Mariah Cruz

Professor Gold

ENG 1121 – D432

May 2, 2019

Genre Assignment

Part One

Speculative fiction is a genre of the science fiction discourse community. The genre deals with elements that do not exist in the real world but could and are often displayed in supernatural, futuristic or imaginative themes. The genre explores ideas that may not seem possible but aren’t completely impossible. According to the journal article, *The Genre of Science Fiction* published by the National Council of Teachers of English, we read science fiction because “it is read as a set of ‘prepackaged imminent futures.’” (Bereit 1) Speculative fiction can be further broken down into utopian and dystopian fiction. Both genres have been important to society because writers use this as a tool to address or talk about social, economic, or political structures and issues going on in our society today. Speculative fiction is written for people to become more aware of their society and to explore the possibilities of changes. Utopian literature usually describes a perfect imaginary world and “makes promises” of a better future. Dystopian literature usually “issues warnings” about social, political, or economic subjects in a ‘nightmare’ world. For example, most dystopian fiction portrays a life in a totalitarian or anarchy society to expose “corruption” and make audiences aware of any societal issues.

One of the most well-known authors to have written and produce in this genre was Ray Bradbury. Ray Bradbury was a well-known American author and screenwriter who has written speculative fiction before but specifically dystopian fiction. His novel *Fahrenheit 451* and short story, *The Veldt* are some examples of the dystopian fiction he’s written. Ursula K. Le Guin is another well-known American author best known for her works of speculative fiction; take for example her book *The Left Hand of Darkness*.

The appearance of speculative fiction can be traced all the way back to the 16th century. Sir Thomas Moore was one of the earliest to write speculative fiction, he wrote his book *Utopia* which was about a perfect self-contained community that shared the same beliefs and life style. Utopian fiction is seen a lot more in the 19th century which was also the time of the women suffrage. During the 19th century there was “an unprecedented number of works of utopian fiction or utopian speculation written by women.” (Lake 1) Feminist utopian fiction gave empowering examples of societies governed by women. Around the 20th century, writers began to recognize the impossibility of utopic scenarios so around the 1980s dystopian fiction started to develop. The 20th century was a time of political distrust, economical stress and global anxiety with issues like the Great Depression in the 1930s and the two world wars. George Orwell’s *1984* and Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* were both inspired by a world war. Dystopian fiction was rooted from utopian fiction. This type of fiction, unlike utopian fiction, include troubled or even unsolved endings and an uncontrollable totalitarian government. Throughout the years many pieces of literature have been produced under the genre of speculative fiction. Speculative literature is seen by others as a tool or platform to inform and give multiple perspectives to possible societal subjects in an imaginative way.

Part Two

Some of the most well-known pieces of literature that fall under the speculative fiction genre umbrella are: *1984* by George Orwell, *Anthem* by Ayn Rand, *Fahrenheit* *451* and *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley. All four samples include the idea of government control over society. George Orwell’s *1984* is a dystopian novel that depicts a totalitarian government that uses media and advanced technology to manipulate people and control society. Ayn Rand’s *Anthem* critiques the idea of a collectivist society which is a world where individuals exist only to contribute to the well-being of society, where individualism and objectivism have been wiped out. *Fahrenheit* *451* by Ray Bradbury takes place in the future where society practices censorship by banning all book. The government controls what people read and think. Huxley’s *Brave* *New* *World* is both utopian and dystopian fiction. There is somewhat a totalitarian government involved, there’s no sense of individuality, people are ranked by a social status, the government controls all aspects of people and society however, people are happy. They love the world they live in and let government control them because they were made to believe that by allowing them to do so they’ll be protected and live a happy life. All these samples seem to portray characteristics of a totalitarian government who manipulates people of society to conform to the rules and avoid consequences for the cost of their freedom or individuality. These samples can relate to our current world as well, for example, the issue in Venezuela regarding the presidency of socialist Nicolas Maduro.

