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The defeat of the Anthropocene

The social and environmental agencies in the literature of Philip K. Dick, Frank Herbert and Ayn Rand

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1. Introduction

As Frederic Jameson points out in *Archaeologies of the Future* , “a mass-cultural sub-genre like SF has different (and stricter) laws than high culture, and can sometimes express realities and dimensions that escape high literature” (2005: 345). From a historical point of view, the perception and importance of science fiction as a ‘mass-cultural sub-genre’ was marginalized, as opposed to that of a more serious ‘high literature’. In his analysis, Jameson resumed the various viewpoints that eventually led to the construction of the speculative science fiction genre that we refer to today. One such perspective, fundamental for the development of this field, was Darko Suvin. In his words,

> SF should not be seen (as I will argue at length in the theoretical part of this book) in terms of science, the future, or any other element of its potentially unlimited thematic field. Rather, it should be defined as a fictional tale determined by the hegemonic literary device of a locus and/or dramatis personae that (1) are radically or at least significantly different from the empirical times, places, and characters of “mimetic” or “naturalist” fiction, but (2) are nonetheless—to the extent that SF differs from other “fantastic” genres, that is, ensembles of fictional tales without empirical validation—simultaneously perceived as not impossible within the cognitive (cosmological and anthropological) norms of the author’s epoch. Basically, SF is a developed oxymoron, a realistic irreality, with humanized nonhumans, this-worldly Other Worlds, and so forth. (Metamorphoses of Science Fiction - On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre, 1979: viii)

In other words, the representation of the future, as limitless possibilities of technological improvements and scientific advancements, becomes only a tangential part of science fiction. What science fiction is concerned with is the depiction of reality through a speculative lens. A ‘realistic irreality’, a portrayal of a world that is close enough to our own in order for us to recognized it, but at the same time has key elements that are so removed in such a fashion as to create estrangement. Science fiction stops being about the perception of the possibilities of the future and takes on the cognitive role of understanding our present condition. As Sherryl Vint points out in *Science Fiction – A Guide for the Perplexed*,

> Science fiction participates in both promoting this myth of technological mastery and transcendence, and deflating it. It provides the language, images, and concepts that celebrate our cultural preoccupation with science and technology, and that express

> our anxieties and fears regarding how they are changing our world and our selves. We might think of the myths of sf as ways of providing imaginary solutions to the real contradictions and tensions of a world in which science has displaced religion as the hegemonic explanatory discourse, a world in which the products of technoscience are ubiquitous in everyday life. (2014: 4)

The science fiction genre becomes a means to explore the socio-political and economic present through the use of the speculative future. In this context, scientific innovations (which have been changing the social and material dimensions since the Enlightenment period) becomes an intrinsic feature used as a literalized metaphor in order to "build worlds that capture something true yet unrepresentable in the literary mode of realism" (Vint, 2014: 5). The two main cognitive strategies employed by science fiction literature are thus the creation of the *what if* scenarios by applying changes to key elements in the past, thus creating different timelines and realities, or the projecting of the present status quo onto the endless plausibility of the future. As stated by Jameson, "the present – in this society, and in the physical and psychic dissociation of the human subjects who inhabit it – is inaccessible directly, is numb, habituated, empty of affect" (2005: 287). Given how it has become increasingly difficult to understand the perplexing and fragmentary world of late capitalism and globalization as a whole, the analytical capabilities of speculative science fiction become pivotal in this task.

In this framework, the means by which it becomes possible for science fiction to achieve its investigative function is by creating the aforementioned sense of estrangement. By creating fictional narratives that provide elements of both the real world, as well as the speculative one, the reader goes through the combined processes of *displacement* and *recognition*. As Vint explains it,

> Sf forces us to confront ideas and conventions that have been made to appear natural and inevitable, by giving us a world founded on other premises. The dialectical interaction between what is familiar and what is alien thus opens up a more critical understanding of the structures underlying and shaping the familiar world of daily experience. This movement back and forth between a normal world that begins to appear strange, and a strange one that becomes more normalized as we immerse ourselves in the sf world, is the source of the genre's ability to be a reflection on reality as well as of it. (2014: 39)

My dissertation will hence focus on the speculative science fiction genre in order to put into a thematic and ideological discourse three authors, Philip K. Dick

(1928-1982), Ayn Rand (1905-1982) and Frank Herbert (1920-1986) and understand how and why the above-mentioned mechanisms are used in their writings. For anyone familiar with at least some of their works, it could appear that they do not have much in common, other than the approximate years they have lived in and published their novels. Their historical contexts is indeed one of the important factors; having witnessed the events of the Second World War and having lived through the paranoid and fear-inducing climate of the Cold War, they contemplated the socio-political spheres of their cultural milieu. Frank Herbert is renowned for *Dune*, his magnum opus, a space opera depicting the endless struggles of humanity in a very distant future. Philip K. Dick is known as a prolific science fiction writer who insists on themes such as ontological doubt and the falsehood of reality. Ayn Rand is the one most removed from the other two, having touched only briefly on science fiction and having dedicated most of her writing career to essays on a philosophy she called objectivism. What I will be attempting to demonstrate is that, in spite of these differences, several key themes[1] echo through all of their works

The dissertation is divided into two main sections. The first focuses on the analysis of the dystopian elements, the representation of the socio-political and economic themes depicted by the three authors in the respective fictional realities of their literary works. The second part is concerned with the ecological and ecocritical viewpoints that the novels present. The ecocritical perspective intertwines with the dystopian part because of how it problematizes the social and political aspects related to the environmental issues. As Greg Garrard points out, “ecocritics generally tie their cultural analyses explicitly to a ‘green’ moral and political agenda. In this respect, ecocriticism is closely related to environmentally oriented developments in philosophy and political theory” (2004: 3)[2].

[1] As Jameson points out in regards to the use of the he word ‘themes’: “It may help to discredit the facile word theme which seems at one and the same time methodologically unavoidable and overly humanistic or anthropomorphic: the "theme", in other words, seems to promise a meaning and to offer a general category that can range all the way from images to ideas. (I hasten to add that the term motif, used above, is not much better, but at least underscores the purely formal nature of the entity, at the expense of alleged meanings)” (2005: 365). Similarly, I will be also using the generalized word ‘theme’, as well as several synonyms such as leitmotif, to indicate the conceptual nodes of that are being discussed. I agree on the fact that such a vague term is methodologically unavoidable but, at the very least, it does facilitate the comprehension.

[2] *Ecocriticism, The New Critical Idiom*, 2004.

Furthermore, the literary corpus has been carefully selected, as such various novels written by the three authors have been excluded from the analysis; this decision has been made due to the overwhelming quantity of their production. I will preface, as such, that the subdivision of the chapters is not equally partitioned. Much more attention and analytical thought has been attributed to the writings of Philip K. Dick; the ideology presented through his novels has been used as a baseline to then be put into correlation with that of Ayn Rand and Frank Herbert. This arbitrary decision does not intend to take away from the importance of the latter two, but means to emphasize the former's multiplicity of philosophical approaches. Philip K. Dick, or as Jameson called him, the "Shakespeare of Science Fiction" (2005: 345), indeed presents a plethora of novels in which themes intertwine in what could be perceived as a frantic way. What I want to underline is that, in spite of this, the overarching intent and ideology is analogous. As Robert Scholes and Eric Rabkin explained in *Science Fiction – History, Science, Vision*,

> All of his [Dick's] books offer ideas, situations, and passages of considerable interest. None quite achieves that seamless perfection of form that constitutes one kind of literary excellence. […] His strength lies in the unique vision that informs all of his fiction, and the crisp serviceable prose in which he presents the most extreme events without acknowledging that they are anything but ordinary. (1977: 71)

The importance of this normalizing process, that Dick perpetrates throughout his writings, shall be vehemently underlined in my dissertation. It constitutes the very same mechanism of estrangement explained previously. The reason I however argued that his novels possess a somewhat frantic quality in the way the themes are presented is justified by his technique and the themes he explores. Other than a constant sense of existential dread that pervades his works, Dick creates plots centred around the idea that reality, as we perceive it, at its core is fake. This is done, all while focusing on key anthropological issues, such as the question of self-awareness and the interactions with society. As Charles Thorpe argues,

> Dick's mainstream fiction offers an exploration of the milieu of the American lower middle class and a social-psychological probing of its anxieties, terrors, prejudices, and desires. […] His science fiction accomplishes a transcendence of middleclass

> social constraints through imaginative techniques of rendering the everyday world strange. (2011: 429)[3]

This apparent contradiction between the normalizing effect that Scholes and Rabkin point towards and alienating quality of everyday life just quoted constitute the main reason why Dick's prose has been given more ample attention and used as a baseline for my analysis. As it shall be explained, he continuously makes the reader experience doubt, ask questions and ultimately feel the need for answers.

Frank Herbert, on the other hand, creates his complex saga with the principal intent of exposing and critiquing the cult of personality. In his view, the individual is capable of failure, as such his perspectives takes into account the fallacy of heroes and prophets. By creating main characters that not only embody heroic and messianic qualities, but by making them become rulers and emphasizing how easily their dominion leads to a form of tyranny, Herbert exposes the corruptible nature of power.

It is also worth mentioning that by the beginning of the '50 the perception of science fiction was undergoing several changes, on behalf of the general public as well as the publishing companies. "The publishing industry shifted away from the monopoly on popular forms held by the magazines, with new companies publishing original as well as reprint work in paperback, and many established specialized genre series" (Vint, 2014: 73). Philip K. Dick primarily, as well as Frank Herbert, were certainly amongst the writers that witnessed first-hand these changes.

Ayn Rand explores the nature of capitalism as opposed to the capability of the individuals of thinking for themselves. Critical reasoning becomes quintessential in her texts as a means of fighting back and opposing any form of oppressive phenomenon.

The three authors end up creating fictional worlds where the main antagonizing element is the oppression perpetuated by a socio-political hierarchy. Their protagonists end up either needing, or even realizing the need, to react against the repressive conditions that they face. Given how these novels start or build up from a situation of utter discontent and, in many cases, the ending does not necessarily provide a resolution to their situation, or a positive outcome altogether,

[3] In article "Death of a Salesman: Petit-Bourgeois Dread in Philip K. Dick's Mainstream Fiction", *Science Fiction Studies* 38.3.

the guiding leitmotif that has been emphasised through my analysis is the theme of defeat. Ayn Rand, Frank Herbert and Philip K. Dick faced the nature of late capitalism and, through their texts, it is possible to perceive a certain sense of uneasiness when confronted with the *what if* scenarios that stem from it. As stated by Jameson in *The Seeds of Time*, “it seems to be easier for us today to imagine the thoroughgoing deterioration of the earth and of nature than the breakdown of late capitalism; perhaps that is due to some weakness in our imaginations” (1994: xii). If this is an ongoing line of reasoning that has been initiated, or at the very least stressed, roughly during the ’50, then I would argue that it is worth revisiting the literary examples that touched on it. For this reason the Ayn Rand, Frank Herbert and Philip K. Dick have been chosen for my investigation.

Finally, I would argue that an important aspect of literature has always been the potential of establishing a discourse between people. By reading any literary work and thinking about it critically, it is possible to trace the general themes, ponder the ideas of the authors that wrote about them, as well as the reasons behind their approach, and finally use those concepts to reach new conclusions. The introspective approach to any literary text, as such, is a guiding factor; understanding how different works of fiction can be put in relation to one another, as well as how the core thematic dimensions are depicted become the building blocks for the discourse previously mentioned. For the purpose of my analysis, the intertextual interpretations of the texts of Philip K. Dick, Frank Herbert and Ayn Rand shall be used to establish a common thread between them.

2.Philip K. Dick, the defeat of the individual

It is no secret that Philip Kindred Dick has pioneered, influenced and helped popularize speculative science fiction. While this dissertation is not concerned with the private life of the author, it is also important to mention several biographical details that either subconsciously or deliberately seeped into his writing; various personal facts echo within his novels either as nuances in the characters or themes and plot points. It is undeniable that he lived a frantic existence: his parents were divorced and he was raised by an emotionally detached mother, he married five times and most of his interpersonal relationships ended poorly. He made extensive use of drugs, which in turn led to schizophrenic symptoms and even an attempted suicide. Furthermore, to add to his trauma, his twin sister died within the first month of being born; Philip Dick always blamed himself for her premature death and would later explore the deep bond between siblings in several of his writings[4].

At the beginning of his career as a writer, he struggled financially and even when he started to publish more and have better recognition by the public, he was still economically unstable since there was less money involved in the science fiction market as opposed to the mainstream literary one. He wrote most of his speculative fiction throughout the Sixties, many of which under the effect of amphetamines to cope with a prolific writing schedule.[5]

It is possible to outline two main strands in Philip K. Dick's production when considering literary genres. On one hand, there are his realist novels, which were both a way for him of dealing with his matrimonial problems, as well as making money since that type of literature was catered for a larger market. On the other hand, there are his science fiction novel, the works for which he is famous today. For the purpose of this dissertation, the realistic novels and the ones that deal with relationship issues will not be taken into consideration. I will rather focus on his speculative science fiction and the multiple themes he has explored therein. It is in

[4] In Philip K. Dick's words to his third wife, "I heard about Jane a lot and it wasn't good for me. I felt guilty—somehow I got all the milk" (Lawrence Sutin, *Divine Invasions: A Life of Philip K. Dick*, 1989: 12). This sense of guilt, bordering on existential dread, reemerges in various moments through his novels.

[5] For a more in-depth account of Dick's life see the previously mentioned Sutin and his officially recognized biography *Divine Invasions: A Life of Philip K. Dick* (1989), as well as Emmanuel Carrère's fictionalized biography *I Am Alive and You Are Dead: A Journey into the Mind of Philip K. Dick* (2004).

those novels that the author's acuity and critique shine; after almost sixty years, his cynical interpretation and bleak depiction of the future are still relevant today. Through science fiction that Dick explored history, the first traces of a heavily consumeristic society and the morbid and obsessive cult of personality, just to name several of the main points he touched. In *Archaeologies of the Future*, Fredric Jameson elegantly sums up why Dick became such an important writer:

> Science Fiction is generally understood as the attempt to imagine unimaginable futures. But its deepest subject may in fact be our own historical present. The future of Dick's novels renders our present historical by turning it into the past of a fantasized future, as in the most electrifying episodes of his books. (2005: 345)

In other words, both present and future have a fundamental role in Dick's worlds and world-building, the present being the authentic reality that the author saw in his own society and his own perception and the possible futures being the speculation of where that status quo of affairs could lead to. His visions of these potential outcomes for humanity are almost never positive as it will be demonstrated later on, but one constant is how technological advancements are portrayed therein; scientific progress in many cases is also a key factor in condemning humanity itself. For this reason, Philip K. Dick is renowned for either having popularized specific words in the science fiction genre or having directly invented new ones that have then become of common use. Examples of such visions of futuristic technologies include flying cars and vehicles, televised communications, artificial organs and androids or simulacra. A brief list of the frequently used terminology in his novels, as well as the works where he used them and a brief explanation of their meaning can be found at the end of the chapter (Table 1.1).

In regards to real technological advancements, it is important to bear in mind that Dick witnessed the advent of the Television and quickly realized its importance. Although with a somewhat pessimistic view, he understood how such a medium could be used to address the masses, but also how it could just as easily become a vector of conformism and homogenization.[6] This leitmotif echoes throughout his writings and in a way becomes a counterpoint to self-identity and the ontological

[6] For a more in-depth depiction of how television influenced Dick's views and writings, see Umberto Rossi "From soft Totalitarianism to TV Introjection – Philip Kindred Dick and the Tube" in David Sandner (ed.), *Philip K. Dick, Essays of the Here and Now* (2019: 32-46).

questions he was keen on exploring. The awareness of both the importance and potential of technology, as well as a constant fear towards a more negative impact it may have on the life of human beings, is nuanced in most of his speculative science fiction and it will be an important *topos* that will be explored in this chapter. This is however not only related to our own physical reality but seeps just as easily in a constructed cybernetic dimension, a simulation of sorts that Philip K. Dick uses to explore the human condition, as it will be seen and explained further on in this chapter. In the words of Katherine Hayles, "Dick is drawn to cybernetic themes because he understands that cybernetics radically destabilizes the ontological foundations of what counts as human" (1999: 24).[7] This destabilization should however not only be considered in the specific case that derives from advancements in the technological field, but should also be understood on a more holistic spectrum. The ontological and existential problem Dick considers is in function not only of the life he has personally lived, the new technologies he has witnessed, but also in the shifting politics and social norms and interactions that his generations lived through. It is an uncertainty that accompanies him throughout all his writing career.

Coherence is one of the central issues that should be emphasized and problematized when attempting a comprehensive analysis of Philip K. Dick's works. His stylistic choices, especially the usage of free indirect discourse, as well as the construction of his characters and plots, tend to create a certain degree of doubt within the reader. His approach purposefully creates a fracture in the narration as well as in the fictional reality of the world he is creating, another benchmark of his novels.

> One form of challenge to coherence is, significantly, almost a design feature of modern literary narratives: free indirect discourse. Being "unspeakable" sentences, radically divided or indeterminate between two deictic centers of utterance or footing, free indirect discourse text is inherently problematic on first encounter. […] Different again, and much more troubling for the reader/addressee, is the narration which is or is suspected of being unreliable. With unreliable narration, the reader is able to reconstruct two or more coherent versions of events and their motivation. But by their very nature, each coherent version implies the false coherence of the others. (Peter Hühn (ed), *Handbook of Narratology*, 2009: 55)

[7] In *How we became Posthuman, Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* however, Katherine Hayles's approach to Philip K. Dick's texts relies more on an interpretation of gender politics (race, gender, sexuality). While this is an interesting point, it is only marginally helpful to the analysis I propose, and as such will be set aside.

This passage gives a brief explanation to the reason why Dick's stylistic choices posit uncertainty in the reader/addressee; add to these his usage of rhetorical devices such as paradoxes and contradictions and it becomes evident how the interpretation also becomes problematic. Through free indirect discourse, his main characters are not only intradiegetic narrators, but also offer extradiegetic perspectives. Furthermore, if we consider that in some novels there are moments where the reality of the characters is questioned by the protagonists themselves, resulting in a hybrid metadiegetic account, then any form of reliability or truth of what is actually happening is shattered. This analysis on Philip K. Dick's levels of diegesis are also considered by Darko Suvin (1975: 9):

> The narration proceeds instead somewhere in between those two extreme possibilities, simultaneously in the third person and from the vantage point of the central or focal character in a given segment. […]The focal character is also used as a visual, auditive, and psychological focus whose vantage point in fact colours and limits the subsequent narration.

It is hence understandable how Dick's narration and the reliability of what is told by his characters is problematized in his works; the limitation mentioned by Suvin usually leads to interpretations and more questions rather than certainties and answers. Before moving on to discuss the central themes of this analysis, there is one novel I would like to briefly discuss to enforce what has been said thus far, as well as a read on how the author interpolates events of his personal life in his narrations.

Amongst Pihilip K. Dick's works, *Valis* (1981) stands out as a para-testimony of his mental struggle and existential dread[8]; in other words, through episodes lived first hand and then elaborated narratively, it is possible to have a glimpse into his life and thought process. In this novel, Dick invents an alter-ego, Horselover Fat, that lives through certain experiences (drug abuse, suicide attempt, theological existentialism) as the story unfolds. This leads the character to inquire about his own existence and use philosophy and theology to explain the existence of God or a god;

[8] Although *Valis* is conceptually the first book in a trilogy, alongside *The Divine Invasion* and *The Transmigration* of Timothy Archer, it has been decided not to use the other two novels for this analysis as they have a more philosophical approach and have less to do with the proposed themes.

this in turn reflects Dick's own approach to the same subject matter. The author's meta-narrative approach however is to insert himself as a character as well, and although this is explained as a coping mechanism to face the crippling dread and anxiety he suffers, it is ultimately a technique that creates various contradictions.[9] As Huntington suggests in his article *Philip K. Dick: Authenticity and Insincerity*,

> Much of the readers' problem in *VALIS* is generated, not by philosophical complexity as such, but by the mechanisms of narration that Dick has learned from popular SF. The important figure for Dick, as has long been recognized, is A.E. van Vogt, known for his confusingly intricate plots. But it is not the model of the plots themselves that we need to be aware of so much as the rule by which he generated them. (1988: 153)

This corroborates yet again what has been stated the author's narratological technique. By having the characters voicing their version of reality and then countering it with an ambiguity, Dick creates the cognitive estrangement which perplexes the reader. The unquestioned acceptance of their own reality enlarges this sense of uncertainty. In *Valis* this is achieved not only by having both Horselover Fat as his alter ego while also inserting the character of Philip K. Dick, being yet another version of himself. The ambiguity is achieved as well by Horselover Fat's undoubting acceptance of what he sees as God:

> After he had encountered God, Fat developed a love for him which was not normal. It is not what is usually meant in saying that someone "loves God". With Fat it was an actual hunger. And stranger still, he explained to us that God had injured him and still he yearned for him, like a drunk yearns for booze. God, he told us, had fired a beam of pink light directly at him, at his head, his eyes; Fat had been temporarily

[9] In the first chapter, it is revealed that the narrator is Horselover Fat who is also a writer: "I am Horselover Fat, and I am writing this in the third person to gain much-needed objectivity" (11) - "I am, by profession, a science fiction writer. I deal in fantasies" (12). This already creates a first clue to whom Fat really is, but is ultimately insufficient to have certainty that he is Dick's literary alter-ego. In chapter two, the narrative voice seems to change but no further clues are given. The notion that Fat's reality is superimposed with one from Ancient Rome (43, 122) also implies that he suffers from a split personality disorder; his other personality however, although being in Ancient Rome, lives within that same time frame as Fat, since the character has arrived at the conclusion that time is a construct. It is only in chapter 9 that it is revealed that the narrative voice belongs to Phil (168), who also mentions several of his books (*A Scanner Darkly*, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*, *The Man in the High Castle*), merging hence the fictitious character with the persona and real author of Philip K. Dick. It is only towards the end of the novel (219) that Dick's psychosis is revealed having created Horselover Fat to cope after a friend of his had committed suicide. Upon being technically 'cured', this event leads to the removal of the character of Horselover Fat. The reliability of the account is however utterly questioned yet again given that Horselover Fat reappears in the narration, also implying that Dick's existential problems and suicide tendencies have not been resolved.

> blinded and his head had ached for days. It was easy, he said, to describe the beam of pink light. (2001: 21)

To cope with the pain of losing a loved one and the resulting existential dread, Horselover Fat explains that he has found God, or rather God has found him. This episode is however narrated by a second party (the narrative voice of one of Horselover's friends); the reader could argue that the specific event is not true, although Fat believes so. This point of view is however somewhat debunked in the plot: one of the things God told Horselover Fat regarded his son's illness, which is discovered to be an accurate premonition. Regardless, in *Valis,* the theological dimension intertwines with the technological one: the transcendental entity perceived as God is a Vast Active Living Intelligence System (acronym for Valis) and the pink light is similar to a laser that transmits information. It is concluded in fact that the "universe is made out of information" (23).[10]

Horselover Fat is not only Philip K. Dick's literary alter-ego, but he also represents a character on which the author projects with exasperation his own existential anxiety. This fear that results in a continuous and exasperating research for answers is a thread that links all of his works. As a person, he feels he does not belong: "As nearly as I could make out, Fat had devolved to the level of those poets, and had, for these times, become an anachronism. The universe has a habit of deleting anachronisms" (36). There is however one certainty in his mind and that is that his research is important for his own survival: "Phil, if I don't find him, I'm going to die" (145). Although it might be argued that Dick played with this theme on purpose to mislead the readers, the importance of this frantic search for answers is still undeniable. While in *Valis* the ontological solution becomes partially theological and partially technological, the research of self, identity and origin of reality are aspects that construct an important focus for Dick in all his other works.

Valis combines three main leitmotifs that constantly intertwine with one another in Philip K. Dick's speculative science fiction: the use of drugs, theological thought and the perception of reality (which is usually portrayed by introducing the concept of simulation)[11]. These thematic cores create an organic whole in the

[10] This theme will be analyzed and explained more in depth in chapters 5 and 6.

[11] Based on what particular themes critics want to analyze, the number of themes may vary. In *Science Fiction - History, Science, Vision* for instance, Sholes and Rabkin indicate two main focal points: "Throughout his work Dick has made two themes his own, developing them and their

author's production and each one of them could deserve an entire chapter by itself. In my analysis, although I will point out where and how they are depicted, they will be analysed only tangentially, in function to how they interact with the human condition described by Dick.

As I have previously mentioned, at a certain point in his life, towards the end of the Sixties, Dick made an extensive use of drugs. As such, he has had first-hand experience not only with the 'trips' and 'visions' associated to being under their influence, but also with the dangers and health issues connected to them. In some capacity, this affected his work in two substantial ways: on one hand, he used several of the scenes he saw during his drug trips as inspiration in his writings and, on the other hand, he developed a cautionary morale he applied in his books. *A Scanner Darkly* (1977), for instance, is a novel with semi-autobiographical undertones that he dedicated to the people he met during that period of his life and to the memory of those who have died because of overdoses and health-related issues. In his own words while talking about it, "I wanted to get down on paper the memory of those people that I had known in the drug subculture. I wrote that to record them. And also as an attack on drugs because I had seen it kill so many people that I now was dedicated to preaching the gospel of the dangers of drugs. I had seen too many people die".[12] In other words, although drugs are a central component in his novels, in some cases even creating different realities and advancing the plot, they are both used as narratological elements as well as a cautionary message for the reader. Another example can be found in *A Maze of Death* (1970) where the author declared that some of the scenes were visions he had seen while under the influence of LSD, this includes especially the episode of his perception of encountering a transcendental being or God.[13]

This leads to a secondary point that, although not of particular importance to my dissertation, should be at least marginally elaborated: religion. While during his first years at the University of California, before dropping out, Dick described himself as a cosmic pantheist, viewing the universe as an extension of God. After studying history, philosophy and psychology, and after later taking copious amounts of drugs

philosophical implications more richly than any other single writer. They are the theme of alternate universes and the theme of mechanical simulacra for organic forms of life" (1977: 71).

[12] Excerpt taken from a collection of interviews by Gregg Rickman, *Philip K. Dick: In His Own Words* (1984: 193-194).

[13] It is worth mentioning that Dick has used LSD only a few times during his life.

and becoming convinced of the existence of a transcendental entity, his perception of religion also gradually changed with his life. The existence, or in some cases death of God, is a leitmotif that echoes throughout his novels.[14] In some way or another, this impacts the ontological nuance of his perception of what reality is and how the life that we are living is just a simulation; this theme becomes a cornerstone of his production and evidently is to be linked with what has been said about his approach to drugs and religion.

Realism in Dick becomes a complex issue; to explain his view, we must also consider the historical roots of Western existentialism that go back to classical and medieval philosophy. In regards to realism, there are the dichotomies between nominalism, in the sense that abstract objects have no existence other than the names or labels that are attributed to them and the relation between realism and idealism in metaphysics, reaching an important point with Kant's doctrines and the following criticism. Given his studies, we should also add the interpolations with Oriental philosophy, especially Taoism and Buddhism, doctrines that he was certainly familiar with. For the purpose of my research, as well as for simplifying a philosophical debate, I will identify Dick's concept of simulation as anti-realism[15], in the simple sense of what is opposite or antithetical to Metaphysical Realism. The problematic interpretation of reality, both from the point of the view of the author as well as how they are problematized by the characters themselves (as previously shown with *Valis*), in turn also create a difficulty in elaborating a complete interpretation of his novels. Various endings are left open to interpretation, time paradoxes are created and never explained and elucidations from him become merely a tautological 'it is what it is'.[16]

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[14] In *Our Friends from Frolix 8*, he writes "God is dead. They found his carcass in 2019. Floating out in space near Alpha" (2006: 50). This statement is however followed by the juxtaposition of the possibility that the entity could have been something else: "They found the remains of an organism advanced several thousand times over what we are. And it evidently could create habitable worlds and populate them with living organisms, derived from itself. But that doesn't prove it was God" (50). Once again, this creates the ambivalent nature in Dick's writing, never giving a precise answer, as previously indicated. He however returns on the topic later in the book saying that at a certain point it was popular to sell "plastic statuettes of God" (150); this is to be connected with his attention to the avid capitalistic nature he saw in society.
In other works on the other hand, as it will be demonstrated further on, the role of God is given to a character that has reached a level of supremacy similar to that of a transcendental being.

[15] For a more in-depth analysis on anti-realism, see the works of Hilary Putnam, Michael Dummett and Crispin Wright.

[16] *Our Friends from Frolix 8* is left on the climax and the situation completely unresolved. *Ubik* on the other hand purposefully leaves the reader puzzled, hinting towards the possibility of the main

What however remains clear and ubiquitous in Dick's novels is his view of society: his works concentrate on protagonists that are trying to fight against an oppressive force and constantly appear to be on the losing side. The dichotomy between oppressor and oppressed is explored through speculative fictions by creating various elitarian groups (the oppressors) that use their power to rule over a majority of the population (the oppressed). In his view, this also impacted the identity of the self and how the self consequently interacted with society. As Charles Thorpe notes, "the sense of the individual threatened by the monstrous coercive power of the collective might be interpreted as expressing a Cold War American fear of Soviet Communism. Yet Dick's existential dread more deeply follows from and expresses the transformations of the middle-class self under pressure from the development of corporate capitalism" (2011: 413-414). In other words, Dick's perspective does not only consider classism, but more importantly it tries to understand how the shifts in the socio-economic stratums also influence the individual. Partially because his struggles in life came from poverty, it follows that he would be personally invested in this issue. While offering an interpretation of both early and late Dickian writing, Golumbia grounds the metaphysical and political problems considering criteria such late capitalism, patriarchy, racism, nationalism and so on. He warns the readers however that an interpretation solely based on the class issues could be lacking:

> I want to suggest that there are limitations in focusing our understanding of Dick's fiction solely on the class-based criticisms that are clearly one of his primary concerns. This suggestion is very much in line, I think, with one of the chief insights of recent cultural studies, which is to suggest that the complex of oppressive and manipulative practices we associate with late capitalism cannot always be fully apprehended through an attention too narrowly focused on issues of class. (1996: 86)

In other words, there are other factors that characterize his novels and that have to be considered in order to get a truer and completer grasp of his reasoning. While the tangential themes that have been mentioned thus far will constitute a useful piece of the puzzle that is Dick's writing, I will however attempt to emphasize just how much these intertwine with the oppressor-oppressed dichotomy. The

character being alive or having been dead from the beginning. The various interpretations have to deal with Dick's narrative style.

central theme as such will be the struggles and subsequent defeat of the human being, the common man that Dick associates with the middle class and that is unable to counteract a superior political or economical power. It will be postulated that the situation of constant threat by a superior position of power that Philip K. Dick described in his works was not only a reflection of his own society, but the process of a progressively deteriorating society that is still in act today. In *Technofobia! Science Fiction Visions of Posthuman Technology,* Daniel Dinello explains that

> Posthuman technology threatens to reengineer humanity into a new machinic species and extinguish the old one. Science fiction shows that this process will subvert human values like love and empathy, revealing that the intrinsic principles of these technologies fortify genetic discrimination, social fragmentation, totalitarianism, surveillance, environmental degradation, addiction, mind control, infection, and destruction. (2006: 273)

I would argue that this bleaker vision of technology is important to understand the final point society reaches in Dick's novels, however in his production it is rarely technology at fault, but rather how it is used. This is also connected, as previously mentioned, to the importance given to the advent of television. Through speculative science fiction, he envisioned the critical scenarios that an improper use of technology could bring. The social fragmentation, totalitarian regimes, plutocracies and despotisms that Dinello emphasizes become in fact an integral part of the world building in Philip K. Dick, but they are a starting point rather than an ending. Regardless, the analysis of power struggles converge on three key factors: politics, economics and mass media, or more in general, technology.

In Dick's novels, mostly in *medias res*, it is a drastic event altered the normal course of events: it is as if society had an agency and changed specific details in our world resulting in a subsequent change in the power structure itself. The new ruling class that is thus formed, as it will be seen through the various examples, is in actuality a regime that exercises its supreme power to control the majority of the population. It is in this context that the Dickian protagonists are forced to fight a seemingly losing battle against a supreme power that is, at the best of times, merely a façade. In most cases, the antagonists are mere placeholders; in simpler words, the authentic source of the oppressive power is understood or discovered by the protagonists. Unsurprisingly, wealth is one of the main causes that creates this great

divide between the classes of human beings. As renowned author Ursula K. Le Guin, who coincidentally was in the same high school as Philip K. Dick, states "There are no heroics in Dick's books, but there are heroes. One is reminded of [Charles] Dickens: what counts is the honesty, constancy, kindness and patience of ordinary people" (1979: 166).[17]

While considering Philip K. Dick's worlds and dystopian futures, his conception of the political agents that could end up either conquering the world or dividing it what appears to be a constant. It is to no surprise that he sees America and Russia as possible candidates for these roles, given that he wrote his books when the Cold War was at its height. Furthermore, he attributes great importance to the rise of an Asian counterpart to balance these two colossal supremacies, usually China or in some cases Japan. Several of his novels are in fact interspersed with oriental philosophical or spiritual elements such as Taoism, Shintoism and so on. What could be more striking however is his consideration for what political power would be the one to arise and counterbalance these other agents from Europe, usually a role given to Germany.[18]

The various themes that have been mentioned thus far in this introduction are the cornerstones of Philip K. Dick's vision of a future world. It is a future where there is little room for hope given how the common man is defeated by a superior power; in most cases, this is a result of improper or unjust usage of wealth, politics and mass media. It is a bleak vision that sees the individual devoid of agency and more frightening still is not only the fact that humanity is heading towards a society that ends up abolishing freedom, but that in the process it creates the illusion of freedom of choice. This pathological fear of what society could become is one of the major points of analysis of this dissertation. Two sub-chapters will be dedicated to a more in-depth illustration of these themes in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968) and *The Man in the High Castle* (1962).[19] Another sub-chapter will be also dedicated to Dick's other more important speculative science fiction works, namely *Vulcan's Hammer* (1960), *Our Friends From Frolix 8* (1970), *Dr. Futurity*

[17] "The Modest One" in *The Language of the Night: Essays on Fantasy and Science Fiction Ursula K. Le Guin.*

[18] This is not only the case for *The Man in the High Castle* that envisions a future where the Allies have lost the war, but also of other books such as *The Simulacra* (where Germany becomes the 53rd state of the USA) and *Martian Time Slip* (where although the story takes place on Mars, back on Earth the major political players are China, Germany, the United States and Russia).

[19] Hence forward, for brevity, these two books will be abbreviated to *Androids* and *MHC* respectively.

(1960), *The Man Who Japed* (1956), *Ubik* (1969), *Dr. Bloodmeny* (1965), *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (1964), *Now Wait for Last Year* (1966), *The Simulacra* (1964), *Martian Time-Slip* (1964), *The Penultimate Truth* (1964), We Can Build You (1972) and *Flow, My Tears, the Policeman Said* (1974).[20] Although the corpus of considered texts is extensive, the choice to discuss, at least in part, their themes was made in order to corroborate how Philip K. Dick's vision functions as an organic whole. At the end of the chapter, in order to simplify the quantity of information provided, it is possible to consult Table 1.2 which contains a synthetic description of the above mentioned novels as well as a brief annotation of the powers involved in them.

2.1 *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, An example of posthuman defeat

Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? is possibly Philip K. Dick's most iconic novel, dealing with the complex issue of the ontological self, human empathy and the relationship between the individual and otherness; it was also popularized through Ridley Scott's renowned cinematographic rendition, *Blade Runner* (U.S.A., 1982), which came out just several months after the author's death. The novel is focused on the character of Rick Deckard, a bounty hunter that catches androids that have rebelled, killed their masters and escaped[21]. He is tasked with capturing three particular fugitives that are harder to differentiate from humans because they are Nexus-6, a new prototype that can imitate empathy almost perfectly (being the only distinguishable and quantifiably quality between the two) which in turn makes them better than older models.

It is useful to underline from the start that, through the entirety of the novel, androids are treated like machines; for them, the mimetic process of emulating

[20] Similarly, *Our Friends From Frolix 8*, *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* and *Flow, My Tears, the Policeman Said* will be abbreviated respectively as *Frolix 8*, *Stigmata* and *Tears*.
[21] It is important to note that, in this novel, androids are almost identical to humans except for their lack of empathy. They are superior intellectually and physically to human beings, but are used as free labour, hence presumably the reason behind their rebellion.

empathy is nothing more than a means for self-preservation. If they can fool their pursuers into thinking that they are human beings, then they can live their limited life span without being bothered. While this might be perceived as a form of 'oppression', one of which I will undoubtedly discuss in the later chapters of this work, it is not considered as such by the characters of the novel. Within the setting and world building, androids are nothing more than tools. It will be only later on, with Scott's *Blade Runner,* that the master-slave dynamic will be explored to a greater extent, focusing on the androids as the 'oppressed' and the dehumanized aspects of the 'oppressors'. In the context of *Androids*, as such, it is useful to reiterate that the attention is focused on the human component: human beings, and society more generally, are the ones who are at risk.

The novel creates a divide between human self and otherness where human beings have established themselves on a pedestal of superiority and do not even consider their way of dealing with androids as wrongful.[22] The implication as such is a critique on society and an ontological investigation on what it means to be human. In Dick's own words, "the theme of my book is that Deckard is dehumanized by tracking down androids"[23]. It is however only in several minute instances that this theme emerges, but even so a quintessential ideological is posed at the core of the novel. Through a negative exemplum, Philip K. Dick demonstrates how society is able to lose its humanity; this point is reached because of a variety of factors such as technology, social shifts and economic interests.

Before continuing the analysis on the human-android relationship, it will be useful to give an explanation of the novel's world building and context. A war, possibly nuclear and referred to as World War Terminus, has taken place on Earth; this left the planet in ruins, where *kipple*[24] becomes the only palpable certainty. The

[22] Not only are the androids referred to as 'andys", implying a degree of detachment, but humans also find a way of justifying their behaviour towards them. This is applied even in regards to ending the existence of the ones that fled, explained on a para-religious basis: "In retiring—i.e. killing—an andy he did not violate the rule of life laid down by Mercer. You shall kill only the killers, Mercer had told them the year empathy boxes first appeared on Earth" (28). As it shall be explained Mercerism is the philosophical and religious stance of this novel.

[23] Quoted in Paul Sammon, *Future Noir: The Making of Blade Runner* (1996: 285).

[24] Kipple is a term invented by the author to indicate both physical as well as emotional 'trash', insignificant objects that continuously multiply. In *Androids*, kipple becomes the physical manifestation of entropy as Jameson sums up: "Dick is notoriously the epic poet of entropy and of the transformation of the world into kipple, the layers of dust, the rotting of all that's solid, a destruction of form itself that is worse than death" (2005: 82). This depiction of the world will be analysed in the second half of the dissertation.

only way of finding a better future being through colonies on other planets. This is however only what is being reported by televised broadcasts;[25] as such, the truth of what is transpiring might be different or questionable. The colonies are portrayed as flourishing, where production is automated through the use of androids (the very same ones that occasionally rebel and flee back to Earth) but it is also implied that not everyone can reach them. The people who are still on Earth do not possess enough funds to reach the colonies, once again emphasizing the divide created by wealth. Furthermore, it should be said that how the colonies are depicted does not necessarily reflect reality as Pris, an android caught by Deckard says, "all Mars is lonely. […] The andorids are lonely, too" (128).

These factors create a problematic read not only because the contradictory nature of the colonies themselves. In Pris's case, the veracity of what is being said is questioned based on the fact that androids are reportedly capable of lying; they do so for self-preservation, in order to make humans feel pity and then escape again. Furthermore, the implication that androids are able to feel loneliness is one of the many humanizing characteristics Dick attributes them, making the reader wonder what exactly constitutes empathy. The novel however adds one more layer to its multifaceted analysis of the self-otherness dichotomy upon considering how human beings perceive animals.

In the narratological framework, after World War Terminus and possibly because of fallout, much of the fauna has gone extinct and few are the animals that have actually survived on Earth. This in turn creates a world where an authentic animal is almost venerated, appreciated for its rarity; the ecological implications will be better explored in the second half of the dissertation. It is however important to underline that, in this context, animals represent a symbol of wealth; people even go to the lengths of buying mechanical replicas, the 'electric sheep' that the title refers to for instance, in order to simulate a financial status. Deckard himself has an electric sheep, but while he reflects on its existence, he perceives how it is merely a mechanical construct:

> The tyranny of an object, he thought. It doesn't know I exist. Like the androids, it had no ability to appreciate the existence of another. He had never thought of this before,

[25] One add in particular has the slogan "Emigrate or degenerate" (7), implying also the possibility of mutations.

> the similarity between an electric animal and an andy. The electric animal, he pondered, could be considered a subform of the other, a kind of vastly inferior robot. Or, conversely, the android could be regarded as a highly developed, evolved version of the ersatz animal. Both viewpoints repelled him. (*Do Andorids Dream of Electric Sheep?,* 37)

Deckard's reflection once again demonstrates how there is no empathy to be had towards mechanical objects and androids, putting them on just a slightly higher level than an 'ersatz animal', a mere surrogate of the authentic. The only saving grace in his discourse is how these viewpoints repel him: in fact he is the only character in the book that occasionally demonstrates a minor form of sensibility towards the situation of the machines. Regardless, this stance is ultimately supressed at the end of the novel. Vinci takes into consideration the role of the android and animals while discussing trauma, absence and loss in an age of simulation.[26] He points out that the post-apocalyptic world depicted in *Androids* is based on anthropocentric values that however fall apart for both humans and nonhuman others as the narration follows through (2014: 92). The main distinction between the two however is that humans are the only ones to have exclusive access to empathy, using it as a gateway to define their own position, whereas androids and animals become "unreal subjects, scapegoats that must suffer so that humans can avoid painful realities" (95). It follows that nonhuman agency is not only limited in the narration, animals and machines becoming mere silent witnesses, but it is also counteracted (or to an extent oppressed) by human action.

One final important building block that constitutes the world-building is Mercerism, both a religion as well as a philosophy that becomes a universal truth for all the characters. It refers to its founder, Mercer, who can be perceived through a device called an empathy box; through the empathy box, characters connect to a type of collective consciousness and can feel Mercer's pain as well as hear his voice.[27] In a way, Mercerism becomes a human validation of being; their ability to

[26] Tony Vinci, *Posthuman Wounds: Trauma, Non-Anthropocentric Vulnerability, and the Human/ Android/ Animal Dynamic in Philip K. Dicks Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (2014: 91-112).

