

SPECULATIVE FICTION: DEFINING SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY

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ABSTRACT: This study aims at promoting a debate about speculative narratives, particularly those commonly classified as science fiction or fantasy, assuming that the first works of speculative literature were not intended to encompass a single generic category given their dialogue with epistemological changes and their close connection with religious and mythological discourses. Through close readings and bibliographic analyses, we build on the literary scholarship of Gunn (2005), Alkon (1994), Araújo (2020), and Manlove (1975), among others. The results suggest that there is no stylistic uniformity in science fiction or fantasy narratives, as they directly converse with historical, political, and cultural moments, as well as with existing literary styles or movements.

KEYWORDS: Speculative fiction; Science Fiction; Fantasy

FICÇÃO ESPECULATIVA: DEFININDO FICÇÃO CIENTÍFICA E FANTASIA

RESUMO: O presente estudo tem como objetivo promover um debate sobre as narrativas especulativas, em particular aquelas comumente classificadas como Ficção Científica ou Fantasia, partindo do pressuposto de que as primeiras obras da literatura especulativa não pretendiam abranger uma única categoria genérica, dado seu diálogo com as mudanças epistemológicas e sua estreita ligação com os discursos religiosos e/ou mitológicos. Por meio de leituras críticas e análises bibliográficas, nos baseamos nos estudos de Gunn (2005), Alkon (1994), Araújo (2020) e Manlove (1975), entre outros. Os resultados sugerem que não há uniformidade estilística nas narrativas de Ficção Científica ou

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Fantasia, pois estas dialogam diretamente com momentos históricos, políticos e culturais, bem como com estilos ou movimentos literários existentes.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Ficção Especulativa; Ficção Científica; Fantasia

Introduction

Coming towards a definition of speculative fiction is, indeed, doing a lot of speculation; many critics, writers, and people interested in literature as a whole have proposed different definitions and categories that may be considered as part of it. Most of them agree, though, that speculative fiction is a broad genre that deals with events that extrapolate those of the everyday world. By going beyond reality as we know it, it becomes the fiction of “what if?”, of what could have been or might have been if the universe and the rules that run it were somehow discrepant from what they are and how they work currently.

Speculating on how things would be different if time-travel, alternate magic worlds, mythological creatures and monsters, ideal societies, and other non-real things truly existed, pushing the boundaries of imagination into a narrative piece of work, might be a simple way of characterizing this genre. Even though the most recurrent topics are not often described as ordinary, this kind of fiction leads to critical thinking, providing insights into humanity and opening room to disturbing questions, since it usually puts regular people face-to-face with extraordinary circumstances.

One of the first known uses of the term speculative fiction was in *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*, October of 1899, in M. F. Egan's review of *Looking Backwards, 2000-1887* (1888), by Edward Bellamy. Its usage as a genre came first from the American science fiction writer Robert A. Heinlein in the late 1940s, separating consistent science fiction works from the pop “sci-fi” of his time, which tended towards fantasy.

Heinlein intended to use speculative fiction as a synonym for science fiction, and both terms may have had their definitions walking together in the beginning, but speculative fiction came to have such a wide application that science fiction became one of its subsets, next to fantasy, horror and many others.

Since no generic borderlines have been provided, the term is generally accepted as including fantasy writing as well. Moreover, it is often used as a substitute for ‘science fiction’ in general, since it is believed to be more respectable sounding and lacking the pulp associations. (CLUTE & NICHOLLS, 1999, p. 1145)

This absence of borderlines Clute and Nicholls refer to in their *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* goes beyond the barriers of science fiction and fantasy, to horror and historical fiction, genres that also existed before the term speculative fiction was coined. Furthermore, the blurred lines that surround speculative fiction also cover works that bring up discussions about issues such as gender, ethics, beliefs, prejudice, ecology, technology, society, metaphysics, cybernetics, etc. It’s the literature of freedom—freedom to escape from conventional thought, and portray old issues from a brand-new perspective.

The purpose of this study is to provide a discussion toward the concepts of fantasy and science fiction, highlighting some important differences, but also showing that it is possible for these two literary genres to coexist in the same narrative.

