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Dystopia in Two 1950s American Science Fiction Novels

BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

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Abstract

The BA thesis aims to analyse the treatment of dystopian features in two science fiction novels written in the 1950s. The two novels that are subject to analysis are *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury, and *The Space Merchants* by Frederik Pohl and Cyril M. Kornbluth. This thesis analyses different features of dystopia and how these features manifest themselves in the science fiction novels mentioned above. The thesis includes a theoretical part and an analytical part. The theoretical part focuses on the definition of science fiction and the historical development of the genre with particular emphasis on its picture in the 1950s as the two novels subject to analysis were published in this period. This part further takes a closer look at the relationship among utopia, dystopia and science fiction in the first half of the 20th century and the particular features that define dystopia. The first chapter of the analytical part opens with a definition of science fiction as a genre and its place within the literary canon. It discusses the term of cognitive estrangement introduced by Darko Suvin to define science fiction.

The first chapter mainly focuses on the development of science fiction and its form throughout the magazine era in the 1940s and 1950s and the transformation from pulp magazines to a recognized literary genre. The literature used in this chapter mostly consists of Darko Suvin's book *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, Mark Bould and Sherryl Vint's *The Routledge Concise History of Science Fiction* and *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*. The chapter discusses the development of science fiction from early science fiction in ancient Greece to the decline of science fiction magazines at the end of the 1950s. It expounds the changes the science fiction genre underwent and discusses the problem with narrative strategies that science fiction faced. The rest of the chapter also takes a look at the speculative fiction of the 17th century, the gothic novel of the 19th century and the science fiction novels of the late 19th century and early 20th century.

The second chapter discusses the topic of dystopia and utopia and their close-knit relationship with science fiction. The critical literature used in this chapter consists mainly of Tom Moylan's *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia*. Similarly to the first chapter, the second chapter likewise focuses on the historical background and the influences that instigated the expansion of dystopia at the beginning of the 20th century. This chapter takes a closer look at the specific features of dystopia that characterize the genre in the 1950s such as the oppressive form of government regimes, the loss of freedom and control over the population and the pivotal moment of rebellion against the regime.

The analytical part consists of an analysis of the particular dystopian features discussed in the second chapter that can be found in the two science fiction novels. The analysis investigates how the dystopian features fit into the 1950s picture of science fiction and dystopian literature. The critical literature to support the arguments consists of Tom Moylan's *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia* and David Seed's essays and book *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*. It focuses on the comparison of the governmental systems, the means of control over the population, as well as the place of the protagonists within the system and how they eventually break out of it. Throughout the course of both novels, their opinions are challenged and finally climax into rebellion. It briefly analyses the role of a catalyst figure as a means to the revolt against the system as well as the reckless consumerism that is prevalent in both novels and the use of media and TV content overconsumption as a means of control.

Key words: consumerism, advertising, media, 1950s American literature, Sci Fi literature, Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, Frederik Pohl, Cyril M. Kornbluth, *The Space Merchants*

Abstrakt

Cílem této bakalářské práce je analyzovat dystopické znaky, které se nacházejí ve dvou vědeckofantastických románech napsaných v 50. letech 20. století. Romány, na které se práce zaměřuje, jsou *Fahrenheit 451* od spisovatele Raye Bradburyho a *The Space Merchants* od spoluautorů Frederika Pohla a Cyrila M. Kornblutha. Práce bude analyzovat dystopické znaky a jejich manifestaci ve výše zmíněných dílech. Práce se bude skládat z teoretické a analytické části. Teoretická část bude zaměřena na definici žánru vědeckofantastické literatury a jeho historický vývoj s důrazem na obraz vědeckofantastické literatury v 50. letech 20. století, jelikož to je doba, kdy oba romány byly poprvé publikovány. Analytická část se dále bude zaměřovat na vztah mezi dystopií, utopií a vědeckofantastickou literaturou v první polovině 20. století a na jednotlivé znaky, které definují žánr dystopické literatury.

V úvodu první kapitoly analytické části je definována vědeckofantastická literatura a její místo v literárním kánonu. V této části je podrobně probrán termín kognitivního odcizení, který představil akademik Darko Suvin za účelem definování vědeckofantastické literatury. V první kapitole je nejvíce čerpáno z následujících knih: *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* od Darka Suvina, *The Routledge Concise History of Science Fiction* od Marka Boulda a Sherryl Vintové a *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*. První kapitola mapuje vývoj vědeckofantastické literatury od jejích velmi raných počátků v antickém Řecku až po úpadek vědeckofantastických časopisů na konci 50. let 20. století. Hlavní část první kapitoly se z velké části zaměřuje na vývoj a podobu vědeckofantastické literatury v časopisové éře 40. a 50. let 20. století a na její transformaci z pulp časopisů (rodokapsy) do uznávaného literárního žánru. Dále se zabývá změnami, kterými vědeckofantastická literatura prošla, a zabývá se i otázkou narativních strategií, kterým vědeckofantastická literatura čelila. Podrobněji mapuje literaturu od spekulativní fikce 17. století, gotického románu 19. století až po vědeckofantastické romány konce 19. a začátku 20. století.

V druhé kapitole se práce zaměřuje na téma dystopie a utopie a jejich blízkého vztahu s vědeckofantastickou literaturou. Literatura použita v této kapitole je kniha *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia* od Toma Moylana. Podobně jako v první kapitole, i tato část mapuje historické pozadí a vlivy, které zapříčinily rozmach dystopického žánru na začátku 20. století. Tato kapitola se také podrobněji zaměřuje na specifické znaky dystopie, které charakterizují tento žánr, jakými jsou například vládnoucí režimy utiskující obyvatelstvo, vládní kontrola populace, ztráta svobody a klíčový moment rebelie proti režimu.

Poslední kapitola analyzuje specifické znaky dystopie, které byly popsány v druhé kapitole, v románu *Fahrenheit 451* od spisovatele Raye Bradburyho a *The Space Merchants* od spoluautorů Frederika Pohla a Cyrila M. Kornblutha. Analýza jednotlivých znaků dystopie je zasazena do kontextu dystopické a vědeckofantastické literatury 50. let. Tato kapitola se z velké části zaměřuje na rozbor vládnoucích systémů, prostředků kontroly populace a následné rebelie proti vládě. Literatura použita v této kapitole je mimo jiné znovu kniha od Toma Moylana *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia* a kniha *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film* a eseje od Davida Seeda. Zabývá se bezohledným konzumerismem, který je jedním z témat obou románů, použitím médií a podporované závislosti na nich, která je využívána jako prostředek kontroly. Dále práce porovnává roli obou protagonistů. V této kapitole je ve zkratce analyzovaná role katalytické postavy jako prostředku revolty proti vládě.

Klíčová slova: konzumerismus, reklama, média, americká literatura 50. let, Sci Fi literatura, Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, Frederik Pohl, Cyril M. Kornbluth, *The Space Merchants*

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Introduction

There has always been a tight-knit relationship between the two literary genres of science fiction and dystopia. Since the rise of dystopia at the beginning of the 20th century brought about by the atrocities of WWI, science fiction and dystopia have created an organic relationship. Even though they can comfortably exist on their own without any interference of the other, science fiction stories are often set in a dystopian world where technology is used in favour of the tyrannical state for surveillance and control of its citizens.

This thesis will be analysing dystopian features in two science fiction novels: Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* and Frederik Pohl and Cyril M. Kornbluth's *The Space Merchants*. It will also be focusing on the portrait of science fiction and dystopia in the 1950s. The era of the 1950s in the US is particularly interesting to analyse because of the factors that were influencing the picture of literature. The bright side of the 1950s in the US was the unlikely economic post-WWII boom. Many economists predicted a recession similar to the one which followed WWI and an increase in unemployment, but the exact opposite happened. After the years of wartime rationing policies and the consequent shortage of goods, Americans were eager to spend their money and the economy was thriving. New technologies and home appliances like radio and television were introduced to the general public.

Not only the economy was enjoying the Golden Age. 1950s science fiction is famously known as the Golden Age of Science Fiction. The science fiction magazine scene was blooming and many of these magazines were responsible for discovering talented writers, Bradbury and the creative duo of Pohl and Kornbluth included.

But the 1950s also had a dark side. The economic boom inevitably caused mass consumption of goods and due to the introduction of television also the overconsumption of TV content. The government was encouraging consumers to spend more money in order to stimulate the economy with the selfish intent to establish economic and political superiority

over the Soviet Union.¹ Soon after WWII, the Cold War started. This clash of two political and economic systems inevitably influenced the era. As a result of the Cold War, the US became subject to the controversial anti-communist policy called McCarthyism. Eponymously named after its instigator, senator Joseph McCarthy, this policy persecuted individuals who showed sympathy to communism or socialism and it often wrongly accused people of espionage for the Soviet Union².

The socioeconomic and political tendencies projected themselves into the science fiction and generally the literature of the 1950s. Weapons of mass destruction were a theme in these two genres since the introduction of advanced war technology during WWI. With the actual use of atomic bombs during WWII, these advanced weapons were suddenly put into a new perspective. In the 1950s, as David Seed points out, it was suggested that the “science fiction novels and films are not producing arbitrary fantasy but rather revoking key metaphors and narratives already circulating in the culture.”³ Given the socioeconomic context of the era, the authors were using notions already present in the society to compose a critique of American habits and politics. The 1950s created the perfect condition for the science fiction dystopia. The Cold War, Stalinist Soviet Union and McCarthyism instigated the dystopian tendencies, and the introduction of new technologies sparked the possible idea of technology being misused by the government to control the citizens.

This cultural background left its mark on the field of science fiction and dystopia. The next two chapters will be looking closely at the development of science fiction and dystopia in the 1950s within this cultural context. The chapters will also be providing the background for the development of these two genres since their beginnings. The last chapter

¹ Lizabeth Cohen, “A consumers’ republic: The politics of mass consumption in postwar America,” *Journal of Consumer Research* 31, no. 1 (2004): 237, <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:4699747>.

² Paul J. Achter, “McCarthyism,” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., accessed August 8, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/McCarthyism>.

³ David Seed, *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film* (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1999), 2, <https://books.google.cz/books?id=r5p4Ko4oP2cC&lpg=PP1&pg=PP5#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

will be focused on the analysis of the particular dystopian features in the two science fiction novels and how they reflect the society and politics of the 1950s.

1. Chapter 1

1.1 The Definitions of Science Fiction

Science fiction literature with its technological wonders may seem like a product of the 20th century. However, the genre has existed long before its peak in the 1950s and “the term ‘Science-Fiction’ was first used by William Wilson in 1851.”⁴ In the first half of the 20th century, Hugo Gernsblak coined the term ‘scientifiction’ “but began to refer to as ‘science fiction’ by 1929.”⁵ This literary genre has gone through a long journey and its evolution was not always a straightforward path. It has a close relationship with Hellenistic “blessed island” stories,⁶ as well as with the fabulous voyages of the 17th century, the utopias of the 18th century⁷ and the dystopias of the 20th century. Even though science fiction has existed for several centuries it received its name fairly recently in the first half of the 20th century.⁸

Because science fiction has followed a convoluted path, there have been many concerns about the definition of this particular literary genre: what criteria should be applied and whether science fiction is even a genre on its own. It is not surprising that critics often differ in their definition of science fiction as a genre. Mark Bould and Sherryl Vint who present Rick Altman’s argument says: “that genres are not objects that exist in the world and are then studied by critics, but fluid and tenuous constructions made by the interaction of various claims and practices.”⁹ Bould and Vint further reference Altman in saying that:

they come into being ‘after the fact’, as writers, producers, fans, critics and other discursive and material actants select and emphasise certain elements of various texts and connect them to similar features in other texts One of the key forces in the creation of a genre is the cultural industries’ drive to reproduce in new cultural products those characteristics that they consider to

⁴ Mark Bould and Sherryl Vint, *The Routledge Concise History of Science Fiction* (Taylor & Francis Group, 2011), 1.

⁵ Brian Atteberry, “The magazine era: 1926 - 1960,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, eds. James Edward and Farah Mendlesohn (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 33.

⁶ Darko Suvin, “On the Poetics of the Science Fiction Genre,” *College English* 34, no. 3 (1972): 372, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/375141>.

⁷ Suvin, “On the Poetics of the Science Fiction Genre,” 372.

⁸ Bould and Vint, *The Routledge Concise History of Science Fiction*, 1.