[27] "He had crossed over in the usual perplexing fashion; physical merging—accompanied by mental and spiritual identification—with Wilbur Mercer had reoccurred. As it did for everyone who at this moment clutched the handles, either here on Earth or on one of the colony planets. He experienced them, the others, incorporated the babble of their thoughts, heard in his own brain the noise of their many individual existences. They—and he—cared about one thing; this fusion of their mentalities oriented their attention on the hill, the climb, the need to ascend." (*Do Andorids Dream of Electric Sheep?,* 20)

feel emotions is juxtaposed to the inability of the androids for empathy. There is however a satirical nuance to Mercerism, but even upon being revealed that he is a fraud, humans still choose not take notice or, even worse, not to care. As Hayles explains,

> Dick's treatment of Mercerism remains complexly ambiguous. The text refuses an either/or choice and implies that Mercerism is both political hucksterism and a genuinely meaningful experience. In an expose by Buster Friendly, a radio talk-show host later revealed to be an android, Mercer is proved to be a fake, a drunk hired by unknown parties to act out a few cheesy scenes of humiliation and atonement on cheap sets. Yet Mercer is also an inspiring figure who mysteriously appears to Deckard to tell him that killing androids is both wrong and necessary, just as Mercer acknowledges that he is at once fake and genuine. (1999: 175)

It becomes apparent of just how much Philip K. Dick exasperatingly plays with the notion of understanding what is real and what is fake; once again, the unreliability of what is said by his characters comes into play. To further add to this dimension is the probable political machinations of a seemingly religious creed, such as Mercerism. As Enns explains “Mercerists represent a spiritual and potentially subversive community is complicated in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?,* which introduces a certain ambiguity as to whether these mediated experiences actually represent escapist fantasies that have been sanctioned or even developed by the government in order to ensure that the population remains passive” (2006: 82). The intersection between the three main factors in Dick’s world-building (politics, economics and mass media) is yet again stressed and in this case, mass media and technology almost permeates the metaphysical, philosophical and religious levels.

An interesting example of subversion can be encountered in the character of Buster Friendly, an android who hosts a talk show that speaks against Mercer and its doctrine; he even produces an expose that denounces Mercer’s falsified nature. In this case, it would seem that machines are the only ones who are able to distinguish and corroborate what constitutes factual reality. This is counterbalanced by the human unwillingness to accept truth when presented with them, preferring Marcer’s ethereal existence within the empathy box as a certainty. At its core, I would argue that this is also a satirical take on religion itself, however Jameson is more reluctant to interpret it as such:

> I think it would be overhasty to characterize this, particularly in the later stages, as some kind of parody of religion, for the parodic elements are soaked up laterally into the SF conventions and framework, while the relationship of Mercerism to suffering and to the desolation of the post-atomic landscape freezes all possible grins into some mixed tonality or nightmarish zaniness preeminently characteristic of Dick's ontological and evaluative undecideability (2005: 367).

To stress even further the role of machines and technology as verifiers of factual reality, it is important to know that the only way to establish if a humanoid is an android or a human is by undergoing an empathy test. This assessment is carried out with the Voigt-Kampff apparatus, a machine that judges micro-expressions and reactions to a series of social-based questions, determining as such if the subject is able to feel empathy (human) or not (android). However, Philip K. Dick yet again plays on doubt and the Voigt-Kampff scale is not infallible as it can also give a false-positive if the subject is one amongst a "selected group of schizoid and schizophrenic human patients" (32). It follows that the scale may also be used to determine whether a human being is able to conform to a standard or not. In other words, *Androids* also inquiries into the role of the human being within society; he functions in relation to a collective and is just one part of the hole. It is because of this reason that Mercerism is so popularized and that the Voigt-Kampff test features solely social context-related questions. Thus, the problematic nature of the android in this intertwined relationship with the human ontological aspect emerges because it is unable to consider itself part of a collective.[28]

The Empathy test becomes important when Deckard meets with Rachel Rosen, a Nexus-6 gen android that has been appointed by the Rosen group[29] as a liaison to help him in his investigation. Initially Rachel manages to pass the Voigt-Kampff test, emphasizing both the fallacy of the test as well as mimetic capabilities of the latest generation androids, then because of a slip-up that Deckard notices, she is retested and finally the bounty hunter discovers the rouse. As an android who is not forced to lie for self-preservation, the reader could assume that her words reflect some form of truth. It is one of the few moments within the novel when otherness, the nonhuman counterpart, is given a voice; her agency is however

[28] It's lack of empathy is judged not only based of how they interact with humans, but also how they interact with each other: "an android doesn't care what happens to another android" (101).
[29] The Rosen group are the manufactures of the andorids, as such their interest is primarily economic.

limited as a character. When Deckard asks her if she feels anything towards the andorids that they are supposed to track down and eliminated, she underlines the triviality of it, comparing the andorids to ants. “We are machines, stamped out like bottle caps. It’s an illusion that I–I— personally— really exist; I’m just representative of a type” (161). Her stance however is ambiguous upon considering what happens after she and Deckard have intercourse.[30] She says that andorids are unable to control their sensual impulses but also hints towards the fact that she wanted to seduce him; she did so in order to stop him from chasing androids, to have a moment of hesitation before shooting one and eventually being shot back. She also infers that she did so with other bounty hunters as well. It is never clear if she is stating the truth or if she is just manipulating Deckard and even in the hypothesis that she is doing so to protect other andorids, this feeling that resembles empathy is never explained.

Deckard’s relation to Rachel has the same problematic nature humans have with technology in the novel. Between the empathy box and the television that broadcasts only what the government has approved and nationalized, it becomes apparent that “technology often acts in Dick's novel as the long arm of the government, furtively breaching the bounds between public and private” as Jill Galvan also surmises (1997: 418). The interaction between technology, machines and andorids alike, has a further alienating effect on Deckard who has already been progressively dehumanized, just as Philip K. Dick had stated himself.

It becomes a cautionary story of what negative effects technology could bring. As Galvan explains (414), succumbing to the “technological totalitarianism” that the world surrounding us is evolving into, we also risk becoming androids ourselves. In other words, we lose part of our humanity, becoming machines or automated beings, and ultimately lose the ability to feel empathy. On the other hand, denying the influence of technology and its pervasive nature also means to deny reality, or to be oblivious to a truth that is undisputable. The only solution becomes to gradually accept the changing world, which is in part what Deckard ends up doing. According to Vinci, “he opens himself up to the traumatic realities he has been evading through his anthropocentric humanism as well as the ability to experience empathy for the

[30] It is noteworthy that sex with an android is not common in the world depicted in the novel. When Resch, another bounty hunter, asks “Don’t you know, Deckard, that in the colonies they have android mistresses?”, Deckard’s only response is “It’s illegal”(123).

radical, nonhuman, perhaps non-living other" (2014: 106). I would however argue that what Deckard feels is not necessarily empathy, but at least some form of acceptance, which is admittedly a step forward. One of his last thoughts is that "electric things have their lives, too. Paltry as those lives are (208)." By acknowledging the non-living existence of the other, in this case the electric sheep he had, Deckard is also able to achieve a different point of view of the andorids than the only one society had imposed on him.

A final tangential point I wanted to make has less to do with Dick's writings and more to do with how he inspired science fiction and how the themes in *Androids* have evolved in other media. As mentioned at the beginning, this novel inspired director Ridley Scott's cinematographic interpretation; *Blade Runner* presents however several important differences. Instead of Deckard being a bounty hunter he is a blade runner, a former police officer who specializes in finding 'replicants' (the androids of the novel). This terminology does not exist in the novel and it emphasizes even more the divide between the two. Furthermore, parts of Dick's satirical style are left out[31] as Scott depicts his world with grittier images, sometimes even touching a more symbolist representation. A theme that is emphasized in *Blade Runner* is the relationship between human and android, explored through the interactions between Deckard and Rachel, as well as by giving a more impactful voice and characterization to Roy Batty[32]. This in turn gives a slightly different perspective on the ontological issue that is proposed: the novel is much more keen to emphasize that androids mimic human behaviour to trick humans and survive whereas *Blade Runner* subtly hints at the possibility of them being able to actually feel empathy. That is not to say that *Androids* does not admit this possibility, as previously mentioned, but rather it is just subtly left more to interpretation. The novel is ultimately more concerned with the human self and how it interacts with otherness. *Blade Runner*, I would argue, provides a more compelling and almost humane vision of the androids. As argued by Jameson,

[31] Mercerism is not mentioned at all, as well as the discourse concerning electrical animals.
[32] The brusque temperament and oafish character portrayed in the novel is reimagined entirely by Scott. In *Blade Runner*, Roy is given a deeper and more philosophical voice. He still poses the strength typical of all androids, but it is also counterbalanced by his ontological thinking. In his final moments he delivers an almost poetical monologue, reflecting on his limited lifespan and own mortality; this clashes completely with how he is depicted by Dick.

> This reverses the external issue of testing into a permanent rift within self-consciousness itself; and it is symptomatic that the debates about Blade Runner (from which the Phil Resch episode, dramatizing the android cogito, has been removed) have slowly evolved into discussions as to whether Rick Deckard (unquestionably a human in the novel) might not be an android himself (2005: 374).

The 'android cogito' refers to Decartes' adage and has the function of humanizing the mechanical entity even further. As Jameson mentions, Deckard's own humanity is unquestionable, except possibly for a scene where Rachel attempts to insinuate a degree of doubt in him, but even then it is discarded completely. Ridley Scott played on this theme and centred his movie around it.

To go a step further, another media that is possible to consider and that is closely connected to what has been explained is Japanese animation, specifically Mamoru Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell* (1995), which pays a direct homage to *Blade Runner*. In this anime, an artificial intelligence permeates the physical world from cyberspace asking for political asylum and protection; its fundamentally ontological question relies on what differentiates a self-aware thinking entity from human beings. Much more than that, the entity asks how it is possible that he could not be given the same legal rights as a human being.[33] This theme that has been made central in *Ghost in the Shell* is the same one that had been quintessentially nuanced in *Androids*.

Going back to the novel and my reasoning behind the theme of defeat, I would like to consider the character of Deckard and the world-building itself. He is nothing more than a bounty hunter, forced to live on a dying planet; not having the funds to emigrate, the only possible outcome is to degenerate as the propagandistic slogan states. At the end of the novel he returns home, but nothing has truly changed. There is no hope to be had, and even his 'victory' against the fugitives he was chasing is barely a consolation prize. His defeat is his own human condition, one that is shared by all others still living on Terra and possibly, considering Dick's pessimism, even of those who managed to emigrate.

[33] For a more in-depth comparison between *Ghost in the Shell* and *Blade Runner*, see Bogdan Groza "Beyond the virtual screen, existentialism and the loss of self-consciousness in Ghost in the Shell" in *Schermi tra lingue, letterature e culture* (2024: 295-305).

2.2 *The Man in the High Castle*, an example of historical defeat

The Man in the High Castle is one of Philip K. Dick's most peculiar speculative science fiction novels as it belongs to a specific sub-genre, the uchronia, also known as 'alternate history' or 'allohistorical narrative'. It functions on the basic principle of asking the 'what if' question but, instead of postulating an absurd or heavily futuristic premise (such as the case with most hard science fiction), it grounds its setting in a historical background by changing a specific element or set of elements and maintaining a certain degree of likeliness. In *MHC*'s specific case, Dick responds to the question of 'what if' the Allies were the ones to lose World War 2.

As Gavriel Rosenfeld (2002: 92) explains, there are various reasons that made science fiction a fertile ground for this sub-genre to become popularized within the span of the last century. Amongst them we can consider the rise of postmodernism (which blurred the boundaries between fact and fiction), the death of socialism after the Cold War which eroded the power of the deterministic worldviews, the information revolution which liberated human beings from the constraints of real space-time and paved the road towards cyberspace and virtual reality as well as the need to explore otherness. This plethora of factors gives an interpretation to how it evolved, the reasons behind its rise in popularity, by why ask the 'what if' question in the first place? What was the underlying reason behind it? "By becoming aware of the fundamentally presentist character of alternate history, it is possible to appreciate one of its most important, but least acknowledged, virtues--its ability to shed light upon the evolution of historical memory" (Rosenfeld, 2002: 93).

In simple words, uchronia writers understand the possible fallacy of historical accounts, how they could be partial or biased, how historical fear and guilt might have influenced their narration, thus postulate the 'what if' scenario as an extremization of this fallacy. This obviously does not validate alternate history fiction, but rather we should focus on its reception, how and why it echoes and resonates within readers becomes an important point of study. Essentially, alternate history is concerned with our reasoning while asking the 'what if' question and the provided answers become a way to express our changing views of the present by analysing

our past. This line of reasoning has however a strong connection with the function of speculative science fiction in general, by a process of substitution: to analyse the present, the uchronia inquires on something known (past) instead of something unknown (future).

As previously stated, *MHC* envisions a world where the Allies have lost World War 2 and as such sees Earth was divided into two hegemonic realities, half to the Japanese and half to the Reich. It should be said that some details slightly diverge from what has been said before about uchronia; given Dick's interpretation of the future, the novel also postulates that the Space Race also brought with it German colonies on Mars. Except for this, most of the novel is grounded in historical likeliness, consider for instance the political succession in the new German Empire[34]. Philip K. Dick interpolates historical and economical facts with the fictional yet plausible scenarios that fit his narrative. If on the one hand he uses Gresham's eponymous law[35] to justify the increment in number of counterfeit American pre-war memorabilia, on the other hand he also imagines that a vast part of the population (half of the world being ruled by Japan) has started consulting the *I Ching* and adopting a Taoist mentality. His pragmatism, as well as his understanding of economics (and possibly obsessive focus on wealth in general as it will be shown further on) made it possible for Dick to construct a verisimilar 'what if' scenario. In Gunn and Barr's words, "Dick's novel demonstrates the ability of SF to deal with complex historical issues by projecting a counter-factual, but perfectly materialist and rational, imagining of how history might have taken turns different from those it actually did take" (2009: 129).

The role of the *I Ching*, or *Book of Changes*, an ancient Chinese divination text has been studied extensively. I will reference Paul Mountfort who provides an intertextual analysis of the twelve times this text is consulted throughout the novel and emphasizes Dick's notion of history as synchronic rather than diachronic. In his words,

> Dick appears to have consulted the oracle more or less obsessively to aid him in developing the direction of *High Castle*, setting up a powerful metafictional dynamic

[34] After Hitler Bormann gains power and after his death Goebbels becomes the new Führer.
[35] Thomas Gresham, a fifteenth century merchant and banker, said "bad money drives out good money". In MHC this becomes "the fakes would undermine the vales of the real" (51) seeing as there is an open market for pre-war goods that the Japanese collect.

> between the author and his protagonists. […] The I Ching also provided a philosophical foundation for the novel in the synchronistic notion of simultaneity or "meaningful coincidence" that is contrary to classical western views of causality, going beyond even the synchronic notion of time advanced by Fredric Jameson in *Archaeologies of the Future*. (2016: 287)

The *Book of Changes* is one of the oldest Chinese texts, dating to the Western Zhou period (1000-750 B.C.) and was used for centuries as a basis for divination and foretelling the future. Philip K. Dick employed it not only to ground his novel even more in a layer of historicity, but also to create a guideline for the plot. He aptly chose the fragments of the text he needed in order to lead his characters into believing the 'meaningful coincidences' referred to by Mountfort.

There are however more levels of meta-literary interpretation in MHC. Initially the 'what if' scenario is introduced, then the narration is interspersed with *I Ching* divinations that add to it a layer of interpretation and finally Dick writes about *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*, a book within *MHC* that presents a uchronia of its own where the Allies are the ones who have won the war. This obviously would be an echo to our own reality, although with slight differences, which in turn go back to the dimension of ambiguity. It might be said that while we, as readers, see in *The Man in the High Castle* a 'what if' scenario, the characters of MHC also see the same thing when reading *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*[36]. By using this narratological device, Dick creates a duality of back and forth between authentic and fabricated. In other words, if on the one hand the *I Ching* creates a certain level of historical grounding while *Grasshopper Lies Heavy* leads towards doubt and perplexity, by a process of subversion the contrary can also applied. As Palmer sums up, "by its gnomic utterances, the I Ching suggests that the history one is apparently living has no existential primacy: the world of The Man in the High Castle, with which the characters have to cope, is not more real than that of The Grasshopper Lies Heavy, or than our own" (2003: 126).

Untimely, Paul Mountfort considers the three sub-cathegories of *uchronie* referenced by William Joseph Collins: pure, plural and infinite (one single reality, our primary one and a secondary one, many and even infinite parallel worlds). Mountfort

[36] Not only is the book banned, indicator of a totalitarian regime, but it is even by some as an "alternate present" (109) and by other as an "interesting form of fiction possible within the genre of science fiction" (109); this creates yet another ambivalent interpretation.

poetically concludes that “Dick produced what is perhaps the ultimate infinite uchronia novel” (306) as the I Ching suggest a reading not just of binaries but of continuum infinites. I would argue that this stance gives an interesting conclusion to his article, but is written more for the effect than for a more pragmatic understanding of *MHC*.

As Brian McHale argues, “such a story invites the reader to compare the real state of affairs in our world with the hypothetical state of affairs projected for the parallel world; implicitly it places our world and the parallel world in confrontation” (1987: 61). It is from this consideration that the interpretation of the theme of defeat emerges. By creating the ‘what if’ scenario of MCH, Dick emphasizes that the main result is a shift in power structure. In a war of such proportions as World War 2, the common man (to which he pays close attention) is always on the losing side; he is able to adapt to the various outcomes, power struggles and new equilibriums, but always having something to lose in the process.

2.3 Other novels and the impossibly of taking action

What has been partially explored through *Do Andorids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and *Man in the High Castle* - and will become clearer through the following textual analysis - is that Philip K. Dick’s world-building process is centred around creating a pre-existing agency that gives form to the setting itself. It is rarely explained how or why this agency took place in the first place, only occasionally a World War or a nuclear catastrophe[37] is mentioned, but he creates a world that is not better off. Within his books it becomes evident that geo-political equilibriums shift, that technology is advanced (although it manages to be a hindrance as well as a benefit) and the divide between classes is even more accentuated. As such, Dick’s dystopias emerge as a critique of what society can become or, even worse, is already becoming. In these grim and pessimistic settings he creates, his main characters struggle and desperately attempt to change their circumstances,

[37] Which fits the chronological political situation Dick lived through considering, for instance, the Cold War political climate.

realizing that in the majority of cases they are utterly powerless. I would argue that their failure and their defeat is something that Dick perceived as his own. As I will try to demonstrate, even in the cases where the novels leave room to interpretation by giving an open ending, there is still not that much space left for hope.

The theme of defeat is portrayed not only in a socio-political dimension of oppressor-oppressed, one that is predominantly regulated by wealth, but on an existential level as well. “In the collective, non-individualist world of Dick, everybody, high and low, destroyer and sufferer, is in an existential situation which largely determines his/her actions” (Suvin, 1975: 9). It could be justified to ask what is the purpose of taking action if the circumstances, even those that pre-exist and have been established by superior powers, are against oneself. In other words, why would Dick’s characters try to go against a system they eventually realize is fake, rigged or flawed? I would argue that the action itself, constituting an external physical struggle – one that is also reflected as an internal one - becomes a protest against a preconceived defeat. I will hence emphasize how the act of rebellion is carried out in a largely oppressed-oppressor contexts, as well as highlight how Philip Dick deals with the bitterness of defeat and possibly leaves some room for interpretation.

Other than a strong divide between the social classes, as previously mentioned, what characterizes most of Philip K. Dick’s worlds is the economical aspect. This is not only because wealth represents a symbol of power and status but also because the lack of it, already implies a certain degree of struggle. Although *A Scanner Darkly* does not fit the criteria of the novels analysed for the purpose of this dissertation, given its quasi-autobiographical nature, it is however representative of Dick’s style and thematic approach (struggles of poverty, drug abuse and existential dread). In *A Scanner Darkly,* the separation between classes is mainly based on wealth: the rich are the only ones for instance who have access to shopping malls as they are allowed to enter because of their credit cards[38]. Even the police force is involved in this scheme: they hunt drug dealers not out of duty or obligation, but because the government is the only one who has the monopoly on said substances. This in turn creates a spiral of paranoia that influences the way

[38] “Ahead, one of those giant shopping malls surrounded by a wall that you bounced off like a rubber ball—unless you had a credit card on you and passed in through the electronic hoop. […] He watched the uniformed armed guards at the mall gate checking out each person. Seeing that the man or woman matched his or her credit card and that it hadn’t been ripped off, sold, bought, used fraudulently.” (6)

humans behave, interact and, to a degree, even disrupt their perception of reality. Drug abuse, as such, becomes a social factor that renders human beings almost akin to the andorids mentioned in the previous subchapter: addicts turn and spy on each other, have no empathy for one another and would do anything for more pills. This, in a sense, becomes their only reason to live and their behaviour aligns with self-interest and self-preservation. The situation is so dire, that "even newborns are addicts" (42). Within the fake drug-induced reality, people find a sense of fabricated peace and happiness[39].

To go a step further, an example where the perception of reality is obsessively questioned can be found in *Flow, My Tears, the Policeman Said*. The plot revolves around the character of Jason Taverner, a famous television show star who is also a Six, a human being that has been genetically modified to be intelligent, charismatic and handsome[40]. One day he takes a particular drug and is subsequently forgotten by everyone. In other words, this drug not only alters the perception of reality of the one who takes it, but the perception of all the other people who know him. How this functions is however left unexplained and free to interpretation. Regardless, by becoming an unknown citizen, without proper documents[41], Jason Taverner is forced to search for a way to regain his identity and consequently face the heavy influence of the police in this depicted world. It is in these circumstances, as a person who has lost the protection guaranteed by his previous social status and wealth, that Jason learns about the disparity between the ruling police state and the rest of the world. With this novel, Philip K. Dick explores the dynamics of power and how a ruling elite class, that also controls the police, can influence even the law to its advantage. One example is the fact that the age of consent is changed to thirteen by an official decree enabling higher-ups to do as they please; homosexuality and paedophilia become legal. According to the new penal code, these are considered "victimless crimes" (p. 127), which in turn not only takes away the culpability of the aggressor, but also dehumanizes the aggressed

[39] "Happiness, he thought, is knowing you got some pills" (10).
[40] Described as having an "incurable physical beauty" (7).
[41] In Tavernr's context, proper identification is quintessential; without it one can be sent to forced labour with no chance to rebut. "I can't live two hours without my ID, he said to himself. I don't even dare walk out of the lobby of this rundown hotel and onto the public sidewalk. They'll assume I'm a student or teacher escaped from one of the campuses. I'll spend the rest of my life as a slave doing heavy manual labour. I am what they call an unperson." (20).

party. General Buckman for instance, that antagonist in this case, even has an incestuous relationship with his sister.

The class divide is shown not only between rich and poor, but also between the students and the *nats* (National Guard) or the police force referred to as *pols*. It is possible to assume that the students are fighting a losing battle against the police and represent the resisting force in this novel, however the motives and their agenda are never actually explained.

Another important detail is provided by Ruth Gomen, a former lover that Jason meets by accident and who obviously does not recognize him. While talking, she explains the importance grief has in love:

> […] causes you to leave yourself. You step outside your narrow little pelt. And you can't feel grief unless you've had love before it—grief is the final outcome of love, because it's love lost. You do understand; I know you do. But you just don't want to think about it. It's the cycle of love completed: to love, to lose, to feel grief, to leave, and then to love again. Jason, grief is awareness that you will have to be alone, and there is nothing beyond that because being alone is the ultimate final destiny of each individual living creature. That's what death is, the great loneliness." (120)

This theme is yet another nuance of the defeat Philip K. Dick wanted to describe; although here it refers more to intra-human relationships, it also echoes the concepts of empathy and solitude explored in *Androids*. The novel ends with Taverner managing to return to normality; his character however does not evolve as he chooses to forget the episode had happened and be satisfied with his regained fame and fortune. The concept of voluntary oblivion to the events that have transpired indicate a lack of morality and intent to act out of empathy for others; Taverner is simply contempt by having regained his social status. Unexpectedly, General Buckman is the one that actually tries to take action against the system, although he does so after retiring: by writing an exposé about the planet wide police apparatus, he however ultimately ends up being assassinated. The defeat in this case is double because not only it is impossible to act against the powers of a superior power, but also because what Buckman wrote fades just as easily into

oblivion as the episode that Taverner lived through, losing any significance it could have had.[42]

The type of oligarchical rule constituted by the Sixes however is certainly not an isolated case. In *Our Friends from Frolix 8* for instance, Dick establish a similar form of regime where two types of evolved human beings hold absolute power: the 'new men' who poses a superior intellect and the 'unusuals', who are precogs and psychics. All other 'old men', in other words the regular human beings, are under the rule of these two factions, subjugated by a quasi-militaristic government. The life and future of an individual is hence established by a mandatory governmental test, one that can be rigged by the very same new men. Thorpe argues that the test "determines the individual's place in the occupational hierarchy, reflecting the rise of educational meritocracy in postwar America, as bureaucratic hierarchies and modes of advancement replaced older entrepreneurial forms of social mobility" (2011: 428). This meritocracy is however debatable given how meaningless the efforts of the old men are depicted. Just as Norbert Weiss, a civil servant that administers these types of tests says to himself "we are the truth; we create it" (13). In various instances the book emphasizes how the new men are manipulating the regulars, be it through the use of media and propaganda, by changing the laws[43] or by completing the 'great ear' – a system that will spy on the inhabitants of Terra and by subjugating the general population with police forces. The theme of mass media as a tool of control to blind and indoctrinate the general population resurfaces in this novel, reinforcing one of the main points explained at the beginning of the chapter.

Within the divide portrayed in *Frolix 8* there exists also an underground group of rebels, the 'undermen', that circulate anti-government propaganda and are waiting for their leader, Thors Provoni to make his return from outer space where he has gone in search for help. In the end, after ten years, Provoni will make his return with a Frolixian, an entity who decides that the best way to end the disparity between the various factions is to lobotomize the new men and render the unusuals

[42] "General Buckman was shot by an assassin, never identified, and no arrests were ever made. His book, The Law-and-order Mentality, continued to clandestinely circulate for a number of years after his death, but even that, too, eventually became forgotten." (245)

[43] When the main character asks for an attorney, the policeman replies: "You can't have one because of the enabling legislation passed last year forbidding legal representation to anyone already arrested. An attorney couldn't have helped you anyhow, even if you had seen him before your arrest, because your crime is political in nature." (103). By changing the law in such a fashion, the police were guaranteed the liberty and free reign to arrest anyone they suspected while also taking away their freedom to legally defend themselves.

powerless. As many other novels in Dick's production, the final confrontation between Provoni and the chairman of the new men will not be shown. The Frolixian enacts its plan, taking away the power from the evolved humans in a drastic fashion, but it is not explained what happens on Terra afterwards. In a subtle manor, Philip K. Dick also hints towards the fact that the Frolixians' true intentions are to devour humanity, hence stopping the evolved humans could just be a meaningless gesture. It follows that while the people were fighting amongst each other, they did not fully understand what the true threat to their wellbeing was. In this case, the Frolixians become the new position of power, able to decide the fate of the new men (exactly like they themselves had done with the old men); a new hierarchy of power is created and, by doing so, the role and agency that the new men had is stripped away from them. The irony is that otherness, in this case represented by the extra-terrestrial beings, may be both an equalizing force as well as a destructive one upon considering the fact that they could destroy humanity if they so whished.

The Man Who Japed provides an example of an even more poignant totalitarian regime. In this case, we witness a police state that forbids any form of anti-governmental behaviour and even has a Moral Reclamation unit, or Morec, that is in charge of creating positive propaganda on behalf of the government. The story follows Allen Purcel, an employee of the Morec who is in charge of creating "ads" that spread a positive image of the government and of its leader, General Steiner. One day, without even realizing it and even forgetting what he did, Purcel vandalizes a statue of the general. Since the Morec does not know he was the one responsible, and because of his career, he is however offered a better work position[44]. Purcel slowly starts to understand the true manipulative nature behind the Morec and starts noticing how it was able to annihilate the will of the masses to take action of any sorts and go against what it is being told by the official propaganda.[45]

[44] Given that he is initially hesitant to make a decision, the Morec liaison offers to direct him to someone who could be able to help him but also states: "These days it's hard to get help. You're not supposed to *want* help." (32). The help implied here is of a psychiatric nature and not being even supposed to want help is referred to how the government has so extensively brainwashed its citizens that they are convinced is perfect the way it is.

[45] Purcell finds a merchant of various memorabilia from the past. While he is inspecting the books the merchant has for sale he is told "Joyce, Hemingway. Degenerate trash. The Major's first Book Committee listed Ulysses on the hex-sheet back in 1988. Here." Laboriously, he scooped up a handful of books; first one and then another was tossed into Allen's lap. "A bunch more of them. Novels of the twentieth century. All gone, now. Banned. Burned. Destroyed" (54) In other words the Morec has banned any form of knowledge or information that could deviate from the truth it wanted to be spread. Purcell genuinely does not understand their purpose and even asks "What kind of

As the story unfolds, eventually Purcel will create a television campaign to fight and counteract the totalitarian regime. The campaign will be aired only briefly, before being forcefully stopped by the police, as it hints at the process of "active assimilation" carried out by the General's orders. This active assimilation refers to how in a time of war and hunger Steiner resorted to cannibalizing the opposition; Dick never clarifies if this is to be intended in a literal or figurative sense. The process of defeat is however not completed in *The Man Who Japed* as Allen Purcel decides not to flee and continue fighting against the higher political powers. I would argue that what does indicate a defeat is how Morec is perceived by most of the population. Given the propaganda, it is as if the citizens have been brainwashed and they believe unconditionally what they are told. "The moral responsibility to serve. To take on the burden on civic life. The highest form of self-sacrifice." (p. 22). Being part of the political machine, being just a cog, becomes in a way a point of pride; there is the awareness of self-sacrifice and the sense of responsibility but there is no question whether it is right or wrong. The defeat becomes evident as the depicted society has been brainwashed to the extent that even the capability of thinking has been invalidated by the system.

It should be mentioned that various parts of *The Man who Japed* are clear and intended echoes of Orwell's *1984*. This is not just the case of terminology such as 'unperson', that Dick knowingly borrows, but also for how the general theme is portrayed. The government exerts a strict control on the population through the use of mechanical sentries and surveillance systems; furthermore, televised mass media is used for the sole purpose of spreading propaganda.

Going back to the concepts of self-sacrifice and adhering to a superior power without asking questions is a factor that is also explored in *Vulcan's Hammer*. In a scenario in which the world risked to annihilate itself, it is decided to eliminate the possibility of human error and entrust the decision and governing process to Vulcan, a super computer. Ideologically, this novel is antithetical if compared to *Androids*: in this case it is because of the unbiased logical capacity of a machine that it is put in

Morec did they teach?" to which the merchant replies "They didn't. These particular novels even taught unMorec."The merchant however is unable to provide a better answer than just saying that the novels are "about something" (implying something real or though-provoking) but he only sells them because he is interested in their monetary value. The merchant is not a symbol of resistance, providing books to educate others, rather he is just another pawn that has been subjugated by material speculation.

charge of the world government. The lack of empathy constitutes Vulcan's strong point and it is not demonized as with the androids saw previously. In this case however there is a clear distinction between machine and human kind.

Regardless, the technocratic regime that ensues will obviously find its fall once the computer ultimately ends up going rogue. The former rebels that were already against Vulcan will coalesce with Unity, or what is left of the former government after it has been attacked by computerized drones, to bring down the supercomputer. This is one of the few examples in Dick's production that not only portrays a certain degree of united front on humanity's side (out of necessity), but also does not to end in utter defeat of the protagonists. In this case, however, defeat was pre-constructed within the premise itself. Although society seemingly tried to learn from the past based historical evidence, by empowering a machine nothing factually changes. The form of government the supercomputer imposes is still that of a militaristic reign that brainwashes its citizens with fabricated truths.[46] Furthermore, there are still dissidents who do not accept Vulcan's orders,[47] the police state that has been created is one that heavily encourages citizens to spy on one another and the concept of human rights seems to have been forgotten. Dick emphasis just how easily basic human needs can be replaced if the government chooses to dedicate monetary funds to something deemed more important, such as a supercomputer, as can be seen in this passage:

> The financial cost of supporting Vulcan 3 was immense. Part of the taxation program conducted by Unity on a world-wide basis existed to maintain the computer. At the latest estimate, Vulcan 3's share of the taxes came to about forty-three percent. And the rest, Dill thought idly, goes to schools, for roads, hospitals, fire departments, police-the lesser order of human needs. (p. 325)

The self-preservation of the prevailing force becomes quintessential. The governing party will do everything in its power to keep its status quo as ruler. A similar case can be found in *Dr. Futurity* where paradoxically we witness a

[46] Schools are in fact used to "infuse the youth of the world with the proper attitude" (285). This attitude however is not one based on critical thinking, rather one that functions on the 'do as you are told' principle.

[47] When an important general visits one of the schools where children are brainwashed, a girl asks "Don't you feel ashamed when of yourself when you let a machine tell you what to do?" (287). This question is seen with dread by the teacher who fears for her career and only mildly dissimulated by the general. The girl's question will in fact lead to an inquiry to find the parents presumed of affiliation with the dissidents that want to counteract Vulcan 3's power.

regression of society; this is achieved by displacing the protagonist, Jim Parsons, who lives in the year 2012 and making him time travel to the future in the year 2405. In this future, although technology still exists, society has both evolved and regressed to a tribal form of caste base government. Births have been limited to achieve a static level of population, medicine has been banned as prolonging one's life would disrupt this equilibrium[48] and the people are multicultural and talk a polyglot mixed language since they are the by-product of generations of melding together all races. At a first glance, this premise could seem like a utopian setting, but Philip K. Dick twists the balance when he uncovers that one of these castes is actually comprised of full-blooded Iroquois Indians who want to use technology to go back to the past and stop the invasion of the first conquistadores. This emphasizes an oppressor-oppressed dynamic that is routed in real history.

Amongst the questions that are left without answers however, or just with vague explanations, are the exact reason why the time travel has occurred in the first place[49] and how, in a process that has seen races melding with one another, full-blood Iroquois still exist. The themes that are nevertheless explored by the writer rely more on ethics and morality. In fact, Parsons asks himself "How can a society be judged by an individual created by another society? There's no disinterested standard. I'm merely comparing this world to mine" (p. 178). He understands his condition as an outsider to a society he has no right to question given that his perception would be influenced by his own way of living. If we consider yet again *Androids* as an example, where Deckard's growth as a character merely acknowledges otherness, in *Dr. Futurity* we witness a character that demonstrates a deeper understanding of the nuances involved in the self-other dichotomy. Parson however faces an impossibility to act because of the time paradox that the setting creates.[50] As such, whatever he will choose to do, the end result will be the same.

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[48] There is even an ethos of death which is explained as "a system devoted to the extinction of the individual, for the sake of the future". (267)

[49] This could also be one of the author's intended techniques. As Canaan argues, "Dick's recurrent reliance on the device of precognition - or visionary access to the future - reveals a twofold agenda for his use of time travel: to undercut and question both our linear experience of time and causality and our commonsense belief in an external reality that exists "out there," distinct from our perception of it. (2008: 342)

[50] He is given the choice between going back to 2012 or remaining in 2405 and is told "I don't want to rob you of the power of choosing for yourself. If I tell you, it will seem determined. Out of you hands."(269). However he is subsequently told that "In one matter, however, you have no choice. You know about that — what remains to be done. Of course, you can do it here as well as back in your own time." partially invalidating the first statement. The second statement possibly refers to the

Ubik is another case in which the themes diverge from the central aspects I am attempting to emphasize. Although initially it starts as a time travel narration where the protagonist goes back in time, it is later revealed that the he is actually trapped inside of a simulation.[51] Not only that, in reality the protagonist is dead and preserved in a half-life state and the crumbling reality he is experiencing is due to another patient that is also in half-life and is absorbing the main character's energy to survive. It should be noted however that the process of maintaining people who have died in half-life is actually very expensive, hence it is a privilege reserved to the rich. Once again, the discourse goes back to classism and the privileges the wealthy elites have. The moratorium, the business that maintains the dead in this suspended state is a very lucrative one, emphasizing once again the lengths capitalism would go to in order to turn a profit.

In the half-life simulation, that we can just assume functions on the same principles of the normal world, money is an even greater dividing factor. All the appliances in this world, as well as non-thinking objects such as doors, require a monetary transaction to be used. This in turn creates an absurdist as well as a paradoxical scenario given that these appliances (even the door) are operated by artificial intelligences who are annoyed or bothered when the main character does not have money. A console at a coffee shop even tells the protagonist "we can do without your kind" (p. 77). On one hand, this can be perceived as humoristic, but on the other this just becomes yet another defeat where the human component has become superfluous for the machine he created. In fact, in an outburst that is a reversal of the expectation, the human will cry out for a revolution:

> One of these days people like me will rise up and overthrow you, and the end of tyranny by the homeostatic machine will have arrived. The day of human values and compassion and simple warmth will return, and when that happens someone like myself who has gone through an ordeal and who genuinely needs hot coffee to pick

act of constructing an object that has saved him the first instance that he time travelled. It is a narrative ploy where a specific action becomes unavoidable. I would hence argue that his freedom of choice becomes an illusion.

[51] "We haven't gone anywhere. We're where we've always been. But for some reason—for one of several possible reasons—reality has receded; it's lost its underlying support and it's ebbed back to previous forms. Forms it took fifty-three years ago. It may regress further." (148) This is one of the explanations provided to the main character before discovering the truth. It is once again a way for Philip K. Dick to play with the notion of what is real, what is fake and how perception can alter their definition.

> him up and keep him functioning when he has to function will get the hot coffee whether he happens to have a poscred readily available or not. (p. 77)

What is even more interesting is the fact that both *Ubik* and *Androids* have been written in the same year but while one features androids lacking empathy and being hunted, the other portrays them talking to humans with a sense of arrogant superiority, although they only provide basic meaningless work and functions in exchange for money.

Even in an accidentally post-nuclear world, where fallout has caused a fragmentation of society and mutation in human beings, the micro communities that have formed are still fighting amongst one another. *Dr. Bloodmoney* features a post-apocalyptical narrative that portrays the consequences heavy radiation could have on humanity; the fear caused by the Cold War and the nuclear menace enables Dick to create a world where both the limitations of the human beings as well as their greed and ambition for power are analysed. On the one hand, hope is explored as the ability to survive in the worst case scenario and how even nuclear fallout is unable to stop humanity. This positive stance is however contrasted by the fact that even in a dire situation, humanity still behaves with selfishness. Hoppy Harrington, a 'phoce'/'phocomelus'[52], previously had no place in his society; in the post-nuclear scenario however he has been able to become a successful mechanic in a self-sustained community. In his own words, "I used to be body-wired. Now I'm brained wired" (p. 99). Nevertheless, the animosity and bitterness he still has for other human beings makes him become an antagonist. His previous envy tainted by the god-complex of his new found psychokinetic powers make him pretend to be revered as a superior being. In an afterword to this novel, Phili K. Dick writes:

> But it is not the job, really, of science fiction, to predict. Science fiction only seems to predict. […] Of course the major item that I got wring is the End of the World. Back in 1964 I was expecting it any time; I kept checking my watch. […] Right now we have other worries. Our problem seems to be paying our debts with incredibly inflated dollars, finding gas for our cars – much more mundane. Less cosmic. (*Dr. Bloodmoney*, 274)

[52] Neologism created by Dick to indicate a man without arms or legs.

This in part corroborates the analysis of his pessimistic view in regards to how technology could provoke a world-ending event. The constant fear of an impending catastrophe is evident in his production. What becomes even more validated from this note is the analysis of his more pragmatic nature and his understanding of capitalism. Even within the context of *Dr. Bloodmoney*, although in a more light-hearted fashion, one of his concerns is primarily the economic issue of the society he lives in. It can be stated that Dick's perception of wealth as the great divide between social classes is absolute. Surprisingly though, he then describes this novel as an "extremely hopeful" one because of the will of his characters to survive and the potential of humans to adapt to new (admittedly critical) circumstances. Dick considers Hoppy not to be evil in the usual sense, but rather represents an abuse of power; "It is not so much that Hoppy is evil but that his power is evil. […] And into the vacuum created comes Hoppy Harrington, who epitomizes the monster in us: the person who is hungry. Not hungry for food, but hungry for coercive control over others" (275 - 276). This is a result of a sense of lacking something while he was a paraplegic combined with a sense of resentment derived from the scorn with which others regarded him. Jameson considers Hoppy's process of corruption by applying it to the bulk of society: "In *Dr Bloodmoney* the historical crisis is expressed in terms of the familiar counterculture denunciation of an evil or perverted science, only too emblematically exposed by the invention of the atomic bomb" (349). I would argue that in his discourse power and technology are placed on a similar level of importance as factors. Jameson ends up affirming Dick's words upon examining the character of Bluthgeld as well:

> Bluthgeld, whether as a scientist or a madman, sees into the structure of the world in a contemplative fashion; and this suggests that his great sin was to have passed, whether voluntarily or inadvertently, from the realm of contemplation to that of action (the fall-out from the tests of 1972, World War Three itself) . As for Hoppy, his knowledge of the future is, like his mechanical skill, simply part of the equipment necessary for survival; but his increasing psychic powers suggest an abuse of his particular position not unlike that of Bluthgeld's, and fraught with similar dangers (2005: 357).

In this case being evil is not intrinsically a human condition, but rather it is a state that becomes achievable when an abuse of power is carried out. This could partially explain various of the novels that have been considered thus far. The main

difference is that while in *Dr Bloodmoney* the process of corruption is portrayed on an individual scale, in other works it is depicted on social hierarchical levels.

The aftermath of a nuclear world war, an outcome that takes a heavy toll on the planet and society - although in a different fashion, may be found in *The Penultimate Truth* as well. As in other circumstances, the events of World War III have already taken place and, as readers, we merely witness the consequences: most of the world's population lives underground, in special shelters that protect it from the ensuing radiation. However, the truth of the matter is much more appalling than what it seems to be: in reality, although the war did took place between the West-Dem and the Pac-Peop[53] it only lasted two years, and the other thirteen years afterwards the general population has been kept underground, controlled and manipulated through lies and forgeries. The majority of Earth's surface, although not a paradise and still having various hot zones (places that are not liveable given their high radioactive levels), has been replaced by immense villas where the elite have taken residence. The surface dwellers in fact use the leadis (robotic advanced intelligence), as personal guards and workers to rebuild what has been destroyed during WWIII.

The leadies, which were previously used during the war, were actually the ones to suggest that the act of just reporting the war[54] would be sufficient, since actually fighting was deemed useless. The fact that it is the robots to first suggest this approach is also reminiscent of *Vulcan III*, the supercomputer from Dick's other homonymous novel. This idea however leads to the creation of Talbot Yancy, a fictitious supreme ruler of the war efforts; in reality Yancy is just a simulation, a virtual character that through a computer deliver speeches to those living underground and written by the elites that reside on the surface (calling themselves thusly Yance-men). The manipulation of truth becomes yet again a core thematic in Dick's work; this is not only demonstrated by the ability of the Yance-men to convince almost the entirety of Earth's population to remain underground through the speeches they programme, but by also intervening on the historical truth as well. Two series of documentaries are forged to change the veracity of the Second World War, one for

[53] The two superpowers are not precisely delineated in the book; it is inferred that they represent respectively the United States and Russia with other allies.
[54] "If merely saying that a man had been executed was enough to satisfy everyone, why not merely say it instead of doing it? The problem was really—to the advanced leadies—that simple." (49)

the West-Dem and one for the Pac-Peop, depicting a different version of the German's role in the global conflict. Regardless, although they are masterfully crafted, they still present flaws: in Dick's vision, this represents the possibility to understand or see through the lie and hence the volition to fight against the oppressive situation.

