty-nine years after the first trilogy. Apart from the faceless mass, the developed individual characters are often combative of the state of affairs. If there is one unifying narrative trend to all novels in the series is the stir the protagonists have in themselves to push back the curtain that the Foundations have over their society. To have the dramatic tension revolve around an individual’s attempts to solve the Foundation’s “puzzles” is, in essence, to have him break free from the deterministic aspects of psychohistory. Granted that this is only to pull them back in, in the end, so that the reader is awed at the remorsefulness of this astounding “science”.

⁴¹ St-Simon addresses the issue of understanding history to the point of predictability in *Essay on the Science of Man* (1813)

While the Seldon Plan demonstrates Asimov's infatuation with the idea of "a civilization based on mental science" (Asimov, *Second Foundation* 115), it is curious to note that this scientific utopia of the 1950s is eventually replaced by a different one when we reach *Foundation's Edge* (1982): That of a utopia based on the notion of Gaia, a collective consciousness involving all living things connected into a single organism. We can safely assume that, by the time Asimov writes *Foundation's Edge*, the utopian desire had shifted from faith in what science had in store to a more pressing concern with ecotopia.

Nevertheless, the departure from individual agency in producing change is overt and may not necessarily be a distortion of historical materialism due to two main reasons. First and foremost, Asimov had other equally strong and perhaps conflicting sources for his model. Spengler was the central one, but the Foundation Series is eminently based on a utopian model itself. Seldon's motivations are utopian in the sense that he aims to usher a new and improved society. It shares Fourier's concept of the commune: by establishing a small settlement outside the influence of the decaying Empire, the Foundation gains a heightened sense of unity and cooperation. Under certain, specific conditions and left largely alone, the Foundation is allowed to naturally evolve into a successful society, estranged from the Empire. Therefore, this is as much an idealist model as a materialist one. In constructing a utopia that relies on the predictability of human nature, it is inevitable for the Foundation Series to depart from historical materialism. By having the key events that propel this civilization to new social change predictably related to modes of production, economical constraints and social conflict in general, the Foundation takes some form of the marxisms as well. This text is not, strictly speaking, a blueprint for any one model and its ties with any proposed theory will almost certainly be loose.

This takes us to the second conclusion that can be drawn here. As we have seen, the heritage of SF greatly influences both its form and subject matter. The concern with reader reception and the creation of something that would spur our imagination and sense of wonder is certainly not a factor for Marx or Plekhanov. In Asimov in particular, he is acutely aware of the reader and “what works” for him. He must create a plausible and compelling model, one which doesn’t necessarily ascribe to one definite philosophy but draws from any that can make for a compelling story. That we see historical materialism come through the narrative does not preclude from the fact that we see other notions as well, sometimes conflicting ones. To quote Barthes on this matter:

We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture. (Barthes, “The Death of the Author” 185)

In Asimov’s case, we cannot attribute to him the full charge of a perfect materialist metaphor. If we consider that Marx, for Asimov, held as much significance as an influence as Gilbert and Sullivan, we can surely recognize the inspiration without faulting the author for misappropriating it.

5. FRANK HERBERT: CONSCIOUSNESS, RELIGION AND THE MESSIAH SYNDROME

If, throughout his life, Asimov refined the model of the robot in an almost clinical analysis of technology and the participation of the machine in social change, Herbert focused centrally on human relationships with power and the ability to adapt and reshape not only humanity itself but its surroundings. Similarly to Asimov, Frank Herbert's grand scale narrative is aimed at discussing certain patterns in history. As with Asimov, after serialization in SF magazines, the first part of his *Dune* Series (1965-1976) was eventually converted into the first trilogy and, again as with Asimov, a second series of novels to complete the arc.⁴² Both series are expanded due to public interest, with Herbert stating, in retrospect, that "By the time the first three *Dune* books were completed, there was little doubt that this was a popular work – one of the most popular in history, I am told, with some ten million copies sold worldwide." (F. Herbert, *Heretics of Dune* 5).

However, Herbert's project has been seen, to a certain degree, as diametrically opposed to that of Asimov. Grigsby notes that "both series are interrelated and similar, but also very opposite in their conclusions" (Grigsby 153). Indeed, in the *Foundation* Series, the key idea around which all others revolve is the Seldon Plan or, in other words, the colonization of social circumstances by the predictable security of hard science. There is little or no negativity connected with technology – robots included – since it has no inherent morality. Even psychohistory is eminently "benign" in its neutrality. When a

⁴² Perhaps more than coincidentally, there may be something to say about trilogies. The first *Foundation* Series is a trilogy, as was Herbert's plan for *Dune*, which is clearly divided into three distinct "Books". Although these were published in a single volume, two other novels followed, *Dune: Messiah* and *Children of Dune*. The second *Dune* Series is also made up of three volumes. In another coincidence, *Dune* was awarded a *Hugo* for "Best Novel" in 1966, the year when the *Foundation* Series was awarded a one-off *Hugo* for "Best All-Time Series".

certain crisis suggests that this science turned faith is wavering, Seldon's recordings come along to demonstrate that the Plan remains unscathed. In a way, it is a form of religion based on certainty, a kind of faith with empirical evidence to prove it. As we have seen, this is an approximation to a Saint-Simonian utopianism. Similarly to Saint-Simon, Asimov seemed to believe in the power of science as the driving force for improved social conditions and neither men took issue in having science take the role of religion. In Asimov, this is best expressed when the Seldon Plan emerges from time to time to direct humanity into the utopia of Mental Science. Hari Seldon himself is a highly mythologized figure and the scientific institution that he creates is best described as a monastic/academic oligarchy. Additionally, as a diluted version of historical materialism, Asimov's is a model that, as Elkins rightly notes, amalgamates society into a faceless mass of general humanity that will either always act according to the Plan or be subjected by it.

On the contrary, Herbert's *Dune* Series depends largely on the individual. What concerns Herbert seems to be precisely what Asimov glosses over: *Dune* is not really about how History is a pattern, but how people cope with and attempt to break from what History expects of them. In the *Foundation* Series, Seldon's Plan is continually being reinforced and protected, the narrative is at its peak when the Plan succeeds. On the contrary, Paul's and Leto's Golden Path in the *Dune* Series are constantly being chipped away and the success of the narrative lies in their ultimate failure. This is something that Herbert was aware of himself. When he commented on the *Foundation*, his criticism on what he perceived as a stagnant model is evident.

History... is manipulated for larger ends and for the greater good as determined by a scientific aristocracy. It is assumed, then, that the scientist-shamans know best which course humankind should take... While surprises may appear in these stories (e.g., the Mule mutant), it is assumed that no

surprise will be too great or too unexpected to overcome the firm grasp of science upon human destiny. This is essentially the assumption that science can produce a surprise-free future for humankind. (qtd. in O'Reilly 86)

O'Reilly goes as far as stating that *Dune* is, in fact, Herbert's response to the *Foundation* Series. The Mule, a character that is brought forward to create instability to Asimov's model is, to a degree, Herbert's main concern and an analogue to the protagonists in the *Dune* Series. They are all unpredictable and uncontrollable leaders that disrupt the status quo. However, while the Mule is portrayed as a sociopathic mutant who threatens social order by working outside the "science" of psychohistory, Paul and Leto are given the qualities of true messianic self-sacrifice. By being able to affect society on a grand scale, they use this ability largely to benefit it, rather than from it, as in the case of the Mule. Even though Herbert's protagonists follow Asimov's Mule in characterization, they are much closer to Olivaw, a robot, in utopian intention. This resemblance may be relevant to demonstrate precisely how Asimov, the engineer, sets up worlds where humanity is the cog in a machine of scientific predictability, while Herbert, the humanist, seems to deposit a resolute trust in human adaptation to circumstances. As we will later see, these two divergent directions will eventually intersect at their far edges. If Olivaw's overarching characterization shows a clear movement from robot to human, Paul and Leto are taken to an extreme of human reshaping that effectively makes them as inhuman as and much closer to Olivaw.

In fairness, the *Foundation* Series still offers a great deal of character development. The texts presented to the reader are set at instrumental turning points where the Foundation seems to flounder, which can only be played out by men. Still, curiously, the most relevant characters of the entire series – Hari Seldon, Daneel Olivaw and The Mule

– are the most abstract ones, often talked about but rarely seen.⁴³ In the *Foundation* Series, it is the concept that drives the characters. Not so in *Dune*, even though there are more than a few similarities in some of the narrative threads. Still, this fundamental opposition between the *Dune* Series and the *Foundation* Series is what concerns us when comparing the two authors, particularly in how each develops his own utopias. The most striking example of this is how Herbert actively avoids the use of technology throughout his novels, choosing to focus the novum on the human instead of science.

5.1. "THOU SHALT NOT MAKE A MACHINE IN THE LIKENESS OF A HUMAN MIND."

The passage above is drawn from the *Orange Catholic Bible*, a fictional book within the narrative of the *Dune* Series, where all types of thinking machines are completely banned. As a result of this, there are no robots, no supercomputers, no technologically-based utopias. For all purposes, this would be an Asimovian nightmare.

In fact, a central aspect for many of Herbert's texts is how people, under certain circumstances, adjust their behaviour, their predispositions and, ultimately, their own minds and bodies. There are numerous examples of this throughout Herbert's work, which may be strongly influenced by *Dune*'s success, but evidently precede it. According to O'Reilly, the very first story Herbert published was "The Survival of the Cunning", a text that "turns on the superior adaptation of the Eskimo to his environment." (O'Reilly 17). Here, as in other future texts, Herbert asserts the superiority of the Inuit over the technologically advanced, but ill adapted soldier. This topic in particular seems to be a direct precursor to the Fremmen in *Dune*, and draws a similar conclusion: humanity is

⁴³ As we know, Olivaw plays a major part in the *Robot* Series, but not here.

malleable to any and all extent; the harsher the environment, the more remarkable the adaptation. The environment or the circumstances are hence imposed on the subject and the interest lies on the resourcefulness of his adaptation to these conditions.

The Dragon in the Sea (1956), Herbert's first novel, deals with the same issues, focusing on the rigours of enclosure in a four-man submarine, both physically and psychologically.⁴⁴ As Ramsey comments, "*We're headed into the deeps [...] Physically and mentally.*" (F. Herbert, *The Dragon in the Sea* 51) The trope, in this case, works perfectly, the pressure inside the submarine actually becoming as mental as it is literal, and has the merit of originality by being at the cusp of an emergent type. Even though *The Dragon in the Sea* is regarded as a text outside the science fiction "genre", it is one of the first two novels to address the strain that submarine crews are subjected to. Despite the fact that war stories were fairly common by the time Herbert's work was first serialized, this specific setting was new. Herbert's first novel had only another one on this subject matter that was published in the same year, Edward L. Beach's *Run Silent Run Deep*. Curiously, while Beach's work was to become the reference novel for a series of naval fictions inspired by the triumphant spirit of the postbellum period, Herbert's own text is overlooked as a contribution to the field, perhaps due to the less literal approach of an entirely fictional war, submarine and crew roster.

Still, O'Reilly describes an episode where Herbert is denounced a traitor and questioned regarding the sources for his story (since the world's first atomic submarine had been commissioned just a year before) (O'Reilly 34). O'Reilly's account is illustrative of how Herbert's work was so regarded as fact rather than fiction at times,

⁴⁴ This novel was initially serialized as "Under Pressure", in *Astounding Science Fiction* magazine between November, 1955 and January 1956.

certainly due to the contemporary actuality of Herbert's "future" setting. In addition, if we consider the numerous examples of science fiction authors writing stories involving nuclear power and militarism in the postbellum period, Asimov and Dick included, it is unsurprising that the nuclear submarine becomes a theme of interest for the genre. Concerns related to the war and its social and technological impact are certainly at the forefront of much of post-war SF and the inevitable technological boost that this period is granted in connection with war efforts fits well with narratives where technology plays a significant role. It is yet another instance where the notion of genre becomes fluid, indicative of SF's propensity towards hybridized and fragmented forms that would become so useful in thinking of postmodernism. Hutcheon's considerations on what she saw as the postmodern novels of Eco and others would fit well in this context.

[H]ybrid novels like these work both to address and to subvert that fragmentation through their pluralizing recourse to the discourses of history, sociology, theology, political science, economics, philosophy, semiotics, literature, literary criticism, and so on. (Hutcheon 21)

Herbert is, indeed self-reflective in this fragmentation. Aside from the fact that Herbert's knowledge and background allow him to imbue *The Dragon in the Sea* with elements close to naval literature, this text also includes many of the concepts that Herbert develops throughout the rest of his literary work. Characters are put under extreme psychological pressure which they learn to accept and make into an integral part of themselves. The captain is an all-knowing figure around whom the men gather in a type of religious fervour, when, in fact, this is a construction for the benefit of crew performance that borders fanaticism. The role of the individual and its exceptional influence in a position of power is at the forefront and, in fact, the key to the entire puzzle that is the novel. The solution to the problem of coping with submarine life is to be imbalanced, an impossible state outside this system. It is interesting to note that Ramsay,

the protagonist should be an external element that is introduced into the hermetic ideology of the subug. In this respect, the novel concerns itself principally with Ramsay's ability to find an identity within the fold of that particular ideology.

This is actually the main source of conflict and can best be described as an Althusserian interpellation. Ramsay identifies himself through the institutions that hail him, as a psychologist, as a member of a governmental bureau, as an agent with the particular mission of discovering a traitor in the closed system of the submarine. However, when entering the submarine, Ramsay is completely isolated from the ideologies that hail him on the outside and, in turn is interpellated by the ideology within the submarine. As Althusser states,

They are inserted into practices governed by the rituals of the ISAs. They 'recognize' the existing state of affairs (das Bestehende), that 'it really is true that it is so and not otherwise', and that they must be obedient to God, to their conscience, to the priest, to de Gaulle, to the boss, to the engineer, that thou shalt 'love thy neighbour as thyself', etc. (Althusser)

In this system, Ramsay eventually chooses to submit to his identity as an engineer, a functioning part of the closed system.

Herbert's conclusion to these two differing ideologies in the novel is that, without identification with the ideology of the system (in this case mystical fanaticism towards the captain), insanity ensues:

Ramsay could contain the question no longer. 'What's your definition of sanity, Skipper?'

'The ability to swim,' said Sparrow.[...] That means the sane person has to understand *currents*, has to know what's required in different waters.' [...]

‘Insanity is something like drowning,’ said Sparrow. ‘You go under; you flounder without direction[...].’ (F. Herbert, *The Dragon in the Sea* 252)

Finally, there is the subtlety of mental meltdown, the line between insanity and coping with reality nearly indistinguishable. The theme of psychological strain is carried on to *Destination: Void* (1965) and his other novels to varying degrees. The aspect of religious fervour and how it shapes social interactions is also present in this novel, as well as the rest of the *Destination: Void* and the *Whipping Star* series, *The Eyes of Heisenberg* (1966), *The Santaroga Barrier* (1968), *Soul Catcher* (1972), *The Godmakers* (1972), *Hellstrom's Hive* (1973). In most of these novels and again in *The White Plague* (1982), the theme of multiple personalities and the malleable nature of the human psyche is explored. These constitute the vast majority of Herbert’s published novels and are all present in his very first work. In addition, there is the theme of ecology and how the environment also changes human behaviour. Arguably, this may also be tenuously seen in *The Dragon in the Sea*, since the claustrophobic environment is the main reason for the men to change. Notwithstanding, this another concept with many branches across different texts and has certainly some relation to “The Survival of the Cunning”.

This illustrates how, similarly to Dick, Herbert’s writings are so deeply interconnected. The individuality of a given text, as a unity, loses significance in favour of the concept, which can be presented in a number of fragmented forms, a “reshuffling of the deck”, as it will. Conceptually, the narrative becomes a mere vessel for the idea to be presented. In this regard, Herbert’s written work resembles Dick’s in their insistence upon the same themes under different settings (Dick, of course, takes this a step further, by reusing and rearranging characters, settings and entire ideas across different novels). On the other hand, Herbert comes closer to Asimov in the sense that great care is given by both to a continued working of the same narrative across many texts, something for which Herbert

is well-known. In *Dune*, even though there is a paradigm shift, we have a similar process to that of *Foundation*, one that fits neatly in Jones' concept that the setting becomes as much a focal point of the narrative as any character, going as far as stating that "[t]he icons of sf are the signs which announce the genre, which warn the reader that this is a different world; and at the same time constitute that difference." (Jones 163)

In *Dune*, this is one of the most productive forms of narrative progression and character development. Every social group or political force in *Dune* exhibits a strict adherence to a certain belief system that, through a metamorphosis of the human body and mind, will guarantee some sort of advancement to its members. Thematically, these experimentations are the concretization of an eminently utopian scheme through the utopian body. Similarly to Asimov's robot, particularly in the Solarian robots, a given group projects itself on an externalized version of themselves that will materialize their utopian aspirations. But, unlike Asimov, this is done by means of the human, and not the robot. This is especially so in the *Dune* Series. Herbert uses the premise of a society that is eminently anthropocentric, where thinking machines are replaced by human beings and virtually every group is conditioned to the point of being physically adapted to fulfil its role in society.⁴⁵ There are, of course, many examples of stratification in the dystopian tradition, from Wells' *The Time Machine* (1895) to Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932). In Herbert, this is present in his own version of physically specialized castes. From the shape-shifting Tleilaxu to the computer-like Mentats, the appearance and abilities of characters are essentially an externalization of the specificity of their stratification. They are optimal versions of what is required of them. The Bene Gesserit, of course, are no

⁴⁵ This is a curious reversal of the cautionary tale on the dangers of technology: in eliminating the threat of the machine, they have to replace it.

exception. They are portrayed as master manipulators of the mores of other communities, and this is clearly externalized in their almost superhuman ability to use extreme forms of mentalism and manipulation that goes as far as literal forms of mind control (again, a trope that had been tested in *The Santaroga Barrier*).