⁹ Bould and Vint, *The Routledge Concise History of Science Fiction*, 2.

be responsible for the financial success of earlier cultural products, thus creating a market for similar products.¹⁰

But often, science fiction shared many similarities with other literary genres and therefore, it could not be classified strictly as science fiction.¹¹ The reader's perception of the text changes and "different features of the text will dominate in relation to the reader's social and historical position."¹² Science fiction writings sometimes do not have a clear outline for the plot¹³ and as Farah Mendlesohn mentions, "sf is quite happy to extract its plot structures from any available genre, and thus each individual book could potentially be identified with one of these genres rather than with sf."¹⁴

Darko Suvin looks into the definition of science fiction, for example, in his book *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* and in his article called "On the Poetics of the Science Fiction Genre." In this article, Suvin mentions that there can be found similarities with myth, fantasy, fairy tale and even pastoral stories, but science fiction differs diametrically in its social function and approach.¹⁵ In comparison to these stories, science fiction literature is not necessarily oriented towards the protagonist either negatively or positively and "the protagonists may succeed or fail in their objectives, but nothing in the basic contract with the reader, in the physical laws of their worlds, guarantees either."¹⁶

Because science fiction bears many similarities to other genres, Suvin defines science fiction as the literature of cognitive estrangement. This definition allows for the description of the literary tradition as "coherent throughout the ages and within itself, and yet distinct from non-fictional utopianism, from naturalistic literature, and from other non-

¹⁰ Bould and Vint, *The Routledge Concise History of Science Fiction*, 2.

¹¹ Farah Mendlesohn, "Introduction: reading science fiction," in *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, eds. James Edward and Farah Mendlesohn (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 2.

¹² Bould and Vint, *The Routledge Concise History of Science Fiction*, 1.

¹³ Mendlesohn, "Introduction: reading science fiction," 2.

¹⁴ Mendlesohn, "Introduction: reading science fiction," 3.

¹⁵ Suvin, "On the Poetics of the Science Fiction Genre," 372.

¹⁶ Suvin, "On the Poetics of the Science Fiction Genre," 378.

naturalistic fiction”¹⁷ and still distinguished from the other literary genres. In *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, in regards to science fiction as a genre, Suvin mentions that “the concept of sf cannot be extracted intuitively or empirically from the work called thus.”¹⁸ As Suvin points out in his essay “On the Poetics of Science Fiction Genre,” he borrowed this concept of estrangement from Russian Formalism’s notion of *остранение* – *ostranenie*, which was later elaborated on by Bertold Brecht, whose aim was to write plays for the scientific age.¹⁹ Brecht also introduced the notion of the estrangement effect.²⁰ The notion of cognitive estrangement can also be described as “a structuralist attempt to distinguish the genre of science fiction writing from other forms of fiction.”²¹ Science fiction as the literature of cognitive estrangement “emphasizes the rational scientific dimension of science fiction and rigorously excludes the kinds of flights of fancy associated with fantasy fiction.”²² The cognitive estrangement is the detachment from reality and “by Brechtian distancing or by the unfamiliarity of science fictional worlds, we are estranged from our assumptions about reality and forced to question them.”²³ Moreover, cognition is not about the “reflection *of* but also *on* reality”²⁴ and “implies a creative approach tending toward a dynamic transformation rather than toward a static mirroring of the author’s environment.”²⁵

According to Suvin, the key to cognitive estrangement is the presence of the ‘novum.’²⁶ The basic premise of the notion of the novum is that its “presence compels us to imagine a different way of conceiving our world.”²⁷ In his essay “On the Poetics of the

¹⁷ Suvin, “On the Poetics of the Science Fiction Genre,” 373.

¹⁸ Darko Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), 63, <https://archive.org/details/metamorphosesofsciencefiction/mode/2up>.

¹⁹ Suvin, “On the Poetics of the Science Fiction Genre,” 374.

²⁰ Ian Buchanan, *A Dictionary of Critical Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 90, <https://books.google.cz/books?id=VSb7tPeZzkC&lpg=PP1&pg=PA90#v=onepage&q=cognitive&f=false>.

²¹ Buchanan, *A Dictionary of Critical Theory*, 90.

²² Buchanan, *A Dictionary of Critical Theory*, 90.

²³ Perry Nodelman, “The Cognitive Estrangement of Darko Suvin,” *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly* 5, no. 4 (1981), doi:10.1353/chq.0.1851.

²⁴ Suvin, “On the Poetics of the Science Fiction Genre,” 377.

²⁵ Suvin, “On the Poetics of the Science Fiction Genre,” 377.

²⁶ Buchanan, *A Dictionary of Critical Theory*, 90.

²⁷ Buchanan, *A Dictionary of Critical Theory*, 90.

Science Fiction Genre,” Suvin points out that the conception of the novum lies in the natural human curiosity. According to him, at the beginnings of literature there was a strong concern about the “domestication of the amazing”²⁸ when “early tale-tellers tell about amazing voyages into the next valley where they found dog-headed people, also good rock salt which could be stolen or at the worst bartered for.”²⁹ In *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* Suvin mentions that “a novum of cognitive innovation is a totalizing phenomenon or relationship deviating from the author’s and implied reader’s norm of reality.”³⁰ He notes that “if the novum is the necessary condition of SF (differentiating it from naturalistic fiction), the validation of the novelty by scientifically methodical cognition into which the reader is inexorably led is the *sufficient* condition for sf.”³¹

In the world of science fiction, the novum can be anything: new technology, time travel, invasion from space or a groundbreaking scientific discovery that changes the way we understand the universe. This novum can have different degrees, as Suvin says it can be a minimum such as a new technological innovation or it can go as extreme as a new “setting (spatiotemporal locus), agent (main character or characters), and/or relations basically new and unknown in the author’s environment.”³² Suvin also draws a distinction between the true and the fake novum. He notes that the distinction is “not only a key to aesthetic quality in sf but also to its ethico-political liberating qualities.”³³ According to Suvin, “novum is fake unless it in some way participates in and partakes of what Bloch called the ‘front-line of historical process’ which for him – (and for me) as a Marxist means a process intimately concerned with strivings for a dealienation of men and their social life.”³⁴ He also adds that:

²⁸ Suvin, “On the Poetics of the Science Fiction Genre,” 373.

²⁹ Suvin, “On the Poetics of the Science Fiction Genre,” 373.

³⁰ Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, 64.

³¹ Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, 65–66.

³² Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, 64.

³³ Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, 82.

³⁴ Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, 81–82.

of brief and narrow relevance, particular rather than general (*kath'hekaston* rather than *kath'holon*, as Aristotle puts it in *Poetics*), they make for a superficial change rather than for a true novelty that deals with or makes for human relationships so qualitatively different from those dominant in the author's reality that they cannot be translated back to them merely by a change of costumes.³⁵

Suvin points out that, for example, “most novels by Asimov can be returned to their detective-story model by a slightly more complex system of substitutions, by which, for example, Second Foundation came from Poe's Purloined Letter.”³⁶ In regards to the distinction between science fiction and other similar genres like fantasy, Suvin mentions that Robert M. Philmus made a distinction between these genres saying “that naturalistic fiction does not require scientific explanation, fantasy does not allow it, and sf both requires and allows it.”³⁷ In conclusion, Suvin says that “science is the encompassing horizon of sf.”³⁸

To present other definitions of science fiction, Mendlesohn posits that “if sf does have an immediately recognizable narrative it is centred on what has been termed the ‘sense of wonder’”³⁹ and adds that “the sense of wonder is the emotional heart of science fiction.”⁴⁰ Mendlesohn further argues that “science fiction is less a genre than an ongoing discussion.”⁴¹ The reader's expectation of the certain text is governed by how the happening in the story “is described and by the critical tools with which the reader is expected to approach the text.”⁴² Due to science fiction's diversity and kinship with other literary genres, it can be very challenging to compile a science fiction text throughout history because of how dramatically it has changed since its beginnings, which some place in Hellenistic Greece and some in the 17th century. There is a popular idea that science fiction literature is trying to predict the future, which is incorrect because what it is:

³⁵ Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, 82.

³⁶ Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, 82.

³⁷ Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, 65.

³⁸ Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, 67.

³⁹ Mendlesohn, “Introduction: reading science fiction,” 3.

⁴⁰ Mendlesohn, “Introduction: reading science fiction,” 3.

⁴¹ Mendlesohn, “Introduction: reading science fiction,” 1.

⁴² Mendlesohn, “Introduction: reading science fiction,” 1.

really good at is not the future but the present— taking an aspect of it that troubles or is dangerous, and extending and extrapolating that aspect into something that allows the people of that time to see what they are doing from a different angle and from a different place. It’s cautionary.⁴³

1.2 The Development of Science Fiction

The following section will be mapping the development of science fiction from its beginnings to the 1950s.

1.2.1 Science Fiction in the 17th and the 18th Century

Themes similar to science fiction literature as we know it today appeared first in antiquity and as Suvin pointed out,⁴⁴ science fiction shares many features with the Greek and Hellenistic “blessed island” stories. Since the dawn of times, unknown places have always provoked the imagination of men and this “implies a curiosity about the unknown beyond the next mountain range (sea, ocean, solar system . . .), where the thrill of knowledge joined the thrill of adventure.”⁴⁵ According to Marshal P. Tymn, the first piece that can be considered early science fiction was written by Lucian in the 2nd century Greece.⁴⁶

According to other views, the first stories that are regarded as the true origins of science fiction can be traced back to the 17th century. These stories written in the 17th century were not yet called science fiction. Brian Stableford mentions that “most subsequent utopian fantasies took scientific and technological advancement into account, but relegated it to a minor role while matters of social, religious and political reform remained centre stage.”⁴⁷ The usual form of utopian fantasy, which was a genre suitable for science fiction speculation,

⁴³ Neil Gaiman, “Introduction,” in *Fahrenheit 451*, Ray Bradbury (New York: Simon&Schuster Paperbacks, 2012), 8.

⁴⁴ Suvin, “On the Poetics of the Science Fiction Genre,” 372.

⁴⁵ Suvin, “On the Poetics of the Science Fiction Genre,” 373.

⁴⁶ Marshall B. Tymn, “Science Fiction: A Brief History and Review of Criticism,” *American Studies International* 23, no. 1 (1985): 41, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41278745>.

⁴⁷ Brian Stableford, “Science Fiction Before the Genre,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, eds. James Edward and Farah Mendlesohn (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 15.

was the so-called imaginary voyage.⁴⁸ One of the biggest influences on speculative fiction was the Copernican revolution, which introduced the heliocentric model thus significantly changing the way people thought about the universe.

The first pioneers of this new wave of literature were Francis Bacon with his *New Atlantis* and Johannes Kepler, who incorporated the Copernican theory into his *Somnium (A Dream, 1634)*. Among those who wrote about lunar voyages were, for example, Francis Godwin (*The Man in the Moone, 1638*) or John Wilkins (*The Discovery of a World in the Moone, 1638*).⁴⁹ Even though the lunar voyages were still very popular, a few other authors were exploring the possibility of an extraterrestrial voyage. The first one who introduced a wide-ranging cosmic voyage was Athanasius Kircher in his work *Itinerarium Exstaticum (Ecstatic Journey, 1656)*.

Writers in the 17th and 18th century used the imaginary voyage form as “scathing satirical fantasies,”⁵⁰ which allowed them to indirectly criticize society or authorities. One of the well-known predecessors of science fiction is *Gulliver’s Travels* by Jonathan Swift. However, according to Stableford, *Gulliver’s Travels* is more considered to be anti science fiction because its “reliance on similar motifs and narrative strategies has always resulted in its subsumption within the genre whose ambitions it opposes.”⁵¹

1.2.2 Science Fiction of the 19th Century

The 19th century was a time when science fiction literature started to focus on science and new inventions of that time rather than on imaginary voyages and satire. Science fiction of the 19th century is characterized by vitality and the continual impetus for change.⁵² At the

⁴⁸ Stableford, “Science Fiction Before the Genre,” 15.

⁴⁹ Stableford, “Science Fiction Before the Genre,” 15–16.

⁵⁰ Stableford, “Science Fiction Before the Genre,” 15.

⁵¹ Stableford, “Science Fiction Before the Genre,” 15.

⁵² Martin Willis, *Mesmerists, Monsters, and Machines: Science Fiction the Cultures of Science in the Nineteenth Century* (Kent: The Kent State University Press, 2006), 2, https://books.google.cz/books?hl=en&lr=&id=jfkYX1U10_oC&oi=fnd&pg=PP9&dq=19th+century+science+fiction&ots=OEvaNhL9xa&sig=z3af7N4gtPwBFK0ngSqEPU7Lils&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=19th%20century%20science%20fiction&f=false.

beginning of the 19th century writers started to experiment with the science fiction narrative method. There was a call to solve a problem that was emerging in the 18th century. The tales were usually “infected by a chronic frivolity that increased as the travels extended into regions inaccessible to ships and pedestrians”⁵³ and “literary dreams, even at their most gravely allegorical, were by definition mere phantoms of the imagination, demolished by reawakening.”⁵⁴ Science fiction did not have a fixed narrative frame that would define it as a genre. The most prominent figures to tackle this problem were Mary Shelley, Edgar Allan Poe, Jules Verne and H. G. Wells.