Science Fiction or Fantasy: Some Distinctive Aspects

As it has been cited, science fiction is a genre that is part of the wide group of speculative fiction. Considering that elements beyond those in our routine reality are part of them all, how is it possible to determine when the reader is dealing with science fiction or fantasy? James Gunn, an established scholar on the subject of science fiction, sets up the following boundaries for science fiction and fantasy:

Fantasy and science fiction belong to the same broad category of fiction that deals with events other than those that occur, or have occurred, in the everyday world. But they belong to distinctly different methods of looking at those worlds: fantasy is unrealistic; science fiction is realistic; fantasy creates its own universe with its own laws; science fiction exists in our universe with its shared laws. (GUNN, 2005, p. 11)

Summarizing, Gunn considers fantasy the literature of difference, for its stories happen in different (“not congruent or incongruent”, in his own words) worlds, while science fiction would be the literature of change, for its stories are placed in the everyday world, though

extended to unknown circumstances. It is all be a matter of explanation: the more explanation in fantasy, the closer to science fiction it becomes; the more irrational suppositions in science fiction, the closer to fantasy it is. If the explanation for how readers got from their own reality to the story's is irrelevant or fanciful, then it should positively be considered fantasy.

Gunn himself does not find this explanation satisfying, or any of his previous definitions of science fiction, including the already well-known among science-fiction students, to be quoted below:

Science fiction is a branch of literature, which deals with describing the influence of changes on people living in the real world, observed against a past or future background, or from a distance. It often speaks about changes taking place in the world of science and technology, and it frequently concerns itself with issues, the relative meaning of which is greater than the meaning of an individual or of a society; the danger here befalls often the whole civilization or race. (GUNN, 1977, p. 9)

He does it for two main reasons: (1) he considers that science fiction is a kind of “super-genre” (GUNN, 2005, p. 11), able to incorporate others and resulting in sub-genres such as science-fiction mystery, science-fiction love story, science-fiction gothic, science-fiction western, etc.; (2) the misuse of words such as *often* and *usually* when using that definition, making it not as comprehensive as it should be. Many other writers and critics recognize that, despite numerous attempts, the science-fiction genre has not found a satisfactory definition yet. In the following section, some of those attempts will be displayed and discussed in order to reach a better understanding of what science fiction and fantasy can be.

Toward a Definitions

There are many definitions for both science fiction and fantasy as literary genres. As the writer Paul K. Alkon comments in his *Science Fiction Before 1900: Imagination Discovers Technology*, “the polysemy of the term *science fiction*, reflected in the inability of critics to arrive at an agreement on any one definition, is a measure of science fiction’s complex significance for our times” (ALKON, 1994, p. 9). Much effort has been applied in order to define, redefine, and even undefine it, since many writers agree that science fiction became such a complex and broad genre that defining it would certainly exclude works that otherwise

would be part of it, as well as the other way around, including literary works that are not considered as science fiction by most.

That is exactly what science-fiction writer and editor Barry N. Malzberg does in his short essay *The Number of the Beast*. At first, he quotes himself in his early definition of SF: “science fiction is that form of literature which deals with the effects of technological change in an imagined future, an alternative present or a reconceived history” (MALZBERG, 2005, p.37). Then, he starts speculating on a list of science fiction books that are left aside by his own definition—only to cite subsequently some others that according to most students of the genre would not be SF at all, but fit in the definition.

An important definition is that of the scholar, writer, and editor Darko Suvin, since it has become standard for those who agree with him and a rich source for those who disagree or build on his definition. He states: “[...] a literary genre whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition, and whose main device is an imaginative framework, alternative to the author’s empirical environment” (SUVIN, 1979, p. 7-8). *Cognition* and *estrangement* are the keywords in this definition. By the first, Suvin means the search for rational understanding, keeping this kind of story apart from those related to fantasy and myth; while by the second, something that is possible to recognize but that looks unfamiliar at the same time, that which would make a difference from realistic mainstream literature.