The utopian body is, thus, a representation of the utopian vision and, as in Asimov, this often entails a cycle of reversal. The reification of the Other for the sake of utopia seems to give way to the undesired effect of a schizophrenic construction where the Other is at odds with its creator. This conflict is plainly used in both authors, not only from a conceptual perspective, but also for narrative purposes, since it drives forward many of the narrative conflicts present in the texts. As we will see below, this ambivalence is very much an issue with Herbert, particularly in *The Santaroga Barrier*, where it is unclear whether the protagonist in the novel desires or rejects the imposing utopia and vice-versa.

The idea of the completely malleable human being is further reinforced by the way many of the characters are developed and clearly present in other texts. Taking the concept of Asimov's Solarians in the *Foundation* Series further, Herbert explores the shaping of humanity by a sense of Mendelian geneticism and Darwinian adaptability. In the caste system that Herbert develops for *Dune*, virtually every faction has been shaped by various circumstances. Mentats are described as human beings that, due to the banishment of any kind of computers and calculating machines, perform as their surrogates through narcotics and conditioning. Similarly, truthsayers act as human polygraphs apparently through a combination of training and genetic predisposition. Every other aspect of *Dune* is permeated by the adaptation of human beings to the circumstances that are imposed on them. The most extreme cases are the Spacing Guild

and the Bene Tleilax, whose respective members are almost entirely devoid of human characteristics out of the necessity to adapt to their respective role in society.

There are two main considerations to be drawn from the way Herbert structures this society. Firstly, the contamination from the gothic is more than apparent. This is a world with virtually no technology, nor the need for it: Human beings have adapted to replace it. As Roberts states, “the whole universe that Herbert creates is almost medieval in terms of its technological non-sophistication.” (Roberts, *Science Fiction* 38). Herbert’s *Dune* is, indeed, medieval in nature. It is structured in a feudal system of Dukes, Barons and Houses. In stark opposition to what is sometimes considered as the Hard SF of Asimov, it is through this entirely unusual setup that Herbert is able to draw much of the uncanny and estranged images. As Royle indicates, “The uncanny is never simply a question of a statement, description or definition, but always engages a performative dimension, a maddening supplement, something unpredictable and *additionally strange*” (Royle 16), which is precisely what happens when Herbert permeates the novum of his SF with the strange of the gothic in a seemingly paradoxical way.

Secondly, taking a page out of Huxley’s *Brave New World*, this is a deeply stratified society, to the point where the role of each class defines its members both psychologically and physically. This is something that Herbert further explores in *The Eyes of Heisenberg*. Here, as in *Dune*, a caste system is also in place, with a separation between the genetically, politically and religiously stratified Folk and the god-like Optimen who rule them. These, however, are not the texts of social criticism through allegory, as is the case with Huxley and the dystopian tradition. Herbert doesn’t seem to imply in his work that his society is becoming dangerously stratified, which is confirmed by the fact that Herbert actually embraces adaptability to one’s environment. As Brian Herbert states, “in many of his

stories he stressed the importance of adaptability, and his characters often had to adjust in order to survive.” (B. Herbert 155). Instead, both in *Dune* and in *The Eyes of Heisenberg*, there are undertones of dystopian symbolism interspersed with other concerns. Even though the displaced world is structured in these particular ways, it is not by contrasting these structures to our own that Herbert draws more significance. It is, in fact, by his recurrent presentation of human beings adapting to social, psychological and environmental circumstances.

The Fremen are one of the most thoroughly explored example of this, both in *Dune* and in any other of Herbert’s works. By virtue of being in an arid planet, they adapt to a point where this has both a physical and cultural effect. They are evidently seen as a superior force as combatants due, in part, to the extreme environment to which they have adapted. The similarity to the eskimo in “The Survival of the Cunning” is glaring, but here the Fremen are taken a step further. Their adaptation to the environment is such that it permeates all aspects of social behaviour and interaction. A Fremen is clearly distinguishable from others due to its inhuman blue-in-blue eyes caused by exposure to a planet rich in a mind-altering substance, pervading every aspect of a Fremen’s life. Curiously, there are counterpoints to the Fremen, such as Baron Harkonnen’s troops and the emperor’s Sardaukar, a military elite who have similarly been conditioned in a desolate environment of their own. This serves to demonstrate that in *Dune*, while society is deeply stratified and unequal in abilities, they are rather a product of circumstances than naturally existing capabilities. On a parallel argument, DiTommaso astutely connects all of these factions into what he calls the Vitality struggle: “Leto, Paul, Shaddam, and even the Baron Harkonnen use the same method to gain and wield power: crack troops” (DiTommaso, “History and Historical Effect in Frank Herbert’s ‘Dune’” 321). This suggests that it is precisely the matter of stratification that determines how a certain kind

of conditioning takes place and, most relevantly, how this is used by virtually any faction to their advantage. What is at heart here, however, is the fact that the dystopian and the utopian here walk hand in hand. We neither abhor the exciting stratification of the Fremen nor do we desire the monstrous stratification of the Guild Navigators.

There are, of course, some instances more in line with the traditional sense of the novum – some of them in the characteristic uniqueness of *Dune*'s imagery - but in Herbert's writings, this is partially instrumental in elaborating social groups and their representatives, inner psychological states and motivations. Ideas like Axolotl tanks, Face Dancers and even spice-fuelled space travel provide abundant and uncanny imagery, but are far from the cognitive Hard SF that takes careful steps to offer a perception of plausible technologies. While this had been the case for *The Dragon in the Sea*, the *Dune* Series ostensibly departs from this concern with empirical believability. This is not necessarily divergent from the concept of Jones' background-as-character or Suvin's cognitive estrangement, as there is an important heritage of SF inspired by "historical" imagery in the form of Edgar Rice Burroughs' Barsoon Series, among others. In addition, surely, the "hook" that editors like John Campbell looked for lies in the exotic: space feudalism, desert people living in symbiosis with giant sandworms, breeding programmes that span for millennia.⁴⁶ But, in the case of Herbert, the utopian process is never described in the follow-up novels, events progress in what Benjamin would call a "homogenous and empty time" (Benjamin, th. XIII) Therefore, one cannot overlook the fact that this must be more than a missed opportunity to present the no-place. In this case there is, in fact, a visible slant towards the individual action in the process of change, an

⁴⁶ John Campbell was editor of *Astounding Science Fiction* during the time of Asimov and Herbert, having published both. Similarly to Gernsback, he is considered as instrumental to the shaping of the genre.

intricate exploration of the character itself. This pushes the setting to the role of structural device, rather than a standalone theme in itself, to counter Jones' assessment in a small way.

In Herbert's case, possibly due to his background, we can safely say that it isn't the setting alone which acts as character. It is also the exploration of the mind and human ability in connection with the novum. This is more evident when we consider what we have already seen, that virtually every technological advancement in the *Dune* universe is dependent on specialized human beings: Mentats instead of supercomputers, Guild navigators instead of spaceship engines, programmable clone gholas instead of robots. This is in keeping with Herbert's mode. In some of his other work, from *The Dragon in the Sea* (1956) to *The Santaroga Barrier* (1968) and *The White Plague* (1982), the humanistic themes overpower the technological in a very meaningful way.

Still, there is evidently a strong imagery associated with Herbert's work. The *Dune* texts are usually described as a series about a desert planet with giant sandworms and precognition, not necessarily a series about the human mind. Herbert is notorious for masterfully crafting societies through these kinds of intricate details, which certainly gives relevance to the setting. However, as Roberts states,

sandworms [...] are the most potent and the most memorable of Herbert's inventions [...]. And it seems clear to me that the reason for this is that it is in the figure of the sandworms that Herbert found his most powerful and least flawed embodiment of alterity. (Roberts, *Science Fiction* 45)

This is perhaps why we see Herbert's significant investment on the psyche, which is not only reflected by the inner monologues and Jungian points of reference, but also by the language itself. Specifically in *Leto*, we are faced with a larger-than-life representation of a human being/giant sandworm hybrid. And yet, *Leto's* bizarre physical

description is parallel to numerous apologetic speeches on how he wants others to understand his motivations. The novum is glaringly present both in theme and in form, and the text certainly makes abundant use of it in unexpected manners. For example, the complex depiction of a man struggling with the knowledge that he will not be fondly remembered is a concern not commonly attributed to SF.

On the other hand, Leto is bigger, not only in size, but in scope, precognition and intentions. As Aldiss explains, “Leto is a predator with a conscience. A racial conscience. His actions in the novel – ostensibly tyrannical – are all designed to create a universe in which surprise and chance might again shape Mankind’s destiny.” (Aldiss and Wingrove 462). He is vocal in his reassessment of his father’s vision, what he calls the “Golden Path”. Aside from an analytical interpretation of the father-son conflict, it is significant that Leto opts for fully realizing the utopian vision in order to teach humanity “a lesson their bones will remember” (F. Herbert, *God Emperor of Dune* 185). Therefore, Leto’s Golden Path implies a utopian project, but not a straightforward one. Akin to Hari Seldon, Leto’s plan is to see humanity through, so that, when he is done, it will spontaneously meet the conditions for utopia. Leto is not outside the system, as Asimov insists on for psychohistory to work, but he is clearly apart from those around him, making him as unworldly as Olivaw. What both characters do is to divorce themselves from the society they bring forward.

Curiously, and partly due to the fact that it is first and foremost the protagonist who is under study in Herbert, what is described in *God Emperor of Dune* is actually not Leto’s promised utopia. Throughout the novel, we see Leto working to build his narrative, imprinting his ideas on others. All other aspects of his rule are either past or already determined by him (which, of course, makes for a compelling reading, even if

thematically declaring that a 3.500 year tyranny is beside the matter) As stated above, the novel seems to follow a path akin to what Benjamin describes, leaving the 3.500 years of homogenous and empty time to be described by flashes of history captured by snippets of text in epigraphs to the chapters of the novel. What is at hand in the novel is the actual messianic moment. A similar narrative had already been established in the *Foundation* Series, when it is stated that humanity must pass through an arbitrary timespan of nothingness to be awakened at revolutionary moments and come out thriving on the other side. Therefore, what is apparently described are the precursors for utopia and not utopia itself. This is, of course, paradoxical. Enticed by a promised utopia, the reader is confronted with the system that will lead to it. A system which can, by its own right, be best described as the only perceivable utopia in the text, a revolutionary desire for something that will not happen as planned, thus exposing particular social and cultural issues existing outside the text.

Therefore, when we look at the text and subsequent novels in the series, utopia remains unrealized and has to be shifted to somewhere else. It is as if, much like Hari Seldon's periodical announcements at pivotal times, the texts are concerned with the shifts of balance between one utopia and the next, but not the utopias themselves. In essence, the focus is sharply on the protagonists and how they are coping with their own psychological issues: their choices, how they influence and are influenced by their environment and, crucially, how they envision their particular world in face of their utopia, or their vision of how their social conditions should be. So, if, for example, the Fremen envision a radical environmental change in the desert environment of their planet in *Dune*, in *God Emperor of Dune* the planet is now green, the utopia is realized, and the narrative has to find another utopian desire: to turn the planet back into a desert. Utopia in the *Dune* Series, it seems,

is exposed as a perennial process of non-actualization. When the no-place becomes a place, a new utopia has to be found.

Since the *Dune* Series offers little in terms of technological advancement, nor any sense of it being a proleptic utopia, what could be considered Herbert's utopia? The most straightforward answer would be ecotopia. According to Roberts, "The most obvious aspect of *Dune* is that it is an environmental novel: the planet of the title is covered by a world-spanning desert, water is a precious commodity and life is hard." (Roberts, *The History of Science Fiction* 235) and even though it may not have been to everyone's expectations, Campbell included, it was an unquestionable success,

Considering that, similarly to More, the term "ecotopia" would only be invented by Ernest Callenbach's *Ecotopia* (1975), Herbert may be regarded as a precursor to this particular type of utopian construction. The premise that sets forward most of the political plotting in *Dune* is the defence of territorialism and the sense that the resources of a certain place should not be exploited by outsiders. Through an ecologically aware cultural tradition, tribal communities are seen as keepers of their surroundings, in a kind of ecotopia, where local communities are astutely aware of the needs of the ecosystem.

Therefore, it is fair to assume that, at least on the level of utopia, Herbert was indeed concerned with ecological issues. In his biography, Brian Herbert gives numerous references that point towards his father's preoccupation with the environment, most notably in a plan that he named "Ecological Demonstration Project (EDP) to explore the application of alternative energy sources [...]." (B. Herbert 283) Whether Herbert's interest with ecotopia inspired his writing of *Dune* or was spurred by it, the fact remains that there is a connection, all the more if we consider that his last novel in the series, *Chapterhouse Dune*, was written in 1985. It is then unquestionable that the ecotopia that

comes through in the novels directly relates to a serious intention for present concreteness in the Blochian sense. In this vein, Luckhurst appropriately remarks that “[Herbert] located himself in the American tradition of small-scale capitalism, and like Campbell he gleaned hope from the view that ‘we are still a society of small scale mechanics’.” (Luckhurst 161)

Regarding the undercurrent of ecotopia in Herbert, it comes as little surprise that we should connect the adaptability of the human to its environment. Although there is a clear departure into extreme and uncanny forms of estrangement, the point of departure remains his short story “Survival of The Cunning”, or the infatuation with the idea that a human being can become virtually anything, as we’ve seen. In *Dune*, however, is where we enter into the realm of the gothic in a process best described as a dichotomy between familiar and defamiliarization. If, on the one hand, Herbert’s imagery reports back to a medieval past, on the other hand the story takes place over 20.000 years from now, in a clear attempt to detach all referentiality to the present. If the reader is provided with a theme of adaptability and resilience in face of harsh environments, this is quickly overturned when the resulting adaptation becomes grotesque. The ambivalence is jarring and had already been alluded upon in *The Santaroga Barrier*: adaptability in Herbert’s novels expands the abilities of human beings, but it also deforms them beyond recognition as human. The second part of this premise is eminently defamiliarizing on the level of the narrative. As we will see below, there may be grounds to consider that, on a formal level, Herbert is defamiliarizing as well.

5.2. TRANSCENDENCE AND THE MESSIANIC

In *Dune*, the subject of religion and the messianic is an unquestionably dominant element and is developed in a number of ways, namely when religion is underhandedly

used by the Bene Gesserit as a traditional method of indoctrination to control the political dynamic of any given society. The Missionaria Protectiva is “the arm of the order charged with sowing infectious superstitions on primitive worlds, thus opening those regions to exploitation by the Bene Gesserit.” (F. Herbert, *Dune* 524). It is fashioned after the Jesuit Order, as is often pointed out, namely by his son Brian Herbert, who gives an account for the name:

His Irish Catholic maternal aunts, who attempted to force religion on him, became the models for the Bene Gesserit Sisterhood of *Dune*. It is no accident that the pronunciations of “Gesserit” and “Jesuit” are similar, as he envisioned his maternal aunts and the Bene Gesserit of *Dune* as female Jesuits. (B. Herbert 21)

As we can see, the inspiration is loose. Therefore, Herbert’s Jesuitical aunts in the context of the *Dune* universe, are much more a political force rather than a religious order. It is assumed by the Sisterhood themselves that the religious aspects of their dealings are merely incidental. This is a departure from the Jesuits in principle, but, the text seems to state, not in practical result. If, unlike the Bene Gesserit, the Jesuits did not see their own faith as basic superstition, the political use of indoctrination is what concerns the Sisterhood in the text. This is something that is implied in similar terms in *The Dragon in the Sea*, when Captain Sparrow’s insistence on religious belief works as a unifying factor for the crew to have faith in him:

What is your religion, Mr. Ramsey? [...] It’s not really important down here,” said Sparrow. “I was merely curious. We have a saying in the subtugs that the lord won’t permit a *live* atheist do dive below a thousand feet.(F. Herbert, *The Dragon in the Sea* 49)

This particularly instrumentalizing view on the use of religion is frequent in Herbert and can be best described as an extrapolation on Jaspers’ philosophy, namely regarding the role of religion and transcendence in the human experience. It is clear that Herbert

read and was inspired by Jaspers, who was a proponent of a particular kind of transcendental existentialism where the subject is restricted to the most basic form of being until he transcends outside empiricism. This fits well with Herbert's tropes of the human that is able to attain a higher level of consciousness and, aside from *Dune*, Herbert expressed this influence most literally in *The Santaroga Barrier*.