Science fiction of the 19th century emerged from gothic romances of science.⁵⁵ Shelley’s *Frankenstein* published in 1818 was an ambitious step in the evolution of the genre. Until then writers mostly focused on voyages but Shelley introduced a new approach. She focused on contemporary science and implemented galvanic electricity and vivisection⁵⁶ into the story. These were newly discovered technologies of the early 19th century. It showed that the story does not have to be set in a faraway land to focus on science.

Poe’s writing can be classified as science fiction very loosely as he is mainly known as a writer of horror stories.⁵⁷ Among his additions to the science fiction literature is a poem called “Sonnet – To Science,” a short story called “The Unparalleled Adventure of One Hans Pfaall,” and the essay “Eureka,” which deals with the new space discoveries through astronomical telescopes.⁵⁸ Even though Poe was not predominantly a writer of science fiction he had an indisputable influence on the next generations of science fiction writers, mainly in Europe due to the translations to French by Charles Baudelaire.

⁵³ Stableford, “Science Fiction Before the Genre,” 18.

⁵⁴ Stableford, “Science Fiction Before the Genre,” 18.

⁵⁵ Willis, *Mesmerists, Monsters, and Machines*, 2.

⁵⁶ Bruce Sterling, “Science Fiction,” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., accessed June 28, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/art/science-fiction/The-19th-and-early-20th-centuries>.

⁵⁷ Bould and Vint, *The Routledge Concise History of Science Fiction*, 7.

⁵⁸ Stableford, “Science Fiction Before the Genre,” 18.

Poe's work influenced Verne, "whose writings laid much of the foundation of modern science fiction."⁵⁹ Verne used the tradition of a voyage. This voyage tradition can be seen in his novels like *Voyage au centre de la terre* (*Journey to the Centre of the Earth*, 1863) and *Vingt mille lieues sous les 20 mers* (*Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Seas*, 1870), yet like Shelley, he also introduced new technologies and scientific discoveries to his writings and some of his depictions may be perceived as prophetic. He "made the most convincing nineteenth century attempt to import a measure of verisimilitude into an extraterrestrial voyage in *De la terre à la lune* (*From the Earth to the Moon*, 1865)."⁶⁰ Verne's approach to writing was different from Poe's – Poe was experiencing the sublime through horror/terror or control but Verne through meticulous planning and mapping and therefore, the experience of the sublime remained safe.⁶¹

With the rising popularity of magazines and periodicals, many authors seized the opportunity and published their work there, one of them being Wells. Science fiction at the end of the 19th century was closely linked with scientific journalism.⁶² Wells himself had a background in science as he was studying biology at a university.⁶³ In 1894, Wells started publishing his journalistic essays.⁶⁴ He popularized scientific discoveries and just as Shelley and Verne before him, he was implementing these discoveries into his stories. Wells was influenced by Poe and he "replicated Poe's determination to explore the utility of a whole range of narrative frameworks."⁶⁵ Wells was aware of the concept of "literary dreams being crushed by reawakening" and he knew it was necessary to replace "dreams as a means of

⁵⁹ Arthur B. Evans, "Jules Verne," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., accessed August 9, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jules-Verne>.

⁶⁰ Stableford, "Science Fiction Before the Genre," 20.

⁶¹ Bould and Vint, *The Routledge Concise History of Science Fiction*, 10.

⁶² Atteberry, "The magazine era: 1926 – 1960," 34.

⁶³ Norman Cornthwaite Nicholson, "H. G. Wells," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., accessed June 28, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/H-G-Wells>.

⁶⁴ Simon J. James, "Science Journals: The worlds of H. G. Wells," *Nature*, Springer Nature Limited, accessed June 28, 2021, <https://www.nature.com/articles/537162a>.

⁶⁵ Stableford, "Science Fiction Before the Genre," 24.

exploring possible futures.”⁶⁶ Seed points out that Wells’ narrative frameworks are “designed to produce verisimilitude and offset the fabulous nature of his ‘fantastic romances,’”⁶⁷ but he also adds that “their actual effect can be far more complex than this would suggest.”⁶⁸ Wells’ most famous novel *The Time Machine* (1895) was inspired by C. H. Hinton’s collected articles published *Scientific Romances* in 1884 and these articles “popularized the idea of time as a ‘fourth dimension.’”⁶⁹ This was an innovative turn, especially when it came to narrative devices because everything written before was “handicapped by its reliance on obsolete narrative frameworks.”⁷⁰ The invention of the time machine opened new possibilities for the exploration of time and space and due to Wells’ powerful narrative energy “he transformed the methodology of speculative fiction, with almost instantaneous effect.”⁷¹

1.2.3 The Magazine Era

In the 20th century, science fiction literature became more diverse. One of the biggest impacts on the development of the genre in the 20th century was WWI. This unprecedented event left an impact on people and the newly emerged themes of scientific stories represented a response to the events. There was a surge of stories discussing the potential end of life on Earth.

According to Stableford, speculative fiction in the US was developing differently from the speculative fiction in Europe. The US entered WWI later and the war was also taking place in Europe therefore, there was less significant disruption of the science fiction scene and “even more important, the effect of the war on American attitudes to technological progress was much less caustic.”⁷²

⁶⁶ Stableford, “Science Fiction Before the Genre,” 24.

⁶⁷ David Seed, “Framing the Reader in Early Science Fiction,” *Style* 47, no. 2 (2013): 139, accessed June 28, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5325/style.47.2.137>.

⁶⁸ Seed, “Framing the Reader in Early Science Fiction,” 139.

⁶⁹ Stableford, “Science Fiction Before the Genre,” 24.

⁷⁰ Stableford, “Science Fiction Before the Genre,” 24.

⁷¹ Stableford, “Science Fiction Before the Genre,” 25.

⁷² Stableford, “Science Fiction Before the Genre,” 28.

The popularity of periodicals was on the rise in the US as well as in Europe. The invention of wood pulp facilitated the immense growth of the magazine scene. Though pulp magazines first appeared in 1886,⁷³ in the 1920s there was a wide range of them⁷⁴ and science fiction pulps soon enjoyed great success and quick growth, which turned them into a moderately successful publishing industry.⁷⁵ Pulp magazines had many subgenres, and their vibrant covers were often printed on higher quality paper because pulp did not handle ink well.⁷⁶ Because it was cheap to produce a pulp magazine, they flooded the market but “most of the fiction was stylistically weak, awkwardly constructed and marked by a naive ‘gee whiz’ attitude toward its gadgets and settings.”⁷⁷ The heroes were stereotyped and most of these stories followed the same tropes creating stock stories,⁷⁸ but they were easy to read and offered escapism especially during the Great Depression era.⁷⁹

In this magazine era, magazines were the chief medium for the distribution of the science fiction literature. The first magazine dedicated to science fiction was Gernsback’s *Amazing Stories* first published in 1926.⁸⁰ Gernsback was the first one who limited the stories to scientific explorations and outer space adventures and he also attempted to define the science fiction genre.⁸¹ He believed that this type of literature could enhance actual science as a scientist or an engineer could be inspired by an idea they had previously read about.⁸² *Astounding Stories* printed stories from new authors but also stories by renowned authors like Wells or Verne, thus laying the foundations for the history of science fiction. As mentioned

⁷³ Adam Roberts, *The History of Science Fiction* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 174.

⁷⁴ Roberts, *The History of Science Fiction*, 174.

⁷⁵ Carl Freedman, *Critical Theory and Science Fiction* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2000), 89, <https://books.google.cz/books?id=s1iF6n6kT-UC&lpg=PP1&dq=narrative%20framework%2019th%20century%20science%20fiction&lr&pg=PR4#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

⁷⁶ *PULP FICTION: The Golden Age of Sci Fi, Fantasy and Adventure*, directed by Elliott Haimoff (Global Science Productions, 2009).

⁷⁷ Atteberry, “The magazine era: 1926 – 1960,” 35.

⁷⁸ Atteberry, “The magazine era: 1926 – 1960,” 36.

⁷⁹ *PULP FICTION: The Golden Age of Sci Fi, Fantasy and Adventure*.

⁸⁰ Freedman, *Critical Theory*, 14.

⁸¹ Atteberry, “The magazine era: 1926 – 1960,” 32.

⁸² Paul A. Carter, *The Creation of Tomorrow: Fifty Years of Magazine Science Fiction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 5, https://archive.org/details/creationoftomorr0000cart_k2z1.

earlier, Gernsback also coined the term ‘scientifiction,’ which was replaced by the term ‘science fiction’ a decade later.⁸³

Writers started to combine science fiction with other literary genres because “the best way to sneak in scientific content was to offer readers the traditional pleasures of popular fiction.”⁸⁴ This approach successfully solved the problem with the narrative frame that the previous generations of science fiction writers were facing. It was not unusual for science fiction magazines to regularly feature columns dedicated to actual science facts.⁸⁵ *Amazing Stories* and *Astounding Stories* were different from the pulp magazines and quickly became popular among their readers. When John W. Campbell became an editor of *Astounding Stories*, the era called The Golden Age of Science fiction started. He built the magazine on the same principle as Gernsback built *Amazing Stories*. Apart from the stories, the science fiction magazines also included columns, advertisements, and fan mail. There were the first attempts to create a critical theory that would describe science fiction.⁸⁶ The relationship between writers and fans was crucial because “readers and writers of sf also began to correspond directly with one another and to meet in person.”⁸⁷ There could be seen a drastic shift and many fan groups dedicated to science fiction emerged. The one well-known group was called The Futurians, which included a number of influential writers, such as Isaac Asimov, Frederick Pohl, Cyril M. Kornbluth or Judith Merril. The Futurians mainly “focused on creating forward-looking science fiction.”⁸⁸ Asimov and Merril later became critics, helping writers navigate in the right direction.⁸⁹ Asimov in collaboration with Campbell also came up with the famous three laws of robotics defining what a robot cannot do. Atteberry concluded

⁸³ David Langford and Peter Nicholls, “Scientifiction,” *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, SFE Ltd., accessed June 28, 2021, <http://www.sf-encyclopedia.com/entry/scientifiction>.

⁸⁴ Atteberry, “The magazine era: 1926 – 1960,” 33.

⁸⁵ Atteberry, “The magazine era: 1926 – 1960,” 34.

⁸⁶ Atteberry, “The magazine era: 1926 – 1960,” 37.

⁸⁷ Atteberry, “The magazine era: 1926 – 1960,” 38.

⁸⁸ “Frederik Pohl,” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., accessed June 28, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Frederik-Pohl#ref1086012>.

⁸⁹ Atteberry, “The magazine era: 1926 – 1960,” 38.

that writers and fans managed to transform science fiction “into something more sophisticated than its pulp beginnings.”⁹⁰

1.2.4 The Golden Age of Science Fiction in the US: the 1950s

The 1950s was a defining era for science fiction, seeing “an unprecedented kind of cultural prominence for the genre.”⁹¹ In the 1940s, Campbell mentioned that “to most people, sf seemed lurid, fantastic, and nonsensical trash”⁹² and he “talked about a marked change in generic emphasis from Pulp sf to a new form of the literature.”⁹³ Luckily, the magazine era was perfect for the development Campbell wished for. Magazines and periodicals allowed the field to develop and change rapidly. New ideas and themes were introduced at a faster pace than would happen if the stories were published as books. In 1953 science fiction magazines were reaching their peak.⁹⁴ Many writers started to experiment with new narrative methods, and they were exploring their personal voices and visions.⁹⁵

By the 1950s science fiction stories were reaching a broader audience and the scene suddenly started to bloom. It was blooming not only in the field of literature but also in film and television.⁹⁶ A competition was growing and *Astounding Stories* was no longer the only science fiction magazine. Many new science fiction magazines appeared, such as *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* founded in 1949, *Galaxy Science Fiction* from 1950 or *If*. These newly founded magazines allowed new writers to explore their narrative voice. *Astounding Stories* would not publish their stories⁹⁷ because this magazine was committed to “hard sf aesthetic.”⁹⁸ In the 1950s some publishers started to publish science fiction writers

⁹⁰ Atteberry, “The magazine era: 1926 – 1960,” 38.

⁹¹ Roberts, *The History of Science Fiction*, 195.

⁹² Roberts, *History of Science Fiction*, 195.

⁹³ Roberts, *History of Science Fiction*, 195.

⁹⁴ Bould and Vint, *The Routledge Concise History of Science Fiction*, 83.

⁹⁵ Atteberry, “The magazine era: 1926 – 1960,” 41.

⁹⁶ Rob Latham, “Fiction, 1950 – 1963,” in *The Routledge Companion to Science Fiction*, eds. Mark Bould, Andrew M. Butler, Adam Roberts and Sherryl Vint (Milton: Routledge, 2009), 80.