Part Three

George Orwell’s *1984* is one of the most intriguing, interesting and relatable books I’ve read throughout my academic years and I truly enjoyed reading it. The dystopian novel depicts a totalitarian government that uses media to manipulate and control society. William Smith, the protagonist, lives in Oceania which is just one of the three governments that exist in his world. Oceania is controlled by a mysterious leader known as ‘Big Brother’ who always uses listening devices and cameras to watch all its citizens. Oceania also has a secret police force who dedicate to finding and preventing any rebellious thought or behavior to higher authorities. Smith doesn’t really like the government, his job at the Minster of Truth involves altering records so that it agrees with the government’s own version of history. He also doesn’t enjoy living under a repressive government, so he begins to rebel, he starts by keeping a diary filled with thoughts on the government and other subjects which is risky considering Big Brother and the thought police is always watching. He ends up meeting Julia, another rebel and love interest which is also illegal in Oceania. They share a desire of separating from this repressive government and meet O’Brien who is also said to be another rebel. However, O’Brien turns out to be one of the thought police working undercover and arrests both Smith and Julia. Smith is tortured physically and mentally until he betrays Julia and is willing to conform to Big Brother and his repressive government again. After, he’s released backed into society, recommitted to Big Brother and no longer has feelings for Julia. The message in this text can relate to a lot of people in todays society as well as to their own government. Just like in the novel, we’ve recently experienced an issue regarding Facebook and privacy. Facebook was accused of harvesting personal data of over 87 million users for political campaign purposes. This became a huge scandal because many were concerned about Facebook violating their personal privacy regardless of promising users that their personal information would stay safe. Just like Oceania was using media and technology to control society and invade people’s privacy, Facebook also violated people’s privacy to control society’s political campaigns. What surprised me the most about this text was the level of manipulation used by the government to make society believe certain things. In the book they mention how they had a ‘youth’ thought police. Kids in that society would be trained to look out for any rebellious thought or behavior and to report it to the higher authorities, even if it was their parents. According to Orwell in his novel 1984, “They [children] adored the Party and everything connected with it…It was almost normal for people over thirty to be frightened of their own children.” (Orwell 24) The totalitarian government in Oceania controlled everyone even the youth which surprises me because its so relatable. Today social media and the internet has great control over many things including people and especially the kids growing up in this generation. My cousin who is only 2 years old already knows her way through an iPhone and iPad. She can easily change the video on YouTube or change through apps on the phone all by herself.

Part Four

Beep…Beep…Beep… “Its time to wake up Mr. Michael. Todays weather seems to be mostly sunny with a little bit of wind. Today you have a meeting at the doctors at 8 o’clock and…” The woman’s beautiful and soothing voice echoed in the big empty room as Michael reached over to get the ‘house’ tablet which controlled the women who spoke over the speakers in his room. He turned his head to the right to look at the time, it was 6 o’clock in the morning the sun was just starting to rise from the horizon. He headed for the bathroom and picked up a razor, he made sure to follow the rule which was to keep yourself clean and ‘presentable’, make sure there was no facial hair and keep the buzz cut clean. After he took a shower, Michael headed for his closet which was filled with blue collared shirts, khaki pants, and a few pairs of white sneakers. After changing he headed to the kitchen for breakfast which was already cooked and prepared by Julia, the women with the beautiful soothing voice from the morning.

“Julia” Michael said while looking up at the ceiling, “remind me of what’s on today schedule please.”

“Of course, Mr. Michael” said Julia “today at 8 o’clock before entering work you must stop by the clinic for your daily dose of vitamin X, you start work at 9 o’clock, when you come out remember to stop by the supermarket for food and remember to finish your assignment from work that’s due this Friday.”

“Thank you Julia I must be on my way now, turn off all the lights and lock the door please. I’ll be back later” replied Michael “Yes sir. Have a great day today” said Julia.

Michael headed to the local clinic to receive his daily dose of vitamin X which was given to him in the form of one single pill. Everyday at 8 o’clock he would make a long line to get them. Everyone was required to pick it up from the clinic and take it in the morning before starting their day, that was the rule. He took the pill in front of a nurse and headed to work. While walking through the streets Michael observed his surroundings and couldn’t help to think how beautiful everything looked. The tall skyscrapers touching the bright blue sky. Smiling back at everyone who passed him. It was a noisy, busy, and beautiful city.

It was 8:30 pm, Michael had just ended his shift, he works as a cop of Elandia. His job was to find and arrest any criminals. These criminals usually weren’t arrested for murder rather for treason. Treason against the Father, the leader of Elandia. He would arrest people who were suspicious of rebelling against The Father or told lies about him and the world. Michael loved his job, he was helping keep his city safe by arresting these criminals who all they did was spread lies about Father just to make him look bad.

Instead of eating at home Michael stopped by a restaurant. Entering he saw the most beautiful women he had ever seen. Sitting at a table drinking her coffee sat a pale looking woman with long light brown hair. As she looked up her bright blue eyes locked with his honey colored eyes. She looked down trying not to make her smile obvious.

“Sir follow me this way” said a machine as it guided him to a table on the opposite side of the room, but he could still see the beautiful women. Men were usually kept separate from women. It was illegal to have any sort of relationship with anyone regardless if it was just to be friends. Everyone already had a busy schedule that they had to follow, relationships just didn’t fit in. It would get in the way of many things anyways according to the laws set by The Father.

A few minutes passed by before the women got up from her chair and headed outside. Michael quickly reached for his keys which were on the table and followed the women. Once outside he looked in every directing trying to look for her. He turned right and saw her turn into a dark street almost like an alley, he followed. At the middle of the street stood the women waiting for him to catch up. They were face to face now.

“Hello” whispered Michael worrying someone was listening and watching him.

“Hello” the women said softly while giggling “I’m Nina, and you?”

