

**ELEMENTS OF COLD WAR IN THE AMERICAN SCIENCE FICTION  
NOVEL OF THE 1950s AND 1960s**

Diplomová práca

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## ABSTRAKT

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Táto práca sa zaoberá popisom a analýzou prvkov studenej vojny vo vybraných románoch americkej vedecko-fantastickej literatúry 50-tych a 60-tych rokov. Jadro práce je rozdelené na štyri časti. Cieľom práce je poukázať na spôsoby akými autori zobrazovali jednotlivé, často paranoidné predstavy americkej verejnosti týkajúce sa vystupňovania vojny do katastrofických scenárov. Cieľom práce je tiež poukázať na alegorické spôsoby, ktorými jednotliví autori zobrazovali nepriateľský totalitný režim a zároveň komentovali udalosti súvisiace s politikou americkej vlády v týchto rokoch. Pozornosť je venovaná zobrazovaniu možných následkov studenej vojny, hľadaniu príčin týchto následkov a úlohe jednotlivca a americkej spoločnosti v týchto rokoch.

Kľúčové slová:

atómová bomba, apokalyptické vízie, militarizmus, paranoja, skrytý nepriateľ, komunizmus, demokracia, utláčateľská spoločnosť

## **ABSTRACT**

SMIDŽÁR, Vladimír: Elements of Cold War in the American Science Fiction Novel of the 1950s and 1960s [Diploma work] / Vladimír Smidžár. –The Catholic University in Ružomberok. Philosophical Faculty; Department of English language and literature. – Instructor: Janka Kaščáková, PhD. – Ružomberok: FF KU, 2009.

This diploma work deals with the description and analysis of Cold War elements in selected American science fiction novels of the 1950s and 1960s. The core of this work is divided into four parts. The goal of this work is to describe the means through which various authors depicted individual, often paranoid ideas of the American public, dealing with a possible escalation of Cold War events into catastrophic scenarios. Also the goal of this work is to point out the allegorical means, through which particular authors depicted the enemy totalitarian regime and at the same time show how these means were used to comment on the actions of the American government in the 1950s and 1960s. Particular attention is paid to the depiction of possible events as results of the Cold War rivalries, the speculations about what might have caused them and the role of the individual and the American society in these events.

Key words:

Atomic bomb, apocalyptic scenario, militarism, paranoia, the hidden enemy, communism, democracy, oppressive society

## **PREFACE**

For my diploma work I have chosen the topic Elements of Cold War in the American Science Fiction Novel of the 1950s and 1960s. Reading literature and the science fiction literature in particular has always belonged to one of my favorite activities. The same can be said about studying history and politics of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and because of that, this topic for my diploma work seemed like a good choice that would combine these two interests.

The science fiction genre has become popular mainly in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As such it is considered by many to be a minor literary genre, having little to offer to a demanding reader besides vivid imaginary worlds, a fast paced plot and two-dimensional character description. However, those who share the common interest in the science fiction literary genre know, that good science fiction forces the reader to speculate about the possible future of mankind and tries to come up with an answer to the most basic, but at the same time unsolved questions and mysteries, mankind has tried to figure out from the beginning. The works in the science fiction genre are often regarded as speculative tales about our future but their goal is also to serve as commentaries on the status and actions of the contemporary society. This can also be said about the American science fiction novel in the 1950s and 1960s, which often tries to speculate about the possible results of the ongoing Cold War and to comment on the actions of the American government and the American public in general, often making these actions a source of many authors' criticism. The manner in which the American science fiction novel of these two decades does it is significant and therefore deserves to be observed closely.

I would like to thank all the people, who have supported me during the preparation of this work. My regards go to my instructor Janka Kaščáková, PhD. for her advice and my friends and family for their moral support. All of them helped to make this work come true.

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## Introduction

Among contemporary historians there is still disagreement when and how exactly the Cold War started. However, the events causing the political polarization of the most of that-time civilized world had a major impact not only in the field of politics, but also on popular culture for many years to come. Beginning in the late 1940s, the Cold War reached its peak during the second half of the 1950s and the early 1960s. Mostly the events between 1953 and 1964 are characteristic by constant change of the Cold War dynamics<sup>1</sup>. In 1953 when the ongoing Korean war, was coming to an end and the change of political leadership both in the United States and the Soviet Union (Dwight D. Eisenhower became the new president and after the death of Stalin, Nikita Khrushchev became the new leader of Soviet Union) presented a hope that there might be a change in the policy and the uneasy tension between these two superpowers may come to an end. But, from the contemporary point of view we can say that what happened after these events was the time of escalation and the greatest crisis of the Cold War that the world had to face.

The U.S defense budget quadrupled and there was still a greater call on the reliance on nuclear weapons against U.S enemies and the Soviet Union also tried to reach nuclear superiority<sup>2</sup>. The result was the nuclear arms race, which brought these superpowers to the brink of nuclear war. The uneasy truce and the atmosphere of fear particular for this era quickly found its way into popular culture.

The American science fiction novels written during these two decades are characteristic for their depicting this atmosphere of fear often affecting the actions of the common American citizen and mainly the actions of the American political apparatus. The novels brought up in this work focus on depicting the results of the Cold War rivalries. These results are either the representation of authors imagination how these rivalries may escalate or depict (either realistically or with the use of allegory) how the escalation of these rivalries in the way they were imagined by most of the American public.

In the first chapter I tried to focus on the apocalyptic event itself, how it is imagined in some works and what some authors claim as a reason for such an event to happen. A particular interest is given towards the actions and roles of various characters facing the inevitable demise of the known world, especially the character of scientist, a

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<sup>1</sup> [http://muse.jhu.edu/demo/journal\\_of\\_cold\\_war\\_studies/](http://muse.jhu.edu/demo/journal_of_cold_war_studies/)

<sup>2</sup> [http://muse.jhu.edu/demo/journal\\_of\\_cold\\_war\\_studies/](http://muse.jhu.edu/demo/journal_of_cold_war_studies/)

key figure in some of these novels. Also I tried to show how some works try to come up with a solution, preventing the apocalyptic event from happening.

The second chapter shows how some authors go beyond the sole depiction of the apocalyptic event and describe how the Cold War rivalries change the world beyond recognition. I tried to analyze the key aspects of the post-apocalyptic novels, through which some novels depict the difficulties of the post-apocalyptic world, serving so as warning narratives in the early years of the Cold War. Also a particular interest is given the oppressive society which is the re-creation of the pre-war society. Here I tried to find parallels between the depiction of the oppressive society and the actions of the early 1950s American government to which the authors of these novels indirectly refer to.

The third chapter focuses on another form of anxiety rooted in the minds of the Cold War man, namely the fear aggressors operating silently from within and the possible fear of invasion by the adversary regime. I tried to focus on the means how the authors comment on this kind of paranoia and again find parallels to security measures made by the American government during these years.

In the short fourth chapter I tried to depict how the American science fiction novel of the 1960s deals with the issue of militarism in the changing attitude of the American public towards this subject.

## 1 Apocalyptic events in the American science fiction novel of the 1950s and 1960s

The optimism dealing with the positive usage of atomic energy, when it was little known about the possible side-effects of radiation and its potential for creating a weapon of mass destruction seemed to be a far-fetched fantasy and often criticized as an expression of technological pessimism by some, was typical for the 1930s. Still, many scientists considered atomic energy as a kind of Pandora's Box as Martha A. Bartter describes in her study *The Way to Ground Zero* (1988).<sup>3</sup> For them the fullest potential of atomic energy was still to be solved, which also led to the assumptions that it may contain forces and unknown dangers better to leave undiscovered. But as already mentioned the optimism of the positive usage of atomic energy prevailed and even among those who assumed these potential dangers, remained a feeling of hope for a bright future, where the world was powered by inexpensive unlimited energy. This forecast was often propagated by the U.S government even in the 1940s when the dangers some predicted realized. Only few months before the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings in 1945, government agencies published the works of John J. O'Neill *Almighty Atom: The Real Story of Atomic Energy* (1945), and David Dietz *Atomic Energy in the Coming Era* (1945). Both predicted a future with atomic powered cars, airplanes and even weather control. The power of the atom would provide unlimited, renewable energy and cure some of the most dangerous diseases like cancer. According to them it was only a matter of time till the danger associated with radiation would be solved.<sup>4</sup>

It was not long that the optimism of the upcoming nuclear age changed into fear what nuclear power is capable of when used for military purposes after the mentioned Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings in the final phase of the World War II. Fear that world would not survive the next world war and visions of a potential doomsday started to find their way into popular media such as film, radio and literature, in particular the science fiction genre.

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<sup>3</sup>BARTTER, M.: *The Way to Ground Zero: The Atomic Bomb in the American Science Fiction*. New York :Greenwood Press, 1988, p. 123

<sup>4</sup> BARTTER, M.: *The Way to Ground Zero: The Atomic Bomb in the American Science Fiction*. New York :Greenwood Press, 1988, p.123



Although the display of various doomsday predictions in science fiction became a cultural phenomenon mainly in the 1950s and the first half of the 1960s we can find dangers associated with the misuse of nuclear power as a motif in few works of the genre already in previous decades. Based on the terror of World War I and an unstable political situation, some writers expressed the fear that a superweapon could make the next war so terrible, that it would lead to the destruction of mankind. Probably the best known example is H. G. Wells' *The World Set Free*, in which Wells predicted a creation of such a superweapon and named it the atomic bomb. John W. Campbell Jr. in his short stories *When the Atoms Failed* (1930) and *Uncertainty* (1936) describes a quick war in which the enemy is in possession of such a superweapon and is ready to wage war on the United States. In comparison to the majority of the apocalyptic fiction, which was published during the Cold War, the conflict is prevented by a genius scientist, who creates an even more powerful weapon and so helps to defeat the enemy, giving the plot an optimistic twist.<sup>5</sup> These and other similar works would later be seen as messages of warning for the things to come. Even George Orwell foresaw a possible state of uneasy truce, a state of "peace that is no peace", in his article *You and the Atom Bomb* (1945). Although he mistakenly assumed that the atomic bomb would be too costly to mass-produce<sup>6</sup>

In the post World War II United States the fear of the H-bomb, as already mentioned, found its way into the popular culture. Besides literature, the 1950s science fiction films became the representation of this fear. Hollywood produced a large number of movies which contained a subtle message about misuse of nuclear power and showing possible doomsday scenarios disguised in movies about giant ant-like monsters, hostile aliens and other horrors. *When Worlds Collide* (1951, adaptation of Philip Wyllie's 1931 science fiction novel), adaptation of H.G.Wells *The War of Worlds* (1953), *Them!*(1954), *The Beast From 20,000 Fathoms* (1953),or *The Incredible Shrinking Man* (1957) are probably the best known examples how movies conveyed the fear stemming from the unknown effects of radiation and a potential World War III conflict.

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<sup>5</sup> BARTTER, M.: *The Way to Ground Zero: The Atomic Bomb in the American Science Fiction*. New York :Greenwood Press, 1988, p. 77

<sup>6</sup>SEED, D.: *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999, p. 1

Also besides the science-fiction novel and the 1950s sci-fi B-movie, dealing with the possibility of a doomsday scenario, we cannot overlook the influence of numerous Pulp magazines, in this case those, which specialized in the science-fiction genre. Magazines like *Amazing Stories*, *Weird Tales* or *Fantastic adventures*<sup>7</sup>, had their place among the most popular, publishing monthly science fiction or horror stories where war, destruction and giant monsters were often the main motifs used.

It arises the question why exactly the science fiction novel is one of the fittest genres to convey the ideas of possible doomsday and post-doomsday events. The purpose of science fiction novel is to ask the “what if” question and in the case of apocalyptic science fiction the question “what if the world we knew ceased to exist?”. Apocalyptic or post- apocalyptic science fiction could be real as events in most of science fiction novels but it has a rather tragical and pessimistic tone in that the world or the whole human race no longer exist. This sub-genre of science fiction features warnings and imaginative stories, whose imaginative presentation, is hoped, will prevent them from happening.<sup>8</sup>

The second question that arises is how to convey these ideas. In the context of cold war we can find two possible ways in which the authors present the doomsday scenario. In the first more direct way of presentation the cause of doomsday is simply a military conflict between the two nuclear superpowers, the U.S and the Soviet Union and is more based in reality than the second way in which new misused technology, a man killing virus or an intergalactic war etc. are used as a metaphor for the fear of the H-bomb or a potential nuclear conflict in the 1950s and 1960s.

Although the first way of presentation of the doomsday events doesn't use metaphors and is more direct, the reader rarely gets answers to all the questions. Only few novels discussed in this chapter provide the reader with the explanation of who attacked whom, who struck first and the reason for the attack often remains a mystery throughout the novels. In each of these novels we only view the attack from the viewpoint of the U.S citizen and it is only indicated that the nation has been attacked by the Soviets. However, all of these questions become irrelevant when the characters have to struggle to survive in a post-attack world, a matter that is discussed in the second chapter. The second reason why most authors provide only a limited view of the attack may indicate that they are not trying to give blame to one side or the other, but rather

<sup>7</sup> CLUTE, J., NICHOLS, P.: *The Science Fiction Encyclopedia*. New York: Dolphin Books, 1979, p.485

<sup>8</sup> SEED, D.: *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999, p.14

blame humanity and human nature itself as it is unable to solve a possible conflict in a peaceful way and is incapable to handle the dangers that are unavoidably associated with technological advancement.

One of the most important writers who provides the reader with a description of a nuclear attack is *Philip Gordon Wylie* (1902 – 1971), who anticipated the cold war rivalries between the U.S and the Soviet Union already in the 1930s in his *When Worlds Collide*(1933) and *After Worlds Collide* (1934).<sup>9</sup> From the end of the war up to the second half of 1950s Wylie was involved in the government nuclear policy. He was invited to report on the Hiroshima bombing and attended the Desert Rock A-Bomb tests. Later he became a consultant to the federal civil defense minister and as he self stated fought against „superficial optimism over the nuclear age”<sup>10</sup> Also he supported the information of the public regarding the A-bomb. In his novel *Tomorrow!* (1954), we get a description of an east-west nuclear conflict and it is explained that the nuclear conflict was initiated by the Soviets. In the novel Wylie clearly depicts the Soviets as the enemy that planned the attack for the purpose of destruction of American values and morale. The fact that the reader becomes a witness of a nuclear attack on Christmas Eve, may be seen as an intended symbol of the atheism supporting communism against these christian values. The attack as it is described in the novel „ could not be described as any other event”.<sup>11</sup> The nuclear bomb is depicted as a weapon or just means of destruction against which there is no real defense as Wylie describes the explosion its aftermath:

„ On the sidewalks, for a part of a second, on sidewalks boiling like forgotten tea, were dark stains that had been people, tens of thousands of people. The light went over the whole great area, like a thing switched on and people miles away, hundreds people looking at it, lost their sight. The air, of a sudden for a long way became hotter than melted lead, hotter than steel coming from electric furnaces...”<sup>12</sup>

A rather different view of the nuclear attack is shown in Robert A. Heinlein’s *Farmhan’s Freehold* (1964), published a whole decade later. Although the novel like all

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<sup>9</sup> CLUTE, J., NICHOLS, P.: *The Science Fiction Encyclopedia*. New York: Dolphin Books, 1979, p. 655

<sup>10</sup> SEED, D.: *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999, p.15

<sup>11</sup> WYLLIE, P.: *Tomorrow!*. New York :Rinehart, 1961 p. 87

<sup>12</sup> WYLLIE, P.: *Tomorrow!*. New York :Rinehart, 1961 p. 87

other dealing with a doomsday scenario is a tale of warning, Heinlein himself was in support of preserving the nuclear weapons on American soil and called for preparedness of the U.S against a potential nuclear conflict, not only in the matter of building facilities providing civil defence. In 1958 after he read an article in his Colorado Springs newspaper, demanding that the Eisenhower administration stop testing nuclear weapons, he started writing a polemic on the subject urging Americans not become “softheaded”.<sup>13</sup>

Heinlein in comparison to Wyllie provides the reader with a limited view of the attack. It is made clear that the nuclear attack was a result of a conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union; however, it is unclear who struck first and why. At the beginning the novel shows us Hugh Farnham, a wealthy, reasonable and quite capable man who builds a fallout shelter for him and his family in his back yard. A rather ideal evening is disrupted by an announcement that a nuclear warhead is about to hit the military base, placed in the near distance of Farnham’s town. He and his family are forced to Farnham’s fallout shelter, in which they survive the attack. Rather than showing the epic scale of the attack we are limited to the viewpoint of Hugh Farnham and his family. After days of waiting for rescue the family is struggling with the shortage of air and water supply and like the reader have little information about the conditions of the outside world. Trying to establish a radio signal shows to be pointless as all means of communication were probably destroyed and the only knowledge of the conditions of the outside world is provided through a device to measure the outside radiation. Although Duke Farnham and other members of his family suppose that the attack is over, they are about to discover that the nuclear attack was only the first phase of a longer conflict followed by chemical and biological attacks.