Noncognitive estrangement, which is neither naturalistic nor cognitively linked to the natural world, includes such genres or modes of fantasy, myth, folktale, among others. About the literature of cognitive estrangement, the literary critic Naiara Araujo (2014) says it “involves a defamiliarization of aspects of the ordinary world through the labor of the author’s and the reader’s cognition” (ARAUJO, 2014, p. 20). The critic also describes how Suvin’s perspective brings an opposition between science fiction and myth. If the circumstances in the story are atemporal, led by magic or religious ways, relying on the hero’s ethics, denying the neutral autonomy of physics, there is a predominance of myth and, therefore, it could be called metaphysical. Then, she diverges by explaining the importance of myth for the science-fiction genre and speculative fiction as a whole,

I would argue that his explanation of myth is reductive and limited, since myth has played a significant role in the study of mankind’s evolution in all its aspects. The most important themes about human existence are usually

represented by mythological narratives which provoke a sense of self-identification in the reader [...]. In speculative literature, myth is a central element because it conjures up possibility. That is why some science-fiction narratives have combined mythological aspects with modern perspectives. (ARAUJO, 2014, p. 21)

In fact, several acclaimed writers, both of hard and soft science fiction, had used myths from different origins associated with new technologies or new organized social systems to develop narratives which open up for different possibilities for the future or even new viewpoints on past and present paradigms, as it will be further examined and illustrated in the following section.

The scholar and science-fiction critic Carl Freedman, when analyzing Suvin's definition, also highlights some of the problems the definition presents. One of them is about how the category *cognition* sets a stronger compromise to science plausibility than to the ideas of literature and genre, as he inquires: "must we wait for a scientific consensus on the matter before deciding whether the text is science fiction or fantasy?" (FREEDMAN, 2000, p. 17). For that issue, Freedman suggests that "cognition effect" would be more important than cognition itself, otherwise science fiction as cognitive estrangement "can lead to patent absurdities." (ibid, p. 18).

Freedman describes cognition effect as the attitude of the text itself toward the estrangement performed in the story. He illustrates his point by using Tolkien's trilogy *The Lord of the Rings* and C.S. Lewis's trilogy, called by some the 'Ransom trilogy' (*Out of the Silent Planet* and its sequels *Perelandra* and *That Hideous Strength*) since both are based on Christian principles, but the first one is taken as fantasy while the second, though not unanimously, is considered science fiction. Freedman elucidates that this happens "because of the formal stances adopted by the texts themselves" (ibid, p. 18), which makes Lewis produce a cognitive effect, while Tolkien deliberately does not.

In his 1986 *Critical Terms for Science Fiction: A Glossary and Guide to Scholarship*, author, editor, and reviewer Gary K. Wolfe gathered more than thirty definitions for the genre, "all of which included contradictions" (KINCAID, 2005, p. 42), "[t]he critical test for any definition", Paul Kincaid says, "is that it includes everything we believe should be included within the term, and it excludes everything we believe should be omitted" (ibid).

The definition of science fiction is also narrowly related to which perspective of urtext (primordial or founding text in the genre) is taken into consideration. Depending on the view of when exactly this genre started to appear in literature, a different idea of what it really is and what kinds of work fit in it will surface. As Kincaid says:

And what we conceive science fiction to be inevitably dictates how we identify its origin. What's more, where we place that starting point inevitably affects what we see as the history (and prehistory) of the genre, which in turn changes our perception of what science fiction is. It is a mobius loop: the definition affects the perception of the historical starting point, which in turn affects the definition. (KINCAID, 2005, p. 45)

It is a circle indeed, as Kincaid describes it. And as there is no agreement as to which definition of science fiction is the (most) correct one, there is no agreement as to which text or set of texts should be considered the first one either. It means every critic, writer, and scholar in science fiction is inside a different Mobius loop.

Similarly to science fiction, there is no agreement regarding a definition of fantasy, although most critics agree that fantasy is a kind of literature that features magical and supernatural elements that do not exist in the real world. There is also some consensus about the necessity of an entirely imaginary universe with its own physical laws.

Fantastical elements have always been part of our imagination. Ancient mythologies are surrounded by gods, monstrous beasts, and magical creatures. Folklore and religious texts are also rooted in some supernatural forces or powers. Regarding the presence of supernatural elements in the structure of fantasy, Manlove (1975) states that "in fantasy the supernatural may in part belong to our reality by being a disguised physical, moral or mental phenomenon but it is never more than partly these things" (p.6). In other words, by supernatural, he means also a symbolic extension of the human mind, as can be seen in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), by Lewis Carroll.

From this perspective, Manlove (1975) defines fantasy as "a fiction evoking wonder and containing a substantial and irreducible element of supernatural or impossible worlds, beings or objects with which the mortal characters in the story or the readers become on at least partly familiar terms" (p. 1). By using his definition, the following 19th-century narratives can be part of the fantasy tradition: George MacDonald's *Phantastes* (1858), Charles Kingsley's

The Water-Babies, A Fairy Tale for a Land Baby (1863), Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), William Morris's *The Well at the World's End* (1896), among others.