“My name – its Michael, Michael Williams” he responded nervously. “If its not to late would you want to come over to my place for a cup of coffee?” asked Michael. Nina nodded with a bright smile across her face. Michael knew this wasn’t a good idea, but he couldn’t just let her go there was something special about her that he wanted to know. Knowing Julia would not allow her in and probably would call the cops after him, Michael took Nina to the roof of the building. He left her there for a few minutes while he went to is apartment to grab 2 cups of coffee. He finally got to the roof and placed the two cups of coffee on the table between the two chairs, he went back to close the roof door. As they both sat down and drank their coffee Michael started to feel weird. He felt as if the world around him was spinning uncontrollably, his world was melting away.

“Michael – Hey, look at me, your alright” said Nina trying to comfort him. “What you see and feel right now is the real world. They’re filling you up with poison to keep you from disobeying and rebelling. I just gave you the antidote, but it won’t last that long. Come with me look” Nina grabbed Michaels wrist and guided him to the edge of the roof, “Take a look at the real-world Michael.”

Michael peaked over the edge to look, the world looked nothing like it did a few hours ago. All he could see was a dark gloomy place filled with miserable people. The air around him felt different, it was thicker and harder to breath in. They headed downstairs to the streets, Michael still confused about everything yet paying attention to everything around him. Everyone who passed him no longer had smiles on their face like they always do, rather everyone was waking like a zombie with gloomy faces. There was screeching noises from big machines a couple of streets down. Workers covered in dirt, sweat and blood. The world became a nightmare.

“What’s going on? Where are we? Why are we here?” asked Michael nervously.

“Don’t worry your safe” said Nina “I put an antidote in your coffee so you could see the real world, don’t you see? These people are poisoning us, making it seem like everything’s perfect” she continued.

“Who’s ‘they’ Nina?” asked Michael.

“The government and the ‘great almighty’ Father” Nina said sarcastically.

Michael couldn’t believe his eyes, “no this isn’t possible; do you know how much trouble we can get into if anyone finds out about this? Do you know what I do? I happen to have arrested people who took this antidote. I’ve heard of it before but never experienced it, only criminals did that.”

“You’re a cop?” Nina asked shockingly.

“I am. Now how do we make all of this end?” asked Michael.

“It’s going to wear off after about an hour, but can’t you see? The people who you’ve arrested for thinking this world is corrupt and miserable, they’re not so wrong after all and you can clearly see that” Nina said as she opened her arms out to the corrupt and messed up world in front of their eyes. “I didn’t think you were a cop since you clearly didn’t care about breaking the law which was speaking to me in the first place, I just thought you’d agree to it since you were already doing it.”

“Agree to what Nina?” asked Michael.

“Will you join the resistance?” replied Nina.

“What? What resistance? What are you talking about?” asked Michael.

“The resistance, a couple of other people have taken this antidote and got the chance to experience seeing our real world. Its not right what they’re doing. They don’t care about protecting us they care about control and power. Look around Michael, this is what really goes on when you’re not on that vitamin they give you every day” said Nina.

All Michael did was stand is shock, looking around at everyone and everything.

“How could they do this to people?” Michael asked himself. Michael began to question everything, he began to question his life, his home, his job, the government and The Father. His mind and his thoughts were everywhere. He didn’t know what to do next or what to believe. His whole world has been turned upside down.

The next day Michael went to the restaurant hoping to find Nina and he did.

“I can’t believe what I saw yesterday, all I could do was think. Think about everything in my life and realizing it was all a lie. What can I do to help stop this?” Michael asked.

Nina’s bright smile made its way across her face and took Michael to meet the others. They began to form a plan to stop all the lies and corruption of the perfect Elandia.

References

1. Bereit, Virginia F. “The Genre of Science Fiction.” *Elementary English*, vol. 46, no. 7, 1969, pp. 895–900. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/41386588](http://www.jstor.org/stable/41386588).
2. Ghiglione, Loren. "Does Science Fiction--Yes, Science Fiction--Suggest Futures for News?" *Daedalus*, vol. 139, no. 2, 2010, p. 138+. *Literature Resource Center*, http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/A225317074/GLS?u=cuny\_nytc&sid=GLS&xid=c07fc2b8. Accessed 5 May 2019
3. Lake, Christina. "Eugenics in Late 19th -Century Feminist Utopias." *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, vol. 77, no. 5, 2018, p. 1277+. *Academic OneFile*, http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/A566560074/AONE?u=cuny\_nytc&sid=AONE&xid=87ee606c. Accessed 5 May 2019.
4. Marina Leslie. Renaissance Utopias and the Problem of History. Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1999. viii+200pp. ISBN 0 8014 3400 9.
5. [Orwell](https://www.enotes.com/topics/orwell-59611?en_action=hh_answer_body_click&en_label=%2Fhomework-help%2Fhow-would-writer-cite-an-mla-works-cited-entry-2297%23answer-709342&en_category=internal_campaign), George. 1984. London: Secker and Warburg, 1949. Print.
6. Warburton, Rachel. "Review of Renaissance Utopias and the Problem of History." Early Modern Literary Studies 6.1 (May, 2000): 19.1-4 <URL: <http://purl.oclc.org.citytech.ezproxy.cuny.edu/emls/06-1/warbrev.htm>>.