The technique of describing a doomsday scenario from a limited point of view is also used by Ray Bradbury in his *Martian Chronicles* (1950). The work discusses a wider range of subjects from the negative effects of colonialism, the negative effect of American civilization’s reliance on certain kinds of technologies, to fears of many that humanity had entered an era of unpredictable danger.<sup>14</sup> Although generally regarded as a collection of short stories Bradbury himself describes the work as a novel in which the stories serve as parts of a chronological plot. In the story called *The Taxpayer* the main character is an unknown citizen of an unknown country. We see him as he is trying to get inside a spaceship, which transports a limited number of privileged to Mars. We

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<sup>13</sup> MILLER, J.: *In a Strange Land*. In : *National Review*, Vol. 59, 7.2007

<sup>14</sup> ANNE REID, R.: *Ray Bradbury: A Critical Companion*. New York : Greenwood Press, 2000, p.33

discover his motivation later, when it is indicated, that he is trying to escape a worldwide conflict, which is about to become reality. The spaceship presents for him a means of survival just like the fallout shelter in *Farmham's Freehold*, which Farmham's son in the evening before the attack jokingly compares to Noah's ark.

In the *Luggage Store* a short bridge piece, we become a witness of a conversation between the owner of a luggage store on Mars and another colonist, who discuss the current ominous political situation on Earth. But, as the reader can see, even in this somewhat detailed conversation Bradbury doesn't go into revealing what is the source of the escalating conflict, even the two colonists maintain optimism, when they agree that a nuclear war is unlikely to happen.

They are proven wrong as we see in the following segment named appropriately *The Watchers*, which describes all the colonists coming out to see the war on Earth, the fire of the bombs exploding, and their decision to return to Earth. As we can see this segment, on contrary to the previously mentioned *Farmham's Freehold*, describes the conflict on a more epic scale but reveals the same theme of patriotic duty, as the majority of colonists leave Mars to fight in the war. Despite the fact that they spent several years living on Mars, they still feel the duty to fight for their homeland and preserve the values it has taught them (in this case Bradbury doesn't speak about the preservation of American values in particular as the colonists are former members of various nations, but he may refer to them). Unlike in Wyllie's *Tomorrow!* this probably isn't a conflict started by the Soviets to undermine the American values and morale (although Bradbury doesn't point it out the novel makes it highly unlikely). We may assume that in the final third of *The Martian Chronicles* (which partially deals with the subject of nuclear war) Bradbury wanted to point out, that in the face of Armageddon the values and morale of entire humanity are at risk.

Philip K. Dick in his *Dr. Bloodmoney, or How We Got Along After The Bomb* (1965), continues in the tradition of fragmental depiction of a nuclear attack as the description of the attack shifts between 4 major characters in the novel, who describe it ( Bruno Bluthgeld also nicknamed Dr. Bloodmoney, an atomic physicist, Walter Dangerfield an astronaut, who is leaving earth just when the missiles are launched, Bonny Keller, a friend and former colleague of Bluthgeld and Hoppy Harrington, a physically disabled person, who later reveals to have psychokinetic powers). This fragmental depiction provides the reader with more knowledge about the character of the attack than the previously mentioned *Farmham's Freehold*, but unlike in

*Tomorrow!* it resigns on describing high ranking politicians and military personnel in action. Early after the attack it is revealed that the attack itself was realized due to malfunction of the United States own defense system, which caused a worldwide attack so rapid, that even a retaliation from the Soviets was impossible. The work carries a theme often present in other Dick's works but also like in *The Martian Chronicles* describes the darkside of certain aspects of technological progress and an overall paranoia and militarism present in the 1950s and 1960s American fiction.

Of course some novels as mentioned use metaphors to convey the fear of the H-Bomb. Kurt Vonnegut's *Cat's Cradle* (1963) stands as one of the best examples. This apocalyptic novel presents readers with a vision of the end of the world that is quite different from the nuclear annihilation that was widely feared in the 1950s and 1960s. Here mankind faces its demise by means of the so-called ICE 9, an isotope which causes water to freeze by solid room temperature and which was originally developed for peaceful measures. At the end of the novel ICE 9 is unleashed and because all rivers and seas on Earth connect, this invention is responsible for killing almost every living thing on the planet. Thomas F. Marvin in his analysis of the novel points out, that : „Vonnegut's world does not come to an end in a fiery bang, the end is like the great door of heaven being closed softly”<sup>15</sup>

Marvin is right that the display of Armageddon, as witnessed in *Cats Cradle*, resigns on the depiction of terrifying images (clothes patterns imprinted on bodies, eyes turned to jelly, the shadows of victims imprinted on walls etc.) unlike Wyllie's *Tomorrow!*. Here the actual doomsday may be described as an event that is totally different from what people have imagined as science can provide various possibilities how to end the world, pointing out the unpredictability of such an event. In the novel a dictator is in possession of the isotope. He has established a republic on the island of San Lorenzo and tries to get rid of it because he is aware that it would lead to the destruction of mankind. Still ICE9 is unleashed after he swallows the isotope, dying and his coffin falls into the ocean during his funeral. Vonnegut still argues that humans and mankind altogether must take responsibility for their own destiny.

Some novels show optimism in that the man kind can still save the planet by abandoning the Earth for another planet, providing the reader with a certain amount of technological optimism (like in the *Martian Chronicles*). But some writers presume that some civilizations, even the ones advanced and colonizing and inhabiting a large amount of planets, cannot prevent a possible doomsday scenario as seen in the first part

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<sup>15</sup> MARVIN, T.: *Kurt Vonnegut: A Critical Companion*. New York : Greenwood Press, 2002, p. 77

of Isaac Asimov's *Foundation* trilogy (1951-1954). However, to be accurate the events described in the beginning of the first novel *Foundation* (1951), don't really portray the doomsday as in other novels discussed in this chapter. What we see is a decline of a galactic empire rather than an actual Armageddon. This decline happens in a point of history when the galactic empire, depicted in the novel, has reached the peak of its development and it is due to the laws of physics on one hand (Asimov discusses the law Entropy - in thermodynamics, it is a measure of the unavailability of a system's energy to do work. This law may be applied to machines but also the universe or civilizations themselves<sup>16</sup>) and the unchanging human nature on the other, that the empire slowly falls apart. On the contrary to other mentioned novels the fall of civilization is described in the whole first half of the novel, rather than the few pages in which other authors depict a nuclear attack as something fast and unpredictable. Here the fall of a civilization is also unpredictable at first, but is rather slow and witnessed by an all-knowing narrator, who provides us with all the details.

As we can see the authors of these novels differ in their depiction of an apocalyptic scenario, some choosing a more detailed description, some providing the reader and the characters with only a limited knowledge as they try to view this scenario from the perspective of a common-man.

The characters in these novels often play crucial role, often more important than the apocalyptic event itself. David Seed points out, that often the characters in apocalyptic novels are distinguished mainly according to their ability to accept and deal with the nuclear or some other apocalyptic threat.<sup>17</sup>

Wyllie's *Tomorrow!* may be seen as an exception. The portrayal of the nuclear attack plays a far more crucial role and the characters themselves may be seen as one – dimensional. Their actions and views may be described as stereotypical and clichéd, at least in the range of the 1950s nuclear fiction. Still, this does not mean, with only a few exceptions, that their acting is irrational. Wyllie points out, that the American citizen should act the same, when a potential nuclear attack scenario comes into realization.

On the other hand Heinlein in his *Farmham's Freehold* or Dick in *Dr. Bloodmoney, or How We Got Along After The Bomb*, offers more than just a flat characterization, providing one with a wide range of characters, who change and

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<sup>16</sup> CLUTE, J., NICHOLS, P.: *The Science Fiction Encyclopedia*. New York: Dolphin Books, 1979, p. 198

<sup>17</sup>SEED, D.: *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999, p.20

develop (for better or for worse) according to the circumstances. In *Farnham's Freehold*, Farnham himself is a capable man, "the man who knows how", and a honorable father of several other characters. His family, however, is decadent. His wife is a selfish alcoholic, his son can be described as a mother's boy, who refuses to take any reasonable advice from his father and his daughter a superficial American 1960s teenager. Although they change during the course of the novel (as mentioned for better or for worse), it happens after they are faced with the post-holocaust world that they change and on the contrary to Hugh Farnham act either irrationally or are way to careless before the attack . Hugh however, remains a typical "Heinleinian hero" throughout the novel. He represents qualities like intelligence, energy, health, emotional control, and enormous good fortune. Qualities that Heinlein requests from his hero, while at the same time denies those qualities to the rest of the human race.<sup>18</sup> Hugh's precaution at the beginning of the novel seems to be just another example of the nuclear threat paranoia, as the reader and other characters suppose. But, his portrayal during the rest of the novel makes us believe that he is just a reasonable man, a careful optimist that just wanted to provide safety for him and his family.

As for Philip K .Dicks *Dr. Bloodmoney, or How We Got Along After The Bomb*, Dick starts the novel with the presentation of characters that are anything else than stereotypes. The only one of the four main characters, who can be described as a common, regular person an ordinary human character is Bonny Keller a housewife and a former colleague of Dr.Bluthgeld. Still, even she acts differently for someone, who has just witnessed a nuclear attack (although she only saw the bombs falling miles away and the danger of fallout is not imminent). She leaves the temporal safety of her house, not looking for a permanent safety in a fallout shelter but rather meets with a stranger named Stuart McConchie, which leads to them both having sexual intercourse. Although when compared to the characters like Hugh Farnham, the "taxpayer" from *Martian Chronicles* or the characters of Wyllie's *Tommorow!*, her actions right after the attack seem neither an expression of unhealthy paranoia nor reasonable precaution and are rather illogical and irrational. However, one has to realize that none of the authors or readers of 1950s and 1960s apocalyptic fiction ever witnessed an actual nuclear attack. Because these novels are pure fiction (even though they describe events, that are likely to happen), the authors may only assume the reaction of somebody who has witnessed such an event or through the actions of their characters suggest, what one should or

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<sup>18</sup> BARTTER, M.: *The Way to Ground Zero: The Atomic Bomb in the American Science Fiction*. New York :Greenwood Press, 1988, p.202



shouldn't do when dealing with the same situation. Dick realizes that such an event cannot be described or predicted like other events and the unpredictability of a nuclear Armageddon corresponds with the unpredictable actions of his characters, in the case of Bonny, even characters who represent the common-man and are more down - to- earth.

The uncertainty of uncommon events and the actions of the characters surviving these events may be seen as one of the trademarks of Philip K. Dick's fiction. Frederic Jameson in his article *After Armageddon: The Character Systems in Dr. Bloodmoney* states that:

„ Every reader of Dick is familiar with this nightmarish uncertainty, this reality fluctuation, sometimes accounted for by drugs, sometimes by schizophrenia, and sometimes by new SF powers, in which the psychic world as it were goes outside, and reappears in the form of simulacra or of some photographically cunning reproduction of the external. “<sup>19</sup>

Although the quote doesn't apply to Bonny in particular it can be applied to other characters. The other characters like Hoppy Harrington a freak of nature, who telepathically predicts the attack few minutes in advance and Dr. Bluthgeld, who suffers from paranoid delusions and is convinced that the bombs were launched due to his psychic powers (which he only thinks he has), cannot act like the characters of Heinlein or Wyllie, due to their quite uncommon nature.

When mentioning the character of Dr. Bluthgeld, it should be mentioned that the character of scientist in an apocalyptic novel is often of greater importance than the other characters surrounding him. If it is not in the earlier stages of the novel, that the character of the scientist is seen as important, it is often a rule that he becomes more and more important as the plot of the novel proceeds.

Even before the apocalyptic fiction of the 1950s there were two ways in which the character of a scientist was depicted. On the one hand, there is a potential hero and on the other a potential villain. Not only in the 1950s and 1960s apocalyptic fiction, the scientist who may cure diseases and create inventions for the good of mankind is also a potentially the mad or a irresponsible scientist, whose invention may be the cause of

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<sup>19</sup> JAMESON, F.: *After Armageddon: The Character Systems in Dr. Bloodmoney*. In: *Science Fiction Studies*, Vol. 5, 1975

world destruction.<sup>20</sup> For example the same institution of scientists that produced antibiotics also brought us the atomic bomb, nerve gas and automatic firearms: means to kill and harm millions of people. The study *Paranoia, The Bomb and the 1950s* offers the following example:

„Idealist Victor Frankenstein, transformed into an obsessed, monster-producing man, and Dr. Jekyll, transformed in the sanctity of his laboratory into Mr. Hyde, are two archetypal figures with whom modern scientists have been associated. The scientist as messiah figure bordering on apocalyptic destroyer partakes of the logic of paranoia.”<sup>21</sup>

After the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings it has become clear, that the scientist has become something more, than just a harmless inventor, whose inventions may be used to harm other human beings against his will. It has become clear that besides politicians and high ranking military personnel, the scientist became a shaper of world policy. Although it is believed, that an ideal scientist himself should be an independent thinker who is above politics, it often shows that this is not possible because politics often interfere with the scientist in his research. Many however, believe that some discoveries can be held secret, but when a scientist senses that he has ventured into something man was not meant to know he should voluntarily suppress his work.<sup>22</sup> This fact is reflected in some of the 1950s and 1960s science-fiction novels, as the character of a scientist has to face the fact that we have reached an era where the misuse of technology may be the cause of a worldwide Armageddon. It is required that these characters should assume a possibility of a negative impact of their inventions on the rest of the humanity and try to prevent it. But, as we can see in *Dr. Bloodmoney, or How We Got Along After The Bomb* or *Cats Cradle* even inventions, whose primary function is to serve or protect mankind may backfire. This happens only because those involved in their development, refused or were too careless to make assumptions, that it actually may backfire.

Dr. Bluthgeld from *Dr. Bloodmoney* himself does take responsibility for his nation, being one of the scientists who helped to design the American defense network.

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<sup>20</sup> HENDERSHOT, C.: *Paranoia, the Bomb and 1950s Science Fiction Films*. London: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1999, p. 20

<sup>21</sup> HENDERSHOT, C.: *Paranoia, the Bomb and 1950s Science Fiction Films*. London: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1999, p. 22

<sup>22</sup> BARTTER, M.: *The Way to Ground Zero: The Atomic Bomb in the American Science Fiction*. New York :Greenwood Press, 1988, ground zero 97

However, he like many others is not able to see or envisage a possible negative impact of the defense system itself, the already mentioned backfire of such a device. His state of paranoid schizophrenia is then caused by feelings of guilt (the missiles of the U.S system destroy the country they are supposed to protect and he believes that they were unwillingly launched by himself, through psychokinetic powers, which he, clearly does not possess). Dick does not portray his scientific hero in an attractive light. Dr. Bluthgeld is not a messianic hero, who brings wisdom and safety to the frightened American public, although he could have originally had those intentions. In Dick's view, Dr. Bluthgeld sees himself as some sort of an unpredictable computing machine or magician. In the course of the novel he takes on a role that the rest of the humanity projects on scientists themselves. A machine, whose infallibility gains him respect, but the way he sees the world around him, his scientific objectivity, makes him different in comparison to the rest of mankind. Also Bluthgeld senses a feeling of power surrounding him, at the beginning presented by the knowledge to which he has access, and later through his psychokinetic powers, he believes he has. The knowledge and the unusual powers of Bluthgeld may pretty well represent the view that the rest of humanity has about scientists. Except for a small group of gifted individuals, scientific discoveries made in the 20<sup>th</sup> century became something that only few individuals outside this group can fully understand. Science itself became a power that is not far removed from magic in the mind of the common-man.<sup>23</sup> Due to his psychosis Bluthgeld assumes the possession of such powers. In his mind he literally believes to possess superpowers or magic, something which even he cannot rationally explain. As such Bluthgeld believes he presents a potential danger to his surroundings and the rest of mankind because of the unpredictability of his powers, perhaps strengthened by his feelings of guilt, that he refused to take full responsibility for his invention. However Dick makes the point, that as such he couldn't take full responsibility for his actions. After all he tried to protect his country by designing the defense system. In *Dr. Bloodmoney* Dick argues that the scientist should predict the negative impact of his inventions, but also be prepared to choose the lesser evil and open the "Pandora's box", because the enemy may be in possession of one as well. In the novel's climax Dr. Bluthgeld is killed, but by getting rid of an unpredictable, partially irresponsible "magician" the world itself doesn't seem to get better.