The main character is a psychologist named Gilbert Dasein (the outsider who is bound by his own scientific empiricism) and "Jaspers" is the mind-expanding drug that pervades everything in the community. Similarly to the spice melange, this narcotic enables its users to unlock their awareness and have a heightened consciousness that transcends their bodies. "Jaspers", as a development of the Spice, is a key metaphor for how Herbert instrumentalizes religion at one end of the text to obtain transcendence at the other. The drug is ubiquitous and inescapable; it is present in all aspects of life (as is the Spice). It is an objective and material part of Santaroga's society that its inhabitants draw from to obtain transcendence. It is the representation of something external to the individual that he embraces and incorporates to attain an expanded sense of self not possible through empirical experience alone. Therefore, the object in itself, in this case the drug, is not actually the source for transcendence, but the objective provider for the inhabitants to reach it in themselves. In this sense, and similarly to the spice in *Dune*, the substance symbolically represents utopia, it's the element that opens the possibility of the utopian within the subject.

O'Reilly effectively connects Herbert's work with Jaspers and Heidegger, noting the intentional pun on the names of characters and finding a parallel between Gilbert Dasein

and Heidegger's "Dasein", rather than Jaspers'.⁴⁷ This is further reinforced by Dasein's love interest, Jenny Sorge, which is presumably taken from Heidegger's "Sorge" as well. Gilbert Dasein can be seen to represent the state of dichotomy between authentic and inauthentic Being that Heidegger poses. His existence as a character can be validated by his struggle in maintaining his individuality in an environment that constantly pushes him to conform to the collective. This is further reinforced by having Jenny Sorge as his love interest, or Heidegger's key element of "caring" to validate the Being of "Dasein". O'Reilly takes this interpretation of Gilbert Dasein in particular, relegating the influences of Jasper to the more epistemological aspects of the text in contrast to the ontological questions. What is important to emphasize here is that Herbert seems to employ these terms liberally. As the love interest Jenny's last name is "Sorge", because it literally means "taking care of", not necessarily because Herbert was following a rigorous path of Heideggerian ontology. As Sembrera explains,

This should make it obvious that in speaking of concern Heidegger means nothing like the mood or emotional state of 'worry,' 'anticipation,' or 'anxious involvement.' 'Concern' is a term referring to the structural whole constituted by being-self-already, and being-among. This is all it means. (Sembrera 121)

This brings forward a problem in the interpretation of *The Santaroga Barrier* in particular, one that raises questions somewhat similar to those that Elkins poses for psychohistory and the *Foundation* Series. If we are to conflate Heidegger and Jaspers in a closely knit trope present within Herbert's text, how can we reconcile whether "Jaspers" is a gateway to Jasperian transcendence or a barrier for Heideggerian authenticity of

⁴⁷ (O'Reilly 141)

Being? Does Gilbert Dasein represent the conflicts of *dasein* that Heidegger is concerned about or is he closer to a character limited by his own scientific empiricism? A reading of the text as influenced by Heidegger will surely conclude that Gilbert Dasein is indeed the hero, invariably impaired by the oppressive force of the communal that is so materialized in Santaroga. Here, his struggle is one of releasing himself from absorption by Santaroga in order to find his own authentic self. “Jaspers” and the barrier are the counterpoint to this by very literally imprinting the individuals with a sense of the collective and removing the possibility of each interpreting the world independently and without “barriers”. However, if one is to take the more Jaspersian approach, then the enhanced state that the Santarogans obtain through the use of “Jaspers” is, in fact, a desirable form of *existenz*. O’Reilly, after making the case for the pervasive influence of Heidegger in the text, points out this connection with Jaspers:

The drug takes Dasein from his everyday, limited consciousness to a transcendence with echoes of the philosopher’s encompassing *existenz*. Like the philosopher Jaspers, the drug also teaches the Santarogans about the pervasive irrational elements in man and shows them that true human being can best be found in the network of awakened human communication. (O’Reilly 142)

How can we, then, reconcile the fact that Gilbert Dasein spends so much of the novel in attempting to escape or break the barrier? He should be, in this perspective, at fault for so adamantly resisting the pressures to transcend. O’Reilly doesn’t state the fact that Jaspers himself had a *dasein*, which is fundamentally at odds with Heidegger’s. While the latter is used to explain Gilbert Dasein as a character struggling to Be in the world, with the Santarogans as the collective antagonist, Jaspers would have him on the opposite role, stubbornly resisting the completion of true transcendent existence. Still, although Heidegger’s and Jaspers’ *dasein* are inherently different, this does not mean that it would

be impossible to appropriate both into Gilbert Dasein, *The Santaroga Barrier*, and other texts in general.

The solution for this maze is similar to that of Asimov and Elkins' assessment of his historical materialism: Herbert does not necessarily use these influences as a treatise on either (or any) particular philosophy. As apparent as these connections may emerge, to the point where even characters are named after key concepts, the central aspect is the curiosity of the idea. It is a what-if scenario as much as Asimov and many other SF authors. What if the mores of society that so often shape our behaviour were materialized in a form of group consciousness? What if the influence of Others were a palpable thing? It seems that there is an uncertainty in the text whether this is positive or negative, and, true to Herbert, the reversals are frequent.

In connection with other texts, namely *Dune*, where the value of the hero is ostensibly ambivalent, perhaps Gilbert Dasein's plight may possibly be regarded both ways. On one hand, "Jaspers" evokes the trope of the alien menace, frequent in the pulps that staged invasions of the more literal type as Lovecraft's alien "colour" in "The Colour Out of Space", which unknowingly infects anything in its path. This type of "conversion" would later be retooled to fit themes such as the post-war communist scare, most ostensibly Jack Finney's pod people in *The Body Snatchers*, 1955, and Heinlein's 1951 *The Puppet Masters*, where the alien is a parasite that controls the mind and actions of the human host. Similarly to "Jaspers", the collective is truly alien and artificially imposed, which is mostly swallowed by inaction. The alien clearly opposes free will and individuality, but is able to act with a fair amount of success. Herbert is certainly concerned with this topic, as most of his work attests. The passivity of social groups when confronted with the oppressiveness of stability is a prevalent theme in both his *WorShip*

and *ConSentient* Series. Here, as well as in the *Dune* Series, a connection is established between the reliance in external forces and the inevitable social stagnation. From a dystopian perspective, this is what “Jaspers” accomplishes and the main reason why Gilbert Dasein sees it as the antagonist. For all purposes, “jaspers” is the purveyor of a utopian experiment, a small town that works individually but with an actually collective consciousness that rejects intrusions.

Luckhurst states that this utopia would be at odds with Herbert’s “suspicion of even liberal communalism.”(Luckhurst 161). This would be confirmed by the fact that the protagonist is under threat by the collective mind of the utopian community. However the issue is murkier. As Luckhurst himself notes, Herbert believed in small-scale capitalism, which the santarogans are. In addition, “Jaspers” is portrayed as truly mind-expanding. As Gilbert Dasein explores the nature of the Barrier, the conflict is eroded with the possibility of him being absorbed by it due to the enlightenment that “Jaspers” provides.

This dichotomy is striking, since it seems that the awakening of the mind entails, to a degree, the recognition of the mode through which it is being accomplished and what is lost in the process. This is something that carries over to other texts, particularly to *Dune* and the ambivalence towards religion and consciousness that was also already present in *Under Pressure*. Creating a messiah is apparently a driving force of socio-political progress, but the consequences that it entails undercut the very same desired progress. Once more, this can be connected to Benjamin in the sense that the emergence of the messiah in *Dune* is a direct result of the necessity to break the continuity of history and cleanse the past.⁴⁸ It is in this respect that the messianic expectations and religious forces

⁴⁸ “He perceives it, in order to explode a specific epoch out of the homogenous course of history; thus exploding a specific life out of the epoch, or a specific work out of the life-work.” (Benjamin, th. XVII)

over the individual come together as the ambivalent elements described above. This enters the broad realm of the utopian in the sense that the positive utopian and the negative dystopian constructions are fundamentally connected and interchangeable.

In *Dune*, this is demonstrated by how most power groups materialistically use both the body and religion. When the Bene Gesserit dismiss religious belief by stating that it is a mere device that is codified into other societies in order to manipulate them when needed, this is frequently contradicted by their fevered observance of practices such as eugenics, mental conditioning and the intention to breed a messiah. It is almost as if, under a Jasperian perspective, they acknowledge that the type of transcendence they seek can only be obtained by embracing the ritualization (as opposed to rationalization) of their own mythos. No matter how political their intentions may be, Herbert has them attempting to breed a messiah in the hopes that the latter will unlock new levels of consciousness. Their aspirations to power are, therefore, as metaphysically driven as they are politically. Here, the role of the messiah is, in fact, one of the text's main concerns. Herbert, looking backward, eventually indicated that this was the focal point of his *Dune* Series:

I conceived of a long novel, the whole trilogy as one book about the messianic convulsions that periodically overtake us. Demagogues, fanatics, con-game artists, the innocent and the not-so-innocent bystanders-all were to have a part in the drama. This grows from my theory that superheroes are disastrous for humankind. Even if we find a real hero (whatever-or whoever-that may be), eventually fallible mortals take over the power structure that always comes into being around such a leader. (F. Herbert, "Dune Genesis")

But there is a more relevant aspect to how Herbert is treating religion in his narratives. As it stands, the *Dune* Series seems to propose that religion is a material social force that human beings appropriate and codify into myth: the purveyors of religion included. We have already seen that religious mythology and cosmogony can be seen as a form of utopianism. With Herbert, this is particularly expressed within the logic of the narratives,

when characters such as Captain Sparrow in *The Dragon in the Sea* or the Bene Gesserit in *Dune* use mythology codify a theological utopia and create social stability.

It is at this point that the messianic is expressed in Herbert's novels. For Herbert, it seems, ritualized social stability generates stagnation. One of the most notable mantras to come out of David Lynch's adaptation of *Dune* is actually "without change something sleeps inside us and seldom awakens. The sleeper must awaken." (Lynch) and Brian Herbert notes that his father "became acquainted with the Zen writings of Alan W. Watts, particularly *The Wisdom of Insecurity*, which postulated the abandonment of safe courses of action in favour of uncertainty and insecurity." (B. Herbert 155). This, distilled into the world of *Dune* and others, translates into radical social changes enacted by highly mythologized people that are in a position of power.

The threat, of course, resides in the fact that change is actually performed by the people and that the figurehead is a mere representation of the already nascent desire to break with stagnation. This, to some extent, can be read under Benjamin's conception of the messianic, particularly when stating that "The storm drives him irresistibly into the future, to which his back is turned, while the rubble-heap before him grows sky-high. That which we call progress, is this storm." (Benjamin, th. IX). It is unknown whether or not Herbert ever came across Benjamin, still, this passage is suggestive of the two aspects of the messianic present in Herbert's *Dune* Series: the steady progress of social and political norms is, in fact, a form of stagnation for the people and it is by a messianic burst that the positions of power are cleansed and a new direction for progress is established.

The question remains whether or not this description should be applied to Asimov's *Foundation*. Let us not forget that, in Asimov's case, the Plan is a constant, a formula that purports to navigate history in a single, unquestionable direction. The revolutionary

moments merely emerge to confirm what is already predicted by the plan. In *Dune*, however, there is the distinct revolutionary element that hinders progress, as progress is indeed equivalent to stagnation in the context of the novel.

However, apart from the messianic spirit as a general force in society, *Dune* actually provides a literal messiah. In this sense, we can see that both Paul and Leto act as symbols of messianism, of a desired utopia that they will bring forward, playing upon the historical imperative to break with the current social scheme. This is, in fact the nature of their threat to society. Roberts, however, assesses that “In *Dune* the messiah proves ‘disastrous for humans’ simply in terms of the political upheaval the causes – war, uncertainty and so on – but this is the kind of ‘disaster’ any conventional political leader can inflict.” (Roberts, *The History of Science Fiction* 236). What Roberts is overlooking here is the fact that, as seen above, Herbert professed uncertainty and change as a productive means to improve his life. The political upheaval itself that leaders instil in the context of *Dune* is regarded not only as positive, but as inevitable. The disaster, as it is presented and as Herbert states in “Dune Genesis”, lies in our belief that the messianic period can be maintained, when, in fact, the messiah will inevitably turn into a tyrant. As Touponce explains, “Personal observation had convinced Herbert that in the power arena of politics/economics and in their logical consequence, war, people tend to give over every decision-making capacity to any leader who could wrap himself in the myth fabric of society.” (Touponce 12)

While the series eventually develops to explore other types of messiah figures, it is in the first trilogy, constituted by *Dune*, *Dune Messiah* and *Children of Dune* that the narrative arc of transforming a desert planet into a green paradise comes to fruition. This, of course, is the foundational story of the ways in which a utopian abstraction can be

actually enacted. However, tied to this process is the development of the protagonist who triggers these changes into effect. There is the desire for a particular utopia, represented by an ecological change with massive political repercussions. As the original protagonist, Paul is wedged in between both worlds: the elaborated feudal structure that and the highly mystical and detached Fremen society that underpins it. By being able to move between one and the other, Paul is a character that becomes knowledgeable in both. Due to this, he is in a position to accomplish what the Fremen desire. Still, he is a product of the established oligarchy, which puts him in a position where he is able to see that the abstract utopia in the Fremen ideology is a fallacy, as it merely shifts the paradigm of oppressiveness and socio-political discontent elsewhere. Strikingly, this is the character that Herbert props up as the protagonist, the messiah who has the task of putting the Fremen at the political forefront and changing the face of the desert planet.

As DiTommaso proposes, “Clearly, Paul is a historically spawned and highly influential catalyst who sparks the awesome inertial forces of history into motion and as such is completely intertwined with the already-present institutions and structures he will use in his rise to godhood” (DiTommaso, “History and Historical Effect in Frank Herbert’s ‘Dune’” 321)

There are more than a few hints that Paul will, indeed, become ruinous to the society that surrounds him, and this is, most of all, recognized by Paul himself. As has been often noted, Herbert clearly hints on the reversal of the hero he intends to put in effect in the

second and subsequent novels of the series, where the utopian vision of the Fremen becomes fragmented by its own concretization.⁵⁰

Herbert's plan to reverse the hero archetype is well established, as is Campbell's erroneous expectation of a continually ascending progression of the protagonist. As a feedback letter to Herbert upon reading the first *Dune* manuscript, Campbell concludes: "If 'Dune' is to be the first of three, and you're planning on using Paul in the future ones . . . oh, man! You've set yourself one hell of a problem! You might make the next one somewhat more plottable if you didn't give Paul quite so much of the super-duper." (Herbert, Anderson, and Herbert 194). However, what happens in the subsequent novels of the series is the diametrical opposite, which goes even farther than a mere dilapidation of the hero myth. While Paul divorces himself from the role he initially embraces, Leto II acts as the alternative to what would have happened if he had continued.

Still, Herbert manages to introduce a progression on the messiah syndrome with Leto II. Since an exploration and inversion of the hero trope is purposefully exhausted by *Dune: Messiah*, it is interesting to see that the author solves the problem of continuing the series by creating an even more extreme character such as Paul's son. If Paul was nigh superhuman, then Leto, by merging with the all-important sandtrout, becomes literally inhuman; while one shapes himself into a messiah figure, the other transforms into an immortal god. In a way, Leto is the natural progression of the uncanny for the reader that would possibly approach the series thirsty for a character that would both rival and replace Paul in these two aspects. Considering this, paired with Campbell's response, we can

⁵⁰ For an in-depth analysis of the reversal of the hero archetype in *Dune*, see Palumbo, Donald. "The Monomyth as Fractal Pattern in Frank Herbert's *Dune* Novels." *Science Fiction Studies* 25.3 (1998): 433–458. Print.

safely consider that Herbert successfully accomplished an estrangement process in an entirely defamiliarizing way. In true Shklovskian manner, with the deliberate purpose of prolonging the experience of enjoyment in the *Dune* Series, the protagonist becomes both an enormous sandworm and a tyrannical ruler that is abject to the reader in every way.