In *The Penultimate Truth*, Philip K. Dick creates a dichotomy not only between upper and lower classes (the people living on the surface and those living underground), but also stresses how much of a disparity there is between the two. There are approximately 160 thousand subterranean dwellings[55] in the west hemisphere, each with about 1500 citizens, whereas the Yance-men live alone in mansions that can extend for even 1.5 million acres[56]. Although in appearance this dichotomy creates a plutocratic system, *The Penultimate Truth* depicts a purely militaristic regime led by fear. The two political leaders, General Holt and Marshal Harenzany (respectively for the West-Dem and Pac-Peop), are only mentioned and never actually act and the one true political dictator is Stanton Brose, feared because of the vastly superior number of leadis he is able to command. This creates a condition where even the few Yance-man that may have developed a conscious and could want to help the people living underground, are swayed not to act out of fear of the repercussions. "No wonder they [Yance-men] all trembled. No wonder their nights were bad. They served – and knew it – a bad master (60)". The bad master refers to Brose and the bad nights may be indicative of the radiation as well as a sense of guilt they shared.

The sense of defeat that is depicted in *The Penultimate Truth* is polyvalent: the manipulation of the truth perpetuated by the Yance-men creates a class-based defeat and the fear and paranoia of the Yance-men themselves creates a sense of ubiquitous defeat where brute force becomes the only governing principle. Furthermore, towards the ending, when Joseph Adams (one of the Yance-men who wrote speeches) is given the opportunity to become part of the resistance against

[55] These dwellings, called ant tanks, create a suffocating absence of privacy given how people live: "He wished he could—at least for a minute—lock them all out. And just sit, in the loneliness and silence of the bathroom; just be" (25). The only place that remains for privacy for the ones living underground is the bathroom; and even there they are severely limited.

[56] With great irony, Dick writes how "every now and then a couple of Yance-men who're neighbours get into a beef over the property line, you know, where one's land ends and the next guy's starts" (99). In other words, territory disputes still exist even between the Yance-men who have so much land they do not even know what to do with it. This serves to underline the avidity and greed of a capitalistic system.

Brose, he ultimately decides to run away and hide underground with the others, waiting for things to change. The open-ended nature of the novel does however leave room for hope, implying that the coup against Brose has succeeded, but it is never actually confirmed; this is rendered through another one of the many messages sent through the computer by the virtual character of Talbot Yance. In this final message, it is reported that the war is finally over and that the humans will be able to go back to the surface, but the process will have to take time. In other words, by not giving concrete evidence, we are left once again with speculation, but it is one of the few times where the situation at the very least seems more hopeful than the other scenarios Dick creates.

In *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* we are faced once again with a form of oligarchy; it bears similarities to *Frolix 8* given that the ruling class is made out of precogs and humans with a superior intellect. In *Stigmata* however, the normal human beings (many of which are forced to work on planetary colonies) are able to find a type of solace by using a specific drug that induces the perception of an altered reality. In other words, drugs become their only way of coping with their current condition. It is also worth mentioning that the disparity between ruling and working class is further emphasized by wealth: any common man can become an elite, by accelerating the evolutionary process and gaining a superior intellect as long as they have the funds to pay for the operation[57]. Monetary capital becomes a focus for the society depicted in *Stigmata* as even precogs use their ability to see the future in order to understand what items can be sold and how to speculate on different trends (such as drugs for instance). This obsessive attention to the economic factors that dictate how society evolves and behaves has also been mentioned by Katherine Hayles while analysing Dick's mid-Sixties novels. In her words,

> The interpellation of the individual into market relations so thoroughly defines the characters of these novels that it is impossible to think of the characters apart from the economic institutions into which they are incorporated, from small family firms to transnational operations. […] Given this dynamic, it is no surprise that the struggle for freedom often expresses itself as an attempt to get "outside" this corporate encapsulation. (1999: 162)

[57] There are dedicated clinics that serve exactly this purpose.

Hayles's consideration, while useful for deciphering other Dikian novels, does not function in the same way in *Stigmata*. The only way to 'get outside' the corporate scheme becomes to enter a drug-induced fantasy, which in turn leads to other problems. Furthermore, the character of Eldritch Palmer, seen as a prophet by the working class, returns after an expedition only to bring a new and better drug and marketing it with the slogan "God promises eternal life; we deliver it". Whoever uses this new drug is mentally transported to Palmer's world where he is the only one capable of makes the rules. The users become, in a sense, imprisoned in this effectively-real fantasy. According to Hayles's interpretation,

> The eternity delivered here is precisely not the apotheosis of the liberal autonomous subject capable of free thought and action but is the subject as pawn in a capitalist's game, imprisoned for eons in a universe that a terrifying and menacing alien other has created to increase his profits. (1999: 170)

As such, the character of Eldritch Palmer is a juxtaposition to the possibility of taking action. The moment a person enters his reality, they automatically forfeit their freedom. In a novel where humans are able to evolve, even by using monetary means, Palmer represents a different stage entirely; he is a hybrid, having maintained some form of physicality, but also having implemented mechanical aids.[58]

Martian Time-Slip, on the other hand, presents several ecological themes that will be considered in the second half of the dissertation. What may be however important to mention is how the role of education changes based on society. The plot takes places on Mars where a colony has been established; Earth however develops a non-intervention policy, justifying it as a necessity for the colony to be self-sustainable.[59] The situation on Earth is however not ideal given that people are overeducated and finding work is considered very difficult. A social shift however occurs on Mars, given that there are very few machineries that were sent from Earth

[58] This fusion between man and machine will be an important topic analyzed in the second part of the dissertation.

[59] The truth of the matter is that Earth does not want to spend money for their existing colonies; the various governments (West Germany, China, Russia and the U.S.) would prefer to rather invest more capital in their space exploration programme to find other resources. "Instead of properly backing the development of the planets, they had turned their attention to further exploration. Their time and brains and money were all committed to the sidereal projects, such as that frigging flight to Centaurus, which had already wasted billions of dollars and man-hours." (15).

and they have to be maintained rigorously. People who have a specific practical know-how, such as mechanics, subsequently rise to power and become wealthy within this context.

Now Wait for Last Year uses many of the Dikian leitmotifs with an important exception: humanity finds itself in an oppressed condition because of an intergalactic war fought between two extra-terrestrial life forms. For this reason, several excerpts shall be considered more carefully in the second part of the dissertation that also deals with otherness. Other than that, given that it does not add much more to the thematic cores that have been analysed thus far and that the time travel episodes portrayed become heavily nuanced by paradoxes, the novel shall be mostly set aside.

Finally, in *The Simulacra* we are informed that after World War 3 the world has split into two overpowering social realities, on the one hand the Communist lands and on the other the USEA (with Germany becoming the 53rd state of the USA). The USEA in particular is divided between the ruling class (Ge class) and the common people (Be class) and is governed by Nicole Thibodeaux, a matriarch loved by everyone.[60] The USEA as such becomes a plutocratic militant state, governed on the basis of positive propaganda where citizens are encouraged to spy on one another and denounce any anti-governmental action. This dynamic is similar to what I have already analysed in *Our Friends from Frolix 8*, from the class system to the usage of citizens as spies and resulting paranoia. Ultimately, it is revealed that Nicole is the latest in a series of actresses who play the role of First Lady in order to maintain a façade while the Ges continue to rule over the general population. This manipulation of the masses is a constant in Philip K. Dick's works and indicates how little trust he had in politics and how he perceived a reality ruled by economic interests. This overwhelming control that higher political powers can have over the people in turn also creates the narratological element of defeat and impossibility of

[60] Her approval is largely due to a conditioning process that has manipulated the beliefs of the people. She has been in office for so long that no one remembers even her true age and simply consider her as an undying ruler. The truth has been kept secret to the working class, hidden by removing all the history books: "On TV she looks around twenty. But go to the history books . . . except of course they're banned to everyone except Ges. I mean the real history texts; not the ones they give you for studying for those relpol tests. Once you look it up you can figure it out for yourself. The facts are all there. Buried down somewhere" (117). The censorship of historical fact returns as an echoing theme and a way to maintain control over the general population.

action. Katherine Hayles recapitulates the main themes proposed in *The Simulacra* as follows:

> Thus the entire government is a fake, its real machinery hidden behind Nicole's beautiful face. The presidential simulacrum, far from being an anomaly, serves as a metaphor for the entire political process. Social classes are divided between the Ge (high status) and the Be (low status). […] Economic distinctions merge seamlessly with the kind of social structure that a paranoid schizophrenic might imagine when constructing a system that brings everything together into a monolithic system of explanation. (1999: 167-168)

The division that is portrayed in *The Simulacra* is, at its core, a social division that I have tried to highlight in almost every dickian novel I analysed thus far. Underlining the disparity between classes becomes almost a compulsive obsession for Philip K. Dick; by doing so he also stresses the misery of the human condition of the oppressed. Furthermore he also sheds light on the fact that there can exist classes who have been brainwashed through propaganda to such an extent that they do not even realized how much freedom has been taken away from them.

I would also add that the robotic simulacrum becomes an important set piece in *We Can Build You*. In this novel, the protagonists create a perfect replica of Abraham Lincoln; the model is so advance in fact that humans fail to realise he is an android. In the background, there is also a scheme to use these simulacra to gain wealth in various ways. As such, it is evident that the novel shares many common themes with both *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, as well as *The Simulacra*. There is one particular episode that does add something to what has been said thus far: Lincoln asks if he, as a machine, has any legal rights, but unfortunately he is left without an answer.[61] It is however the one of few interactions where the simulacra shows that he may poses an amount of ontological thinking and agency. Sadly, Philip K. Dick ends up not pursuing this particular theme and the novel takes a different direction, exploring the psychosis of the main character. In fact, the simulacra plot node is not even resolved; for this reason, not much more is left to add.

[61] There is certainly a connection between Lincoln's question and what I have said previously about Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*, and even more so, about Mamoru Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell*.

2.4 Final remarks

I started this chapter by explaining how, for a variety of factors, Dick's novels are difficult to interpret and analyse. By always bearing in mind a clear vision of the importance that doubt and uncertainty have in his texts, as well as how Dick uses them, this chapter traced several thematic nuclei in his production. Jameson once again summarises perfectly what reading Philip K. Dick feels like:

> 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. In general, the effect of these passages, in which the narrative line comes unstuck from its referent and begins to enjoy the bewildering autonomy of a kind of temporal Moebius strip, is to efface the boundary between real and hallucinatory altogether, and to discredit the reader's otherwise inevitable question as to which of the events witnessed is to be considered "true". (2005: 350)

I find the Moebius strip analogy being very effective when dealing with Philip K. Dick's writings; it reflects both cyclicality and well as endlessness, and these qualities may be very well applied to the struggles of his characters just as easily. I would also agree with the fact that the readers are the ones who constantly search for truth or certainty, but I would also add that the fictional characters have either abandoned this hope or, in some cases never even attempted to do so. Suvin argues that in Dick "truth lies in his plot or fabula"[62], which could be debatable. Howard Canaan elaborates on this and states that "the Ur-plot of a Dick story or novel consists of one or more characters' efforts to pierce the illusions foisted on them by an oppressive world, illusions generated to keep them in enslaved ignorance" (2008: 336). This remark might seem pungent, but it does depict that constant struggle and even inability to rebel or act on behalf of the characters that have been analysed throughout the chapter. The main factors that lead to this state on an individual level are the same ones that create power struggles on a social scale: wealth, politics and technology. This is the struggle that I identified with the condition of human defeat. In regards to this, Philip K. Dick's own words could clarify my choice:

[62] As argumented in *Goodbye and Hello: Differentiating Within the Later P.K. Dick* (2002: 369)

> And if my books all have a consistency it's because my ideas interlace and interact with each other. And I always try to find somebody who's the victim of the idea and somebody who is the master of the idea. So you have a bifurcated society always with the loser, you know, and the winner. Somebody's going to make it off the idea and somebody's going to be victimized by the idea. Suppose we use pretzels for money, as an example. And all the people who own bakeries would probably - instead of a president we'd have the chief baker. See what I mean, and then there's another guy who has a dietary deficiency. He's got to eat pretzels or he'll die.[63]

The interview goes on with the example, but this is epitomizes the way Dick thinks as a writer. This excerpt summarizes both his way of creating a story, as well as the importance he gives to power dynamics. Ironically, he only focuses on the losers and never writes stories about the winners; the 'winners' of his world tend to become the antagonists and the ones who can abuse their power. In a way, this reflects his cynic and pessimistic point of view.

Finally, I mentioned in the introduction that Philip K. Dick, given how he witnessed the advent of television, also had a certain fear of how its potential of communicating to masses could be used with ill-intent. This explains his ambivalent viewpoint of technology in general, both as enabling human beings of surpassing their limitations as well as condemning them if placed in the wrong hands. Through the various passages I highlighted from his novels, his stance becomes apparent. What also becomes self-evident is another fear he also had upon envisioning the future: censorship. The form of censorship I am referring to constitutes the other half of the coin of mass communication; it is the limitation of information by a superior power structure. Dick explores this theme by constructing worlds and futures where certain literary works have been banned. These may be fictitious books, as in the case of *The Man in the High Castle*, or real ones (i.e. *The Man Who Japed*, *The Simulacra* and *Vulcan's Hammer* all have scenes where books have been banned by the government). The censorship as well as the machinations on the historical truth, alongside the manipulation through mass media, the creation of elitarian groups through money and the self-serving ways in which they use the power they gain all point towards a pessimistic view of the future. Philip K. Dick creates a maze

[63] Excerpt taken from Hour 25 (H25), a radiophonic transmission that discussed science fiction between 1972 and 2000. In 1976, Mike Hodel - the host - invited Philip K. Dick for an hour-long interview on the status quo of science fiction. KPFK-FM, North Hollywood, California (June 26, 1976), Hour 25: *A Talk With Philip K. Dick* as transcribed and edited by Frank C. Bertrand.

for his characters and by giving them a pre-existing setting where reacting becomes impossible, limits their agency to a degree that depicts what could be called ‘the worst case scenario’. Changing the status quo may appear only in rare cases, either as an illusion or as an abysmal and remote possibility; by creating his dystopias in a similar fashion Dick warns us about the endless factors that could shape a worse future than the present we are living.

Table 2.1

Title (A-Z)	Written/ Published	Year of setting	Political structure and powers/factions in play
A Maze of Death	1968/1970	n/a	Set in a simulation / man vs. man in a virtual environment
A Scanner Darkly	1973/1977	1994	Economic divide / social hierarchies based purely on wealth – much power attributed to police forces
Do androids dream of electric sheep?	1966/1968	1992	Plutocracy/Police state: Rich part of society off world on colonized planets – Androids as servants, some of which have fled - Humans left on Earth who suffer
Dr. Bloodmoney	1963/1965	1972 (flashbacks) , then 1988	Fallout micro-societies: Fragmented primitive communities fighting amongst themselves
Dr. Futurity	1953/1960	Initially 2012, 2405 (time travel)	Tribal/Caste division: United Tribes – Individual tribes secretly trying to take over
Flow, my tears, the policeman said	1970/1974	1988	Plutocracy: Sixes (higher class comprised of genetically modified human beings) – Lower class
Martian Time-Slip	1964	1994	
Now Wait for Last Year	1963/1966	2055	United Terra that is under threat because of a space-war between Reegs and Starmen
Our Friends from Frolix 8	1969/1970	2135	Totalitarian Regime: New Men (superior intellect) and Unusual (precogs) – Regulars or Old-Men with UnderMen (rebels) – Frolixians that arrive at the end
The Man in the High Castle	1960/1962	1962	Militaristic regime: Japan and Reich divided the world amongst themselves since the Allies have lost the war
The Man Who Japed	1955/1956	2114	Totalitarian regime: Morec or Moral Reclamation Authority that rules over society

The Penultimate Truth	1953(short story)/1964	2025	Plutocracy and Totalitarian Regime: Yance-men (above ground) and normal humans (underground). WWIII fought between West-Dem and Pac-Peop
The Simulacra	1963/1964	2050 circa	Totalitarian regime: Communist lands / U.S.E.A .(America allied with Germany)
The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch	1964/1964	2016	Totalitarian regime: Precogs have power and rule over the other human beings
Ubik	1966/1969	1992	Precogs – Telepaths
Valis	1978/1981	1972-1978	Correlates more to drug usage and theology; deals less with politics
Vulcan's Hammer	1953/1960	2029	Technocratic regime: Supercomputer Vulcan III (Unity) – Dissidents and Healers (rebels) and a shattered government
We can Build You	1962 /1972	1982	Capitalistic system where the wealthy have power and influence

Table 2.2

Terminology	Found in	Meaning
3D Visrecorders (phonographs)	A Maze of Death	Device that is able to project movies on walls
Empathy box	Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?	Device used to merge/interact with Mercer
Kipple	Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?	Junk (both phisical and emotional) that accumulates and creates enthropy
Voigt-Kampff Test	Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?	Empathy based test to establish if an individual is a human or an android
Skyflys or Flipflaps	Flow, My Tears, the Policeman Said	Flying vehicles
V-letters	Flow, My Tears, the Policeman Said	Presumably virtual letters
Artiforg	Now wait for last year	Artificial organs used for medical reasons
Brainbasher	Now wait for last year	Psychoanalist
Squibs	Our Friends from Frolix 8	Flying vehicles
V-fones	Our Friends from Frolix 8	Virtual or video phones that let one see the speaker
Neutrologics	Our Friends from Frolix 8	Cognitive functions of a higher order - superiori intelligence
Getabouts	The Man Who Japed	Autonomous(???) cars - possibly flying
Freud units	The Three Stigmata of Eldritch Palmer	A unit of measure to measure stress
Ident-Pape	The Three Stigmata of Eldritch Palmer	Identification papers
Kresy's Gland	The Three Stigmata of Eldritch Palmer	Gland that controls the human evolution speed
Beuty aid	Ubik	Visual filter that changes one's appearence while talking on the vidscreen
Conapt	Ubik and The Penultimate Truth	Appartment complex similar to a condominium

Half-life	Ubik	A state of stasis between life and death - it is possible to interact with the deceased by the use of a machine
Ganymedian [plus noun]	Various books	Anything deriving from Ganymede (reffered to more like a planet than the actual asteroid it is)
Homeopape	Various books	Newspaper that filters news and only shows what the reader is interested in
Vidscreens and vidphones	Various books	Virtual or video phones that let one see the speaker
Simulacra/Artificial Constructs/Automatons	Various books	Usually an android or a robot that is phisically similar to human beings
Precog	Various books	People with telepatic capabilities
Ersatz	Various books	Surrogate or substitute
Plasma pistol	Vulcan's Hammer	Gun that boils the spinal fluid of the person shot
Flapples	The Penultimate Truth	Flying vehicles
Leadies	The Penultimate Truth	Robots, initially used as war machines, and then as personal guards, servants and laborours to the Yance-men
Rhetorizor	The Penultimate Truth	A machine capable of writing speeches based on words it is given
Ant Tanks	The Penultimate Truth	Undeground sealed housings where most of the population has been hidden during World War III
Demesnes	The Penultimate Truth	Immense villas built on the ruins of the world post World War III where the Yence-men reside
Poscreds	Various books	Generic term for currency

3. Ayn Rand, the defeat of the collective

Alisa Zinovyevna Rosenbaum, naturalised as Alice O'Conner and better know by her pen name, Ayn Rand, out of the three writers I chose to analyse is probably the most extraneous to the science fictional aspects I am considering. As it shall be explained, however, the themes of her fictional works and even more so of her philosophical treaties have a way of intertwining with the ones touched by Philip K. Dick and Frank Herbert. In her writings, she was concerned with the figure of the human being as an individual and his role within society; furthermore, the speculative *topos* of envisioning distant futures is less of an issue for her given her concern with the present and the more imminent future. Most of her works are thus grounded in more realistic settings, as it is the case for *Atlas Shrugged* (1957). Given that it is one of her most famous novels, it depicts a scenario similar to a dystopia (or at the very least the crumbling of a utopia) and reflects her personal philosophy in a metaliterary fashion, I will use it extensively through the course of my analysis. The other literary text that has been chosen, the only one to portray a speculative science fiction setting, is *Anthem* (1938), as it will be subsequently discussed more in depth.

Ayn Rand was born in a bourgeois family in Saint Petersburg; because of the October Revolution and the political climate in Russia, she immigrated to America in 1926, while she was still in her early twenties. She always had a passion for writing and eventually became a screenwriter, first in New York, and then moving to Hollywood. During the first years of her career, she wrote various screenplays and short stories that were published only later on in her career; Rand's first successful literary accomplishments came when she sold the screenplay for *Red Pawn*[64] (1932) and with her first published novel, *We the Living* (1936). It was only several years later, that she was able to assert herself as a thought-provoking and acclaimed writer with the publication of *The Fountainhead* (1943).

To give a more poetical yet functional description of Ayn Rand's more mature novels, Leonard Peikoff states in one of his many introductions to her works:

[64] Although it has never been adapted to film, the rights belong to Paramount Pictures.

> They [*The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged*] portray an uplifted vision of man, in the form of protagonists characterized by strength, purposefulness, integrity—heroes who are not only idealists, but happy idealists, self-confident, serene, at home on earth. The books are written in a highly calculated literary style intent on achieving precision and luminous clarity, yet that style is at the same time brilliantly colorful, sensuously evocative, and passionate. (*The Early Ayn Rand, A Selection from Her Unpublished Fiction,* 1984: vii)

The highly calculated literal style inferred here is an emphasis on the narrative techniques employed by Ayn Rand. Although she explained her philosophy mainly through essays, Rand also applied parts of her mind-set in her literary works, two of them in particular which spanning for a little over one thousand pages[65]. Although it may be argued that quantity does not always equate to quality, in Rand's case it is easy to see how she does not rush the action of her plot to enable her characters to grow and show the readers why they think and act the way they do. By giving proper pacing to the narration and methodically building up the protagonists and crafting the world and events that surround them, she also succeeds in interpolating complex philosophical ideas.

A further note is due on Leonard Peikoff, given that several of his introductions and quotations will be used: he was initially a medical student, but after falling in love with Rand's philosophy, he began to follow her career and even give lectures on her writings. They eventually even met personally, eventually even developing a long lasting friendship; as such, his works will provide valuable insight to understand Rand's philosophical points of view. While Peikoff is one of biographers that shall be used in my dissertation, I will also indicate the work of Jennifer Burns, *Goddess of the Market Ayn Rand and the American Right* (2009), as another important source of information although developing a much more keen focus on Rand as a political philosopher.

As previously mentioned, the literary texts that will be used for this chapter are *Anthem* and *Atlas Shrugged*. The first because it presents a dystopian setting much closer to the science fiction literature that Philip K. Dick and Frank Herbert present; not only does it anticipate several Orwellian dystopian themes[66], but it also functions as a good connective point amongst the authors I am discussing. *Atlas*

[65] Both *Atlas Shrugged,* as well as *The Fountainhead,* are novels of considerable length.
[66] *Anthem*, originally published in 1938, predates by almost a decade Orwell's *1984*. The dystopian society it depicts portrays many affinities with Orwell's concerns and setting, such a totalitarian society, the annihilation of an individual identity, censorship and propaganda.

Shrugged, on the other hand, is much more grounded in realism (as most of her literary works) but leaves an open ending that leads towards the beginning of a dystopia. As it shall be explained, rather than the crushing fear and exhausting paranoia that Philip K. Dick perceived for a future ruled by capitalistic conglomerates, Rand's approach to the subject matter is different. In some sense, she perceives the potential in capitalism; she saw hope for prosperity but also confined it within the sensibility and attitude of human beings. As such, she did not see an inherent evil in a capitalistic society but rather the potential for it in human beings. Instead of condemning humanity from the start or from the premise and world building itself, like Philip K. Dick does, she suspends the future and places it on the shoulders of the human being. In the very introduction of *The Romantic Manifesto, A philosophy of Literature*, she states "Will we see an aesthetic Renaissance in our time? I do not know. What I do know is this: anyone who fights for the future, lives in it today" (1975: viii). In her philosophy, there is a much more hopeful and positivistic view for the future, but instead of concentrating on futurity, she believes it is more important to understand and shape the human attitude starting from the present.

A last note on an important distinction between Ayn Rand and Philip K. Dick is reliability. If on the one hand Dick uses his characters as unreliable narrators, characterized by a fragmented style and a continuous doubt of what truly constitutes reality in order to create uncertainty in the reader, Rand could be considered a polar opposite. Most of her novels have a realistic approach except for minor details (such as the open ending mentioned for *Atlas Shrugged*) and it may be even argued that she is first and foremost an essayist and then a novelist. In fact, I would stress that she used her literary creations as a receptacle for her ideas that then could be better conveyed to others. For this reason, other than the two aforementioned books, the other source material that will be quintessential for my analysis will come directly from Rand's own words as a critical thinker: *The Romantic Manifesto* (1969)*, For the New Intellectual – The Philosophy of Ayn Rand* (1961), *The Virtue of Selfishness - A new Concept of Egoism* (1964) and *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal* (1966).

Before following through with the textual analysis, let me try to outline Rand's personal beliefs as a writer. In her *Romantic Manifesto*, she emphasizes how she concentrates on stories that constitute experiences worth living and characters that one would have pleasure to meet in life. In her own words, "the motive and purpose

of my writing is the projection of an ideal man. The portrayal of a moral ideal, as my ultimate literary goal, as an end in itself — to which any didactic, intellectual or philosophical values contained in a novel are only the means" (1975: 162). She underlines that her writings are not meant for the reader's intellectual development or their philosophical enlightenment – these become just secondary derivatives. In other words, she is not concerned with the didactic purpose of literature, although is aware of it; Ayn Rand is rather more interested in the portrayal of values through the actions of men. "Neither politics nor ethics nor philosophy are ends in themselves, neither in life nor in literature. Only Man is an end in himself" (1975: 164).

To explain an important part of her mentality, as well as her perception of her own work, I would like to quote a lengthier passage which she wrote as an introduction for the 25th anniversary edition of *The Fountainhead:*

> Certain writers, of whom I am one, do not live, think or write on the range of the moment. Novels, in the proper sense of the word, are not written to vanish in a month or a year. That most of them do, today, that they are written and published as if they were magazines, to fade as rapidly, is one of the sorriest aspects of today's literature, and one of the clearest indictments of its dominant esthetic philosophy: concrete-bound, journalistic Naturalism which has now reached its dead end in the inarticulate sounds of panic.
> Longevity – predominantly, though not exclusively – is the prerogative of a literary school which is virtually non-existent today: Romanticism. This is not the place for a dissertation on the nature of Romantic fiction, so let me state – for the record and for the benefit of those college students who have never been allowed to discover it – only that Romanticism is the *conceptual* school of art. It deals, not with the random trivia of the day, but with timeless, fundamental, universal problems and *values* of human existence. It does not record or photograph; it creates and projects. It is concerned – in the words of Aristotle – not with things as they are, but with things as they might be and ought to be. (1993: v)

It is possible to note in her words a somewhat decadent tone for a literary period that she perceives as non-existent; for this very same reason her fiction strives to reassess several of the principles that governed Romanticism by reinterpreting them in her own way. If for Philip Dick there were no heroics, for Ayn Rand that is one of the main concerns. Many of her protagonists stand out for the nobility of their intentions; either by rigorously following a moral code of their own, or through the solemnity of their actions, the intention is to depict a certain type of

righteousness within them. The fiction she carefully constructs[67] aims to have a timeless quality or, at the very least, deal with what she refers to as timeless values; she does not pretend to know whether her work will be regarded as such by her readers, but her intent is clear. Similar to Romanticism, she explores several themes with through a new point of view, focusing on the emotion of the characters, especially their own individuality and sense of self, as well as emphasizing the aesthetic beauty[68] of what she describes.

3.1 *Anthem*, an example of defeat through social indoctrination

Anthem is a novella and one of Rand's shortest works, if we exclude her theatrical writings. Having been written in 1937 and published within the following year, it preannounced the themes that would be depicted more extensively in Orwell's *1984* a little over a decade later. These themes include the portrayal of a dystopian and brainwashed society where there is only an illusion of freedom and the means by which censorship is incorporated in the social fabric of the people. The comparison between Rand's novella and *1984* is also mentioned by Leonard Peikoff:

> Orwell regards freedom as a luxury; he believes that one can wipe out every vestige of free thought, yet still maintain an industrial civilization. Whose mind is maintaining it? Blank out. Anthem, by contrast, shows us "social cogs" who have retrogressed, both spiritually and materially, to the condition of primitives. When men lose the freedom to think, Ayn Rand understands, they lose the products of thought as well. (1993: 362)

[67] As we have mentioned previously through Peikoff's words as well – a 'highly calculated literary style' – Rand is keen on her work as a novelist and the importance of her words. To further give an example of this feat and solidify her diligence, further on in the introduction of *The Fountainhead* she mentions how one particular word in a central part of the main characters speech should have been 'egoist' and not 'egotist' – this oversight was mainly due to a misleading definition of a particular dictionary. This minute attention to detail is a testament to her thorough modus operandi.

[68] Her prose is rich with symbolic imagery, especially when talking about nature, as it will be elaborated further on.

I would not necessarily agree with this interpretation and think that it is still possible to justify a complete or partial surrender of rights by the people even while maintaining a heavily industrialized civilization. In fact, in many of Philip K. Dick's novels, societies still have access to an advanced form of technology, but in many cases, the basic human rights have been conditioned to the extent of even being surrendered or nullified. The main difference is that Dick achieves this status quo by creating plutocracies or militaristic regimes that oppress the citizens almost to an unbelievable degree. The manipulations that occurred in his novels have the role of replacing the concept of social truth and, in some cases, even the historical truth that had been lived by the characters and should have been indisputable. In *Anthem* there is a similar process of manipulation of historical truth, although it is represented in its advanced stage where the conditioning process has already been completed. The individualistic aspect of the people has been removed to give space to the collective; in this context, everything must be done in a group, and even the simple act of being alone is considered a criminal offense[69].

Regardless, Rand's novella was first conceived as a play during her early 20's with the title *Ego*, as in the Latin *egos*, but not only in the declination of the canonical 'I', but a more ample 'man's self'. As Leonard Peikoff notes in the introduction to the very same novella, "man's self, Ayn Rand held, is his mind or conceptual faculty, the faculty of reason. All man's spiritually distinctive attributes derive from this faculty. […] And it is reason which possesses volition, the ability to make choices" (1995: v). From this very statement follows the importance given to personal identity, as in self-awareness and the conscious decision of discerning one's self from the rest of society. For this very reason, Ayn Rand puts emphasis from the very beginning on the distinguishing world building element in *Anthem*: the main character addresses himself as 'we'.

> Our name is Equality 7-2521, as it is written on the iron bracelet which all men wear on their left wrists with their names upon it. We are twenty-one years old. We are six feet tall, and this is a burden, for there are not many men who are six feet tall. (*Anthem*, 18)

[69] The novella opens up with the protagonist writing about how he has broken the law and committed a sin, given how he is writing his story (which is forbidden). He then says that he is also, which is equally prohibited: "The laws say that none among men may be alone, ever and at any time, for this is the great transgression and root of all evil" (17).

This is the style in which the first part of the book; having the protagonist speak in first person plural to describe only himself marks the radical shift from individual to collective. As previously mentioned, any form of self and identity are banished, even within the most basic oral form. In the dystopian society that takes form, the masses are controlled with the specific purpose of conforming to a predisposed standard. Furthermore, the language used by the citizens of this collective is quasi-biblical or at the very least religious[70], indicating an even further degree of extremization. This changes only towards the very end of the novella where the newly discovered sense of identity implies the self-awareness and detachment from the collective.

Anthem's story is written in a diary-like fashion, akin to a memoir. The main character, Equality 7-2521[71], is writing about his experiences and how he does not fit into society; the act of writing itself constitutes a crime, and this is just one of the many of Equality's transgressions that will lead him further away from society and towards understanding his own self-identity. The plot takes place in an unspecified future, after a 'great rebirth', in which society has regressed to a medieval-like stage and even basic fragments of knowledge have either been lost or invalidated[72]. In this scenario, not only is it forbidden to talk about the time that preceded the great rebirth, but it is also considered forbidden to want something more in life and to be better than the others – not conforming to what is deemed common becomes a sin. At its core, although arguably not perceived by the other characters except for Equality, this is an oppressive form of government, that uses censorship and taboos to manipulate the behaviour of its citizens. Even friendship itself becomes a transgression as it implies favouring one over the other and the governing principle is a selfless dedication to the collective: "that which is not done collectively cannot be good" (73). Individuality is demonized whenever possible in the dystopian world created in *Anthem*. As previously mentioned, this is also achieved through a semi-religious structure; even the prayer said by children before going to bed recites "We

[70] 'Crimes' are referred to as 'sins' for instance and even seemingly minor infringements entail drastic corrective punishments: "We stole the candle from the larder of the Home of the Street Sweepers. We shall be sentenced to ten years in the Palace of Corrective Detention if it be discovered." (18)

[71] The names are meant as an ironic take on what society has become: although they represent virtues (Equality 7-2521, Union 5-3992, Liberty 5-3000, etc.) they are also followed by a number representing just a mere cog in a mechanical society where identity has been invalidated.

[72] "We learned that the earth is flat and that the sun revolves around it, which causes the day and the night. […] We learned how to bleed men to cure them of all ailments" (23). These, alongside other minor nuances point to a regressed society.

are nothing. Mankind is all. By the grace of our brothers are we allowed our lives. We exist through, by and for our brothers who are the State. Amen." (21)

Society is organized in a hierarchical caste-like fashion: except for the city-state-world council classification, there is also the Council of Vocation that decides on the fate of the citizens, in other words what specific work they will do for the rest of their lives, voiding the possibility of making a choice for oneself. From birth, children[73] are placed in the House of infants until the age of five, then they are sent to the House of Students where they are instilled with the specific behaviour and knowledge the dystopian society deems important. Through the Council of Vocation, the children are then given a job and finally, the few who manage to live past the age of forty are sent to the House of the Useless. The system represented in these passages is one that limits freedom so much that any form of insurgence becomes an impossibility; people are forced into such a way of living that they do not even realize the notion of a rebellion or of going against the system for it is the only way of living they know.[74]

It is in this context that the main character, ironically named Equality, grows and feels he does not fit in. He understands he is different, although initially perceiving it as a 'curse':

> We, Equality 7-2521, were not happy in those years in the Home of the Students. It was not that the learning was too hard for us. It was that the learning was too easy. This is a great sin, to be born with a head which is too quick. It is not good to be different from our brothers, but it is evil to be superior to them. The Teachers told us so, and they frowned when they looked upon us […].
> We looked upon Union 5-3992, who were a pale boy with only half a brain, and we tried to say and do as they did, that we might be like them, like Union 5-3992, but somehow the Teachers knew that we were not. And we were lashed more often than all the other children (21-22)

Equality's diversity is punished and reprimanded; this is clearly indicative of the forced conformism that the depicted society is based on. There is no alternative to what is the social norm and Equality understands the behavioural patterns he

[73] Given the absence of individuality and the taboo of creating bonds with others, it follows that also there is no conceptualization of parenthood: "Children are born each winter, but women never see their children and children never know their parents" (41).
[74] A conceptual link might be also established with Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, published in 1932 - just five years prior to *Anthem*. George Orwell would later on, to an extent, also exemplify similar themes.

sees; he even goes as far as trying to fake his own attitudes and conduct in order to adapt or, at the very least, not to get punished. The 'curse' he perceives to have is not as much related to his intelligence, but rather it is correlated to his inquisitive spirit. Because he wants to learn more about the world, he also hopes to be select for the House of Students, a job that would permit him to act upon his curiosity. Once again, the protagonist suffers a defeat perpetuated by the caste system that is in place: given that he is unable to choose his own path and that the Council of Vocation does not function based on meritocracy or aptitude, Equality is sentenced to be a street sweeper.

It is however by doing his job as a cleaner that he discovers a secluded place which he calls simply a hole, similar more to a cave, that as readers we will later understand is in fact an abandoned train station. This becomes an important place for Equality, not only because it is a safe space in which he may find solace, but also because it becomes his new laboratory. Although he is committing a grave transgression[75] against what has been made law by the dystopian society of *Anthem*, he still wants to be part of it. He convinces himself that if he is able to prove himself as a student to the Council of Scholars, they will give him an opportunity; Equality still hopes for what we would call a meritocratic system. It is only in that hole that he is able to feel alive; it is a first sign of the protagonist gaining part of an individuality he has never known.

> Yet as we stand at night in the great hall, removing our garments for sleep, we look upon our brothers and we wonder. The heads of our brothers are bowed. The eyes of our brothers are dull, and never do they look one another in the eyes. The shoulders of our brothers are hunched, and their muscles are drawn, as if their bodies were shrinking and wished to shrink out of sight. And a word steals into our mind, as we look upon our brothers, and that word is fear. (46)

In this passage Equality notices the effects of the society he is living in; it is only through a process of comparison that this realization comes to him. By having experienced a small portion of freedom and by being able to think for himself and not through the words he has always been told to think, he also realizes the draining effect that a submissive attitude has on others. There is no zeal or happiness in his

[75] Equality justifies his presence in that place through a caveat, a loophole of sorts that enables him to keep part of his freedom: "Since the Council does not know of this hole, there can be no law permitting to enter it. And everything which is not permitted by law is forbidden" (31).

‘brothers’ – the other citizens – because they were never taught to think of such things. It is not even a sign of resignation on their part because that would imply that they know and understand what they are renouncing in the first place; the people depicted in *Anthem* do not know any other life than the one they have always lived and as such they seem more and more like lifeless husks to Equality.

It is in the abandoned train station that the protagonist studies the remnants of the civilization that had existed before his; it is here that he eventually also discovers electricity[76]. He is determined as such to present his findings to the Council of Scholars. In a predictable turn of events, Equality is incriminated by the scholars; he flees away, almost being hunted down by his brothers, not understanding why the Council of Scholars did not want to understand the importance of his findings. As Burns points out, “integrating technology, discovery, and invention into her [Rand’s] story broadened her reach and made the book a relevant commentary on the potentially destructive nature of state control” (2009: 50). In other words, any form of technology that could lead to an advancement or improvement for the people could also lead them to a better understanding of their circumstances; state control is enacted in this case by a complete rejection of any form of such technology. This is a severe form of censorship, a policy of maintaining the status quo as is because it is in that state, by destroying any will or possibility to fight or even think to fight, that people are the easiest to control.

Regardless, after having escaped the old society and finding himself in the forest, exhausted, he faints. Upon waking up there is a new moment of realization, an epiphany of sorts that sees the chains of the collective being broken:

> We awoke when a ray of sunlight fell across our face. We wanted to leap to our feet, as we have had to leap every morning of our life, but we remembered suddenly that no bell had rung and that there was no bell to ring anywhere[…]. We thought suddenly that we could lie thus as long as we wished, and we laughed aloud at the thought. (78)

[76] “The Council of Scholars has said that we all know the things which exist and therefore the things which are not known by all do not exist. But we think that the Council of Scholars is blind. The secrets of this earth are not for all men to see, but only for those who will seek them. We know, for we have found a secret unknown to all our brothers.” (52) Equality develops an understanding of the blindness of the ruling class; the obvious problem however is that the society presented in Anthem will not admit any new invention, especially not one deriving from the civilization that existed before the great rebirth.

This is an initial taste of what freedom means; Equality's awareness comes from a rupture in his previous daily and obligatory routine. He does not need to follow the tedious and almost Sisyphean chores that were previously imposed onto him. His reaction is a moment of unadulterated joy expressed through laughter. Furthermore, when he escapes he is also followed by Liberty 5-300, a farmer girl that he called Golden One partially because of her hair and partially because of what he felt for her. Unfortunately, Liberty is more of a one-dimensional character; the love interest between her and the protagonist develops in just a few minor interactions, mostly based on them staring at each other and several conversations. Upon being asked how she managed to find him in the forest, she replies:

> We heard that you had gone to the Uncharted Forest, for the whole City is speaking of it. So on the night of the day when we heard it, we ran away from the Home of the Peasants. We found the marks of your feet across the plain where no men walk. So we followed them, and we went into the forest, and we followed the path where the branches were broken by your body. (82)

Although the novella focuses on Equality and his story, it is equally important to underline that Liberty managed to detach herself from the rigorous social norms seen thus far. It is never fully explored if she was pushed by curiosity or pure love, and that is why I would argue that Liberty's character is more limited and one-dimensional. Regardless, Equality, with the new sense of freedom, also wants to express his feelings, but ultimately is unsuccessful: "We are one... alone... and only... and we love you who are one... alone... and only. […] And we felt torn, torn for some word we could not find" (87). This is the moment in which the inadequacy of their vocabulary becomes apparent: 'we' is insufficient to express love. The collective, the 'we' in this case, is juxtaposed with the need for individuality in expressing intimacy. Equality and Liberty, although they are experiencing freedom and a form of individualism, have not yet completed their transition. The dividing linguistic factor, the knowledge of the word 'I' to express oneself marks the complete maturation of their newfound self-awareness:

> It was when I read the first of the books I found in my house that I saw the word "I." And when I understood this word, the book fell from my hands, and I wept, I who had never known tears. I wept in deliverance and in pity for all mankind. (98)

The protagonist learns about said word through the books found in an abandoned house where he and Liberty start to live. The word 'I' becomes an epiphany as well as a statement of the self: "I am. I THINK. I WILL" (94). This realization brings the protagonist to tears, but they are not tears of joy; unlike the episode in the forest where laughter is key to his newfound freedom, this scene is pervaded by the sadness for what has been taken away from human beings. Equality thinks of his peers, the other citizens that are still living in the city and do not even realize what the word 'I' is or what it means. By creating this clear distinction between individuality and collective identity, Rand emphasizes how much the two concepts clash with one another[77].

He ultimately adopts the name Prometheus, being a mythological symbol for opposing the will of superior powers, in this case those of an oppressive tyrannical society. His story however ends on what might seem a sombre note; by promising to erect a fort and wage war against the Council to free the men, Equality-Prometheus wants for the others to be able to see what freedom is and judge for themselves. Above the doors of the fort, he will carve the one true word that has meaning and glory: Ego.

