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Science Fiction And Dystopia

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"A Science Fiction is a narrative (usually in prose) of short story, novella or novel length. As to what it is about is not easily classifiable. Such stories are about an amazing variety of things, topics, and ideas. They include trips to other worlds, quests, the exploration of space, visits to other planets and interplanetary warfare". (quoted by Cuddon : 791) .

Science Fiction is a literature concerned with the process by which a depicted environment has become different from our own, or with the means by which humanity finds itself there. This does not rule out narrative elements of intrigue, adventure and so forth. (Mann : 5).

Brian Aldiss defines Science fiction thus:

Science Fiction is the search for a definition of mankind and his status in the universe which will stand in our advanced but confused state of knowledge (science) and is characteristically cast in the Gothic or Post-Gothic mode". (quoted by Cuddon : 791)

He also defines it more succinctly as "Hubris clobbered by nemesis".

Some Science Fictions are concerned with utopia and utopist visions, and also with dystopia. Others are set in the future but are not utopian. Still others are set in the past. Many have a contemporary settings which is somehow influenced by the arrival or invasion of alien beings or by some invention which profoundly alters normality. They are also concerned with technological change and development with scientific experiment with social, climatic, geological and ecological change. Some are concerned with supernatural forces and agencies. They are often fantastic, though they may be rooted in reality. They stretch the imagination. Science Fantasy or Space Opera will use devices derived from Science Fiction to describe new and exciting environments, but in many ways both subcategories remain more true to the pulp-fiction genres of the 1920s and 1930s. This is because they do not bother to make plausible their invented futures, being more concerned with the adventure components of

their storylines and more willing to go beyond the realms of scientific plausibility to create spectacular effects. This is another factor that can make it more difficult to reach a satisfactory definition of real "Science Fiction". - George Mann opines that

Science Fiction is an open and wide – ranging genre whose definition can have as much to do with the way in which a book is written as with its content. It also incorporates the more fantastical Space Opera, which, although has its proponents who insist on claiming a "Scientific" foundation for the intergalactic conflicts and militaristic alien invasions, for the most part prefers to concentrate on the end result, spectacularaction rather than means, convincing exploration.(Mann : 6)

THE ORIGIN OF SCIENCE FICTION

The foundations of Science Fiction were laid many centuries ago, with such wonderful works of mythology as The Epic of Gilamesh and The Egyptian Book of the Dead during the second millenium B.C.. There is no way in which these ancient texts can be meaningfully interpreted as Science Fiction, but they do offer a starting point for a more general form of fantastic literature that points out the way to the eventual emergence of the genre. But, of course, it was not until much, much later than Science Fiction would actually develop as a distinct branch of literature.

The term "Science Fiction" was first used, in 1851 the year of the Great Exhibition, in William Wilson's A Little Earnest Book upon a Great Old Subject.

The term was eventually put into circulation in the late 1920s by Hugo Gernsback (1894-1967), who had originally coined the word "Scientification". "Science Fiction" gradually replaced the term "Scientific Romance", and Science Fiction is quite often categorized as "Speculative Fiction".

An early example as the predecessors of modern science fiction is the Vera Historia or True History (AD. 150) of Lucian of Samosata, a parody of the tall stories of adventure presented as truth by former historians. The hero of this work visits the Moon and the Sun and is involved in the interplanetary warfare. The "Vision Literature" of the Middle Ages was very popular and widespread in Europe. It was about the exploration of metaphysical worlds : heaven, hell and purgatory. Especially hell, because it was more interesting and, anyway, was easier to describe. Trips to the abode of the damned were, in some cases, an early form of horror story, and were forerunners of a later kind of "Scientific Romances". Gradually, the attraction of such escapist tales palled, to be replaced by utopianism. Thomas More's Utopia

was published in 1516 and was to be a kind of prototype of all sorts of utopia and utopian schemes, plus adventure quests including expeditions into space. For instance, Francis Godwin's The man in the Moone (1638) : or, A Discourse of a Voyage Thither (1638) by Domingo Gonsales, John Wilkin's Discovery of a New World in the Moone (1638).