Considering the uncanny and uncomfortable nature of all of these elements, we can safely consider that, in this particular example, there is no process of naturalization as described by Spiegel. The defamiliarization process in *God Emperor of Dune* is indeed brought to its full effect. This can best be seen by Campbell's reaction. If Campbell had already expressed some resistance regarding the treatment of the hero in the original novel, his misgivings were turned into downright disagreement with *Dune: Messiah*, where he exhibited a strong bias of what their readership expected:

Herbert's revision of "The Messiah" still didn't satisfy me . . . In this one, it's Paul, our central character, who is a helpless pawn manipulated against his will, by a cruel, destructive fate. . . .The reactions of science-fictioners, however, over the last few decades have persistently and quite explicitly been that they want heroes—not antiheroes. They want stories of strong men who exert themselves, inspire others, and make a monkey's uncle out of malign fates! (Herbert, Anderson, and Herbert 207)

In hindsight, however, Herbert's development of the hero is not so detached from Campbell's misgivings. For all of *Dune*'s wonderful complexity, one cannot but wonder how straightforward this progression from Paul to Leto appears to be. Casting aside all other thematic layers that intersperse the *Dune* novels, such a movement from one protagonist to the other seems, at least partly, motivated by the need of a strong replacement to carry the series forward. A character such as Paul is indeed hard to replace, and Campbell's misgivings on the treatment of the hero in *Dune: Messiah* are as much a concern for how the reversed type might alienate readership as to how it would be silly to destroy a character with such a potential for an expanded run. Even though Campbell

didn't seem to agree with the exploration of the anti-hero, his concerns about readership and serial expansion seem to fall in line with Herbert's work in the *Dune* Series. A god-like figure such as Leto, in taking Paul's conceptual utopia to another level of realization is certainly fit to fill the gap left by abandoning Paul. It, if for no other reason, solves the problem of continuing the series further, which is in keeping with Herbert's other novels. This is merely one of the most striking examples that, for the most part, Herbert does, indeed, take care to establish the groundwork on each novel that will carry the series over to a potential follow-up. Leto II is even developed as someone who surpasses Paul in scope and ability, thus solving one of Campbell's original concerns for Paul's excessive abilities.

As Campbell implies in his correspondence with Herbert, there is a certain notion that a successful hero must be preserved and revisited for as long as it resonates (and, therefore, is bankable) with the readers. For the most part, this position stems from the history of serial publications and pulps themselves, and Campbell couldn't possibly ignore a potential Tarzan or John Carter in Paul Atreides. However, the treatment of the hero in this vein implies a particular sort of presentation that seems fairly common in these serials and in the pulps and dime novels that precede them: In order for the hero to be used again in as long a run as possible, there must be room for new plots and character development. In a style characterized by concerns with mass appeal, heroes must provide a constant and steady outlet for new adventures while keeping their essential and recognizable traits intact.

In this respect, SF is perhaps uniquely positioned to fill these particular needs. If we look at the novum, we quickly realize that it nicely fulfils the constant requirement for something new, shocking or awe-inspiring that would captivate audiences while retaining

a sense of familiarity in the recurring characters, places and themes. With a genre brimming with novum, readership, at least in concept, is certain to return for new instalments of the otherworldly-but-familiar texts.

6. THE HISTORICAL SCIENCE-FICTIONAL NOVEL

It seems necessary, at this point, to take pause from analysing the three proposed authors and assess the implications of the historical undercurrent that so strikingly emerges throughout their work. Indeed, as we have seen so far, Herbert's work, particularly in the *Dune* Series, demonstrates a linguistic meta-text throughout the novels. It begins with the quotations that introduce each chapter. As references to fictional books, they are usually "excerpts" of historical documents written by some of the characters, popular sayings from a given culture or even segments from codices for specific castes. Their relevance usually pertains to what follows in the subsequent chapter, however, the peculiarity of a fabricated history with bibliography to accompany it, is what is most striking. Aside from the textual concern with historicity and the ways in which it can be reshaped, there is a secondary layer of fictionalized historiography. This works particularly well in *God Emperor of Dune*, where we have a protagonist obsessed with historicity and the fruition of his Golden Path, which is, in essence, the material representation of imposing an *a priori* version of history.

In *God Emperor of Dune* all of these excerpts are taken from Leto's Journal itself. In a peculiar movement of self-referentiality, Herbert has Leto, through his Stolen Journals, attempting to address a future society within his universe, the receptors of his legacy. This implies that, in the fictionalized logic, these were documents left behind in a post mortem attempt to further shape the course of history and the perception of him. Curiously, while Leto has a professed necessity to be understood by his closest cohort, there is no indication that these are, in fact, purposefully inscribed as historical documents for future generations to discover. What hints us to this information is the characterization of knowing this protagonist and what his major concerns are. Excerpts like these, written by

the subject matter itself, only further underline the series' curious connection with Benjamin in assertion that "[t]he true picture of the past whizzes by" (Benjamin, th. V). However, both the full text and the society that receives these live outside the narrative of the *Dune* novels, somewhere in between the narrative and the reader. It is a veritable no-place within the folds of these fictionalized excerpts.

Furthermore, the language of SF is itself akin to the historical novel. There is a prevalent concern with factually addressing the environment in which the narrative takes place, the nitty-gritty of society that possibly makes it so estranged from our own. The modes of discourse are similar in the sense that SF texts, even when following a particularly character-based narrative, often go to great lengths to unpack the meaning of the setting, since it is a purposeful and carefully imagined construct. The similarity here lies in the fact that the historical novel, even more so than the historical text, surreptitiously performs the same movement. It purports to describe an actual past when, in reality, it is fictionalizing a conceptual one after the fact. Neither narrative has as referent an actual place. In this regard, on a textual level, both the historical novel and the SF operate as fabricated models.

The proximity of SF to the historical novel is particularly clear if we take into account Lukács' study on the latter. Lukács sees the historical novel as a by-product of the rooted momentum of socio-political criticism that led to the revolutions of 1848 (Lukacs 30). For Lukács, reflecting on the past, specifically in fiction, is something of a mass movement, emergent out of the eighteenth century realism, among other factors: It was the French Revolution, the revolutionary wars and the rise and fall of Napoleon, which, for the first time made history a *mass experience*, and moreover on a European scale." (Lukacs 23) Here we have moments of revolutionary patriotism that look to historicism

for reinforcement of their ideologies. Past narratives are sought after for validation and scrutiny of current conditions, but they also serve as a point of reference for a projected change onto the future. Whether or not this was a concern as universal as Lukács initially assesses is inconsequential here. Lukács himself states in the foreword to the first English translation to *The Historical Novel* that “certain expectations have proved too optimistic” (Lukacs 13).

If we focus on the aspects pertaining the literary analysis of the historical novel, we notice that it very clearly falls in line with a possible interpretative model for SF. As an example, the way that the SF text stems from a massified legacy of the pulp publication implies, as with Lukács’ historical novel, a populist movement that reshapes the texts themselves. Furthermore, a significant part of the common interest in SF seems to reside in its very ability to explain the present by comparing it to a displaced model. The fact that it is frequently set in an imagined future rather than a retrospective past is a moot distinction. Both are, in the end, projected fictionalizations from a present standpoint; their methodology is essentially the same. Freedman, who also makes a connection between SF and Lukács in the form of the historical novel, is acutely aware of this when he compares both models under a Lukácsian positioning:

Both manifest a radically critical impulse, for both are radically dialectical and historicizing literary tendencies, and both are determinate products of the capitalist –revolutionary dynamic that produced history (in the modern sense) itself. Both operate by means of a post-Hegelian dialectic of historical identity and historical difference: in both, that is the empirical present of the reader and of the text’s own production is put in contrast with an alternative significantly different from the former, yet different in a way that remains rationally accountable. (Freedman 57)

This is, indeed the axis of the historical novel and SF, as their relationship with the present is essentially the same. But Herbert, Asimov and Dick go particularly farther than

merely projecting a historiography onto the future. In the *Dune* novels, for example, there is the addition of future histories spectrally present in the novels' historical past. Such is the case of the Butlerian Jihad and a quite extensive amount of other "factual" historical nuances. In this respect, Herbert's *Dune* solidly meets Lukács' positions on more than one level. Generically, and similarly to much SF, the discourse is analogous to that of the historical novel. However, the matter of fabricating an unknowable past history validates, in a way, the narrative itself. This is, of course, extremely close to the intention of solidifying one's position and ideology, which is pointed as one of the main charges for the emergence of the historical novel itself.

It is, in fact, very clear in Herbert's initial *Dune* novels and even his earlier work that there is a preoccupation with establishing a theoretical past, which is only alluded to, but defines the present. There is constant reference to other worlds, events which are not directly featured in the novels and even the epigraphs. The possibility for connecting Herbert to Benjamin abounds, as seen in the previous chapter. Still, if one is not convinced and dismisses these links as excessive, the fact remains that, in addition to any other aesthetic or narrative purposes, there is in Herbert a clear sense of the historical and how it validates the texts themselves. At the very least, and avoiding a Benjaminian dialectic, it is as if quoting from the past, however fictional, makes the present more topical. The work of Willis E McNelly is remarkable in this sense by exhaustively inscribing a wide range of historical events in his *Dune Encyclopedia*, placing it as a kind of in-world book and treating each entry as a representation of actual events. This truly is a meta-textual text that stretches the boundaries between historical fact, historical fiction and historical trope. This project very much resembles (and draws from) both the numerous epigraphs along the series and the plot elements that contain some sort of historical background. In

this respect, it brings forth the historiographical propensity found throughout the series, as the details are numerous and rich enough to warrant such an encyclopaedia.

Curiously, in the *Foundation* novels there is also an extensive use of excerpts drawn from a fictionalized Encyclopaedia Galactica, frequently with the same use of an “external” validation the following chapter. Furthermore, the first of the original short stories that make up *Foundation*, covers precisely the initial group of scientists charged with gathering and registering all knowledge into a physical form. It is relevant that all other events lay on the assumption that progress and power are mere dependencies of whomever manages to hold all knowledge in one place – the technocratic bias that Asimov is well known for, not the least in his most visible short story “Nightfall”, where only a scientific elite presumably survives the impending disaster through academic knowledge. Even in *Foundation*, the conception of an encyclopaedia that would cover a novel’s main events, characters and backgrounds is not entirely uncommon both in SF and fantasy fiction. It further demonstrates the propensity in these genres for historiographical models, largely due to their common focus on grand scale events and epic protagonists that represent a larger impact on a given social order. What Herbert and Asimov uniquely perform is precisely the shift of these encyclopaedias into the novel itself, as a fictionalized text within the text.

Additionally, if we consider some of the other precursors for SF that have been already established here, we reach a point where Edisonianism and utopianism intersect. On one hand, following the industrialization processes, there is an implicit faith in science and engineering, the commodification of serial publications and broadcasts and the emergence of technological militarism. On the other, we have a point of reflection on the human condition in face of these developments. Again, even though we are addressing

SF, this is very much the case in the historical novel. According to Lukács, out of the realistic social novel of the eighteenth century, there is a growing concern in staging the historical past, particularly in epic form, in order to conceptualize the present and project action towards the future: “The broad delineation of manners and circumstances attendant upon events, the dramatic character of action” (Lukacs 31). Similarly, so is the SF novel, with this kind of dramatization, merely giving form to what are already present and actual concerns. It is Edisonian due to its tendency to reproduce the sense of wonder borne out of invention, something of a technological revolution; it is utopian since it looks for a displaced model to work out the present. Both of these are made aware in a massified way and frequently and thoroughly assume the style of the Lukacsian historical novel.

There are other instances, still, where historicity plays a major part in the construction of these narratives. Both in Asimov’s *Foundation*, and Herbert’s *Dune* Series, the breadth of the epic inevitably addresses the flows of history. Asimov’s historiographical influences are clear, mainly through his readings of Gibbon’s *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* and the *Foundation* Series’ focus on a cyclical view of history. In this sense, this series in particular fits tightly in Freedman’s assessment of the SF historical novel, due to its theme and the treatment of particular points in the fictional history where revolutionary processes signal an emergent shift in the social order of the narratives. The centrality of registering these events is, of course, unequivocally tied with a historiographical mode and is the main reason why each successive novel is weighed down by the increasing amount of history that, in Asimov’s view, must be conveyed in each new addition. Akin to what Lukács states, “The historical novel presents the writer with a specially strong temptation to try and produce an extensively complete totality.” (Lukacs 42). This seems to be the case in Asimov’s *Foundation* Series, when the novels are increasingly weighed by the totality of past history. In Asimov’s writing, this is a truly

historiographical problem, as “nothing” is to be left out. In Herbert’s history, as we have seen, this is less so, since, from the start, there is a recurrent reference to unknown segments of the fiction’s history. However, as novels progress, so does the totality of inscribing every aspect of every social order. The purposefully unknown of the past turns into the “extensively complete” as described by Lukács of certain historical novels.

On the other hand, Herbert lets historicity seep through his series not just in the epigraphs and a fictionalized history, but in the sense that the focus of the texts is precisely the effect of leaders in society. Aside from the curious fictionalized historical background, the socio-political is necessarily tied with historicity as well, with the unavoidable tendency to describe the nuances of a given social order in a specific time and place. Even here, Herbert’s centring on Paul is in step with Lukács own view of the function of the hero, strongly shaped by his reading of Scott’s historical novel:

It is their task to bring the extremes whose struggle fills the novel, whose clash expresses artistically a great crisis in society, into contact with one another. Through the plot, at whose centre stands the hero, a neutral ground is sought and found upon which the extreme, opposing social forces can be brought into a human relationship with one another. (Lukacs 36)

It must be stated at this point that, whether or not Lukács would positively or negatively consider the historical science-fictional novel, under these terms, is of small concern. In fact, by contrast to the standards Lukács sets with Scott’s historical novels, a respectable amount of elements will fall under what Lukács considers a decline in form and spirit of the historical novel. His tremendous relevance here lies in the fact that, even if negatively, Lukács is effectively delineating the SF novel when addressing the historical novel. In the case of the hero, for example, while Paul Atreides might be too strong of a character to be an exemplary hero of a historical novel, he can certainly be construed as a protagonist that represents the human axis between “opposing social

forces” – the Fremmen vs. the Imperium, the Bene Gesserit vs. Guildsmen, the Atrides vs. the Harkonnen, etc. That Paul’s character presents strong undertones of the classical hero may aid in equal measure this connection with the epically influenced hero of the historical novel.

Still, it has been noted here that the *Dune* Series progresses significantly away from these strong, overbearing characters in its latter novels. Here, the Duncan and Teg heroes of *Heretics of Dune* and *Chapterhouse: Dune* might be the most straightforward examples of Lukács projections, in the sense that they are not as significant by themselves as they are in significant historical moments. In these two novels specifically, the background becomes more pronounced, perhaps in part due to the shedding of the strong characters that became fixtures for the whole series or merely for the same reason that Asimov’s *Foundation* Series progressively accumulates a heftier backstory. Here, as with Asimov’s moments of extreme historical shift in the *Foundation* Series, the hero becomes a mere representational device to drive the action and reach the relevant historical message. This is relevant for Lukács in the sense that he sees as the better part of Scott’s novels when he does not stylize his heroes:

The great historical figure, as a minor character, is able to live himself out to the full as a human being, to display freely all his splendid and petty human qualities. However, his place in the action is such that he can only act and express himself in situations of historical importance. He achieves here a many-sided and full expression of his personality, but only insofar as it is linked with the big events of history. (Lukacs 45)

This is exactly the case with Asimov’s *Foundation* Series and, while Herbert’s Paul may be too epic for Lukács taste, he is, indeed, frequently presented insofar as his influence on society is of relevance. As the novels succeed themselves, this characteristic becomes more prominent, mainly due to the relative secondary position of the Duncans.

In the end, as Paul's figure as hero dwindles, the *Dune* Series becomes increasingly historical in this regard as well. As Lukács notes, "the relation between individual and nation in the age of heroes require that the most important figure should occupy the central position, while in the historical novel he is necessarily only a minor character." (Lukacs 45).

Therefore, this strong propensity in authors like Asimov or Herbert towards inscribing historical events, however fictive, might even be equated with Lukács' argument that the historical novel falls squarely on the shoulders of realism. In fact, this has commonly been attributed as his critical fault: "The literary achievements of the past, the aspirations of the present and future have been, are, and will be the result of a single mode, realism" (Nichols 349). More relevantly to the discussion at hand, it seems hard to reconcile a theory that has as its main precursor the realistic novel with a genre apparently grounded on the most outlandish narrative landscapes possible. Indeed, Freedman addresses this matter by applying a redacted version of Suvin's cognitive estrangement turned into estrangement *effect* in the creation of alterity:

For the construction of an alternative world is the very definition of fiction: owing to the character of representation as a nontransparent process that necessarily involves not only similarity but *difference* between representation and the "referent" of the latter, an irreducible degree of alterity and estrangement is bound to obtain even in the case of the most "realistic" fiction imaginable. (Freedman 21)

Historicity is, in fact, the locus of SF, generally speaking. Its concern with thoroughly registering the facts of the fictionalized world actually place it in the mode of the realist novel: there is an ostensive concern in most SF – even the soft kind – to be accurate and cohesive within the boundaries of the created reality.