> For the coming of that day shall I fight, I and my sons and my chosen friends. For the freedom of Man. For his rights. For his life. For his honor.
> And here, over the portals of my fort, I shall cut in the stone the word which is to be my beacon and my banner. The word which will not die, should we all perish in battle. The word which can never die on this earth, for it is the heart of it and the meaning and the glory.
> The sacred word: EGO (104-105)

I would argue that what might seem a 'happy ending', or a positive one, one that implies the possibility of a better future, the story of Equality is also one that will inevitably lead to bloodshed. He promises a revolution, and that is partially what Rand wanted to express, the necessity of fighting against an oppressive force, specifically a ruling state or dictatorship. The theme of defeat in this case remains with the people that still live in the city, under the rulings of the different Councils.

[77] "My happiness is not the means to any end. It is the end. It is its own goal. It is its own purpose. […] Neither am I the means to any end others may wish to accomplish. I am not a tool for their use. I am not a servant of their needs. I am not a bandage for their wounds. I am not a sacrifice on their altars (95)". The words uttered by Equality represent a clear dissociation with the society that has oppressed his freedom.

Their defeat is complete and unconditional; as previously stated, for them, not even the option to fight exists as they do not know life can be lived differently. In *Anthem*, the dichotomy between oppressors and oppressed is radicalized to the extent where the oppressed are entirely unaware of their condition.

On a final note, it should however be mentioned that the premise for *Anthem* was not completely original, especially when considering the critique of an essentially communist approach to society. In Burn's words, "many of Anthem's basic elements mirror those of the story and another famous science fiction work, Evgeny Zamyatin's *We* (1924)[78], a novel that circulated *samizdat* in Russia when Rand lived there" (2009 :50). Zamyatin's work however has a much more science-fictional approach given how the society depicted is governed by a coldly rigorous logic. One of the similarities with Rand's *Anthem* relies on how the citizens have lost their sense of identity and their name is functionally replaced only by a number. While there are also biblical references, Zamyatin's *We* is essentially a book against the growing dogmatic form that the Soviet government was taking at the time.

3.2 *Atlas Shrugged*, an example of defeat through human capital flight

Atlas Shrugged, is possibly Rand's most ambitious and controversial novel. It was published in 1957, more than a decade after *The Fountainhead* (1943), when Ayn Rand was already at the peak of her career. If *Anthem* came out during the economic downturn of the Great Depression, *Atlas Shrugged*, on the other hand, came out at the beginning of the Cold War and during the McCarthyist period, where anti-Soviet propaganda was fairly common.

The novel itself is ultimately a depiction of Rand's ethical and philosophical principles; by weaving her ideas in the creation of the novel's story and characters, she also created a representation of what for her is the ideal human being and his interaction with an exceedingly capitalistic society. By analysing the reviews of the

[78] 1924 refers to the English publication date; the novel was written between 1919 and 1921, but its publication was banned by the communist censorship.

time, Michael Berliner explains how come *Atlas Shrugged* was poorly received by both American political parties: “the Left was appalled by its blatant pro-capitalism; the religious Right rebelled against its rejection of religion. Most reviewers were dismayed by its immoderation, that is, its absolutism, and horrified by its opposition to altruism” (2009: 134). It might be important to also mention that the original working title for the novel was ‘The Strike’, indicating the core plot point that is explained throughout the more than a thousand pages of the book. This strike is one perpetrated by the so called minds of the modern society, the genius people that pioneer new technologies and make it possible for civilization to progress. In Rand’s own words, “the theme of *Atlas Shrugged* is the role of the mind in man's existence. The plot-theme is the men of the mind going on strike against an altruist-collectivist society” (*The Romantic Manifesto,* 1975: 85). Once again it is possible to note the importance she attributed to the self and her process of demonizing an utterly collectivist civilisation.

It might also be useful to underline that her characters, although evolve with the novel and have a certain depth, in broad terms fall under two categories: they are either positive or negative. “Ayn Rand’s villains, as well as her heroes, offer a colorful and enlightening cast of philosophical players. Fundamentally, *Atlas Shrugged* shows that either a man is for the mind or he is against it. Therefore, every major character in the story—and many of the minor ones—is a specific variation on this theme” (Bernstein, 2009: 182). This is to say that there is not much room to explore the nuances between good and evil and, as previously hinted by Rand’s words herself, it is not a theme she is interested in. She focuses on the depiction of what she thinks is ideal and to be idealized; I would argue that by avoiding to create a moral nuance she wanted to emphasize the distinct characteristics of the protagonists she wanted to portray. Her critique was vehement regardless of how plain her characters might have seemed. As Jennifer Burns notes,

> Rand’s romantic fiction, with its heavy political messages and overdrawn contrasts between good and evil, was hopelessly out of fashion as a vehicle for serious ideas. *Atlas Shrugged* was a throwback to Socialist realism, with its cardboard characters in the service of an overarching ideology.
> […]
> With her focus on the mind, Rand blamed contemporary intellectuals for every evil in the world, particularly the expanding welfare state. It was true that many prominent

> intellectuals had supported Communism and socialism, but Rand went far beyond standard conservative rhetoric about traitorous eggheads. (2009: 178-179)

This in part explains why the novel was not received with positive reviews[79] as previously mentioned. Ayn Rand made her antagonizing position clear in any occasion she had the chance and *Atlas Shrugged* represented the literary apotheosis of her ideas.

Before starting the analysis of several of the important passages of *Atlas Shrugged* that also depict Rand's philosophy, it will prove useful to summarize in minimum terms the main plot points. Given how in more than one thousand pages, many other events happen, I will take into account only the more important ones. The story takes places in a dystopian United States that is going through an economic depression, timeframe unspecified[80], and the very first line asks "Who is John Galt?"[81]. A first striking coupling of characters are Dagny and Jim Taggart, sister and brother that manage the Taggart Transcontinental Railroad; while Jim, the president of the company, makes reckless decisions and risky investments, Dagny is the level-headed one that does her best to keep the company afloat and striving for growth. Dagny is an important character throughout the novel, not only given that she is the acting vice-president of the Railroad company, but because of her interactions with the other heroic characters. She is distraught because of how

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[79] As Jennifer Burns notes, "Rand was a favorite target of prominent writers and critics on both the left and the right, drawing fi re from Sidney Hook, Whittaker Chambers, Susan Brownmiller, and William F. Buckley Jr" (2009: 1).
In particular, Whittaker Chambers' article *Big Sister is Watching You*, published in the 1957 *National Review* issue of December 28, critiques as follows: "The news about this book [*Atlas Shrugged*] seems to me to be that any ordinarily sensible head could possibly take it seriously, and that, apparently, a good many do. Somebody has called it: 'Excruciatingly awful'. I find it a remarkably silly book. It is certainly a bumptious one. Its story is preposterous. It reports the final stages of a final conflict (locale: chiefly the United States, some indefinite years hence) between the harried ranks of free enterprise and the 'looters'. These are proponents of proscriptive taxes, government ownership, Labor, etc. etc. The mischief here is that the author, dodging into fiction, nevertheless counts on your reading it as political reality".

[80] As Edward Younkins aptly summarizes: "The story may be described as simultaneously anachronistic and timeless. The pattern of industrial organization appears to be that of the late 1800s, with large capital-intensive corporations being run and owned by individual entrepreneurs. The mood seems to be close to that of the depression-era 1930s. Both the social customs and level of technical knowledge remind one of the 1950s. The level of government interference and political corruption is similar to that of the 1970s." (*Ayn Rand's Atlas Shrugged A Philosophical and Literary Companion,* 2007: 10)

[81] Throughout the novel this idiomatic expression will be repeated, almost as an echo, signifying not to ask questions that have no answers; it is a laissez faire attitude that implies a certain futility to deal with problems that have no apparent solution. As it will be later explained, John Galt is however one of the main characters of *Atlas Shrugged*, an embodiment of qualities Rand idolizes.

others do not take risk factors in account for their business approach: for example, Francisco d'Anconia (childhood friend, first lover and billionaire) heavy invests in copper mines in Mexico – these could be easily nationalized by the country implying a heavy loss for Francisco. Jim Taggart also ignores her advice by using unreliable steel for the company, investing in a regional line and ultimately disregarding the Rio Norte Line in Colorado (important for an oil reserve discovered nearby).

Meanwhile, the attention shifts on Hank Rearden, another important character not only as a self-made man and metallurgy tycoon, but as an inventor who designs and patents a new type of steel, better than any other in circulation which he calls Rearden Metal. Dagny decides to use it for the Rio Norte Line and becomes Rearden's first major buyer. A government research foundation asks to buy some of this new alloy to study it; when Hank Rearden refuses (given that he wants to have monopoly over his own creation), the State Science Institute publishes a paper condemning it without giving precise explanations. This results in a boycott of the Rio Norte Line and in Dagny deciding to construct the line as an independent company (naming it the John Galt Line) in order to protect Taggart Transcontinental. Hank Rearden (unhappy with his marriage) and Dagny eventually become lovers given their situation and akin way of thinking, especially in regards to their business mentality. In the background, various business leaders are quitting and disappearing, resulting in entire industries moving towards failure; Hank is also experiencing economic difficulties because of this, as well as due to the fact that Wesley Mouch, a former Rearden lobbyist, betrays him and starts leading a government agency against him. The government, on their part, tries to limit the backlash of systematic business failure by not allowing the citizens to abandon their jobs and also nationalizing all patents.

Through a series of coincidences, not only do we discover that John Galt is real[82], but also that he is the one leading the strike and thus explaining the organized disappearance of the intelligent people from the country. Because of a convenient plane crash, Dagny finds him alongside most of the men on strike in Galt's Gulch, a secluded valley. While recovering, Dagny is illustrated the motives behind the strike, the main one being - in simple words - the flaws of the collective society mentioned

[82] Unveiled by scientist Quentin Daniels who was hired by Dagny and Hank to research a particular advance engine they had found which was made by Galt himself.

earlier. The masses and the political system in place are seen as a hindrance to freedom and an impediment to true progress. Furthermore we discover that Francisco D'Anconia is one of the strikers (hence why he was purposefully leading to ruins his own empire), amongst many other important people. John Galt asks Dagny to join the strikers; although she falls in love with him, she is unable to leave her company and returns to society only to find that it devolved into a dictatorship. Meanwhile, Hank Rearden is also convinced by Francisco to take part in the strike. Finally, John Galt follows Dagny and manages to deliver a long nation-wide radiophonic broadcast that quintessentially represents Ayn Rand's philosophy. He is captured, refuses to stop the strike and tortured; with the collapse of the government, *Atlas Shrugged* ends with Galt announcing that the strikers are finally ready to re-join the world and help rebuild society.

With the novel having been summarized, it is already possible to notice some of the themes that have been hinted at earlier: the main one being the importance of the self, as having personal beliefs and an identity, when in relation with a collectivist society. In this depiction, it may be argued that Rand wanted to emphasize how a governing ruling class might try to perpetrate a particular type of conformism on the citizens for their own personal gain. I would like to take the next few pages to consider in more detail several passages that give a better understanding to what the author intended to represent. This textual analysis will be achieved by quoting specific episodes of the individual characters mentioned thus far and how the author built their identity through them.

> Just once more, she [Dagny] thought, even if the next one would crack the bones of her arm.. Just once more, even if the air which she forced down in gasps past her tight, swollen throat, would be stopped altogether… Then she felt nothing, no pain, no muscles, only the thought that she had to beat him, to see him exhausted, to see him (Francisco) collapse, and then she would be free to die in the next moment.
> She won. Perhaps it was his laughing that made him lose, for once.
> He walked to the net, while she stood still, and threw his racket across, at her feet, as if knowing that this was what she wanted. He walked out of the court and fell down on the grass of the lawn, collapsing, his head on his arm. (103)

At this point of the novel, Dagny's main qualities have already been portrayed extensively: not only is she a woman in a competitively male-dominant business, but she is strong-willed and acts on reason making pondered decisions. She is the

exact opposite of her brother, but she is merely vice-president, and as such has to demonstrate at each and every step that she is there not only because of her family business, but because she gained the right to. In this scene, where she is playing tennis with Francisco d'Anconia, her indomitable spirit and will to win are emphasized. The reason for the love relationship between Dagny and Francisco is mutual respect: Dagny sees in him not just a spoiled rich man (a façade that is constructed for the public audience), but an equal, a capable businessman. For this very reason, his later decision of investing in a failing enterprise such as the copper mines will irk Dagny and make her lose interest. Considering this relationship between the two, it becomes clear how even putting her own body on the line to win the game is the equivalent of Dagny's own drive and motivation. She will persevere no matter the obstacle and will stop at nothing to achieve her goals.

Although the following passage is rather lengthy, I want to include it in my analysis given its importance. At a certain point, Hank Rearden is put on trial for violating the regulations set by the government and refuses to sell his alloy to the State Science Institute. Upon being asked if he will not defend himself, he explicitly states that he does not recognize the court's right to put him on trial.

> "Do you mean that you are refusing to obey the law?" asked the judge.
> "No. I am complying with the law—to the letter. Your law holds that my life, my work and my property may be disposed of without my consent. Very well, you may now dispose of me without my participation in the matter. I will not play the part of defending myself, where no defense is possible, and I will not simulate the illusion of dealing with a tribunal of justice."
> "But, Mr. Rearden, the law provides specifically that you are to be given an opportunity to present your side of the case and to defend yourself."
> "A prisoner brought to trial can defend himself only if there is an objective principle of justice recognized by his judges, a principle upholding his rights, which they may not violate and which he can invoke. The law, by which you are trying me, holds that there are no principles, that I have no rights and that you may do with me whatever you please. Very well. Do it."
> "Mr. Rearden, the law which you are denouncing is based on the highest principle—the principle of the public good."
> "Who is the public? What does it hold as its good? There was a time when men believed that the good' was a concept to be defined by a code of moral values and that no man had the right to seek his good through the violation of the rights of another. If it is now believed that my fellow men may sacrifice me in any manner they please for the sake of whatever they deem to be their own good, if they believe that they may seize my property simply because they need it—well, so does any

> burglar. There is only this difference: the burglar does not ask me to sanction his act." (441-442)

In this passage, Hank Rearden underlines the unjust nature of the trial that the government is forcing him to partake in. He realizes that the system is flawed and that the whole aim of the trial is to use him as a scapegoat. As such, Rearden elegantly refuses to fight a battle that he knows for sure will be a losing one given how the system has been rigged. I would argue that this scene in particular is meant to emphasize how much of a businessman Rearden's character is. It is also possible to compare his adamant will with that of Dagny Taggart, explained in the previous excerpt. Upon being asked if he does not recognize the public's right to limit his profits, he simply states "Why, yes, I do. The public may curtail my profits any time it wishes - by refusing to buy my product. Any other method of curtailing profits is the method of looters - and I recognize it as such" (442). He does not fake ignorance; for him, the trial is a façade that is only meant to be a forced seizure of his alloy on behalf of the government. Ultimately, the judge tries to condition Rearden's words, but his attempt fails:

> "Surely, Mr. Rearden, you wouldn't want your attitude to be misunderstood. You wouldn't want to give support to the widespread impression that you are a man devoid of social conscience, who feels no concern for the welfare of his fellows and works for nothing but his own profit."
> "I work for nothing but my own profit. I earn it." (444)

This simple yet effective answer is in itself a stance: the individualistic theme that has been nuanced throughout this chapter, becomes even clearer in this case. While explaining the nature of profit, Richard Salsman argues that "profit needs no apology. Profit is good so long as men see production as good. Only thefts of wealth or restrictions on its production are unjustified, for each destroys wealth by abrogating freedom and shackling intelligence" (2006: 48). This description fits perfectly with Hank Rearden's response; he understands that the system has been rigged in order to take what is rightfully his and refuses to comply if this is to be the premise. In her *Capitalism - The Unknown Ideal*, Rand explains this very same concept:

> Capitalism is a social system based on the recognition of individual rights, including property rights, in which all property is privately owned.
> The recognition of individual rights entails the banishment of physical force from human relationships: basically, rights can be violated only by force. In a capitalist society no man or group may initiate the use of physical force against others. The only function of the government, in such a society, is the task of protecting man's rights, […] thus the government is the means of placing the retaliatory use of force under objective control.
> It is a basic, metaphysical fact of man's nature - the connection between his survival and the use of reason - that capitalism recognizes and protects. (1967: 19)

It could be argued that Ayn Rand's describes an ideal scenario and not one that necessarily is enacted in society. This falls in line with her practise of indicating an idealization rather than a more pragmatic depiction. In this model scenario, the government becomes a warrantor that foresees the harmonious growth of society through the means of capitalism. As such, capitalism is not inherently good nor evil; by not being accompanied by a moral code, it depends on one for it to not be used in a malevolent way. If it is neutral in essence, it stands to reason hence that the responsibility to make conscious and pondered decisions of its usage falls with the people themselves. The same emphasis on neutrality is also stated by Francisco d'Anconia; in the beginning, his character seems only like a billionaire who squanders his wealth, but his words make more sense if we consider that he has always been part of the strikers and has his own personal agenda.

> Have you ever asked what is the root of money? Money is a tool of exchange, which can't exist unless there are goods produced and men able to produce them. Money is the material shape of the principle that men who wish to deal with one another must deal by trade and give value for value. Money is not the tool of the moochers, who claim your product by tears, or of the looters, who take it from you by force. Money is made possible only by the men who produce.
> […]
> Money will always remain an effect and refuse to replace you as the cause. Money is the product of virtue, but it will not give you virtue and it will not redeem your vices. Money will not give you the unearned, neither in matter nor in spirit. Is this the root of your hatred of money? (380-382)

Francisco sees money not only as the de facto by-product of a capitalist society, but also as a tool that can be used for either good or evil, but the intent being established by the individual human being. He perceives its neutrality, as well as its potential, but underlines that the only way it may be achieved is through the

“the highest type of human being—the self-made man—the American industrialist” (384). Ayn Rand understands the wealth that may be speculated from scientific and technological progress for instance, but also that the only way to achieve it is through personal ingenuity.

One last example that I want to explore is constituted by John Galt’s speech, transmitted by radio to the entire nation; I will use only a brief excerpt, the last part of his words, as the entirety of it is almost sixty pages long. Galt starts by indicating himself as the true enemy[83], in a way becoming the romantic hero that self-sacrifices himself in order to become a martyr and a symbol of change. He underlines the importance of volition; “But to think is an act of choice” (926) and that choice is one that has to be made on an individual level. For him true independence is correlated to the responsibility of judgement and most of his monologue emphasises it is the self that has to make conscious choices. The themes that have been discussed thus far in Ayn Rand’s other fragments become consolidated in John Galt’s speech and in his final words:

> “Do not let the hero in your soul perish, in lonely frustration for the life you deserved, but have never been able to reach. Check your road and the nature of your battle. The world you desired can be won, it exists, it is real, it is possible, it's yours.”
> "But to win it requires your total dedication and a total break with the world of your past, with the doctrine that man is a sacrificial animal who exists for the pleasure of others. Fight for the value of your person. Fight for the virtue of your pride. Fight for the essence of that which is man: for his sovereign rational mind. Fight with the radiant certainty and the absolute rectitude of knowing that yours is the Morality of Life and that yours is the battle for any achievement, any value, any grandeur, any goodness, any joy that has ever existed on this earth.
> "You will win when you are ready to pronounce the oath I have taken at the start of my battle—and for those who wish to know the day of my return, I shall now repeat it to the hearing of the world:
> "I swear—by my life and my love of it—that I will never live for the sake of another man, nor ask another man to live for mine." (979)

Rand’s animosity on this topic, as well as her vehement attack on society, resulted as previously mentioned in her marginalization. “The novel established her as the foremost philosophic defender of capitalism […]. The response to *Atlas Shrugged* was principally negative and often vicious—making her infamous in some

[83] “I have ended your battle. I have stopped your motor. I have deprived your world of man’s mind.” (924)

circles and a controversial figure for the rest of her life" (Berliner 2009, 133). The radical nature of Galt's speech, one that is directed against altruism and collectivism, but rather focuses on egoism and individuality in a sense reflect Equality/Prometheus's stance at the end of *Anthem*. As Bernstein summarizes,

> His [Galt's] goal is to successfully complete the strike - to withdraw from the world the men of the mind, to precipitate the collapse of the looters' regime and the creed upon which it rests; then to return to the world and rebuild it on the basis of a philosophy recognizing the role of the mind in human life, that is, a philosophy of reason, egoism, individualism, and capitalism. (2009: 179)

Although his goal is to rebuild, Galt is also aware that before this can be possible, society must first crumble. I would argue that his strike, more than a protest, seems to be a declaration of war. By enabling the flight of human capital, he also enabled a state of initial dictatorship that resulted consequently in anarchy. Although at the beginning of my analysis I stated that her characters are either utterly good or evil and that there is not much room for nuances, Galt's actions lead to speculation on this interpretation. By encouraging the intellectual elite to follow him in Galt's Gulch, he creates a critical situation for the masses. This is the defeat I would argue is presented in *Atlas Shrugged*. Even by following a logic which implies that the ends justify the means and that the resulting civilization which will come after the strike will be an utopian paradise, in itself is not a good defence. Galt says "in the name of the best within you, do not sacrifice this world to those who are its worst" (979). This however creates yet another division, almost classist, between those who are able to produce something (or the people who serve a purpose) and those who are only able to follow. Furthermore, the seemingly positive open-ending where we are informed that the strike has finished its course and that society will once again advance, does not give a proper conclusion. As such, although we may speculate that the strike was a success given the irrefutable heroic qualities of the protagonists and their positive agendas, it is not a guarantee that their approach actually accomplished what they set out to.

3.3 Notes on Rand's philosophy, Objectivism

Although the two literary books that have been analysed thus far represent the author's ideologies, with the monologue from *Atlas Shrugged* being the epitome of her thinking, she mostly explained her points of view as an essayist. Her complex works revolve around topics such as ethics, economics, politics and human morals in general. Although I do not intend to delve too deeply in political ideology, it is useful to remember that she was born in Russia in a bourgeois family; as such, she has witnessed first-hand what an extreme form of communism looked like. To oversimplify, if we consider communism as a political form where decisions are made for the greater good of the people, then we can also understand how an individualistic ideology focused around a particular type of selfishness was developed in her writings.

The whole of her ideology and thought processes take the name of Objectivism, which she defined continuously throughout her life; John Galt's sixty-page speech is only a condensed form of her philosophical stance. Regardless, the nuances that objectivism presents have already been intrinsically mentioned while analysing the textual passages of *Anthem* and *Atlas Shrugged*. In part, it embodies the other extreme of communism considering how altruism becomes demonized and selfishness is praised as a virtue. In her view, the discourse on ethics cannot subsist without considering the social, political and economical implications as well. As such, her attack on altruism becomes also a defence on Capitalism:

> Capitalism and altruism are incompatible; they are philosophical opposites; they cannot co-exist in the same man or in the same society. Today, the conflict has reached its ultimate climax; the choice is clear-cut: either a new morality of rational self-interest, with its consequences of freedom, justice, progress and man's happiness on earth—or the primordial morality of altruism, with its consequences of slavery, brute force, stagnant terror and sacrificial furnaces. (*For the new intellectual*, 45)

At this point, we might be inclined to ask what is the benefit that the human being receives from the rational self-interest Rand proposes. Her words hint towards happiness on earth, a state of bliss, which apparently is also the purpose itself. This is also stated by John Galt: "By the grace of reality and the nature of life, man—every man—is an end in himself, he exists for his own sake, and the achievement

of his own happiness is his highest moral purpose" (928). This attitude towards the importance of happiness is partially indicative of a hedonistic mentality, but it is one that is based on a harmonious personal growth. The dichotomy that Rand creates between self and society, and to a degree the clash between the interests of the two, is resolved in her mentality through the sensibility of the individual.

> The Objectivist ethics holds that the actor must always be the beneficiary of his action and that man must act for his own rational self-interest. But his right to do so is derived from his nature as man and from the function of moral values in human life—and, therefore, is applicable only in the context of a rational, objectively demonstrated and validated code of moral principles which define and determine his actual self-interest. It is not a license "to do as he pleases" and it is not applicable to the altruists' image of a "selfish" brute nor to any man motivated by irrational emotions, feelings, urges, wishes or whims. (*The virtue of selfishness*, 8)

In other words, in the society she envisions, there is no conflict of interest and maybe more surprisingly, this self-interest is not meant to act as entitling and enabling force that permits the followers to act as they please. I would again argue that this seems much more akin to an optimistic reasoning and not a pragmatic system; it relies on the human sensibility to act according to what is good, and that is hardly ever the case. In regards to this stance, Edwin Locke and Jaana Woiceshyn applied Rand's objectivism to business ethics:

> In Ayn Rand's view, honesty is a virtue because it is necessary for man to live successfully on earth. But this presupposes that he is free to seek values and to voluntarily trade them with others. The moment this freedom is taken away, honesty ceases to be a means to achieving values and becomes rather an impediment. The only way men's freedom can be taken away is by initiating physical force. Any threat or act of physical force will make it impossible to practice honesty (if one is concerned with self-preservation), such as a dictator threatening a person with jail unless he obeys the dictator's arbitrary commandments. (1995: 410)

This however is exactly what Ayn Rand did in her novels; by obstructing the freedom she praised and preached, she also created a fertile dystopian ground to explore why said liberty is so important. The radical example of a voluntary mass brain drain, as the one depicted in *Atlas Shrugged*, or an awakening to what true freedom to think is, as shown in *Anthem*, are both instances where it is a higher political power or agent that acts as an oppressor. What is important to note is how

this condition of tyranny is faced by the protagonists of the novels: in both cases they use reason, main characteristic of Objectivism, to face their respective ordeals. While this is functional from a novelistic perspective, creating a scenario where heroic figures exemplify the qualities she vouched for, it may be less apt within a real context. As Richard Salsman[84] argues,

> Rand recognizes that reason is man's primary means of survival and the source of his wealth-making prowess; he does not acquire knowledge by non-rational means. Man's only other means of survival consist of his purely physical capacities. But unlike animals, man cannot advance very far by physical means alone. Thus Rand's emphasis on man's intellectual efforts stands in sharp contrast to the labor theory of value; in fact, she implies, manual laborers largely carry out or repeat the productive routines discovered and established by the great thinkers in business—by the scientists, engineers, entrepreneurs, and capitalists. (2005: 50)

In other words, what Ayn Rand conceptualizes is a society where there is still a great dividing force between people, and that is intelligence and reason. This should be in turn problematized because it would end up creating yet another form of oppression. The intellectual capabilities, as such, end up being weponized and used as a tool of control, which technically corresponds to reality. As Slavoj Žižek argues in *Living in the End Times* when mentioning Rand's 'hymn to money'[85],

> But did not Marx say something similar in the formula just quoted, regarding how, in a commodity economy, "relations between people assume the guise of relations among things"? In the market economy, relations between people can appear as relations of mutually recognized freedom and equality: domination is no longer directly enacted and visible as such. What is problematic is the underlying premise of Rand's statement: that the only choice is between direct and indirect relations of domination and exploitation. (2010: 290)

I would argue that this becomes the core conceptual node that Ayn Rand touches with her Objectivism, as well as the paradoxical and perplexing idea it holds. While on the one hand it preaches rationality as way of establishing a form of equality and freedom from oppression, on the other it is this very same reason that

[84] "The False Profits of Antitrust" in Hull, Garry (ed.) – *The Abolition of Antitrust* (2005).

[85] The passage cites: "Until and unless you discover that money is the root of all good, you ask for your own destruction. When money ceases to become the means by which men deal with one another, then men become the tools of other men. Blood, whips and guns or dollars. Take your choice —there is no other." (Ayn Rand, *Atlas Shrugged*, London: Penguin Books 2007: 871)

– because of how the capitalistic system functions – is used to create yet another form of oppression.

4. Frank Herbert, defeat on an intergalactic scale

Previously it has been explained how Philip K. Dick created his fictional worlds by setting an overtone of ontological uncertainty and explored the dichotomy between authentic and simulacrum. On the other hand, Ayn Rand used a more assertive approach, using literature as an outlet for her philosophical reflections. Out of the three authors, Frank Patrick Herbert (1920-1986) is the one who may be considered to have had a more linear career as a writer. Diverging from Philip K. Dick's eccentricities and drug usage and Ayn Rand's rationale, Herbert started as a political speech writer. While early on he also published short stories and throughout his life he wrote various novels, he is mostly known for the *Dune* saga. As important biographical sources, I will indicate Brian Herbert's[86] *Dreamer of Dune* (2003) as well as *The Maker of Dune*[87] (1987) edited by Tim O'Reilly.

As Chris Pak reminds us, "Herbert attributes the initial inspiration for the Dune trilogy to an uncompleted magazine article, 'They Stopped the Moving Sands,' which focused on the US Department of Agriculture's project to cultivate poverty grass to bind sand dunes in Florence, Oregon" (2016: 117)[88]. While studying the shifting sands and dunes in Oregon, the idea for his universe started to form in Herbert's head. It took him six years to construct the world, think about the different aspects he wanted to portray and eventually write the first novel, *Dune*. In *Dune Genesis*[89] (1980, 72) he explains his intent as follows:

> I conceived of a long novel, the whole trilogy as one book about the messianic convulsions that periodically overtake us. Demagogues, fanatics, con-game artists, the innocent and the not-so-innocent bystanders - all were to have a part in the drama. This grows from my theory that superheroes are disastrous for humankind.

[86] Frank Herbert's son, Brian, is not only one of the biggest sources of information regarding his father's life, but he is also the one who continued the *Dune* Legacy. While being a published author himself, Brian used his father's universe, as well as his notes, to write several other trilogies and standalone books that expand on the *Dune* lore; he worked on them mainly alongside Kevin Anderson.

[87] *The Maker of Dune* is a compendium of various interviews and articles, many of which were selected by Herbert himself, and give a further insight on his work as a writer as well as various details on the universe he created.

[88] Named the Florence project, as the homonymous city.

[89] *Dune Genesis* is a four page essay that Herbert published in the 1980 July issue of Omni, a science fiction magazine that was published in print version between 1978 and 1995. Several excerpts shall be used in the course of my analysis as they represent an important testament of the intentions behind Herbert's writing delivered by the author himself.

> Even if we find a real hero (whatever - or whoever - that may be), eventually fallible mortals take over the power structure that always comes into being around such a leader.

These brief outlines are important to understand the world Herbert envisioned in his saga as well as the message he wanted to pass on through them. He grounded the narratological aspects of his various overarching plots in the notion that history repeats itself and, as such, *Dune* becomes a cautionary tale about whom we choose to follow, from political rulers to religious leaders. It seems clear in Herbert's mind that the cult of personality, in other words the machinations that make masses idealize one man over others, is ultimately detrimental and destined to fail. Whatever the original intentions of the idolized people were, ultimately they may suffer the same consequences as history has shown repeatedly: a 'fallible mortal', a man-become-hero who is still simply just a human that is capable of erring or that may be corrupted by power. These aspects of corruption, political machinations, mass manipulation and shifts in ideology and alliances are just several of the important themes Herbert touches in his saga. Furthermore, his inquisitive nature led him to explore other topics as well, just as he stated in *The Maker of Dune*:

> Even after all of the research and writing, I find fresh nuances, things in religions, in psychoanalytic theories, in linguistics, economics, philosophy, in theories of history, geology, anthropology, plant research, soil chemistry, in the metalanguages or pheromones. A new field of study rises out of this like a spirit rising from a witch's caldron: the psychology of planetary societies. (1987, 99)

His approach, as well as the field he called 'psychology of planetary societies', eventually led Herbert to become one of the most important science fiction ecological writers, paving the way for many who would follow in his footsteps. The methods by which he intertwined not only ecological aspects in his world building, but also historicity, political intrigue and grandiose characters made him become one of the most prominent science fiction writers of the last century.

My work will focus only on Frank Herbert's *Dune* saga[90], the original trilogy consisting of *Dune* (1965), *Dune Messiah* (1969) and *Children of Dune* (1976), as

[90] For consistency and functionality, I will provide quotes from the 2020 Box set edition published by ACE; this version provides not only the usual appendixes that are an integral part in the

well as the other three novels that follow the events of the first ones, *God Emperor of Dune* (1981), *Heretics of Dune* (1984) and *Chapterhouse: Dune* (1985)[91]. While there is a vast expanded universe regarding the literary universe of *Dune*, constructed through different trilogies and standalone books published by Brian Herbert (some of them even used Frank Herbert's notes), these will not be considered as they would lead towards a different line of investigation. Another one of Frank Herbert's book that will also be analysed concurrently with the *Dune* saga will be *Hellstrom's Hive* (1973). Although the settings between them are very different, as well as the thematic nodes they touch, there are still several leitmotifs and nuances that may be studied side by side; furthermore, *Hellstrom's Hive* provides several concepts that facilitate a comparison between Frank Herbert's works and the ones of the other two authors under scrutiny in my dissertation.

Given that I have already opened a parenthesis for *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and *Blade Runner,* it would be impossible not to mention, at the very least in passing, the *Dune* cinematographic interpretations. David Lynch's *Dune* (1984) came out just one year prior to the publication of the sixth and final volume of the saga. Reportedly, the movie was a difficult project, having been abandoned by other directors such as Alejandro Jodorowsky and Ridley Scott. It would also be unfair not to mention the more recent adaptations directed by Denis Villeneuve[92] which, in their own way, renewed the popularity of the saga for a younger generation. Whether Lynch's slightly more surrealist style was critically acclaimed or Villeneuve's overall epic tone gave *Dune* its proper grandeur are of no particular interest for this analysis. While it may be said that these renditions could offer a different point of view of the saga, they would lead away from the crucial points of this dissertation. I would argue that, because of how the books were written and the sheer philosophical complexity of the saga, *Dune* is a series that does not permit a simplified cinematographic rendition of its content, just as suggested by how other directors decided to abandon such an ambitious project.

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comprehension of the text, but also have introductions and afterwards both by Frank Herbert as well as by his son, which I will quote when needed.

[91] While these six books comprise the whole of the Dune universe as written by Frank Herbert, it is worth mentioning that *Chapterhouse: Dune* was published just the year prior to the author's death; ending on a cliff-hanger and leaving several plot points without a definite conclusion beckoned Brian to follow through with his father's work.

[92] Villeneuve divided the first book in two separate movies: *Dune* (2021) and *Dune: Part Two* (2024)

A common approach and point of study when dealing with the *Dune* universe, especially the first three books, is to compare it with Isaac Asimov's *Foundation*. Not only were they initially trilogies that then generated sequels with an expanded lore, but they also deal with the theme of power struggles in a very distant future where humanity has colonized the galaxy. It is worth mentioning that in both trilogies great importance and representation is given to the amalgamation between the so called hard and soft sciences. The humanist disciplines are melded with the technological aspects within the two sagas (psychohistory and prescience respectively); furthermore, both are used as narrative ploys to advance the events in the narration as well.[93]

It should be noted that there is an important linguistic aspect at play in *Dune*'s nomenclature. While the names given to the various characters come from a wide array of linguistic families (Latin, Greek, Navajo, Indian, Old English and so on), the terminology related to the Fremen, natives of *Dune*, comes mainly from languages rich in uvular and pharyngeal sounds (such as Arabic). It is not only the case of minor instances such as 'baklawa'[94] or 'bourka'; the first term is found only in an isolated case whereas the second one may be encountered various times in in *Children of Dune*. It is a linguistic choice that becomes evident upon considering names or titles where the Arabic definite articles ("al-", "el-", "il-") are used in correlation with the Fremen.

Furthermore, the terminology used by Herbert becomes an integral part of his magnum opus; his neologisms, as well as the factions he created and the technology he envisioned, grant *Dune* its depth and scale. In most editions, amongst the appendix entries, it is also possible to find a brief glossary containing almost three hundred terms. For simplicity, similarly to what had been done for Philip K. Dick's neologisms, I will include at the end of the chapter a Table (4.1) of about thirty words with their definition; this serves merely as a fast reference for the specific vocabulary used, which I will however explain during the textual analysis. I will also indicate for further study that in 1984, Berkley Books published *The Dune*

[93] For a more in-depth study on the nuances between Dune and Foundation, see John Grigsby, Asimov's *Foundation* Trilogy and Herbert's *Dune* Trilogy: A Vision Reversed (1981) and Herbert's Reversal of Asimov's Vision Reassessed: *Foundation's Edge* and *God Emperor of Dune* (1984), as well as Donald Palumbo's Chaos Theory, Asimov's Foundations and Robots, and Herbert's Dune (2002).

[94] Deriving from the Turkish baklava indicating a specific pastry.

Encyclopedia, compiled by Willis E. McNelly and revised by Frank Herbert himself. This compendium contains in alphabetical order the terminology, events, dates and most of the lore-related details pertaining to the saga.

One last remark regards the importance of the epigraphs that functionally divide the chapters throughout the entirety of the saga. These are paratextual elements, in many cases presented as excerpts from books written by the characters of *Dune*, proverbs or even nursery rhymes, and contribute to creating a holistic depiction of the history of the fictional world, as well as providing a more intimate point of view of the protagonists themselves. In various cases, they even preannounce to the reader characters or events that chronologically have yet to appear in the narration or refocus on the ones that have died in the previous books. I will be extensively using these epigraphs to emphasize specific aspects of the themes I will be analysing in the following sub-chapter.

4.1 Dune, an example of endless cyclicality and historical defeat

The saga concentrates on the political struggles, ecological shifts and social dynamics that are portrayed on the planet of Arrakis (also known as Dune); the first half, constituted by the original trilogy, largely focuses on the two generations of the Atreides family, whereas in the second half, the abovementioned themes are explored throughout the passing of millennia. In the first book, more so than the others, the figure of the 'epic' hero has a fundamental role. Herbert employed the narratological scheme of classic myth to create Paul Atreides, the main character; it was important to mould the messianic paragon, that would then be followed as a leader by the population of Arrakis, to explore his possible and probable fallacies.[95]

I use the term epic to indicate not only the grandiose nature of the world Herbert created, but in accordance to the style of the novels as well. This is especially true for *Dune* given how Campbell's notion of monomyth[96] can be applied

[95] I am basing this on what was previously quoted from Herbert's article in OMNI.
[96] Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand faces* first published in 1949, chapter 3.

to the narratological structure of the novel: “The standard path of the mythological adventure of the hero is a magnification of the formula represented in the rites of passage: separation—initiation—return: which might be named the nuclear unit of the monomyth” (2004, 28). This brief summary represents the common heroic narrative where the hero - or protagonist - sets out, through his adventures undergoes some form of ritualistic transformation and then makes his return. In most cases, this narrative functions as a tale of growth, from adolescences into adulthood, with the hero surpassing the trial (rite of passage) and becoming a man. Within certain limits, this represents exactly the nucleus of the first book and the story of Paul Atreides; the socio-political overtones, as well as the ecological aspects that are fundamental for the saga and world-building itself, are meant to introduce the entirety of the literary universe that will be a constant and evolving background in the saga.

Before moving towards the thematic and textual analysis itself, book by book, it might prove useful to explain the core elements that make up Herbert’s world; these details are nuanced slowly yet steadily throughout the more than two thousand pages of the six novels. The events of *Dune* are set in a very distant future but still within our same galaxy; Earth, referred to as Old Earth or Terra, seems to be a remnant of the past. Although the narrative takes place presumably more than twenty thousand years in the future, not all about its existence has been forgotten however; in various moments, great thinkers, philosophers or historical figures that the reader would recognize are mentioned.

Approximately ten thousand years before the events of the first book, an episode referred to as the Butlerian Jihad radically changed the historical timeline of the world. This war was one undertaken against machines that had imprisoned humans. Because of the dangers that computers posed towards humanity, various technological advancements were halted and even forbidden; technological and computerized aid, as such, became the biggest taboo that was established, one maintained even ten thousand years after the war. It is a dogma that can be found in the very first chapter of the first book: ‘Thou shalt not make a machine in the likeness of a human mind’ (14). The Butlerian Jihad is never extensively explained within the books, although all the characters know exactly how much of a pivotal point it was for human society; more details are described in the various glossaries

that Herbert wrote. In the second appendix of *Dune*, dealing with religion, describes it as follows:

> Then came the Butlerian Jihad—two generations of chaos. The god of machine-logic was overthrown among the masses and a new concept was raised:
> "Man may not be replaced". (633)

This passage, amongst other things, marks the rebellion against the machines as well as the importance of re-establishing a focus on the human being; it follows that in a pre-Butlerian time span, machines had taken that centrality for themselves, which then in turn led to the war. As such, the technology that has been - to an extent - demonized in *Dune* is the one directly correlated with machines capable of logical thought: there are no supercomputers in this universe and no androids. There are still technological advancements, weapons of mass destructions (that have been similarly prohibited) and other scientific aids, but they are limited to their autonomous functionality and have nothing of what today would be perceived and indicated as artificial intelligence. This process of rethinking the importance of the human being, as opposed to that of the thinking machine, as it might already have been surmised, will prove an important point of discussion in the second part of the dissertation.

In *Dune*'s timeline, the galaxy has evolved to be governed as an empire, with planets forming archetypal fiefdoms; these 'feuds' are governed by the Great Houses, the main ones - as far as this analysis is concerned - being House Atreides and House Harkonnen, the two antagonistic forces of the first novel. The other important institutions that have formed and act as economic and political agents in the Empire are the Bene Gesserit, the CHOAM and the Space or Spacing Guild, each with their own personal agenda. The Bene Gesserit are a matriarchal order, who although initially deny pertaining to any religious order, use a primarily mystical and ritualistic approach in their teachings and training process. They act as consultants in the Empire, but their true concealed objective is to create (through a long-lasting plan of genetic manipulation) a being capable of bridging time and space, the Kwisatz Haderach. The CHOAM is the mercantile guild, another important agent that is controlled by the Emperor and the Great Houses. Finally, the Spacing Guild is the only one in the Empire that is responsible for space travel; I will also add that such travel is only possible through the use of a special type of spice

that can be found only on Arrakis, but this will be discussed in length later on. One final important faction that plays a quintessential role in the Dune universe is the one represented by the Fremen, the indigenous inhabitants of the planet itself, employed as human labour by the Empire; they represent the oppressed party, seeing how their planet has been colonized for its resources.

I already mentioned that because of the Butlerian Jihad supercomputers and androids were banned in this setting; this gave rise to the need of masterful logicians and thinkers in the ranks of the Empire. The mentats were conceived with the specific role of consultants; by being genetically enhanced and referred to as 'human computers', their mental capabilities are described as incredibly advanced, coldly calculated given their conditioning to mimic cognitive computer-like processes, but also capable of feeling humane emotions such as empathy. Mentats, as such, are employed by the Great Houses as advisors and war strategists for the ones who are already in power or as mentors for the younger generations.

