

Editorial: “Myth and Science Fiction”

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A categorical comparison: myth and science fiction are not good bed companions. Like all bold statements, this one has an objective: to mark the territory; like every categorical statement, it must be nuanced.

Indeed, on the one hand, science fiction and myth overlap on several substantial aspects: both are stories of extraordinary events of a functional, symbolic, emotional and dynamic nature, composed of a series of elements (themes and motives); on the other, only myth presents the clash between the transcendent and immanent worlds, while science fiction eliminates any hint of transcendence by providing scientific and immanent explanations of all mysteries.

Myth does not circumvent explanation; indeed, the yearning for understanding is part of the backbone of myth. Nor does science fiction elude explanation, determined as it always is to understand the intricate mechanisms of the world. They each do it in their own way, but with the same immediate purpose. It is precisely there that myth and science fiction approach each other.

The unfinished search for referentiality brings them together; both yearn to answer the everlasting questions: the origin of life and the cause of death. It would be futile to provide here one or two examples among the possible thousands.

But explanations are not enough for human beings: the full description of the world can satisfy their desire to understand it, but not to judge it. They are not simple machines that accumulate data: they want to process them and make approving or condemnatory judgments. Beyond yes and no, there is good and evil. Hence, both myth and science fiction unceasingly project contradictions in unprecedented circumstances for the purpose of adhesion or denunciation. Given the projective capacity of our imagination, we propose improbable scenarios that allow us to see under new light the consequences of a future situation that for the moment, because it is only sketched out in incomplete and limited brushstrokes, we fail to embrace in all its depth and extent.

Like myth, science fiction has incorporated into its thematic range so many anxieties of our time. Famous novels and films in the genre have addressed contemporary apprehensions, such as a nuclear catastrophe of incalculable consequences (this is the cause of the appearance of the Godzilla monster, in the homonymous film by Ishirō Honda, 1954), radioactive fallout caused by World War Terminus and the need to emigrate to space colonies to avoid the disappearance of the human species (the novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, Philip K. Dick, 1968), or fear of the excesses of a questionable use of science (mass production of human beings as clonal vessels for the regeneration of vital organs in millionaire patients, as in the movie *The Island*, Michael Bay, 2005).

But this parallel search for explanations regarding absolute issues does not empower critics to mix up mythology and science fiction. It would be imprudent, for example, to talk about mythological adventure in *Metropolis* (novel by Thea von Harbou, 1926, film by Fritz Lang, 1927). The evocations of biblical myths (the workers devoured by Moloch and the story of Babel narrated by Mary) do not convert the text or the film into mythological accounts.

Although both seek to explain, justify or deny unsettling situations, myth and science fiction are not interchangeable. Both resort to etiology: the former searches the transcendent causes, the latter, the scientific ones. Hence, the study of each one requires its own discipline, with its own methodology and hermeneutics.

Amaltea, Revista de Mitocrítica publishes these original articles that study the relationship between myth and science fiction in literature and the arts since 1900. Authors have felt free to choose whatever texts, literary genres or epistemological treatment they have considered suitable for their study.

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Good reading!

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