However, when it comes to the root of the genre, it is fair to mention the contributions of the Brothers Grimm's *Grimm's Fairy Tales* (1812) or *Aesop's Fables*, opening the discussion to a range of subgenres related to this kind of narrative, such as high fantasy, low fantasy, epic fantasy, dark fantasy, and fairy tales, among others. Such a diversity of categories prevents a definition that supports all the characteristics or tendencies. Thus, the boundaries of these speculative genres or subgenres have been subject of controversial discussions.

In an attempt to simplify the way in which we look at fantasy and science fiction, for example, Manlove (1975) states that:

Fantasy often draws spiritual nourishment from the past (even when set in the present day, as with Lewis' or Williams' fiction), particularly from a medieval and/or a Christian world order, for example the works of MacDonald, Morris, Dunsany, Eddison, Williams, Lewis, Tolkien, Peake, where science fiction is usually concerned with the future and the way we may develop. Again, in fantasy the direction of the narrative is often circular or static where in science fiction it is generally evolutionary or dynamic (MANLOVE, 1975, p. 8).

Although Manlove's explanation sheds some light on the discussion, the boundaries of these genres are not always clear in all narratives, since it is common to find elements that are usually related to fantasy in science-fiction works, for example. Such acknowledgment enables us to recognize the hybridization of the genre as an important point to be mentioned when it comes to the definition of these speculative genres.

Hybridization: A term to be considered

Science-fiction writer and playwright Brian W. Aldiss defines speculative narrative as "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" (ALDISS & WINGROVE, 2005, p. 164). According to him, the gothic novel is the one from which science fiction has sprung, which leads him to *Frankenstein* (1818) as the original text in the history of science fiction. In his essay called "On the Origin of Species: Mary Shelley", he goes deep into that matter.

Some works written in the seventeenth century could be considered protoscientific, which according to Araújo (2020) are narratives

[...] com a presença de fundamentos representativos de outros gêneros ou subgêneros, tais como fantasia, magia, sonho, suspense, horror, gótico, ou ainda princípios ligados ao sincretismo religioso, ocultismo ou outras crenças ou dogmas populares, sejam elas derivadas da religião ou de outras práticas culturais. Essa mistura de elementos reforça a influência dos estilos literários vigentes, bem como a presença marcante do diálogo entre o presente, o passado e o futuro; este, por vezes, vem envolto a dúvidas, medos e tensões³. (ARAÚJO, 2020, p. 42)

The first to be mentioned is *True History* (1634, first published in English) which narrates a journey to the Moon totally by accident: Lucian's ship is caught in a typhoon, lifted 1,8000,000 feet into the sky, and then headed to the Moon. The author was translated by both Sir. Thomas More and Johannes Kepler. Kepler admitted to using *True History* as the main source for his book *Sommium* (1634), also about a voyage to the Moon. His protagonist is taken to the Moon by demons, but scientific details are presented regarding the effects of gravitation and rarefied air in space. It was, alongside Lucian's other work *Icaromennipus*, a great influence on H.G. Wells' *The First Men in the Moon* (1901). Thomas More, on the other hand, by writing *Utopia* (1516), provided an important motif for modern science fiction, since the utopian scenario is a recurrent one in futuristic science-fiction adventures.

It is also important to mention Bishop Godwin's *The Man in the Moone* (1638). It supports the Copernican theory when its protagonist Domingo describes our planet hanging in space:

Then I should perceive a great shining brightness to occupy the roome, during the like time (which was undoubtedly none other than the great Atlantick Ocean). After that succeeded a spot almost of an Ovall form, even just such as we see America to have in our Mapps. Then another vast cleernesse,

³ [...] with the presence of fundamentals representative of other genres or subgenres, such as fantasy, magic, dream, suspense, horror, gothic, or even principles related to religious syncretism, occultism or other popular beliefs or dogmas, whether derived from religion or other cultural practices. This mixture of elements reinforces the influence of current literary styles, as well as the strong presence of the dialogue between the present, the past and the future; this last one comes, most of the time, with doubts, fears and tensions.