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<sup>23</sup>BARTTER, M.: *The Way to Ground Zero: The Atomic Bomb in the American Science Fiction*. New York :Greenwood Press, 1988, p. 148

In *Cat's Cradle* Kurt Vonnegut presents the reader with another character who is a scientist. Although the Nobel Prize winning physicist Felix Hoenikker cannot be considered the main character of the novel (much like Dr. Bluthgeld from *Dr. Bloodmoney*), his invention has an eventual negative impact on humanity as well, as we see in the novel's climax. Thus his role in the novel is again not a role of messianic hero, bringing the world relief and wisdom. On the contrary he may be regarded as an unintentional initiator of a worldwide catastrophe. But, in the beginning of the novel he may be seen as such a messianic figure as he is repeatedly called a „saint” and one of his colleagues compares his research and an overall advancement of scientific knowledge itself as a „holy quest that will lead to paradise on earth.”<sup>24</sup> Thomas F. Marvin in his analysis of the novel points out, that:

„ Important events in the novel, including visit to the research lab and Dr. Hoenikker's death, coincide with Christmas, and Christian symbols intertwine with scientific apparatus to suggest the birth of a new religion. *Cat's Cradle* points out that science became a kind of false religion that filled a spiritual vacuum in the twentieth century.”<sup>25</sup>

Thus Hoenikker is seen as some kind of a spiritual leader or a “magician”, with science being his religion and the rest of the humanity as his followers, blindly believing science will bring them peace and relief. However, Hoenikker himself doesn't claim superiority over other human beings just because of his extraordinary intellect and cares little for money, fame or prestige. Still much like Dr. Bluthgeld, the way he sees the world, his scientific objectivity segregates him from the rest of the mankind and although he cares little for prestige or fame, he also cares little for other human beings even his family. This is not because he would express hatred towards other human beings, but because he cares little for social interactions and is also unable to understand the essence of human relations themselves. Because Hoenikker may represent just another stereotype of a socially awkward scientist, he is an interesting and somewhat likeable character. Thus Vonnegut doesn't really try to show Felix Hoenikker in an overall negative light. Still, he still represents a scientist, who is unable to see the possible negative impact of his inventions and is too careless to take such an impact into account. The truth is that Hoenikker conducts his research as if it was only a game and

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<sup>24</sup> MARVIN, T.: *Kurt Vonnegut: A Critical Companion*. New York : Greenwood Press, 2002, p. 77

<sup>25</sup> MARVIN, T.: *Kurt Vonnegut: A Critical Companion*. New York : Greenwood Press, 2002, p. 77

he explores the A-bomb and ICE 9 the same as he would explore the behavior of an insect. He is a happy and careless character who enjoys making discoveries and as he himself states, he was able to make his discoveries because he maintained the curiosity of an eight year old. Through him Vonnegut points out, that some of mans characteristics, although not necessary evil like irresponsibility and lethargy combined with mans technological power and the unquestionable belief in science as a new kind of religion are enough to destroy the world.

However, not all science fiction novels of the 1950s and the 1960s portray the character of a scientist as an irresponsible, deeply flawed, potential initiator of doomsday events. Some writers choose to depict such characters in a more positive light, although they do not argue against the fact that any type of knowledge may be used as a source of human misery, when fallen into the wrong hands.

Hari Seldon, the major character of Isaac Asimov's *Foundation Series* may serve as one of the best examples. Seldon presents the intellectual hero in the series, although he is alive only in the beginning of the first book in the series simply titled *Foundation* (1951). As a mathematics professor on the University of Trantor (the capital of the vast galactic empire), he develops a fictional science named "psychohistory", through which he can predict the future on the basis of several factors and probability. Through his research he discovers, that the empire is on a verge of decline and constructs a plan, lasting several centuries, through which the advanced society of the empire will eventually be rebuild. The plan consists of establishing a foundation, a small society inhabiting a planetary system on the edge of the galaxy. This society is assigned to fulfill Seldon's plan to eventually reestablish the declining galactic empire. Although the reader isn't presented with such a detailed portrayal of Seldon's personality like in the case of Dr. Bluthgeld in *Dr. Bloodmoney*, it is obvious, that Seldon presents the idealistic intellectual hero, a scientist taking responsibility not only for the actual state of society but also the responsibility for the welfare of future generations. Although to be fair, Asimov doesn't confront Seldon with the situation of choosing the lesser evil (like Dr. Bluthgeld) or the assumption, that his invention might be used to cause human misery (like Felix Hoenikker). Still Seldon takes responsibility for the plan he has constructed just because the actual and future generations rely on it so much and take confidence in it. In the series, the plan gradually achieves a status of an almost religious importance, making Seldon the scientific messiah, who saves the society from decline and to whom future generations look up to, when seeking

guidance. Although, Seldon appears only at the beginning of the first novel in the series, he has left a number of pre-recorded messages, which automatically activate at the time of a crisis, only he knew about. The so called “Seldon crisis” is a historic phenomenon in the series, a situation, that to be successfully overcome, would eventually leave only one possible course of action.

In the *Foundation*, Sheldon’s foundation is able to overcome several of these crises, when acting according to Sheldon’s plan. But, as we see in the novels sequel titled *Foundation and Empire* (1952), the plan fails, due to an anomaly that Seldon could not have predicted. Although after such a surprising turn of events in the novel, it would seem that Asimov plays with the thought of science not providing solution to all problems or that one shouldn’t blindly trust the guidance provided by it, it is only a part of a larger twist. At the end of *Foundation and Empire* the characters discover, that Seldon has prepared for such an event, in establishing a secret backup plan, which is the centre of the third novels plot titled *Second Foundation* (1953). So Asimov re-establishes faith in his “scientific messiah” Seldon and science itself, displaying an pro – scientific optimism, which as mentioned before, was not a typical feature of novels describing apocalyptic events.

The novels described in this chapter offer various reasons, why an apocalyptic event may occur, presenting it through various scenarios. Although all of them present different causes for something like this to happen from human irresponsibility to lust for power and destruction, they generally present another cause, which lies in the character of human nature itself. Throughout history different philosophers offered two models of human nature. One being naturally good, claiming man is born good but is corrupted by the surrounding society, the second being basically evil, which claims that man is born corrupted, repeating his mistakes throughout history, thus claiming, that the basically evil model of human nature is hereditary. However, the naturally good model, the basically peaceful model of human nature is rarely used in most science fiction novels, except ironically.<sup>26</sup>

In Asimov’s *Foundation Series*, humanity is given a chance to start anew, by leaving Earth and all its wars behind, building a vast galactic empire. (although this process is not described in the series, the theme of humanity’s second chance lying in search for a new home after it has destroyed the planet of its origin, offers itself from

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<sup>26</sup>BARTTER, M.: *The Way to Ground Zero: The Atomic Bomb in the American Science Fiction*. New York :Greenwood Press, 1988, p.141

the setting of the series). But, when reading the series, the reader sees, that the society of the empire, although more technologically and intellectually evolved carries the same stigma of basically corrupt human nature like the 20<sup>th</sup> century individual. The characters in the series act and think exactly the same like the 20<sup>th</sup> century man. Some may argue that this fact is of no importance, because only few science fiction authors try to create a setting in which society and human language and thinking patterns are fundamentally different from the society and patterns of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, this fact is justified in the series, by the essential concept of Seldon's psychohistory itself. Psychohistory as such is based on the fact that even through eons of human existence the human nature doesn't change and despite the level of scientific development, the presence of different kind of social order, government or religion the individuals and society carry the same psychological makeup as their 20<sup>th</sup> century counterparts.<sup>27</sup> Despite the fact, that the setting of the *Foundation series* takes place in a distant future (the exact time is unknown, the beginning of the first novel takes place around the year 12000 of G.E (Galactic Era), we don't get the explanation how this date relates to Earth's history) and Earth and its history at this time is nothing more than the subject of unproven myths. Even though psychohistory cannot predict or calculate the behavior of an individual, it can predict the behavior of masses, society in general.

Still the question arises of how human nature, if basically corrupt, can be changed to avoid society's demise, or if such a change is virtually possible. Asimov and Vonnegut in *Cat's Cradle* offer a solution to this problem, presented by different tools, which help regulate human nature for better. In the case of Asimov's *Foundation Series* such a tool is presented by Seldon's science or psychohistory itself. The series makes the statement, that science is nothing to be afraid of and that it may eventually provide all the answers to individuals and society's problems. Asimov believes, that we get into trouble, when we descent into religion or in some way ignore the guidance, which is presented by science. In the series he even sheds a positive light on the power of the atom or atomic energy itself.<sup>28</sup> He tries to reassure the 1950s society, which was already aware of the immense destructive potential of the atomic bomb that atomic energy may be of great prosperity to all mankind, when used for noble purposes. In the series the foundation is able to survive and fulfill Seldons plan also thanks to the advancements

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<sup>27</sup> BOOKER, K.: *Monsters, Mushroom Clouds, and the Cold War: American Science Fiction and the Roots of Postmodernism, 1946-1964*. New York: Greenwood Press, 2001, p. 36

<sup>28</sup> BOOKER, K.: *Monsters, Mushroom Clouds, and the Cold War: American Science Fiction and the Roots of Postmodernism, 1946-1964*. New York: Greenwood Press, 2001, p. 36

made in the research of atomic energy. Still, one must also realize that it is used for noble purposes, because this society is guided to make the proper actions, through Seldon's psychohistory. The proper use of science for noble purposes is thus the result of the influence of another scientific discipline.

As mentioned Vonnegut argues, that the unquestionable reliance in science as a new kind of religion has filled the spiritual vacuum of the mid-twentieth century man and that man through his hereditary corrupt human nature isn't able to deal with it with the proper respect. In *Cats Cradle* Kurt Vonnegut offers a tool to the regulation of human nature, which is in direct contrast to Asimov's pro-scientific optimism. In the novel Vonnegut creates a fictional religion named Bokononism, which is worshiped by the inhabitants of the republic of San Lorenzo, where most parts of the novel take place. Vonnegut creates a detailed picture of this new religion with a full set of texts, commandments and rituals and he invents new names for aspects of life all people now but never really think about them (for example *granfallon* – a group or a pair of people who think they have a connection that does not exist or *karras* – a group of people, who often unknowingly, work together to fulfill God's will)<sup>29</sup>.

Although Vonnegut doesn't descend into theological debate, arguing for or against the existence of god or an afterlife, he argues that even in the case that there is no afterlife or a god, religion is a necessary tool for the proper functioning of society. He claims various reasons, why something like a religion is necessary, first of them being man's everlasting strive to give his life a meaning. Vonnegut claims that although man cannot prove that life as such is meaningless and that there is no purpose one has to acknowledge that it is a possibility. As the human nature is hereditary egoistic many people may act to achieve happiness in life through any means, fair or foul and lack the motivation, to act in such a way that their road to happiness wouldn't take its toll in other man's misery. Religion however, offers such a motivation in promising an afterlife and motivates people to take responsibility in their actions and makes them question if their pursuits are good for other people and humanity in general. The children of Felix Hoenniker, who gain the possession of ICE 9 also lack a sense of responsibility and the novel ends with one of the characters finishing his manuscript titling it „The History of Human Stupidity”

The second reason why the establishment of a religion in a society is important is human fear. Although a necessary part of human life, when exaggerated and unreasonable may result in an unreasonable, paranoid and irrational human behavior

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<sup>29</sup> MARVIN, T.: *Kurt Vonnegut: A Critical Companion*. New York : Greenwood Press, 2002, p.80



that can lead to actions with unfortunate results for other human beings or humanity in general. The religion of Bokononism as such offers shelter for those who embrace it and may be seen as a tool to alter human nature for the better, motivating man to take responsibility for his actions. But, as the novel's apocalyptic climax indicates, it was already too late to for the tools regulating human behavior, to prevent the doomsday scenario from happening.

Bokononism as a religion however, is based on a lies, but by following and adhering to these lies one will live a happy and peaceful life. The founders of San Lorenzo tried to create a utopian society, which they tried to achieve through designing a perfect economic plan and a new religion but, it soon becomes clear that the economy of this small republic cannot be improved, thus leaving the religion the only tool giving hope and meaning to lives of its inhabitants. However, for the religion to work properly, the inhabitants have to be fully aware of evil in society and because many don't think that their actions are foul they have to be provided with a literal example. This is presented through the "evil" dictator of San Lorenzo, who himself is a secret practitioner of Bokononism, but has to act as a tyrant in public to maintain the illusion the founders of Bokononism have created as they were aware that:., good societies could be built only by pitting good against evil, and by keeping the tension between the two high at all times"<sup>30</sup>

In both *Cats Cradle* and the *Foundation series* the authors work with the assumptions, that the negative aspects of human nature don't change and that humanity isn't able to learn form its past mistakes without proper instruments that would prevent them from happening again.

On the contrary to these works, Heinlein displays a partial optimism in humanity in the climax of *Farmham's Freehold*. After Hugh Harnham and his family survive the nuclear attack in their fallout shelter, they are transported by means of time travel into the future, experiencing living in a suppressive dystopian society. At the end Hugh Harnham is transported back in time only few hours before the attack, that he experienced in the novel's beginning and shows little optimism as he already knows what the future holds. Without any explanation being offered to the reader, the United States are hit only by the first wave of atomic bombs (in the course of the novel Hugh finds out that the initial attack was followed by several others and a chemical and a biological attack, which were the main cause of Americas destruction) and the apocalyptic scenario as experienced at the beginning of the novel doesn't repeat itself.

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<sup>30</sup> VONNEGUT, K.: *Cat's Cradle*. New York: Dial Press Trade, 1998,p. 74

The society is able to rebuild and a peace treaty is signed between the United States and the Soviet Union. Although this twist presents a major plot hole it may also be regarded as a display of Heinlein's optimism towards humanity, which realizes soon enough that an extension of the conflict may lead to its demise. The novel's society becomes aware that after making one mistake it might not get the chance to survive if it makes the same mistake again.

There are various possibilities in the way how to depict a potential doomsday scenario in the science fiction genre, but there are some which prevailed during the “escalating” years of the cold war. Although the means of destruction is presented by a nuclear war or a scientific experiment gone wrong, they have one thing in common and that is mankind's effort for survival and prevention of possible apocalyptic events caused by its own sense for self-destruction and disregard for the consequences of their actions. All of these narratives try to play a minor role in popular culture trying to bring some sort enlightenment and warn over possible events, which it is hoped will be prevented from happening.

## 2 The post-apocalyptic scenario and the dystopian society

As mentioned in the first chapter only novels depicting the apocalyptic scenario, tend to provide the reader with facts of who attacked whom. The reason for why these novels rarely bother to provide this information which may seem essential to the reader is because they often focus on the post-holocaust world, where such information is irrelevant. All humanity is united, although not literally, in their struggle for survival and a potential re-establishment of the pre-holocaust society. However, these novels are very reserved in their display of optimism. These novels serve again as cautionary tales, displaying the fact that the world following an apocalyptic event is often more terrible, than the actual event itself. With depicting the hardships of the post-holocaust world these novels again serve as cautionary tales warning before the escalation of the cold war rivalries and the eventual impact of this escalation on the human society, but also the natural world itself.

The novels, which focus (primarily or partially) on the apocalyptic scenario, can be divided into four groups. The first, which may be represented by Vonnegut's *Cats Cradle*, end with the apocalyptic scenario leaving no or little hope for humanity.

The second in which the novels also end with the apocalyptic scenario but leave the humanity with hope as few have survived. The last segment of Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicles* titled *The Million-Year Picnic*. Here a family of survivors escapes the destruction of Earth for Mars, where they have a chance of rebuilding society, because there is a possibility that another family may have survived and may reach Mars soon. Although it is not revealed whether or not the second family reached Mars, the reader can see that Bradbury partially refuses the scenario of "total destruction". Because he presents hope, he refuses an ultimate ending and thus reduces the meaning of the word "total". David Seed mentions that in many of these novels:

„the characters are in a position from which one anticipatory contemplates the end, utter devastation, from a standpoint beyond the end, from a post-holocaust perspective. In a sense, all post-holocaust fiction tacitly controls the result of atomic war by positing the survival of human beings and some

form of culture. Even those stories most dreadfully depicting a ravaged globe imply human survival”<sup>31</sup>

The novels belonging to the third group depict the apocalyptic scenario at the beginning and then focus on the survival in the post-apocalyptic society like Philip K. Dick's *Dr. Bloodmoney, or How We Got Along After the Bomb*.

The fourth group focuses mainly on the post-apocalyptic society and don't depict the apocalyptic scenario directly. This event itself is only mentioned often by one of the characters or is only a subject of tales about events long forgotten about which the characters or the society have very little knowledge. This is often because the sum of knowledge possessed by humanity and especially the knowledge of the event itself has been long lost and has to be recovered again in the course of the novel (e.g. Walter M. Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz*). The reason for mentioning the apocalyptic event may also be because the characters and humanity on the whole has to be reminded (often because such an event is threatening to happen again). The novels from the third and fourth group, which actually portray the post-apocalyptic world as a world where humanity is given a new chance and the world in which they live is a world they make for themselves.

As previously mentioned most apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic novels of the 1950s and 1960s display the doomsday as a result of humanity's incompetence to come to a peaceful resolution of its disputes and the incompetence to positively handle the achievements brought by the technological progress. Many post-apocalyptic novels however, add the themes of ecology (man's interference and the eventual destruction of the nature), evolution and devolution (evolutionary change has been associated with a worldwide disaster since the 18<sup>th</sup> century), which may be caused by mutation (the use of nuclear weapons often leads to biological changes in humans, animals and plants) and the establishment of a different type of human society (e.g. feudalism in *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, where society returns to a medieval model ).<sup>32</sup>

Also many post-apocalyptic novels follow a certain pattern (examples from this chapter include Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz* , Philip K. Dick's *Dr. Bloodmoney* and Richard Matheson's *I am Legend*), which includes:

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<sup>31</sup> SEED, D.: *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999, p. 9

<sup>32</sup> CLUTE, J., NICHOLS, P.: *The Science Fiction Encyclopedia*. New York: Dolphin Books, 1979, p.290

1. The experience of the doomsday or reference to the doomsday
2. The journey through the apocalyptic wasteland
3. Settlement and establishment of a new community (in the case of *I am legend* also the settlement of a lone individual)
4. The re-emergence of the wilderness as a potential adversary
5. A battle or struggle which will determine which values shall prevail in the society (or in the case of *A Canticle for Leibowitz* a repeated battle for the determination of these values)<sup>33</sup>

As mentioned many of these novels deal not only with the destruction of a certain type of social order (in the case of American science – fiction it is always a democracy) or the extinction of most of the humanity, but also with the impact that the cataclysmic events had on the nature and human biology itself. This impact may occasionally take positive turns but is more frequently depicted as negative. The depiction of the state of post-apocalyptic ecology is a fragment of an overall depiction of a post-apocalyptic world in these novels (together with the depiction of a new social order and the way different characters act in this kind of reality).