In 1668, Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle published The Description of a New World, called The Blazing World, an extraordinary Wellsian fantasy in the course of which the Duchess advanced the then improbable idea that mankind might be ruled by a non-human or animal "intelligence". Other 17thC curiosities among the "ancestors" are Kepler's Somnium (1634), also concerned with lunar exploration; and a guided tour of heaven somewhat in the form of Kircher's Itinerarium Exstaticum (1656).

In 1516, Thomas More published, in Latin, his famous political work Utopia, which displays a particularly resonant awareness of its time and explorates contemporary political thought to create its setting. An English translation appeared in 1551. It describes in great detail, an unknown island (clearly modeled on the recently discovered America) where a "perfect" society has been established – the first depiction of a Utopian State. The book is fundamentally satirical, as More intends it to be known that he does not believe that such a profound social equilibrium as he depicts could ever be reached. His book triggered an explosion of Utopian fictions : they continue to appear even today; but are ultimately more correctly considered as political rather than science fictional writings. 'Utopia' does, however, indicate the direction that fantastical literature was beginning to take.

There followed a succession of fantastical works over the next few centuries, as writers began to make use of devices that would later become intimately associated with the Science Fiction genre. Gulliver's Travels (1726 : rev. 1735) by Jonathan Swift is one fine example, as is Voltaire's lesser-known Micromegas (1752). Both are satirical and use devices such as aliens and strange new worlds as a means of commenting on the society of their contemporaries. These are not the alien races that would come to appear much later in episodes of STARTREK, but metaphorical humans with no previous experience of our culture. Their ignorance is used to satirical and often ingenious effect. Nevertheless, these stories remain, ultimately, fantasies.

The 18th Century was no less found in the creation of other worlds and fictional voyages of discovery. Two key works Swift's Gulliver's Travels and Defoe's Robinson Crusoe (1719) were to have a profound and long lasting influence on fiction in general. Robinson Crusoe

was the prototype of a genre of novel subsequently described as desert island fiction and was the progenitor of the Robinsonade. There were scores of imitations in Europe during the next two hundred years. Less well-known adventure stories of the 18th Century are Ludwig Holberg's A journey to the World Underground (1741). By this stage, the novel of adventure and the travel book, were well established as separate genres. Voltaire's Candide (1759), a philosophical and satirical adventure story, was a combination of both.

Brian Aldiss proposes in his excellent history of the genre, Billion Year Spree (1973) that Mary Shelley's Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus (1818) should be viewed as the classic Gothic Romance, as the first novel to be truly recognized as Science Fiction. There are many grounds for agreeing with him.

• Frankenstein is a completely original work, an innovation. It produced countless imitations and variations. It was almost immediately dramatized.

• Frankenstein shows a keen awareness of the technological and scientific knowledge of its time, and develops this to form the basis of the novel.

• From some perspectives, Frankenstein shows clearly the beginning of the development of Science Fiction as a form distinct from other fantastical literature.

• In a similar way to much other fiction of the time, Frankenstein draws on images taken from philosophy, poetry and mythology but adds the extra dimension of science.

• It is essentially a Gothic Romance in which Shelley, bravely, used current scientific thought to render her demon credible.

The monster is no longer a devilish entity that simply exists - it is created, bit by bit, a human being and literally shocked into existence with electricity. Magic and mystical invocations are nowhere in sight and although religious analogies are drawn, they remain purely metaphysical. Science, not religion, has become the key to unlocking life.

• Shelley's novel represents a bold step forward into a new way of thinking, and shines a light ahead of itself, making further exploration possible.

• In Frankenstein, Shelley opened up a Pandora's Box of notions and ideas that had been bubbling away under the surface of society for years. She gave them voice and form, and proved herself to be years ahead of her time.