As an example we need only to look at one of the biggest sins which any SF author is liable to be accused of: plot inconsistencies that break the canonical facts of previous texts. Above all, this very prominent preoccupation in SF is representative of how rooted the realist novel is inside the SF novel. In the end, Freedman eventually harmonizes these two seemingly opposing aspects by relegating the strictest historical part to those science-fictions that prominently present historical concerns: “the science-fictional historical novel is a closely related subgenre.” (Freedman 61) Nevertheless, carrying Freedman’s arguments further, the science fictional historical novel needs not to be regarded as a subset of SF, but the actual mode for its greatest part. Regardless of the existence of such a subset, we can comfortably shift the adjective order and consider not that there are certain SF texts that are historical but that the historical is an integral part of SF.

7. PHILIP K. DICK: AMBIVALENT AND REIFIED ONTOLOGIES

Our third example on the relevance of utopian symbolism in SF lies in Philip K. Dick's work. While, unlike Asimov and Herbert, Dick never purported to create a Lukacsian historical totality, of the three under analysis, Dick is the one most compulsively dedicated to pouring out his own socio-political concerns into his texts in a sort of activist manner. Therefore, if not in form, Dick surely follows Lukács' considerations on how ideologically bound and a productive expression of social revolution the historical novel is. A case in point is Dick's *A Scanner Darkly* (1977), where the main focus resides on the lost generation of the sixties. Although hardly a materialist text, it does stand as an example of the drug novel, which is in itself historically bound:

This has been a novel about some people who were punished entirely too much for what they did. They wanted to have a good time, but they were like children playing in the street; they could see one after another of them being killed – run over, maimed, destroyed – but they continued to play anyhow. [...] This novel is about more people than I knew personally. Some we all read about in the newspapers. It was, this sitting around with our buddies and bullshitting while making tape recordings, the bad decision of the decade, the sixties, both in and out of the establishment. (Dick, *A Scanner Darkly* 218)

Still, the connections with historicity do not end in his autobiographical side to all of his writing. In a more radical way than Herbert, his themes are marked by a perpetual recurrence from one text to another and, as Asimov, one of Dick's interests seems to be that of historicism. In his eulogy, Jameson writes the following:

Consider Dick's capacity to render history. Consumer society, media society, the "society of the spectacle", late capitalism – whatever one wants to call his moment – is striking in its loss of a sense of the historical past and of historical futures. (Jameson 344)

Indeed, Dick's particular sense of the historical in connection to the present escapes totalization, since it is much more attuned to the heroic (or hopeless) present. His motives

to refer back to other historical periods seem to relate more to a conception of the now as a fiction, a farsical historical present that is being rehashed from some other past. In this respect, Marx's famous opening line in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* couldn't be truer for Dick's ontology, taken even a literal meaning. This is particularly relevant in Dick, since it is in light of this ontology that we can better regard Dick as a dystopian writer. While an author like Asimov or Herbert use history and historicism to inform and inspire their writing, Dick is actually living it.

Still, without faulting Asimov or Dick for not being quite as radical, we can see that, When Asimov shapes his Foundation Series on top of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, it is to register Trantor's decadence as an empire and the necessity for an alternative to barbarism. The reasons for Trantor's decadence are thus historically drawn from some of Gibbon's views on the factors that led to the fall of the Roman Empire: mostly the entropy of excessive expansionism and socio-political apathy that leads to a centralized government with no effectual centralized power. Strikingly, this somewhat simplistic historical view is adopted in the intricate *Dune* novels. In equal measure the Imperial seat, in Herbert's version, falls prey of other factions, more attuned to the effective means of maintaining power – The Guildsmen control transportation; the dominate the genetic lines, the Ixians the machines and so on. As DiTommaso notes, this is most visibly seen in the way the social order in the *Dune* world is organized by the Faufreluches:

Faufreluches, then, imposes the artificial stability needed to maintain the rigid structure of the Imperium. It brought society, politics, and economics into its compass, influencing and affected by the codification and stagnation of the techno-military field, but does not include religion. The best definition of faufreluches is the terse "a place for every man and every man in his place" (TERMS:FAUFRELUCHES).¹⁰ For Herbert, faufreluches is a historical

language-a language of society, politics, and economics. (DiTommaso, "History and Historical Effect in Frank Herbert's 'Dune'" 314)

This is essentially the root of the imperial entropy in *Dune*. We are presented with a deeply stratified and stagnated society, facing much of the same problems as Gibbon's Ancient Rome and Asimov's Trantor. Particularly in *Dune*, virtually every aspect of significant characterization can be easily associated with a variety of historicizable influences, from the Islamic Fremen to the Jesuit Bene Gesserit. The use of the empire trope is, in this manner, clearly connected with a sense of imperial decadence and the politics of circularity in history. DiTommaso, more recently, has solidified the argument by adding it to the already established connection between the *Foundation* and the *Dune* Series. He sees this relationship coming through both in the *Foundation* Series and the *Dune* Series: "The connexion between decadence and decline--the dynamic of decline--may be articulated on several levels, yet in every example the social structure and value system of a declining population is linked with its stagnation." (DiTommaso, "The Articulation of Imperial Decadence and Decline in Epic Science Fiction"). To these two we can possibly add Dick's use of the Roman Empire. While not as straightforwardly historicizing as the other examples, it is clearly connected with the same sense of entropy and stagnation. The Ancient Rome that Dick so frequently mentions usually represents, by analogy, our own entropy. Curiously, Dick seems to be aware of this process in him but, as we can see, it translates into his own perception of the world and, in turn, his writing:

If I had to come forth with an analysis of the anger that lies inside me, which expresses itself in so many sublimations, I would guess that probably what arouses my indignation is seeing the meaningless. That which is disorder, the force of entropy – there is no redemptive value of something that can't be understood, as far as I am concerned. My writing, in toto, is an attempt on my

part to take my life [...] and fashion it into a work that makes sense. (Dick, *The Shifting Realities of Philip K. Dick* 94)

This entropy is most visible in its extreme representations, when it is superimposed on top of our own reality, but it cannot be disregarded as coincidental when in *The Man in the High Castle*, for example, Germany is briefly compared to Ancient Rome: “Like the joke about Goring... the one where Goring buys Rome and has it shipped to his mountain retreat and then set up again. And revives Christianity so his pet lions will have something to...” (Dick, *The Man in the High Castle* 78) As in other instances with Dick, there is a visible movement from passing reference of this recurrent topic in his early novels into a radicalized notion of a degradation of reality that translates into the overlapping worlds of Ancient Rome and California of the 1960s and 1970s.

Incidentally, for *The Man in the High Castle*, Dick made “much use of *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, A History of Nazi Germany*, by William L. Shirer.” (Dick, *The Man in the High Castle* 8), a reading which seems somewhat parallel to Asimov’s reading list for the Foundation Series. Both these research materials take the particular historiographical position of a cyclical sweep to the periods under analysis. However, it doesn’t seem circumstantial that this work, among other historiographical narratives mentioned by Dick, is the scaffolding for *The Man in the High Castle*. In fact, this is Dick’s novel where historicity and the historical is most directly problematized.

7.1. THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE

As the first of what is frequently considered Dick’s height, this text has a number of elements clearly matured in Dickian fashion, which will be further developed in subsequent novels. These range from parallel realities to Taoism, metaphysics to divorce, capitalism to mental breakdown. Nevertheless, Dick’s connection to history is centrally

treated here. More importantly, his use of history in the novel is recursively dystopian in nature.

Firstly, there is the most evident aspect of the alternate history. When the text establishes a setting where the axis has won the Second World War, it is not only a matter of alternate reality, but also one of historicizing the consequences of such a pivotal moment. The text is extensive in portraying the consequences of President Roosevelt's assassination. In this regard, aside from other plot development, the historical novel is here in full force when the focus is on the most intricate political consequences from this single event. It is a narrative essentially constructed through a dialectic of comparison – estrangement comes out of the fact that Roosevelt was not assassinated by Giuseppe Zangarain in our “actual” history and Germany was not able to expand and conquer the rest of Europe. It seems appropriate here to use Freedman's connection of Dick (and the science fiction mode in general) to Bakhtin: “Dick 's is a radically dialogic use of language, one that exploits to the utmost what Bakhtin calls *heteroglossia*; that is, the primacy of linguistic polyvalency [...]” (Freedman 38)

Freedman uses Bakhtin to discuss Dick's style, which is appropriate, of course. After all, Bakhtin proposes that an utterance is always modulated in function of the social, historical and ideological context. However, we can perhaps expand on this use to include what is at the other end of the stylistic production: the narrative itself. Following Freedman's assessment, the matter of heteroglossia also comes through when the reader is confronted with multiple options of history and texts within texts. To quote Bakhtin, “At the moment of creativity, literary language is already surrounded by heteroglossia.” (Bakhtin 295)

Therefore, part of the play of this novel lies in pinpointing alternate events and comparing them to the factual. It is an excavation process, a collection of small alternative historical pieces of a puzzle and the comparison with a different picture. It is also a process of estrangement and defamiliarization through the use of heteroglossia.

For example, in the novel's alternative, after Roosevelt's successful assassination, Garner, who was actually his first vice-president, holds office. John Bricker succeeds, who was actually the republican vice-president candidate for Thomas Dewey, the Republican loser to Roosevelt's second legislature. General Gott is mentioned as the leader responsible for a significant loss of foothold against Rommel's army. General Gott was, in fact, killed before taking command and eventually replaced by General Montgomery, who defeated Rommel.

As we can see, the historical novel becomes a vessel to establish a connection with the contemporary, but one that defamiliarizes our very notion of history. This is confirmed by the fact that Dick doesn't stop here, it is not a matter of reality in opposition to alterative history in an attempt to simply contrast a reality where the Nazis win. We shall look at them further, but firstly let us consider how utopia is productively brought forward in this context.

It is clear that *The Man in the High Castle* is a dystopia where the Nazis win the war in the same vein as Orwell's *1984*. As Dick's novel was published in 1962, however, the starting point of the dystopia is necessarily revisionist. So, in this case, we aren't faced with a proleptic dystopia such as *1984* and most dystopias in the genre. This is an important characteristic, as we have seen, since there is a cautionary element to the dystopian narrative. Therefore, the chronological becomes a function of saying "If we do

not act now, this will happen". However, as we can see, the situation with Dick is altogether different.

What Dick deploys is, in fact, a locational dystopia. It exists in our chronological time. It is a device of displacement of the real that fits Dick's overarching theme of entropy. Jameson pinpoints the same trace in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968), when discussing the technological junk that reproduces itself around Jack Isidore. For Jameson, kipple symbolizes "a dystopian and entropic world consistently threatens the thin fabric of the projective identification." (Jameson 369). This definition would fit nicely here, if it were not for the fact that Jameson firmly states that Dick's post-apocalyptic worlds cannot be regarded as dystopian due to the fact that "in Dick neither the past nor the future can become autonomous." (Jameson 381). However, Dick's dystopian kipple actually takes place in the future. Considering the position taken here that Dick's dystopia focuses on the present as a kind of Other no-place, Jameson's misgivings regarding the de-autonomization of past and future in Dick is then resolved. This can possibly be confirmed by the fact that when Jack Isidore describes kipple as an actual living organism, there is real kipple seemingly reproducing around Dick (and us).

Kipple is indeed a good example of the symbolic dystopia in Dick, as there are many instances of it throughout his novels. One is the manner in which, in *The Man in the High Castle*, antiquities are extremely sought after commodities that underpin an entire structure of relationship between power and the procurement of the rarest objects. In essence, this is the reification of history as a productive means to exert power. The value and even the very concept of antiquities is vastly treated in this novel as a status symbol, as if the objects are nearly xamanic in the sense that they are considered powerful and productive for the other affairs of the collectors. It is unknown, but likely, that Dick was

acquainted with Marx's concepts on commodities. Regardless, it is interesting to note how Marx's concept of commodity fits here:

Commodities come into the world in the shape of use values, articles, or goods, such as iron, linen, corn, &c. This is their plain, homely, bodily form. They are, however, commodities, only because they are something twofold, both objects of utility, and, at the same time, depositories of value. They manifest themselves therefore as commodities, or have the form of commodities, only in so far as they have two forms, a physical or natural form, and a value form. (Marx 138)

Marx's separation of the physical form from the value form fits particularly well with the commoditized artefacts. They do not hold an intrinsic value, this is "deposited" onto them. Their utility, in this case, is inconsequential, since they are only used for their value form. The fact that the mode of production of the forgeries is the same as the original, further stresses this problem: if "the value of commodities has a purely social reality", then Frank's originals are doomed to fail, since, unlike the forgeries, they are perceived as lacking any "social substance" (in this case history). This explains why Frank has trouble selling his original artwork, as it is considered void of meaning, which, in this world, is only equated in terms of historical worth.

This is an extreme view on contemporary antiquarians where an entire economy is based on the assumption that any given Americana item holds an intrinsic historical value inside it. It is also a dystopian manifestation of how Dick perceived the culture of commodification around him: the belief that consumer goods have any intrinsic value, ignoring that the value of an item is a subjective category. Freedman has already suggested the link between commodity fetishism and SF, particularly to explore paranoia

and conspiracy in Dick.⁵¹ Although there is no reference to *The Man in The High Castle* specifically, Freedman does offer that,

historical fiction is of all forms especially vulnerable to an undialectical and *un*historical fetishism of the (as-if-dead) past, a reified and reifying antiquarianism in which the merely aesthetic relish of costume and exotic factuality triumphs over the genuinely critical issues of historical specificity and difference. (Freedman 57)

Luckhurst seems to agree, but warns against generalizing this to Dick for fear of imposing “over-coherence on a chaotic body of work” (Luckhurst 108). However, as is the case for Asimov and historical materialism or Herbert and Heidegger, there is no structural framework to be found in Dick in this respect, merely a partial reading on how Dick perceives commodification as dystopian.

In this regard, *Man in The High Castle* is clearly critical of this type of commodification, since apparently the fake items proliferate among the undistinguishable authentic ones. Dick viewed his reality as kipple and the novel eventually offers that what is being commoditized is not the meaningless objects themselves, but the sense of empowerment by materially owning a piece of history. This, of course, becomes useful from a Lukácsian perspective, as the appropriation of history is relevant insofar as a mechanism for social revolution. Additionally, what is being posited in Dick’s work is essentially the construction of a more comfortable, purchasable reality, a dystopia through assorted small objects. This, in fact, is not at all uncommon in Dick, with an analogous example in the artificial pets as a status symbol for happiness in *Do Androids Dream of*

⁵¹ Freedman, Carl. “Towards a Theory of Paranoia: The Science Fiction of Philip K. Dick (Vers Une Théorie de La Paranoïa: La SF de Philip K. Dick).” *Science Fiction Studies* 11.1 (1984): 15–24. Print.

Electric Sheep? There, as, here, plenitude is commercially achievable. However, the commodity in charge of providing such a sense, in this case, is historicity itself.

A final item of note in linking *The Man in The High Castle* with the historical novel is *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*, the fictional novel within the novel. If there was already an exercise in effect by comparing the alternate history of the novel to our own, *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy* adds another layer by being an alternate history novel within the alternate history novel, a reversal of a reversal. Firstly, we should consider that both Herbert and Asimov, as we have seen, present their own texts within the text with their encyclopaedias. Similarly to these, *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy* has the relevant function of placing the question of historical relativism within the novel itself. However, while in Herbert and Asimov this is performed to further elucidate or reaffirm the histories of the texts, in Dick this is more akin to Orwell's *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism* placed within *1984*. *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy* is a clearly subversive book within the logic of the narrative, but its contents appears to describe our own reality. In essence, *The Man in The High Castle* seems to demonstrate that our own political existence is itself subversive. Warrick offers a possible topical intention of such an inversion:

The winner of the war is really the loser. Dick here asks the reader to follow him through a series of reflections in the artifices mirroring reality. In the world of *High Castle*, the Nazis really won the war, but in the science-fiction world of *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy* (representing Inner Truth), they really lost it. If the reader moves back a step, he realizes that in the real world of human construct, the United States and its allies won the war, so the inner truth, contained in Dick's science fiction, is that they really lost it. (Warrick 49)

Nevertheless, it doesn't end here. It can easily be missed, but on a closer inspection of what *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy* portrays, we find that there isn't an exact match

between it and our reality. The similarities are just enough for the reader to embrace the subversive book and embody the rift between the two world narratives. Still, *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy* eventually drifts away from our own historical events. As Hayles notes;

But is this reality? Mr. Tagomi understandably regards it as a frightening illusion, a “dreadful gliding among shadows.” He regards his experience as the “world seen merely in symbolic, archetypal aspect, totally confused with unconscious material.” We, of course, would disagree; for us this is the real world. But within the fictional construct of *High Castle*, the answer comes out differently. For at the end, we learn that the “real” world, according to the *I Ching*, is that depicted in Hawthorne Abendsen’s alternate-history novel, *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*. And the world of *Grasshopper* is *not* our world. (Hayles 65)

The exit out of this self-referential maze lies precisely in certain details done purposefully “wrong” in *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*. The novel within the novel is carefully constructed by Dick to not be mistaken for a strict depiction of our own historical facts, since certain details are glaringly at odds with both our reality and the text’s alternate one. On every instance where *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy* appears, the added information in the fictional book does not quite conform to our own history. In it, Italy effectively joins the Anglo-Saxons, Hitler is tried after the war, Rexford Tugwell succeeds Roosevelt instead of Truman and Chiang Kai-Shek isn’t overthrown, thus solidifying the relationship between China and the United States. For *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*, apparently there is no cold war backlash. In essence, the alternate history of *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy* presented within the alternate history of *The Man in The High Castle* is yet a third alternative. As DiTommaso explains,

There is no more inner truth in GLH than there is in MHC, for history is the identification and interpretation of past-time data, an activity that can strain but cannot break the bonds of subjectivity. All history, *qua* history, is subject to this restriction, a theme that Dick implies repeatedly in MHC.