In Walter M. Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz* (1959), the reader becomes the witness of a post-holocaust world in which humanity, after being bombed back to the Dark ages tries to re-establish itself. This leads to a process at the end of which humanity bombs itself right back again. Already at the beginning of the novel we see what an impact the nuclear Armageddon had on the face of the nature as we see a lone monk wandering through a desert, which was once a forest located somewhere in Central America. As the beginning of the novel is placed relatively far in the future we can see that much like human society, which returned to dark ages, the nature also takes time to re-build itself after destruction (but for the time being it remains an unfertile dangerous wasteland). As the novel is also rich on religious symbolism one may assume, that the previously mentioned fertile land before the nuclear war presented much like the rest of the world a Garden of Eden. Because humanity maintained its corrupt nature it had to face the consequences, which is presented by the banishment from the "garden of Eden" to an unfertile, dangerous wasteland. The novel also shows, that this is the world that mankind made for themselves due to the impossibility to treat

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<sup>33</sup>BARTTER, M.: *The Way to Ground Zero: The Atomic Bomb in the American Science Fiction*. New York :Greenwood Press, 1988, p. 214

it with respect. Humanity through technological advancement has learned to face and survive the dangers that were presented by the wilderness. However, in the process of gaining the superiority over nature it has become more and more arrogant. After the Armageddon nature won its old position back, it has once more become a place of unpredictable dangers and forces the man to treat it with respect yet again. The characters in the novel often refer to the nuclear war as the “ great purification” , which among other things means that after it mankind has abandoned (or at least tried to abandon) its arrogant ways as the wilderness has become a superior adversary. At the end of the novel, which takes place some 1000 years after the beginning the desert has again become a forest a place much more suitable for human life. Even the society regained its knowledge and is at the end even more technologically advanced as the society of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which destroyed itself. Still, the novel shows that even though society may rebuild itself, the nature as such may even after eons of rebuilding never be the same. This assumption is presented by an old woman, a mutant, whose mutation is still an aftereffect of the nuclear holocaust, an event that happened more than 1000 years ago. Although she and many others like herself serve as a reminder for humanity not to repeat its old mistakes again, it doesn't stop the new society to destroy itself in a new nuclear war. Although humanity is again left with a small chance to start again as few escape in space shuttle for another planet, the nature is left without hope and may never reemerge again as the end of the novel, describing oceans full of dead fish, indicates.

In Isaac Asimov's novel *Stars Like Dust* (1951) starts with the main character living a careless life on Earth before unusual circumstances force him to leave. As the beginning of the novel plot is set on Earth, the reader is exposed to vivid description of a land destroyed by means of nuclear war. The society was able to reestablish itself to the state before the war (the main character is a student of one of Earths universities), but even after centuries the war has left an impact on the face of the planet. Men live in contained, safe areas but radiation is still present and described in an almost poetic way as Asimov mentions the beautifully glowing blue horizon resembling Aurora Borealis. This beautiful description is brought in contrast with the statement of the main character, mentioning that on Earth, blue has become the color of death. Much like in *A Canticle for Leibowitz* the once beautiful natural world has been replaced by a merciless, deadly wasteland. In both novels the devastated ecologies serve as mementos of man's mistakes, but as the reader can see in the course of both novels, man tends to

take such warning signs lightly as he has learned to adapt (*Canticle*) or has found a new home (*Stars like Dust*), where he slowly forgets them and is predestined to repeat his mistakes with more or less devastating results.

Philip K. Dick in his novels *The Penultimate Truth* (1964) and *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968) displays the natural world which also carries the stigma caused by a nuclear attack. Although the author doesn't indicate, whether both novels take place in different timelines ( the former only 15 years after nuclear war, the latter several decades in the future) of the same universe, the description of how man crippled nature beyond repair is similar. In both novels all animals are extinct or are believed to be extinct and humans replaced the nourishment they presented with a form of synthetic replacements. In *Do Androids Dream of Electrical Sheep?* the lack of animal life is also the source of a even deeper human pessimism. People simply lack the companionship and the feeling of happiness represented by the surrounding wildlife and buy themselves artificially constructed animals, which however, lack the " soul " of their living counterparts. Dick researches the importance of such artificial replacements more closely as the novel centers around a man, who hunts "Replicants", machines similar to humans in every detail, except that they are artificial. The novel like many others dealing with the subject of artificial intelligence, questions the essence of human life. The "Replicants" are self – aware, they express feelings happiness or fear, they feel pain, but are superior to humans in their ability to survive as they are able to endure much higher levels of radioactivity and perform physically more difficult tasks.

The same type of physically superior machines is presented in *The Penultimate Truth*, which don't display any kind of typically human behavior but are able to survive in a radioactive wasteland on the contrary to their human masters. The "leadies" as they are called, are built to withstand the most extreme circumstances. So both novels partially play with the thought of mans eventual replacement through technology in the case of an apocalyptic scenario as it is better suited to survive the post-apocalyptic world. As in *A Canticle for Leibowitz* the conflict of technology vs. nature is present. The advancements as a result of technological progress may be the source of man's destruction (the atomic bomb) or may replace him and the natural world (leadies, robotic animals).

As mentioned some post-apocalyptic novels deal with the subject of evolution or mutation, one of elements of post-apocalyptic natural world, always displayed as a side

effect of the initiator of apocalypse, may it be the atomic bomb or something else like a man killing virus. Evolutionary abnormalities or mutations have been the subject of science fiction already before the 1950s and 1960s. Mostly in the 1940s and 1930s various science fiction pulps tended to present a character of a sympathetic superhuman often unjustly hated and persecuted by the rest of humanity. At this time some authors present mutation as a positive aspect changing human nature itself as mentioned in the study *Way to ground zero*:

„ To allow human nature to alter rapidly, many writers use some version of the "mutation by radiation" story. Following the doctrine of "progress," writers often portray the mutants as a higher form of life than their human progenitors.”<sup>34</sup>

But it was not until the late 1940s and early 1950s that the theme of mutation began to become a more frequent element of most science-fiction literature and after the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings the authors remain reserved in displaying the positive influence of atomic energy.<sup>35</sup> Here the authors try to display a more freakish impact of mutation associated with the dangers accompanying the nuclear age. The character of a mutant is often presented as a reminder (the disfigured old woman in *A Canticle for Leibowitz*) or a threat to society around him as he is often mentally and physically superior to his fellow humans.

Such a type of mutant is presented in Philip K. Dicks *Dr. Bloodmoney or How We Got Along After the Bomb* by Hoppy Harrington a mutant in possession of telekinetic powers. At the beginning of the novel before the actual nuclear blast he is due to his physical handicap a presentation of a man, who prides himself in doing jobs reserved for people otherwise excluded from the normal white American society. It is after the attack, when his powers begin to reemerge. As a skilled technician he becomes of a crucial importance to a small post-apocalyptic community. For Hoppy, his knowledge of the future is, like his technological skills, simply an instrument, ability necessary for survival; but his increasing psychic powers indicate an abuse of his position in the community, what actually happens later in the novel.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> BARTTER, M.: *The Way to Ground Zero: The Atomic Bomb in the American Science Fiction*. New York :Greenwood Press, 1988, p.141

<sup>35</sup> CLUTE, J., NICHOLS, P.: *The Science Fiction Encyclopedia*. New York: Dolphin Books, 1979, p.415

<sup>36</sup> JAMESON, F.: *After Armageddon: The Character Systems in Dr. Bloodmoney*. In: *Science Fiction Studies*, Vol. 5, 1975



Hoppy's mistake lies in the belief that he is the opposite of other normal human beings especially to Dr. Bluthgeld and feels that he is destined to dominate them. Especially in the case of Dr. Bluthgeld, one of the “scientific magicians”, who played a crucial guiding role in the pre-holocaust world, Hoppy feels the urge to replace him, becoming the only “magician”, whom common men fear and respect at the same time. Frederic Jameson in his analysis of the novel suggests that Hoppy is Bluthgeld’s mirror-image, but at the same time suggest that the relationship between the two is far more complicated. Hoppy is seen in the eyes of other characters to be Bluthgeld's creature, because they believe him to be the genetic result of the nuclear catastrophe for which the scientist feels responsible. What they don’t know is that his powers began to show themselves already before the actual nuclear strike. So Hoppy doesn’t feel obliged to Bluthgeld for his powers and is thus free to annihilate him.<sup>37</sup> Because of the fact, that Hoppy’s mutation isn’t a direct result of the nuclear fall-out, his role in the novel isn’t to serve as a warnings sign before the negative impacts of nuclear technology, but is rather a presentation of freakish nature trying to take control over man in a crippled post – attack society.

The role of mutation as a result of nuclear fallout is taken by Edie Keller, daughter of Bonny Keller (she is the result of Bonny’s sexual encounter right after the nuclear Blast). On the surface she seems perfectly normal, but in reality shares her body with a twin brother, believed by everyone to be an imaginary friend but really being an abnormal “fetus in fetu”<sup>38</sup> named Bill. He has the ability to communicate telepathically, and foresees way before the other characters in the novel the danger Hoppy presents. Eventually he helps to destroy Hoppy at the end of the novel, through which he becomes a positive representation of a mutant in the dark ages. Through this character (and some other displays of mutation in the course of the novel) Dick represents, the evolutionary leap caused by a cataclysmic event. Such characters represent anomalies, which through the course of the novel remain limited and don’t replace the “normal” man even if they try (e.g. Hoppy Harrington), through which the author expresses a certain amount of optimism. But also indicates that such mutations, like the rest of the natural world after the attack is unpredictable and will probably remain (much like in Millers *A Canticle for Leibowitz*) a permanent part of the Earth’s ecology for the rest of human history.

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<sup>37</sup> JAMESON, F.: *After Armageddon: The Character Systems in Dr. Bloodmoney*. In: *Science Fiction Studies*, Vol. 5, 1975

<sup>38</sup> JAMESON, F.: *After Armageddon: The Character Systems in Dr. Bloodmoney*. In: *Science Fiction Studies*, Vol. 5, 1975

The change as a result of an evolutionary leap replacing the man of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is at the centre of William Matheson's *I am legend* (1954). Although the novel doesn't refer to the apocalypse as a result of the cold war directly (the source of Armageddon is neither H-Bomb nor other technological advancements created by man himself), it still dwells on the cold war anxieties stemming from a potential destructive scenario, which may become reality. In the novel, humanity is attacked by a deadly virus, killing men first only to bring them back to life as vampire-like creatures. The altered human biology presents a danger for the minority of humanity (presented by the single character of novel's main protagonist Robert Neville), which at first remains the only intelligent form of life, threatened to be annihilated by mindless, instinct driven creatures. However, as the novel continues the threatening mindless vampire creatures evolve into a stage in which they resemble the pre-catastrophe man in every detail except for their nourishment represented by blood. Robert Neville becomes as a representative of the pre-catastrophe man a part of evolutionary chain that is soon to disappear and become the stuff of legends (Matheson plays with the reverse of roles of vampire, a legend in previous society, and man, who becomes the legend in new society).

As mentioned besides the devastating impact the doomsday scenario has on the natural world and human biology, the novels also focus on the actions and behavior of normally human characters facing the dystopian world. Although the reaction and processes the characters go through before or immediately after the attack (as analyzed in the previous chapter) are often of crucial importance, their actions from a post-doomsday perspective are the ones which make the difference between survival and annihilation. As some authors point out, only a part of humanity dies in an actual nuclear attack, the rest needs tactics to ensure their further survival and because these novels are rather pessimistic in tone, the characters view their future in hopeless pessimistic terms. This is often expressed in the way they envy the ones, who actually died in the catastrophe and are spared from facing the hell of post-apocalyptic world they have to endure.

In *Farnham's Freehold*, Heinlein tends to sort his characters according to their capacity to endure the dystopian world, only to let the typical "Heinleinian hero", Hugh Farnham stand out. Even after the apocalypse Hugh Farnham remains the representation of what Heinlein sees as good American values: Hugh Farnham remains an enterprising, technologically resourceful, patriotic character and is also the personalization of what

one may call aggressive defense and defiance against ones enemies. Although in the pre-doomsday America, Farnham was just a presentation of another elderly man with family problems, he gets the opportunity to prove himself, facing situations against all odds. In the post-war world he quickly gains respect and following of the community, consisting of his family members. The other members of his family lack some or many of the qualities, which ensure Hugh's survival in this kind of world. His wife is a selfish, ignorant alcoholic; his son, a "mommas boy," permits himself to be castrated in order to enjoy the benefits of the luxurious but at the same time inhuman and racist society, into which Farnham's family has fallen and his teenage daughter is even less fit for survival, as she cannot fulfill the basic "female" role and dies in childbirth.<sup>39</sup> Without having to sacrifice his dignity and morale Farnham finds a way to secure his place in this repulsive society, even though he still tries to get him and his family out of it. Although the flawlessness and perfect physical and psychical condition of Hugh Farnham hinders the reader to view him as a realistic character, one may assume, that Heinlein's intentions may have originally been to create an ideal American role model, the reader can look up to (this is feature typical in his juvenile novels and some of his previous works like the *Puppet Masters* or *Starship Troopers*).<sup>40</sup>

In *I am Legend* Richard Matheson provides with the character of Robert Neville a more realistic approach of a man facing the post-apocalyptic future, at least when compared to Heinlein's ideal character. Neville is also a physically capable character, whose skills ensure him his survival, but his behavior and actions in the course of the novel show, that he has a limited mental ability to cope with the terrifying events he witnesses, much like any other man who would find himself in his position. Matheson also shows, that it was thanks to Neville's enormous good fortune he survived the worldwide epidemic (early in his life he was accidentally bitten by a bat, that carried a light form of the disease causing him fever and eventually made him immune). The novel so partakes in the thought of the apocalyptic event being so unpredictable, that its survival may only be a matter of coincidence. Throughout the novel the events he experiences combined with his permanent isolation from the rest of his kind (at the time the novel begins it is possible, that he is the last of his kind) are a cause of his increasing paranoid behavior and the questioning of his sanity. He experiences periods of high anxiety and depression which are followed by heavy drinking, which seemingly end,

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<sup>39</sup> BARTTER, M.: *The Way to Ground Zero: The Atomic Bomb in the American Science Fiction*. New York :Greenwood Press, 1988, p.192

<sup>40</sup> SEED, D.: *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999,p. 32

after he decides to find the cause and cure for the disease. He obtains books and other research materials from a library, and through endless research he discovers the root of the vampiric disease. But, after he fails to find a cure after several hopeless attempts, the endless circle of anxiety and depression returns. His salvation from his hopeless state is represented by his death at the end of the novel.

Such flawed, human characters are also at the centre of Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz*. Brother Francis (the central character of the novel's first part) may serve as an example. He is a member of a monastic order residing in a monastery located in a vast desert. The novel begins with him performing a Lenten fast during which he discovers artifacts from before the nuclear war or "flame deluge" as it is referred to by the novel's characters. The artifacts become a crucial part of the plot during the rest of the novel and Miller focuses on how these artifacts partake in development of the post-war society. However, he also depicts his characters and their limits for survival in dystopian world. Brother Francis is shown as an average faithful and moral character and although his knowledge is little compared to some of his monastery brothers it is still highly superior, when compared with the rest of the society. But despite his relative intelligence and morality he is far from the ideal "Heinleinian hero" as he possesses no defense skills (represented not only by physical force, but rather by the ability to think rationally when confronted with danger) to protect himself in the dangerous world, outside the monastery's gates and because of his unquestionable obedience he shows towards a higher authority, represented by the head of the monastery Abbot Arkos. His eventual encounter with a band of robbers in the wilderness shows his lack of survival skills and the resolution to fight against odds. His only weapon presented by his intelligence is useless, when numbed by anxiety and is eventually overcome by brute force of the post-apocalyptic wilderness.