representing the West Ocean; and lastly a medley of spots, like the countries of the East Indies. So that it seemed unto me like no other than a huge Mathematical Globe, leasurely turned before me, wherein successively all the countries of our earthly world within the compasse of 24 howers were represented to my sight. (GODWIN apud HILLEGAS, 1979, p.5)

The shift from the geocentric to the heliocentric understanding of the solar system changed the status of our planet (until that moment, the center of the universe) to just one among many others. It opened up writers' eyes to different approaches to marvelous journeys to other worlds. Cyrano de Bergerac stands out for his *The Comical History of the States and Empires of the Moon and the Sun* (1656), in which he goes beyond removing Earth from the center of the universe: by mocking, satirizing, parodying, and criticizing the culture of his French contemporaries—and his own, he removed his own culture from the center of the human race, placing it as just one culture among many others. The ingenious ways deployed in order to take the protagonist to the Moon are also noteworthy.

Johnathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, in special the third book, *Voyage to Laputa*, is often cited for its influence and importance to what would later become science fiction. Gulliver ends up on the island of Balnibarbi, and from there he sees "a vast opaque body between me and the sun, moving towards the island" (SWIFT, 2006, p.146). Laputa is powered by a giant magnet; its underside is adamantine only. The island has the same composition as a mini-moon, meaning that this could be considered Swift's voyage to the moon in reverse. The conversation in which Gulliver describes all the problems and the cruelty of Western civilization to the King of Brobdingnag is noteworthy. The King's reply, "I cannot but conclude the bulk of your natives to be the most pernicious race of the little odious vermin that nature ever suffered to crawl upon the surface of the earth," (SWIFT, 2006, p.121), became famous and influential, since it appears in similar ways in Well's *The First Men in the Moon*, when Cavor is talking to the Grand Lunar, and in C.S. Lewis's *Out of the Silent Planet*, during Ransom's conversation with Malacandra's Oyarsa.

Voltaire, who admired Jonathan Swift and got to know him during his exile in England, was influenced by *Gulliver's Travels* when writing *Micromégas* (1752), to the extent that he cites Swift during a certain part of the story. Thousands-of-feet tall visitors from Sirius and Saturn come to Earth, in need of huge equipment (a 150 feet diamond as a microscope) and a lot of research to be able to see humans, whom they call "intelligent atoms." The satire is

heavily present in the aliens' conversation with human philosophers, such as in this fragment: "we talk about two or three points that we understand, and we argue about two or three thousand that we don't understand" (VOLTAIRE, 1961, p. 46). The aliens later gift the visitors with what is, for them, a tiny philosophy book with blank pages.

Voyages to unknown worlds underground started to appear in the 18th century. Some relevant works are Robert Paltock's *Peter Wilkins* (1750), which depicts its protagonist reaching a new place accidentally after having his broken ship sucked into a cavern and having kids with one of the native flying inhabitants of the place; Baron Holberg's *Journey of Niels Klim to the World Underground* (1741), whose main character gets to the hollow earth with its own sun, planet (Nazar), and firmament. Because he walks around Nazar for three days, Klim becomes its satellite; later on, he gets in trouble with the locals and flees through the same hole that led him there in the first place. There is also *Symzonia* (1820), by an anonymous author, which was a great influence on some of Poe's future work.

The 19th century produced the greatest influences on what is today called science fiction. The first to be cited here is Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818). As it has been already shown, Brian Aldiss is one of the most enthusiastic defenders of *Frankenstein* as the origin of the science-fiction genre. Paul Alkon starts his *Science Fiction before 1900* with the sentence "science fiction begins with Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*" (ALKON, 1994, p. 2).

Still in the 19th century, Edgar Allan Poe and Nathaniel Hawthorne were also influential in the development of speculative genres, both fantasy and science fiction. Hawthorne's attitude towards science seemed to be one of suspicion, since his works showed the damage that the excesses and the evil side of science could bring. The best examples of this are his *Rappaccini's Daughter* (1837), which portrays an extreme scientist ready to sacrifice his nearest and dearest for the sake of science, and *The Birthmark* (1843), which depicts Aylmer, who tries to perfect his wife by removing a birthmark but ends up destroying her.

