

THE EVOLUTION OF SCIENCE FICTION: AN ANALYSIS OF GENRE FEATURES

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Abstract: This article explores the evolution, characteristics, and cultural significance of the science fiction genre. Rooted in scientific knowledge and technological speculation, science fiction distinguishes itself from fantasy by emphasizing plausible scientific concepts rather than magic. Tracing its origins from ancient legends through early works by Lucian, More, Verne, and Wells, the genre has developed into a major literary form that reflects humanity's hopes, fears, and philosophical questions about the future. Key periods such as the Golden Age and the New Wave are examined, highlighting influential authors and their contributions. The article also discusses the emergence of subgenres like cyberpunk, biopunk, and climate fiction, emphasizing science fiction's role in addressing social, cultural, and ethical issues. Finally, it argues that science fiction acts as a mirror to societal change and a tool for imagining possible futures, making it a vital part of global literature and cultural discourse.

Key words: Science fiction, literary genre, technological speculation, science and society, genre evolution, Golden Age of science fiction, New Wave, cyberpunk, cultural impact, futurism, science fiction subgenres, social criticism, science fiction history, technological prediction, global literature.

Introduction. Science fiction works are based on science and technology and a type of literary genre. They differ from fantasy novels with its scientific proofs. There is no magic in these works, but may have hypothesis about future.

Science fiction genre is one of the rapidly developing types of literature. It expresses the hopes, fears and hypothesis of man connected with the future. This genre not also amuses the readers, but also presents deep reasoning about future of humans. The theory, history, cultural impact, and predictions of technology in science fiction have made it an essential part of world literature [3].

Analysis and results. The origins of science fiction goes back to the ancient legends and tales, at that times extraordinary things are used to explain natural incidents. In ancient times there can be observed the elements of science fiction in Lucian's "True history" and in middle centuries T.More's "Utopia". But modern type of the genre formed in the XIX th century with the works of J.Verne and H.G.Wells.

As the American science fiction scholar and writer Laster Del Ray has said, it is difficult to define the term science fiction even to the avid lover of the literature. Because there is no clear and specific given definition of the term. According to the scholar Isaac Asimov words, science fiction is a type of literature and can be defined as the man's attitude to the changes of science and technology. Robert A. Heinlein has said that a brief definition of the science fiction genre is the event may happen in the future, the enough knowledge about today and past, thorough understanding of nature and scientific researches. The science fiction genre continues to lack a definitive consensus, as its interpretation varies among its enthusiasts.

In 1954 Forrest A. Ackerman used abbreviation of "sci-fi" for the term science fiction for the first time. According to playwright Peter Nichols, science fiction writers and readers prefer to use abbreviation of "SF" of this genre.

In XVII century the novel writing was developed. There is a hypothesis Mary Shelley's "Frankstein" has been as the first science fiction novel. Famous writer Edgar Allan Poe has

written several stories on science fiction genre. For instance, in the story “The unparalleled adventures of one Hans Pfall” the travel to the planet moon is described. Jules Verne is renowned for his writing with details and scientific clarity, especially it is mostly seen in his work “Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Seas”. Edgar Allan Poe and Jules Verne contributed to the science fiction genre development with writing their works in two styles. Jules Verne wrote his novels with technology fantasy, whereas E.A.Poe’s writings are rich with magic and horrible creatures with scientific facts. In 1887 Spain writer Enrique Gaspar wrote his work “El anacronópete” and the first time machine is described in it.

Many critics consider H.G.Wells as the main writers of science fiction and even he has been like Shakespeare in this genre. His famous science fiction works are “The time machine”, “The Island of Doctor Moreau”, “The Invisible Man”, and “The War of the Worlds”. These works include not also interesting adventures, but also deep social ideas and predictions. For instance, in “Invisible man” the main hero Griffin makes great discovery, being invisible he does his evil actions. Analyzing this character shows, there is complex relation between moral aspects and scientific discoveries. His science fiction novels allow their readers to imagine aliens’ wars, biologic engineering, being invisible and time travel [9].

In 1926 Hugo Gernsback published first American journal “Amazing Stories”. In the inaugural issue of this journal, it was asserted that notable science fiction works, exemplified by H.G. Wells and Edgar Allan Poe, present rare and distinct representations of the genre. These works engage with scientifically plausible concepts and the intriguing theme of the future, while simultaneously offering both intellectual enrichment and moral insight to their readers [6].

Hugo Gernsback created the term “scientifiction” and defined it is the genre of mixed scientific knowledges and hypothesis [2]. Because science fiction works not only include fantasy, but also scientific facts. The events in them are related logical and the characters, heroes and the setting may happen in the future. For instance, Neal Asher’s “Gridlinked” presents integration of artificial intelligence and human. Comparing these things, this work predictions are becoming reality in present time. All of these novels are based on great knowledge and the author of this work is mechanic, so he has written them according to technical science.