Another aspect that some post-apocalyptic novels discuss is the acquisition or the recovering of the knowledge long lost due to society's downfall. As many of them show its successful acquisition (may it be on the same level of pre-war society or just partial) is crucial for the re-establishment of society to its previous state. However, they also discuss the thought whether it is not better, to leave the sum of knowledge possessed by the previous society undiscovered.<sup>41</sup> From the view of the post-apocalyptic characters it was the man's incapability to responsibly handle the advancements created as a result of

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<sup>41</sup>SEED, D.: *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999, p. 157

his increasing knowledge which participated in the Armageddon. Because as mentioned most science fiction novels see human nature as flawed and unchanging, it is likely, that the whole scenario will repeat itself again. After the post-apocalyptic society reaches the level of knowledge owned by the society, which managed to destroy itself, the anxiety associated with the negative impact of this knowledge is quite justifiable. The characters of these novels often vary in their reactions to a new piece of knowledge which might participate in the change of the post-war society. David Seed examines this aspect and mentions that:

„ If nuclear holocaust is imagined as the ultimate rupture to human life and history, survivors attempts to reconstitute some form of civic order involve the problem of how to access the past. Knowledge is often represented by books, which take on a symbolic value of talisman from pre-war desired by some and feared by others ”<sup>42</sup>

In *A Canticle for Leibowitz* the recovery of lost knowledge plays a crucial role. At the beginning the monastery of the monastic order (named Order of St. Leibowitz after the founder of the order who survived the "Flame Deluge") located in the centre of a dangerous wasteland, represents a small island of knowledge present in the dystopian world. The members of the order work as "bookleggers", who try to preserve the books for the future and so shortening the dark ages humanity has fallen into. The artifacts discovered by Brother Francis, later referred to as "Memorabilia", are quickly recognized as relics of the pre-war society. Although the monastery, much like in the Middle Ages is a centre of knowledge, the research of the artifacts is conducted in a very limited way. The monks because of their limited knowledge are unable to decipher the meaning of the artifacts correctly and may only guess what their true meaning is. Often they see what they want to see and every assumption concerning the artifacts nature that questions their view of the world is condemned as heresy. Miller presents his main characters as would-be readers, who try to decipher the scripts left by the previous society, but are denied ultimate knowledge.<sup>43</sup> Another of the novel's characters a scientist named Thon Thaddeo is examining the documents of the monastery's archive, which should help him to understand the origin of mankind. During his research he

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<sup>42</sup>SEED, D.: *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999,p. 157

<sup>43</sup> SEED, D.: *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999,p. 161

discovers, a fragment of a play or a dialogue, which describes the creation of some kind of, servant species, which revolts against its own creators. He then makes the assumption, that humanity is descended from this species, not knowing that the scripture is a fragment of Karel Capek's play *R.U.R.*, but the monks do not know how to classify the fragment. In the pursuit after the knowledge of the previous civilization, the characters lack the necessary knowledge to fully comprehend the meaning of artifacts through which it is preserved. But, this is not the only problem they have to face in their pursuit. Many scenes of discoveries made in the course of the novel are somewhat overshadowed by a critical voice, a pessimistic attitude represented by a higher authority or are by the narrator himself described in a rather ominous tone. The rediscovery of electricity is criticized by a monk, who is shocked by the machine and fearfully exclaims "Lucifer" (a nickname that is also given to the atomic bomb several centuries later at the end of the novel). David Seed in his analysis of the novel states that:

„the rediscovery of electricity is symbolized as an inevitable displacement of religion and an anticipation of the atomic bomb a sign of destructive technological knowledge”<sup>44</sup>

Many of the characters however, believe that the discovery of such destructive knowledge was a necessity because their creation was a part of God's plan to test the man of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the last chapter of the novel humanity has again regained the knowledge possessed by its predecessors and it is soon clear, that it has forgotten its past mistakes and is destined to relive its demise again. In Miller's view the history of apocalypse is cyclical, as the same pattern of destruction continually repeats itself.<sup>45</sup> *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, like many other cyclical science fiction novels, presents the thought, that no change in the essence of human nature is possible and there is little or no hope for progress.<sup>46</sup> Even the society marked with the consequences of a doomsday event isn't able to achieve change in the basic human behavior. So the rediscovery of

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<sup>44</sup> Seed, D.: *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999, 159

<sup>45</sup> MANGENIELLO, D.: *History as Judgment and Promise in A Canticle for Leibowitz*. In: *Science Fiction Studies*, Vol. 13, 1986

<sup>46</sup> MANGENIELLO, D.: *History as Judgment and Promise in A Canticle for Leibowitz*. In: *Science Fiction Studies*, Vol. 13, 1986

lost knowledge, technology and the reestablishment of a pre-war society is depicted as both a blessing and a curse.

The role that knowledge plays in a dystopian society is also a theme discussed in Ray Bradbury's classic *Fahrenheit 451* (1953). Here firemen and policemen take on the roles of figures of a regime forcing them to destroy, burn all books. Throughout the novel it is seen that the society has condemned all kinds of knowledge in the form of books. The reason for this is the assumed fact that they provoke the creation of critical thought and on the whole force the individual to question his life and the world around him, without providing any real answers, thus making him unhappy and depressed. Because the individuals struggle and unhappiness in his life is seen as the cause of conflict, which can on a wider scale escalate to a full scale war, the prohibition of all books is seen as the most appropriate solution. But, as the novel continues it is obvious, that the solution offered by the regime is only a part of its propaganda to suppress individuality. That the prohibition of any critical knowledge isn't really the right solution is showed first in the main character, a fireman named Guy Montag, who realizes the emptiness of his life and starts to search for its meaning in the books he is supposed to burn. Also as the reader witnesses at the end of the novel, the ignorant and to conformity forced society gets destroyed in another nuclear conflict, despite the "security measures" imposed by the government. Like Miller, Bradbury works with the model cyclic history in which, most of the survivors of the nuclear holocaust might be expected to attempt to rebuild a society much like the one that was just destroyed, only to destroy it and rebuild again and again.

As already mentioned, another process that is depicted in most post – apocalyptic novels represent an establishment of a new kind of society, which can be in most cases described as dystopian (a model of society, which is in opposition to Utopian models and presents images of a fearful and unpleasant world). These images are in opposition to an optimistic, hopeful thinking, which promises a better future. A future often presented in some novels by means of propaganda, which the central character questions and sees its consequences not as Utopian but rather catastrophic.<sup>47</sup> (Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* is the best example among the novels discussed in this chapter). Although not all dystopian societies are a result of a world created after a nuclear war (Kurt Vonnegut's *Player Piano*), the authors try to present a type of society, which reduces the freedom of an individual to preserve the status quo. A state

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<sup>47</sup> CLUTE, J., NICHOLS, P.: *The Science Fiction Encyclopedia*. New York: Dolphin Books, 1979, p.184

in which the majority of common-men don't question the actions of their government, living seemingly happy lives, convinced they are working for a better society for everybody, while the corrupted elite secretly controls every aspect of their lives. The illusion of freedom and welfare created by the elite is then used to secure the voluntary participation of the rest of population in the oppressive policies of the government. It is shown, that it is when the characters question such society, they do get into trouble. The authors often depict a society, which in the context of cold war used to stand as a representative for communism or indirectly refers to the actions taking place during the era of McCarthyism.

As mentioned the book burning in *Fahrenheit 451* is only a tool of propaganda imposed by the regime to make its citizens easier to control. The entire culture of this society seems to be designed to numb the minds of its population and to prevent them from experiencing any real thought or feeling (much like in many other non-American dystopian novels e.g. Orwell's *1984* or Huxley's *Brave new world*)<sup>48</sup>. Although the message of the novel is timeless and the regime depicted could be associated with any type of suppressive society, the fact that it was written in the early 1950s may force the reader to especially draw parallels between the bookburning in the Nazi Germany as well the Soviet Union.<sup>49</sup> Although many readers believed, that the work depicts the prohibition which is only possible in a totalitarian regime, represented by the Soviets or the communist regime as a whole, many authors were unaware of the prohibition that took place in the early 1950s in the United States alone. Ray Bradbury in one of his essays stated that:

„Fortunately, nothing of this sort happens in the United States. Minor altercations with censors, mayors, politicians, which have all blown away in the wind.”<sup>50</sup>

As mentioned prohibition took place in the United States as well, early in the 1950s Senator McCarthy started a campaign to have all left-wing works removed from US libraries. This led to a reaction home and overseas but had a huge impact also on the

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<sup>48</sup> SEED, D.: *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999, p. 80

<sup>49</sup> SEED, D.: *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999, p. 78

<sup>50</sup> SEED, D.: *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999, p.78



publication of Bradbury's novel. Following this the American Library Association wrote a manifest declaring that the „freedom to read is essential to our democracy” and attacking „the existence of individuals and groups with wisdom to determine by authority what is good or bad for the citizen”<sup>51</sup>

Because the censorship of books which dealt with socialism, eroticism, and sexuality in the early 1950s was a publicly well known security measure it made the actions of Guy Montag seem quite believable for the American reader.<sup>52</sup>

Even though the novel carries traits, that the reader chooses to associate with different oppressive regimes, in the context of the 1950s one of such traits can be especially associated with communism. One of the reasons with which the novel's society justifies bookburning, is the apparent achievement of happiness. As mentioned the regimes propaganda is based on the fact, that the knowledge contained in books forces the individual to question his life, thus making him unhappy and depressed. What the government also states is the fact, that the prohibition of books is created for the sole purpose to promote equality (a utopian conception characteristic for communism). The fact, that by reading books some gain the knowledge others don't possess, endangers the whole conception of equality, because those who don't possess the knowledge may feel inferior to those who possess it. The firemen's duty is thereat to destroy knowledge and promote ignorance in order to equalize the population and promote sameness. As ideology-enforcers, the firemen stand as a symbol for the forces of repression, represented by both Soviet communism and very likely senator McCarthy and his supporters in the early 1950s.<sup>53</sup>

The other reason for such a precaution, which the regime obviously doesn't mention is the fact, that the knowledge contained in some books forces the individual to not only question his purpose in life but also the actions of the government itself. Bradbury makes it clear that the government is trying to annihilate any sign of critical thought. Such a thought is unwanted, because if the individual questions what's happening in society, he may come to the conclusion that there is something wrong with it, and thus try to change it.<sup>54</sup> However, as we see in the novel bookburning isn't the only tool of the government to achieve a certain level of social control. One of those tools is the obvious rewriting of history, forcing the common-man to believe, that the

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<sup>51</sup> SEED, D.: *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999, p. 78

<sup>52</sup> SEED, D.: *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999, p. 78

<sup>53</sup> ANNE REID, R.: *Ray Bradbury: A Critical Companion*. New York : Greenwood Press, 2000, p. 59

<sup>54</sup> ANNE REID, R.: *Ray Bradbury: A Critical Companion*. New York : Greenwood Press, 2000, p. 59

American society depicted in the novel was like this from its beginning. For example, the history books of this society claim that fire departments have always been organized for the purpose of burning books and Benjamin Franklin is claimed to be the founder of the very first fire department.

Although the 1950s reader may associate the oppressive society depicted in *Fahrenheit 451* as a presentation of communism, several other traits of the novel's society leave room for other indications.

One of the main themes of the novel is also the use of technology to control individuals. Technology becomes a tool to gain social control and in the novel it is mainly presented by means of mass media. Bradbury describes the process of people being bombarded twenty-four hours a day by broadcasting promoting mass culture, suppressing individualism and spreading false one-sided information. How such information is spread is presented in the informing about a possible war scenario, which eventually materializes itself. Here the reader might see an obvious reference to the Cold War (and in early 1950s the Korean War), which might eventually lead to such a nuclear attack as that which occurs at the end of the book. In the novel the media spread one-sided news about the nation's cause, driving the people to war instead of trying to convince them to seek means for communication and co-existence.<sup>55</sup> Another example of media manipulation is seen in the coverage of an upcoming election, where one of the candidates chosen is a good-looking middle age American, while the other a intentionally picked obnoxious caricature of a politician. On the basis of superficial qualities the citizens choose the first one, fooled by the illusion of choice created by the government.

Although it may seem that only the government is to be held responsible for this future Bradbury makes it clear, that the American population also shares the guilt for what the world has become. As some of the characters claim it was also the American population's desire for positive images and simplicity, which resulted in the suppression of books as complex, contradictory, and difficult<sup>56</sup>Bradbury shows that the majority of the novel's population is weak-minded. People avoid thinking for themselves and don't try to solve the problems of the world. For them it is far easier to live a life, where they are confronted only with an artificial reality created by the mass media of which the ones in power are fully aware and try to exploit it.

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<sup>55</sup> ANNE REID, R.: *Ray Bradbury: A Critical Companion*. New York : Greenwood Press, 2000,p. 60

<sup>56</sup> ANNE REID, R.: *Ray Bradbury: A Critical Companion*. New York : Greenwood Press, 2000, p. 55

Despite the fact that Bradbury's dystopian society carries several traits of communism it also resembles the conservative America of the 1950s, which indicates one of the novel's themes that even a seemingly non-totalitarian society may actually be based on lies and therefore corrupt in reality. Guy Montag and the main characters of Vonnegut's *Player Piano* (1953) and Frederick Pohl's *The Space Merchants* (1952) come to realize that a downfall to a dystopian society is possible even in non-totalitarian society as many individuals lack the will to change the political reality because they see it as perfect and unable to make mistakes.

Both *The Space Merchants* and *Player Piano* depict a dystopian society, which unlike the society of *Fahrenheit 451* didn't come to existence because of a past nuclear conflict. Still, their creation was a result of a past event, that can be in some extent described as a negatively world changing event disguised as progress.

In both novels there is an obvious emphasis on the citizens' consumerism, as consumer products are used by the ruling elite to buy citizens approval. The goal of the ruling elite is to gain citizens understanding and to gain a certain level of approval of the ordinary man, in order for the corrupt ruling administration to sustain.

This process became is central subject of Pohl's *Space Merchants* (1952). The novel was a collaboration between the already mentioned Pohl and C. M. Kornbluth and as such describes the takeover of the Earth and other near planets as a form of imperialist expansion<sup>57</sup> In this case the expansion took form of satire of American domestic and foreign policy, which is in a certain way operating according to a single "voice" of imperialist expansion. Pohl himself states that his political ideas were formed in the thirties. He joined the young communist's movement, though he became disillusioned later: „ I didn't lose my concern for politics in 1940. I only came to believe that the communist experiment had failed"<sup>58</sup>

During the course of the novel a certain international business is shown. This business has a worldwide dominance and is of American origin, which in itself could symbolize the takeover of the entire world by means of economic great power which the USA represented in the 1950s. This would mean a takeover of the communist part of the world, even the Soviet Union as well as the communist China. These are described by the government as degenerated forms of the ideology from which they originate (without acknowledging its own corruption), namely Marxism and have descended into a

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<sup>57</sup>SEED, D.: *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999, p.82

<sup>58</sup> SEED, D.: *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999, p.84

economic depression in the 1990s during in which the novel takes place. The Space Merchants describes the activities of this economic great power as if she was exercising the foreign policy of a nation. First the American continent, then Asia and then Antarctica, come under the economic influence of the business empire. The communist powers still show some resistance and try to establish a certain economic independence, but a full economic and later a political takeover (which would lead to a disintegration of the communistic regime) is only a matter of time.

Even more aggressive is the expansion of this form of imperialism on the surrounding planets, mainly Venus. A lifeless wasteland is to become a utopia by means of the same process which has already taken place on earth. This form of expansion shows a certain parallel to American history, mainly the colonialist expansion of the British on the American continent. Even the TV commercials describe the spaceship by which the colonists should arrive to Venus as an „Arc” taking „pioneers” to „tear an empire from the rich fresh soil of another world”<sup>59</sup> The Venus project shows a certain context in the American history. Here not only a product is being the subject in the hands of a business enterprise but the whole planet. In the novel we can see this at the utterance of one business executive, who states: „My God not just a commodity. But a whole planet to sell”<sup>60</sup>

Like in Kurt Vonnegut’s *Player Piano* the administration, the business empire is trying to achieve a certain form of approval. However, not only from the ordinary man himself, but rather from the whole world even the ideologically opposite Soviet Union or China. The government depicted in the novel is trying to secure their submission by means of economic support. Still, little respect is shown by both sides. The United states are described by the communist powers as “imperialist pigs” and on the contrary the communists are labeled as “Commies” or later as “Conshies” as slaves acting just as military objects of a certain regime. Certain arrogance is shown on both sides. Here Pohl depicts that even in an age of technological advancement and space travel there is no guarantee of a peaceful and respectful coexistence of nations even if the politics of these are supported by a different ideological basis.

Like in *Fahrenheit 451* Pohl doesn’t try to label totalitarian communistic regime as the only real threat to freedom present in the world, may it be in the 1950s or a distant future. This represented by the fact, that although the United States are depicted as a

<sup>59</sup> SEED, D.: *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999, p.84

<sup>60</sup> POHL, F. KORNBLUTH, C.M.: *Space Merchants*. London: St. Martin's Press,2002, p.120

great in many ways advanced economic and political power, they are also depicted as a corrupt system in which a business enterprise has almost absolute control over the life of an individual. As the reader can see the novel doesn't primarily focus on the dangers of communism, although it is depicted as based on a degenerate ideology and as highly uncooperative, uncompromising and is of a total negative character. It primarily focuses on the ideology on the other side of the barricade, namely capitalism, which seen in the eyes of its supporters as basically right. The novel depicts the negative aspects of capitalism, a capitalism brought to extreme, and the way it will look like in the future when following its current course. Something that many Marxist theorists describe as "late capitalism"<sup>61</sup>

*Space Merchants* much like *Fahrenheit 451* depicts the control of society by means of mass media. Here the business enterprises, which replaced the 20<sup>th</sup> century government, control the society by means of an aggressive advertising, fooling the ordinary man to believe, that his quality of life is improved by all the products put on the market meant for him to consume. Mass media as depicted in *Space Merchants* represent technology, which is basically amoral a steering wheel leading the way of society and can be used for good or for evil, depending on the hands which control it.