Dune begins on Caladan, an oceanic planet, just several days before the Atreides family is supposed to depart for Arrakis; this is due to the fact that the Padishah Emperor has appointed Leto, paterfamilias of House Atreides, as fief ruler of the desert planet of Dune. In reality, the Padishah is envious of Leto's popularity and sees him as a potential threat to the throne; he conspires, as such, with House Harkonnen[97] to eliminate House Atreides. In this brief prelude to the arrival on the new planet, the various characters and important members of Leto's entourage are presented. He will be accompanied by Duncan Idaho and Gourney Hallek (elite soldiers), his mentat Thufir Hawat, as well as his concubine Lady Jessica[98] and his son Paul. The figure of the mentat will become even more important in the following books. According to one of the epigraphs:

> Above all else, the mentat must be a generalist, not a specialist. It is wise to have decisions of great moment monitored by generalists. Experts and specialists lead you quickly into chaos. […] The mentat-generalist must understand that anything which we can identify as our universe is merely part of larger phenomena. But the

[97] The Harkonnens were the previous stewards of Arrakis (governing it with an iron fist), as well as mortal enemies of the Atreides.

[98] Lady Jessica, an acolyte of the Bene Gesserit, was part of the genetic program of the Order to create a potential Kwisatz Haderach candidate. She ends up disobeying the Order and giving birth to a boy rather than a girl. Within the world building of *Dune*, the Bene Gesserit have mastered their bodies to such an extent that they are capable of influencing and choosing the gender of their offspring, as well as using their 'Voice' to influence the actions of others.

> expert looks backward; he looks into the narrow standards of his own specialty. The generalist looks outward; he looks for living principles, knowing full well that such principles change, that they develop. It is to the characteristics of change itself that the mentat-generalist must look. —The Mentat Handbook (*Children of Dune*, 258)

This excerpt is important because it emphasizes Frank Herbert's quintessential theme: the volatile nature of the world. He applies this concept of fluidity to politics (i.e. shifting alliances), to time (given how even secular traditions are liable to changes) and most importantly to the ecological processes of his universe that see shifts even in planetary ecosystems as it will be further discussed. These shifts are not only analysed through external events, but are even explored internally, considering for instance what Paul Atreides lives through.

Paul is the main character of the first novel. Belonging to a noble and wealthy family, he is described as having had an excellent upbringing: he was taught military strategy and how to fight by Duncan and Gourney, socio-politics by the Mentat and even trained in the ways of the Bene Geserit by his mother. Because of his mother's teachings, he also develops a certain predisposition towards prescience, a particular ability that he will develop later on and that is connected to the perception of time and foresight; in fact, he is also tested by one of the Reverend Mothers of the Bene Gesserit through the trial of the Gom Jabbar. The Gom Jabbar[99], more than testing a candidate's aptitude to deal with discomfort, pain and stress, is meant to establish how well they are able to understand their circumstances, control their own bodies and react under extreme pressure.

The members of House Atreides depart for Arrakis. It is paramount to underline the importance that this planet - made almost entirely out of deserts - has for the entire galaxy; its strategic value is undisputed. It is not only the central stage where the action of the saga takes place, but rather its importance is emphasized by being the only planet where melange (commonly referred to as *spice*) is produced. This melange has a double function: it bestow on the user a lengthier lifespan[100] and it enables space travel. Throughout the novels, it is referred to in

[99] The test itself is administered by a Revered Mother of the Bene Gesserit and consists in making the candidate place their hand in box that recreates an increasing sensation of pain while the Reverend Mother places the Gom Jabbar (a long knife-like needle) to the candidate's throat. They are then told that if they will remove their hand, the Gom Jabbar will take their life.

[100] The exact amount of time is never specified; it is hinted that in a large quantity however it could also grant immortality. This will only be partially the case as it will be seen in *Children of Dune* and *God Emperor of Dune*.

various ways: spice, melange or even geriatric spice (to emphasize its correlation with its medical purpose) – these synonyms will also be the ones commonly use henceforth. As previously mentioned, computers have been forbidden in Herbert's universe and, as such, the only way to travel through the void of space is to employ special Guild Navigators (Steersmen), appointed by the Spacing Guild. The Steersmen, suspended in tanks that are filled with melange in gaseous form, are able to indicate the routes the spaceships have to follow based on prescience (the same one mentioned for the Bene Gesserit). It other words, it is the melange that grants the prescience that then enables space travel; it follows that it's importance as a resource is paramount for the Empire and the sovereign Houses. I will also add that melange is a by-product of the sandworms found on Arrakis; in Herbert's vision, the renowned creatures are an integral part of not only the planet's ecosystem, but of the galaxy's economic and political structure just as easily. Their importance will be outlined in the following pages and explained extensively in the chapter that deals with ecocriticism.

It is also opportune to give a more detailed explanation regarding the planet of Arrakis, aptly named the desert planet because of how it is largely composed of sand. As such, given the planet's scorching heat and aridity, the second resource intuitively that acquires a quintessential importance is water. The Fremen, natives of Dune, are characterized by their knowledge and ability to adapt to the harsh and taxing environment. They have conceived suits that allow them to recycle their own sweat and urine as to not waste any precious liquid molecules and even their rites and expressions revolve around it[101]. The Fremen, employed frequently as workers by the sovereign Houses, are however detached by the Empire's civilization: their society has almost a tribal structure and live in 'sietches' that are inaccessible to most of the outsiders. The bridge between the Empire and the Fremen can be found in the figure of the Imperial Planetologist, one that partially encapsulates Herbert's various interests if we consider his own words in the interview quoted at the beginning of the chapter. Under the previous rule of Arrakis, the assigned planetologist however was forced to help baron Harkonnen to recruit the Fremen as

[101] For instance, they accept and honour a pact by spitting (sign of great respect considering how important water is). Furthermore, their burial ritual consists in absorbing the water that the body of the deceased still stores. All aspects of life revolve around the resource that on their planet is so scarce.

labour in conditions almost similar to slavery. The first planetologist, Pardot Kynes, could be blamed for this oppressing approach:

> To Pardot Kynes, the planet was merely an expression of energy, a machine being driven by its sun. What it needed was reshaping to fit it to man's needs. His mind went directly to the free-moving human population, the Fremen. What a challenge! What a tool they could be! Fremen: an ecological and geological force of almost unlimited potential. (*Dune*, Appendix 1, 621)

Although it is apparent that by using the word 'tool' to indicate a population there is no humane intent towards the natives of Arrakis, it should also be said that the figure of Pardot is actually more complex than it seems. As described in the appendix, he was also the first to not only save some Fremen from a group of Harkonnen guards, but he was also the first to try to understand their costumes and traditions; for this reasons he was even allowed in their *sietch*, something never accomplished by others. As such, planetologists gained a standing with the Fremen and were amongst the few that could establish a communication channel and make arrangements between the two parties.

The entourage of House Atreides arrives on Arrakis, taking lodgings in the palace left behind by the Harkonnens, in the capital city of Arrakeen. The first nuances that reflect the harsh ecological conditions of the inhospitable planet can already be in various passages. For instance, the capital is protected by a shield wall which serves not to defend against attacks, as it may be presumed, but to protect it from the strong winds and sandstorms that form continuously on Arrakis. One recurrent theme as such is the relation between man and nature; an overarching theme in this dynamic is the abuse of power, as exemplified by the previous iron-fist rule of the Harkonnens. They subjugated the indigenous population, while also squandering the resources at their disposal as they pleased. It is in the palace that Paul notices that, as per order of the previous ruling house, date palms are watered daily. He is informed that the water wasted this way could hydrate an incredible number of Fremen on a daily basis[102]. Paul understands just how unbalanced the previous ruling house was and how the Fremen would be much more useful as allies rather than oppressed work force. Regardless, given the

[102] "One date palm requires forty liters of water a day. A man requires but eight liters. A palm, then, equals five men. There are twenty palms out there—one hundred men." (*Dune*, 76)

machinations on behalf of Baron Vladimir Harkonnen and the Emperor, Leto is left to govern a planet where the production of melange has been heavily hindered by the wear on the mechanical appliances used to extract it and the difficulties that arise because of this. Furthermore, he is also under the pressure of quotas that must be met, given how much spice is an indispensable necessity throughout the galaxy. In a conversation with his mentat, Leto is informed of the costs of the melange production:

> Under the Harkonnens, maintenance and salaries were held to fourteen per cent. We'll be lucky to make it at thirty per cent at first. With reinvestment and growth factors accounted for, including the CHOAM percentage and military costs, our profit margin will be reduced to a very narrow six or seven per cent until we can replace worn-out equipment. We then should be able to boost it up to twelve or fifteen per cent where it belongs. (*Dune*, 114)

The report Hawat offers indicates not only the cold and calculated way of thinking of the mentats in general, but also shows the interest and knowledge Herbert put in creating the economic difficulties that arise with leadership. Furthermore, Hawat gives Leto the alternative of using the same wages, smaller in comparison, that the Harkonnen used. As a wise leader, understanding that it is important to maintain good relationships especially with the Fremen, he refuses, once again establishing the Emperor's view of him as a threat; if left alone, Leto could in fact easily rise to power based on his benevolent nature and approval on behalf of the people. This possibility however does not come to pass; soon after their arrival on Arrakis, House Atreides is attacked by the combined forces of the Baron's guards and the Emperor's Sardaukar, ferocious warriors. With this coup, Leto is captured and subsequently killed, Lady Jessica and Paul manage to flee thanks to Duncan Idaho's sacrifice; the Harkonnens presume they are both dead or will soon be given the impossibility of surviving the desert. It is however in the desert, while being exposed to a high dose of melange, that Paul will be able to awake part of his prescience faculties; this is due to the Bene Gesserit breeding program and genetic manipulation, as well as Paul's own training. He had experienced some episodes of prescience previously[103], but they had always been unclear dreams,

[103] Before the Harkonnen's attack, "he felt himself touched briefly by his powers of prescience, seeing himself infected by the wild race consciousness that was moving the human universe toward chaos" (*Dune*, 278). This however indicates a predisposition on Paul's part of accepting the various futures

more sensations and feelings of the future rather than visions of the events to come. When exposed to the concentrated melange, Paul starts seeing branching paths, different plausible futures, scenarios that beforehand he had no control on; now, in an different state of being, he understands his perceptions and their importance, as well as how to act on them. The following passages marks the moment of awakening:

> He [Paul] fell silent as memory of that seeing filled him. No prescient dream, no experience of his life had quite prepared him for the totality with which the veils had been ripped away to reveal naked time.
> […]
> She [Jessica] looked at Paul's face, his eyes—the inward stare. And she knew where she had seen such a look before: pictured in records of disasters—on the faces of children who experienced starvation or terrible injury. The eyes were like pits, mouth a straight line, cheeks indrawn. It's the look of terrible awareness, she thought, of someone forced to the knowledge of his own mortality. He was, indeed, no longer a child. The underlying import of his words began to take over in her mind, pushing all else aside. Paul could see ahead, a way of escape for them. (*Dune*, 250-251)

Paul's new gained prescience, from a symbolic perspective, indicates the transition to manhood and maturity; it denotes growth as well as his awareness of his place in the world. Although it is achieved through an almost preternatural method, this character development becomes crucial for the events that unravel through the whole series. In this new state, he replies to Jessica without her uttering a word; Paul's training, alongside his prescience, enables him to seemingly read minds. He does not only tell her that she is pregnant and will eventually deliver his sister, which Jessica already knew, but also that her father was Baron Harkonen, a secret well kept by the Bene Gesserit which even Lady Jessica was unaware of. As she is thinking that Paul is in fact the Kwisatz Haderach, the prophesized child sought by the Bene Gesserit, he anticipates her and says that he is no such thing[104], and thinks to himself that he is merely a seed. This preannounces the events that

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that are able to come and is radically different from the prescience of the Navigators for instance. "The Guild navigators, gifted with limited prescience, had made the fatal decision: they'd chosen always the clear, safe course that leads ever downward into stagnation" (*Dune*, 596). In other words, in its lesser form, prescience can only indicate the most probable path, the 'safe course', but in Paul's case it becomes a holistic vision of the various scenarios that may occur.

[104] "You're thinking I'm the Kwisatz Haderach. Put that out of your mind. I'm something unexpected." (*Dune*, 252)

will follow in the second and third novels, including how his son will become the God Emperor of Arrakis, denoting also Herbert's ample vision of the saga.

As Paul sees the various paths of the future, he chooses to follow the one that will lead him to the Fremen. Here he will gain their trust by defeating and killing a Freeman warrior in a ritualistic crysknife[105] duel; this trial ascertains once more his passage into adulthood. Lady Jessica, on the other hand, in order to demonstrate her loyalty for the Fremen, is forced to take the ritual of becoming a Reverend Mother by drinking the poisonous Water of Life[106]. Hesitant at first, she drinks the liquid, passing the test while also giving her yet-to-be-born daughter, Alia, the precognitive powers she will demonstrate in the second novel.

Two years pass during which Paul takes Chani, a Fremen native, as a lover; they have a son together which Paul will name Leto, in honour of his father. During this time span, he becomes Paul Muad'Dib[107] as the Fremen see in him the prophesized Lisan al-Gaib[108] given his understanding of future and current events through his prescience. He ends up training soldiers, slowly gathering an army under his command, reuniting with Gurney Hallek and understanding that his abilities are still incomplete. Paul drinks the Water of Life as well, which was known to be fatal to males, and after a long stasis he reawakens with the clairvoyance and perception of time and space, supposedly becoming the Kwisatz Haderach. His conception of time shifts and he is able to see both the future as well as interact with the past, talking with his ancestors. As Herbert writes it, "He [Paul] realized suddenly that it was one thing to see the past occupying the present, but the true test of prescience was to see the past in the future" (Dune, 455). For the Bene Gesserit, the Kwisatz Haderach was also the one who could 'bridge time and space', or in other words be simultaneously in various moments of past, present and future.

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[105] Sacred blades made from the teeth of the sandworms which were never shown to outsiders to the Fremen culture.

[106] Chani tells Jessica "Here is the Water of Life, the water that is greater than water—Kan, the water that frees the soul. If you be a Reverend Mother, it opens the universe to you. Let Shai-hulud judge now" (*Dune*, 447). This concoction is what remains after a sandworm, Shai-hulud, dies and it has the properties of concentrated melange.

[107] Refers to the desert mouse, a small creature that in spite of its size is able to adapt to its circumstances. Upon choosing it, Stillgar, the leader of one of the Fremen *sietchs* says "Muad'Dib is wise in the ways of the desert. Muad'Dib creates his own water. Muad'Dib hides from the sun and travels in the cool night. Muad'Dib is fruitful and multiplies over the land. Muad'Dib we call 'instructor-of-boys.' That is a powerful base on which to build your life, Paul-Muad'Dib" (*Dune*, 389).

[108] Translated as either 'voice from the other world' or 'giver of water', the Fremen see in this name a prophet and a saviour. One problematic issue arises upon considering that this legend and name was implanted by the Bene Gesserit to more easily manipulate them when the occasion called.

By slowly sabotaging the mining operations that had been retaken by the Harkonnens after their victory, Paul puts further strains on the power balance that had been steadily deteriorating on Arrakis. When eventually Baron Vladimir and the Emperor arrive land on the desert planet with their troops, destroying a Freemen outpost in the process, killing Leto and capturing Alia, the true rebellion begins. Paul uses atomics, forbidden technological warheads (considering the previously mentioned Butlerian Jihad), but only to destroy the shield wall protecting Arrakeen. With his army of Fremen, riding a giant sandworm, they enter the city and defeat the opposing forces.[109]

In the final confrontation, Paul faces the Emperor and makes him surrender control of his throne by menacing the destruction of all spice production on Arrakis. Paul has a sharp understanding of the principles of economics: he knows that the disappearance of melange would halt most means of transportation within the galaxy and ultimately cripple the geopolitical equilibrium of the Empire itself. This puts him in a position of complete and undisputable control. The Emperor is left with no choice than to abdicate and give Princess Irulan, his daughter, in marriage to Paul. As Paul Muad'Dib takes the throne, he understands that it is too late to stop the Freemen jihad that he foresaw in the future; their belief in him has become too strong given how the events unfolded.

It was previously mentioned that the structure of the first novel was written with the intent to mimic the epic genre, featuring the story of the hero. Going back to Joseph Campbell and his study, it is possible to define the hero as "the man or woman who has been able to battle past his personal and local historical limitations to the generally valid, normally human forms" (2004, 18). On the one hand, it is certain that Paul's journey has achieved exactly this; he has surpassed the limitations and barriers that have been placed in front of him and returned victorious, but that is only the beginning. He becomes a symbol for the Fremen, and as David Higgins argues,

> Paul's quest to become the Kwisatz Haderach runs parallel to an inward social and political journey; the desert planet Arrakis begins as a subjugated colony vital to imperial economics, but rather than attempting to decolonize Arrakis, Paul seeks to

[109] It is worth mentioning that it is Alia, who at the time was almost three years old, the one to actually assassinate Baron Vladimir Harkonen with a Gom Jabbar; this emphasizes her precocious nature, as well as the effects the Water of Life had on her.

> use the planet's power (both its natural resources and its military potential) in order to gain control of the Empire from within. Rather than dismantling the Imperium, the novel posits the redemption of Empire through the enlightened guidance of a male superman who has successfully decolonized his own inner space. (2013, 236-237)

I would only partially agree with Higgins's interpretation. It is true that Paul 'decolonizes his inner space', becoming for all intents and purposes a Fremen in order to use them, fighting partially for his own interests as well as those of the previously oppressed people of Arrakis. It is important however to remember that he does not arrive on the planet with the intention of being a liberator or fighting for freedom, rather he is hurled into this scenario because of the schemes of the Harkonnens. By siding with the Fremen he becomes a hero and symbol out of personal necessity; after he has gained the trust of the oppressed, he then becomes a leader, a ruler, and finally a despot. Paul understands that what he has started, he is no longer capable of stopping. This is partially what Frank Herbert meant when he talked about the dangers correlated with heroes; by constructing a Paul in such a way that he may be both seen as a savior as well as an opportunist, he also critiques the nature of political figures as well as portraying the nature and origin of the abuse of power.

I would argue that the political power and influence the Harkonnens had, governing the planet of Arrakis as a military dictatorship, alongside their subterfuges and machinations, within the events portrayed in *Dune* was simply substituted by another regime stemming from another source. Although the two houses are enemies, that is not to say that they are also antithetical. Leto understood the importance of maintaining good relationships with the Fremen and gave them more than the Harkonnens ever would have, but he still used them as a source of labor. Paul also uses the native population of Arrakis for his own war and personal vendetta; the main difference is that the Fremen justify it because they see in him the figure of a prophet. It might be opportune to be mindful that the myth of Lisan al-Gaib was established by the Bene Gesserit. Paul, as such, denotes a certain multifaceted nature when considering him in the discourse of oppressor-oppressed. What complicates this dynamic even further, and possibly what can become a key to interpreting his character, is the role of ecology. As Scholes and Rabkin remarked,

> He [PAUL] immerses himself in Fremen culture, even undergoing the male rite of passage by riding a sandworm. It is Paul's belief in the inherent rightness of the Fremen's association of the sandworms with the life-giving melange that leads him to discover its true source. This belief in the Fremen, who understand and deal with their environment, is a belief in an ecological viewpoint. (1977, 146)

As previously mentioned, Herbert puts side by side the nature of an ecosystem capable of adapting and changing with the shifts in socio-political equilibriums, creating a juxtaposition that is slowly portrayed throughout the entirety of the saga. This awareness of fluidity and volatility can also be connected to how he describes prescience and how it is used by Paul[110]. His clairvoyance allows him to experience past, present and future at the same time, but the various paths that he is able to take would also alter the futures he sees. To further complicate things, there is also the question of Paul's true intents; in the second and third books, other characters will hint towards the possibility of having to choose the path of tyranny in order to prevent a larger degree of suffering. This can only be achieved by the one who has the ability to see in the future and knows which path leads to less suffering. For these reasons, it is difficult to indicate the character of Paul Muad'Dib as being clearly good or evil, positive or negative, a liberating force or an oppressor in disguise.

Regardless, another duality that arises in *Dune* is presented by the Fremen themselves in regards to what they are fighting for. On one hand, they rebel against the oppressors, and on the other, they are demanding a specific type of abundance, which on their planet is translated with an abundance of water. The only problem is that by introducing a large quantity of water on Arrakis, something that the Fremen have been working on for several hundreds of years as it will be better explained, would also radically change the entire ecosystem. To simplify and better understand the concept, if there is no more desert, there are no more sandworms, which in turn translates to no more melange and this means the end of space travel and the

[110] In one of the epigraphs written by princess Irulan (who at this point of narration has not yet been presented), reports: "Muad'Dib could indeed, see the Future, but you must understand the limits of this power. Think of sight. You have eyes, yet cannot see without light. If you are on the floor of a valley, you cannot see beyond your valley. Just so, Muad'Dib could not always choose to look across the mysterious terrain. He tells us that a single obscure decision of prophecy, perhaps the choice of one word over another, could change the entire aspect of the future. He tells us "The vision of time is broad, but when you pass through it, time becomes a narrow door." And always, he fought the temptation to choose a clear, safe course, warning "That path leads ever down into stagnation" (*Dune*, 277).

Empire. In the final pages, that is exactly what Paul promises the Fremen: “There will be flowing water here open to the sky and green oases rich with good things. But we have the spice to think of, too. Thus, there will always be desert on Arrakis … and fierce winds, and trials to toughen a man” (*Dune*, 615). It is unclear how much of the shifts in the planet’s ecosystem he was able to perceive when promising both water and desert, but this key factor adds to his complexity as a character as previously stated. The final note I want to add on this topic comes from another epigraph, written by Princess Irulan, that recapitulates what I have argued thus far:

> He was warrior and mystic, ogre and saint, the fox and the innocent, chivalrous, ruthless, less than a god, more than a man. There is no measuring Muad’Dib’s motives by ordinary standards. In the moment of his triumph, he saw the death prepared for him, yet he accepted the treachery. Can you say he did this out of a sense of justice? Whose justice, then? Remember, we speak now of the Muad’Dib who ordered battle drums made from his enemies’ skins, the Muad’Dib who denied the conventions of his ducal past with a wave of the hand, saying merely: “I am the Kwisatz Haderach. That is reason enough.” (*Dune*, 588)

Although he sided with the Fremen, from this description it is easy to see how Paul is, at least in part, a despot. His story, as such, continues in the second novel. In his introduction to *Dune Messiah*, Brian Herbert reflects on how the second entry in the series was misunderstood by the critics, publishers and readers. Many did not understood or appreciated the antithetical elements that subvert the epic nature of the hero and his story and lead towards the representation of a dystopian violent failure. In Brian’s words,

> The detractors did not understand that *Dune Messiah* was a bridging work, connecting *Dune* with an as-yet-uncompleted third book in the trilogy. To get there, the second novel in the series flipped over the carefully crafted myth of Paul Muad’Dib and revealed the dark side of the messiah phenomenon that had appeared to be so glorious in *Dune*. (*Dune Messiah*, ix)

This reflection in part corroborates what I described previously as Paul’s multifaceted nature and underlines Herbert’s initial vision for the trilogy. Brian adds that one of the reasons his father saw fallacy in heroes and endless possibilities for making mistakes is to be found in his career as a speechwriter. By working in D.C., Frank saw the “megalomania of leadership and the pitfalls of following magnetic, charming politicians” (*Dune Messiah*, x). The portrayal of a society that blindly

follows a leader such as Paul becomes a cautionary message, one that may be found as a background undertone throughout the entirety of the saga. This dichotomy between the fallacy of the leader and the people who should pay attention when dealing with icons and heroes is also echoed in the very first epigraph of the book itself:

> But there were, after all, a man born Paul Atreides and a woman born Alia. Their flesh was subject to space and time. And even though their oracular powers placed them beyond the usual limits of time and space, they came from human stock. They experienced real events which left real traces upon a real universe. To understand them, it must be seen that their catastrophe was the catastrophe of all mankind. This work is dedicated, then, not to Muad'Dib or his sister, but to their heirs -- to all of us. (*Dune Messiah*, 7)

There is an intent on Herbert's part to almost seemingly break the fourth wall and reach out to the readers. 'To all of us', in the context of the epigraph given that it is written by the Mahdi Spirit Cult (Fremen who worship Paul), would refer mainly to the descendants, physical as well as spiritual, of Muad'Dib. In a greater context, the 'catastrophe of all humankind' almost puts the reader in the position of being part of this inscription.

Dune Messiah's events take place twelve years after the ones depicted in the first novel. During this time, Paul had no choice but to accept his role as a prophet, as the title itself suggests, but he also maintained his reign as Emperor. His actions unleashed in the galaxy a jihad, a holy war in his name that he is unable to control. Through prescience, he is certain that although billions have died, the path that he chose leading towards the future is not the worst possible outcome. What he tried to actively avoid, by choosing a route that is however admittedly paved with genocide, is a stagnation that would lead the Galaxy to be utterly destroyed[111]. However, in doing so, Paul also managed to acquire a socio-political and economical power superior to any known in the galaxy. His rule is nothing if not a tyrannical one:

> Production growth and income growth must not get out of step in my Empire. That is the substance of my command. There are to be no balance-of-payment difficulties

[111] As previously mentioned, this is one of the main reasons that led critics to compare it to Asimov's Foundation trilogy.

> between the different spheres of influence. And the reason for this is simply because I command it. I want to emphasize my authority in this area. I am the supreme energy-eater of this domain, and will remain so, alive or dead. My Government is the economy. - Order in Council The Emperor Paul Muad'dib (*Dune Messiah*, 188)

As already iterated various times, Paul's multifaceted nature is constantly stressed throughout the novels. On the one hand he is acclaimed as a prophetic figure, one who states that he will bring peace in the Empire, but on the other he merely abuses his status to impose his will. Because of the power and importance Paul Maud'Dib amassed, his army as well as his monopoly over the production and distribution of melange, he becomes an enemy to the political agents that previously ruled the Empire. Normally, because of his prescience, any opposition would be impossible, but the Spacing Guild is able to use its Navigators to partially shield their true indentations. As such, the Spacing Guild and the order of the Bene Gesserit coalesce and conspire in order to dethrone the new tyrannical emperor. They also involve the Bene Tleilaxu, an isolated group of genetic scientists, who produce Face Dancers (spies which are able to mimic any human being) and gholas of deceased people (humanoids similar to clones, grown in laboratories, capable of even recalling the memories and nature of the cloned person). The three-sided alliance also recruits Princess Irulan to spy on Paul, which in turn, knowing this through his clairvoyance, uses her for information just as well. His union to the Princess was a political machination either way and he still has Chani as his concubine.

In an overarching subplot, the Tleilaxu offer Paul a ghola of Duncan Idaho; they hope to start disrupting the bond between him and the Fremen (since the natives of Arrakis see the Tleilaxu technology as profane) as well as having their ghola make Muad'Dib question his own rule. Because of the fondness Paul had for Duncan, in spite of understanding the enemy's intentions, he accepts the clone of his deceased mentor. The increasing tension that follows leads a group of Fremen to use an atomic weapon, given by the Bene Tleilaxu, against Paul. Although this renders him blind, it ends up only reinforcing his stance as a god-elected prophet; while by tradition Fremen that can no longer see are required to exile themselves in the desert, Paul uses his prescience to see even better than he would have with his lost eyes.

The ploy of using the ghola of Duncan Idaho as an assassin also backfires completely; because of a strong shock, the ghola manages to reawaken all of his

memories and regaining his old identity. In other words, he has stopped being a ghola and simply becomes Duncan Idaho again. What ends up happening however is that Chani dies at childbirth, managing nevertheless to deliver two infants: while Paul had foreseen the birth of his daughter, he had failed to see the birth of his son. He understands that by deciding what path to take towards the future, he has rendered himself blind to all other possible futures; finally, he decides to follow the Fremen tradition and exile himself in the desert.[112]

The Atreides genetic line, and mainly the story of Leto II and Ghanima as twins in which the prescience and clairvoyance ability has reached its full potential, will be portrayed in *Children of Dune* and *God Emperor of Dune*. In the third and fourth book, more importantly, the ecological shifts of Arrakis take centre stage. The planet's ecosystem, because of the gradual introduction of larger quantities of water, changes; it is a slow process, but large periods of time are condensed in the narration and as such, the alterations in Arrakis's flora and fauna are portrayed. This topic will constitute a case study in the second part of my work.

Nine years have passed since Paul has went into exile in the desert. The initial ecological shifts, mainly more frequent rains and oases forming in the desert, also denote a socio-political alteration. More and more pilgrims visit the planet, uniting under the Fremen banner, while in the background the jihad continues throughout the galaxy.

To briefly summarize *Children of Dune*, it is important to understand the role of the twins in Herbert's vision. Because of their innate prescience, they are capable of foreseeing what the climatic changes will also signify for the planet itself, and consequently for the entire galaxy. The disappearance of the deserts compromises the habitat of the sandworms, but these creatures are in turn the ones responsible for producing melange. After a long sequence of events involving assassination attempts, escape scenes and political scheming that are not relevant for my analysis, Leto II is faced with the same spice-trance that his father had also previously undertaken. By awakening the full potential of his prescience, he is able

[112] Because of how things turn out, the Atreides line is left to prosper with no foreseeable enemies: Irulan abandons the Bene Gesserit effectively removing their leverage on the situation, the Spacing Guild and the Tleilaxu are discredited for their actions and Paul avoids deification. This last point is important given how the jihad that was launched by the Fremen in his name would have only led towards even more bloodshed if his image would have become that of a deity or a martyr for instance. Alia, Paul's sister, is left to take care of Leto II and Ghanima, her twin nephews; given that she was already worshiped by the Fremen, the transition does not create further political tensions.

to see that almost all the paths leading towards the future also lead towards the annihilation of human life, except for what he refers to as 'The Golden Path'. Leto II understands that his father had had the opportunity to follow that path before him, but had chosen not to[113]. As such, Leto is resolved to follow the Golden Path for the sake of the human race. It is important to understand that the consequences for him are dire: history will remember him both as a God and a tyrant, no one will understand the importance of what he has accomplished by doing so and, most of all, he has complete awareness of these facts.

To follow the Golden Path means that Leto has to sacrifice his own humanity. He fuses with a gathering of sandtrouts, which are the larval form of the adult sandworms. His body begins a slow process of metamorphosis, making him gain super-human strength, agility in traversing sand and, to an extent, invulnerability. Leto II becomes part of the planet's ecosystem and ends up destroying several of the water basins that had been constructed by the Fremen to slow down the ecological changes that had already begun. In his new body, he will be able to live for thousands of years and accompany humanity towards the only path that does not lead to annihilation. By the end of *Children of Dune,* Leto II proclaims himself Emperor with full dominion over Arrakis and the Fremen.[114]

God Emperor of Dune is narrated rather differently than the previous novels; the narration tends to be more fragmented because of how the passage of time is also depicted. Instead of describing the events that transpired within the next couple of years with the same characters as in the first three books, the fourth one portrays Arrakis after 3500 years have passed. To further enhance this discrepancy, most of the chapters begin with epigraphs that are reported to be from the Stolen Journals; these are fragments written by Leto II almost as a form of personal diary. They record his view of the world and of the future, without necessarily specifying at which point of his life and metamorphosis they have been written. His words, as such, give

[113] As I quoted previously, Paul had told his mother that he was just a seed; the first book subtly referenced this very event, the fact that his son was the one who was meant to follow that precise future and not him.

[114] There are various other subplots that I did not consider important for the purpose of my analysis such as other political struggles for power, Alia's descent into madness, her suicide and Paul's death. To consolidate his power, Leto also marries Ghanima, his own sister. He does so only out of interests and political manipulation, while letting her continue the Atreides line with Farad'n Corrino. Farrad'n is also an important character in *Children of Dune* that ultimately gives Leto control over his personal Sardaukar army, as well as regency of planet Corrino.

the narration a prophetic overtone, and his character becomes a bridge between human and divine as well as past and future. Furthermore, his Stolen Journals are marked by a solemn tone of omniscience, in accordance to the fact that he is heading towards a future that he has seen through prescience. Just to give an example of this technique, I will quote one of these excerpts:

> Some say I have no conscience. How false they are, even to themselves. I am the only conscience which has ever existed. As wine retains the perfume of its cask, I retain the essence of my most ancient genesis, and that is the seed of conscience. That is what makes me holy. I am God because I am the only one who really knows his heredity! - The Stolen Journals (*God Emperor of Dune*, 65)

The certainty of his words, as well as the awareness of his own divinity characterize him more as a religious fanatic, a zealot and a despot, while also being the symbol of his own religion. He has exercised his power and control over the galaxy by remaining the only supplier of melange, putting an end to most of the Great Houses (in other words changing the political structure of the Empire), rendering space travel limited and enforcing peace through stagnation. As previously mentioned, while it may be surmised that he has avoided the fall of humanity that in his vision would have otherwise destroyed itself, the status quo he has established is reminiscent of a medieval-like society given how even technology has been even more severely limited. Furthermore, a clear paradox is at play in this case: Paul sought a path that avoided the very same stagnation that Leto's reign delivered and yet the Golden Path is the one that is said to take humanity towards salvation.

Amongst the various important events that unfold in *God Emperor of Dune* is yet another rebellion led by Siona (a descendent of Ghanima's bloodline and, in other words, Leto's niece over many generations); this is all according to Leto's design who wants to further the Atreides line by having her procreate with Duncan Idaho's ghola[115]. Through numerous other subplots, Leto's true vulnerability emerges: given that his body has become that of a sandworm, similar on a cellular and biological level, water will destroy him. This is reported in one of the epigraphs as well:

[115] Leto II used the Tleilaxu technology to recreate a ghola of Duncan Idaho each generation and used him as an advisor throughout the three and a half millennia.

> I am beginning to hate water. The sandtrout skin which impels my metamorphosis has learned the sensitivities of the worm. Moneo and many of my guards know my aversion. […] Now, I must avoid water because there are no other sandtrout, only the half dormant creatures of my skin. Without sandtrout to bring this world back to desert, Shai-Hulud will not emerge; the sandworm cannot evolve until the land is parched. I am their only hope. - The Stolen Journals (*God Emperor of Dune*, 158)

This passage represents the cyclical nature towards which his metamorphoses is heading. The sandtrouts that make up his body, now a seven meter long sandworm with a human face, will have to return to the their larval stage and begin anew the cycle which will in turn create other sandworms. In his vision of the future, Leto II already knows that Arrakis will revert once more to the arid planet it once was. He penetrates the very fabric of the ecosystem, becoming an agent of the natural order of the planet and assuming on himself the responsibility of transporting the sandtrouts to their maturity. In fact, towards the end of the novel, the assassination attempt on his life (carried mainly by Siona and Duncan) is successful, making him plummet from a bridge in a river below. The worm portion of his body is destroyed, but the sandtrouts escape with the currents.

Leto's last words disclose an important detail about the Golden Path: the intention was to create a human that could be invisible to prescience and clairvoyant visions and Siona is the result. As such, her descendants will also have this ability. In his vision, this is the key to free humanity from the dominating forces of oracles. An argument could be made that this is the true representation of free will, but it remains only an interpretation and Leto's vision remains largely unexplained.

The God emperor's death causes two radical changes in the setting of the following novels. On one hand, there is a reversal on the technology ban, seeing how computers are needed for space travel and that Navigators have become obsolete. It also means that the Galaxy has lost the tyrannical power that reigned over it and, as such, this leads to what is referred to as the Scattering, a massive exodus of the Empire citizens towards other galaxies and planet.

Heretics of Dune and *Chapterhouse: Dune* are both set 1500 hundred years after the death of Leto II. I will not add much of the plot of these two novels as they only partially reiterate some of the themes already portrayed in first ones and furthermore, as previously mentioned, the sixth one was meant to have yet another

sequel that was never written given the death of the author. What is however worth mentioning is that the Scattering that was caused by the God Emperor's death, might be perceived as a fulfilment of the prophecy itself and of the Golden Path. By destroying the vast economic system that the former Empire had established, based on the singular resource of spice, Leto enabled humanity to flourish once again, exploring space and not being trapped in a stagnant system overruled by the wealthy through sheer despotism. This however creates a contradiction given how his reign was nothing else than a tyrannical rule.

Both Heretics of Dune and *Chapterhouse: Dune* explore once again an iteration of political struggle, indicating cyclicality, where the Bene Gesserit Order is juxtaposed to the Honored Matres. Many of the epigraphs, as such, report the teachings of these orders and their stance on power and intent. What distinguishes the two last novels is the fact that sandworms, who are once again part of Arrakis (now referred to only as Rakis), are not exclusive to a single planet anymore. Through the use of technology, they can be introduced in the ecosystem of other desert-type planets, this in turn also means that melange can be produced in other parts of the galaxy. Although important from an ecological point of view, this constitutes a lesser motivation for the setting itself: if technology has advanced and spice is not needed for space travel anymore, it stands to reason that its value has diminished. This principle that puts into direct correlation both the ecological as well as the economical aspects shall be useful in the second part of the dissertation.

After portraying the narrative structure and main events in the *Dune* saga, what seems important in Frank Herbert's creation of his world is his emphasis on history and time. By a process of narratological repetition and insistence on similar power struggles throughout the saga, he ends up amplifying their magnitude and underlining not only the basic principle of history repeating itself, but also of how easy it is to manipulate and be manipulated. In this conceptual frame, I would also situate the condition of defeat that serves as a guiding thread throughout my analysis. In Herbert's case defeat happens on a galactic scale, even in a futuristic setting, even when society has already been defeated by machines and ended up prohibiting their use, even twenty thousand years in the future the very same principle of oppressor and oppressed still repeats itself.

I would argue furthermore that even the Golden Path is just another example of defeat that Herbert purposefully constructed as a contradiction. If the purpose of

the Golden Path was to avoid the destruction of humanity by its own hands but it required for the figure of a tyrant to destroy the entire geopolitical system that had been previously created, the stagnant period of time and resulting peace becomes nothing more than a façade. After that period, history once again will repeat itself, and new power structures and political agents will form. The hunger for power that Herbert postulates as a basis on behalf of the wealthy leaders ends up however affecting everyone; going back to the essay I quoted at the beginning of the chapter, it becomes evident that the 'messianic convulsions' he mentions indeed touch every stratum of society. "Demagogues, fanatics, con-game artists, the innocent and the not-so-innocent bystanders-all were to have a part in the drama" as Herbert puts it. For this very same reason, in his holistic view, the only solution is to denounce heroes and not believe in them or to try and at least understand their fallacy. This is a concept that he insists upon repeatedly and tries to exemplify extensively. To take it one step further, Frank Herbert also understood that for a rebellion to occur, it is also important to have a disruption in the status quo or give people the reason to fight as well as the awareness that such a thing is possible. One of the epigraphs reports Paul Muad'Dib's thoughts and states: "There should be a science of discontent. People need hard times and oppression to develop psychic muscles" (*Dune*, 206). To simplify, if society is suspended in a limbo of staleness, in other words stagnation (similar to the three millennia of the God Emperor's reign), then people will not even realize that there are better options, a different future or a different path. Herbert, better than many writers of his time, understood how politics in general manage to desensitize people by appeasing them with trivialities. To recapitulate what has been explained thus far, another textual passage might prove useful:

> Governments can be useful to the governed only so long as inherent tendencies toward tyranny are restrained. Monarchies have some good features beyond their star qualities. They can reduce the size and parasitic nature of the management bureaucracy. They can make speedy decisions when necessary. They fit an ancient human demand for a parental (tribal/feudal) hierarchy where every person knows his place. It is valuable to know your place, even if that place is temporary. It is galling to be held in place against your will. This is why I teach about tyranny in the best possible way by example. Even though you read these words after a passage of eons, my tyranny will not be forgotten. My Golden Path assures this. Knowing my message, I expect you to be exceedingly careful about the powers you delegate to any government. -The Stolen Journals (*God Emperor of Dune*, 314)

In this excerpt, Leto's thoughts epitomise Frank Herbert's key ideas of the entire saga. 'Leading by example' in this case becomes 'writing to exemplify'; the God emperor's hypocrisies, although self-denounced, serve not only as a reminder of the truth behind political power, but also to directly include the readers themselves. I would argue that this technique purposefully bridges together the fictitious dimension of the novel with the real one he lived in.

One last remark should be directed towards the postcolonial read of the novel; Herbert, ahead of his time, had nuanced a theme that in recent years gained a broader academic perspective. As Higgins states "readers are invited to distance themselves from identification with imperial oppressors and to identify with decolonizing nationalists overcoming the tyranny of imperialism" (2013: 239). The figure of Paul, although depicted as a prophet and worshiped by the Fremen, is still a tyrant who uses his power in order to control an underdeveloped civilization. This is just one of the reasons that made the Dune saga such an object of critical analysis along the years. Through the use of science speculative fiction, Herbert explored complex dynamics such as colonial practices, ecological and ecocritical perspectives and socio-political imbalances where the abuse of power leads to the creation of an idolized fraud.

4.2 Hellstrom's Hive, an example of technological defeat

Frank Herbert had the inspiration to write this novel because of the 1972 particular 'documentary' about insect life entitled *The Hellstrom Chronicle*[116]. The premise of the novel is the existence of an ever-growing society of hybrid human-insect beings that build an underground hive; through a continuous evolutionary process, their aim is to eventually replace all of humanity.

Plot wise it is less convoluted than the *Dune* saga and even the political overtones and implications are less present. It does however focuses on perturbing

[116] *The Hellstrom Chornicle* received the Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature and the BAFTA Award for Best Documentary; it is a depiction of the life of insects in an ominous and eerie tone.

and unsettling themes by analysing the implications of extreme bioengineering and the repercussions on the social and anthropological dimensions.

In the novel, Nills Hellstrom is monitored by a governmental Agency[117] not because he is a famous entomologist filmmaker with various political ties, but rather because as a scientific advisor he is suspected to either being a communist or building technologically superior weapons. Furthermore, the government is not even interested in stopping a potential threat to the state and its people, but rather to seize part of Hellstrom's weapons, emphasizing once more how political agents move out of personal interest. Given how the first operative the Agency ordered to investigate disappeared without a trace, more are sent to discreetly gather information. What they discover becomes the core of the novel: the subterranean Hive has been there for more than three hundred years, spanning over fifty or sixty levels underground and having at its disposal more than fifty thousand workers. The final step in Hellstrom's[118] plan is world domination, by initially slowly substituting humans with human-like advanced beings and finally swarming the entire planet.

From a metaliterary point of view, there is a sense of claustrophobia that persists and transpires in the narrative structure: there is no division of chapters and the various perspectives of the characters are amassed together. The few moments of respite from this technique are given with excerpts directly from Hellstrom's diary; this use of paratextual notes is akin to the one Herbert used in *Dune* with the epigraphs. By encapsulating the narration in such a way this also gives a representation of the hive life, the underground colony that extents for more than fifty levels. The subterranean dimension and claustrophobic sensation emphasizes the gritty themes that the novel presents; in a way, this is a direct opposite if we consider Herbert's focus on the vastness of space and immense political intrigue depicted in *Dune*.

One nuanced theme is the loss of personal identity; the hive-mind in this case only has functional workers and agents, everything has a specific purpose and nothing is left to chance. All of the hybrids that are in the hive, although genetically

[117] "The Agency. No one ever called it anything else" (*Hellstrom's Hive*, 15). The generic nature of the Agency is meant to emphasize that the struggles for power and interest will always exist and don't even require a precise name. This in turn also creates a juxtaposition with the hive's inhabitants who are also just as easily expendable as the agents.