Edgar Allan Poe is seen by some as the father of modern fantastic literature for his serious concern in achieving technical verisimilitude, applying scientific principles and the technology of his time, and explaining in depth the extensions of his speculation on what was still scientifically unknown. This way, he could easily move from the real to the imaginary, from facts to hoaxes, from discovery to imagination.

"The Unparalleled Adventures of One Hans Pfaall" (1835) is a good example of this: Poe gave a lot of attention to the preparations, and as for the journey to the Moon itself, he justifies the employment of a balloon by claiming that there is a thin atmosphere in space, using

a lighter-than-air balloon and a very light new gas as fuel. Hans has a set of instruments to help him through the trip, such as a telescope, thermometer, barometer, electrometer, and magnetic needle. As he rises and it gets more difficult to breathe, he starts bleeding through his nose, eyes, and ears, so he adjusts the air-tight bag around his car. Plenty of observations are made about the trip. His description of the Moon is similar to Kepler's—"entire absence of ocean or sea, and indeed of any lake or river, or body of water whatsoever" (POE, 2009, p. 526)—but in a later article he explained that his inspiration came from Sir John Herschel's *Treatise on Astronomy*, published a few months before *Hans Pfaall*. His inventiveness comes through in his descriptions of the locals as ugly little people, round, red-nosed, and with no ears.

Other noteworthy works by Poe are "Mellonta Tauta" (1849), about a letter written from the future that explains how different humanity and its technologies would be; "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" (1845), about a man mesmerized to the point of death, and then being awakened seven months later, portraying a pseudo-scientific hypothesis on hypnosis, besides explaining the process in details; *The Narrative of Arthur Gordom Pym* (1838), in which explorer Jeremiah Reynolds's real travel journals were weaved in Poe's plot; and "The Balloon Hoax" (1844), first published in *The Sun* newspaper as a true story and then retracted two days later.

Thanks to the writer Charles Baudelaire, Poe's works were translated into French and became very influential, especially in Jules Verne's writings. Although Verne's themes were not very original, his method of developing them was unquestionably unique during his time: carefully and constrainedly extrapolating his contemporary technology. His *From the Earth to the Moon* (1865) was the most convincing attempt at extraterrestrial voyage of the 19th century and is also speculated to be a retelling of Poe's "Hans Pfaall". It is also debatable whether *Around the World in Eighty Days* (1873) could be a sequel to "The Balloon Hoax," as well as *The Ice Sphinx* (1897) to *The Narrative of Arthur Gordom Pym*. His *voyages extraordinaires Journey to the Centre of the Earth* (1863) and *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Seas* (1870) are imaginative, though with certain moderation, as it became characteristic of him.

According to the writer and critic John Tresch, in his essay "Poe Invents Science Fiction", in *The Cambridge Companion to Edgar Allan Poe*, two of Poe's tales were influential for H. G. Wells's *The Time Machine* (1895): "Some Words with a Mummy" (1845), that shows how a pharaoh is brought back to life by the application of a galvanic fluid, sort of a "time machine powered by the same electric, magnetic, and spiritual mechanism as mesmerism"

(TRESCH, 2002, p.117); and “Mellonta Tauta” (1849), which has already been mentioned in this section.

By the end of the 1890s, historian, novelist, and social thinker Herbert George Wells started developing works that would become essential to the formation of science fiction as a genre, since he presented some ideas that became some of SF’s most relevant motifs. *The Time Machine* (1895) approaches the future in a very innovative way: no longer through dreams, visions, or mesmerism, but through the idea of time as a fourth dimension, which was present in C. H. Hinton’s essays collected in *Scientific Romances* (1886). In his work, Wells confronts the myths of social harmony and progress with entropic decline, degeneration, and radical class division. His Time Traveler shows that in a certain part of the future humanity is divided into two groups: Eli, which descended from the owning classes, and the Morlock, descendent from the working classes. Then, by going even further into the future and discovering there is no humanity left at all, it is clear that Wells’s position is not the most optimistic.