In 1937 John W.Cambell became the editor of the magazine “Astounding science fiction”. He urged young and talented authors to write with clear scientific facts and social relevance. It is suggested that these years has become beginning of “the golden period of science fiction”. I.Asimov, A.Ch.Clarke, R.A.Heinlein and T.Sturgeon contributed to develop this genre. In 1942 Isaak Asimov started to write the work “Foundation” which describes progress and fall of galactic empires and presents psychohistory. These works are awarded with Hugo rewards. It is proposed golden age of science fiction has been ended in 1964s [4]. I.Asimov’s “Foundation”, “Robots”, R.A.Heinlein’s “Stranger in a Strange Land”, A.Ch.Clarke’s “Childhood’s End” are shiny examples of this period.

Discussion. In 1957 Russian writer and paleontologist Ivan Yefremov wrote “Andromeda: A space age tale” which offered a vision of interstellar civilization in the future and considered to be one of the very significant science fiction works. “Starship Troopers” was written by A.Heinlein in 1959 and regarded as one of the earliest and most impactful instances of military science fiction [8].

In the 1960s and 1970s, a new wave of science fiction emerged, focusing on both new styles and more complex ideas. They paid attention more on literary experiences, psychological depth and social criticism. The editors such as Michael John Moorcock and Harlan Ellison supported young writers. Ursula K. Le Guin, Samuel R. Delany, Roger Zelazny, J.G. Ballard, Philip K. Dick created the new style in this genre. These writers criticized traditional golden age science fiction and western imperialism.

In 1961 the work “Solaris” was published by Stanislaw Lem in Poland. This work is about man’s limitations, because people in the story want to study about ocean in the new discovered planet. In 1965 Frank Herbert wrote “Dune” and it depicted more complex and thorough version of future society.

In 1967 Anne McCaffrey started to write science fiction novel “Dragonriders of Pern”. Two novellas of the work are included in the first novel “Dragonflight”. This work earned Mak Kaffrey the distinction of being the first woman to receive ei the Hugo and Nebula Award. In 1969 Ursula K. Le Guin wrote his science fiction novel “The Left Hand of Darkness”. It is about the planet where the gender of its inhabitants is unclear and regarded as a good example of social science fiction, feminist science fiction and anthropologic science fiction.

In 1967, Isaac Asimov commented on the ongoing changes in the field of science fiction, suggesting that, because today's reality resembles events once considered fantastical, fans of past science fiction may feel concerned and appear to have lost their sense of wonder. He argued that what were once awe-inspiring events and phenomena have become so commonplace in today's world that they now seem ordinary.

In the 1980s the action “cyberpunk” has started. This action studied themes such as high technology, low life style, computer systems, virtual reality and corporate power. W. Gibson’s “Neuromancer” is the first example of this style.

Science fiction genre diversified in the 1990s and XXI centuries. New directions such as biopunk, climatepunk and slipunk has emerged. The writers researched themes such as climate changes, artificial intelligence, social justice and genetic modification [7].

Science fiction genre has been learned with its two parts in the history, they are: hard and soft science fiction. Hard science fiction is based on scientific facts and include subjects like physics, chemistry and astronomy. Soft science fiction has two kinds of approaches: they may not be proved scientifically or they are connected with subjects as psychology, anthropology and social sciences. Scholars such as Teit Thomson and Jeff Vandermeer has said the works in the field of astronomy, mathematics, engineering are considered to be hard science fiction works. Moreover, works connected with botanicas, zoology and social sciences are named soft science fiction novels.

Science fiction novels include the following elements:

- Imaginary technology;
- Smart computers and robots;
- Imaginary worlds;
- Similar planets;
- Similar planets;
- To travel in space and research it;
- Alien planets, their life style and mutants;
- To control the mind, telepathy, telekinesis – the ability to rule the things from a distance;
- Time travelling;

When composing science fiction works, authors must give due consideration to the following factors:

- Make sure the events are similar to reality. In science fiction, any technological or fantastical element must be grounded in phenomena or developments that have already been realized in contemporary reality.
- Make the list of rules and follow them. Science fiction works are not directly interesting, but with their rules they must be believable and clear. If the author breaks its rules then the reader stops to show interest to the work.

➤ Do the explorations. Although it may seem weird, building the story with explorations helps to rise interest towards the story, otherwise the story may be seem as fake to the reader.

➤ The events of the story should be taken from real life. Events and incidents should be taken from present moment, imagining them a little further in the future. Although mankind is a short-sighted creature, with fantasy they may give several predictions about future.

Conclusion. Science fiction is not just fun or easy reading — it deals with deep questions about philosophy, society, and culture, and helps people think more critically by showing unusual or different worlds. The way science fiction has developed is closely linked to changes in society. Each time in history has come up with its own kind of science fiction. This proves that the genre acts like a mirror, reflecting social changes. Science fiction is growing beyond just Western stories and becoming more global, with voices from many different places. This makes the genre more interesting, diverse, and open to everyone. Science fiction often predicts new technologies. It also shows how these technologies might affect people and society.

In conclusion, science fiction gives us a lot to think about when it comes to how literature, science, and society affect each other. It helps us look back at the past, think about today's world, and imagine the future. Science fiction stories show how complicated human life is and how new technology might change our future.

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