(DiTommaso, "Redemption in Philip K. Dick's 'The Man in the High Castle'" 93)

This is perhaps the most effective way to problematize history and historical values. With the first alternate history, we question our own historicity and its impact on our socio-political order. We put into question the validity of our position as the result of the side that won. But with a second alternative as the one contained in *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*, we begin to question the historical novel itself, which is historicizing on its own account. Apart from the political value of either side in the Second World War, there is the question of what the texts that register it actually represent, based on a relative accuracy and their influence on those who read them. What Dick seems to repeatedly suggest throughout the novel is more than an assertion of subjectivity over the historical, it is also the recognition that history, by itself, is meaningless and hollow. It is a relatively falsified construction of an already ambiguous past. The second novel is of great importance in accomplishing this sense, lest not the reader mistake the alternate reality for an actual setting.

In light of this, it is understandable how postmodernism saw in Dick's work such a productive example of postmodernist fiction. We have already seen how Baudrillard (mis)appropriated Dick in referencing *The Simulacra* to illustrate his point. Perhaps the non-referentiality of the forgeries in *The Man in the High Castle* would have been more appropriate. Hutcheon, for example writes that,

Historiographic metafiction incorporates all three of these domains: that is, its theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs (historiographic metafiction) is made the grounds for its rethinking and reworking of the forms and contents of the past. (Hutcheon 5)

As the novel performs this, we can then safely assume that both *The Man in the High Castle* and *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy* may be considered as works of historiographical

metafiction. This is very closely addressed not only in the forgeries, but also with the way in which the histories within the histories are, at the same time, restaging the past and forcing us to reassess our present. In this regard, and considering that McHale (1987) had already solidified the position of SF as a postmodern genre, Hutcheon's conception on historiographic metafiction can easily be applied to more than a few SF novels, *The Man in the High Castle* included. DiTommaso notes that, in fact, what the reader is asked to perform is an exercise of reflection:

Juliana reads about the details of an alternate history in GLH and wonders at the solidity of her reality; we read about the details of an alternate history in MHC and wonder about the solidity of ours. (DiTommaso, "Redemption in Philip K. Dick's 'The Man in the High Castle'" 95)

Taking this argument further, we wonder about our world by questioning our own historiography. Most of the characters in the novel, unlike in Orwell's *1984*, are mundane, realistically outlined representations of ourselves. In parallel, a very different world from our own is constructed on top of these people who are us. We then are incited to question our reality through identification. However, the process does not necessarily culminate here. With *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*, we are able to not only wonder about the history of our reality, but to wander in the historical narratives themselves as constructions. They certainly cause an impact on those who interact with them, and there is a constant need in the characters to anchor themselves to the "real" through the factual value of narratives that stabilize this relationship. This is precisely why *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy* is so problematic in the logic of *The Man in the High Castle*, but it can easily be transposed to our own reading of the novel or any other material, for that matter. This can be seen when even the SF genre is discussed in light of this novel:

‘Not a mystery,’ Paul said. ‘On the contrary, interesting form of fiction possible within genre of science fiction.’

‘Oh no,’ Betty disagreed. ‘No science in it. Not set in future. Science fiction deals with the future, in particular future where science has advanced over now. Book fits neither premise.’

‘But,’ Paul said, ‘it deals with alternate present. Many well-known science fiction novels of that sort [sic].(Dick, *The Man in the High Castle* 109)

In the end, Dick puts forward where the alternate history is and how to figure the science fictional genre. The estrangement lies in the present, not necessarily the future. What needs addressing is our own reality; the alternative is but a means of representing the displaced real. This can be translated into a double dystopia of sorts. On one hand, Dick constructs a self-contained socio-political structure (*The Man in the High Castle*), and, on the other, he offers it to the reader with clear signs that it is, in fact a construction. Every other alternative (*The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*), offered as a possible counterpoint for this dystopia, instead of appeasing us and our reality, disrupts it. Our identification and contrasting is established with the characterization of the dystopia but also on its textual, meta-literary side as well. As wholly fictionalized historical constructions, the novels within novels represent completely ungraspable no-places. Actual history becomes something of an entirely abstract concept, which is proven by the fact that any historical (re)construction is viable.

This seems, to a degree, similar to Leto II’s aspiration to force a reaction through historical manipulation and, in some ways similar to Seldon’s Plan as well. Both instances partly deal with, albeit in very different ways and with different endings, the possibility of harnessing the historical narrative to somehow manipulate or, at least, gear humanity towards a specific path. As we have seen, there are numerous references to this, both in Asimov’s use of psychohistory and Herbert’s “Missionaria Protectiva” and the Golden

Path, among others. These are, of course, their own types of historical representation in a utopian vein. They are materializations of how the need for socio-political identification can be exploited for a certain idea, any idea, to be accepted and adopted. Here, Hutcheon's proposal seems appropriate: "[...] fiction is offered as another of the discourses by which we construct our versions of reality, and both the construction and the need for it are what are foregrounded in the postmodernist novel. (Hutcheon 50)

As we can see here, Asimov, Herbert and Dick may plausibly fall under this category. The *Dune* Series, the *Foundation* Series and *The Man in the High Castle* confront the issue of referentiality by essentially establishing historiographical versions that deliberately attempt to construct realities within the text and, at the same time, clue the reader as to what they are doing. The approximation to the utopian trope here is not only in the alternate histories of either *The Man in the High Castle* or *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*. It seeps through these objects, the social mores and even as far as personal relationships and identities. Baynes and Tedeki are, in fact, undercover agents attempting to swap information through a façade of antique trading. The truck driver Joe Cinnadella is actually a contract killer looking for Abendsen. Abendsen himself, as the author of the subversive novel, is proven to be less than the oracle that Juliana expects. His "High Castle" is no more than a single-story suburban home with a tricycle in the driveway. Even Childan's surroundings are constructions, which are eventually shown to be much more pervasive than his connection with "real" and "fake" antiques:

At once he took a forkful of salad. 'No,' he said. 'It is virtually the most delicious meal I have had in years.'

'Thank you,' she said, obviously pleased. 'Doing my best to be authentic . . . for instance, carefully shopping in teeny-tiny American markets down along Mission Street. Understand that's the real McCoy.'

You cook the native foods to perfection, Robert Childan thought. What they say is true: your powers of imitation are immense. Apple pie, Coca-Cola, stroll after the movie, Glenn Miller . . . you could paste together out of tin and rice paper a complete artificial America. (Dick, *The Man in the High Castle* 113)

The contribution of these “alternates” to a utopian conceptualization of the novel is the fact that our own expectations of the individual and the collective are evidently put into question. Repeatedly throughout the text, and in most of Dick’s work, we are confronted with the concept that reality is but a thin varnish over a constructed narrative. This is not just the principal point of *The Man in the High Castle* as a whole, it is methodically drummed in every small point of the novel. If Abendsen’s novel is an uncomfortable utopia within the logic of *The Man in the High Castle*, so are the alternatives that these characters build around themselves. The forgeries, whether represented by the shifting histories, alternate identities or even by the artefacts, work as artificially created points of reference for this imaginary real, laying one on top of another, no more valid and no less constructed as a reality.

Finally, there is the question of artistic originality that is brought forward by Hutcheon. Within the context of commodified copies in opposition to artistic expressions that cannot become objects, Hutcheon’s logical contribution would be the confirmation that both items are indeed authentic through their own historiographical constructions. Warrick refers to this as a space of ambiguity, “ambiguity in the economic situation, the political situation, and the situation of the artist. (Warrick 184) and it runs deeper than the sum of

the conflicts pertaining to social interactions. Throughout the novel, there is the question of authenticity and whether Frank's original artwork holds any value against some of his other reproductions. In the society described by Dick, there is a straightforward aspiration for the intrinsic value of objects, as Frank's interest lies in producing something that can be mass marketed. Whether antiques hold an intrinsic value, is beside the point from Frank's ambivalent perspective. This is particularly relevant since, if we analyse Frank's objectives, his work in reproductions should be his means to success, not the original oddity that the novel addresses. In some ways, *The Man in the High Castle* enacts this ambiguity of attempting to encapsulate true value in mass production. As Warrick notes, Childan has to come to terms between mass producing Fink's work and preserving its "wu" and rejecting it. On the other hand, this rejection is precisely what discourages Fink. This is precisely the catch-22 represented under different guises throughout the novel: the space of ambiguity includes our interactions and relationships with the objects that surround us.

There are a few conclusions that we can reach by following this reading. Firstly, there is an element of actual social change. Much like More's *Utopia*, the novel is read by many critics as a metaphor for Dick's own disquiet of the *status quo*. Suvin assesses that "Up to the mid-60s Dick could be characterized as a writer of anti-utopian science fiction in the wake of Orwell's *1984*" (Suvin, "Artifice as Refuge and World View: Philip K. Dick's Foci" 80). Robinson goes farther and, while using Suvin's terminology, demarcates Dick as a writer whose "fictional worlds were constructed by taking sceptical political metaphors, and making the metaphorical statements literally true in the worlds of his fiction; thus his «futures» are always of looking at our present." (Robinson viii).

For example, a work such as *A Scanner Darkly*, one of his last novels written just a year before *VALIS* (1981), centrally demonstrates this aversion to institutionalized power, culture and politics, turned into suspicion and even paranoia. It is perhaps one of the most relevant novels of Dick's career, since it is here that the line between SF estrangement and mundane contemporaneity is diluted into one narrative. Palmer's reading of this book falls curiously in line with what has been said here of *The Man in The High Castle*: It's not only that the possibilities of SF are expanded by a kind of infusion of the qualities and preoccupations of the realist novel [...]. It's also that what the "real" might be is subjected to radical questioning and painful twisting (Palmer 393).

Still, this is a text of more than two decades in processing the conceptual concerns that are turned into Dick's reality. If we travel back to the beginning of his career as a SF writer, already in *Solar Lottery*, Dick's first published novel in 1955, we have a few of his concerns that will carry to many other works.⁵² There is the working class hero, attempting to keep his sanity afloat against a backdrop of alienation. There are cruel, but inevitable women, what he would later call the "dark haired girl". There is a false prophet, revealed to be no more than yet another mass deception. There are androids and precognition, conspiracies and barbiturates. This is a world of overbearing entertainment disguised as government. The overarching narrative, it seems is the dystopian element of the locational variety. Across these narratives there is distrust of the institution, oppressiveness and abundant use of drugs as a cultural institution. If these seem like

⁵² Incidentally, the plot involving an artificial intelligence taking over the most fundamental act of political self determinacy is extremely close to "Franchise", a short story by Asimov, written in the same year as *Solar Lottery*. In Asimov's case, Multivac, the computer AI, requires a single human being to hold an election, the rest of the process being resolved by Multivac. Similarly, in *Solar Lottery*, only one ruler is needed, chosen at random. In both, the theme of free will and its dilution due to an increased dependency on computers is afforded full treatment.

elements drawn from Huxley it is because they are. However, Dick seems to actually be living them. It is in this context that his introduction to *The Golden Man* becomes so relevant: Dick actually perceived the world as a dystopia and cathartically poured what he saw onto his fiction.

As an example, Dick's general misgivings regarding socio-political establishments are relatively unsurprising, due, at least in part, to his post-war formative years at Berkeley. It is equally important to consider that it was in the 1960s that Dick reached the height of his writing output, during a period immersed by a politically charged environment. Therefore, it is safe to presume that these connections, coupled with the backlash of McCarthyism, would certainly play a role in Dick's considerations on the respective positions of State and the individual. Furthermore, Dick was actually visited by the FBI on more than one occasion in connection with his wife's attendances at Sather Gate. As Sutin explains,

Phil never joined her and seldom attended political meetings of any kind. Nevertheless, one day in 1953 or 1954 FBI agents George Smith and George Scruggs knocked on the door. [...] Politely they asked the couple to identify faces in Sather Gate surveillance photographs. (Sutin 83)

This particular episode, in which Dick is unequivocally confronted with a vigorous government agency scrutinizing people's lives for their political persuasions, must have surely resonated, as it is an all too clear topic looming over many of his texts. All of his novels surrounding this period (and most, if not all of his novels overall) can indeed be considered dystopias in the sense that there is an overwhelming presence that determines and distorts all human experience. It can be represented in the form of an oppressive political structure, frequently with conspiratorial overtones, but it also takes the form of mass dependency on mood altering drugs, numbing commodification of every human

experience by crushing corporations or the more outlandish conspiracies of overlapping realities. *Eye in the Sky* (1957), for example, relates to the events of the FBI visits and deals more directly with the issue of McCarthyism and the dangers of punishing people over their thoughts. Jack Hamilton is conspicuously interrogated and fired due to his wife's leftist associations. It is, therefore, understandable that Freedman should strive for a theory of paranoia based on Dick's novels, since paranoia is a recurring element.

However, already in this early novel in Dick's career can we see the Dickian turn that his written work eventually takes. When Jack Hamilton and his wife, along with six others, fall into a maze of shared psyches that they need to pull through, we are confronted with private psyches turned into actual realities. Aside from the matter of presenting a shared form of sub-consciousness and the clear question regarding the true value of reality (as opposed to the subconscious realities, some of them entirely indistinguishable from our own), is also possible to correlate this bizarre twist with the McCarthyism topic – the worlds that are created out of pure consciousness expose parts of the characters' psyche that are ready for misinterpretation. The four realities that the characters have to go through represent dystopias within themselves, inspired by the most extreme beliefs of each respective purveyor. However, the characters are far from being a mere reflection of their fundamentalist roots. It is as if Dick is presenting the reader with the McCarthyist dream of showing what horrific things people possess inside them, only to prove that it is impossible to define a person in such a narrow sense. In the end, here is Dick's call to action on the part of the reader to not embark on clear-cut definitions of people, as they are more than the sum of a few observable traits. As Rossi explains,

Seeing the events unfold through the eyes of different characters allows the reader to perceive how different individual takes on reality may be, how conditioned by highly subjective drives, fears, expectations, obsessions, etc. Above all it generates a condition of general uncertainty, because what

readers are shown might not be a reliable representation of a fictional *koinos kosmos* but a very deformed *perception* of that common world, as seen from a very odd and twisted private world. (Rossi 98)

This partly explains Dick's propensity to use multiple points of view, giving predominance to how different observers perceive and, to some degree, create different worlds. This is particularly evident in *Eye in the Sky*, but is frequently used in Dick's novels, from *The Man in the High Castle* to *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*. In a sense, this is yet another level of utopia, as the realities produced out of the combination between a perceived external world and the interior *kosmos* can be seen as no more than fictionalizations themselves, as *Eye in the Sky* very literally stages. As we can see, Dick's take on his themes is never a linear dystopian deconstruction as Suvin's assessment suggests.

A few years after *Eye in the Sky*, Dick would rationalize the subjectivity that reality is prone to:

"I have been very much influenced by the thinking of the European existential psychologists, who posit this: for each person there are two worlds, the *idios kosmos*, which is a unique, private world, and the *koinos kosmos*, which literally means shared world (just as *idios* means private). No person can tell which part of his total worldview is *idios kosmos* and which is *koinos kosmos*, [...] (the idea parallels Jung's concept of projection, by the way, projection of unconscious archetypes onto the "real" outer world), and in all of my books, well, virtually all, the protagonist is suffering from the breakdown of his *idios kosmos* - at least we hope that's what's breaking down, not the *koinos kosmos*. As his *idios kosmos* breaks down, the objective shared universe emerges more clearly [...] but it may be quite different from the *idios kosmos* which he is in the process of losing. Hence, strange transformations take shape. (Gillespie 31–32)

Regardless of the simplification this approach is prone to, it is relevant to note that Dick himself states that this is a central theme in "virtually all" of his books. Indeed, the confrontation of different varieties of "real" is as true for the projected psyches of *Eye in the Sky* as for most of his work.