War of the Worlds (1898) proposes the thematic of an alien invasion. The two species in the story are opposed in a process of similarities and differences. Though the Martians are greatly disliked and feared, they are doing to humanity what humans have done to other species. Another interesting characteristic is that the plot starts with the narration of an ordinary moment of everyday life and then it all changes because of modern scientific advances. *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896) discusses the consequences of experiments in vivisection and how far a scientist can go in the name of science. Dr. Moreau tries to turn animals into humans, but he ends up producing beast-men who eventually return to their original behavior. To stop this from happening, the creatures repeat the litany called The Law:

Not to go on all-Fours; that is the Law. Are we not men? / Not to suck up Drink; that is the Law. Are we not men? / Not to eat Flesh nor Fish; that is the Law. Are we not men? / Not to claw Bark of Trees; that is the Law. Are we not men? / Not to chase other Men; that is the Law. Are we not men? (WELLS, 1896, p. 64-65)

This book has an interesting link to Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, though the relationship between creator and creatures and the control that one exerts over the other are quite different. In *The World Set Free* (1914), Wells predicted the invention and employment of the atomic

bomb: something he witnessed happening a few decades later. The antigravity technology of Carvorite in *The First Men in the Moon* (1901) is another interesting idea employed by Wells.

Although the expression “science fiction” had appeared before the 1900s, as in 1851 by William Wilson in his *A Little Earnest Book upon a Great Subject*, it was only in April 1926, in the first editorial of the *Amazing Stories* magazine, that it started to be acknowledged. About its meaning, when it was still known as “scientifiction,” the writer, publisher, and founder of *Amazing Stories*, Hugo Gernsback explained:

By ‘scientifiction’ I mean the Jules Verne, H. G. Wells and Edgar Allan Poe type of story – a charming romance intermingled with scientific fact and prophetic vision [...] Not only do these amazing tales make tremendously interesting reading – they are always instructive. They supply knowledge that we might not otherwise obtain – and they supply it in a very palatable form. [...] New adventures pictured for us in the scientifiction of today are not at all impossible of realization tomorrow. [...] Many great science stories destined to be of historical interest are still to be written. [...] Posterity will point to them as having blazed a new trail, not only in literature and fiction, but progress as well. [...]. (GERNSBACK, 1926, p. 3)

The term had been copyrighted by him for that specific magazine usage, so later on, after leaving *Amazing Stories*, in the first editorial of his new magazine *Science Wonder Stories*, Gernsback (1929) started using “science fiction” instead. It became a much more popular term, which is still used to the current days to refer to the genre.

As one can see, many of the narratives mentioned above have a strong connection with a fantastic world justifying the choice of *Science Wonder Stories*. In a discussion about the intersections between fantasy and science fiction, Robert Scholes (1987) uses the term science fantasy novels referring to these “half-science half-fantasy” narratives, particularly those written before the 20th century.

From this perspective, the term hybridization seems to be appropriate when it comes to the speculative novels written before the 20th century. Mystery, uncanny, marvelous, myth, dream, horror, belief, and science are terms present in the structural and generic nature of both fantasy and science fiction.

Final Considerations

By analyzing the journey of speculative or fantastic narratives over time, it is possible to infer that the first works of speculative literature were not intended to encompass a single generic category, given their dialogue with epistemological changes and their close connection with religious and mythological discourses.

Considering that the systematization of a genre usually takes root after its first manifestations and their repercussions within a readership and a group of writers and critics, it is understandable that, without intentions or pretensions, the narratives take on characteristics more focused on an author's individualities. Such characteristics are largely linked to the way of thinking and acting of a particular group to which the author belongs.

Thus, when producing a fantastic narrative, the writer is putting on paper the fruits of his imagination, the results of his desires, dreams, or fantasies. Likewise, when writing a work of science fiction, the writer projects what he or she believes is possible to happen due to technoscientific advances at a given time and space. Such a distinction between fantastical and scientific feats is not always clearly presented in the narratives, especially in hybrid works, where fantasy is mixed with science, as can be seen in many works from the 18th and 19th centuries.

It is noteworthy that given the historical, cultural, and political differences, as well as religious aspects of each country, these narratives can present distinct components, directly linked to the cultural identity of each people or region. In other words, there is no stylistic nor intentional uniformity in science fiction or fantasy narratives, as they directly dialogue with historical, political, and cultural moments, as well as with existing literary styles or movements, nationally or internationally.

Furthermore, it is possible to verify the hybridization or intersection of the genre in contemporary works. This allows us to state that, given the accelerated and multifaceted technological development, the sudden changes in the means of social interaction, as well as the emergence of the most varied forms of artistic and cultural dissemination, there is a natural tendency to produce hybrid narratives that allow for their insertion and/or classification in more than one genre or literary style.

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