• It is fair to say that Frankenstein represents the first true Science Fiction novel to appear. The novel had an even more significant bearing on the Gothic Romance until the middle of the 20th Century. Frankenstein did not have a big influence on the development of Science

Fiction genre. It stands alone as a testament to the foresight of one young woman and it was not until many years later, when the genre was already established, that it would be recognized as the classic piece of Science Fiction that it is. It took a few years more and the works of a number of other writers before the genre began to emerge in its current and recognizable form.

During the 19th Century, a number of other writers showed a predilection for the scientific romance, akin to what might now be loosely described as science fiction. Mary Shelley wrote a much less well-known book, The Last Man (1826), there were yet more utopian novels, the influence of the Gothic novel became pervasive, and Edgar Allan Poe published a number of stories in which one can see him feeling his way towards a science fiction mode.

While it remains undeniable that Poe has had a more direct and profound influence on the modern horror story, exemplified in the work of such writers as Stephen King and Clive Barker, it is nonetheless notable that a number of his stories make use of ideas that would later become associated with Science Fiction. In the works of Poe, there are alien races existing out in the ether of space, balloon– flights to the moon, and the travel journals of a twenty–ninth century woman. The power of these stories is undeniable and they represent the seeds that would eventually flower into the modern genre, yet they remain, like the fantastical tales that had preceded them, i.e. allegorical fantasies. The "fantastic journey" and the utopian / anti-utopian story developed into a more recognizably modern form of Science Fiction with the publication of the first Scientific Romance, the French Author Jules Verne's Journey to the Centre of the Earth (1863).

By the mid 19th C, science fiction was on the move; things were happening. In an entry in their Journal (for 16 July 1856) the Goncourt brothers (Edmond and Jules) displayed remarkably astute prescience in commenting on a "new literary world pointing to the literature of the twentieth century. Scientific miracles, fables on the pattern A + B; a clear sighted, sickly literature, no more poetry, but analytic fantasy ….. things playing a more important part than people…. etc.". (Cudden : 794).

The ever popular Jules Verne (1828 – 1905), who was considerably influenced by Poe, made a major contribution to a new kind of fiction which combined adventure and exploration and the popularization of science. Immensely prolific, he is now best remembered for :

* Voyage all centre de la terre (1864)

* Vingt mille lieus sous les mers (1969)

* Le Tour due monde en quatre – Vingts Jours (1873).

A major part of Verne's success was his ability to make scientific expertise plausible.

In the 1890s, H.G. Wells, one of the great originators of science fiction ideas – many of which have been refashioned by other writers since then made his impact on the world with such works as :

* The Time Machine (1895)
* The Wonderful Visit (1895)
* The War of the Worlds (1898)
* First Men in the Moon (1901)

Wells was prophetic and showed the way to many possibilities in Science Fiction. He had the advantage of being a trained scientist with a profound understanding of scientific matters. With H.G. Wells, Scientific Romance got a new identity.

The Scientific Romance represents the first real step on the road towards the consolidation of the central ideas and themes of Science Fiction into one dominant form, the first version of science fiction in a recognizably "modern" manifestation. The term did not actually come into use until about thirty years after Verne's Journey to the Centre of the Earth (1863), with the publication of H.G. Wells' The Time Machine (1895).

Journey to the Centre of the Earth (1863) achieves much. Its precision of detail is certainly inspired by the works of Poe, but it shows a more clear and ready grasp of science and the scientific method. It describes the descent of Professor Von Hardwigg and his spirited nephew Harry into the mouth of an Icelandic Volcano, from which they go on to discover a subterranean world inhabited by prehistoric monsters. The author approaches the scenario itself with judicious logic, explaining how these dinosaurs could have survived for so long in isolation, but it is the manner in which the character of Von Hardwigg, a chemist and mineralogist, approaches his discovery that is most enlightening. The novel is full of scientific speculation of the day. It casts a scientist in the lead role, and shows very clearly how he uses the scientific method to aid him in his quest to discover how this subterranean world has come about. It was widely read and therefore had an important and far-reaching influence on the other writers of the day.