[118] It should be rather said that this is the hive mind's plan. Hellstrom is but one of its agents, an integral part of its society, who has functioned as the appointed leader for more than a hundred years through the help of advance bioengineering.

and biologically advanced, do not deviate from the chain of command. In this representation of hive-mind, the self has been replaced by the collective; the mentality is that of insects and by applying it to humans, Herbert succeeded in creating an effectively grotesque futuristic scenario. As William Touponce (1988: 113) argues:

> But even Hellstrom's diaries, excerpts from which make up a good half of the novel and which are addressed to future readers to justify and explain, do little to humanize his project. Considering the fact that Herbert repeatedly warned against the dangers of fanaticism, and himself rejected "hot gospel" ecology, it seems likely that Hellstrom is a portrait of human ecology gone awry.

Hellstrom, as a character, is convinced however that the hive is the true future of humanity, and so is everyone else that is part of it. By annihilating the self and creating a social structure that focuses only on evolution, Herbert takes the theme to an unthinkable extreme. While it is true that various hybrids are better than human beings (either more physically apt, intelligent or even overspecialized in specific tasks), others undergo physical mutations to reach that level. In other words, they have abandoned their humanity in favour of the evolutionary process of the species and the growth of the hive. One of the paratextual epigraphs reports the words of one of the previous Brood Mothers[119]: "Some threat is good for a species. It tends to stimulate breeding, to raise the level of awareness. Too much, however, can have a stupefying effect. It is one of the tasks of Hive leadership to adjust the level of stimulating threat" (*Hellstrom's Hive*, 22). The Hive's leadership, in other words, has the specific function of supervising its own continuous growth and evolution. Progress however, in this case, takes a macabre tone, inhumane to an unimaginable extent. Amongst what is found in the Hive, except for mating chambers, are also 'reproductive stumps'[120], half bodies that are used for their genetic importance. In this case, the human is not required in its entirety, only the genetic material that the body houses.

[119] As is the case with many insect colonies, the Hive also relies on a matriarchal order where the 'queen' or Brood Mother in this case oversees all aspects of the colony.

[120] "He stared at the objects, unwilling to believe his eyes were reporting accurately. Each bench carried what appeared to be the stump of a human body from about the waist to the knees. Some were grossly male and some female. Among the females were a few whose abdomens bulged as though they were pregnant. Beyond waist and knees there was nothing that could be thought of as flesh—only that tubing with its pulsing colors." (*Hellstrom's Hive*, 299)

“To Hellstrom, the hive is a cocoon from which the next stage in human evolution will emerge. To us, however, it evokes little more than horror and disgust” (Touponce, 112). What is perceived as grotesque and horrifying in this case is not the intent to evolve, but rather the means. By dehumanizing the various aspects of the human being, from his identity to his own body and flesh, Herbert creates alienation. It is important to note that genetic manipulation was also used in *Dune*, but it was achieved differently:

> For our purposes, we borrow a definition from the Bene Gesserit and we consider the various worlds as gene pools, sources of teachings and teachers, sources of the possible. Our goal is not to rule, but to tap these gene pools, to learn, and to free ourselves from all restraints imposed by dependency and government. (*Dune Messiah*, 104)

In this example, for instance, genetic pools are connected with memory and learning and not only functionality; thorough the *Dune* saga, even the gholas (who are considered aberrations by some) are clones who maintain a sense of self and even identity. In *Hellstrom’s Hive*, the only possible verdict the agent that is investigating it is able to reach is one of total annihilation: “This was a horror, an abomination, a thing that needed to be burned out” (299).

The open ended nature of *Hellstrom’s Hive* further extends the eerie and uneasy sensation that perspires throughout the entire novel. There is little doubt that the Hive and its hybrids will eventually swarm the planet, it becomes just a question of when. It could be possible however to analyse the evolutionary process depicted in the novel through a different light. As Peter Brigg suggests,

> On close examination the hive is much less a condemnation than one first supposes. Its activities are carefully justified in ecological terms that set it off as a model of biological practicality in tune with the natural world. […] Although selective breeding in the hive and feeding the dead into vats are repulsive, and the "freedom" may be questioned in light functional specificity of hive members, Herbert again makes it clear that the outside world is a worse situation. (1980: 196)

While the implication behind the ‘ecological terms’ referred by Brigg will be discussed in the second part, I would argue that his reasoning is optimistic at best. The consideration that the outside reality is worse should not be taken as a validation for the dystopian world that Herbert depicted. I would rather contextualize

and consider his novel as a double fear: one regarding the dangers of technology and one regarding the climate of the cold war. I obviously use the word fear only to summarize the concept; it has been already discussed that Herbert's approach to technology and scientific progress is simply a cautionary one. His aim was to make people understand the possible and probable consequences, not to create an anti-technocratic movement. In the second case, it could be argued that, given the political climate between the United States and Russia, *Hellstrom's Hive* could be an interpretation of the Red Scare; I would however consider the novel less political in nature and more inclined to an inquiry into ontological issues.

In this case, the guiding leitmotif of defeat becomes an anthropological one; the role of technology and bioengineering, as previously mentioned, is not to make humans evolve beyond their potential, but rather create a hybrid that is less and less human. I would argue that Herbert did not consider the human-insect creature as the next step in evolution, but rather a sidestep or a diverging path. The price the holistic society that the hive offered becomes the ontological self; accepting willingly such a condition, becomes in itself a defeat.

Table 4.1

Terminology	Definition
BENE GESSERIT	The ancient school of mental and physical training established primarily for female students after the Butlerian Jihad destroyed the so-called ‘‘thinking machines”’ and robots.
CHOAM	Acronym for Combine Honnete Ober Advancer Mercantiles—the universal development corporation controlled by the Emperor and Great Houses with the Guild and Bene Gesserit as silent partners.
CRYSKNIFE	The sacred knife of the Fremen on Arrakis. It is manufactured in two forms from teeth taken from dead sandworms.
DEW COLLECTORS or DEW PRECIPITATORS	Not to be confused with dew gatherers. Collectors or precipitators are egg-shaped devices about four centimeters on the long axis. They are made of chromoplastic that turns a reflecting white when subjected to light, and reverts to transparency in darkness. The collector forms a markedly cold surface upon which dawn dew will precipitate. They are used by Fremen to line concave planting depressions where they provide a small but reliable source of water.
DEW GATHERERS	Workers who reap dew from the plants of Arrakis, using a scythelike dew reaper.
EL-SAYAL	The ‘‘‘rain of sand.’’ A fall of dust which has been carried to medium altitude (around 2,000 meters) by a coriolis storm. El-sayals frequently bring moisture to ground level.
FREMEN	The free tribes of Arrakis, dwellers in the desert, remnants of the Zensunni Wanderers. (‘‘Sand Pirates’’ according to the Imperial Dictionary.)
GOM JABBAR	The high-handed enemy; that specific poison needle tipped with meta-cyanide used by Bene Gesserit Proctors in the deathalternative test of human awareness.
GUILD	The Spacing Guild, one leg of the political tripod maintaining the Great Convention. The Guild was the second mental-physical training school after the Butlerian Jihad. The Guild monopoly on space travel and transport and upon international banking is taken as the beginning point of the Imperial Calendar.
HARVESTER	A large (often 120 meters by 40 meters) spice mining machine commonly employed on rich, uncontaminated melange blows. (Often called a ‘‘crawler’’ because of buglike body on independent tracks).

JIHAD, BUTLERIAN	The crusade against computers, thinking machines, and conscious robots begun in 201 B.G. and concluded in 108 B.G. Its chief commandment remains in the O.C. Bible as ‘’Thou shalt not make a machine in the likeness of a human mind’.
KWISATZ HADERACH	‘Shortening of the Way’. This is the label applied by the Bene Gesserit to the unknown for which they sought a genetic solution: a male Bene Gesserit whose organic mental powers would bridge space and time.
LISAN AL-GAIB	‘The Voice from the Outer World’. In Fremen messianic legends, an off-world prophet. Sometimes translated as ‘Giver of Water’.
MAHDI	In the Fremen messianic legend, ‘The One Who Will Lead Us to Paradise’.
MELANGE	The ‘spice of spices’, the crop for which Arrakis is the unique source. The spice, chiefly noted for its geriatric qualities, is mildly addictive when taken in small quantities, severely addictive when imbibed in quantities above two grams daily per seventy kilos of body weight. Muad’Dib claimed the spice as a key to his prophetic powers. Guild navigators make similar claims. Its price on the Imperial market has ranged as high as 620,000 solaris the decagram.
MENTAT	That class of Imperial citizens trained for supreme accomplishments of logic. ‘Human computers’.
MUAD’DIB	The adapted kangaroo mouse of Arrakis, a creature associated in the Fremen earth-spirit mythology with a design visible on the planet’s second moon. This creature is admired by Fremen for its ability to survive in the open desert.
ORNITHOPTER	Commonly: ’thopter. Any aircraft capable of sustained wing-beat flight in the manner Of birds.
PLASTEEL	Steel which has been stabilized with stravidium fibers grown into its crystal structure.
SANDRIDER	Fremen term for one who is capable of capturing and riding a sandworm.
SANDTIDE	Idiomatic for a dust tide: the variation in level within certain dust-filled basins on Arrakis due to gravitational effects of sun and satellites.
SANDWALKER	Any Fremen trained to survive in the open desert.
SARDAUKAR	The soldier-fanatics of the Padishah Emperor. They were men from an environmental background of such ferocity that it killed six out of thirteen persons before the age of eleven. Their military training emphasized ruthlessness and a near-suicidal disregard for personal safety. They were taught from infancy to use cruelty as a standard weapon, weakening opponents with terror.

SHAI-HULUD	Sandworm of Arrakis, the ‘Old Man of the Desert’, ‘Old Father Eternity’, and ‘Grandfather of the Desert’. Significantly, this name, when referred to in a certain tone or written with capital letters, designates the earth deity of Fremen hearth superstitions. Sandworms grow to enormous size (specimens longer than 400 meters have been seen in the deep desert) and live to great age unless slain by one of their fellows or drowned in water, which is poisonous to them. Most of the sand on Arrakis is credited to sandworm action.
SHIELD, DEFENSIVE	The protective field produced by a Holtzman generator. This field derives from Phase One of the suspensornullification effect. A shield will permit entry only to objects moving at slow speeds (depending on setting, this speed ranges from six to nine centimeters per second) and can be shorted out only by a shire-sized electric field.
SHIELD WALL	A mountainous geographic feature in the northern reaches of Arrakis which protects a small area from the full force of the planet’s coriolis storms.
SIETCH	Fremen: ‘Place of assembly in time of danger’. Because the Fremen lived so long in peril, the term came by general usage to designate any cave warren inhabited by one of their tribal communities.
STILLSUIT	Body-enclosing garment invented on Arrakis. Its fabric is a micro-sandwich performing functions of heat dissipation and filter for bodily wastes. Reclaimed moisture is made available by tube from catchpockets.
THUMPER	Short stake with spring-driven clapper at one end. The purpose: to be driven into the sand and set ‘‘thumping’’ to summon shai-hulud.
WATER BURDEN	Fremen: a mortal obligation.
WATERCOUNTERS	Metal rings of different size, each designating a specific amount of water payable out of Fremen stores. Watercounters have profound significance (far beyond the idea of money) especially in birth, death, and courtship ritual.
WINDTRAP	A device placed in the path of a prevailing wind and capable of precipitating moisture from the air caught within it, usually by a sharp and distinct drop in temperature within the trap.

5. Common themes: religion, technology and society

This chapter has the main function of marking the division between the two parts of my work, as well as briefly emphasizing the main ideas that have emerged from the various literary texts thus far. A thematic study and approach will prove useful to affix the various concepts that have been analysed in the previous chapters, as well as further explain how they were interpreted by Philip K. Dick, Frank Herbert and Ayn Rand respectively. Although the three authors converge in their perception of society in several cases, in others their ideology clashes and becomes almost a polar opposite. In either case, they thought about the future society was heading towards and through their speculative fiction gave an interpretation on the dynamics of power, social issues, religious themes, ecological aspects and how the technological advancements could and would influence these various spheres.

Let us however verify beforehand if there were any ties between the three authors in real life and if they knew one another or if they were, at the very least, acquainted with each other's works. One of the few traces that establishes a friendship between Philip K. Dick and Frank Herbert comes from the former's selected letters; it should be however said that, out of all of the five volumes of material, he mentions him only several times and all in regards to the 1974 science fiction convention held in Vancouver (VCON 3). Dick was the guest of honour during the previous year and, as such, one of the organizers, Mike Bailey, asked him to write an introduction for Herbert given how the latter would be the guest the following year[121].

Out of all of the selected letters, Dick writes to Frank Herbert directly only once, always in regards to VCON 3 to congratulate him. Aside for the formal pleasantries with which he starts his letter, he then proceeds to writing about seemingly trivial things from his personal life. The complete letter can be found in Appendix 1 since it servers to reinforce several of Dick's traits discussed in the previous chapter. He explains how he sold two novels that year, as well as the rights to *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* to U.A. – his preoccupation with money

[121] "Congratulations on having a 3rd Vancouver Convention! And on getting Frank Herbert! I've known Frank for—let's see, since about 1965—and here enclosed you will find a two-page piece on him that I've written per your request." Letter to Mike Bailey (*Selected letters vol 2*, 354).

was a constant in his life, even in 1973 when he was financially more stable. He then writes about how he married Tessa and has a four-month-old son with her, but also tells Herbert about the people that he will be meeting in Vancouver as well as hopefully a woman, Jamis[122], with which he fell in love with; this is to be correlated with his tumultuous love life as explained in chapter two.

During the 1974 Vancouver science-fiction convention (VCON 3), the audience listened to an introductory note written by Philip K. Dick (who could not attend due to different circumstances) about Frank Herbert. In this introduction, Dick starts by saying that it is usually not an exciting experience as one might think to encounter the authors in person, given how they tend to create false expectations; he then states that Frank Herbert is an exception to this generalized rule. In his own words,

> This reaction of acute depression is a natural one, because s-f writers are by and large dull, ordinary-looking and badly-dressed as door-to-door vacuum cleaner salesmen. Worse than that they are pompous. […] Never model yourself after any s-f writer – except Frank Herbert. He is, in my mind, a great writer – but even more, a great and kind human being, with a twinkling, genial worldly wisdom you should pay attention to, and which you may never see the like of again.[123]

Philip K. Dick then proceeds to saying that he sees Herbert as a balanced man and the ideal of the Greeks, at ease in whatever he does and a paragon of a human being. “In all the years I’ve known him not once have I ever heard him speak badly of anyone nor have I heard even the meanest creature concoct an insult in his direction”. It is important to note that these words regarding their friendship might have been more for the effect of the eulogy than corresponding reality. There are little to no traces of any further important interactions between the two.

Another link, although even more superficial, can be traced between Philip Dick and Ayn Rand; Rand is never mentioned in Dick’s letters nor are there any traces of her ever having spoken to him, however her name appears in two distinct

[122] “(I) am looking forward with hope toward the Vancouver Convention in February in Vancouver. You must go, if only to meet the Guest of Honor Frank Herbert (who wrote DUNE) who is an old friend of mine and a neat guy.” Letter to Jamis, no surname (*Selected letters vol 2*, 364).

[123] This excerpt is taken from a brochure made for the 1974 VCON, which can be located in the *Special Collections and University Archive* of the UC Riverside Library, California; to my knowledge, it has never been published in any critical edition. Given the link it establishes between the two authors, the first part will be included in Appendix 2.

novels. In *Dr. Bloodmoney,* she is mentioned as follows "No one would be dependent on big society; it would all be small towns and individuality, like Ayn Rand talked about in her books" (67). The passage is a reflection of what society was becoming after the severe nuclear disaster depicted in the novel and the individuality refers, most probably, to Rand's objectivism. In *A Scanner Darkly,* on the other hand, Rand's *The Fountainhead* is mentioned as one of the artefacts a character chooses to have with him before committing suicide, as it reads in the following excerpt:

> He spent several days deciding on the artifacts. Much longer than he had spent deciding to kill himself, and approximately the same time required to get that many reds. He would be found lying on his back, on his bed, with a copy of Ayn Rand's *The Fountainhead* (which would prove he had been a misunderstood superman rejected by the masses and so, in a sense, murdered by their scorn) and an unfinished letter to Exxon protesting the cancellation of his gas credit card. That way he would indict the system and achieve something by his death, over and above what the death itself achieved. (147 – 148)

It is possible to surmise that, at the very least, Philip K. Dick knew some of Rand's works and was acquainted with her philosophy; these two examples however are the extent of it. He did not mention her in any of his letters or in other examples and did not discuss Rand's objectivism.

Ayn Rand on the other hand lived a more secluded life when compared to the other two authors; she developed an entourage, various people who followed her teachings and several others who even worked on spreading her philosophical point of view[124]. Although she could have a political career or use her influence in other ways, she chose to never stray too far from her inner circle and not have many contacts with other writers. As Patrick Allitt points out, "Rand's stubborn reclusiveness made her politically irrelevant despite her fame. […] Rand had surprisingly little contact with the intellectual luminaries of her generation" (2011: 258-259). As stated in the introduction, out of the three, she is the author that is most removed from the topics I am discussing. This is not only tied to her reclusive nature, given how she spent most of her life developing the philosophy of

[124] Leonard Peikoff's extensive contributions, for example, have already been mentioned in the chapter dedicated to Ayn Rand.

objectivism. Regardless, her works offer several useful ideas that intertwine well within the ideology presented by both Herbert and Dick's novels.

Before exemplifying the various thematic nuances explored by the three authors, there are two main points I want to clarify: the chronological framework used and the core discourse of their work. When considering the literary corpus that has been used for my dissertation, it is possible to identify three different narratological time periods; with this I mean the respective chronologic aspects of the fictional settings. There are some minor exceptions, but it is possible to trace a generic period reference for each author. They are respectively the historical present (Rand), the near future (Dick) and the distant one (Herbert).

Ayn Rand set her novels mostly in the present (with the obvious exception of *Anthem*), or rather her historical present; she used it with the purpose of exploring socio-political and economic issues. As discussed in the third chapter, it is also through her novels, and especially *Atlas Shrugged*, that she explained her philosophy through a more literary approach, rather than an academic one. While it is still speculative fiction, her setting is never a vision of the future and the dramatic possible changes, rather a distortion of her current events.

In Philip K. Dick's case, the chronological framework he mostly employed is the one of a forthcoming and proximate future, usually setting his stories within a time span that ranges from a few years to maximum of a few decades in the future. Obvious minor exceptions to these novels are the ones involving time travel and *The Man in the High Castle*. By adding the futuristic element, Dick also had a higher degree of freedom to create the 'what if' scenarios of his fictional worlds. Through them, he still explored the socio-political issues of his time, but also managed to analyse further his fears for the years to come, reflected in dreadful dystopian scenarios.

Finally, the *Dune* saga is set in a future that is an extremely remote future, almost unimaginable[125]; Frank Herbert employs this setting in part to emphasize the endless cyclicality of time and of social behavioural patterns, but also to give it a more mystical overarching tone. In Herbert's case, the obvious exception amongst the books that have been analysed is *Hellstrom's Hive*.

[125] Roughly the events depicted in *Dune* take place twenty thousand years into the future.

I would finally argue that the three authors work on one core macro-theme, as previously mentioned, and that is the dynamics of power within society; from this overall encompassing matter, various other conceptual nodes branch out. Their approach is to problematize the power structure and the imbalance between the rulers and the ruled. In the various novels that have been analysed, there is always a form of struggle which puts in direct opposition these two groups. As such, the process by which this disparity is portrayed, the reason why one group has power over the other, as well as the conclusions that the authors reach are the main points that will be analysed. This is where the three, all in their respective ways, may either perceive an issue in a similar fashion or have discordant opinions. It becomes nevertheless apparent that there are indirect commonalities and ideas that can be put together in a coherent discourse and that is what will be shown in the following pages.

5.1 Theology

While religion is one of the themes I did not focus on during the course of my investigation, it is still one that echoes throughout several of the selected works in various ways. Different nuances and traces of theological thought are evident while reading especially Philip K. Dick's works; it is however true that he tends to combine religion with philosophical concepts such as existentialism and nihilism. It follows that his novels are a heterogeneous ensemble presenting different perspectives on the meaning and existence of God. In the second chapter, I mentioned how Dick at first perceived himself as a cosmic pantheist; it was only after dropping out of college and later on having a drug-related episode that made him wholeheartedly believe in a superior entity. Throughout his novels, however, this conviction becomes fragmentary at best.

One particular nuance in Dick's perception of this theme is the frantic search for answers, seeking for something that is in nature ineffable or transcendental. This also creates in his writings, and especially in the attitude of some of his characters, a sense of constant dread. It is to no surprise for instance that in *Valis*, Horselover

Fat[126] says that he will die if he does not manage to find God. The paradoxical nature of this passage is that he is saying this to Phil, another character, as well as a representation of himself within the same novel. This acts like a meta-narrative conversation that he establishes with himself through the use of his literary selves.

Dick's pantheistic vision, on the other hand, is somewhat represented in *A Maze of Death*, where in the simulation that the protagonists are living in has a composite theology and belief system that combines the faiths of all humanity[127]. What is however striking, in this case, is the realization on behalf of the protagonists that they had programed a computer to compile a religion by postulating the existence of God. This existence becomes possible only within the simulation; the characters of *A Maze of Death*, once their virtual experience reaches its conclusion, perceive it more as an absurdity than a possibility. Philip K. Dick used similar contradictions and played on this theme in many other instances. For example, as previously elaborated, in *Our Friends from Frolix 8,* the discovery of God's corpse becomes a way to explore the most preposterous form of capitalism; the body of this presumably divine entity becomes a trinket that can be replicated and sold to tourists.

It is however also in *Our Friends from Frolix 8* that another side of theology is explored, and that is the existence not of a God, but that of a superior being. From a narratological point of view, the Frolixians are aliens who serve more as a *deus ex machina* to give the novel its conclusion. It is however also important to note that their superiority is such that it becomes akin to godhood. Throughout other of his novels, Philip Dick creates entities that act as superior beings and, to an extent, are capable of deciding over the fate of humanity. They may be either extra-terrestrial, artificial or even enhanced human beings. This is nuanced for instance in *Vulcan's Hammer* as well, where humanity itself decides to entrust complete decision-making power to a supercomputer. In *Dr. Bloodmoney*, on the other hand, this role is given to Hoppy Harrington who after the nuclear disaster awakes psychokinetic powers;

[126] It is important to remember that Horselover is one of his literary aliases.

[127] "What did we make up? he asked himself blearily. The entire theology, he realized. They had fed into the ship's computer all the data they had in their possession concerning advanced religions. Into T.E.N.C.H. 889B had gone elaborated information dealing with Judaism, Christianity, Mohammedanism, Zoroastrianism, Tibetan Buddhism . . . a complex mass, out of which T.E.N.C.H. 889B was to distill a composite religion, a synthesis of every factor involved […]. Distillate of man's total experience with God—a tremendous logical system, a comforting web deduced by the computer from the postulates given it—in particular the postulate that God existed." (*A Maze of Death*, 181)

these abilities make him believe that he has become the next step in human evolution and, in a way, akin to divinity.

It is interesting to note that in many cases, these godlike entities (either self-proclaimed or simply perceived as such) act according to a specific function that was also explored by Frank Herbert. Herbert portrayed how the idealized figure of a prophet or a leader may be in fact detrimental to society itself. Specifically, in *Dune*, this is seen with the character of Paul Maud'Dib. This becomes even more evident in *God Emperor of Dune*, where Paul's son, Leto, becomes a literal divine being by fusing himself with the sandtrouts. In this hybrid state, as well as given his ability to perceive the various futures that may occur, Leto loses his humanity and takes control of the planet of Arrakis. His rule, which will last for millennia, is not one that is merely imposed by divine right; he establishes a theocratic regime based on himself as symbol of worship. This form of hubris is one that is heavily critiqued by Herbert as one that has been perpetrated, in different forms, throughout history. It is nuanced not only throughout the plot of *Dune*, but even in paratextual elements as well. One such excerpt from *God Emperor of Dune* quotes one of Paul's adages, "The problem of leadership is inevitably: Who will play God?" (235). This once again emphasizes the close relationship between leaders and their thirst for power; in this case it is also correlated with the willingness of doing anything to achieve that status.

What Frank Herbert accomplished in the world building of the *Dune* saga was to create various religious overtones that, although seemingly being authentic, all had a certain fallacy to them. By ironizing the intentions and possibility of the erroneous interpretations of religious messages, Herbert created a cautionary tale against self-proclaimed prophets. Explaining however the various religions and theological ideas of the saga would lead astray from the main points I am trying to emphasize in this passage. It may prove important either way to underline that Herbert also created a composite religion, similar to the one Philip Dick used in *A Maze of Death*. In *Dune*'s Appendix II, the various theological viewpoints as well as their ramifications are detailed extensively. For example, the Orange Catholic Bible – referred to throughout the novel as a philosophical and religious treaty – was written by the combined efforts of the C.E.T. (Commission of Ecumenical Translators). The irony that Herbert uses in this case is to explain how little did the

C.E.T. accomplish given its inability to reach a common ground[128]. Also, the criteria for being represented in the commission was a faith with more than a million followers; this in turn also implies that, although advocating for an univocal stance, minor religious ideologies were left out.

The Orange Catholic Bible is however just one of the schools of thought present in *Dune*. The Fremen combine a cult for water with a seemingly Islamist religion, the Bene Gesserit[129] have more of a mystical approach to theology and the Guilds, on the other hand, have a more agnostic stance. Lastly, Herbert adds that there is another important force that shaped the religious ideologies of his universe: space travel. This is to be correlated with the fact that various technological advancements, such as artificial intelligence, had been banned. Space travel[130], being made possible only through the calculations of special agents of the Navigation Guild and through the use of spice, achieves as such a more religious overtone. It may be worth underlining that while other authors saw in the vastness of space either a mystical zone or one that can evoke alienation, loneliness or even monstrosities, Herbert does approach it with the same attitude. In the *Dune* saga it is rather the means of transportation (through the use of the Guild agents) that acquires a mystical overtone; the vastness of outer space, on the other hand, simply becomes a transitional zone. It is by no means trivialized, but space travel is, to an extent, normalized in his universe.

Between Philip K. Dick's belief in a superior entity and Herbert's cautionary message of how the cult of personality can be used maliciously, Ayn Rand tends to perceive religion from a more atheist and logical point of view. Based on what has been said previously regarding her objectivism, it stands to reason to expect that Rand puts the human being at the centre of her analysis. As such, the relationship between man and God is seen by her as contradictory, given how religion is based

[128] Jubilation at this "sign of profound accord" proved premature. For more than a standard year, that statement was the only announcement from C.E.T. Men spoke bitterly of the delay. Troubadours composed witty, biting songs about the one hundred and twenty-one "Old Cranks" as the C.E.T. delegates came to be called. (*Dune*, Appendix II, 634)

[129] The Bene Gesserit, who privately denied they were a religious order, but who operated behind an almost impenetrable screen of ritual mysticism, and whose training, whose symbolism, organization, and internal teaching methods were almost wholly religious. (*Dune*, Appendix II, 631)

[130] I am referring to obviously to the later type of space travel. Initially it was achieved through technology and computers, which was also one of the factors that led to the Butlerian Jihad, which in turn had the result of banning technology and consequently developing space travel through the use of melange.

on faith and not reason. To go a step further, I would argue that she denotes hypocrisy in those who use religion to justify their behaviour. In her own words,

> The social theory of ethics substitutes "society" for God—and although it claims that its chief concern is life on earth, it is not the life of man, not the life of an individual, but the life of a disembodied entity, the collective, which, in relation to every individual, consists of everybody except himself. As far as the individual is concerned, his ethical duty is to be the selfless, voiceless, rightless slave of any need, claim or demand asserted by others. (*The virtue of selfishness*, 30)

Rand's reflection, even when considering religion, always returns on the relations between self and society. Her critique moves towards the way religion is used to manipulate the individual into being assimilated by the collective and not being able to think for himself. As Leonard Peikoff also explained[131], for Rand reality is not a manifestation of the divine; the metaphysical principles and theological questions simply become superfluous or even counterproductive. "Every argument commonly offered for the notion of God leads to a contradiction of the axiomatic concepts of philosophy" (1991: 32). Rand's approach is a rigorously logical process and, as such, there is no room for religious thought in her discourse. Furthermore, the only thing even worse than theology is indecisiveness. As Peikoff notes further on in the same text, "agnosticism is not simply the pleading of ignorance. It is the enshrinement of ignorance" (169). Scepticism, in this case, becomes a justification; not deciding whether one believes or not in God is seen as a graver issue than just blindly following the collective.

Rand's animosity towards religion is also underlined in *Atlas Shrugged* during John Galt's long speech[132]. One of the passages denounces the principle that by living according to religious dictums, where good is represented by self-sacrifice, one is unable to live according to what is truly good for themselves.

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[131] "In regard to fundamentals, it makes no difference whether one construes existence as subservient to the consciousness of God, of men, or of oneself. All these represent the same essential metaphysics containing the same essential error. Objectivism rejects them all on the same ground: that existence exists." (*Objectivism - The Philosophy of Ayn Rand*, 23).

[132] "For centuries, the battle of morality was fought between those who claimed that your life belongs to God and those who claimed that it belongs to your neighbors—between those who preached that the good is self-sacrifice for the sake of ghosts in heaven and those who preached that the good is self-sacrifice for the sake of incompetents on earth. And no one came to say that your life belongs to you and that the good is to live it." (*Atlas Shrugged*, 926)

Although Rand's critique of religion starts from the individual, I would argue that it shares a commonality with Herbert's concept of how religion is used by higher powers. In this later case, Herbert would consider the interaction between society as a mass and their will to blindly follow a self-proclaimed prophet for instance. In *Children of Dune*, one of the paratextual elements states "these are illusions of popular history which a successful religion must promote" (75) and then follows by listing various points such as evil men never prospering and honesty being the best policy. This creates a form of irony based on the precepts that religions are obligated to promote, but also how they are utterly illusions.

One last detail that I want to add regards the experience of religion as something that transcends the human capabilities of understanding. An obvious example would be Philip Dick's personal experience, the drug-induced trance that he lived and subsequently his frantic attempts to give various explanations on said divinity and metaphysical questions. It may prove however useful to quote a passage from *Dune* to understand how Herbert approach a similar notion:

> The trance-state of prophecy is like no other visionary experience. It is not a retreat from the raw exposure of the senses (as are many trance-states) but an immersion in a multitude of new movements. Things moue. It is an ultimate pragmatism in the midst of Infinity, a demanding consciousness where you come at last into the unbroken awareness that the universe moves of itself, that it changes, that its rules change. that nothing remains permanent or absolute throughout all such movement, that mechanical explanations for anything can work only within precise confinements and, once the walls are broken down, the old explanations shatter and dissolve, blown away by new movements. The things you see in this trance are sobering, often shattering. They demand your utmost effort to remain whole and, even so, you emerge from that state profoundly changed. (*God Emperor of Dune*, 199)

This excerpt refers to the experience of the trance induced by melange, the same one in which both Paul and Leto II saw the various futures. It is functionally the same one that the Guild agents have to experience in order to navigate through space. The ineffable experience of the trance itself once again gives us a correlation between the *Dune* saga and a certain mysticism that Herbert purposefully uses throughout it. It is also yet another way for him to underline the limitations of technology in his world, just as it will be explained in the following section.

5.2 Technology

When thinking about the technological advancements presented in the respective created worlds of the three authors, it is important to be mindful of the fictional chronological subdivision mentioned previously. Ayn Rand uses technology as a basis for progress, Philip K. Dick considers the various futures towards which said progress could lead to and Frank Herbert analysis the aftermath and consequences.

In *Atlas Shrugged*, Hank Rearden's new steel becomes quintessential not only to justify a part of the plot, but also to analyse how technological innovation becomes a catalyst for human avarice. The industrial progress is delayed because once a new idea emerges, everyone else will do whatever is in their power for the proverbial piece of the pie. For this reason Rand distinguishes between the personal and individualistic nature of society and the counterpart represented by collective greed. The issue arises when the work of the individual is taken by force or without just compensation.

In Philip K. Dick, on the other hand, technology has already progressed to a more advanced stage. Rather than concentrating on the fight for new ideas, the novels become more focused on the fight against them. While it may be true that in many cases the inventions depicted in Dick apparently render the everyday life of human beings easier[133], on the other hand, they are also responsible for various problems. The issues vary in degree: from minor hindrances, such as the requirement to pay a 'smart-door' just to enter a building in *Ubik*, to more catastrophic consequences such as a supercomputer deciding to destroy humanity in *Vulcan's Hammer*.

Lastly, in Frank Herbert's *Dune* saga, technology has already failed and has been substituted by the human component. As explained in various paratextual elements, like appendixes and such, the artificial intelligence that humanity had created prior to the events of *Dune* rebelled against their creators. This led to the Butlerian Jihad and a ban of technological innovation, as well as a sanction on the

[133] I am referring in this case to more practical aspects. In many novels, inventions such as flying cars, vidphones and generally avant-garde technology for its time are depicted constantly.

use of advanced weaponry such as nuclear missiles. This approach contributes to the more mystical overtone of the saga.

In all three cases, the authors present technology as a double-edged sword, although in different ways. For Ayn Rand it becomes a question of greed and a capitalistic system that wants to own intellectual property. In Philip Dick, technology is translated as having great potential but, at the end of the day, it ultimately backfires. Finally, in Herbert's case and more specifically in the *Dune* saga, the age of technology has already reached a peak where it already failed humanity. I would even argue that the events nuanced during the artificial intelligence rebellion are close in mentality to the ones depicted in various Philip K. Dick novels; it is quintessentially a discourse of man against machine.

I would like to consider a particular example of how Philip K. Dick and Frank Herbert both approach a plot sequence of assassination. In *The Penultimate Truth*, a shape-shifting droid is sent out to assassinate one of Stanton Brose's men. The plot implications are less important than how the scene is described:

> The machine, having completed its mobile, ambulatory phases, based on the doubly reinforcing tropisms of heat and respiratory rhythm, was attempting to locate exactly the beating heart of the man asleep in the bed.
> […]
> It released, from an aperture at its upper lid, a cyanide-tipped self-propelling dart. Traveling at extremely slow speed, so that corrections of its trajectory could be achieved even at the last fractional second, the dart made its way from the upended machine, veered slightly as signals from the machine indicated the need of a minor correction—and then its needle nose penetrated the chest of the sleeping man.
> Instantly the dart ejected its freight of poison. (*The Penultimate Truth*, 117)

What is important to note is that the assassination is entrusted to a machine. In *The Penultimate Truth, leadies* - as they are called by all the humans - are akin to androids in the sense that they are seemingly sentient. Later on in the scene, after completing its mission, this assassin mechanism is even depicted trying to shape into a household item in order to hide from the ensuing investigators. This may be seen as the machine's will of self-preservation. I would like to compare this excerpt with the following one from *Dune*:

> From behind the headboard slipped a tiny hunter-seeker no more than five centimetres long. Paul recognized it at once - a common assassination weapon that

> every child of royal blood learned about at an early age. It was a ravening sliver of metal guided by some near-by hand and eye. It could burrow into moving flesh and chew its way up nerve channels to the nearest vital organ.
> […]
> Through Paul's mind flashed the related knowledge, the hunter-seeker limitations: Its compressed suspensor field distorted the room to reflect his target, the operator would be relying on motion—anything that moved. (Dune, 85-86)

This scene, similar to the previous one, represents an assassination attempt with Paul being the target. The mechanism is also a metal cylinder similar to a dart, but in this case it is not piloted by a machine. In *Dune*, since artificial intelligence had been forbidden, the assassination is carried out by a human being. Furthermore, given the short radius, the assassin is hiding in close proximity. What may be interesting to note, other than the description of the object itself, is that *The Penultimate Truth* was published in 1964 and the first book of *Dune* was published just a year later in 1965[134]. Both cases present a clear correlation between technology and its weaponization. It is worth stressing that Dick was in his early teens during the Second World War while Herbert was in his twenties; they saw the destruction caused by the atomic bomb and later on experienced the climate of the Cold War. These factors inevitably conditioned they stance on possible consequences that technological advancements may lead to.

Similarly, the negative aspects of technology are also reflected in Rand's *Anthem*. In this case, it becomes a resource that is used to control the other members of society by a select few; as such, innovation and technological advancement is prohibited in this fictional dystopian setting. It is only when the protagonist understands the truth behind this manipulation that he is able to acquire a new form of freedom. He decides to use his scientific knowledge as a weapon in order to free his peers from oppression. This way of influencing society is also nuanced by Frank Herbert:

> Quite naturally, holders of power wish to suppress wild research. Unrestricted questing after knowledge has a long history of producing unwanted competition. The powerful want a "safe line of investigations," which will develop only those products and ideas that can be controlled and, most important, that will allow the larger part

[134] While this may be a mere coincidence, especially considering that Dick's novel was based on one of his short stories dated in 1953 and *Dune* was written in a wider time span, I still find the similarities to be worth mentioning.

> of the benefits to be captured by inside investors. Unfortunately, a random universe full of relative variables does not insure such a "safe line of investigations." (*Heretics of Dune*, 232)

It may be argued that Herbert elaborates on the adage that states that 'knowledge is power' and the key factor of controlling said knowledge. The less the members of society know and understand, the easier it is to manipulate them. The meaning behind 'holders of power' is to be searched in that select group of individuals that govern over others. Furthermore, this power may come from various sources: it may be political, religious (as previously mentioned), self-proclaimed or even technological.

The way technology is used is also responsible of creating paranoia, especially in the texts of Philip K. Dick. In *Our Friends from Frolix 8*, in the background, there is talk about a 'telepathic listening device', called the Great Ear[135]. In the novel, a newspaper article describes it as follows,

> Thought to be beyond the scope of probability, work on the first purely electronic telepathic listening device advances at a reassuring rate, officials of McMally Corporation, the designer and builder of Great Ear, as it has come to be called, said today in a press conference attended by many skeptical observers. "When Great Ear goes into operation," Munro Capp opined, "it will be capable of telepathically monitoring the thought-waves of tens of thousands of persons, and with the ability - not found among Unusuals - to unscramble these enormous flood-tides of . . . (30)

Further on in the novel, the protagonist discovers that policemen are monitoring the activity of hundreds of thousands of individuals, all recorded through the use of cameras that relay their footage to T.V. screens[136]. Dick's obsession with the use of technology being used to practically destroy any form of human privacy, and subsequently freedom, is certainly an important and overarching theme in many of his novels. In The *Man Who Japed* for instance, mechanical sentries called juveniles, gather information through tapes which are then presented to the police

[135] The name could obviously be a nod to George Orwell's *1984*, given the symbolism connecting Big Brother's eye and loss of privacy.

[136] "Nick followed . . . and saw, in a single glimpse, the nervecenter of the police apparatus. TV screens, small, hundreds and hundreds of them, with a cop monitoring each cluster of four screens. A cacophony of noise hummed and clicked and buzzed through the big chamber. […] Once more, Nick gazed into the huge grotto-like chamber of the ten thousand TV screens. Like fish, he thought, the people gliding about; purple fish, both male and female, bumping together from time to time, like molecules of a liquid." (100-101)

as evidence[137]; in this latter example, it may be however argued that there is a certain degree of impartiality on behalf of the spying machines. The fact that they record any type of conversation is however reason enough for the protagonists of the novel to constantly fear what they are saying. This is part of the paranoiac dread constructed meticulously by Dick in his works.

Ultimately, what is important to note is that in the various proposed texts there is almost always a group of these holders of power. The three authors tend to create a distinct division between higher and lower stratums of society, and in most cases, that division coincides with those who oppress and those who are oppressed. As such, the socio-political dynamics become quintessential in all the novels; the way the three authors approach this theme will be explained in the following part.

5.3 The Self and Society

This part is dedicated to a more complex theme in nature as it deals not only with the relationship between the individual and society, but also with the ontological questions of identity and self. I have decided to encapsulate them in the same analytical block because the nuances that the three authors explore functionally interact with one another, albeit in different ways.

To summarize briefly, it is possible to outline several thematic lines before proceeding with the analysis. Both Philip K. Dick as well as Frank Herbert analysed the possibility of a higher echelon of society improperly using its power. The former approached the theme with a more paranoiac take, denoting an impossibility to react against a higher power. The later wrote the *Dune* saga more as a cautionary message against this possibility, a warning of sorts. There is a certain analogy with Rand's works as well, although it might be argued that her approach is more

[137] "His attention fixed itself on the pack of juveniles. They were here, the earwig-like sleuths. Each juvenile was a foot and a half long. The species scuttled close to the ground—or up vertical surfaces— at ferocious speed, and they noticed everything. […] There was something sinister in these metal informers, but there was also something heartening. The juveniles did not accuse; they only reported what they heard and saw. They couldn't color their information and they couldn't make it up. Since the victim was indicted mechanically he was safe from hysterical hearsay, from malice and paranoia. But there could be no question of guilt; the evidence was already in". (37)

optimistic; in *Atlas Shrugged* there is a form of oppression against the intelligent and resourceful part of society; the ending however provides seemingly a more positive resolution. It should be specified that Rand's objectivism, as well as John Galt's speech, have a basic flaw: they rely on a type of selfishness that is not meant to do harm to others. At its core, it is an idealistic form of society in which malice does not exist; I would argue that this is unrealistic. Rand's objectivism does however create an interesting counterpoint to Dick and Herbert's creation of a plausible reality that underlines the capitalistic greed and the corruptible nature of those involved. At the centre of this complex discourse, it is possible to place the power dynamics within society; yet again the theme of oppression has a fundamental role.

In most novels that have been taken into consideration, the authors create more than just a faceless and anonymous oppressive force; they also create a character that represents the entire group and agenda. As such, the design of the oppressor has the double function of both creating a narratological plot point that the protagonists are forced to deal with, as well as providing a moralistic exemplum. A keyword that should be emphasized upon considering these antagonistic characters is deceit; they hide their intentions and create a façade when dealing with the lower stratum of society. Their falsehood is revealed only to the protagonists and that functions as a turning point for the novels. Let me explain this mechanism through several examples.

In Philip K. Dick's *We can build you*, the antagonistic figure is represented by Sam Barrows, a magnate of sorts. His intention is to use the androids built by the protagonist in order to populate a lunar colony[138]; however, Barrows invested a hefty sum of money in this business in order to then speculate from the colonists. Although throughout the novel he is described as a charismatic genius and visionary, it is slowly revealed that this is just public image and manipulation to have more support. Upon realizing this, the main protagonist has a moment of epiphany and says "How much else in Barrows' empire had been concocted in this manner? Appearance built over the fake" (117). What Barrows stands for is an empire built upon lies; everything that he has achieved, he has achieved by manipulating those who in this context

[138] Within the plot this serves to convince people from Earth to emigrate to the desolate and barren wasteland that is the moon.

are the oppressed. What makes things even worse is that they are unaware of this, which in turn reflects what has been said about knowledge previously.