In the short story “Roog”, which is Dick’s very first, written in 1951, the point of view, or the *idios kosmos* is shifted to Boris, the dog, which slants his worldview. This is of absolute relevance, as Boris is shown to identify a completely different reality from our own. In Boris’ perspective, his owners carefully store their food in the trash cans, only to get stolen (and presumably eaten) by the garbage men. In this very economical short story, we are presented with a complete sense of Dickian ontology. Boris’ owners are the “Guardians”, who store their food in “offering urns”. The garbage men are “Roogs” (what Boris keeps barking out), who viciously undermine the work of the Guardians. These three designations aren’t particularly close to SF, and there are no other elements of SF in this story. However it does “feel” as part of the genre, if, for no other reason, as its publication in *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction* may attest.⁵³ With just three aliases we understand that there is a reality parallel to our own, where a certain social order is undercut by an antagonizing group and a power struggle is taking place. Boris’ perception of reality is, therefore, an effortless utopia, which can only be decoded by us, who stand outside it and are able to correlate it with our own system. As Dick himself explains,

So here, in a primitive form, is the basis of much of my twenty-seven years of professional writing: the attempt to get into another person’s head, or another creature’s head, and see out from his eyes or its eyes, and the more different that person is from the rest of us the better [...]I began to develop the idea that each creature lives in a world somewhat different from all the other creatures and their worlds. (Sutin 71)

“Roog” is, in this sense, yet another indicator that Dick’s interest in alternate or shifting realities can be referenced as an exercise in utopianism. If we look back at *The Man in*

⁵³ Here, we are taking advantage of the discussion on genre, as outlined in chapter 3 above.

the High Castle, we see that all of the three alternate realities are mere placeholders for the *koinos kosmos*, while all of the individual perceptions of each character are, themselves, subjective projections of each *idios kosmos* onto possible world systems. These are all no-spaces of infinite possibilities, and characters such as Tagomi, Julia or Childan undergo a process of recognition of this fact throughout the novel. It is also for this reason that the forgeries work so well, even if conspicuously massified. They represent a material anchor for the utopia, a fabricated *koinos kosmos* for the benefit of individual *idios kosmos*. More importantly, since the world views themselves are the result of the interplay between the *idios kosmos* and the *koinos kosmos*, the end result, the real, can equally be brought into question as a no-space itself.

This is a somewhat shifted function of utopia from what we have seen in Asimov and Herbert. In those authors, utopia could have been more easily be equated with desire, since there was an implicit pleasure drawn from designing a world with decidedly positive elements: constructive precognition, immortality, socio-political stability. In Dick, perhaps due to the fact that his texts are far more internalized, the landscape is consistently dystopian, with a focus not on the hopeful, more Blochian aspects of the desired other, but on the Kafkaian constant unfulfillment. In this respect, it is fitting that Dick may be regarded as Kafkaian, since there is another castle that is generally considered as utopian:

Kafka's fiction as a whole and the aphorisms in particular demonstrate unmistakably that the transcendent remains permanently out of reach. The exception to this rule, as I have been arguing, are the few rifts opened up by the scattering of sublime moments throughout the text. They do not offer themselves as a highroad to transcendence but serve only as an assurance that something is there in the nontime and nonspace of the human soul, something worth aspiring to even if it remains out of reach. K's unnamed ambition, his motive for wanting to penetrate the castle, is utopian. There is no method and no theory and no eschatology associated with it. Its literary corollary is

meaning, which remains always present, always ahead, and always other.
(Dowden 138)

As Dowden explains, Kafka's *The Castle* presents itself a kind of utopia, mainly due to the fact that K is continually caught in a circular motion of unsuccessfully attempting to reach the authorities. He receives just enough knowledge in order to keep attempting, always without success. In a way, he is inside the castle, but outside the utopia that conspires against him. This is, in broad strokes, not only Herbert's overarching theme for *The Santaroga Barrier* but, even more strikingly, Dick's concern in *The Man in the High Castle*, where virtually all the characters hopelessly attempt to escape their social paradigm, a fake, constructed utopia, if there ever was one. As with other of Dick's core themes, this is carried throughout his life and fiction, up to the point where the two are indistinguishable.

7.2. THE DYSTOPIAN NOW

It must be reinforced that the themes above aren't exclusive to *The Man in The High Castle*. In fact, one of the most distinguishing characteristics of Dick's fiction is his propensity to rehash ideas, tropes, settings and even characters. These are consistent in such a way that, while Dick's work is not connected in serial format, as are Asimov's and Herbert's texts, the regularities that emerge throughout his writing form a handful of concepts that he uses to perceive the world.

Therefore, in the greater scope of Dick's life, *The Man in The High Castle* is commonly considered the pinnacle of Dick's literary work. Robinson notes that critical interest on Dick went early on towards this novel in particular and for good reason:

as new critics unfamiliar with the field appeared, they needed help in finding the books that were worth writing about, and a canon of science fiction classics was established fairly rapidly. *The Man in the High Castle* became

part of this canon early on, and it alone among Dick's novels received critical attention. (Robinson 228)

Aside from the perception, however unfounded, that this particular novel presents a higher level of literary quality, as opposed to some of Dick's previous and latter work, the fact remains that *The Man in the High Castle* is indeed produced at a midpoint in Dick's life where his exegesis has not quite taken over his thoughts yet, while having all of those considerations already there in a restraint form. This may be the reason why this novel usually serves as a marker to compartmentalize his works. Suvin does so in three separate periods:

I would divide Dick's writing into three main periods: 1952-62, 1962-65, and 1966-74. The first period is one of apprenticeship and limning of his themes and devices, first in short or longer stories (1952-56) and then in his early novels from *Solar Lottery* to *Vulcan's Hammer* (1955-60), and it culminates in the mature polyphony of *The Man in the High Castle* (1962). Dick's second, central period stands out to my mind as a high plateau in his opus. [...]The latest stage of Dick's writing, beginning in 1966, is in many ways a falling off. (Suvin, "Artifice as Refuge and World View: Philip K. Dick's Foci" 73)

What we should give equal consideration, however, is that *The Man in the High Castle* is part of a process – perhaps at the top as it may be – of the development of a Dickian ontology. As we have seen, this novel clearly borrows themes, concerns and even narratological modes from earlier work. This is not at all unusual in Dick, since the core of his texts seems to reside in a very fixed thematical set. As a result, Dick takes no issue in taking advantage of whatever bits and pieces resonate from previous work.

Moreover, even further than the obvious similarities in characters and themes from one novel to the next, are the actual links between them when one character or episode is carried to a different text. Robinson points out that all of Dick's major characters are already in place in *Voices From the Street*:

The various character types that reappear again and again in Dick's novels are almost all there in *Voices From the Street*: the hapless protagonist, leaving his unimportant job and losing track of reality; the protagonist's boss, sympathetic but forced by business concerns to harm the protagonist in some way; the protagonist's apathetic and clinging wife; a dangerous, intense young woman, both attractive and repellent; a mysterious, cryptic religious leader. (Robinson 17)

But the connections and repetitions do not end here, by any means. Aside from the already mentioned Jack Isidore, in *A Maze of Death*, Dick reuses the structure of *Eye in the Sky* to jump from one individual subconscious reality to the next.⁵⁴ *The Unteleported Man* is an expansion of a short story with the same name, similarly to Asimov's *The Positronic Man* and "The Bicentennial Man". As is the case with prominent novels such as *Ubik*, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* or *The Penultimate Truth*, who were all retooled from short stories. The list of recycling narratives is impressive, but Dick goes as far as reusing plot elements. For example, the reality-changing drug called Can-D in *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* turns into Substance D in *A Scanner Darkly*

What this long list of connections between works demonstrates is the appropriateness of this process. Certain characters and details are used as spare parts when, in fact, this is the reality of Dick's surroundings, not only regarding the delusion of an in-between wars

⁵⁴ Again, curiously, *A Maze of Death* bears striking resemblance with another author of interest to this study. In this case, we have a stranded spaceship crew, attempting to pass the tests created by an artificial intelligence that devolves into a full-fledged antagonizing god. This loosely describes Herbert's *Destination: Void* and the *WorShip* Series.

America of the fifties and sixties, mired with commoditized kipple, but also due to the fact that these texts are grandfathered by their pulp origins. The disposable nature of the pulp magazines produced equally disposable narratives, available for as many uses as a readership would accept them. This is a practice that still resonates today as a matter of controversy.⁵⁵ In the case of Dick, it seems only consistent that a useful character or idea should be restaged if needed, at the very least, to aid in conveying the required themes.

This can, in fact, be regarded as an argument for a resemblance between Dick and authors like Asimov or Herbert in terms of serialization of his work. Even though none of Dick's novels are straightforward expansions on an already established series, there is certainly margin to consider that virtually all of Dick's work is interwoven as one, enormous dystopian phenomenology. The fact that characters are reused and short stories expanded only attests to the notion that these were particulars in attempting to stage and restage the same topics of concern to Dick. It is as if the writing part was partially taken care of, ready for any possible *idios kosmos* to inhabit it. Dick himself is aware of these repetitions:

“EYE,” “Joint” “3 Stigmata,” “Ubik” & “Maze” are the same novel written over and over again. The characters are all out cold & lying around together

⁵⁵ See, for example, Brian Herbert's rehash in extending further the Dune Series and its ambivalent reception.

on the floor (*Mass hallucinating a world.) Why have I written this up at least five times?

[.] What's got to be gotten over is the false idea that an hallucination is a *private* matter. Not hallucination but *joint* hallucination is my topic, including false memories. (Sutin 95–96)

On the other hand, as we can see, in Dick's case there isn't a well-defined project of enriching a single, unified world, piece by piece, in semi-serial form. Instead, there is an unabashed investment in recurrently staging the themes in particularly extravagant ways to reach the same idea. Therefore, Suvin's cognitive estrangement applied to Dick's work places us in a particularly uncomfortable situation. While it seems clear that we are talking about SF, most of Dick's imagery is estranged to the reader not exactly in a technological sense or in a speculative sense. There is technology, but it is nonchalantly brought up and put together, frequently without the least bit of scientific-sounding quality. There are future worlds, but these are often just a few years ahead and many can be better described as contemporary alternates rather than strange, but plausible futures. Sutin suggests that,

As to SF novels, the major influence within the genre was Van Vogt, as opposed to the "hard"-science approach favoured by Asimov, Heinlein, and Clarke. [...] Phil's approach to technology was, simply, to make up whatever gizmo he needed to keep the characters' realities in suitably extreme states. (Sutin 88)

If we gloss over the formalism inherent to these designations, however, there is a level in which Suvin's novum can be applied here: for all his divergence from Hard SF, Dick is centrally focused on estranging the reader. It may not be the expected variety of placing the reader in a foreign, but plausible-sounding setting due to the fact that Dick diligently chips away at the barrier between different versions of the "real", as well as the alienation and outlandishness already present in the source material that is his life. Nevertheless, it can be considered the most extreme form of the novum, since, usually, not even his

protagonists comfortably inhabit his utopian landscapes. It is not just the reader who is estranged, parts of the texts are estranged within themselves, since the very author sees himself as estranged as well. As Lem points out, “Philip Dick does not lead his critics an easy life, since he does not so much play the part of a guide through his fantasmagoric worlds as he gives the impression of one lost in their labyrinth.” (Lem, “Philip K. Dick” 62)

There is, therefore, good cause to consider Dick’s obsession with repetition of these themes and settings as, at least in part, a type of novum. On one hand, carrying Robinson’s definition forward, it seems clear that Dick does, in fact, desire to exercise some sort of socio-political change. In his letters and interviews, one can glimpse a man with a grasp of a monumental array of topics and questions, often with strong opinions on what they should be or represent in his contemporary world. It may even prove itself as a bit odd that a writer such as Dick, with a problematic and growing detachment from linear reality, would take a step back in the opposite direction, in order to address very topical concerns of his everyday experiences. *A Scanner Darkly*, for example, is dedicated to the lost generation – his generation – who were like “children playing in the street” (Dick, *A Scanner Darkly* 218). In the end, this seems to qualify as an apt example of a dystopia used to describe the actual present reality.

This strengthens Robinson’s reading that Dick is, above all, a realist novelist (Robinson 28). In this case, it may even be argued that the texts go further than a realist novel, since Dick does not accept the real without unequivocal proof. Since this only rarely applies, the real is no more valid than any other narrative, something that proves itself to be the case in quite a few of his novels, *The Man in the High Castle* included. This is not a matter of whether Dick should be labelled as a postmodernist writer or not. It relates to the fact

that, as we have seen, this is in fact how he perceives reality, as if the dystopias of the texts were symbolical representations of the dystopia he lived in.

The first instance of this in the shape of a novel is *The Cosmic Puppets*, in which the protagonist begins to question his surroundings when he is confronted with an alternate version of his hometown. This is a SF novel of Lovecraftian sensibilities, however, and there is an unusually high bias towards the uncanny and a tinge of the horror for Dick. There are clear hints of this legacy in the “body snatching creature”, as some of the townspeople have become mere vessels for god-like creatures to exist in corporeal form. The town is overrun and eerily decrepit and the children, Mary and Peter, control snakes, rats and assorted insects for maximum horror effect. To boot, the protagonist not only is unable to escape his hometown, but quickly finds out that he has been dead for eighteen years. In fact, it seems too much of a coincidence when we confront this title with Heinlein’s 1951 *The Puppet Masters*, published only two years before Dick finished writing this novel.⁵⁶

Regardless of genre designations, we can already identify a number of tropes here that will be distilled in later texts. The concern with a cruel, even sadistic god is addressed when presenting the puppet masters, who are revealed to be opposing deities using the town as their battleground. Along the way, ambivalent dualities abound, most notably in the two god-like entities and the alternate, replacement town of which Ted is suspicious from the start, with the original version is still accessible underneath. In fact, Ted’s struggle throughout the novel turns away from escaping into attempting to restore the “real” Millgate of the past. Again, here we have an incipient theme in Dick’s narrative

⁵⁶ As we have already seen, Frank Herbert presents his own foray in this model with *The Santaroga Barrier* (1968)

framework – the representation of the Real by means of mundane objects. Both Ted and Christopher are able to revert objects to their original form as a way to reinstate the “real” Millgate. This will reappear as a fairly central trope when, in *Ubik*, Joe Chip is confronted with a reality that is devolving around him. When we consider that this is staged through the everyday objects that rematerialize into their precedent counterparts – a television is transformed into a radio, a spray can into an ointment, and so forward – we clearly see the pattern that Dick aims for: The very objects that are around us and taken for granted, as the artifacts in *The Man in the High Castle*, are the anchors for what we consider real. As we impose our *idios kosmos* onto them, they act as layouts for us to inhabit and construct our narratives. They may also be seen as heteroglossial in the Bakhtinian sense, as they take different forms under different circumstances. In the case of *Ubik* and *The Cosmic Puppets*, their shape is actually uncertain until characters interact with them. As Bakhtin states:

No living word relates to an object in a singular way: between the word and its object, between the word and the speaking subject, there exists an elastic environment of other, alien words about the same object, the same theme, and this is an environment that it is often difficult to penetrate. (Bakhtin 276)

There is a particular episode in *The Cosmic Puppets* where Bakhtin’s words will resonate. When Ted Barton looks intensely at a ball of string, he is able to see that underneath its physical existence there is another: that of a tire iron. This is, in many ways, a Bakhtinian “elastic environment” and Ted is able to bring the tire iron back into the material world merely by interacting with the object as another.

DiTommaso has suggested that “everything in MHC which exists- race, artefacts, or ethics-is dependent upon external referents for meaning and validation.” (DiTommaso, “Redemption in Philip K. Dick’s ‘The Man in the High Castle’” 98) If we consider that

either we are the ones providing exterior meaning for these objects or they are themselves the external vessels for any meaning that will fit, this observation isn't at all exclusive to *The Man in the High Castle*, as it comes up time and again in Dick's texts, *The Cosmic Puppets* included.

In *Now Wait For Last Year* (1966), Virgil Ackerman painstakingly recreates his childhood reality as a toy world mimicking Washington, circa 1935.⁵⁷ Each new item introduced into this life-size mock-up represents the materialization, albeit hollow, of this very reality. In *Time Out of Joint* (1959), the same process is undertaken, this time with the detailed recreation of a 1959 America in order to fool Ragle Gumm. In this case, Ragle begins to unravel the conspiracy around him, due to a few misplaced objects from the real world, which are out of step with his paradigm – Digging up a magazine featuring Marilyn Monroe when, in Ragle's reality, she doesn't exist or reaching for a light bulb cord that was never there. Similarly, in *Flow, My Tears, the Policeman Said* (1974), Jason Taverner runs the better part of the novel in a Kafkaesque parallel reality where his identity as a well-known celebrity is erased from society. On some levels, it resembles a revisit to *Time Out of Joint*, and again, in the same vein, Taverner's reality bleeds through this alternate in objects that transition from one reality to the next – in this case, one of Taverner's records or one of his songs on a jukebox, which are blatantly out of step in that context. Remarkably, for a concept of, at times, such low consideration in these narratives, the presence of the object as the linchpin between realities makes it predominant feature in Dick's work. What, in fact, this represents is the spring from which Dick draws his

⁵⁷ The date seems fitting, since, in *The Cosmic Puppets*, Ted wants to revert Millgate back to its 1935 version

material. Ambivalence is central to Dick's narrative, and the position of the object in reality is no exception. In his often cited reply to Lem, Dick summarises this question:

But you see Mr. Lem, there is no culture here in California, only trash. And we who grew up here and live here and write here have nothing else to include as elements in our work; you can see this in *On The Road*. I mean it. The West Coast has no tradition, no dignity, no ethics – this is where that monster Richard Nixon grew up. How can one create novels based on this reality which do not contain trash, because the alternative is to go into dreadful fantasies of what it ought to be like; one must work with the trash, pit it against itself, as you so aptly put it in your article. Hence the elements in such books of mine as *Ubik*. If God manifested Himself to us here He would do so in the form of a spraycan advertised on TV. (qtd. in Sutin 200)

Notably, it is through the representation of these objects as ahistorical and regressive that both Gumm and Taverner begin to unravel his constructed reality. In *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, in a page out of *The Man in the High Castle*, we are presented with a business model where craftsmen fashion artefact layouts to be inserted into an alternate reality, reminiscent of a simpler social structure. Here, the alternate takes a significant turn towards alienation, another of Dick's frequent themes.