If Journey to the Centre of the Earth (1863) marks the beginning of Science Fiction as a definite genre, Verne's later works, From the Earth to the Moon (1865), Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea (1870) and The Mysterious Land (1874) represent its continued

growth, as he toys with new ideas and continues to develop imaginative scenarios that can nonetheless be explained logically in terms of cause and effect.

These 'extraordinary voyages', as they were then known, had an exceptional influence on the works of many writers, including that of Edwin A Abbott and Robert Louis Stevenson, but their most profound effect was on the British Writer H.G. Wells, whose The Time Machine (1895) represents the definitive moment at which science fiction came of age.

Wells's The Time Machine (1895) is the epitome of a science fiction novel, marking the important leap from Verne's adventurous 'extra ordinary voyages' to fully fledged Science Fiction.

It achieves this in a number of ways.

1) Firstly, it postulates a device, based on a scientific theory, that will see its characters transported forward through time to various stages in the existence of man. It explorates from current "Evolutionary" theory to justify its portrayal of future humanity as two distinct species. Perhaps most importantly, it also uses scientific speculation to comment critically on the Victorian society of Well's own time.

Wells wanted to stir up the complacent Victorians and provide them with what he thought could be an accurate vision of their future. He saw the gentle yet docile race as symbolic of the effete upper classes, whilst the Morlocks represented the descendants of the uneducated but more evolutionarily successful workers underclass. His fictional future was a satire on Victorian society, but it was also scientifically plausible according to the speculation about evolution that was current at that time.

2) The Time Machine pioneered the use of many Science Fiction concepts that have now become genre clichés, so often have they been recycled by other writers over the years. Indeed, the story culminates in what has become one of the most enduring images of the genre, the terminal beach, as the Time Traveller Watches the final, dying moments of the Earth before the Sun expands to swallow the planet. Wells was not optimistic about the future, and in The Time Machine (1895), he attempted to show his Victorian readers one possible means by which they might eventually bring about their own downfall.

Wells had given readers an ostensibly 'scientific' method for traversing the time streams; he posited a device created through the application of advanced science that would allow its inventor to actually visit times to come. This revolutionary book put scientific thought at the forefront of modern literature science and opened the door to the future.

3) Wells did not stop there, and in the heady years that followed he produced some of the finest writings that the genre has ever seen who can forget the end of The war of the Worlds (1898), in which malignant Martian invaders are destroyed not by human resistance but by a simple strain of common cold. Wells set out a template for the development of the genre that would eventually come to be known not by its original name of "Scientific Romance" but as "Science Fiction".

The First World War affected everyone in Britain to a greater or lesser degree, not least, the creators of futuristic scientific romance. There was a steadily burgeoning idea, and even a conviction, that another world war would spell the end of civilization and that mankind was approaching irreversible disaster leading to another epoch of barbarianism. This would be the ultimate horror story. More or less concurrent with this idea was another – that the "terminus post quem" catastrophe, holocaust, Armageddon, etc. might somehow lead to the establishment of a new race of human beings; or, that, because mankind was on the brink of comprehensive disaster, a 'new race' could be desirable. A further instance of alternative worlds, these were dominant ideas between the wars. After the second world war the advent of the nuclear / hydrogen bomb age and the whole world might be written off by a lunatic megalomaniac or even by mere carelessness or inefficiency inspired spates of post – nuclear disaster fantasies, and for years tens of thousands of schoolboys read the stuff avidly and indulged their speculative powers on such themes in their weekly compositions. The spectre of the 100 – megaton 'bomb' cast an enormous shadow for some twenty years. By the 1980s the fact that a single submarine in the Irish Sea had enough nuclear fire power in its missiles to wipe out all the major cities of Europe was taken entirely for granted and hardly raised an eyebrow.

In the inter-war period not a few British authors wrote books concerned with the effects of a new war. Notable examples are :

* Edward Shank's People of the Rains (1920).
* Cicely Hamilton's Theodore Savage (1922).
* H.G. Well's The Shape of Things to Come (1933).