⁹⁷ Atteberry, “The magazine era: 1926 – 1960,” 41.

⁹⁸ Latham, “Fiction, 1950 – 1963,” 81.

who made their name in one of the magazines.⁹⁹ Some of the stories that were once published in magazines were now available to purchase anytime, “giving readers access not only to current work but also to the cream of the pulp archive.”¹⁰⁰

Many writers who are nowadays part of the canon of science fiction started their careers in some of the magazines. Writing for a pulp magazine was a shrewd way to perfect one’s writing because the stories had to be produced at a quick pace. H. L. Gold, the founder of *Galaxy Science Fiction*, was responsible for publishing Pohl and Kornbluth’s *Space Merchants* and a short story titled “The Fireman” by Bradbury which was later published as *Fahrenheit 451*. Science fiction underwent a drastic change and “by the end of the 1950s the best magazine sf was comparable to fiction published in more traditional literary venues and readers were already getting a taste of the experiments that were to characterize the next decade’s New Wave.”¹⁰¹

By the end of the 1950s, the magazine era was on the decline. This was mainly because the American News Service, the distributor, was declared a monopoly. As a result, 20 magazines were discontinued, only six¹⁰² survived and the “paperback market was growing in importance.”¹⁰³ The main problem was that magazines always had their readers despite the content.¹⁰⁴ The decline of science fiction magazines caused that the stories were more frequently published in a book format. This was the beginning of a new era referred to as the New Wave.

⁹⁹ Latham, “Fiction, 1950 – 1963,” 81.

¹⁰⁰ Latham, “Fiction, 1950 – 1963,” 82.

¹⁰¹ Atteberry, “The magazine era: 1926 – 1960,” 44.

¹⁰² Latham, “Fiction, 1950 – 1963,” 80.

¹⁰³ Bould and Vint, *The Routledge Concise History of Science Fiction*, 83.

¹⁰⁴ Atteberry, “The magazine era: 1926 – 1960,” 46.

2. Chapter 2

2.1 The Definitions of Dystopia

Dystopian fiction is a fairly new literary genre. It evolved from utopian fiction where writers imagined the ideal world. Dystopian writing can be characterized as:

an imaginary state or civilization in which true happiness is impossible. Dystopias are usually caricatures of the writer's own society, set in a near future in which the negative qualities the writer perceives in the present are permitted to run amok, so that the representation he creates exemplifies the consequences of a current set of circumstances run out to their logical conclusion.¹⁰⁵

Dystopia as a genre lies somewhere between utopia and anti utopia negotiating “the continuum between the Party of Utopia and the Party of Anti-Utopia”¹⁰⁶ and it “negotiate[s] the social terrain of Utopia and Anti-Utopia in a less stable and more contentious fashion than many of their eutopian and anti-utopian counterparts.”¹⁰⁷ Dystopias take “qualities of both subgenres”¹⁰⁸ and therefore, “the typical dystopian text is an exercise in a politically charged form of hybrid textuality.”¹⁰⁹

Utopias are widely criticized for their “lack of dramatic conflict” and uneventful perfectionism.¹¹⁰ Unlike utopia or anti utopia, dystopia describes a society where “evil, or negative social and political developments, have the upper hand”¹¹¹ and therefore, there is a lot of potential for a dramatic conflict. Gregory Claeys points out that in the work of writers like John Talmon and others, the utopian elements are in fact dystopian because “the desire to create a much improved society in which human behaviour was dramatically superior to the norm implies an intrinsic drift towards punitive methods of controlling behaviour which

¹⁰⁵ Harold Bloom, “Summary and Analysis,” in *Bloom's Guides: Fahrenheit 451*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 2007), 16.

¹⁰⁶ Tom Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia* (Boulder: Westfield, 2000), xiii.

¹⁰⁷ Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia*, 147.

¹⁰⁸ Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia*, 147.

¹⁰⁹ Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia*, 147.

¹¹⁰ Sterling, “Science Fiction.”

¹¹¹ Gregory Claeys, “The Origins of Dystopia: Wells, Huxley and Orwell,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, ed. Gregory Claeys (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 107.

inexorably results in some form of police state.”¹¹² From the early period, dystopia has offered “challenging cognitive maps of the historical situation by way of imaginary societies that are even worse than those that lie outside their author’s and reader’s doors.”¹¹³ Dystopias have a unique “ability to reflect upon the causes of social and ecological evil as systemic.”¹¹⁴ Tom Moylan points out that “crucial to dystopia’s vision in all its manifestations is this ability to register the impact of an unseen and unexamined social system on the everyday lives of everyday people.”¹¹⁵

Moylan points out that:

Baccolini’s studies of the dystopian form help to explain how the sf properties of cognitive estrangement and a textual novum come into play in significant dystopian texts as the narrative progresses. The cognitive estrangement in dystopian fiction is characterized by its immediacy and the normality of the location.¹¹⁶

The dystopian text usually already begins in the hostile new world, no trip nor dream was needed to get there and all the protagonists of the story are already there.¹¹⁷ Dystopian narrative strategies have “precisely that capacity for narrative that creates the possibility for social critique and utopian anticipation in the dystopian text.”¹¹⁸ Moylan summarizing Raffaella Baccolini’s argument notes that the “counter-narrative develops as the ‘dystopian citizen’ moves from apparent contentment into an experience of alienation that is followed by growing awareness and then action that leads to a climatic event that does or does not challenge or change the society.”¹¹⁹ The counter-narrative that Baccolini described in dystopian fiction is a narrative that tells the story of the protagonist whereas the main narrative is the oppressive government. This event may or may not overthrow the evil regime and bring about subsequent change in the society. Referring to Baccolini, Moylan points out

¹¹² Claeys, “The Origins of Dystopia: Wells, Huxley and Orwell,” 108.

¹¹³ Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia*, xi.

¹¹⁴ Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia*, xii.

¹¹⁵ Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia*, xiii.

¹¹⁶ Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia*, 150.

¹¹⁷ Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia*, 148.

¹¹⁸ Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia*, 147.

¹¹⁹ Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia*, 148.

that “despite the absence of the eutopian plot of dislocation, education, and return of a visitor, dystopia generates its own didactic account in the critical encounter that ensues as the citizen confronts, or is confronted by, the contradictions of the society that is present on the very first page.”¹²⁰

2.2 Dystopia and Science Fiction in the 1950s

In the 1950s in the US, more dystopian features began to appear in science fiction texts. According to Moylan, “a clear dystopian tendency developed within science fiction, and this resulted in the ‘new maps of hell,’ as Kingsley Amis called them, that appeared after World War II and continue in the sf of recent years.”¹²¹ Sometimes, it can be extremely difficult to place a novel within the genre because it can manifest both dystopian and science fiction elements, but the distribution of these elements may differ. Moylan summarizing Suvin says that “the potential of a dystopian text thereby rests in the capacity of its novum to ‘reconcile the principle of hope and the principle of reality’ by resisting mythological/ideological closure and opening towards”¹²² what Suvin describes as a “more mature polyphony envisaging different possibilities for different agents and circumstances, and thus leaving formal closure cognitively open-ended, regardless of whether at the end of the novel the positive values be victorious or defeated.”¹²³ Dystopian novels are usually characterised by the notion of fear of disappointment or a terrible disaster.¹²⁴

Since the age of pulp magazines, science fiction has been said to offer escapism,¹²⁵ but as Moylan points out, this escapism “does not necessarily mean a debilitating escape *from* reality because it can also lead to an empowering escape *to* a very different way of thinking

¹²⁰ Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia*, 148.

¹²¹ Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia*, 121–122.

¹²² Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia*, 151.

¹²³ Darko Suvin, *Positions and Presuppositions in Science Fiction* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1988), 83.

¹²⁴ Brian M. Stableford, “Dystopias,” *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, SFE Ltd., accessed June 28, 2021, <http://www.sf-encyclopedia.com/entry/dystopias>.

¹²⁵ *PULP FICTION: The Golden Age of Sci Fi, Fantasy and Adventure*.

about, and possibly of being in, the world.”¹²⁶ Science fiction writers achieve a better world by educating other people about science, and by a presentation of alternate possibilities.¹²⁷ The theme of extraterrestrial travel and “the state of dynamism itself – the expansion of the human race along with the expansion of its horizons and potentials – is itself a potentially utopian state.”¹²⁸

The expansion of horizons and potentials can also be seen as technological advancement. Edward James argues that the technological advances which are generally viewed as dystopian can also be, in a different light, viewed as utopian: “universal telepathy might bring mental harmony; it might bring political control and the end of privacy. Immortality might extend the human propensity for growth and development; it might bring boredom, mental instability or dangerous over-population.”¹²⁹

The 1950s were the defining years for both science fiction and dystopia as these two genres supported each other. It can be noted, during the 1950s, some texts were heavily oriented towards antiutopian pessimism such as the works of George Orwell who “regarded his work as a utopian attack on what he saw as anti-utopian historical tendencies.”¹³⁰ The authors of the 1950s were exploring the possibilities of unrestricted technological and commercial development and new exploitation and sexual exploration, notably in *The Space Merchants*, where Pohl and Kornbluth were criticizing the exploitation of resources that lead to the destruction of the environment. As Moylan says, some of the science fiction novels of the 1950s, or novels that were on the edges of the genre, were almost distinctly dystopian.¹³¹

In regards to science fiction and dystopia, utopian elements usually appear as an element of hope in the world of despair and therefore, according to Moylan:

¹²⁶ Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia*, xvii.

¹²⁷ Edward James, “Utopias and anti-utopias,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, eds. James Edward and Farah Mendlesohn (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 222.

¹²⁸ James, “Utopias and anti-utopias,” 226.

¹²⁹ James, “Utopias and anti-utopias,” 228.

¹³⁰ Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia*, 162.

¹³¹ Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia*, 168.

a dystopian text can be seen as utopian in tendency if in its portrayal of the 'bad place' it suggests (even if indirectly) or at least stimulates the potential for an effective challenge and possibly change by virtue of human efforts (what Raymond Williams understood as 'willed transformation').¹³²

Moylan referencing George Woodcock says that even Orwell and Huxley give some kind of hope because "although they acknowledge defeat in the present, they also look beyond it to the possibility of an eventual triumph for humanity."¹³³

There are also evident socio-economic impacts that undeniably influenced the picture of both genres in the 1950s. As mentioned before, the world saw the atrocities of both world wars with their technological advances which in this case were not used to enhance life but to ultimately destroy it. The writers in this era reflected on the destructive force of these newly created weapons but also on the rise of consumer culture, new media, and McCarthyism in the US. Some of the science fiction texts, like *The Space Merchants*, that were critical towards capitalism and consumerism, escaped the sharp eye of censors because the censors, such as the House Un-American Activities Committee, Joseph McCarthy, and the Roman Catholic Church didn't take science fiction seriously and they targeted more mainstream content like films or music.¹³⁴ Moylan paraphrasing Mark L. Hillegas mentions that the social causes that lead to the creation of the terrifying texts can be among others "dictatorships, welfare states, planned economies, and all manner of bureaucracies' and the regimes of 'Hitler, Stalin, or Roosevelt.'"¹³⁵ The world was also submerged in the Cold War, which diametrically differed from the two world wars. The USSR and the US were fighting over superiority in the world and the colonisation of the outer space.

As has been pointed out before, one of the themes that appear in dystopian and science fiction novels in the 1950s is the theme of technology being misused. If the technological advance is misused, it can be a very effective way to control and oppress a

¹³² Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia*, 156.

¹³³ Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia*, 124.

¹³⁴ Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia*, 169.

¹³⁵ Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia*, 126.

certain group of people. This fear of technological abuse started to appear in the era of pulp magazines¹³⁶ and gained a lot of popularity in later years. Many science fiction novels with dystopian features follow the same formula: technology is used to suppress a group of people; the ruling elite slows technological development, but people rise against their oppressors and in the end overthrow the regime.¹³⁷ The following section will be looking more closely at particular features of dystopia that characterize this formula of dystopia.

2.3 The Features of Dystopia in the 1950s

Dystopian writings differ from other forms of writings in many ways but mostly by their characteristic depiction of society and the forms of oppression and control. The narrative usually begins already in a bleak, dystopian world where the protagonist questions their place within the society and as was already pointed out by Moylan, “crucial to dystopia’s vision in all its manifestations is this ability to register the impact of an unseen and unexamined social system on the everyday lives of everyday people.”¹³⁸

2.3.1 The Government and Control

One of the most recognizable features of dystopia in the 1950s is the specific administration or government. What we can see in dystopias is usually a government that is controlling in all spheres of life.¹³⁹ The Government is an essential part of the everyday life of any state on Earth and it does not matter whether the society is democratic or autocratic. The Government is an authority that gives a certain frame and system to societies. However, autocratic governments where power is held by an individual or a very specific group of people are failing the people to push through their own interests. This type of government executes strict discipline which “is employed on all levels of society as the most crucial tool

¹³⁶ Stableford, “Dystopias.”