Despite this similarity in both works Bradbury is more direct in depicting the way how the ruling elite controls the individual, Pohl takes a more subtle approach. Both the reader and the main character aren't able to see beyond the seemingly good intentions of the business enterprises until a certain point in the novel, where their original intentions ultimately reveal themselves to the main character. In this world, consisting of the so called admen and consumers, we get to see the world from a perspective of an admen, named Mitch Courtenay a worker for one of the advertising agencies. As such the administration in *Space Merchants* is more realistic representing a type of government, which disguises itself as a democratic order but its true face is only visible to those, who control everything behind the scenes. It is later revealed that these agencies hold control over the world putting away everyone, who stands in the way of their business. After Mitch survives two assassination attempts he is abducted, declared dead and forced to become one of the consumers/workers. After his escape it is revealed, that he has been abducted by an underground movement, for the sole purpose to let him experience the world from a perspective of a consumer and so become a supporter of their cause. This

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<sup>61</sup> BOOKER, K.: *Monsters, Mushroom Clouds, and the Cold War: American Science Fiction and the Roots of Postmodernism, 1946-1964*. New York: Greenwood Press, 2001, p.39

group is trying to overthrow the established order, feeling that the admen are responsible for the overcrowding and pollution destroying the world.

Another display of a future in with a democratic society, which is not really a democratic society, is seen in Vonnegut's *Player Piano* (1953). The novel describes an almost fully mechanized society run again by a small, elite group of managers and engineers (of which the main character Paul Proteus is also a part). The entire economy and is managed by an enormous computer that determines how many products each individual needs and thus supporting a concept of equality. The computer also calculates tests, which determine who gets into college and which of the college graduates may go on to study for the doctoral degree. Those who are not chosen for the few positions available in the manager-engineer elite are given two options: the army or manual work.<sup>62</sup> The ruling elite makes such decisions for the less-privileged majority that are in opposition with the conception of a democratic society. Because it is not possible by any means for the individual to rise from his social status by any means Vonnegut's American society as depicted in *Player Piano* is a society in which the vision of American dream does not longer exist. The city of Ilium in which the novel takes place is a representant of a society where each individual is given a role given to him without his own choice:

„ Ilium divides spatially into three areas occupied by the managerial elite, the machines and „almost all other people,,. Dominating this military industrial complex stands the battlemented works, patrolled by armed guards. To the regime the machine embodies an ideal of social interfunctioning: National classification tests allot citizens their “best” place in society”<sup>63</sup>

However, unlike the elite depicted in *Fahrenheit 451* and *Space Merchants*, the one depicted in *Player Piano*, cannot be seen as basically corrupt. Here the elite reduces the freedom of the less-privileged majority and tries to preserve the status quo, but it is convinced that its actions are creating a better world and the majority appreciates it. The resistance movement depicted in the novel is seen by the elite as negative force, which is

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<sup>62</sup> MARVIN, T.: *Kurt Vonnegut: A Critical Companion*. New York : Greenwood Press, 2002, p. 26

<sup>63</sup> SEED, D.: *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999, p.77

trying to destroy the welfare created by the elite for the less-privileged. The elite is unaware, that the majority of these less-privileged are unsatisfied with their lives and want to change the structure of the society. As such the elite has noble goals but the means it chooses are repressive, without it even realizing it.

Although all three novels describe the dystopian society in more or less different ways, there is one aspect they have in common, namely the depiction of the main characters which shares similar traits. All three: Guy Montag, Paul Proteus and Mitch Courtenay represent something that can be described as a divided nature of the cold war man.<sup>64</sup> A man that believes in the principles his society is based on but at a certain point begins to question the actions conducted to preserve these principles (like many who criticized America's involvement in Korea or the, "witch hunts" during the McCarthy Era). In these novels, this duality is brought to extreme as even the principles of the societies in these novels are depicted as fundamentally wrong, reducing the freedom of the individual. As such these characters are (at the beginning) unquestionably devoted to the ideology on which their society is based and are convinced that their actions (and the actions of their government) are basically good. They see their actions as necessary for the preserving of welfare of the whole society and for preserving an ideology that they see as the only right one. They see the world in black and white terms, a view where that which belongs to our world (ideology) is good and the rest ultimately bad. However, at a certain point they begin to doubt these certainties as they begin to see, that concepts on which their society is based on are fundamentally wrong. In order to participate in a change, they have to face persecution and feel being trapped in system from which there is no escape (they are at first observed without them or the reader noticing it). Eventually they end up joining an underground movement and are labeled as dissidents. As such they represent another type of a post-apocalyptic character, not primarily motivated by his survival and re-establishment of the destroyed society but rather by changing the character of the new society so it won't repeat the mistakes undeniably leading to its demise.

Although the post-apocalyptic novels discussed in this chapter vary to some extent in their display of the post-apocalyptic future, they share a similar pessimistic tone showing that the conflicts resulting in such future may leave permanent impact on the world as we know it (e.g. permanent changes in the ecology). Also they discuss the

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<sup>64</sup> ANNE REID, R.: *Ray Bradbury: A Critical Companion*. New York : Greenwood Press, 2000, p. 54

previously mentioned assumption, that even after a previous devastating conflict, humanity is unable to change. The fact that many of these authors emphasize, because many became the witness of how the post-World War II world engaged itself in yet another conflict, whose escalation may have an even more terrible impact.



### 3 Invisible invasion and the enemy within in the 1950s science fiction novel

In the early stages cold war and there has been an ongoing struggle to defeat communism, which negatively reflected itself on the political actions mostly in the early 1950s. In the era of McCarthyism many Americans were persecuted because of an alleged collaboration with the communist regime. This thrive to discover supporters of the communist regime among own ranks reflected itself also in the popular culture, from which the science fiction literary genre may serve as a primary example. The study *Paranoia, the Bomb and 1950s Science Fiction Films* gives a description of the early 1950s society:

„As such the Post-World-War-II American society is frequently defined by the symptom of paranoia. The paranoia that provided the basis for the McCarthyist witch-hunts and postwar representations of the alien invader characterizes late twentieth-century perceptions of 1950s America”<sup>65</sup>

The novels discussed in this chapter also reflect the issue of alienation. They touch on the form of alienation and paranoia, that was typical for the early decades of the Cold War, mainly the early 1950s. The issue of alienation can partially be described as a fear of exclusion, of not fitting in with the rest of the society. Many individuals felt, that being different, because they refused to be forced into conformity, they would be inevitably labeled as “them”, namely the communist.<sup>66</sup> Keith Booker discusses how the 1950s Cold War society battles with the difficult distinction between “Us” and “Them”:

„the Us versus Them logic that was so central to the Cold War as an attempt to recover the firm sense of separation between self and Other that was otherwise becoming so unstable in the 1950s. Indeed even within the context of Cold War Manichaenism, it became extremely difficult to determine with any certainty just who was “Us” and who was “Them”.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> HENDERSHOT, C.: *Paranoia, the Bomb and 1950s Science Fiction Films*. London: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1999, p. 1

<sup>66</sup> BOOKER, K.: *Monsters, Mushroom Clouds, and the Cold War: American Science Fiction and the Roots of Postmodernism, 1946-1964*. New York: Greenwood Press, 2001, p.19

Mainly Robert A. Heinlein's *The Puppet Masters* (1951) and Jack Finney's *The Body Snatchers* (1955) depict a scenario in which alien invaders could make themselves indistinguishable from common Americans. It is obvious that these alien invaders are just another representation of Soviets or their supporters operating within the American society. However, the main goal of these novels is not to serve as cautionary tales about the spreading of the communist threat, but rather to depict a society in which all the society's actions are motivated by paranoia stemming from this threat. These novels are a fictional representation of how the American public paranoidly imagined a disintegration of the 1950s American society by the "unpredictable communist threat"

In Robert Heinlein's *The Puppet Masters*, which was by Heinlein described as a horror story influenced by Edgar Allan Poe<sup>68</sup>, flying saucers have brought on earth an advanced parasitic race of sluglike creatures from planet Titan, who fasten themselves on human beings, attacking their nervous system and gaining so the control over the human body. These infected individuals act according to a single mind lacking any individuality and with the purpose to infect other members of the human race in order to enslave this and all other societies. The novel follows three agents, Sam, Mary, and the Old Man, of the secret government agency, the Section, as they defend the United States from these parasitic creatures. At the beginning of the novel the agents travel to Iowa to investigate the crash of a flying saucer. After a while they realize that the nearby town has been taken over by these slugs. As the novel continues more and more of the United States come under their control and only a group of trained individuals is present and capable to stop the infection from spreading.

As in many of his novels Heinlein demonstrates a sensitive awareness of contemporary political development. Already in 1947 the National Security Act established the CIA. The director of CIA General Vandenberg spoke in support of the bill, citing America's total lack of preparedness for Pearl Harbor, which was described by Heinlein as one of country's "stumbles"<sup>69</sup>. Although *The Puppet Masters* discuss the nations preparedness when faced with a potential threat they also discuss the extent to which security measures made to prevent such a threat should be taken.

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<sup>67</sup> BOOKER, K.: *Monsters, Mushroom Clouds, and the Cold War: American Science Fiction and the Roots of Postmodernism, 1946-1964*. New York: Greenwood Press, 2001, p.19

<sup>68</sup> BROWN, F.: *Heinlein and the Cold War: epistemology and politics in the Puppet Masters and Double Star*. [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_hb1421/is\\_1\\_49/ai\\_n29440380/](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_hb1421/is_1_49/ai_n29440380/) (2008 – 11-11)

<sup>69</sup> SEED, D.: *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999, p.30

Jack Finney's *The Body Snatchers* (adapted a year later into a motion picture *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*)<sup>70</sup> is set in the fictional town of Mill Walleys in California. The plot centers around Dr. Miles Bennell, a local doctor, whose patients begin to approach him with the suspicion, that their friends and family members have changed and aren't any longer the people they've known their whole lives. Bennell soon discovers, with the help of his friend Jack Belicec, that the townspeople are being secretly replaced by their duplicates grown from plantlike pods; perfect physical duplicates who kill and dispose of their human victims. These duplicates are indistinguishable from their originals, except for the fact that they lack any emotion. The duplicates later described as "pod people" work together to secretly spread more pods in order to replace the entire human race. The novel climaxes with Bennell attempting to escape the pod people, with the intent to warn the rest of humanity, but as we see at the end of the novel it may already be too late as the plantlike pods have already been distributed by the pod people to the rest of the country.

Both *The Puppet Masters* and *The Body Snatchers* provide the reader with a similar scenario of an alien invasion. The invasion is conducted in such a way, that it happens without the public even realizing it up to the point where it already be too late.

As mentioned the invasion in *The Puppet Masters* begins in a small nearby town, inhabited by a small community of people, whose depiction in the novel may be described as a display of common, hard-working Americans. The town is described in an almost idyllic way, with people greeting each other, families taking a walk on a Sunday afternoon and children playing carelessly in the streets, without noticing the strange behavior of some of their fellow citizens. From a superficial observation nothing doesn't indicate, that this small town may be the centre of an enemy invasion, which is about to spread. However, as mentioned this is how many government officials and common citizens imagined a possible invasion in the paranoid atmosphere of the 1950s. A quiet invisible invasion not starting among the highest ranks of political or military apparatus, but rather in a quiet rural community, with no one would suspect of being the nucleus of such a threat.

In *The Body Snatchers* Jack Finney provides the reader with the same scenario of an enemy invasion. The initial goal of the invaders is the penetrating into the very heart of American 1950s society - the small, suburban town. This apparently safe

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<sup>70</sup> HENDERSHOT, C.: *Paranoia, the Bomb and 1950s Science Fiction Films*. London: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1999, p.43

environment of the American small town is invaded by an unpredictable force, changing it beyond recognition, ironically without the people noticing it. The reason why the invaders would choose such an environment is obvious. The quiet town community in both novels presents a place with little surveillance about the activities of each of its citizens. Also the character of social bonds plays a crucial role, as these are much looser among the people living in cities than in smaller, town communities where everybody knows everyone and because of this people are more trustworthy and thus easier to assimilate. For this assimilation to happen the enemy must take a form of the well known neighbor, friend or family member someone the other would trust, without sensing the potential danger lurking under his unchanged exterior.

Because the whole plot of Finney's *The Body Snatchers* is set in this small Californian town and ends with a loose pessimistic ending it is up to the reader's imagination how the invasion will proceed. On the contrary to Finney, Heinlein's invasion *The Puppet Masters* doesn't focus on the disintegration of the small town community but depicts the invasion on a national scale. *The Puppet Masters* describe the whole process of how the invisible enemy proceeds after infecting the nucleus of the American society, reaching the urban society, the highest ranks of national security and political apparatus.

Although both novels describe the change of the society on a smaller or a wider scale, the reader isn't provided with the actual depiction of the assimilation of an individual taking place. In *The Body Snatchers* we can see, that even the victims, who have already been assimilated, don't remember the actual process taking place. As such they don't realize that they are being replaced until it's too late. What follows is a feeling of happiness and lack to feel neither pain nor fear, but they lack any individuality. The town of Mill Walley thus becomes a small society, which actually isn't any society, but rather a single body, parts of which are acting according to the will of a higher alien power.

The same can be said about the assimilation in the *Puppet Masters*, where the recovered victims describe a blackout taking place right before the actual assimilation. The actions of the assimilated victim may be described as unquestionable obedience to a dictatorship of one central "voice of expansion". When assimilated the victims don't question their actions and feel no guilt when harming other human beings, motivated only by the goal of spreading the infection. Because the novel is narrated from the viewpoint of the main character, who only remembers being attacked and later waking

up assimilated the reader isn't provided with the depiction of assimilation from the viewpoint of the characters psyche. However, later the assimilation is described in scientific terms. The slugs fasten themselves on the back of their victims pinching the nerve cells of ones body. Thus the process becomes a representation of pinching the cells of not only individual but also communal body. One of the characters in the novel describes the slugs actions as „pinching off the nerve cells of our social organism ”<sup>71</sup>

Another aspect that is presented in the same way in both novels is the drawing of a certain kind of imaginary border between those who are easy to assimilate or duplicate and those who are not. After a certain point in both novels, where the danger becomes obvious, the characters start to assume that some people are easier to “convert” to the enemy’s ideology, than others. This fact reflects the opinion on the spreading of communist ideology shared by the American public in the early 1950s. According to a study which evaluated Americans’ attitudes toward communism, the majority of the people surveyed shared the belief that „the less educated and working-class people were more likely to be communists than the better-educated and white-collar people”<sup>72</sup> Although neither *The Puppet Masters* nor *The Body Snatchers* describe the first people being “converted” as “working –class people” the assumption, that a certain individual may be infected by the parasites just because of his belonging to a certain society rank is present. At first both novels show that the first people being assimilated are the either physically weak or “less-educated” some characters draw the conclusion that the invaders are less capable to assimilate physically stronger human beings. However, as we see in *The Puppet Masters* this conclusion is put aside later as even the ones physically capable become the victims of assimilation. Later, when it becomes clear that the aliens have a sophisticated strategy, military personnel, people working in mass media and politicians become the most endangered groups. Because the enemy slowly finds its way through the whole spectrum of society it is shown, that even the physically fit and intellectually superior are helpless against its force. This fact again deepens the paranoid atmosphere, where no one is spared from conversion to the enemy’s ideology and therefore no one can be trusted. On the contrary to Finney the combination of physical agility, defense skills and healthy intellect are presented by Heinlein as advancement, although their possession cannot be seen as a hundred percent safety guarantee.

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<sup>71</sup> HEINLEIN, R. : *The Puppet Masters*. New York :Del Rey, 1986, p.22

<sup>72</sup> HENDERSHOT, C.: *Paranoia, the Bomb and 1950s Science Fiction Films*. London: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1999, p. 79

One of the differences between the depiction of invasion in both novels is present in the fact, that unlike in *The Body Snatchers* the alien invaders take over the control of the minds of innocent humans (rather than replace them by their look-alikes}, who then become deadly foreign agents looking just like everyone else. Later in the novel the characters discover that a separation from this form of mind control is actually possible, without killing the ones infected. In *The Body Snatchers* the victims replaced cannot be converted to the state of mind of their originals, even though they possess the limited personal characteristics and memories of their originals. In this way Heinlein shows more optimism in depicting, that the ones already infected by the “ideology” of the enemy may recover and return to their former worldview. Finney on the contrary presents the view of the early 1950s American public, namely that those who were at some point in their lives supporters of the opposing ideology, may be its supporters for the rest of their lives even if they claim otherwise.

The fact that the assimilated victims in both novels cannot be distinguished from other normal human beings deepens the atmosphere of paranoia where no one can be trusted. Besides the seemingly safe environment of the close ones, even the institutions securing the safety of an individual, like the police or the government, can no longer be seen as shelters of safety. On the contrary they become even more dangerous because of their possession of surveillance technology and information, which makes the individual even easier to track down and assimilate.