The idea of a new race, a new species of humanity, was developed by a number of writers, and principally by Olaf Stapledon (1886–1950). He introduced an ethical and philosophical element – almost a mystical element to his extra ordinary scientific romances, which display a cosmic vision at once grand, spectacular and despairing. His two main books were : Last

and First Men (1930) A history of man's descendants over some billions of years and Star Maker (1937).

By the 1920s utopian visions were unfashionable. Dystopian visions began to replace them. For example, Zamayatin's 'We' (1920-21), and Muriel Jaeger's The Question Mark (1923). Later in 1932, came Aldous Huxley's Brave New World (1932) : a brilliantly witty and deeply depressing picture of a possible future society in a book whose popularity has remained undiminished after more than sixty years. From the late 1940s onwards there was to come a succession of anti-utopian or dystopian fictions which examined various kinds of repressive regimes. George Orwell's 1984 (1949) remains the most famous. Other notable instances are :

* H.F. Heard's : Dopplegangers (1947)
* B.F. Skinner's : Walden Two (1948)
* George R. Stewart's : Earth Abides (1949)
* David Karp's : One (1953)
* Ray Bradbury : Farenheit 451 (1953)
* Harry Harrison's : Make Room ! Make Room ! (1966)
* Philip K. Dick's : Flow my Tears, the Policeman Said. (1974)

However, the founding of Amazing Stories magazine in 1926 by editor Hugo Gernsback represented the first real attempt to put Science Fiction before the reading public as a distinct genre in its own right.

When Amazing Stories had experienced financial problems during the 1930s, a new magazine named Astounding Stories had thrived.During the 1930s and 1940s American Science Fiction continued to be confined to the magazines, but gradually it became more intellectual and sophisticated. This was largely due to the impact of John W. Campbell. He took over the magazine

The original Golden Age of Science Fiction is believed by many to have occurred during the war years of 1939-43. It was arguably the most important period in Science Fiction history, and saw the emergence of many of the classic writers, as well as the establishment of a more sober and serious tone for the genre. There is little doubt that this maturing of the genre was partly due to the Second World War and the effect that it was having on the mood of the time, but much of it can also be put down to the constant and attentive work of editor John W.

Campbell. He changed the name of the magazine to Astounding Science Fiction with this change in the title came an important and revolutionary change in the content.

The 1930s and 1940s also saw a number of mainstream authors such as Aldous Huxley in Brave New World (1932) and George Orwell in 1984 (1949) make use of Science Fiction ideas and concepts. In some ways, this highlights the shift in the public's perception of the genre that was beginning to take place. Science fiction was becoming respectable.

Science Fiction became even more popular in America with the arrival of paperbacks. Many short stories were still written, but the novel attracted writers more and more. The American modes of science fiction became dominant in Britain and elsewhere in 1950s. The writers and the people in the first half of the 20th C. were not much hopeful about future and civilization of the world after the first and Second World War. Their distressed and confused minds were mirrored in the sub-genre of Science Fiction as dystopian or anti-utopia novels.

WHAT IS DYSTOPIA?

A dystopia (cacotopia, kakotopia or anti-utopia) is a fictional society that is the anti thesis of utopia. It is usually characterized by an oppressive social control, such as an authoritarian or totalitarian government. In other words, a dystopia has the opposite of what one would expect in a utopian society.

Some academic circles distinguish between anti utopia and dystopia. As in George Orwell's 1984 (1949) and Yevgeny Zamyatin's We, (1920-21) a dystopia does not pretend to be good, while an anti utopia appears to be utopia or was intended to be so as in Aldous Huxley's Brave New World (1932), but a fatal flaw or other factor has destroyed or twisted it in the anti-utopian world or concept.

DEFINITION

A dystopia, a community or society gone wrong, is the opposite of a utopia. Dystopias are often portrayed as social structures that have collapsed under an environment burden or political regime. Due to their very nature they are often set at some indefinite point in the future; societies do not decay over years but over decades. (Quoted by Mann : 477)

It can be argued that much Science Fiction takes place in either utopia or dystopia; they are the obvious choices for science fiction as they instantly communicate an alternate situation or environment. Dystopias particularly give the characters the reasons to act, as there is a very definite need to create a better society.