¹³⁷ Stableford, “Dystopias.”

¹³⁸ Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia*, xiii.

¹³⁹ Julia Gerhard, “Control and Resistance in the Dystopian Novel: A Comparative Analysis” (Master’s Thesis, California State University, 2012), 23.

to establish supreme control.”¹⁴⁰ Therefore, the government aims to control every aspect of the everyday life of their people to give them as little freedom as possible. We see whole continents controlled by the government such as in K.F. Crossen’s *Year of Consent* published in 1954 where the government “maintains itself by a massive system of cameras, bugs and registration laws.”¹⁴¹ This novel uses monitoring in the same way as Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* which is using control through manipulation.¹⁴²

Control through manipulation can be observed in many governments throughout history. The state apparatuses that are often described in dystopian fiction are usually inspired by apparatuses from real life. To describe the structure of such apparatuses there can be used Louis Althusser’s interpretations. According to Althusser, there can be distinguished two types of state apparati: Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) and Repressive State Apparatus (RAS).¹⁴³ It can be seen that many dystopian political systems are indeed based on existing ideologies, however, the crucial difference is the use of the ideology. The Ideological State Apparatus functions on the basis of ideology whereas the Repressive State Apparatus functions on the basis of violence, both physical and psychological, and the ideology is secondary. In dystopias, both apparati can be observed because the Repressive State Apparatus takes the form of the hard force, such as the police or the army whereas the Ideological State Apparatus is characterized by soft power which includes schools, families and culture.¹⁴⁴ Dystopian fiction mostly uses the ISA because it “enable[s] the state to maintain its power, force a loss of identity among individuals, and strip subjects of the knowledge and ability they would need to easily go against the state.”¹⁴⁵ We can see this in

¹⁴⁰ Gerhard, “Control and Resistance in the Dystopian Novel: A Comparative Analysis,” 23.

¹⁴¹ Seed, *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*, 77.

¹⁴² Seed, *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*, 78.

¹⁴³ Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards and Investigation,” in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 80, <https://mforbes.sites.gettysburg.edu/cims226/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Week-3b-Louis-Althusser.pdf>.

¹⁴⁴ Kory Wise, “Ideological State Apparatuses in Dystopian Novels,” *Digital Literature Review* 6 (January): 2, doi.org/10.33043/DLR.6.0.8-19.

¹⁴⁵ Wise, “Ideological State Apparatuses in Dystopian Novels,” 2.

Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, where the government executes both apparatuses, more specifically in the form of newspeak and doublethink. Winston Smith experiences the consequences of doublethink himself. Seed says that "through such a process state ideology can become totally internalized, which is what has happened in Smith's case."¹⁴⁶

2.3.2 Censorship and Propaganda

Censorship and propaganda play a vital role in dystopias because as Candice L. Mancini says, *Fahrenheit 451* is one of those post-war dystopias "that denies its past; it has no records of the past events, no books, no documents, and as a result, no framework for personal memory."¹⁴⁷ Censorship is defined as "the changing or the suppression or prohibition of speech or writing that is deemed subversive of the common good."¹⁴⁸ It allows the governments to control their people and spread thoughts and ideas among the masses. The primary goal of censorship is to eliminate the texts and thoughts that may be inconvenient for the government. As Mancini says, in *Fahrenheit 451*, the government strives to create a stable society and they use the "anti-intellectual argument that reading is conducive to critical thinking, and thinking creates unrest and disorder – in other words, psychological and social instability."¹⁴⁹

This instability is perfect for the spread of the propaganda. The desired outcome of censorship and propaganda is to make a large enough group of people believe in the official narrative and give them no reason to question it. One of the most powerful and effective ways how to secure people's favour is to make people accomplices of the government. What it does is allowing "the victims to essentially become their repressors."¹⁵⁰ Therefore, people themselves will be then spreading the propaganda without the government's effort.

¹⁴⁶ Seed, *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*, 70.

¹⁴⁷ Candice L. Mancini, ed., *Censorship in Ray Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451* (Farmington Hills: Greenhaven Press, 2011), 50,

<https://books.google.com/books?id=vn9mDwAAQBAJ&lpq=PP1&pg=PA3#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

¹⁴⁸ George Anastaplo, "Censorship," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., accessed June 28, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/censorship>.

¹⁴⁹ Mancini, *Censorship in Ray Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451*, 48.

¹⁵⁰ Megan Burbage, "Modes of Control in Dystopian Fiction," *Medium*, accessed June 28, 2021, <https://medium.com/@meganxburbage/modes-of-control-in-dystopian-fiction-2caf645e44ee>.

One of the threats to the establishment is the generation of people who knew the world before the oppression. This group of people can be resilient to the official propaganda and hence present a threat to the system. Therefore, children and people already born into the system present a vital tool for the maintenance of the system. Children can be depicted as being raised by the state and “government-created propagandistic teachings for the children, and the complete alienation of these latter from their natural parents guarantee future model citizens who are industrious and, at the same time, patriotic and tractable.”¹⁵¹ These people influenced deeply by the system do not know the world before and therefore, the reality of omnipresent control is their normal reality. This control over people “is achieved through the manipulation of the human mind, materialized in ideological indoctrination, to ensure people’s total acceptance of the ruling ideology and total compliance to the state’s mandates.”¹⁵²

This is also where censorship becomes important. Censorship helps the government to control the information that is spread among the citizens. Dystopian societies are usually depicted as alienated from the outside world or at least being cut from the information about the outside world. Hence, censorship is there to filter the unwanted information that could contradict the official narrative and create a potential collapse of the system.

2.3.3 Surveillance

As mentioned above in the section about government and control, to execute the power and control over whether people follow the orders, there must be a form of surveillance. Surveillance as a means of control is important because “docile bodies have to be observed and monitored to make sure that they follow the rules, complete their social functions and do not dare to oppose the régime.”¹⁵³ Orders without surveillance and potential punishment would potentially endanger the system. For writers of dystopian science fiction,

¹⁵¹ Gerhard, “Control and Resistance in the Dystopian Novel: A Comparative Analysis,” 25.

¹⁵² Gerhard, “Control and Resistance in the Dystopian Novel: A Comparative Analysis,” 24.

¹⁵³ Gerhard, “Control and Resistance in the Dystopian Novel: A Comparative Analysis,” 52.

this can be a shrewd way to incorporate futuristic technology that helps the government control every aspect of a person's life. As Seed mentions, "the use of visual medium, however, carries with it a crucially different dimension of controlling rather than informing."¹⁵⁴ Many dystopias feature the theme of 'technology being misused for evil intentions,' and this is one of the areas where technology turns against people. Before the invention of technology such as radios and TV, it was more complicated to get inside people's homes.

With the rise of TV in the 1950s, we can see writers incorporating these technologies into their writing. In the past, before the invention of sufficient surveillance technology, those in power relied on informers willing to gather information. But with the rise of technology that people were willing to bring into their own homes, this task became easier. This form of surveillance from within was perfected by Orwell in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, where people are under constant surveillance of cameras built inside their television and microphones hidden everywhere, even in nature. As Seed points out, "the system of surveillance – literally 'looking-over' – receives its classic formulation in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*"¹⁵⁵ and this novel became an exemplary text for describing the militarisation and centralisation of American life into a 'quasi-dictatorship.'¹⁵⁶ To give another example, in his book *They Shall Have Stars* published in 1956, James Blish created a satire of the security state where the FBI is monitoring a research project on space flight.¹⁵⁷ In this novel, the information holds power and therefore, it has to be monitored by the state.¹⁵⁸ The surveillance in dystopian literature has its eyes everywhere and as Seed points out "the all-seeing eye of God is secularized into a

¹⁵⁴ Seed, *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*, 68.

¹⁵⁵ Seed, *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*, 69.

¹⁵⁶ Seed, *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*, 69.

¹⁵⁷ Seed, *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*, 71.

¹⁵⁸ Seed, *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*, 72.

political nightmare of total control where the figure of visual observation signifies a whole elaborate system of monitoring and documenting.”¹⁵⁹

2.3.4 The Media

Without the existence of the media, the propaganda would be diametrically less successful and less widespread. The Media is often used to spread propaganda among the masses. As has been mentioned above in the section about surveillance, the media can also represent the aspect of technology being misused by the people in power. However, for this model to work people need to be willing to bring the media into the comfort of their own homes or otherwise the desired effect will not be as successful. Homes are a safe space and if people are willing to let the technology invade their life so intimately, the effect is stronger and also more long-lasting.

While the media and technology are often tools of control and propaganda, they are never the “source of control itself”¹⁶⁰ because there has to be a person operating behind the scenes. In later dystopian literature, there is an interesting clash between new media and the more traditional media: “novels thematize two major dichotomies recurring in media criticism: between print (good) and screen (bad), and between high culture and mass culture.”¹⁶¹ The traditional media in particular are often the means of resistance and source of hope for the rebels. This dichotomy is not surprising as the world experienced immense media expansion and the new technology slowly became a necessity and not a luxury. Also, the media presented a challenge to society because people before WWII grew up without the pervasive presence of television and other forms of the new media. The post-war novels often

¹⁵⁹ Seed, *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*, 68.

¹⁶⁰ Burbage, “Modes of Control in Dystopian Fiction.”

¹⁶¹ Trine Syvertsen, *Media Resistance: Protest, Dislike, Abstention* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 37.

“thematize how media endanger key values of morality, culture, enlightenment, democracy, community and health.”¹⁶²

Out of all the newly emerged media, writers often critiqued the screen media, mainly television, and to illustrate the negative effects, televisions were “grossly enlarged and exaggerated”¹⁶³ and they feel invasive and disturbing. The protagonists portrayed as good are often seen avoiding the technology¹⁶⁴ and indulging in the more traditional media whereas the characters portrayed as vain or going with the flow prefer the new media. In novels such as *The Brave New World*, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* or *Fahrenheit 451*, traditional books are even simplified or wiped out entirely.¹⁶⁵ Post-war dystopian literature implies that the downfall of the print media equals the downfall of civilisation. And reversely, the rise of new media and more importantly the mass media is often portrayed as vital in the rise of autocratic societies.¹⁶⁶

2.3.5 Social Class and Stratification

Writers of dystopian fiction often use the division of social class or social stratification as another form of oppression. Putting people into certain groups helps to illustrate the diametrical differences between the masses and the ruling class. Dystopian fiction offers various ways of division: based on financial situation, profession, birth origin and many others. In the context of Huxley’s *Brave New World* and his ‘Will to Order,’ Seed says that if the present era is the ‘era of the social engineers,’ the next century will be of ‘World Controllers.’¹⁶⁷ He explains that in this context there is a dominant metaphor which is “the machine, suggestive at once of a controlling elite and the reduction of the masses to

¹⁶² Syvertsen, *Media Resistance*, 46.

¹⁶³ Syvertsen, *Media Resistance*, 47.

¹⁶⁴ Syvertsen, *Media Resistance*, 47– 48.

¹⁶⁵ Syvertsen, *Media Resistance*, 48.

¹⁶⁶ Syvertsen, *Media Resistance*, 50.

¹⁶⁷ Seed, *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*, 76.

dehumanized instruments.”¹⁶⁸ This division between the elite and the masses can be observed in many dystopias. In Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* the society has three different classes: the Inner party, that has the power, the Outer Party, that has some benefits and the Proles, who are the lowest and do not have much privilege. In Kurt Vonnegut’s *Player Piano*, the society is technocratic, and the main protagonist starts as a middle manager but soon loses his status and becomes ‘unclassified’ and he is labelled as potential saboteur.¹⁶⁹ And as Seed points out, “now the state security apparatus, previously only implied, begins to impact on him.”¹⁷⁰

We can see that in dystopian societies, there are groups of people affected differently by the system. As illustrated on these two examples, it is not unusual that the state gives the people advantages if they follow the rules, and conversely punishes those who are breaking the rules. The ruling class is the group that profits from the state apparatus the most. They are those people whose agenda is being pushed at the expense of other citizens. It is interesting to see that the difference between the elite and the masses is significant.

The class in the middle, who generally follow the rules and therefore, benefit from the system to a certain degree are also those who knowingly or unknowingly support the state. The working class is more willing to control themselves because “the threat of the alternative, extreme poverty”¹⁷¹ makes them do so.

The people in the lowest class, often depicted as the poorest class, are often reduced to being victims of the system.¹⁷² They are those who do not follow the rules and therefore, do not benefit the system as much as the class in the middle or the leading class. The biggest difference between the working and the lowest class is the realisation that they are being

¹⁶⁸ Seed, *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*, 76.