The example from *We can build you* also reinforces Herbert's cautionary tale about the cult of personality and the dangers of following someone based on their fame. Barrows is clearly an antithetical character to the idealized version of human being that Ayn Rand explores with the figure of John Galt. In *Atlas Shrugged* the capitalistic greed is intrinsic within society itself; Rand's focus is on the positive counterpart, a martyr that triggers the strike and the consequent brain drain.

I would even venture as far as suggesting that oppression is not limited only to the economic stratum. It deals with the larger issue that Rand was concerned with and that is the inability of the individual of thinking for himself. If the only truth presented to the individual is the one given to him by society, a society that has been manipulated to think in a certain way, it stands to reason that it becomes extremely difficult to change the status quo. Independent reasoning[139] thus becomes an impossibility.

Another technique by which the oppressor-characters were created is the use of exaggeration. By heavily accentuating various physical features, the malevolent nature of these characters was also portrayed. One such case, for instance, may be found in *The Penultimate Truth*. In this case, Stanton Brose, a dictator that uses fear to affirm his position of power, is described as follows:

> Brose was old. What was it, eighty-two? And not lean. Not a stick, ribboned with the streamers of smoked, dried flesh; Brose at eighty-two weighed a ton, waddled and rolled, pitched, with his mouth drizzling and his nose as well…and yet the heart still beat, because of course it was an artiforg heart, and an artiforg spleen and an artiforg and so on. (*The Penultimate Truth*, 33)

In this excerpt, the falsehood mentioned previously may be correlated to his artificial organs, but what is important to note is the character's corpulence. The almost grotesque description is meant to create an antithetical character and emphasize not as much his physical defects but rather his tyrannical and dominating nature.

[139] This was a key point in Rand's reflections. The independent person "must examine a theory presented to him by other men exactly as he examines any fact of physical nature by the same method, through the same act of independent rational judgment. He is as alone in the presence of an idea as in the presence of a jungle" (*Journals of Ayn Rand*, 257).

Although the *Dune* saga does not permit a simple reading of positive and negative characters, considering how Paul and Leto both become usurpers in their own way, it can be at the very least argued that there are certainly powers that are more malevolent than others. In the first novel, for instance, one such power is represented by the Harkonnens who manipulated the Atreides ascendency just to then conquer them. Baron Vladimir Harkonnen is another example of such a vivid description that is purposefully exaggerated. One of the first portrayals of his character hint towards physicality:

> As he [Vladimir Harkonnen] emerged from the shadows, his figure took on dimension—grossly and immensely fat. And with subtle bulges beneath folds of his dark robes to reveal that all this fat was sustained partly by portable suspensors harnessed to his flesh. He might weigh two hundred Standard kilos in actuality, but his feet would carry no more than fifty of them. (*Dune*, 26)

Furthermore, in this particular scene he is hungry and asks for even more food. The attention to his corpulence, as well as to his insatiable appetite, is interspersed throughout the novel. The 'portable suspensors' that are mentioned in the excerpt refer to antigravitational devices that enable him to move as otherwise it would be impossible for him to do so. Furthermore, the hunger he denotes should also be interpreted as a crave for more than just simple food. Except for his carnal and dietary tastes[140], he yearns for power and control. It follows that the exaggerated physical traits are meant to symbolize his greedy nature and malicious intentions.

Since Baron Harkonnen is the quote on quote antagonist of the first book, his plotting and usurping intents ultimately lead to his defeat. This is however not to be taken as a simplistic moral of the triumph of the good over the evil. The more nuanced interpretation should also consider the figure of Paul Muad'dib, as well as the role of his son in the other novels of the saga. Their rise to power is perceived as messianic, but paradoxically, although stating the contrary, they still end up misusing their authority. One of the paratextual elements, referenced as 'Muad'dib on Law, The Stilgar Commentary', states the following:

> There exists a limit to the force even the most powerful may apply without destroying themselves. Judging this limit is the true artistry of government. Misuse of power is

[140] Although never directly portrayed, Vladimir Harkonnen has a preference for young boys and possibly human flesh, indicating him both as a pedophile and a cannibal.

> the fatal sin. The law cannot be a tool of vengeance, never a hostage, nor a fortification against the martyrs it has created. You cannot threaten any individual and escape the consequences. (*Dune Messiah*, 247)

While this passage indicates the proper way power should be exerted, in reality it becomes more of a cautionary message for the oppressors to understand how to approach their rule. If there 'exists a limit to the force' an oppressor may exert, that also entails that force remains a viable solution; violence may be used to govern as long as the ruler knows and understands how much to apply without suffering the consequences. In this particular case, Harkonnen was destroyed by an excessive use of force, but Paul Muad'dib thrived, notwithstanding the use the Fremen as a personal army of fanatics. By becoming a tyrannical ruler and halting the distribution of spice throughout the galaxy, Paul also ends up embodying the usurper he had fought against. Brian Herbert aptly notes that

> Very few readers realized that the story of Paul Atreides was not only a Greek tragedy on an individual and familial scale. There was yet another layer, even larger, in which Frank Herbert was warning that entire societies could be led to ruination by heroes. In Dune and Dune Messiah, he was cautioning against pride and overconfidence, that form of narcissism described in Greek tragedies that invariably led to the great fall. (*Dune Messiah*, introduction by Brian Herbert, xi)

In this context, considering Paul as a character, there is a progression from his individual dimension and confrontation with society, his fight against the circumstances and the system, all ending with him becoming part of that same system. He achieves this by becoming a revered hero of the Fremen, but even with his ability to see the future he ultimately fails in his attempt of creating a better society. Leto is the epitome of this failure to an even greater degree considering the substitution of messianic with divine; this is not to say that he is a malevolent character, but rather that the end result of his actions is a failure in itself.

An interesting comparison arises upon considering the characters of Leto and John Galt given their self-righteous attitude and belief in their cause. While the former is revered, and also feared to an extent, for his divine status, the latter is

admired for standing up for his cause and fighting the capitalistic greed of society. It may also be argued that their conviction is accompanied by a note of martyrdom. After the two hour-long monologue that Galt delivers via radio, he does not care if the authorities will end up arresting or even killing him; his intention was to let the world know about his protest, a protest that is worth remembering is pacific and not violent. Leto, on the other hand, by seeing the various futures that can occur, choses the one in which he will lead society towards what is referred to as the Golden Path; in this endeavour he loses part of his humanity and becomes for many either a symbol of godhood or of hatred. He understands that in order for a shift to occur in the power dynamics it is imperative to follow the Golden Path, become a god and ultimately be killed in the process. There is a subtly irony in Herbert's writing: Leto imposes a forced period of peace, but by doing so instigates a revolution, all while knowing perfectly well what will happen. This is underlined by his own words:

> When I set out to lead humankind along my Golden Path, I promised them a lesson their bones would remember. I know a profound pattern which humans deny with their words even while their actions affirm it. They say they seek security and quiet, the condition they call peace. Even as they speak, they create the seeds of turmoil and violence. If they find their quiet security, they squirm in it. How boring they find it. Look at them now. Look at what they do while I record these words. Hah! I give them enduring eons of enforced tranquillity which plods on and on despite their every effort to escape into chaos. Believe me, the memory of Leto's Peace shall abide with them forever. They will seek their quiet security thereafter only with extreme caution and steadfast preparation. (*God Emperor of Dune*, 205)

Security and social stability are placed on the same level with peace, but even upon attaining it, it is still an insufficient condition to reach a mutual agreement amongst the members of society. Frank Herbert creates the best case scenario with Leto, a scenario in which Arrakis reaches a period of prosperity. It may be argued that the reason it ends up not functioning is because of the presence of a tyrannical ruler, but I would assume that the causes are more nuanced. The previous excerpt treats human beings as entities that are impossible to satisfy, thus creating a paradoxical truth. In a period of peace, boredom becomes a factor to promote turmoil and violence.

Another interesting point that touches on everything that has been said is the falsification of truth. In *The Man in the High Castle*, the fictitious Gresham's law is quoted, saying that "the fakes would undermine the value of the real" (51). In the

novel, it refers mainly to pre-war memorabilia that is being falsified and then sold to magnates, and as such has a more practical application. It is important to stress that this is a quintessential part in Philip K. Dick's overall thematic approach; it is yet another example of his obsession on problematizing the fake-authentic dichotomy that touches many conceptual spheres. As Howard Canaan[141] points out,

> The "empire of falsehood", a term that carries considerable weight for Dick, refers politically to the falsehoods that he sees at the base of the regimes, which he places in control of the characters in his fiction, perceives in control of the present world, and sees as a threat to control "the future technological state" described in his SF. (2008:336)

Falsehood, in this case, refers to political powers who use lies and deception in order to manipulate the masses, a theme that has been extensively underlined. The concept of falsehood can be however taken one step further. Various instances have been already portrayed where Dick applies this type of inquiry to reality itself, doubting even the truth of what is humanly perceivable.

The fake-authentic analysis becomes important in Ayn Rand and Frank Herbert's novels just as easily. Rand problematizes it in *Anthem,* for instance, by depicting how the controlling powers are withholding the truth from the general population in order to control it; in Herbert's case it has been already explained how the falsehood of the prophet has an important role in his critique. The fake political truth told to the masses subverts the authentic one, and substitutes itself becoming the only one perceived by the masses. Gresham's law comes full circle. To give a parallel example, "Memory never recaptures reality. Memory reconstructs. All reconstructions change the original, becoming external frames of reference that inevitably fall short" (*Heretics of Dune*, 455). In this case even memory, and to an extent I would argue historical memory as well, may be falsify and suffer the same fake-to-authentic substitution.

Ultimately, Ayn Rand's intention was to depict a society formed by independent and objective individuals. Herbert's thesis relied on explaining not only the ruinous paths of the ruling powers but also on analysing the faults of human nature in general. Philip K. Dick's approach was to indicate the ruling powers as

[141] "Time and Gnosis in the Writings of Philip K. Dick", *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies*, 2008.

responsible for the decline of civilizations and also to emphasize the difficulty, or even the impossibility, of acting or reacting against these hierarchies. A paratextual element from the *Dune* saga states that "all governments suffer a recurring problem: power attracts pathological personalities. It is not that power corrupts but that it is magnetic to the corruptible. Such people have a tendency to become drunk on violence, a condition to which they are quickly addicted" (*Chapterhouse: Dune*, 64).

This addiction to power by a ruling class that ultimately turns totalitarian, as it has been presented relentlessly throughout my dissertation, echoes in the novels of the analysed authors. It is worth noting that the reasoning behind this addiction is 'power for power's sake'[142]; in most cases, however, the narratological method employed is to personify the thirst for power in an antagonist who is also the oppressor. Herbert's reflects on this within the real world context: "It is demonstrable that power structures tend to attract people who want power for the sake of power and that a significant proportion of such people are imbalanced - in a word, insane"[143] (74). The theme of corruptibility and misuses of power for power's sake is one of the most constant theme that the three authors touch upon in their novels. I would argue that it is also symptomatic of that imbalance and power struggle that has been mentioned at the beginning of this part. It is one that I would in part indicate in relation to their historical context, as well as one that I would link directly to the condition of defeat that will be explained further on.

5.4 Notes on the thematic node of defeat

What becomes evident throughout my investigation is how the various literary topoi mentioned thus far are functionally constructing a framework for the analysis of the human condition. These, in turn, point in most cases towards the specific types of defeat analysed in the various chapters; this also becomes inextricably tied to the oppressor-oppressed dynamic. By faking the truth and fabricating a different

[142] Referencing as well one of the core themes of *1984*, although in Orwell's case it becomes a more metaphysical consideration.
[143] From the Omni interview already quote; he generalizes a concept of 'power structure' and indicates that they produce 'imbalanced' people – once again relating to the cult of personality, false prophets and fake heroes.

version of it, the oppressors may even not be perceived as such. By hiding their intentions, which usually are oriented towards accruing even more power and wealth, the oppressors are seen as prophets, saviours or even heroes. The three authors reflect as such on the critical and analytical capabilities of the individual in dealing with analogous situations. It is possible to summarize this with Herbert's words from his interview:

> Don't give over all of your critical faculties to people in power, no matter how admirable those people may appear to be. Beneath the hero's facade you will find a human being who makes human mistakes. Enormous problems arise when human mistakes are made on the grand scale available to a superhero. (*OMNI* magazine, 72)

This cautionary message echoes throughout the various presented novels. Herbert created a monomyth and constructed the plot in order to demonstrate his point. In Philip K. Dick's novels, on the other hand, society has already reached a crumbling point based on the fact that the people in power were given that same 'critical faculties' that Herbert mentions. In other words, they were trusted by the members of society and used that to their advantage. Finally, in *Atlas Shrugged*, the intent was to underline the process of taking action against a similar fate. As Andrew Bernstein suggests, "although Ayn Rand does not dramatize the specific deeds by means of which the men of the mind rebuild the world from the shattered remnants of the looter's regime, she leaves no doubt that such reconstruction is imminent and that the thinkers, now free, will lift men to exalted heights of progress and prosperity" (2008: 189)[144]. In spite of this consideration, I still suggest that the novel's ending in itself, given that there is no actual change and political promises usually imply other layers of lies, is to be taken with a less optimistic tone. It is Herbert once again to stress the intrinsic nature of the ruling class of acting only based on personal interest:

> Governments, if they endure, always tend increasingly toward aristocratic forms. No government in history has been known to evade this pattern. And as the aristocracy develops, government tends more and more to act exclusively in the interests of the ruling class — whether that class be hereditary royalty, oligarchs of financial empires, or entrenched bureaucracy. (*Children of Dune*, 221)

[144] In *Objectivism in One Lesson – An Introduction to the Philosophy of Ayn Rand* (2008).

In this dynamic between the ruling class and the ones who are ruled, the various novels explore the difficulty of the latter mainly by emphasizing the hardships of individual characters pertaining to the lower stratum of the social hierarchy. In the discourse between individual and society, as such, the thematic nuances that have been explored throughout this chapter point towards the defeat of the individual. Society, as a collective of voices that blindly follow what they are told, becomes a bitter reality in the works of the three authors. The ones who detain power, either in a tyrannical fashion or through lies and deception, ultimately end up perpetuating their unjust conduct in a cyclic repetition. This oppressive reality becomes even more aggravated upon considering the cases in which it is a conscious choice on behalf of the individual. If the individual voluntarily decides to be oblivious, it is arguably worse than not even realizing that there is a choice to be made and a possibility of taking action against the unjust ruling powers.

One of the main reasons why the speculative fiction written by Philip K. Dick and Frank Herbert is perceived as plausible is to be found in their understanding and analysis of the socio-historical context. The cyclical nature of the oppressor-oppressed relation is explained for instance by Herbert in the following statement:

> Liberty and Freedom are complex concepts. They go back to religious ideas of Free Will and are related to the Ruler Mystique implicit in absolute monarchs. Without absolute monarchs patterned after the Old Gods and ruling by the grace of a belief in religious indulgence, Liberty and Freedom would never have gained their present meaning. These ideals owe their very existence to past examples of oppression. And the forces that maintain such ideas will erode unless renewed by dramatic teaching or new oppressions. (*Heretics of Dune*, 221)

Leto's words, as reported in this excerpt, are a summary that touch on the different aspects that have been discussed thus far, including religion, history and the relation between individuals and society. Liberty and freedom are indeed complex concepts, just as the nature of the human condition. The behaviour of the individual within the social context is also obviously to be put in correlation with the power dynamics that are in play. As such, it is the oppressive nature of the depicted realities that impact negatively on the human condition. This in turn leads to the analysis of the defeat as a common thematic thread between the three authors.

Although in different ways, they all shared this concern, denoting a preoccupation not only for their own society, but for its future as well.

6. Ecological aspects in dystopian portrayals

In her book, *Not the End of the World - How We Can Be the First Generation to Build* a *Sustainable Planet* (2024)*,* Hannah Ritchie analyses environmental issues by confronting the perception of the general population with the hardened scientific truth of the state of affairs. While she is aware of the fact that, as a society, we have pushed the various issues further and further onto the future generations, with no true urgency to act[145], she does warn the readers about the dangers of promoting a 'doom narrative' which often has no real scientific basis. These types of alarmist claims entail divulging to the masses news about the exaggerated consequences of true ecological issues; it is possible to consider, for instance, problems such as the one concerning the hole in the ozone layer and how slowly the situation ameliorated. By endorsing an alarming stance, it was the hope of many scientists to not only make the lesser informed part of the population understand and empathize with ecological issues, but also to optimistically make them take action. A common conception is that, if people act together as a whole, they could make an important difference. Ritchie argues that this attitude however largely backfired. The proposed 'doom narratives', being exaggerations, were ultimately untrue; this shifted the perception of the population, resulting in scientists losing part of their credibility[146].

Ritchie arrives at the conclusion that ultimately, 'doom narratives', rather than inducing awareness and willingness to act, provoke a radical feeling of helplessness and paralysis. An issues on such a global scale, as many of the ecological problems tend to be, accompanied by the narrative of the planet heading towards destruction, or suffering dire consequences, leads to the attitude of giving up. For this reason, in her book, Ritchie analyses with scientific accuracy an array of these ecological issues and underlines how they have been either exaggerated or how it is still possible to change them and make them less of a threat than what is commonly and erroneously perceived. She states that "accepting defeat on climate change is an indefensibly selfish position to take" (2024: 7).

[145] "The world has lacked urgency to act. Bringing attention to the magnitude of potential impacts is essential if we want things to change. But that is a long way from telling kids they're ruined." (Ritchie, 2024: 6)

[146] "It makes scientists look like idiots. Every doomsday activist that makes a big, bold claim invariably turns out to be wrong. Every time this happens it chisels another bit of public trust away from scientists." (ibid.)

Regardless, the awareness itself that we are indeed facing environmental issues is an ascertained fact, one that should be given importance to. It is from that consciousness that ecocritical thinking and analysis begins. As Cheryll Glotfelty states[147], "most ecocritical work shares a common motivation: the troubling awareness that we have reached the age of environmental limits, a time when the consequences of human actions are damaging the planet's basic life support systems" (1996: xx). It is however important to be mindful that this ecocritical ideology is anachronistic to the novels analyzed in this dissertation. As such, although Ayn Rand, Frank Herbert and Philip K. Dick do in fact touch on environmental issues, each in their own way, their perception of the subject matter was not the same as ours. According to Jameson,

> The various SF historicisms – galactic Roman empires, Orientalist fantasmagorias, samurai worlds, medieval-corporate Foundations - stand on an equal footing with images of this or that fantastic future; and, whatever their more fantastic details, such as the spice worms of Frank Herbert's Dune (1965), reinforce components of an essentially historical situation, rather than serving as vehicles for the fantasies of power. Herbert's remarkable ecological construction, indeed, offers a revealing textual contrast to related fantasy worlds of the "sword-and-sorcery" type. (2005: 59)

The three authors proposed demonstrated an acute sensibility for issues that would become important in later years. I am not implying however that they were the first to do so, but simply that they provide an important point of view for their time. In Rob Latham's words "while ecological extrapolation was not new to SF in 1965 — indeed, Frank Herbert's *Dune*, serialized in *Analog magazine* during 1963–64, probably did more than any other single book to bring ecological awareness into the center of the genre" (2014: 87)[148].

Through speculative science fiction, various authors have tackled, in their own way, with the 'what if' scenarios, including those correlated with the aforementioned 'doom narratives'. This comprises as well the three authors that have been discussed thus far; hence, the following subchapters will also take into consideration their attitude and their perception of said ecological issues.

[147] *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, 1996.
[148] "Biotic Invasions; Ecological Imperialism in New Wave Science Fiction" in *Green Planets – Ecology and Science Fiction,* edited by Gerry Canavan and Kim Stanley Robinson

6.1 Organic, inorganic, micro-ecology and macro-ecology

When thinking about ecocriticism, and more in general about the natural world, a common mind set is to associate this dimension with what can be referred to as organic. Nature becomes, as such, synonymous to living organisms; this intuitive correlation between ecosystem and flora and fauna is however insufficient. The organic component is certainly an important half of the natural world, but to consider the holistic aspect, it is also important to be mindful of the presence of inorganic elements, as well as all of the natural phenomena[149]. The interactions between these three agents, the multiple ways they influence each other, as well as their coexistence define the ecosystem as a whole; the study of these factors, especially in a literary context, can be attributed to material ecocriticism. In a concise yet accurate synopsis, Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann describe it as follows:

> Material ecocriticism, in this broad framework, is the study of the way material forms — bodies, things, elements, toxic substances, chemicals, organic and inorganic matter, landscapes, and biological entities — intra-act with each other and with the human dimension, producing configurations of meanings and discourses that we can interpret as stories. Even though no preordered plot can rigorously distinguish these stories of matter, what characterizes them is a narrative performance, a dynamic process of material expressions seen in bodies, things, and phenomena coemerging from these networks of intra-acting forces and entities. (*Material Ecocriticism*, 2014: 7)

I will furthermore emphasize the 'narrative performance' mentioned in this passage: it is in fact through a narratological study, one that relies on the analysis of the intertextual elements, world-building aspects and minute details that would otherwise seem trivial that it is possible to get a better understanding of the ecosystem depicted within literary works. Coincidentally, the same intertextual analysis that has been used thus far to also analyse the other thematic elements in the previous chapters. It follows that passages from the novels of Ayn Rand, Philip

[149] By natural phenomena, I mean all of the various observable events (physics terminology) that are intrinsically part of the ecosphere such as air currents, tectonic shifts, hydrological cycle and so on and so forth.

K. Dick and Frank Herbert will be once again taken as a reference to analyse their interpretation of the ecological aspects[150].

One initial consideration to be made regards the degree and importance with which the three authors use the natural world or create entire ecosystems within their works. If not for *Anthem*, it might be even argued that Ayn Rand has no consideration for the ecological aspects that I will be discussing, but I would argue to the contrary. I have already discussed how *Atlas Shrugged* is an epitome of her mentality and philosophy; as such, it would also stand to reason that nature is less of a concern in her writing. Furthermore, considering the value she gives to human labour - and Fordism in general – it would be in accordance to perceive the world she envisions in *Atlas Shrugged* as one purely based on the mechanical and technological advancements of humankind. In this context, the natural elements (especially the inorganic resources) are there to be used by humankind to further their growth; in other words, nature becomes subservient to man. I would argue however that this is only part of the truth and it becomes evident upon a closer inspection of the way she writes certain passages. One of the pivotal plot points in *Atlas Shrugged* revolves around the steel invented by Henry Rearden, aptly named Rearden Steel. It is however important to note that, although the metallurgical process by which it is portrayed as being complex and highly industrialized, the steel itself ends up having a greenish-blue hue. In various passages, Rand portrays elements that could be strictly connected to Fordism and the industrial processes, but she does so while also employing a lexicon that heavily borrows from the natural world. The following passage, for instance, depicts the first time Rearden shows Dagny his creation:

> She approached him. He pointed silently. Far in the distance, beyond the mill structures, she saw a string of gondolas waiting on a siding.
> The bridge of an overhead crane cut the sky above them. The crane was moving. Its huge magnet held a load of rails glued to a disk by the sole power of contact. There was no trace of sun in the gray spread of clouds, yet the rails glistened, as if the metal caught light out of space. The metal was a greenish-blue. The great chain stopped over a car, descended, jerked in a brief spasm and left the rails in the car. The crane moved back in majestic indifference; it looked like the giant drawing of a geometrical theorem moving above the men and the earth.

[150] While it is obvious that the category of material ecocriticism would be anachronistic when considering their work, it will prove nevertheless useful in understating the author's ideology.

> They stood at the window, watching silently, intently. She did not speak, until another load of green-blue metal came moving across the sky. Then the first words she said were not about rail, track or an order completed on time. She said, as if greeting a new phenomenon of nature: Rearden Metal. (*Atlas Shrugged,* 86)

As previously stated, it is possible to notice the emphasis Rand gives to both the industrial world, by describing the assembly line itself, as well as the use of imagery connected to nature. The last phrase elevates the steel from a man-made product to a 'phenomenon of nature', hence giving it even greater importance. This is not an isolated case, but even so, nature always remains subservient to the will of man: the natural elements are there to be used.

In regards to the 'doomsday narrative' that was previously mentioned, in Rand's *Atlas Shrugged* the crisis does not emerge from a lack of materials or a process of destruction of the ecosystem, but rather from a shift in the social hierarchies. This phenomenon is one seen frequently in Philip K. Dick's writings as well, but with one important distinction: his dystopias tend to also reflect compromised ecosystems that were either by-products or consequences of the aforementioned social disparities. This is achieved mainly through two narrative strategies: either a catastrophic event has already brought forth the collapse of society and of the ecosphere, hence the intertextual elements that refer to it are mentioned as past events, or the story starts in *medias res* and the protagonists are experiencing first hand these shifts.

Philip K. Dick gives more importance to the ecological factors than Ayn Rand. It has already been explained how he attributes an obsessive importance to the economic aspects, both in his novels as well as his real life; it is fascinating however to notice that, in some of his literary works, the fictional currency is based on organic matter. For instance, in *The Three Stigmata of Eldritch Palmer,* truffle skins are used as a form of money since they are harder or impossible to replicate[151]. Furthermore, the same may be argued about the way he used the word *ersatz*. I have already discussed his fixation and inquiries into what constitutes reality, however this theme is not only ontological and also becomes important within the ecological context.

[151] In *The Three Stigmata of Eldritch Palmer*, "He offered Hnatt the stack of brown, wrinkled, truffle-skins which served as tender in the Sol system: the only molecule, a unique protein amino acid, which could not be duplicated by the Printers, the Biltong life forms employed in the automated assembly lines by many of Terra's industries." (33)

Ersatz – in the case of food for instance - is a substitute, but except for very few exceptions, Dick never gives a direct explanation to what exactly is the material it has been substituted with. In his novels, most characters are not even surprised to eat something that is quite possibly a processed substitute; in fact, they are surprised when the contrary occurs[152]. I would hence argue that in the case of nourishment, in Dick's world building, what ends up happening is a reversal from organic to inorganic materials. A similar yet more morbid concept may be seen in *Now Wait for Last Year,* where extra-terrestrial amoebas are used to produce (or better yet replicate) various types of goods. While initially the transitions is organic-organic (from amoebas to fur coats), it then becomes organic-inorganic (from the same amoebas to weapons). As the passage shows:

> Once the corporation had collected the dung of the Martian flap bat, had made its first returns that way and so had been in position to underwrite the greater economic aspects of another nonterrestrial creature, the Martian print amoeba. This august unicellular organism survived by its ability to mimic other life forms – those of its own size, specifically – and although this ability had amused Terran astronauts and UN officials, no one had seen an industrial usage until Virgil Ackerman of bat guano fame had come upon the scene. […]
> The answer, developed over a period of many months, consisted of killing the amoeba during its interval of mimicry and then subjecting the cadaver to a bath of fixing-chemicals which had the capacity to lock the amoeba in that final form; the amoeba did not decay and hence could not later on be distinguished from the original. It was not long before Virgil Ackerman had set up a receiving plant at Tijuana, Mexico, and was accepting shipments of ersatz furs of every variety from his industrial installations on Mars. And almost at once he had broken the natural fur market on Earth. (*Now Wait for Last Year,* 8-9*)*

The reason I indicated this passage as morbid is due to how the particular approach to the natural world is normalized in Philip K. Dick's writing. Although it might be argued that the exploitation is only that of amoebas, it is certainly not an isolated case; there are other instances of extra-terrestrial life forms being used in similar fashion as well as that of terrestrial animals[153]. Furthermore, I am not stating

[152] In *Our Friends from Frolix 8* for instance, one of the characters asks with dismay "Is there really ham available?" (23), indicating a world where authentic food has almost never been seen.
[153] In *Dr. Futurity,* for instance, rat brains are used as control panels for space ships: "In a fluid, something soft, on the order of gray organic material, floated. Out of the top of the machine several delicate projections sprouted, reminding him of the below-surface portions of mushrooms. Fine interlacing of fibers almost too tenuous to be visible. Pausing at the entrance porthole, one of the government men turned and said, 'It's not alive. That business floating around up top, that's a section cut out of a rat brain. It's growing in the medium, but it's not conscious; it's just to simplify building

this with a moralistic intent, but rather to juxtapose it to what has been said previously about Ayn Rand. Rearden steel, being an inorganic by-product deriving from inorganic matter, reflects a certain degree of respect for the natural world and, to an extent, lyricism in its description. Philip K. Dick however normalizes a process that creates an inorganic by-product deriving it from organic matter; on one hand, this creates a disturbing effect, but on the other gives a better representation of the human nature of using available resources. I would however emphasize that this effect becomes merely tangential to Dick's true intention. His emphasis is directed more towards the authentic-artificial dichotomy; in his works, the simple fact of characters being surprised that there exists food that is not artificial (not ersatz), is in itself a worship for the authentic. As such, it may also be argued that he creates a dichotomy based on natural/artificial, which in some cases transforms into organic/mechanic, as it will be explained further on.

Another recurring theme in Dick's novels is, as previously mentioned, the topos of the catastrophic event that drastically changes the socio-political equilibrium, as well as heavily influencing the fictional ecosphere. In the majority of the cases, this pre-existing element in the plot is a war of great proportions. It stands to reason that the possibility of an impending war was on the minds of many writers of the time: on one hand the Second World War was still fresh in their minds and on the other they had to deal with the fear of the Cold War. In the case of *The Simulacra* and *The Penultimate Truth* it is in fact World War III, whereas in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* it is referred to as World War Terminus and in *Dr. Bloodmoney* it is simply fallout caused by the detonation of many nuclear warheads. It is interesting to note that although the effects, mostly correlated with radiation, impact humanity and the ecosystem, they are almost never the sole focus of Dick's novels. In fact, in many cases it is only possible to surmise some of the consequences through minor descriptions or passages. Furthermore, in very few instances is nature given agency or the possibility to counteract man's intervention. Nature simply adapts to a new status quo or ecological equilibrium[154].

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them. 'Easier to cut a section from a rat brain than build a control', another man said" (181). While it may be argued that the comment of the brain not being alive might indicate a humane connotation in the use of rat brains, the following comment reveals that this is due mainly for economic reasons.

[154] In *The Penultimate Truth*, for instance, a menacing fog covers big parts of Earth rendering it unlivable: "Don't look out over that fog and coastline of rocks; [it] stretches south of San Francisco a hundred miles; one of the most bleak on Earth" (*The Penultimate Truth*, 57).

Dissimilarly, in Rand's dystopian novella, *Anthem*, the author gives more importance to nature, emphasizing its ability to reclaim Earth when the human agency is limited; in this case, it could be said that Nature juxtaposes technology, but the discourse is more nuanced than that, as it will be explained further on. Considering that the story is set it in a future that depicts society as regressed to a primitive state, nature also reverts to an unknown entity for human beings. Those who are in power, primarily use the unknown feature of Nature to instil fear in the masses.

> We have heard that there are many Uncharted Forests over the land, among the Cities. And it is whispered that they have grown over the ruins of many cities of the Unmentionable Times. The trees have swallowed the ruins, and the bones under the ruins, and all the things which perished. (*Anthem*, 48)

This is the only case out of the various text that have been analysed where nature is given an anthropomorphic quality: the fact that vegetation has 'swallowed' the ruins makes it become more akin to an entity rather than a simple natural phenomenon. The only nuance that comes close to this one in Dick can be seen in *The Simulacra* where a "dark wet forest of the extreme northern coastal region of California" (5) is described. Once again, however, it remains only a passive account of what the world has become: "Lush growth, tangled variants created by the fallout . . . the forestation had an almost tropical quality now, Nat knew. And the rain virtually never ceased; it had been frequent and heavy before 1990 and now it was torrential" (*The Simulacra*, 40).

Regardless of how it is explained, be it more as an account within the fictional world building or as an active interaction with the narrative world itself, what becomes evident is the emphasis on the human condition and man's ability to adapt. The ecosystem may change, but so can the human being. This concept is emphasized by Frank Herbert as well:

> A sophisticated human can become primitive. What this really means is that the human's way of life changes. Old values change, become linked to the landscape with its plants and animals. This new existence requires a working knowledge of those multiplex and cross-linked events usually referred to as nature. It requires a measure of respect for the inertial power within such natural systems. When a human gains this working knowledge and respect, that is called "being primitive."

> The converse, of course, is equally true: the primitive can become sophisticated, but not without accepting dreadful psychological damage. (*Children of Dune*, 78)

Out of the three authors, Herbert was the one most interested in the ecological aspects in his writing. While Ayn Rand gave more attention to the inorganic materials in *Atlas Shrugged* and Philip K. Dick nuanced the interaction between humans and organic matter, Frank Herbert considered both aspects. The ecosystem he created for the planet of Dune takes into account both organic and inorganic dimensions. As previously explained, the by-product of the larval forms of the sandworms is melange, the geriatric spice also responsible for space travel. Given that it is produced by living organisms, melange could be an organic compound; this is however not explained throughout the novel. I would however argue that melange might be inorganic, not just because the characters refer to it simply as being a spice; in the saga there is a sparing discussion about the possibility to replicate it (this is never accomplished). Regardless of the nature of the substance, it is not only a simple plot device. The entire economic system, as well as the political agents, rely on this single resource, mined on the desert-type planet, with machines that either rapidly corrode or are even swallowed by sandworms. Herbert subtly points towards the fact that it is not the spice alone that should be the main focus. Liet Kynes (current planetologist in the first novel) remembers his father, Pardot, saying:

> One crop. It supports a ruling class that lives as ruling classes have lived in all times while, beneath them, a semi-human mass of semi-slaves exists on the leavings. It's the masses and the leavings that occupy our attention. These are far more valuable than has ever been suspected. (*Dune*, 349)

Part of Frank Herbert's vision underlines the importance of the masses in understanding their own circumstances and their ability to make a choice. If organized and determined it becomes easy for the masses to topple who is at the top of the command chain. He however understands that, especially if blinded by the cult of personality, the icon of the hero, the people will forget their power and even willingly renounce it. For them it becomes easier to follow rather than to make a choice. And those who are in power have the awareness of this notion and manipulate the truth in order to keep a firm control on the situation. Paul's ultimatum

to the Emperor becomes the destruction of the source of melange itself. “The people who can destroy a thing, they control it” (Dune, 532) he says even before facing the supreme ruler. His statement implies that he wold rather see the most valuable resource of the galaxy destroyed rather than losing his war. It is an extremist stance, one that characterizes aptly the nature of Herbert’s pretended heroes. Furthermore, it should also be noted that in Herbert’s mind there is a comparison between the fabricated reality in the *Dune* universe and the socio-political dynamics of our world. As David Higgins states,

> Herbert’s setting reflects (on a galactic scale) the conditions of postmodern globalization emergent during the 1960s: extensive forms of connectivity across space and time require high-speed transportation, and transportation requires natural resources that have limited availability. (2013: 238)

It is this exact awareness of the galactic scale, that Herbert delineates from the environmental micro-constituents that becomes paramount in the analysis of the saga. It is by introducing a large amount of water in the desert planet’s ecosphere, that the author also considered the impact such a drastic shift can have on the planetary scale; this likewise leads to an analysis of how the life of the people, especially the Fremen, changes with it. Furthermore, by creating an arid ecosphere and adding the ‘cult of water’, Herbert was also able to emphasize the quintessential importance of the various natural phenomena.

The aforementioned reasoning also introduces the concept of micro-ecology and macro-ecology, referring to the scale of the phenomena that the authors considered. It is intuitive to see how Frank Herbert understood these two dimensions and made them interact cohesively. It could be argued that Rand is more interested in the macro aspects in *Atlas Shrugged*; a parallelism can be traced between Rearden Steel and melange. Her concern has however less to do with ecology itself and more to do with the economic ecosystem. I would argue that Philip K. Dick puts more emphasis on the micro-elements and details that seemingly do not have an immediate impact on the world-building process itself. Examples of the use of truffle skins as currency, the transformation of alien life forms as inorganic products and nutrition being *ersatz* are all examples that have been already provided. It can be inferred nevertheless how this micro-ecology is either a cause or an effect of the macro-ecological dimension. For instance, if all food is merely a surrogate, this in

turn entails that within his worlds there is either a shortage or directly a lack of flora and fauna. Explanations are never fully provided, but they can still be understood in the general narrative scheme of his novels.

I would like to end this subchapter, that functions more as an introduction to several of the themes that will be discussed more profusely further on, with a quote by Frank Herbert taken from the interview that was already used in the chapter dedicated to him.

> Ecology encompasses a real concern, however, and the Florence project fed my interest in how we inflict ourselves upon our planet. I could begin to see the shape of a global problem, no part of it separated from any other-social ecology, political ecology, economic ecology.
> It's an open-ended list.
> Even after all of the research and writing, I find fresh nuances in religions, psychoanalytic theories, linguistics, economics, philosophy, plant research, soil chemistry, and the metalanguages of pheromones. A new field of study rises out of this like a spirit rising from a witch's cauldron: the psychology of planetary societies. (OMNI, 74)

This excerpt demonstrates the importance that Herbert gave to ecology as well as his understanding of a holistic system. It is interesting to note how he describes the socio-political dimensions that have been discussed in the previous chapters: they are in fact social ecologies, political ecologies and economic ecologies. This in turn links directly to the definition that Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann gave to material ecocriticism. This continuous intertwinement of dimension and concentricity of themes is in fact the reason why analysing the text of these three authors becomes possible.

6.2 The importance of water and other resources

Several paragraphs have been already dedicating to explaining how Rand, Herbert and Dick approach the human use of natural resources as well as the consequences of their scarcity. In *First as Tragedy, Then as Farce*, while reflecting and problematizing the failures of capitalism, Slavoj Žižek also considers the

ecological aspects intertwined with this concept. “Are we thus not gradually approaching a global state in which the potential scarcity of three basic material resources (oil, water, and food) will become the determining factor in international politics?” (2009, 83). The rhetorical question emphasizes how natural resources, and more importantly their continuous and incremental shortage, become an integral part of the socio-political discourse. This subchapter proposes to analyse other excerpts and understand how the three authors were already aware of the close relationship between the socio-political equilibrium and said resources.

A natural association between water and life is certainly not an innovative correlation in philosophy and literature. It is possible, for instance, to consider the pre-Socratic material monists who identified natural elements as main forces of creation. Thales, in such a case, considered water as being the unifying *arche*. It follows that many other symbolisms have been attributed to water along the centuries and great importance has been given in the case of its shortage.

Through Philip K. Dick it is possible to analyse the scarcity of water within the discourse of capitalistic greed and waste of resources. In various minor instances, the author depicts aridity, but in *Martian Time-Slip* he epitomizes this concept. The plot is set on Mars where draughts and lack of drinkable water are normalized[155]. Dick manages however to problematize this aspect by creating the Water Works Local, an organization that distributes and rations water on Mars; by having access and monopoly over such a valuable resource they become the superior governing force. In a typical fashion seen throughout Dick’s novels, the organization overuse their authority and become a form of dictatorial regime. Their blatant abuse of power is expressed through the very waste of water:

> Everybody called him by his first name, and that was good. Arnie Kott nodded to Bill and Eddy and Tom, and they all greeted him. The air, full of steam, condensed around his feet and drained off across the tiles, to be voided. That was a touch which pleased him: the baths had been constructed so as not to preserve the run-off. The water drained out onto the hot sand and disappeared forever. (*Martian Time-Slip*, 11)

[155] Water is rationed on Mars and the people are forced to use it as sparsely as they can: “She turned on the water at the sink and splashed her face. The water, unpleasant and tainted, made her cough.[…] They had waited eleven days, and now they would receive their share of water from the great ditch which passed by their line of houses a mile to the Martian north. (*Martian Time-Slip*, 1-2)

In this case, Dick creates a severe inequality between the quote-on-quote common people who are forced to wait for their ration of water and the ones who have so much power because of their unlimited access to said natural resource. In another passage, Kott's wife calls him the "the totem god of wasted water" (163) which further cements him as one of the main antagonists. As a character, Kott's greed and the importance he gives to his position outweighs the needs of others. It is not that he is blind to the suffering or problems of the general population either; not only is he not concerned with such issues, but even goes out of his way to purposefully waste something needed by others and does so with pride.

If Dick puts an exaggerated emphasis on the socio-political aspects correlated with nature, Rand, on the other hand, reverts to a more lyrical and poetical dimension. As it has been already discussed in regards to *Atlas Shrugged*, she has a similar approach in *Anthem* as well. In the very first pages she gives this description: "The walls are cracked and water runs upon them in thin threads without sound, black and glistening as blood" (18). In this case, it is not scarcity that is a main concern, but rather the symbolic representation of asphyxiation and dread. It could even be argued that water is linked to life, but more specifically to a more visceral aspect of it; the aesthetic of walls being covered in blood already evokes a sense of uneasiness. Rand employs this technique to achieve an opposite effect as well. An example can be extrapolated from the way she describes the protagonist's view of the woman he loves. "The Golden One were kneeling alone at the moat which runs through the field. And the drops of water falling from their hands, as they raised the water to their lips, were like sparks of fire in the sun" (42). In this case, the poetical moment directs the reader towards the affection that the protagonist has for Liberty 5-300. To an extent, this passage also juxtaposes the process of drinking water, one of the elements necessary for life, with the sparks of fire, otherwise symbolizing love and passion.

Just as previously mentioned, in Frank Herbert's case, both the symbolical dimension, as well as the socio-political aspects come into play within his saga and general world building. I have already explained how he creates an ecosystem cantered around water and melange, but in *Dune* water acquires a plethora of different connotations. By considering Campbell's work on the concept of monomyth, Donald Palumbo correlates the absence of water with a more personal and spiritual counterpart:

> Water, of course, is what is lacking on Arrakis; and the absence of water on Dune is symbolic of the lack of freedom suffered by the Fremen at the hands of their Harkonnen oppressors. On a deeper level, however, the absence of water is also symbolic of a spiritual emptiness - a divorce from the unconscious and thus from the divinity that dwells within one's humanity - for Campbell notes that wells and other water repositories symbolize the unconscious and that the hero becomes an incarnation of god to reveal to all that everyone is an incarnation of god. (*The Monomyth as Fractal Pattern in Frank Herbert's Dune Novels*, 1998, 441)

While this reflection may give a deeper level of interpretation to individual characters[156], it does not take into account the significance of water on the social and planetary scale. It could be argued that Frank Herbert, similar to Dick's approach in *Martian Time-Slip*, also creates a system where having monopoly over one resource can lead to establishing a totalitarian regime. Instead of water however, in *Dune*, that resource is melange. Herbert nevertheless adds a key factor: it is possible to disrupt this equilibrium by radically changing the ecosystem. If another precious resource such as water - which just as easily marks a disparity between power structures - is introduced in both the natural ecosystem, as well as in the economic and social fabric, then it can overthrow the levels of disparity previously established. In other words, the Fremen create a shift in the power structure by changing the ecosystem of the entire planet of Arrakis and, by doing so, also disrupt the economy of the entire Empire. This in turn explains why Paul Maud'dib is seen as a liberator and messiah by the Fremen since he is the one who facilitates this process.