SOME COMMON TRAITS OF A DYSTOPIAN SOCIETY

In general, dystopias are seen as visions of dangerous and alienating future societies.

It is a culture where the condition of life is "extremely bad" as from deprivation, oppression or terror.

The overwhelming majority of dystopias have some connection to the world, but often in an imagined future or an alternative history. Furthermore, the dystopia was brought about by human action or inaction whether stemming from human evil or merely stupidity.

The only trait common to all dystopias is that they are negative and undesirable societies, but many commonalities are found across the dystopian societies. Many dystopias can be described as a utopian society with at least one fatal flaw. A utopian society is founded on perfectionism and fulfillment, a dystopian society's dreams of improvement are overshadowed by stimulating fears of the "ugly – consequences of present day behaviour".

SOCIETY

A dystopian society exhibits an apparent society free from poverty, disease, conflict and even unhappiness. Scratching the surface of the society, however, reveals exactly the opposite. The exact problem is, the way the problems are suppressed and its chronology forms the central conflict of the story.

Many dystopias impose severe social restrictions on characters' lives. This can take the form of social stratification where social class is strictly defined and enforced. Social mobility is non-existent.For example in the novel Brave New World (1932), the caste or class system is pre-natally designated in terms of Alphas, Betas, Gammas, Deltas and Epsilons, who lack the very ability to advance.

Another, often related form of restriction lies in the requirement of strict conformity among citizens, with a general assumption that dissent and individuality are bad. In the novel We (1920-21) by Yevgeny Zamyatin, prople are permitted to live out of public view only for an hour a day. They are not only referred to by numbers instead of names, but are considered neither "citizens" nor "people" but "numbers". The dystopian society depicted in We is called the One State, a glass city led by the Benefactor and surrounded by a giant Green Wall to separate citizens from nature. All citizens are known as "cypher" which means "non-entity". In Anthem, Ayn Rand depicts the same type of society. Here also the characters are not known by their names but by the attributes and numbers that they are given.

Some dystopian works emphasize the pressure to conform in terms of the requirement not to excel. In these works, the society is ruthlessly egalitarian, in which ability and

accomplishment or even competence, are suppressed and stigmatized as forms of inequality. As in Anthem by Ayn Rand, the protagonist Equality 7–2521 invents electricity and presents his invention in front of The Council of Scholars, efforts are made to capture him, because the characters in the novel are not allowed to deviate from their streamlined routine.

In a typical dystopia, there is total absence of any social group beside the state, such social groups become the subdivisions of the state, under the government control, for example, the Junior antisex league in 1984 by George Orwell.

POLITICS

Dystopian politics are often characterized as one or several types of government and political systems. These systems include, bureaucracy, capitalism, communism, fascism, totalitarianism, oligarchy, dictatorship and other forms of political social and economical control. These governments often assert great power over the citizens, dramatically depicted in 1984 as the authority to decree that 2 + 2 need not equal to 4.

OLIGARCHY

Oligarchy is a form of government where political power effectively rests with a small elite segment of society (distinguished by wealth, family or military power). This group of society has the political power to rule over the majority.

All these political regimes are very well brought out in the dystopian novels. In When the Sleeper Wakes, (1899), H.G. Wells depicted the governing class as hedonistic and shallow. He contrasted this to the world of Jack London's, The Iron Heel (1908), where the dystopian rules are brutal and dedicated to the point of fanaticism, which he considered more plausible, and is more typical of dystopias in general.

The Iron Heel (1908) – the novel is based on the (fictional) Everhard Manuscript written by Avis Everhard. The manuscript itself covers the years 1912 through 1932 in which the oligarchy arose in the United States. In Asia, Japan conquered East Asia and created its own empire, India gained independence and Europe became socialist Canada, Mexico and Cuba formed their own oligarchies. In North America, the Oligarchy maintains power for three centuries until the revolution succeeds and ushers in the Brotherhood of Man. During the years of the novel, the First Revolt is described and preparations for the Second Revolt are discussed. From the perspective of Everhard, the imminent Second Revolt is sure to succeed, but, from the distant future perspective of Meredith, it is realized that Everhard's hopes were to be crushed for centuries to come.