¹⁶⁹ Seed, *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*, 76.

¹⁷⁰ Seed, *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*, 76.

¹⁷¹ Burbage, “Modes of Control in Dystopian Fiction.”

¹⁷² Burbage, “Modes of Control in Dystopian Fiction.”

oppressed.¹⁷³ Being the lowest class that consists of people who are not welcomed by the system, this group often harbours the resistance or the rebels who intend to overthrow the oppressive regime.

2.3.6 Resistance

The resistance against the system is the element that has proven to be crucial in dystopian writing in comparison to utopian. Utopian fiction was criticized for the lack of conflict because it offered no struggle against the antihero. The theme of revolution against a regime is a staple in dystopian and science fiction literature because it offers a “melodramatic potential”¹⁷⁴ and also an interesting plot development. The resistance of the misfits creates the crucial conflict and therefore, builds up the plot of the narrative. Even the most meticulous propaganda and censorship will not be completely effective and there will always be individuals who will question the reality and their experiences. According to Moylan, the alienated protagonist “begins to recognize the situation for what it really is and thus to trace the relationship between individual experience and the operation of the entire system.”¹⁷⁵ The individual experience in the entire system will not be the same even though the system may try to make it the same for everyone. There will be individuals who will for whatever reason suffer in the system and, on the other hand, there will also be individuals on the other tip of the scale who will profit from the system.

The government’s greatest strength and yet the greatest weakness is the large group of people they are controlling and suppressing. A group as large as an entire nation is imperative in maintaining the official narrative. However, this is where the weakness appears: the larger the group, the larger the portion of people who will inevitably start questioning their experiences within the system. Moylan says that some dystopias start with the “singular

¹⁷³ Burbage, “Modes of Control in Dystopian Fiction.”

¹⁷⁴ Stableford, “Dystopias.”

¹⁷⁵ Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia*, xiii.

misfit”¹⁷⁶ who “finds allies and not only learns the ‘truth’ of the system but also enters collectively into outright opposition”¹⁷⁷ and in other dystopias “narrative runs aground when the power structure crushes the resistant dissenter – ending the text on a note of resignation that nevertheless offers the compensation of an apotheosis of the defeated individual.”¹⁷⁸

Seed pointed out the existence of the “catalyst”¹⁷⁹ or “catalyst figure”¹⁸⁰ in dystopian literature. This figure helps the protagonist to realise that the system is corrupt. Seed specifically mentions *Nineteen Eighty-Four* to illustrate this device in which “one or more characters (Winston and Julia) act as catalysts to bring the latent dissatisfactions of the protagonist to the surface although his ‘dissidence’ remains ambiguous throughout.”¹⁸¹ The catalyst figure can often be a mere plot device because “once the protagonist has manifested his restiveness he places himself at odds with the law and is liable to arrest which serves as a prelude to extended interrogation.”¹⁸²

Moylan referencing Baccolini notes that the “crucial weapon and strategy”¹⁸³ in dystopian fiction is “the control over the means of language, representation and interpellation.”¹⁸⁴ Language is a powerful tool in dystopian fiction because language allows the person to think critically. This form of resistance through language can be seen in Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, in Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451* and Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the language is firstly used to control the history, but Winston repeatedly goes back to the original language that he remembers and that existed before newspeak in order to revisit his memories. The control of language as a form of resistance is powerful and, as Moylan points out, the “result of the reappropriation of

¹⁷⁶ Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia*, xiii.

¹⁷⁷ Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia*, xiii.

¹⁷⁸ Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia*, xiii.

¹⁷⁹ Seed, *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*, 70.

¹⁸⁰ David Seed, “The Flight from the Good Life: ‘Fahrenheit 451,’ in the Context of Postwar American Dystopias,” *Journal of American Studies* 28, no. 2 (1994): 233, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40464168>.

¹⁸¹ Seed, *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*, 70.

¹⁸² Seed, *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*, 70–71.

¹⁸³ Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia*, 149.

¹⁸⁴ Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia*, 149.

language by the dystopian misfits and rebels is the reconstitution of empowering memory.”¹⁸⁵

As Moylan says, people in the dystopian society “lose all recollection of the way things were before the new order, but by regaining language they also recover the ability to draw on the alternative truths of the past and speak back to hegemonic power.”¹⁸⁶

2.3.7 Ecology and Overpopulation

The environmental anxiety was probably evoked by the “extreme pollution in the wake of atomic warfare.”¹⁸⁷ The ecological ideas “found their way into the foreground of the futuristic fiction in the 1950s and 1960s”¹⁸⁸ and political issues were “forced out to the margins.”¹⁸⁹ It can be said that:

the disenchantment with political systems fostered by Orwellian dystopias helped to feed the conviction that the essential problem afflicting eutopian ambitions lay outside the arena of party politics, arising from such ecological problems as population expansion and environmental pollution, whose potential ill-effects put those of tyranny somewhat in the shade.¹⁹⁰

The question of world population resonated with the 1950s society. In 1955, first anxieties regarding the world population appeared with some parties forming the Population Council which was spreading “propaganda regarding the dangerous rapidity of world population growth.”¹⁹¹ These themes of overpopulation started to appear in “SF magazines before the Population Council was formed.”¹⁹² Asimov wrote *The Caves of Steel* which offered an “analysis of the kinds of living conditions that a huge population would have to adopt and learn to love”¹⁹³ while *Natural State* by Damon Knight talked about biotechnological improvisations necessary for the sustenance of a large population.¹⁹⁴

¹⁸⁵ Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia*, 149.

¹⁸⁶ Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia*, 149.

¹⁸⁷ Brian Stableford, “Ecology and dystopia,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, ed. Gregory Claeys (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 269.

¹⁸⁸ Stableford, “Ecology and dystopia,” 270.

¹⁸⁹ Stableford, “Ecology and dystopia,” 269–279.

¹⁹⁰ Stableford, “Ecology and dystopia,” 270.

¹⁹¹ Stableford, “Ecology and dystopia,” 270.

¹⁹² Stableford, “Ecology and dystopia,” 270.

¹⁹³ Stableford, “Ecology and dystopia,” 271.

¹⁹⁴ Stableford, “Ecology and dystopia,” 271.

As has been mentioned in the section about Dystopia and Science Fiction in the 1950s, the authors in this era also explored the theme of exploitation. This can be seen most notably as the exploitation of the Earth and its natural resources, resulting in environmental disaster, malnutrition due to shortages of food or water and overpopulation. These surprising ecological tendencies emerged in an era when eco-consciousness was not yet fully developed. The topics of deforestation, excess fuel production, greenhouse gasses or ice caps melting were not yet being discussed in public spaces. It was the era when the mass production of plastics and more importantly the production of single-use plastics was only at its beginning and the habits of consumers were forming. Global warming and its effects were not yet known.

When we look at the example of *The Space Merchants*, “the development of this economy and culture has been achieved at the expense of the natural environment, for not only has the natural order been ravaged for industrial growth but also unchecked population growth has been encouraged to produce new consumers.”¹⁹⁵ In the novel, there can be seen other manifestations of environmental destruction such as polluted air and water, the devastation of forests and shortages of food that resulted in the need for proteins to be manufactured artificially. This theme of ecology will be further explored in the next section which will be analysing the two novels, *Fahrenheit 451* and *The Space Merchants*.

¹⁹⁵ Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia*, 170.

3. Chapter 3

3.1 The Analysis of *Fahrenheit 451*

Bradbury began his career as a writer for science fiction magazines in the 1950s, as mentioned in the section about the Golden Era of Science Fiction. *Fahrenheit 451* was originally a short story called “The Fireman” which was eventually reprinted as a book in 1953. The novel is significantly influenced by the cultural and social situation of the 1950s. The US was in the Cold War with the USSR and one minor mistake could turn the world into a war conflict which would, in this case, involve nuclear weapons. People in the US adopted new consumer habits and the masses began to favour television and radio over books. Bradbury wrote *Fahrenheit 451* during the era of McCarthyism and Cold War which probably inspired him as “he was concerned with the development of authoritarian politics.”¹⁹⁶ McCarthyism was a response to the growing fear of communism during the 1950s in the US and the US government attempted to censor the media, literature and films which was the same strategy the Soviets and Nazis implemented.¹⁹⁷ The novel targeted “anti-intellectualism and cramped materialism posing as social philosophy, justifying book burning in the service of a degraded democratic idea.”¹⁹⁸ The fictional government in the novel tries to secure the stability of society by utilizing the “anti-intellectual argument that reading is conducive to critical thinking, and thinking creates unrest and disorder – in other words, psychological and social instability.”¹⁹⁹

The major theme of *Fahrenheit 451* is the “resistance against the conformity imposed by a mass media and the use of technology to control individuals and the dependence

¹⁹⁶ Harold Bloom, “The Story Behind the Story,” in *Bloom’s Guides: Fahrenheit 451*,” ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 2007), 12.

¹⁹⁷ Mancini, *Censorship in Ray Bradbury’s Fahrenheit 451*, 41.

¹⁹⁸ David Mogen, “*Fahrenheit 451* as Social Criticism,” in *Bloom’s Guide*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 2007), 63.

¹⁹⁹ Mancini, *Censorship in Ray Bradbury’s Fahrenheit 451*, 48.

on technology.”²⁰⁰ The novel follows the protagonist Guy Montag, who evolves from a dedicated fireman to a refugee. At first, Montag does not question the purpose of his job and appears to be an ordinary citizen of the brainwashed society. The novel is set in the future United States that has many technological novelties unknown to people in the 1950s like cars “driving a hundred miles an hour.”²⁰¹ M. Keith Booker says:

dystopian literature generally also constitutes a critique of existing social conditions or political systems, either through the critical examination of the utopian premises upon which those conditions and systems are based or through the imaginative extension of those conditions and systems into different contexts that more clearly reveal their flaws and contradictions.²⁰²

This is exactly what Bradbury achieves in *Fahrenheit 451*. The scientific advances and new technologies that are seen in the book are mostly used to restrict other people’s freedom or for propaganda.

3.1.1 Censorship

In *Fahrenheit 451*, the most prominent feature of oppression is the censorship of books. But in contrast to other dystopian novels, Bradbury does not describe the book burning as a result of dictatorship but dictatorship as a result of book burning.²⁰³ Bradbury saw that the decline of books could be caused by the change of lifestyle as people would seek more condensed content that film and the radio can offer. Captain Beatty comments on the decline of books: “Picture it. Nineteenth-century man with his horses, dogs, carts, slow motion. Then, in the twentieth century, speed up your camera. Books cut shorter. Condensations. Digests, Tabloids. Everything boils down to the gag, the snap ending.”²⁰⁴ In the world of *Fahrenheit 451*, it seems that people caused the decline of books themselves because, in the time the

²⁰⁰ Robin Anne Reid, *Ray Bradbury: A Critical Companion* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2000), 76–77, https://books.google.cz/books?id=wvMEoM8gu74C&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_atb&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false.

²⁰¹ Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2012), 43.

²⁰² M. Keith Booker, *Dystopian Literature: A Theory and Research Guide* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994), 3.

²⁰³ Mancini, *Censorship in Ray Bradbury’s Fahrenheit 451*, 50.

²⁰⁴ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 52.

novel is set, the contents of classic books was significantly reduced to “fifteen-minute radio shows, then cut again to fill a two-minute book column, winding up at last as a ten- or twelve-line dictionary resume.”²⁰⁵

The reduction of books in this case is a form of censorship because the source material is removed and only the condensed version is available. Even though people stopped reading the books and it was their conscious decision, it is still oppression because the ownership of any books is banned and people who are found guilty of owning them are then persecuted. Firemen “in an Orwellian inversion of the meaning of the word”²⁰⁶ are exclusively created just to deal with crimes that involve books. In the past, firemen were designed to extinguish fire and help people affected by fire but in *Fahrenheit 451*, firemen ignite the fire and inevitably cause pain to people who are affected.

As Harold Bloom mentions in his *Guide to Fahrenheit 451*, the symbol of fire that pervades the book is a powerful symbol as it is the building block of human civilisation²⁰⁷ and the firemen are abusing the fire to destroy the human civilisation. Although the novel is set in the future, the fire still connects it to the very beginnings of humanity. There is a parallel between the beginning of the book and the ending: the novel starts with fire being used for destruction and ends with a fire that gives life and brings the story back to something as basic as survival: “He hadn’t known fire could look this way. He had never thought in his life that it could give as well as take. Even its smell was different.”²⁰⁸ In the novel, Bradbury perceives books as “image of humanity as such, and a reverence for books is a reverence for humanity”²⁰⁹ and therefore, by destroying the books, people are destroying their humanity.

²⁰⁵ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 52.

²⁰⁶ Bloom, “Summary and Analysis,”16.