The technology represented mostly by means of mass media is seen as one of the greatest weapons the enemy uses to fool the minds of the individuals in *The Puppet Masters*. This becomes evident as the slugs assimilate the personnel of a small TV station placed in the small town at the beginning of the novel. As the invasion progresses the slugs are able to take control of bigger means of communication reaching more and more people, advising them to visit their local police stations and doctors, who at that time are already at their control. Again like in some novels mentioned before, the mass media becomes a tool of propaganda, however not used the ruling elite itself but by the invisible enemy spreading the “ideology”. Heinlein suggests, that propaganda as such works only if its recipients get the message, the slugs therefore assure themselves that the connection between the propaganda and the recipients is indeed made.<sup>73</sup> Although the mass media seem one of the most fit means in spreading of enemy’s ideology, Heinlein shows that it may be a two-edge weapon. As we see later

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<sup>73</sup>BOOKER, K.: *Monsters, Mushroom Clouds, and the Cold War: American Science Fiction and the Roots of Postmodernism, 1946-1964*. New York: Greenwood Press, 2001,p. 49

in the novel, when security measures are taken to prevent the slugs from spreading, the slug-free government uses the secure forms of mass media to spread its own “propaganda” in order to stop the slugs from spreading. So technology becomes one of the weapons to fight against such a threat.

Heinlein shows that the only way to really defeat this enemy is to undergo a certain transformation and act much like they do, thus mirroring their behavior. (here a parallel is drawn between the actions of the novel's main protagonist, which are trying to save the world and the activities of the secret service in the early 1950s trying to invade communist groups in the United States by acting as one of them. The parasitic slugs represent a form of brainwashing which can be only defeated by functioning as one organism, thus trying to defeat it by means of a reasonable, well-planned cooperation. In order to act like the enemy one has to become the enemy, much like the main protagonist Sam, who is at a certain point of the novel infected, but is later cured and may provide the others with useful information. This strategy proves to be useful later in the novel as even more undergo this process in order to understand the strategy of the enemy.

Finney's *The Body Snatchers* and Heinlein's *The Puppet Masters* may be seen as allegories depicting the takeover of the United States by the invisible communist spies. In Both novels there is an obvious parallel between the alien “masters” and the typical 1950s idea of communists, whom J. Edgar Hoover would often publicly describe as „masters of deception”<sup>74</sup> That the alien invaders stand as a representation of communist is more clearly indicated in Heinlein's novel. First of all, throughout the course of the novel Heinlein often emphasizes the collective character of the slug society a feature that the Cold War American public recognizes as one of the basic elements of communism. Secondly, as mentioned, the individuals infected by the slugs lack any individuality and the whole society consisting of such individuals is a presentation of society forced to conformity, yet another feature characteristic for the communist society. Also, not only does the way the government battles the alien threat in many ways resemble the anti – communist security measures plasticized in the early 1950s but the area infected by the slugs is referred to as “zone red”.

Although the slugs may represent the Soviets to a certain extent, Soviets themselves are mentioned in the novel as a nation that has already been defeated but still presents a problem:

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<sup>74</sup> BOOKER, K.: *Monsters, Mushroom Clouds, and the Cold War: American Science Fiction and the Roots of Postmodernism, 1946-1964*. New York: Greenwood Press, 2001, p. 49

„Too big to occupy and too big to ignore, World war III had not settled the Russian problem, and no war ever would”<sup>75</sup>

The future Russian society in the novel is described in the same way as its 1950s counterpart. Because it shares many similar traits with the slug society, it is speculated whether Russia may not already be under control of the slugs. Sam, the narrator of the novel at one point notes that „ the parasites might feel right at home behind the curtain”<sup>76</sup> Further he notes that the Russian propaganda system is very quick in taking action when the American government starts to report about the invasion by means of mass media. These reports are characterized as a pure imperialist fantasy created for the purpose to subvert the communist society. Sam later states that the slugs may have already invaded Russia but because of the character of its ideology it would make little difference:

„ Stalinism seems tailor-made for the slugs. On second thought I wonder if they already did land there. On third thought I wondered, what difference it would make; the people behind the curtain had had their minds enslaved and parasites riding them for three generations. There might not be two kopeks difference between a commissar with a slug and a commissar without a slug.”<sup>77</sup>

Because the Russians are present in the novel both as a society in the near future and allegorically in the form of slugs, David Seed criticized Heinlein of wanting to have it both ways. The slugs are used as a presentation of communist for the reader in the early 1950s and the novel’s Russian communism in the future is described as something that was already defeated in World War III, but not destroyed and still presents a danger. The reason for these two presentations of communist ideology in the novel may be because of Heinlein’s fear that this kind of ideology is deeply rooted in the human mind and might never be defeated.<sup>78</sup> The defeat of the slugs at the end of the novel mirrors the defeat of communism in World War III. Although the slugs have been unsuccessful in their invasion they haven’t been destroyed and may return from their home world with a better

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<sup>75</sup> HEINLEIN, R. : *The Puppet Masters*. New York :Del Rey, 1986, p.91

<sup>76</sup> HEINLEIN, R. : *The Puppet Masters*. New York :Del Rey, 1986, p.91

<sup>77</sup> HEINLEIN, R. : *The Puppet Masters*. New York :Del Rey, 1986, p.125

<sup>78</sup>SEED, D.: *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999, p. 30



planned invasion (or may be still hiding on Earth in some Third World hideout like the Amazon).

*The Puppet Masters* and *The Body Snatchers* were not the only novels, which presented the theme of the hidden enemy and the problem of distinguishing between “Us” and “Them”. One of Philip K. Dick’s earlier novels *Impostor* (1953) shows certain similarity to both works as the reader is again presented with an enemy, whose only goal is to destroy the existing society. The main protagonist of the novel Spence Olham is a scientist, working on a military project, when he is visited by security officers who accuse him of being a humanoid robot smuggled by the enemy to Earth during the ongoing alien war. The robot probably contains a bomb, which will be launched after the usage of a certain phrase. Both sides cannot prove Olham’s true identity until a robot, is discovered proving that Olham is human. However, later it is discovered that the robot is in fact a human and Olham only an imitation, which leads to the triggering of the bomb which he holds in himself. Like in the *Puppet Masters* the individual’s true identity cannot be discovered by means of a pure superficial observation, thus creating a paranoid atmosphere in which no one can be trusted. Unlike Finney’s or Heinlein’s depiction of a possible invasion Dick’s depiction is a presentation of different idea of such an event, residing in the minds of the 1950s American citizens. The enemy alien race in the novel conducts the invasion with the goal not to assimilate its adversary (and so heighten the numbers of the supporters of their ideology), but rather chooses the means of annihilation, completely destroying the adversary with an attack from within.

The humanoid robot spy may be viewed as another representation of a communist, but the fact that he is a weapon of a technologically more advanced society presents a feature, that the alien invaders in *The Body Snatchers*, *The Puppet Masters* and *Impostor* have in common. As such the invaders are presented as a society placed higher on the evolutionary scale than the attacked human race (at least when we look at their ability to survive and their superior intellect). This crucial difference may be seen as a reversion of the 1950s and 1960s idea of a communist. As the study *Paranoia, the Bomb and 1950s Science Fiction Films* shows, the regular American’s idea of a communist and the Soviet Union was anything else, than a technologically superior society:

„ Scenes of Russian peasants living in one-room huts filled with straw serve to reinforce stereotypes of Russians as primitive and hence of

communism as a political system lower on the social evolutionary scale than American democracy . . . . In the early stages of Cold War, the threat for the United States was the Soviet Union, the devolved, childlike primitive country that threatened democracy with depravity and degeneration.”<sup>79</sup>

Besides these allegorical representations of the communist invader some authors chose a more literal way. One of the best examples for this approach can be found in K.F. Crossens’s novel *Year of Consent* (1954). The novel takes place toward the end of the twentieth century, where the United States have taken the rule over the entire American continent. But despite the fact that the democratic superpower has extended its field of power, it hasn’t been able to eliminate the threat of the opposing regime. Both the democratic and communist superpowers still exist and have divided the entire planet into two power blocks. Because the threat of an enemy operating within the borders of United States has become even more realistic, measures have been taken against anyone sharing the slightest interests with the communist dissidents. These communist dissidents are kept in South Dakota, which is like a reservation surrounded by electrical fence. Still, the novel doesn’t primarily focus on depicting the communist society in a negative light but rather on the actions of the democratic society and its citizens guided by anxiety and paranoia.

Although the novels mentioned provide the reader with the depiction of a seemingly invisible invasion they also discuss the theme of the security measures taken to protect from such a threat. The novels depict to which extent these measures could be taken without the American society betraying the basic principles on which democracy is based on. As many of them show this scenario is often inevitable to happen and may serve as a critique of the security measures taken during the era of McCarthyism, pointing out, that they were often dangerously close to those plasticized by a totalitarian government.

In the *Puppet Masters* Heinlein argues that certain security measures are tolerable, when conducted in a reasonable extent. Because the slugs in the novel fasten themselves on the backs of their victims (and later on other parts of the body), hiding under the victims clothes, they are unrecognizable without a proper examination. Later

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<sup>79</sup>HENDERSHOT, C.: *Paranoia, the Bomb and 1950s Science Fiction Films*. London: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1999, p. 79-80

when the alien threat is discovered the government comes with solution, which commands the citizens to stop any kind carrying clothes or footwear. With the threat that those seen with their clothes on will be shot on sight, the novel's democratic society is so forced to a certain form of conformity, one of the principles of the opposing ideology it despises. Although the citizens and the government in the novel are fully aware of this similarity between the democratic and totalitarian society, they recognize that such security measure is tolerable given the seriousness of the threat. In general, they are not deprived of the rest of their liberties and the government makes no attempt to suppress them even more. The attitude of both the citizens and the government in this kind of situation represents Heinlein's view on the subject of civic suppression in the early 1950s, pointing out that in that kind of situation respect has to be shown on both sides. He himself was in support of uncovering the communist threat inside the United States, but he also called for the resistance against and critique of the political authorities, which in a way suppressed the civil rights of the American citizens<sup>80</sup>. The critic Joseph F. Brown describes his attitude present in his body of work:

„...in understanding Heinlein as a Cold War figure, it should be noted that it is possible for Heinlein (and his mouthpiece characters) to be both the confident champion of personal liberties and freedom and the critic of Soviet-style collectivism, alongside narratives that render possible threats to American power”<sup>81</sup>

However, some novels show that the preventive measures against a possible communist invader may be taken to extreme. Crossens's *Year of Consent* depicts a society, which tries to protect itself through a massive system of cameras, bugs and laws, which regulate the citizens roles in the society. Also a permanent Committee is established in order to find evidence about any communist conspiracy and a giant computer named SOCIAC is invented with the purpose to store even the most personal information about the citizens. Through these actions the society tries to reduce the factor of alienation forcing itself to conformity, uncovering the ones suspicious of collaboration, erasing any display of individuality in the process. Crossen goes even further by describing the character of the government. The seemingly democratic political apparatus

<sup>80</sup> BROWN, F.: *Heinlein and the Cold War: epistemology and politics in the Puppet Masters and Double Star*. [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_hb1421/is\\_1\\_49/ai\\_n29440380/](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_hb1421/is_1_49/ai_n29440380/) (2008 – 11-11)

<sup>81</sup> BROWN, F.: *Heinlein and the Cold War: epistemology and politics in the Puppet Masters and Double Star*. [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_hb1421/is\\_1\\_49/ai\\_n29440380/](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_hb1421/is_1_49/ai_n29440380/) (2008 – 11-11)

consists only of a group of individuals mostly originating from the military and sharing obviously unlimited powers. As mentioned both the democratic and communist superpowers still maintain their position in the world, but it is evident in the novel, that the true meaning of the word democracy has been lost and the form of society depicted only represents a degenerated form of its former ideology.

Another display of extreme liberty suppression for the purpose of security is can be found in Philip K. Dick's *Eye in the Sky* (1957). Although the depiction of a political regime that tries to take total control over the life of an individual, a system based on monitoring and documentation of each of his citizens are recurring themes in some of his other novels, the *Eye in the Sky* may be viewed as his commentary on the political climate of the mid 1950s. The novel starts with depiction of a military scientist, who is told that his wife has been classified as a company and security risk. Later he becomes the witness of an FBI investigation of his wife's personal life, which results in loss of her job because of the possibility that she has been a part of a left-wing organization at a certain point in her life. As the story continues, the main protagonist discovers that he like many others is being spied on by a "spy-eye," satellite just because there is just a mere possibility that he like his wife may be still collaborating with this left-wing organization. Much like in Dick's *Impostor*, the main character is persecuted and forced to view the whole situation from the viewpoint of "Them". Because Dick tells the story from the viewpoint of an individual who has become the victim of unjustified persecution the reader is provided in detail with a pessimistic resolution of the "who is Us and who is Them distinction" problematic. As it is difficult to distinguish between friend or foe, between an obeying citizen or a pawn representing the ideas of an opposing superpower, measures are taken even at the high cost of persecution of an innocent individual.

In James Blish's novel *They Shall have Stars* (1956) the paranoid security measures of the McCarthy Era become the source of satire. Blish doesn't try to hide the fact that the surveillance actions of the government represent the actions of Senator McCarthy and his supporters, even later he admitted that about a third of the novels content was meant as a „personal attack on the late Senator McCarthy”<sup>82</sup>. The novel describes the FBI monitoring of a space flight research project, which is being conducted by the main character Dr Corsi, who undergoes a questioning of his activities by the FBI later in the novel. The FBI surveillance is presented by the re-occurring symbol of

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<sup>82</sup> SEED, D.: *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999, p. 72

shadows<sup>83</sup> depicting the whole security apparatus in a rather ominous tone from the beginning of the novel:

„The shadows flickered on the walls to his left and right, just inside the edges of his vision, like shapes stepping quickly back into invisible doorways”<sup>84</sup>

Because there is suspicion, that there may be communist spies trying to gain crucial information on the secret government project the information about it and the ones exposed to this information have to be monitored permanently. The information in the novel is presented as some sort of product a valuable commodity only available to few and because of the assumption that it may fall into the wrong hands the freedom of spreading it is extremely reduced. As the reader can see the actions of the main character are motivated by escaping the world in which the loss of freedom of information simply represents just another step in the loss of other freedoms.<sup>85</sup> Ironically, the only real casualty in the novel is the senator who represents and is in charge of the apparatus of surveillance and is later executed by his own guard, because evidence is found accusing him of collaboration with the communist agents. However, at the end of the novel we find out that everything was just a huge misunderstanding. Thus the senator is eventually killed by the paranoid apparatus he himself helped to create.

As seen in these novels the theme of paranoia has found its way into popular fiction and represented different aspects of overexposed fear rooted in the minds of the citizen, whether a politician or an average citizen. The authors tried to comment on specific kind of paranoia spread in the 1950s that originated from the possibility of the enemy within undistinguishable from the common American citizen. This enemy was represented by various forms of invaders from slug-like aliens to humanoid robots or mere communist spies or their collaborators carrying the disguise of a common American citizen. However, rather than serving as warning tales before the Soviet threat, these novels focus on the actions of the citizens and the government often numbed by the

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<sup>83</sup> SEED, D.: *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999, p.71

<sup>84</sup> BLISH, J.: *They Shall have Stars*. New York: Avon, 1968, p. 13

<sup>85</sup> SEED, D.: *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999, p. 72

paranoia and inability to distinct who belongs to “Us” and who belongs to “Them”. The novels discuss these actions and to some extent make them a source of their critique.

## 4 Attitude towards militarism in the science fiction novel of the 1960s

During the period of the late 1950s up to the end of the 1960s it becomes clear that the otherwise popular opinion of the American public in its attitude to war has undergone a process of radical change. After experiencing the events of the Korean War in the early 1950s, the Cuban missile crisis in the early 1960s and also slowly realizing the unjustified reasons for the States “intervention” in Vietnam, the American public started to question the moral justification of war.<sup>86</sup> This radical change led to the expansion of the anti-militaristic attitude in the life and in popular culture (Joseph Heller’s *Catch 22* is one of the best examples of a successful anti-militaristic novels published in the early 1960s)<sup>87</sup>. However, the approach to this subject matter in the genre of the science fiction novel cannot be seen as an outright condemnation of militaristic tendencies.

In some of the works mentioned in the previous chapters, the authors tried to comment on the paranoia based on the misuse of nuclear weapons and a possible Soviet invasion. Although they often served as a critique of both political and citizen actions in the time of crisis, some like Wyllie’s *Tomorrow!* serve as warning tales about the uncompromising policy of the communist threat. But, as seen in some of them, we often encounter a mirroring principle where the characteristics attributed to one superpower mirror those of the other.<sup>88</sup> So often both East and West are criticized for the oppressive politics, but what can be also found is that they are to some extent both criticized for their militarism. The critique of militarism as seen in some novels varies in tone and in some cases, like Heinlein’s *Starship Troopers* (1960) the authors themselves show militaristic tendencies in a positive light rather than making these a source of their critique. Although some novels show a certain anti-military attitude, they also try to answer the question whether war as such has some positive aspects. As mentioned it was obvious, that the public has changed its attitude about a possible war in the, late 1950s. But despite this radical change, some people still believe, that on some level war is not only inevitable but in some cases also necessary for human survival (a thought most clearly expressed in *Starship Troopers*).