Utopian politics is often considered as idealistic in practice towards the society in which they are dictated and enacted. Dystopian politics, however, are considered flawed in some ways or have negative connotations amongst the inhabitants of the dystopian "World". Dystopian politics are often portrayed as oppressive. Dystopian are often filled with pessimistic views of the ruling class or government that is brutal or uncaring, ruling with an "Iron hand" or "Iron fist". This dystopian government establishment often have protagonists or groups that lead a "resistance" to enact change within their Government.

Examples of dystopian politics in literary fiction can be read in Parable of the Sower (1993), V for Vendetta (1984) Dystopian politics is portrayed in films such as Fahrenheit 451 (1966), Brazil (1966), THX 1138 (1985).

ECONOMY

A commonly occurring theme is that the state is in control of the economy, as shown in such works as Anthem (1937). Some dystopias, such as 1984 (1949), feature black markets with goods that are dangerous and difficult to obtain, or the characters may be totally at the mercy of the state controlled economy. Such systems usually have a lack of efficiency, featuring a bloated welfare system in which total freedom from responsibility has encouraged an underclass prone to any form of antisocial behaviour. Kurt Vonnegut's Player Piano (1952) depicts a dystopia in which the centrally controlled economic system has indeed made material plentiful, but deprived the mass of humanity of meaningful labour; virtually all work is menial and unsatisfying and even most of the small groups that achieve education are admitted to the elite.

Even in dystopias where the economic system is not the source of the society's badness as in Brave New World (1932), the state often controls the economy. In Brave New World (1932), a character, reacting with horror to the suggestion of not being part of the social body, cites a reason that everyone works for everyone else.

A HERO / PROTAGONIST

Unlike utopian fiction, which often features an outsider to have the world shown to him, dystopias seldom feature an outsider as the protagonist. While such a character would clearly understand the nature of the society, based on comparison to his society, the knowledge of the outside culture subverts the power of the dystopia. When such outsiders are major characters – such as John the savage in Brave New World – their societies are not such as can assist them against the dystopia. The story usually centres around a protagonist who questions

the society, often feeling intuitively that something is terribly wrong, such as Winston Smith in 1984 (1949) or 'V' in Alan Moore's V for Vendetta. The hero comes to believe that escape or even overturning the social order is possible and decides to act at the risk of life and limb; in some utopias, this may appear as irrational even to him, but he still acts.

In many cases, the hero's conflict brings him of a representative to the dystopia who articulates its principles, e.g. Mustapha Mond in Brave New World (1932) and O'Brien in 1984 (1949).

CLIMAX AND DENOUMENT

The aim of the hero is either an escape or destruction of social order. However, the story is often unresolved. That is, the narrative may deal with individuals in a dystopian society who are dissatisfied, and may rebel, but ultimately fail to change anything. Sometimes they themselves end up as changed to conform to the norms of the society. This narrative of a sense of hopelessness can be found in such classic dystopian works as 1984. It contrasts with much fiction of the future, in which a hero succeeds in resolving conflicts and the otherwise changing things for the better.

Occasionally, the escape from dystopia is made possible by time travel and changing history. Marge Piercy's Woman on the Edge of Time (1976) though chiefly concerned with the protagonist's time-travel to a future utopia, also has her travel to a dystopia, and in the current time, stymies the efforts that will lead to that future. Poul Anderson's The

Corridors of Time (1965) has a protagonist recruited by one future to fight another dystopian one; learning that both societies are dystopian in very different ways. He acts to prevent each from one gaining the upper hand over the other in their time-travelling wars, enabling the future emergence of a utopian society. In its time, such a dystopia can be quite as powerful as any other. However, the time travel necessarily moves portions of the story, and usually quite large portions, out of the time of the dystopia, making it less an overwhelming presence in the novel.

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