²⁰⁷ Bloom, “Summary and Analysis,”16.

²⁰⁸ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 139.

²⁰⁹ Bloom, “Summary and Analysis,”17.

3.1.2 The Media

Bradbury put books in opposition to the new media, namely television and radio. The invention of television significantly influenced the American society in the 1950s and Bradbury imagined that the future would be completely dominated by this technology in its advanced form. The wall screen televisions and special parlours dedicated to these screens are both a futuristic invention that appears in science fiction, but they also serve to demonstrate the dangers of technology. The technology seen in *Fahrenheit 451* can be seen as being specifically designed to be an equivalent of a drug. In the novel, Montag's wife Mildred is portrayed as being addicted to the TV and the radio. It is also implied she probably has a real drug problem too, because the first time Mildred appears in the novel, she overdoses on pills. She is a housewife without a job whose only daily activities are the TV programmes and the early image of the headphones called seashells/bees that she is wearing tucked in her ears even when she is asleep. It appears that Mildred's behaviour is not problematic, and it is even encouraged as her friends also indulge in similar activities and Montag his eccentric neighbour Clarisse McClellan do not fit in within this technology-driven society. The addiction to technology makes Mildred a "part of an extended mechanism of the state."²¹⁰ The TV programmes are there only for entertainment purposes, to offer an escape from reality and do not seem to bring any intellectual value. Even though it is not explicitly stated in the novel, the overconsumption of television content is an effective tool for the control of the citizens. The consumer culture in *Fahrenheit 451* is basically divorced from political awareness.²¹¹ Later when Mildred and her friends discuss politics, they are only interested in the names and appearances of the political figures.²¹² If they are engaging nonstop with the streamed content, which is undoubtedly censored by the government, they are less likely to question the state apparatus and politics which gives the government a stable position.

²¹⁰ Bloom, "Summary and Analysis," 18.

²¹¹ Seed, "The Flight from the Good Life," 228.

²¹² Seed, "The Flight from the Good Life," 228.

The TV walls are no regular TVs, they form a virtual reality and the person watching is included in the broadcasting. In *Mildred*, the novel shows how crushing the results of an addiction to technology can be. Mildred is often seen reading scripts and engaging with her TV family. As Faber recalled, even Christ was part of the family now: “Lord, how they’ve changed it in our ‘parlours’ these days. Christ is one of the ‘family’ now. I often wonder if God recognizes His own son the way we’ve dressed him up, or is it dressed him down?”²¹³ At the end of the novel, Mildred is incapable of existing outside the virtual reality because “the experience of one consumable can only be understood through comparison with another, and here the individual is put into a posture of maximum passivity as subjected to machines, not their controller.”²¹⁴ It is also known that apart from the virtual reality entertainment, the television also broadcasted news because when Montag was being pursued by the Mechanical Hound at the end of the story, it was broadcasted live to all households.

3.1.3 Consumerism

The TV walls are there to criticize the growing consumerism of the 1950s. The TV walls were the ultimate symbol of status and wealth, as were televisions in the 1950s. Seed notes that in the novel, “Millie and her friends are defined entirely by their roles as consumers, whether of sedatives, soap-operas, or fast cars.”²¹⁵ They do not consume just goods, they mostly consume unhealthy entertainment.

More screens equal more prestige and therefore, also more entertainment. Montag and Mildred’s house already has three walls but Mildred dreams of having a fourth wall so the parlour can be turned into a room where she can meet her family and other virtual people: “If we had a fourth wall, why it’d be just like this room wasn’t ours at all, but all kinds of exotic people’s rooms.”²¹⁶ This dystopian vision of consumer habits leads to subconscious freedom

²¹³ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 77.

²¹⁴ Seed, “The Flight from the Good Life,” 230.

²¹⁵ Seed, “The Flight from the Good Life,” 229.

²¹⁶ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 18.

restriction. It appears as though the TV walls offer freedom because they let people experience other people's lives when in fact it takes freedom away from the owner of the TV walls. After all, it will not be their room "but all kinds of exotic people's rooms."²¹⁷

3.1.4 Resistance

Throughout the novel, it can be seen that Montag develops from a dedicated fireman lacking critical thinking into a refugee with a purpose. The feature of revolution or an escape from the dystopian society is a key element. At some point, the protagonist realizes that the system they are living in is unsatisfactory. To accelerate the moment of realisation, the writer uses a "catalyst-figure whose role is to function as a productive irritant in the protagonist's consciousness."²¹⁸ Montag's unquestioning view of the world is challenged many times throughout the book by his neighbour Clarisse. Later in the novel, when Clarisse is eliminated, he forms a friendship with a former English professor Faber, who unveils to him the beauty of literature. The seventeen years old Clarisse is the catalyst figure that provokes Montag's thinking. She is curious about the world around her and actively questions the environment. She is the first person who asks him whether he reads the books and questions the existence of firemen: "Strange. I heard once that a long time ago houses used to burn by accident and they needed firemen to stop the flames."²¹⁹ In the short story "Fireman," Bradbury himself acknowledged that Clarisse is the pivotal character in the story and that without her, Montag wouldn't have had hope:

[T]he young girl who lives next door is really the pivotal character; without her and her influence . . . our Fire Man may not have changed when he did. The story, in order to achieve balance, should show The Fire Man enjoying his work, meeting the young neighbor, and changing, beginning to think what in hell he's been up to for a number of years. This way we get some sort of character growth in the tale.²²⁰

²¹⁷ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 18.

²¹⁸ Seed, "The Flight from the Good Life," 233.

²¹⁹ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 6.

²²⁰ Ray Bradbury, *Ray Bradbury to Rupert Hart-Davis, February 26, 1953*, letter, from University of Tulsa, *Hart-Davis Collection*.

Throughout the novel, the minor events that shape Montag's new consciousness pile up and later "the essential trigger to that flight is supplied by an alienation not only from suburban monotony but also from Montag's consumer-wife."²²¹ The alienation plays an essential part in Montag's awakening. When Clarisse and her family are eliminated by the government, Montag almost feels like he is obligated to honour Clarisse's legacy and continue in his curiosity about the world. This is another impulse why he decides to contact Faber, the former professor of English.

3.1.5 The Government

In dystopias, the antagonist sometimes is the state and the apparatus itself, but *Fahrenheit 451* does not give any specific information about the type of government, therefore, Beatty functions as an antagonist and the representation of government in the story. The government is unspecified, the only information that Bradbury gives away are the consequences of the government's policy – the book burning and persecution of people who own books.

Beatty is the figure of authority and law. He is the same figure of authority as O'Brien in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. In contrast with the other firemen, he is capable of quoting some of the classic authors and from the beginning, "Montag internalizes Beatty's voice as a censorious or punitive force, the voice of the superego resisting taboo thoughts or actions"²²² and the killing of Beatty is the pivotal moment of refusal of the state he was living in. Beatty stands for the "institutional or government voice"²²³ and in the end functions as a law executioner. Montag is found guilty without a trial and Beatty is the one who passes the final judgement. Beatty in the end perishes in the flames of Montag's house which underlines the

²²¹ Seed, "The Flight from the Good Life," 231.

²²² Seed, "The Flight from the Good Life," 235.

²²³ Robin Anne Reid, "Fahrenheit 451 (1953)," in *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations: Fahrenheit 451*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2008), 76.

significance of the fire because Montag used against Beatty the same power that was there to destroy books.

Montag takes refuge with other people who fled the system. He gets to know the academics who memorized the books and decided to take over the language and let it define their new future. Bradbury gives the story an optimistic, almost utopian ending. He returns back to the beginning of humanity: to the oral culture and a fire that is no longer a destructive element but a lifegiving force.

Fahrenheit 451 clearly criticizes the 1950 society and politics. Bradbury writes about the anxieties surrounding the media, mainly about the takeover and the possible negative effect of television in which he sees the downfall of the societies he knew. The novel follows a classic dystopian arc where the alienated hero realises his place within the system and tries to break away from it and in the end, it follows the utopian ending which was typical for the 1950s novels. *Fahrenheit 451* offers a unique narrative arc because it starts in the 'novum,' the dystopian society, where firemen are used to destroy books and houses and throughout the course of the novel, this theme of fire is reshaped into the meek force that once founded all humanity. Bradbury revisits the beginnings of humanity, therefore offering a utopian ending with the suggestion that if the society comes back to its ancient foundations, it has hope to rebuild itself.

3.2 The Analysis of *The Space Merchants*

The Space Merchants is a satirical novel written in 1953 by Pohl and Kornbluth. Similarly to *Fahrenheit 451*, *The Space Merchants* was first published as a short story called ‘Gravy Planet’ in *Galaxy Science Fiction* magazine in 1952,²²⁴ only to be published a year later as a novel. Amis described this type of satirical science fiction novel as a comic inferno and in his book *New Maps of Hell*, he wrote that through Mitch Courtenay “we are progressively acquainted with a utopia of the comic-inferno type built on a complex of assumption.”²²⁵ The novel is primarily criticizing consumerism and advertising but it also addresses the consequences of consumerism and economic expansion which result in environmental destruction and overpopulation. Hillegas says that Pohl and Kornbluth present a “warning against the dangers inherent in perfecting a ‘science of man and his motives.’”²²⁶

Moylan looks at the dystopian strategies in *The Space Merchants* and according to him, “*The Space Merchants* isolates and examines the disciplinary tendencies of consumerism and anti-communism as they tighten the grip of hegemonic power on the newly affluent society.”²²⁷ The Earth in *The Space Merchants* is overpopulated, the environment is vastly damaged and the two always competing advertising agencies have more power than the legal government itself. Significant to dystopia, the elite ruling class, in this case, the employers of the advertising agencies, hold most power and privilege in the world. The vast majority of the population is the working class that is being controlled by those in power. On the outskirts of society, a resistance group known as the Conservationists, also called the “Consies” is sabotaging the advertising agencies.

²²⁴ Latham, “Fiction, 1950 – 1963,” 81.

²²⁵ Kingsley Amis, *New Maps of Hell: A Survey of Science Fiction* (New York: Arno Press, 1975), 129, <https://archive.org/details/newmapsofhellasu0000amis>.

²²⁶ Mark R. Hillegas, “Dystopian Science Fiction: New Index to the Human Situation,” *New Mexico Quarterly* 31, no. 3 (1961): 248, <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nmq/vol31/iss3/22>.

²²⁷ Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia*, 169.

The Space Merchants treats the dystopian features similarly to *Fahrenheit 451*. Pohl and Kornbluth took an existing crisis and extended the premise to reveal its flaws. Both *The Space Merchants* and *Fahrenheit 451* criticize the 1950s society for its detrimental consuming habits. In *Fahrenheit 451*, it is mostly the overconsumption of information and technology but *The Space Merchants* specifically targets the overall overconsumption and the marketing that generates the overconsumption. The world of *The Space Merchants* is primarily modelled on the advertising frenzy of the 1950s and it describes the takeover as a “commercial form of an imperialist expansion”²²⁸ because the agencies in *The Space Merchants* are trying to colonise Venus with the help of advertising.

To specifically illustrate the existing crisis, the 1950s became known for its booming advertising that included psychological strategies to make the advertisements more effective. This use of psychological strategies can be very clearly seen in *The Space Merchants* as well. As has been mentioned already, at the beginning of the 1950s, in comparison to the rest of the world damaged by WWII, the state of the US economy was enviable.²²⁹ The blooming economy in the US allowed some people to self-indulge and this “created a level of prosperity unseen since the heady days just before the stock market crash of 1929.”²³⁰ The boom of consumerism was just a direct result of it because in the post-war era, there was “the emergence of the affluent society.”²³¹ In the 1950s, various adverts were already appearing in magazines and on the radio, but with the rise of television, businesses saw this unprecedented opportunity to use technology for advertising. The increase in consumption was largely endorsed by politicians because it boosted the economy, but “consumerism as a political project had to be seen as offering something to all consumers, rich and poor alike. The

²²⁸ Seed, *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*, 82.

²²⁹ William H. Young, Nancy K. Young, *The 1950s* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004), 3, <https://books.google.cz/books?id=pto5xnJXvkC&lpg=PR7&ots=bvor2rlfcy&dq=advertising%20in%201950s&lr&pg=PA3#v=onepage&q=advertising%20in%201950s&f=false>.

²³⁰ Young, *The 1950s*, 3.