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<sup>86</sup> CLUTE, J., NICHOLS, P.: *The Science Fiction Encyclopedia*. New York: Dolphin Books, 1979, p. 641

<sup>87</sup> CLUTE, J., NICHOLS, P.: *The Science Fiction Encyclopedia*. New York: Dolphin Books, 1979, p.641

<sup>88</sup> SEED, D.: *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999, p. 94

Robert A. Heinlein's *Starship Troopers* was and still is considered to be one of the most controversial science-fiction novels ever written.<sup>89</sup> The story is set in the 22nd century, where Earth is at war with a "bug" race from another galaxy. From what the characters of the novel say, we assume that at the end of the war only one race will survive, therefore a military conflict is inevitable. As the novel's main character Johnny Rico states: „They are tough and we are tough and only one of us will win and the other gets wiped out,"<sup>90</sup> This thought is uttered in the novel several times, presenting so Heinlein's view, that some enemies can only be defeated by force. It is clear that the "bugs" present an enemy that cannot be reasoned and the war in the novel is a conflict, which will be decided by the survival of the fittest. The fact that human society continues to maintain some part of its aggressive nature and that the support of the military is crucial even in the time of peace, is what ensures the survival of a certain society, when being attacked by an unpredictable enemy. As there can be no guarantee that humanity won't be facing a conflict in the future these measures seem to be reasonable. However, the novel's purpose wasn't just to discuss the military's importance in the future of mankind. Keith Booker claims that the novel contains also Heinlein's commentary on the military policy in the late 1950s:

„Clearly a response to Heinlein's belief, that the U.S was going soft in the late 1950s, *Starship Troopers* is essentially a call to arms ...Indeed the book presents a Darwinian vision as life as a struggle for survival of the strongest, thereby urging Americans to seek greater military strength so they can survive"<sup>91</sup>

When viewed only as a speculative tale on possible positive aspects of human aggression and militarism, the novel cannot be seen as controversial. The arguments given for the support of military service are as mentioned reasonable. The controversy the novel has caused, stems from the depiction of the novel's society and Heinlein's view of this society as ideal.<sup>92</sup> The society depicted in the novel is built on the principle, that only some of its citizens may earn the right to vote or uphold a position in the

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<sup>89</sup> GIFFORD, J.: The Nature of "Federal Service" in Robert A. Heinlein's *Starship Troopers*. <http://www.nitrosyncretic.com/rah/ftp/fedrlsvc.pdf> (2009 – 03-02)

<sup>90</sup> GIFFORD, J.: The Nature of "Federal Service" in Robert A. Heinlein's *Starship Troopers*. <http://www.nitrosyncretic.com/rah/ftp/fedrlsvc.pdf> (2009 – 03-02)

<sup>91</sup> BOOKER, K.: *Monsters, Mushroom Clouds, and the Cold War: American Science Fiction and the Roots of Postmodernism, 1946-1964*. New York: Greenwood Press, 2001, p. 51



society's political apparatus. These rights are given only to those, who earn them after they have served a term in the Federal Service, an institution equal to the present day military service, although Heinlein and the characters in his novel claim otherwise. James Gifford claims, that in the novel the character of federal service is explained in two ways of which only one can be correct:

1. Federal Service is roughly equivalent to present-day military service (Army, Navy, Marine), including military support services such as research and development, logistics, labor battalions and intelligence.<sup>93</sup>
2. Federal Service is equivalent to general government service, including military service and what we would call "civil service," the latter being responsible for ninety-five percent of all Federal Service positions.<sup>94</sup>

It is clear from the novel that only a part of the citizens enlisted in the Federal Service take part in the direct confrontation with the bugs. However, because of the fact, that even those serving in labor battalions, intelligence, research and development often risk their lives, operating in facilities which may become the target of the bugs' attack, their occupation cannot be viewed as "civil service". They are therefore clearly part of the military service, although the definition the characters give in the novel claims otherwise.

Another reason why many describe *Starship Troopers* as militaristic is the novel's statement, that those who have been given the right to vote have earned it because of their service to society, risking their lives for the welfare of the civilians. The fact that the working civilians also contribute to the welfare of society (a fact that Heinlein omits) but are still denied their rights to vote or hold a position in the government, support the claims of those who describe the novel's message as irresponsible.

As mentioned, when viewed in the context of late 1950s and early 1960s the novel can be viewed as the call to arms meant for the American public. Even when

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<sup>92</sup> GIFFORD, J.: *The Nature of "Federal Service" in Robert A. Heinlein's Starship Troopers*. <http://www.nitrosyncretic.com/rah/ftp/fedrlsvc.pdf> (2009 – 03-02)

<sup>93</sup> GIFFORD, J.: *The Nature of "Federal Service" in Robert A. Heinlein's Starship Troopers*. <http://www.nitrosyncretic.com/rah/ftp/fedrlsvc.pdf> (2009 – 03-02)

<sup>94</sup> GIFFORD, J.: *The Nature of "Federal Service" in Robert A. Heinlein's Starship Troopers*. <http://www.nitrosyncretic.com/rah/ftp/fedrlsvc.pdf> (2009 – 03-02)

looking at the enemy a race of bugs, the reader may see another symbolic presentation of communists (although, on the contrary to *Puppet Masters* Heinlein's symbolic presentation of the communists shifts from presenting them as an enemy lurking within the States to a brute striking force). The bugs in the novel operate as a single body following the „dictatorship of the hive”,<sup>95</sup> and cannot be described as individuals by any stretch of imagination. The bugs in a certain way present a overexposed form of communism, some sort of “total communism” where as mentioned each individual acts according to the will of the ruling regime and is under permanent surveillance, in the novel represented by the so called “bug commissars”. They are also a presentation of unpredictable aggressors and they make slaves of the ones which they don't kill. One reviewer discovered the parallel between the communism and the bugs :

„In short the bugs represent the perceived characteristics of Soviet communism transposed after a defeat of the ,Chinese Hegemony, in the novels future history, on to an alien species. Political difference is thereby neutralized into threateningly alien”<sup>96</sup>

However, when we look at the description of the novels military life a certain mirroring principle is visible, the soldiers resemble the bugs more closely than they are aware of. The novel itself describes in its course the military life and from this description we can see, that the military itself represents a certain form of regime where there is little place for individuality. The main protagonist of the novel Rico leaves his own biological family and finds a certain substitute, which is represented by the army. The question which immediately arises is what makes an obeying soldier different from the obeying bug, but is during the course of the novel left unanswered and left upon the reader to decide. Here Heinlein presents on the contrary to the rest of the novel one negative aspect of militarism. Although the military is described as efficient and prosperous it forces the individual to give up his individuality and become one with the “hive” but as the novel states there is sadly no other alternative when a race or a culture faces extinction.

Darko Survin describes this feature as present in many military science fiction novels:

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<sup>95</sup> BOOKER, K.: *Monsters, Mushroom Clouds, and the Cold War: American Science Fiction and the Roots of Postmodernism, 1946-1964*. New York: Greenwood Press, 2001, p. 122

<sup>96</sup>SEED, D.: *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999, p. 37

„ In military SF, you must be both a hero and an interchangeable cog in the all-encompassing military machine. Thus the price is very high: the collectivity no longer stands for participatory democracy from below upward but for militarized hierarchy ”<sup>97</sup>

Because of the reasons mentioned, *Starship Troopers* may be seen as distinct from the rest of the 1960s novels, dealing with the subject of militarism. On one hand it is a speculation on the positive aspects of a military based society, on the other hand it dares to go much further in depicting it as an ideal form of society and may be therefore labeled by the reader as controversial. As Rico's old high school teacher says in the beginning of the novel (and is so representing the Heinlein's philosophy) the military based society of the future is an "improved" future society which came to existence after the „decadence and collapse of the democracies of the 20th century”<sup>98</sup> after which the surviving war veterans took over.

To a certain extent, one of Heinlein's following novels *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress* (1966) is a similar representation of his philosophy. Society's total abandoning of the aggressive aspects of the human nature is impossible, because there would always be an enemy. Life as such is seen as a harsh game with an uncertain ending, where the survival of the fittest is a partial guarantee.<sup>99</sup> The novel is a depiction of a lunar revolution, where the lunar colony exploited by a united world government prepares and eventually starts a fight for its independence. Although the message of the novel may be misinterpreted as a fight for the subversion of bad capitalists, such an interpretation would mean to ignore Heinlein's previous work. The colonists' struggle is a struggle for establishing the rules of free trade between Earth and its lunar colony.<sup>100</sup> Heinlein again shows that some enemies cannot be reasoned with. As the novel shows, after the calls for a peaceful negotiation from the side of the lunar colony have been ignored (and followed by a brutal attack to suppress the revolution) a military conflict is inevitable.

One of the novels partially dealing with the whole subject of pacifism vs. militarism in the mid-1960s was Frank Herbert's classic *Dune* (1965). The novel describes an ongoing struggle over the desert planet Dune, where two Imperial houses,

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<sup>97</sup> SURVIN, D.: *Of Starship Troopers and Refuseniks: War and Militarism in U.S. Science Fiction, Part 2*. Extrapoltion, Spring 2007

<sup>98</sup> HEINLEIN, R. : *Starship Troopers*. New York: G. K. Hall & Company, 1998, p.102

<sup>99</sup> HEINLEIN, R.: *Měsíc je drsná milenka*. Praha: And Classic, 1994, p. 2

<sup>100</sup> HEINLEIN, R.: *Měsíc je drsná milenka*. Praha: And Classic, 1994, p. 2

the house of Harkonnen and the house of Atreides fight to gain control over the planet and its precious resources. The Harkonnen again present an enemy, much like Heinlein's bugs, which is a chronic aggressor, enslaving those who they don't kill. Although the 1960s reader may find allusions between the Harkonnen and the communists (they represent a suppressive society, use the color red on their emblems and flag, their ruler has a Slavic name Baron Vladimir Harkonnen), Herbert himself stated that he had no allegory in mind, when writing the novel.<sup>101</sup> Present among other major themes in the novel is also the theme of power and war as a natural conclusion of a conflict. In the centre of the novel stands the character of Paul Atreides, who slowly becomes the leader and discovers that he or she must wage war to gain and maintain that power and bring a resolution to the whole conflict. The novel so presents Herbert's view on the subject of war, which is a logical consequence of any struggle to gain and maintain power whether political or economic or ensure survival of a certain society.<sup>102</sup> The novel also spends a great amount of time describing Paul's maturing into the leader, by means of a continual "military" training, much like Johnny Rico from *Starship Troopers*, although unlike *Starship Troopers* it is not structured as didactic and literal.

Although the previous three novels mentioned take the route of describing the positive aspects of militarism some novels are purely structured as critiques of this phenomenon in the Cold War society.

In one of their later Novels *Critical Mass* (1961), Pohl and Kornbluth give us a satire of Robert Kennedy's war policy. We are here presented with a defense obsessed USA, where the nuclear shelter program is evidently good for the construction industry, bad for the military and good to the president because he came to office on the promise to pass the Civilian Shelter Bill. However, a specialist building the shelters and later the president see the meaninglessness of such actions when the president asks himself : „What was the use of any kind of shelters... if all you have to come out of them to was a burned out Sahara?“<sup>103</sup>The whole civil protect system shows to be a joke, trying to deceive the public in believing the nuclear war with the Soviet Union would result in little harm to the ordinary citizen's life, thus giving an excuse for developing new weapons and spending great amount of the country's budget for military purposes. But, a similar approach is seen also on the opposing side of the Iron curtain, where people are

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<sup>101</sup> PARKERSON, R.: *Semantics, General Semantics and Ecology in Frank Herbert's 'Dune.'* In: *National Review*, Vol. 59,2007

<sup>102</sup> PARKERSON, R.: *Semantics, General Semantics and Ecology in Frank Herbert's 'Dune.'* In: *National Review*, Vol. 59,2007

<sup>103</sup> POHL, F.KORNBLUTH, C.M.: *Critical Mass*. New York: Bantam Books,1978, p.41

lead to believe the same thing. The whole defense program is just a charade which together with the consumer products produced by large enterprises, which work hand in hand with the government to support its ideology, try to accomplish a certain form of approval from the citizen. Although the novel does not remove the demonic image of the Soviet Union, the United States aren't depicted in a positive light either as their actions try to provoke the opposing regime.

To give at least one example of a scenario, how the world comes to an end when all the power over the world's fate is given to the hands of aggressive military general is Peter George's *Red Alert* (1963), which became a basis for Stanley Kubrick's motion picture, *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*.<sup>104</sup> Here the novel ends with the unleashing of Armageddon caused by a Soviet hating general, who suffers from a personal delusion that he will make the world a better place and personally decides to drop the A-bomb on Russian soil. The unlucky circumstances which cause the fate of the whole world to fall into the hands of a madman seem unlikely, but this only serves to underline the novel's theme that the uneasy treaty between the two nuclear superpowers is easy to break perhaps even by a simple misunderstanding and unreasonable military aggression.

As seen in this short overview, these few science fiction novels of the 1960s provide the reader, with a rather similar approach to the whole subject of militarism. Because Heinlein and Herbert share the view of life as a Darwinian struggle of the survival of the fittest, therefore man's aggression preserved to a reasonable level ensures his ability to protect himself from an even more aggressive enemy. However, in the context of the Cold War George and Pohl depict, what happens when either the lust for power or military aggression are taken to an unreasonable extent. The institutions that were established to protect the country then may become the source of its demise.

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<sup>104</sup> CLUTE, J., NICHOLS, P.: The Science Fiction Encyclopedia. New York: Dolphin Books, 1979, p. 179

## 5 Conclusion

My diploma work dealt with the description and analysis of Cold War elements in selected American science fiction novels of the 1950s and 1960s. When discussing the genre of science fiction in literature, many tend to describe the era beginning in the early 1950s as the start of the “golden age” in this literary genre.<sup>105</sup> In fact many of the authors named in this diploma work wrote their most crucial works in the 1950s and 1960s, works that became classics in the genre and helped to define it for the decades to come. Although these works offer different presentations of the authors’ imagination, those discussed in this diploma work share a common interest in dealing with the issues of the 1950s and 1960s Cold War society.

As the reader of the 1950s and the 1960s science fiction novel can see, the authors chose various means through which they comment and often criticize the actions of both the Soviet Union and The United States during these years of Cold War hysteria. Although the Era of the Cold War started shortly after the Second World War, many historians agree that mainly the period starting in the early 1950s and ending sometime after the mid-1960s can be described as a period of Cold War hysteria.

As seen many authors tried to point out the possible result of this hysteria, stemming either from the fear of misuse of the scientific advancements (in particular the atomic bomb), mistrust in the ones deciding the fate of humanity, the inability to distinguish between the “true” American citizen and the “Other” the one supporting the adversary totalitarian society and man’s irresponsible, often aggressive side of his nature. The presentation of the result of this hysteria then serves as a warning tale, showing to which extent the actions of the individual and the society can be taken without crossing the border.

However, although these works often seem to be pessimistic in tone, in some cases they provide the reader with hope, presented through the fact that man is given the chance to start anew. This is not the case only in the subgenre of apocalyptic and post apocalyptic fiction but also in other novels discussed in this work, as the hope is presented either through a possible revolution that will change the established oppressive government or the fact that man’s reason, willpower and aggressive side of nature, when

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<sup>105</sup> BOOKER, K.: *Monsters, Mushroom Clouds, and the Cold War: American Science Fiction and the Roots of Postmodernism, 1946-1964*. New York: Greenwood Press, 2001, p. 2

kept to a reasonable extent, may help him to overcome the odds and face an even more aggressive enemy.

But although these novels give the reader hope, they often show a potential apocalypse, the paranoid behavior in society or comment on the oppressive politics of the political apparatus in such means, that they clearly indicate, that man has to participate in a change. The hope for a better future is present in these novels, but the authors show, that without a reasonable approach to the whole problem, from the side of those in power or just a common citizen, the hope presented is still only a speculation.

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## CURRICULUM VITAE

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**Vzdelanie a školenia:**

05. 02. 2009 Štátna skúška z nemeckého jazyka, literatúry a didaktiky

2004 - 2009 Kurz nizozemského jazyka, získanie Certifikátu nizozemčiny ako cudzieho jazyka od CVaVT v máji 2008, úroveň A2

2004 - 2009 Magisterské štúdium na Filozofickej fakulte KU

v Ružomberku, kombinácia učiteľstvo slovenského a nemeckého jazyka a literatúry

07. 04. 2008 Štátna skúška z pedagogiky a psychológie

09.04.2007 – 31.08.2007 absolvovanie výmenného pobytu v rámci programu SOKRATES / ERAZMUS na Universität Passau, Nemecko

2000 – 2004 Gymnázium Antona Bernoláka v Námestove; maturita z predmetov slovenský, anglický, nemecký jazyk a dejepis

**Jazyky:** nemecký – aktívne, anglický – aktívne, nizozemský – aktívne (pokročilý).

**Osobné schopnosti a oprávnenia:** Komunikatívnosť, zmysel pre organizáciu, improvizáciu, motivácia pre prácu s cudzími jazykmi a literatúrou

**Technické schopnosti:** Používateľ MS Windows – veľmi dobre, MS Office – veľmi dobre, internetu – veľmi dobre, vlastným osobným počítačom

**Vodičský preukaz:** Skupina B

**Záujmy:** literatúra, film, jazyky, cestovanie, história, politika, hudba

**Vyhlasenie o počte znakov započítaných do rozsahu práce**

Vyhlasujem, že moja diplomová práca má 162 416 znakov.

V Ružomberku, dňa 01.06.2009