In part as the natural segway from the trope of the alternate or overlapping realities, the characters of *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* effectively project themselves onto the layouts of a pre-established narrative. This is clearly the extreme, but natural progression of Dick's interplay between realities and objects. The layouts are quite literally empty vessels that accept and amalgamate consciousnesses. Therefore, instead of an object that symbolizes the creation of meaning in reality, we are presented with an actual placeholder. What's more, instead of infusing it with our theoretical psyche, the concepts resulting from our *idios kosmos*, the characters of *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* transfer themselves as a whole onto the objective layout. The experience is such that it is represented as para-religious, and it is relatively ambiguous whether the perfect

communion onto an established *koinos kosmos* outweighs the necessary alienation of the individual self. On closer inspection, before the narrative line with Palmer Eldrich and the Chew-Z virus disguised as a drug, the *status quo* of the Can-D drug in combination with the Perky Pat layouts seems at equilibrium. There is an outspoken dependency on the experience in order to cope with reality, but, for the most part, it is depicted as largely pleasant an integrated part of this particular dystopia. Even if representing a form of alienation, which Dick always seems to imply in circumstances like these, it is the lesser evil, one which offers a passage to transcendence – again, in a commoditized and diluted manner. There isn't any absolute rejection of the role the layouts play in people's dreary lives, even though (or perhaps as a result of) their world is eminently dystopian.

In the Dickian ontology, accurately depicting reality inevitably involves showing its inconsistencies. The novum is actually there to provide yet another layer of alienation, not because we desire those worlds or feel reinforced in ours, but because we effectively correlate these strange settings with what is around us. In this respect Dick's work, as Robinson defends, is often closer to a realist portrayal of his environment with elements of fable interspersed between them. The estrangement may, therefore, be regarded not as estrangement in the traditional sense, but as an alternate way of depicting how our surroundings impose themselves onto us. This is particularly relevant for Dick himself, since these issues were, in fact, present in the realities that he saw. As Kleo Mini puts it when talking about the manner in which Dick recounts events,

I shouldn't say it's not true. If we were talking about Philip, essentially it's true – it just didn't happen. This is a Philip construct of a situation that existed

and it's a little way to describe that situation without strictly adhering to specifically real life data. But then, that's what he did. (Sutin 79)

This may very well be the main reason why Dick's success was doomed to stay within the confines of SF. His particular way of decoding reality includes a level of the other-worldly, the strange and unusual. The issue with Dick lies in his struggle to reconciling that the surreal is actually realist according to his personal empirical evidences. This aesthetic of actual estrangement does not sit well with the realist novels, particularly when all of Dick's narratives present, at some point, the concept that human reactions are inconsistent and surprising. In *Confessions of a Crap Artist*, Dick's most successful mainstream book, every aspect of Jack Isidore and his relationship with Fay slips away from the realist into the surreal, which would possibly be a comfortable position if he could call it SF. Regardless of the stiffness that the realist novels bring out of Dick, the fact remains that a few of the Dickian tropes are in place. Fay is the bitch wife, Jack is the tinkerer, Charley is the ambivalent father figure. Sadly, as Sutin describes, the novel prefigures themes that would eventually transpose into Dick's life: "By 1963, four years after *Crap Artist* was written, there was occasional, minor physical violence on both Phil and Anne's part. *Crap Artist* had known it was coming." (Sutin 105)

Perhaps the most striking aspect to Dick's life and writing is the fact that his core themes – paranoia, schizophrenia and visions of the possible futures, or past as alternate realities – seep out of his early fiction into his later life. When Ragle Gumm, in *Time Out Of Joint*, discovers that there is another, underlying reality to his own comfortably nostalgic one, this is backed by all the questions of madness, hallucinations and visions of alternate worlds. Ragle spends the first half of the novel considering this, testing his reality and attempting to sort out if he is insane or paranoid. He logically understands that what is happening to him equates as derangement, but his rationality does not allow him

to summarily dismiss what he sees and feels either. According to Sutin, Dick got inspiration for the novel when once, similarly to Ragle, he “reached for a light cord that wasn’t there and never had been there.” (Sutin 95). However, what is most remarkable is not the minute circumstance in Dick’s life that generated the idea for a novel, but that what is presented in the novel becomes part of Dick’s reality a few years later – Dick’s eventual transcendental experiences he designated as the “2-3-74” events (short for February and March 1974). Sixteen years after *Time Out Of Joint* is published, we have *VALIS*, where much of the same sense of simulated worlds and surveillance by the government is still there. The difference here is that *VALIS* is an actual biographical account of the 2-3-74 events and how he attempts to cope with the alternatives of either being insane or stumbling across an alternate reality. All of the concerns that come through in many of his works suddenly turn real. In effect, Dick becomes Ragle. As Dick explains,

I, in my stories and novels, often write about counterfeit worlds, semi-real worlds, as well as deranged private worlds inhabited, often, by just one person, while, meantime, the other character either remain in their own worlds throughout or are somehow drawn into one of the peculiar ones. This theme occurs in the corpus of my twenty-seven years of writing. At no time did I have a theoretical or conscious explanation for my preoccupation with these pluriform pseudoworlds, but now I think I understand. What I was sensing was the manifold of partially actualized realities lying tangent to what evidently is the most actualized one, the one that the majority of us, by *consensus gentium*, agree on. (Dick, “If You Find This World Bad, You Should See Some of the Others” 240)

Whether due to mental breakdown, excessive drugs or an actual transcendental experience, Dick becomes Ragle Gumm, Jason Taverner Rick Deckard et alii. Strikingly, what follows is *Radio Free Albermuth*, *VALIS*, *The Divine Invasion* and *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer*, four novels attempting to rationalize his experience. If we accept Dick’s definition of reality as “that which, when you stop believing in it,

doesn't go away.” (Dick, *The Shifting Realities of Philip K. Dick* 261), then, similarly to his novels, it is beside the point to question whether he had a vision or not. The fact remains that it was an experience according to him. What interests us regarding this episode is precisely the fact that Dick translated this into writing. What we are suggesting here is that, since the utopian landscape was already in place throughout his novels, Dick merely transplanted himself onto the text. Therefore, if it is the case that his dystopia didn't translate into the real world, then, for Dick, the issue was finalized in the opposite direction.

8. THE BORDERS OF UTOPIA AND SCIENCE FICTION

In a manner of conclusion, let us begin with a fairly problematic assertion. A statement along the lines of “all SF is utopian” is usually ill advised, since it lends itself to be disproven with numerous examples of non-utopian SF. Furthermore, it can easily be construed as that kind of prescriptive classification which leaves a number of texts out in the cold. However, for the sake of bringing together all elements that have been argued here, let us assume that, indeed, there is a consistent thread shared by all of SF, irrespective of theme, structure or cultural influences. Let us call that common thread, as Jameson has, a “utopian desire” in its broadest, most pervasive possible sense. In the same respect, let us consider that the word “utopia” can be used to designate more than one, contained concept. As has been frequently explored in this dissertation, the mode behind many utopian texts is very much tied to their dystopian counterparts. Their relationship with and effect on the objective realities out of which they are produced is essentially the same. Additionally, we can safely observe that utopianism has been appropriated in a number of seemingly differing ways, from Manheim’s realizable utopia to Bloch’s utopian imagination. There is, therefore, a certain margin for action in handling this concept.

On the other hand, utopia was characteristically applied by Marxists as a derogatory term for ethereal socialist constructions with little to no regard to the revolutionary process and the class struggle that would effectively bring this end objective into fruition. By this account, More and, for the most part, any literary narrative would certainly be considered within the boundaries of utopian socialism. At its best, as a symbolical critique of contemporary political structures, it would still be at fault by virtue of its concern with a projected social other and its detachment from the means of production that would

necessarily effect change. This is, to some extent, an accurate description of the science-fictional utopias, as these texts are often more invested in presenting estranged concepts, even if connected with our own social models, rather than explicitly expressing the guidelines for a social revolution. In fact, neither Asimov nor Herbert, having made the most significant strides towards utopias out of the three here in discussion, purport the desire to see their models effect real social change on a wider scale. There are, of course, themes directly connected with socio-political preoccupations, such as Herbert's concern with the mythologizing of leaders or Asimov's concept of a recurrent, predictable trend for historical events. Even Dick, possibly the author, out of the three, most connected with social criticism, would fall short of an analysis of the modes of production that will materially motivate change. In its most allegorical sense, his work does represent his actual empirical experience of the world, but he markedly displaces it into the plausible impossibility of the science-fictional. He becomes utopian not as a curator of a single, richly detailed, other world, but by consistently exploring his internal vision of what he sees as a dilapidated and schizophrenic reality. His utopia is one of perception rather than of a socio-political construct, which, in either case, is irreconcilable with a strict materialist reading.

Still, all three of these authors apparently present elements that can be best read through aspects of certain marxisms. The most prominent is, of course, the already discussed historical materialism that Asimov's psychohistory seems to liberally draw from. However, Herbert's concerns regarding the reshaping of history may also point in this direction. Even though the link isn't as straightforward, since there is only manipulation and never the admission of materialism, in Herbert's case the historical textuality is much more associated with the relations of production – in this case, the inevitability of being involved with the production of Spice. Lastly, Dick's treatment of

the reification of his realities may also point towards another marxist reading of the commodification and the form of value. This is most vivid in *The Man in the High Castle*, but it transpires in many of his other works since, as we know, the presence of the object as a placeholder for value is present in several of Dick's texts, namely *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* with the "Perky Pat" layouts or *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* in the form of the commoditized artificial animals.

But if we regard SF as predominantly utopian in nature, how can we reconcile it with marxisms? The answer lies in the fact that not even those marxisms are entirely effectual. Regardless of their predispositions, the fact remains that they are equally utopian constructions, in this case of an ontological nature. Geoghean, in offering marxisms instead of Marxism, assesses that not even Marx and Engels were strictly opposed to the more speculative utopian narratives:

The similarity between Marx and Engels' characterization of communist society and that of the utopian socialists could have escaped no-one. Neither here, nor elsewhere, do they deny these similarities. However, they saw their dispute as methodological: the utopian socialist vision is at best a subjective imaginative abstraction from the divisions of class society, whilst the communist vision, by contrast, is the objective *telos* capitalist society creates as it negates itself. (Geoghegan 29)

Geoghean sees this methodological dispute as the fundamental legacy for an outright aversion to utopianism. Still, even if we consider the problem in this light, assuming that post-marxist proponents dogmatize Marx and Engels in detriment of a dialogic approach to the likes of Fourier and Owen, they were still bound by the written word themselves. This is most clearly visible in their overt avoidance of any hint of abstraction. Geoghean states that "Their tragedy was that they had to speak of the future but, given their inhibitions about such speculation, lacked the means of articulation." (Geoghegan 45) Still, textually speaking, scientific socialism is no less of a scientific model as

psychohistory, since both assume a narrative approach to an exact social science. At their stylistic level, they are assumed interpretative models. Given that one is an influential and complex socio-economic interpretative model, while the other comes across as an idea entertained on a commute trip, this still does not invalidate that they are equally utopian at their most fundamental exegetical level. This can be applied to other SF and even the naming is indicative of a certain similarity of approach. As we have seen, the term “science” in science fiction was traditionally applied to collate a certain kind of literature to the factual validity of the exact sciences. In a less instrumentalizing fashion, this is, in fact, what Engels seems to imply with his designation: a scientific approach to social studies.

That SF arises out of the pulps is central here. Its conception is, at its core, an appropriation of the Edisonian discourse of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The genre, at this point, is naturally aligned with factual texts dedicated to documenting the emergent technocratic momentum, along with a clearly welcoming setting, exultant of what science and engineering can accomplish. Since the cultural discourse at this time is already brimming with infinite technological possibility, with inventors and scientists seemingly holding the answers for the future of civilization, therefore, comes as little surprise that the literary co-opts the utilitarian. The utilitarian text of this period, or, in other words, radio catalogues, news about industrial developments, advertisements for new consumer gadgetry directly from the minds of inventors, is, by all accounts, utopian already. It is not uncommon to find texts such as the one found in the *Lincoln Evening News* on May 10, 1901. The article, complete with illustration and titled “the latest type of flying machine.” not only reports of a new flying invention, but proceeds to speculate on the future such a device will unlock:

As a flying machine of this type costs only \$10,000, it is possible that wealthy Americans will soon be flying about in private aerial cars as teh[y][sic] now speed over the county in their automobiles. "Own your own flying machine" will probably be the advice of dealers in "aerials" in the very near future. ("Latest Type of Flying Machine (1901)")

In this instance, the boundaries for the cognitive are expanded to such a degree that Suvin's novum is a common discourse of both fictional and factual narratives alike. Owing to these peers in as great a measure as to H.G. Wells, Jules Verne or Méliès, the SF text is eminently utopian due to the fact that it is precisely surrounded by a utopian discourse stemming out of infinite possibility. With added factors such as the serialization of the constructed *topos*, the interest in staging the self in an alienated setting or the exploration of a wide range of ontologies, the SF text becomes something of a metonym for the utopian construction. Aside from, its rooted affinity with the utopian, SF has currently become the main source for a matured utopian literature itself. This can be seen in the present paradigm where virtually any contemporary utopian text runs the risk of being considered SF.

If we regard the utopian narrative as the text of the unfulfilled and unfulfillable no-place, one which works dialogically with the discrete circumstances around which it was produced, then surely these texts fall in line with the more encompassing delineation of utopia. They certainly present no-spaces in the sense that SF projects outwardly what cannot be seen within, onto the alien, the robot, the super human, other worlds, fabricated political systems, etc.,. In focusing on these no-instances, they very much depend on the discourse of palpable reality to establish the characteristic contrast of how alien their construction is by comparison. At the very least, the SF/utopia interplay performs a commoditized contrast between real and fictionalized objects, settings or societies. At its best, this interchange clears the path for a few forays into novel propositions and puts in

question the comfort of our own well-known systems. As Lem suggestively demonstrates in *Solaris*:

We go in quest of a planet, of a civilisation superior to our own but developed on the basis of a prototype of our primeval past. At the same time, there is something inside us which we don't like to face up to, from which we try to protect ourselves, but which nevertheless remains, since we don't leave Earth in a state of primal innocence. We arrive here as we are in reality, and when the page is turned and that reality is revealed to us — that part of our reality which we would prefer to pass over in silence — then we don't like it any more. (Lem, *Solaris* 75)

In the end, isn't Suvin's cognitive estrangement so productive because it essentially describes the production of utopias? Could we not possibly use the concept to infer that any utopia inevitably possesses cognitive elements reflected from the texts' contemporary socio-political circumstances? Is it not a necessary trait of utopia to take these elements and displace them into an external, estranged social order? We can possibly find similar concerns in a text such as Conrad's *The Heart of Darkness* (1899), for example. The colonial impulse to lose oneself into the unknown turns nothing more than a plunge into the darkness of oneself. Conrad's title, as we know, alludes more to Marlow's and Kurtz's own hearts than to the heart of Africa. If we look at More's seminal work, while lacking a number of elements present in SF proper, it would likely be fitting to consider it as a cognitively estranged colonial travelogue, certainly so by the standards of fifteenth century European society.

In the end, if we compare Herbert, Asimov and Dick side by side, we will surely find a few similarities as the ones that intersperse this dissertation. Both Dick and Herbert deal with precognition and reality-altering drugs, albeit in very different ways. Asimov's and Herbert's work lie on a foundation of serialization so similar that it shaped their respective series in a comparable manner. Dick and Asimov share a propensity for the detective noir,

quite possibly due to their pulp background. However, the common thread that goes across most of these characteristics is that all three authors, while using their estranged worlds, are fundamentally concerned with the real. The texts then assume a utopian level of metaphor or metonymy, whether localized in time, space or even within the self. These are territories of negativity (a place that doesn't exist, a person that cannot be human) and at the same time of creation in a form of utopian textuality.

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