²³¹ Matthew Hilton, “Consumers and the State since the Second World War,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 611 (2007): 67, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25097909>.

affluent society had to promise more choice for those who could afford it, but also more stuff for those who so far could not.”²³²

The society in *The Space Merchants* is described as being “subject to McCarthyite fears of internal subversion.”²³³ The whole world is run by businesses that are always in competition. Similarly to *Fahrenheit 451*, the media and overconsumption are a mode of control that is there to secure the stability of the society. Seed argues that “allegiance becomes one object among others in a general process of commodification which motivates and sustains administration.”²³⁴

3.2.1 Resistance

The protagonist of *The Space Merchants*, Mitch, is put right in the middle of the system that controls the population. He is a star class copywriter in an advertising agency called Fowler Schocken Associates whose job it is to sell the trip to Venus to unknowing customers. Mitch as an employee of one of the advertising agencies is a member of the elite and therefore, he is sustaining the system. The job of a copywriter is to sell people products through words but this job is morally conflicting because the “highest art is to convince people without letting them know that they're being convinced.”²³⁵

He resembles Montag in many ways because they both come from a privileged background and find themselves plunged into the life of an outcast. The difference is that Mitch is kidnapped, and he does not choose to confront the oppressive system that he was working for. Until his kidnapping to the Chlorella factory in Costa Rica, he does not question anything, and he is using all the benefits provided by his elite position in society. He detests the resistance group called the Consies that sabotages the system and causes minor inconveniences that have little effect on Mitch’s life. His transformation starts after he is

²³² Hilton, “Consumers and the State since the Second World War,” 68.

²³³ Seed, *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*, 84.

²³⁴ Seed, *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*, 82.

²³⁵ Frederik Pohl and Cyril M. Kornbluth, *The Space Merchants* (London: Gollancz, 2003), 170.

abducted, and his privileged life is taken away. In *The Space Merchants*, the catalyst figure that leads to Mitch's awakening is, surprisingly, his rival and Consie Matt Runstead who orchestrates his kidnapping. At the Chlorella factory, he is confronted with the reality of consumers who are directly controlled by the advertising system he used to be a part of and his "realizations about this reality attest to a worldview so different from the worldview of global capital that Fowler Schocken writes them off as imagined."²³⁶ After the death of Schocken, Mitch is left with most of the shares in the company and he uses this newly acquired power to persuade people not to depart for Venus. The death of Schocken and Mitch's departure to Venus can be perceived as the beginning of the collapse of the oppressive system.

3.2.2 Advertising and Consumerism

In *The Space Merchants*, the features of advertising and consumerism are so intertwined they cannot possibly be separated because one feature supports the other and vice versa. The advertising agencies, producers and consumers are trapped in a never-ending circle of consumerism. Advertising becomes far more aggressive. Schocken's biggest achievement is the successful turning of the whole of India, an independent country, into a manufacturing complex Industries. The agencies do not shy away from harmful practices like adding addictive substances to food to ensure the long-term loyalty of customers or projecting advertisements directly onto the retina of the eye.

Maybe in his blindness, Mitch does not see his job as morally conflicting because he acknowledges that "there's a responsibility that goes with the power. Here in this profession, we reach into the souls of men and women. We do it by taking talent and redirecting it. Nobody should play with lives the way we do unless he's motivated by the highest ideals."²³⁷ But what are the highest ideals when the results of the advertising campaigns are only sales

²³⁶ Eric Otto, "Science Fiction and the Ecological Conscience" (PhD diss. University of Florida, 2006), 150.

²³⁷ Pohl and Kornbluth, *The Space Merchants*, 41.

and profit? The only people who are profiting are part of the highest social class – in this case, the advertising agencies, and their employees.

The advertising agencies are motivated only by profit, and they are capable of selling anything to anyone, even a complete lie like the colonisation of Venus. The increase in population has always been convenient because as Mitch says: “increase of population was always good news for us. More people, more sales. Less brains, more sales.”²³⁸ When Mitch is given the task to advertise a one-way trip to Venus it soon becomes clear that Venus is completely uninhabitable and what they are trying to advertise does not exist. After a conversation with the only man who travelled to Venus and back, Jack O’Shea, he realizes that Venus is not habitable. The solution to the overpopulated planet here goes into monstrous proportions because the people are willingly paying the advertising agency to be taken to an uninhabitable planet without any prospect of returning to the Earth. This is a very nuanced and subtle, yet no less atrocious solution to overpopulation. The people are being tricked into buying a one-way ticket which results in their demise.

Mitch himself is the prototype of the ideal consumer because his mind works on the chain of associations of brands: “Think about smoking, think about Starrs, light a Starr. Light a Starr, think about Popsie, get a squirt. Get a squirt, think about Crunchies, buy a box. Buy a box, think about smoking, light a Starr.”²³⁹ According to Moylan, this cycle of associations is the way “to cope with the alienation and exploitation of his mind and body in the daily grind.”²⁴⁰ The agencies are not playing with the lives of adults but also children. They are grooming children from a very young age by giving them cigarettes to get them addicted early on so they will be loyal customers in adulthood. In some dystopias, children are featured as being indoctrinated by the state from school age to ensure the stability of the society and *The Space Merchants* is using this device in a similar fashion.

²³⁸ Pohl and Kornbluth, *The Space Merchants*, 94–95.

²³⁹ Pohl and Kornbluth, *The Space Merchants*, 85.

²⁴⁰ Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia*, 170.

3.2.3 The Government

In *The Space Merchants*, the government in a typical sense was removed and replaced by the advertising agencies that control the world and, most importantly, the people. Even though the official government exists in the world of *The Space Merchants*, it seems rather powerless. However, it can be argued that the advertising agencies are in fact the government and they hold a lot of power. It can be noted that these two global advertising agencies are an ominous reference to the actual, always competing global superpowers: the USSR and the US. Because the government in a traditional sense has disappeared, it was replaced by agencies that do not have any code of conduct or any laws.

In dystopian writings, it is the government that holds the most power and oppresses their people. In *The Space Merchants*, the advertising agencies are controlling people through the never-ending cycle of sales, profit, and advertising. They do not employ the traditional means of control, but this does not mean the control is any less horrifying and immoral. A perfect example of the role of advertising agencies as the government can be seen in the example of children who are being raised as future consumers and customers. The advertising agencies take the role of the government, therefore the children are being indoctrinated in the same way they would be if the country was run by a government in the traditional sense. In adulthood, the agencies start giving people food with addictive substances in it. As a result, the agencies have control over the lives of people from the beginning till the end.

3.2.4 Ecology and Overpopulation

One of the features of dystopia that also appears in *The Space Merchants* is overpopulation and environmental destruction. According to Pohl, it can be said that the whole environmental movement in America began with science fiction.²⁴¹ The novel shows the consequences of reckless consumerism which urged the expansion of the economy that is

²⁴¹ Frederik Pohl, "The Politics of Prophecy," in *Political Science Fiction*, eds. Donald M. Hassler and Clyde Wilcox (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1997), 10, <https://books.google.com/books?id=QyKkrxd80CUC&lpg=PP1&pg=PP1#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

based on “ever-increasing everybody's work and profits in the circle of consumption.”²⁴² The world is damaged to the extent that wood resources are scarce, there is no fuel to run cars, there are shortages of food and drinking water and the air is polluted so the residents must wear special sooth extractor nose plugs. Pohl and Kornbluth tackle the possible future of destroying the planet to an irreversible extent and escaping to another planet to solve this crisis. In the novel, they decide to colonize Venus by selling the trip to unknowing consumers. The colonisation of Venus by Americans is simply what Seed called an “imperialist expansion”²⁴³ which has its model in the space race between the US and the USSR during the Cold War.

It is interesting to see how overpopulation shifts the perception of wealth. In *Fahrenheit 451*, the ultimate display of wealth are the TV screens, however in *The Space Merchants*, all people can boast about is that “every piece of furniture is constructed from top to bottom of authentic, expertized, genuine tree-grown wood.”²⁴⁴ Ironically, the *space* in the title of the novel refers not only to the extra-terrestrial expansion, but also to living space. The space on the Earth became so scarce that a two-room apartment is a luxury and most of the clerics live on the stairwell. Food and water became a luxury, too. Using freshwater for anything else than drinking is considered wasteful and saltwater is used instead. When Mitch is kidnapped and put into the Chlorella factory, the story reveals the truth behind the food that people are consuming. The Chlorella factory is harvesting a living lump of proteins called Chicken Little that is an eerie result of food scarcity.

The Space Merchants is not trying to criticize consumers or producers, the novel is “illustrating the absurdity of an advertising machine powerful enough to erase empirical evidence that such a frenzy is materially impossible to sustain.”²⁴⁵ Pohl and Kornbluth are

²⁴² Hillegas, “Dystopian Science Fiction,” 243.

²⁴³ Seed, *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*, 82.

²⁴⁴ Pohl and Kornbluth, *The Space Merchants*, 2.

²⁴⁵ Otto, “Science Fiction and the Ecological Conscience,” 146.

putting the responsibility on the advertising agencies who are essential for the growth of the economy. *The Space Merchants*, as well as *Fahrenheit 451*, follow the classical dystopian arc mentioned before and both of these novels end on a brighter note. Even though leaving the destroyed Earth behind could be perceived as a grim future, Mitch's escape in a rocket with a group of Consies and his wife Kathy can be seen as "utopian escape to Venus where some enlightened humans who question the validity of capitalism will start again,"²⁴⁶ therefore it is aligned with the utopian tendencies within the dystopian fiction typical for the 1950s. But this is not the only source of hope that can be found in the novel. The death of Fowler Schocken, who was one of the people in charge of the system, can be perceived as hopeful because the oppressive system is slowly starting to dismantle and therefore, the power of advertising agencies will be less prominent in the future.

²⁴⁶ Peter Fitting, "Utopia, dystopia and science fiction," in *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, ed. Gregory Claeys (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 141.

Conclusion

As has been mentioned before, the 1950s created the perfect background for these two novels to come to life. The thriving scene of science fiction magazines allowed the genre to evolve quickly and therefore, the stories were considered legitimate literature that managed to shed off the bad taste of its pulp fiction past. Even though both *Fahrenheit 451* and *The Space Merchants* were first published as short stories in a magazine, they were eventually published as books for a wide range of readers to enjoy. It can be seen that the problem with narrative strategies was in the case of these two novels solved by employing the dystopian features as well as its narrative structure. Both of these novels follow a more or less very similar narrative structure where the privileged, yet alienated protagonist finds himself to be a part of the evil system and with the help of external impulses, they realise the system they were helping to build is corrupt and therefore, they eventually make a conscious decision to break out of it.

It can be seen that Bradbury and Pohl with Kornbluth were criticizing the society and the politics of the 1950s. The technological novelties, the eagerness to spend money on the novelties and the drastically changed advertisement strategies created exclusively to sell these novelties, offered the perfect background for the reckless overconsumption in *Fahrenheit 451* and *The Space Merchants*. In the era of McCarthyism, it was safer to criticize the society and the government through science fiction literature as this genre was not taken seriously by the authorities. Anyone showing socialist tendencies could face persecutions from the side of the government and both novels managed to avoid the scrutiny.

Bradbury showed a dystopian society after the nuclear war where the police and surveillance are no longer crucial because citizens learned to patrol one another. The absence of a particular government was replaced by the novel's antagonist Captain Beatty who served as a representative of the repressing government, the one who executes the law. Bradbury's

story does not give detailed information about the world. The story feels more like an intimate view into a sequence of unexpected events in the life of a member of the privileged social class. With this story, Bradbury criticized the overconsumption of content from the new technologies and the fear of the downfall of books. In *Fahrenheit 451*, the books are cherished as the last connection with the long-lost past and considered as the ultimate rebellion against the system.

Pohl and Kornbluth's *The Space Merchants* employed the dystopian features in a different way, primarily criticizing the consumer society. The control over the population was not executed through a visibly oppressive government but through the advertising agencies whose main task was to persuade people in order to let the agencies have control over them. As well as *Fahrenheit 451*, *The Space Merchants* criticizes overconsumption, but it focused on the material side and the way overconsumption is promoted. Pohl and Kornbluth exposed the never-ending vicious cycle of production and consumption that was the driving force of the 1950s. Compared to *Fahrenheit 451*, the main protagonist Mitch has an even more privileged position as he stands on top of the system. *The Space Merchants* shows more of the social structure of the dystopian world than *Fahrenheit 451* and it shows the crushing consequences of overpopulation where the people of the lowest classes live in a stairwell in the building where they work. With the additional themes of glaring overpopulation and environmental destruction, *The Space Merchants* also brings an ecologically conscious message that was ahead of its time.

The employment of dystopian features in these two novels served to criticize the consumer society of the 1950s and suggest the possible outcomes if consumers would not change their spending habits. It can be seen that both novels drew the inspiration from the socio-economic background of the 1950s as they were primarily criticizing the materialistic consumers, the unethical side of advertising that was suddenly surrounding people

everywhere and the possible dangers of the new technologies that emerged in the era. Both *Fahrenheit 451* and *The Space Merchants* showed that dystopian and science fiction features can organically exist in a single story.

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