I would argue that Frank Herbert constructs a paradox within the creation of the Fremen people themselves. Although they want to change the ecosystem of Arrakis, it is also true that for them there is no other way of living than the one in the desert. It may be argued that they will be able to learn to cohabit with a newly developing ecosystem, but that is hardly the case. In several passages it is reported how any other form of living would be inconceivable for such people: "A Fremen dies when he is too long from the desert; this we call the water sickness" (*Children of Dune*, 141). Herbert refers to it as sickness, similar to home sickness, but ironically it is a sickness of water. This obvious paradox could also be a way of

[156] Especially in the case of Leto seeing how he becomes the God Emperor.

portraying futility given the cyclical nature of the events of *Dune*. To an extent, I would even argue that by depicting the Fremen as just having a goal with no precise plan afterwards, it becomes that much easier for a proclaimed prophet as Paul to become a despot. He is not as tyrannical as his son, but his nature is just as totalitarian. This in turn goes back full circle to what has been argued thus far concerning Herbert's warnings about the fallacy of heroes and prophets seizing power.

The discourse regarding natural resources always seems to converge on one pivotal point: their importance and more specifically, what exactly constitutes their value. In the case of water, the intrinsic value is self-evident as it is directly linked to human preservation. Without any water, or any similar surrogate, human life would cease to exist. In the real world, gold has an inherent value based on its limited availably, as well as its properties and usage in various industries. In the case of melange, on the other hand, the value is more strategically nuanced: it is important to be mindful that melange does not only have geriatric properties[157], but it is also the only substance that enables interplanetary and intergalactic travel in the world of *Dune*. The socio-political ecosystem that Frank Herbert constructs in his universe heavily depends on intergalactic communication and transportation. If the production and distribution of melange would abruptly cease, it would be as if in the real world the entirety of the logistic system and infrastructure would come to a halt. It would not just mean trucks, ships and airplanes ceasing to function, but even the roads would not exist anymore. In this comparison, it could be argued that internal production of resources could still be possible, but in a pre-existing system, this change would be drastic and next to impossible to achieve in a foreseeable short term. For this reason, I argue that Herbert managed to craft not only an ecosystem for the planet of Arrakis, but an economic, social and political ecosystem – admittedly in a delicate equilibrium considering how it relies only on one planet – within his saga.

Going back to the original question of what constitutes the intrinsic value of a resource, it is also possible to consider Ayn Rand's reflection that limits it to a contained subjective perception:

[157] If the only property of melange would be the one of prolonging one's life, it could be argued that it is only the elite and wealthy stratum of society that attributes its value.

> "Value" is that which one acts to gain and/or keep. The concept "value" is not a primary; it presupposes an answer to the question: of value to whom and for what? It presupposes an entity capable of acting to achieve a goal in the face of an alternative. Where no alternative exists, no goals and no values are possible. (*The Virtue of Selfishness*, 12)

Her reflection is mostly related to ethics and social interactions, but I believe that this passage could also be helpful in understanding the value of resources as well. It could be argued, as such, that value is based on functionality, and if that functionality indeed constitutes a primary need, such as water, the value is undisputable. It is even possible to rethink her words and consider that if indeed there is no alternative to water then certainly no goal or value is possible because it becomes a need rather than a commodity. Once again, it is possible to understand how any entity[158] that has monopoly over such a resource automatically gains a position of superiority over others – the imbalanced nature of power dynamics. The consequences of the actions of these overarching powers can be seen on the defeated, the characters that have been analysed thus far. To go back to Philip Dick:

> It's a form of barbarism, this pettiness we're reduced to. What's the point of all this bickering and tension, this terrible concern over each drop of water, that dominates our lives? There should be something more. . . . We were promised so much, in the beginning. (*Martian Time-Slip*, 3)

These words are delivered by the wife of the protagonist, essentially a secondary character, and yet they have a greater importance than just a fleeting consideration on the status quo. In most cases, these type of thoughts are left to be interpreted and extrapolated from the world building and plot, rather than directly put in conversation by the characters. There is bitterness, resentment and hopelessness in these words; above all, the last part refers to the futile promise made by Earth's government. Dick adds a layer to the manipulations and hypocritical nature of totalitarians not only by creating the self-absorbed Water Works Local of Mars, but also through the political powers on Earth. Because of limited resources and overpopulation, the governing agents of Terra portray the colonies on Mars as a new beginning. They do so in order to entice more and more people to emigrate, however they do not mention the difficult situation and limited

[158] As in a single individual or a collective.

water supply that come with this pretence of a fresh start. Furthermore, not only do they send limited equipment and supplies for the colonies, but they prefer to dedicate those resources to exploring and expanding further into the galaxy. This is once again symptomatic of the capitalistic greed that Philip K. Dick uses as a baseline for his novels.

One last reflection concerning the scarcity of natural resources, as well as the ecological issues that arise because of them, can be surmised through Žižek's words:

> If such problems are not solved one way or another, the most likely scenario will be a new era of apartheid in which secluded parts of the world enjoying an abundance of food, water and energy are separated from a chaotic "outside" characterized by widespread chaos, starvation and permanent war. (*First as Tragedy, Then as Farce*, 84)

This concept of division between the select few that possess such wealth that they are able not to care about what happens on the 'outside' expresses perfectly the power inequalities that have been explained thus far. The 'outside' becomes the world that is left to the defeated, a world where it is maybe only possible to scrape by, and even then it is not an assurance. This consideration epitomizes the settings and pivotal points that each of the three authors, in their respective ways, have analysed through their novels.

6.3 Man and nature, nature and technology, technology and man

The theme concerning resources and natural materials is part of a larger discourse that encompasses the relationship between man and nature in general. As Gregg Garrard[159] explains "the widest definition of the subject of ecocriticism is the study of the relationship of the human and the non-human, throughout human

[159] Garrard Gregg, *Ecocriticism, The New Critical Idiom,* 2004.

cultural history and entailing critical analysis of the term 'human' itself" (2004: 5). For the purpose of this analysis, as well as for the purpose of this subchapter, the notion of non-human shall be used to identify multiple thematic threads: it will not be limited to natural phenomena, resources, flora and fauna – in other words, what appertains to the ecosphere – but it will also consider the non-human otherness. Specifically, in the writings of Philip K. Dick and Frank Herbert, this will be used to justify the analysis of extraterrestrial life, as well as technology that progresses without further human intervention (for example androids). It has been considered opportune as such to also include the relationship between man and technology in a more general sense. This creates, as the title suggests, the possibility of analyzing a triptych focused on man, nature and technology, as well as their respective interactions with one another.

To start understanding the various layers of this complex thematic nucleus, I would like to quote once again Pardot Kynes from the appendix of *Dune*:

> There's an internally recognized beauty of motion and balance on any man-healthy planet. […] You see in this beauty a dynamic stabilizing effect essential to all life. Its aim is simple: to maintain and produce coordinated patterns of greater and greater diversity. Life improves the closed system's capacity to sustain life. Life—all life—is in the service of life. Necessary nutrients are made available to life by life in greater and greater richness as the diversity of life increases. The entire landscape comes alive, filled with relationships and relationships within relationships. (*Dune*, 622)

Kynes, who predates the events of the saga, is also one of the most atypical characters in the *Dune* universe. He was received by the Fremen almost as a prophet, being one of the first to actually start building a relationship between the nomadic tribes and the Empire. To further affirm his role as a clairvoyant, he also foresaw that the ecology of the planet would one day change, implying that the desert would become an oasis. In spite of these factors, he remained impartial and did not become the archetypical prophet or hero that is liable to fail or misuse his power and influence. Paradoxically, with this passage, the intervention of man is not contemplated in the course of nature. Kynes' statement, 'life in service of life', leads towards the consideration of the human being as part of the ecosystem while also not considering his agency and ability to intervene. I argue that this creates a paradox because of how the narrative structure and plot points evolve in *Dune*. Herbert emphasized the relationship and interactions between the arid ecosystem

and the Fremen, as well as the members of the Empire. Kynes, on the other hand, underlines a reasoning that features nature finding a way regardless; the adaptability, usually quintessential to human beings when facing different environments, is attributed to nature as a whole.

Adaptability becomes a pivotal feature when considering the triptych that is being analysed. While it may be argued that nature does not require a proper agency to adapt to changes in circumstances, mainly because of its intrinsic in the natural order of ecological phenomenology, humans necessitate an understanding of circumstances to develop said adaptability. This may occur because of natural evolution[160] or a capability gained through technological aids[161]. To give just a brief example, let us once again consider the arid climate of Arrakis: fauna adapts in a natural way, predatory birds becoming carrion-eaters and even being able to drink blood[162], whereas humans are forced to adapt and build special suits capable of retaining and recycling bodily fluids[163]. Without this proper technological advancement, there would be no hope to survive on Arrakis, other than possibly extreme mutations if we consider for instance Leto's plot line.

Adaptability can be however a necessity, forced on the human body because of the drastic shift in the ecosystem; what becomes ironic, especially in many of Philip K. Dick's novels, is that the very same drastic shift in the ecosystem is actually caused by human agency (consider for instance World War events and nuclear fallout).

> The legacy of World War Terminus had diminished in potency; those who could not survive the dust had passed into oblivion years ago, and the dust, weaker now and confronting the strong survivors, only deranged minds and genetic properties. […] The saying currently blabbed by posters, TV ads, and government junk mail, ran: "Emigrate or degenerate! The choice is yours!" Very true, Rick thought as he opened the gate to his little pasture and approached his electric sheep. But I can't emigrate, he said to himself. Because of my job. (*Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?,* 7-8)

[160] Or devolution if we consider the impact fallout and radiation has on the human body.
[161] For this reason it seemed apt to include technology within the same discourse.
[162] "All of our birds, of course, are carrion-eaters, and many exist without water, having become blood-drinkers" (*Dune*, 173).
[163] "It's from those suits they wear —call them 'stillsuits'—that reclaim the body's own water. Paul swallowed, suddenly aware of the moisture in his mouth, remembering a dream of thirst. That people could want so for water they had to recycle their body moisture struck him with a feeling of desolation" (*Dune*, 37).

This passage encompasses many important aspects from Dick's writing. A world war has left the planet into ruin, all that remain is a consuming 'dust', most probably fallout, and the only possible solution is to emigrate. The problem is that leaving for other colonies is expensive and there is a certain sarcasm in the words of the protagonist saying that he is unable to leave because of his job. Furthermore, although never expressed, it is possible that living conditions on the colonies is equally bad[164]. Lastly, to further add to the many layers Dick overlaps in this novel, the allocation of resources should be considered more carefully: in a world that has been destroyed and flora and fauna is close to extinction, social status and appearance is still important. For this reason, electric animals are being sold[165] to the ones who are still on Earth. The simulacrum of the animal, hence relating to the natural world, as such becomes fetishized; as argued by Jill Galvan[166], "the Voigt-Kampff scale refers in large part to incidents of animal mistreatment because live animals, in a post-nuclear era which finds them scarce, have been fetishized as the repositories of human empathy" (1997: 415). With this consideration in mind, it is with *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* that another important facet of the triptych can be analysed, mainly the relation between humans and technology.

In the previous chapter it has been discussed how technology is used as a means to create paranoia by the oppressors and spy on the general population. The hundreds of thousands of T.V. screens and the Great Ear from *Frolix 8*, as well as the juveniles (recording sentries) in *The Man who Japed* are nevertheless only mechanical aids. The human-technology dichotomy becomes more complex when considering seemingly anthropomorphised machines. Consider for instance how every-day appliances are depicted in *Ubik*:

> The world of *Ubik* is thoroughly saturated by commodities that foreground their status as quasi-living, mystifying signifiers. Not only do doors threaten to sue and coffee-pots demand money for services rendered; creditor robots dun free-spending debtors like Joe Chip, and animate homeopapes read the news for a specified fee. (Carl Freedman, 1984: 20)[167]

[164] I am saying this considering not only the manipulation perpetrated by the government as seen previously in *Martian Time-Slip*, but thinking about the reasons why the androids would want to escape from the colonies, another detail that is never fully elaborated.
[165] Regarding the way animals symbolize wealth and status, see chapter dedicated to Philip K. Dick.
[166] "Entering the Posthuman Collective in Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*" in Science Fiction Studies 24.3.
[167] *Towards a Theory of Paranoia: The Science Fiction of Philip K. Dick* in Science Fiction Studies 11.1.

In his critique, Freedman justly correlates the material dimension of anthropomorphized objects[168] with paranoia; I, on the other hand, would link it only partially to paranoia, but even more so to the poverty of the lower stratum of society and the anxiety of not having financial stability. Regardless, in this passage, what is noteworthy is the attitude of what should be simple objects. Doors, coffee-pots and animated newspapers possess a human-like attitude, but untimely are still mechanical contraptions. The discourse becomes much more complex when taking into account androids. In this case, consider what has already been explained about otherness in chapter two. The Nexus-6 prototypes hunted by Deckard in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*? not only have a human-like attitude (with the exception of only simulating empathy), but also are made to look human. In How We Became Posthuman, Katherine Hayles argues that

> In *Do Androids Dream*, Roy Baty understands full well that androids have been denied the status of the living and consequently forced to serve as slaves rather than function as the autopoietic systems they are capable of becoming. The struggle to achieve autopoietic status can be understood as a boundary dispute in which one tries to claim the privileged "outside" position of an entity that defines its own goals while forcing one's opponent to take the "inside" position of an allopoietic component incorporated into a larger system. Working along apparently independent lines of thought, Dick understood that how boundaries are constituted would be a central issue in deciding what counts as living in the late twentieth century. (1999: 161)

This is yet another indicator of how Philip K. Dick anticipated several thematic nodes that would in later years become more relevant.

A further difficulty when trying to analyse the role technology in the various proposed novels arises upon considering its ambivalent nature. While it may be perceived that any scientific advancement would ultimately serve humanity, it is also undeniable that war also favoured technological discoveries that ended up causing the death of many. The effects of nuclear fallout that have been discussed in several

[168] Other academics reflected on the theme of quasi-living machines as well; Gerry Canavan, for instance, in “Capital as Artificial Intelligence”, discuses it as follows when considering *Vulcan’s Hammer*: “Few writers of Cold War SF capture the paranoid spirit of capital-as-Machine like Philip K. Dick. Dick's military and economic decision-making-Machines, like Asimov's work first and foremost to secure their own preservation - but unlike Asimov 's they are utterly unconstrained by any sense of concern for the humans, whose bodies and labor become mere energy inputs in a much larger homeostatic ecosystem of nonbiological Machine life” (2015: 697).

examples are part of this grim side of technology. As mentioned previously, an underlying sense of fear, a direct result of both World War memory and Cold War climate, are ever-present in the background of several of Dick's novels. I would argue however that this dread can be extrapolated more from the settings themselves rather than the characters; most of the protagonists have an almost eerie and passive attitude towards the various nuclear events[169]. In *Dr. Bloodmoney,* the characters experience first-hand several nuclear bombs that radically change the ecosystem and there is almost no sign of despair, rather they simply move forward, quickly adapting to the new circumstances.

It could be argued that Philip K. Dick does not resent technology and the utter destruction it can bring with it; rather he focuses on the powers that misuse it and how this in turn affects society. In his vision, technology becomes an integral part of both the natural as well as the socio-political ecosystems.

In the *Dune* saga, on the other hand, Frank Herbert has an approach that features distancing. As already explained, prior to the events portrayed in the books, the Butlerian Jihad had erupted because of a critical failure on technology's behalf. This leads humanity towards detaching itself from various computerized aids and even the abolishment of weapons of mass destructions and artificial intelligences. In turn, humanity adapts by infusing various features that were left to computers into humans[170].

Ayn Rand has an even more ambivalent position. While with *Atlas Shrugged*, which however explains parts of her ideology, it is possible to infer that technology is seen purely on a utilitarian basis[171], it is hardly the case with *Anthem*. On the one hand, technology and nature are used by the governing powers to manipulate the general population[172], while on the other it becomes a weapon to fight against the

[169] This is to be correlated to Dick's technique of normalizing the otherwise alienating events, as explained in previous chapters.
[170] I am referring to how space travel is achieved, for instance, not by programing a computer but by a Navigator indicating the way through the use of melange.
[171] The first time plant producing Rearden steel is described, it is seen by passengers on a moving train. The plant itself is massive, and although the production is following suit, the whole area looks almost abandoned, like everything has been automated. "The passengers could not grasp the complexity of what seemed to be a city stretched for miles, active without sign of human presence. They saw towers that looked like contorted skyscrapers, bridges hanging in mid-air, and sudden wounds spurting fire from out of solid walls. They saw a line of glowing cylinders moving through the night; the cylinders were red-hot metal. An office building appeared, close to the tracks. The big neon sign on its roof lighted the interiors of the coaches as they went by. It said: REARDEN STEEL "(*Atlas Shrugged*, 33).
[172] This is achieved through strict taboos and limitations.

oppressors. To complicate this analysis even further is the role of nature; the florid and lush vegetation that has reclaimed parts of the land becomes unexplored territory. The survey of these areas becomes one of the vetoes imposed by the oppressors, but by breaking said rule, the protagonist is able to achieve freedom. In *Anthem,* by breaking the restrictions imposed on nature, the main character will be led to discover remnants of the past, hence technology. It is thus through science and intelligence that the protagonist is able to reclaim his complete freedom and start a war against the reigning unjust power.

> For the first time do we care about our body. For this wire is as a part of our body, as a vein torn from us, glowing with our blood. Are we proud of this thread of metal, or of our hands which made it, or is there a line to divide these two? (*Anthem*, 61)

This passage is important because a previous imposed boundary between man and matter (or machine) begins to shattered. The interrogative posed by the protagonist denotes a difficulty in understanding if this truly is a next stage in the human evolution. This new condition is not dissimilar to what has already been analysed in the character of Hoppy Harrington “I used to be body-wired. Now I’m brained wired” (*Dr. Bloodmoeny*, 99). In the case of Hoppy, however, the fusion between man and machine is achieved through the mind; Philip K. Dick puts more emphasis on the consequences of radiations on awakening mental abilities in the form of precognition and other similar phenomena. This can occur in the natural world, but it may also happen in what a modern reader would call cyberspace.

> Thoughts of the Brain are experienced by us as arrangements and rearrangements -- change -- in a physical universe; but in fact it is really information and information-processing which we substantialize. (*Valis*, 24)

This excerpt is to be partially understood as Dick’s tentative description of the difference between authentic and fake, but it also emphasises his attention towards a universe that is technological. For this reason, as previously mentioned, the interpretation that technology is part of the intrinsic process of human evolution continues to have validity.

An important remark regards the possibility of technology producing hybrids that would be both non-human and non-natural. In simpler words, this occurs when

humans use technology to evolve, but that new state that is achieved is so uncanny that it creates an estranging and unnatural effect. I would argue that it is perceived to a lesser extent in Dick because of how the characters impassively accept these changes, but it becomes a quintessential aspect when analysing Herbert's *Hellstrom's Hive*. In this novel, part of humanity decides to undergo an evolutionary process and become man-insectoid hybrids. While it may be argued that these creatures[173] have superior physical and mental abilities than humans, in the process they lose their individuality[174] as well as their humanity. Herbert emphasizes this process by giving it a grotesque and alienating dimension:

> Whatever we do in breeding for the specialists we require, we must always include the human being in our processes, preferring this to the intrusion of surgical instruments. The sexual stump can be condoned only as long as we include the body's original genetic materials in the practice. Anything that smacks of genetic surgery or engineering must be looked upon with the gravest misgivings. We are, first and foremost, human beings, and we must never loose ourselves from our animal ancestry. Whatever we are, we are not gods. (*Hellstrom's Hive*, 151)

Herbert creates several layers of paradoxes: technological aids such as surgical instruments are frowned upon by the new hybrids yet it is only through genetic engineering that they achieved their evolution. Being 'first and foremost humans' also creates a problematic consideration given how they transition towards a more and more elaborated hybridity. Their loss of humanity, as previously mentioned, can also be seen in how they use 'sexual stumps', which are the lower half of a humans - technologically kept alive - and used for the sole purpose of reproduction. Everything, from technology to nature and the human body, is seen on a purely utilitarian basis: the Hive must evolve and expand, everything else becomes secondary. This is the grotesque and, to an extent, horrifying narrative the Frank Herbert constructs; by doing so, he problematized the ways through which the human-nature-technology relation could go horribly wrong. It could be argued however that my interpretation tends to be more anthropocentric. According to Peter Brigg[175],

[173] I use the word creatures because they are no longer for all intents and purposes human.
[174] Following a natural insect behavior, their behavior reflects what is referred to as hive-mind or collective mind.
[175] "Frank Herbert: On Getting Our Heads Together" in *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal* 13.3/4.

> In all the principal novels, climaxing in Leto II's conversion to a semi-human "maker," the objective is ecologically positive, representing a view of mankind as part of the evolving process of planetary life. The "horrors" of human simulacra constructed from beetles, legless and armless breeding trunks, a man who puts on the skin of a sand-trout to evolve over four thousand years into a different-from-human creature, and men behaving as insects and predators are hardly horrible in the natural world where species survival species-survival as life's sole goal. Even if the "mindless" hive were actually the highest form of mind, the fact would remain that it might be devoted to goals conflicting radically with the natural aspirations of the human heart and imagination. (1980: 197)

This interpretation sees the Hive's behaviour as an expected process of Nature; with such a point of view in mind, it may be argued that the Hive is merely existing, following the course of evolution.

6.4 Final observations

This chapter started with an explanation about 'doom narratives', their effects and how they are perceived both in regards to real life crises as well as in narrative worlds. Either way, the usage of these type of narratives may also be studied from a capitalistic perspective. As pointed out by Mark Fisher in *Capitalist Realism - Is There no Alternative,*

> Climate change and the threat of resource-depletion are not being repressed so much as incorporated into advertising and marketing. What this treatment of environmental catastrophe illustrates is the fantasy structure on which capitalist realism depends: a presupposition that resources are infinite, that the earth itself is merely a husk which capital can at a certain point slough off like a used skin, and that any problem can be solved by the market […]. Yet environmental catastrophe features in late capitalist culture only as a kind of simulacra, its real implications for capitalism too traumatic to be assimilated into the system. The significance of Green critiques is that they suggest that, far from being the only viable political-economic system, capitalism is in fact primed to destroy the entire human environment. The relationship between capitalism and eco-disaster is neither coincidental nor accidental: capital's 'need of a constantly expanding market', its 'growth fetish', mean that capitalism is by its very nature opposed to any notion of sustainability. (18-19)

While the ecocritical nuances may be anachronistic for Philip K. Dick, Frank Herbert and Ayn Rand, capitalism was not. The fact that in many of their novels the 'growth fetish' mentioned by Fisher is portrayed in the different declinations that have been analysed thus far is certainly no coincidence. Furthermore, it is a reasonable outcome that the fictional ecosystems depicted are either severely limited or drastically undergoing changes in order to adapt is a logical consequence of this capitalistic activity. I would add that this dimension is closely correlated with the condition of defeat that has been analysed in chapters regarding the authors. Many of the protagonists become powerless in front of this system.

Although it is possible to consider that the characters created by Frank Herbert, Ayn Rand and Philip K. Dick did not directly reflect on the respective 'doom narratives' that were part of their worlds, it is hard not to consider that they were intrinsically or partially responsible. A destroyed ecosystem – or to put it more poetically a doomed or dying planet – logically deteriorates the human condition and this in turn is reflected in the loss of hope and condition of defeat of the protagonists that have been analysed. Greg Garrard traces the apocalyptic narrative to its primordial roots, starting from Zoroastrism and continuing from there. While his focus is mostly concerned with the eschatological implications and correlations with these types of narratives, he also considers their effects. In his words,

> Apocalyptic rhetoric seems a necessary component of environmental discourse. It is capable of galvanising activists, converting the undecided and ultimately, perhaps, of influencing government and commercial policy.[…] The news media often report environmental issues as catastrophes not only because this generates drama and the possibility of a human interest, but also because news more easily reports events than processes. (2004, 104-105)

While on one hand it is important to create a certain degree of commotion in order to create visibility, it may also be argued that on the other hand this becomes a manipulation of the narrative as well. This line of reasoning is frequent for instance in Philip K. Dick's storylines and is portrayed mostly as a one-way course of monetary interest on behalf of superior powers; this gain may be achieved through the use of media manipulation.

Furthermore, if we consider the effects of the 'doom narratives' on the general population, we once again reach the impasse Ritchie mentioned previously.

Creating a narrative that leads to hopelessness becomes counterproductive. Antithetically, Garrard reaches a similar yet opposite conclusion: “Only if we imagine that the planet has a future, after all, are we likely to take responsibility for it” (2004, 107). In other words, it is only when humanity reaches a critical point, as in the asphyxiating perception of not having a future, that it will strive, act and try to find a solution. In this case the need to find a remedy emerges out of desperation; one that, I might add, may be found as a constant in the background of the novels that have been analysed thus far. This conclusion, that might be perceived as pessimistic, was not reached only by Garrard. Žižek, for instance, agreeing with what had been proposed by Alain Badiou, states that:

> We have to accept that, at the level of possibilities, our future is doomed, that the catastrophe will take place, that it is our destiny-and then, against the background of this acceptance, mobilize ourselves to perform the act which will change destiny itself and thereby insert a new possibility into the past. Paradoxically, the only way to prevent the disaster is to accept it as inevitable. (*First as Tragedy, Then as Farce,* 151)

The paradoxical nature that Žižek depicts is one that I would argue fits with what has been said thus far. The catastrophic nature of ecological crises have a direct impact on human psychology and perception, and as such on all other factors that follow. Accepting the apocalyptic narrative as an unavoidable outcome or understanding its implications and perceiving them as non-immediate threats but as plausible ones are attitudes that lead to the same conclusion. It becomes paramount to act, to understand the problem and find a solution. What both these approaches underline, as emphasized by Žižek, Garrard, Ritchie et. all others, is that a state of human paralysis and inaction would be ultimately detrimental and that is what would truly lead towards the fulfilment of the apocalyptic narrative.

7. Conclusions

I don't necessarily know how to wrap up such a work and, for that matter, I can only hope that I managed to provide a cohesive enough analysis in the previous chapters for it to all be summarized in several pages of condensed conclusions. So let me start by stating something I perceive as obvious: I am convinced that the main role of literature is to create a discourse, free from boundaries, to put into communication themes and ideas belonging to different areas in order to arrive at original ideas and pursue new lines of thinking. In this case, I am not talking from any kind of philosophic or academic perspective, I am merely considering the aptitude of a text of creating a conversational moment between readers, aficionados and scholars alike. This concept can also be applied between novels and authors, just as I have argued in the introduction, and that is why I have put a huge emphasis during my analysis on the intertextuality and ideological dimensions presented by the three authors.

In spite of the fact that Ayn Rand, Philip K. Dick and Frank Herbert were active largely during the same period, their literary works, philosophy and approach to their craft tends to be varied; they coincide in some cases and heavily diverge in others. They witnessed the events of World War Two, although at slightly different ages, lived through the paranoid and fear-inducing climate of the Cold War and contemplated the socio-political spheres of their historical period. In their writings, they reflected on various themes that would later become important academic points of analysis. However, my dissertation is not about how they might be perceived as prophetic or avant-garde; although they certainly problematized various subject matters ahead of their time. The discourse I wanted to establish is not based on what the intertextuality tells us today, but rather focus on the motives that made them write on those thematic nodes in the '60 and '70[176].

As stated in the introduction, my dissertation did not consider the entire literary corpus of the three authors, rather it focused on specific texts, admittedly concentrating more on the works of Philip K. Dick. This was decided mainly because his novels offered a solid basis for the comparative analysis with the other two authors. For Frank Herbert the majority of the work concentrated on the *Dune* saga,

[176] There are minor exceptions of novels predating this time frame (such as *Anthem* for instance*).*

with the added novel of *Hellstrom's Hive*. The former offered important perspective in regards to the ecocritical themes and the latter offered a bleaker vision and interpretation of the dystopian genre. I have to admit that Rand is the author which I considered least out of the three; while her *Anthem* and *Atlas Shrugged* proved to tie perfectly within the established thematic discourse, her Objectivist philosophy was more of a tangential point to the dissertation.

The quintessential leitmotifs that dominate Philip K. Dick's fictional worlds are the usage of drugs, theological and ontological contemplation and the falsehood of reality. These three themes intertwine and permeate constantly within his world building, characters and plots. The other trifecta that is important to mention is the one Dick was interested in analysing and criticizing: politics, economics and mass media, or technology more in general. In his novels, Dick creates a divide between the lower and upper echelons of society, usually based on financial status (denoting his obsession with money); the resulting political system in similar cases always results into some form of authoritarianism or even totalitarianism, be it dictatorship, plutocracy or militaristic regime. It is for instance the case of *The Penultimate Truth*, *Our Friends from Frolix 8* and *Flow my Tears, the Policeman Said*, just to name a few. His texts in fact veil a certain sense of discontent towards a manipulative form of government, which in most cases is either revealed to be corrupt or is just openly unjust. This overwhelming sense of discontent, which in the best of cases can be forgotten by the fictional characters through the use of drugs, also derives from the awareness of the futility of trying to change or fight the system. Add to this dynamic a constant sense of paranoia and existential dread and it is easy to understand how the theme of 'defeat' or 'the defeated' becomes an apt key to interpreting his work and mentality.

From totalitarian circumstances and societies it is possible to move towards a whole totalitarian galaxy and universe. *Dune*, Frank Herbert's magnum opus, lends itself to an analysis of complex ecosystems; I am not only implying environmental ecosystems, but the economic, political and social ones as well. The saga is, for all intents and purposes, an ecological novel; it takes into account the phenomena that shape an entire ecosphere. It comprises anything in between, from the more infinitesimal level (such as the habits of the local flora and fauna of Arrakis) to phenomena that operate on a planetary scale (the shift of the planet's entire ecosystem upon introducing a colossal mass of water). These aspects however are

not isolated, but intertwine with the socio-political dimensions of the fictional characters living, not only on the desert planet, but in the entire galaxy as well. Herbert achieves this by creating a delicate equilibrium based on the economy of melange (being the only substance that enables space travel). As soon as a despot radically changes this status quo, first Paul and then his son Leto, then all of the previously established socio-political equilibriums crumble. Ultimately, Herbert used the tyrannical figures of both the aforementioned protagonists to create a cautionary message about the dangers correlated with the cult of personality, its prophets and its heroes. His critique points not only towards the fallacy of the hero and the prophet, but towards the fallacy of those who blindly follow them just as easily. It is also a way for him to point towards historical dynamics that repeat themselves almost as in a loop; for this I pointed in my analysis to the theme of cyclicality.

Finally, the misuse of power in a seemingly totalitarian regime, as well as the concept of blindly following a leader, is also taken into account by Ayn Rand. In *Anthem*, this is achieved by reverting society to a primitive form; the technology that we know has been lost and the political agents used this moment of oblivion to take control over the entire population. It is up to the protagonist to understand that he in fact can detach himself from these political machinations through the use of his own reason. Individuality and critical thinking, as such, become quintessential in Rand's critique. In *Atlas Shrugged* it is a particular form of greedy capitalism that puts into motion the entirety of the plot. In this case, it is once again through reason and detachment from the social imposed behaviour that the protagonists are able to fight back. Furthermore, in *Atlas Shrugged*, the solution reached by the 'men of the mind' is to simply go on strike and let the technological infrastructure crumble. Ultimately, Rand creates a severe brain drain, where the intellectual human capital has detached itself from the social reality, and by doing so, reclaimed its right to be treated justly. It may be argued that out of the three she is the only one to propose a more hopeful and positivistic ending.

It is already possible to see how various of the ideas of Rand, Herbert and Dick can be intertwined in a somewhat unified conversation. Regardless, it is still worth being cautious of the role of the author in creating such moments of conceptual interchange. I will reference once again a passage of Dick's introduction to Herbert at the VCon conference: "S-f writers are almost universally failures in some basic sense, and have taken refuge in their profession because of this,

whether they know it or not. S-f writing, as a career, is a difficult compensation for some deeper, earlier failure in us". Philip K. Dick had a difficult relationship with his craft, with money and with the society he lived in and yet there is always a certain 'playfulness' in his writing; what I mean is that he plays on the themes he considers important in unexpected ways. As readers, we are always forced to be 'on our toes', attentive and doubtful at the same time, and this is not only because of how he manipulated and used the theme of false reality. To go back to the H25 interview that has been used multiple times, Dick warns us quite openly: "Don't believe anything a writer tells you. I'm a writer, I would know.[…] Always, always check on your facts when any writer tells you anything, any fiction writer tells you anything. A fiction writer speak with forked tongue"[177]. In a way, this is what Herbert had also warned against, using not specifically writers as an exemplum but the cult of personality.

Philip K. Dick was a very good scholar of human beings, ontological thought and social behaviour. He saw, more than most of his generation, not only the shifts in civilization, but the complex interactions between economics, politics and technology within the social connective tissue. His texts may be considered somewhat pessimistic, or at the very least cynical or nihilistic, but it is important where does this general point of view originates. There is a certain fear, similar to an anxious form of dread, in the visions of not only Philip K. Dick, but Frank Herbert and Ayn Rand as well (although admittedly in a diminished degree). I would argue that this attitude of bleak uncertainly towards the future is routed deeply into their socio-political and historical dimension, just as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter – this much should be fairly self-evident. I tend to believe however that it goes just a little bit further than that. The grim and pessimist outlook towards the future is not because of society as a whole, but rather because of how it can be manipulated; the fear of the authors I have analyses regards the abuse of power and, to a degree, how technology can facilitate this. To quote Mark Fisher's *The Weird and the Eerie*,

> Some of the most powerful passages in Dick's work are those in which there is an ontological interregnum: a traumatic unworlding is not yet given a narrative

[177] See note 60.

> motivation; an unresolved space that awaits reincorporation into another symbolic regime. (2016, 50)

The ontological quandaries present in Dick come from a pre-existing trauma, one that is usually not given much explanation in his world-building, just as it has been discussed in the second chapter. As such, the space where he explores the human condition is within this symbolic regime that he creates and, in most cases, sees humans pitted against one another based on social hierarchies. For him this division was primarily based on wealth, while similarly, in Herbert, it is based on interest and resources. Rand likewise sees a division between the oppressors and the oppressed, although she tries to offer a more optimistic solution in the form of the peaceful protest in *Atlas Shrugged.* These authors were well aware of the socio-political problems of their time and were also preoccupied of how the consequences of these struggles could impact the future. As Herbert comments in the interview for Omni:

> Yes, there are analogs in *Dune* of today's events-corruption and bribery in the highest places, whole police forces lost to organized crime, regulatory agencies taken over by the people they are supposed to regulate. The scarce water of Dune is an exact analog of oil scarcity. (1980: 74)

This is just one of many traces that indicates how the authors that have been analysed perceived the state of affairs of the world they lived in. It is almost impossible not to hear a note of resentment or, at the very least, regret in their words. So, instead of focusing on what scenarios became more or less truthful throughout the ones they proposed, a more interesting approach would be to try and understand how much the dread they felt towards the future is still relevant today. In other words, is the human condition of anxious dread that they problematized in their novels similar to the one felt today (if indeed that condition it is still perceived)?

It has been already mentioned how social manipulation from higher political power is a leitmotif taken into account by all three authors. In Dick, this can be seen as a pre-existing situation, where the masses have already been either brainwashed, indoctrinated or simply rendered innocuous; the few characters that go against the status-quo, in most cases, soon understand how powerless they truly are. Rand, on the other hand, emphasizes the possibility of a protest against the

ruling capitalistic powers. It might be argued that in *Anthem* there is still a possibility of change, but it will only come through war. Finally, Herbert constructs it from the point of view of the manipulator, hero and messiah, especially through Leto II, denouncing the hypocrisy and ineptitude of leader figures. What is interesting to note is that within the power dynamics created by the three authors, there is always a degree of culpability, a character that is either clearly an antagonist or perceived as one. There might be a sense, on behalf of the characters or on behalf of the readers of 'fighting a losing battle', but at the very least it is possible to see and interact with the antagonist. It is not a battle against an amorphous undefined system, it is a fight between individuals. It is this sense of individuality that I would argue takes an important role in my analysis. As Herbert writes,

> Good government never depends upon laws, but upon the personal qualities of those who govern. The machinery of government is always subordinate to the will of those who administer that machinery. The most important element of government, therefore, is the method of choosing leaders. (*Children of Dune*, 170)

In this specific context there is a certain sarcastic intent in his words, but there is also an important nuance that should be stressed. This is a call to personal and critical thinking; individuality, as in the ability to use your own reasoning to decide, becomes once again paramount. At its core, this is the same conceptual idea that Rand employed within her writing. To use her own words,

> Independence is the recognition of the fact that yours is the responsibility of judgment and nothing can help you escape it - that no substitute can do your thinking, as no pinch-hitter can live your life - that the vilest form of self-abasement and self-destruction is the subordination of your mind to the mind of another, the acceptance of an authority over your brain, the acceptance of his assertions as facts, his say-so as truth, his edicts as middle-man between your consciousness and your existence. (*Atlas Shrugged*)

This excerpt, alongside many others quoted from *Atlas Shrugged*, has the function of reminding people to think for themselves. Thinking for ourselves is an ability that we still have, as opposed to many of the fictional characters that have been analysed throughout my dissertation, characters who were brainwashed, manipulated or oppressed and possibly did not even realize it. That is the exemplification that the three authors perpetuate in their novels through what I

analysed as the theme of defeat. To reiterate what Ursula K. Le Guin's words "There are no heroics in Dick's books, but there are heroes". She was referring to characteristics such as honesty, kindness and compassion, but I am not entirely certain those qualities suffice. In the narrative of defeat, ultimately, the characters do not change the status quo, but it has to be said that an attempt is made. This is possibly the point I am more interested in and that is directly correlated with our own status quo, the present we are living through and the possible future that the three authors feared. In *Chapterhouse Dune,* an epigraph for one of the chapters presumably explains how part of the population of Arrakis lived after Leto II:

> Some never participate. Life happens to them. They get by on little more than dumb persistence and resist with anger or violence all things that might lift them out of resentment-filled illusions of security. (177)

I would argue that the apathy described in this passage is the true risk that the three authors hid in the background settings of their works. By creating a dynamic between oppressor and oppressed, the need to resist and fight becomes an evident necessity; if, on the other hand, the oppressed passively submits, without even attempt to act or react, then the condition of defeat is absolute. The type of defeat that I have analysed thus far is seemingly a form of 'defeat in progress'. In Dick it happens because the ending of the novel is usually left either inconclusive or open to interpretation, Herbert focuses on cyclicality so there history is simply forced to repeat itself and Rand at the very least gives us the possibility of a protest. In the introduction to *Messiah of Dune,* Brian Herbert clearly states:

> Among my father's most important messages were that governments lie to protect themselves and they make incredibly stupid decisions. Years after the publication of *Dune*, Richard M. Nixon provided ample proof. Dad said that Nixon did the American people an immense favor in his attempt to cover up the Watergate misdeeds. By amplified example, albeit unwittingly, the thirty-seventh president of the United States taught people to question their leaders. In interviews and impassioned speeches on university campuses all across the country, Frank Herbert warned young people not to trust government, telling them that the American founding fathers had understood this and had attempted to establish safeguards in the Constitution. (XI-XII)

This is an example of a real historical context, one that still understood the importance to question its leaders and think for themselves. It seems to me however

that more time passes and more it is difficult for this to occur; the fact that technology could one day indoctrinate the masses and that Dick envisioned so vividly is becoming more an accepted truth rather than a dystopian dread. Newer generations are conditioned to be apathetic, not even to lose their ability to act or think, but to never have had it in the first place.

Admittedly, some of these last interpretations might feel slightly pessimistic and not quite academic. Given that at the beginning of chapter six I stressed the problems correlated to giving too much credit to the 'doom narrative', I should rectify. In order to alleviate from the previous cynicism, I will suggest a more positive train of thought. While the current status-quo of affairs and political climate may not be encouraging, not all hope is lost. It is by creating a common discourse and understanding the issues at hand that we may also be able to find solutions; this is ultimately the reason why I chose to analyse Philip K. Dick, Frank Herbert and Ayn Rand together. The methods by which they problematized their own socio-political context can be used to understand how we arrived to our own. It is not a simple question of saying 'they were right and things got worse', rather than a question of amplifying their words and stressing the importance of their message.

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Appendix 1 – VCon pamphlet excerpt

V-CON III, the Third Vancouver Science Fiction Convention, has been sponsored by the British Columbia Science Fiction Association. The convention executive committee are:

Mike Bailey - co-chairman, treasurer, and promotion
Pat Burrows - registration, costume ball and information
Allan Dickeson - displays and promotion
David George - co-chairman, hotel and suppliers arrangements and promotion
Ed Hutchings - Metropolis
Diana Keswick - program book
Robert Leung - hucksters
Ron Norton - Art Show and art work

We would like to thank several people and organizations which have made special contributions to the convention:

Guest of Honor, Frank Herbert

Chuck and Edna Davis; Michael Walsh; John Park; Susan Walsh for the SCA demonstrations; Bubbles Broxon for acting as Seattle liaison and for the Clarion and SCA demonstrations; the Society for Creative Anachronism; Crawford Kilian; Mason Harris; Carl Chaplin, Simon Curly, Herb Gilbert, Bob Inwood, and Michael Malcolm for their contributions to the Art Show; Doug Seeley and Barry White for the computer terminal and Fanweb; Ian Sexton; Dave Williams and the BC Telephone Computer Communications Group; Dr. Hal Wineberg and Simon Fraser University; Myles Murchison and Radio CKLG; Sally Warren and Vancouver Calendar Magazine; Jack Moore and Vancouver Week; Dave Lindquist and the UBC Physics Department; Dr. Lawrence Fast and Vancouver City College; Al Betz for recording the entire convention; Southern Music; ARP Instruments and Tom Payne Music; SFU Department of Geography; Gordie Weaver and Labatt Breweries; Bill Robinson and Park and Tilford Distillery; Castle Wines; the B.C. Narcotics Addiction Foundation; the UBC Film Society; the management and staff of the Georgia Hotel; all the BCSFA members helping with the hospitality suite bar, Art Show and registration; and all of those attending members who have agreed to appear on panels and in demonstration events.

CONCERNING FRANK HERBERT

-- by Philip K. Dick

Generally it is one of the most unlucky events in your life to meet your favorite s-f author face-to-face at long last. I have had fans tell me that after meeting me they either (one) did not care to meet any more writers ever or (two) ever meet anybody of any sort again. Classic in this regard is Harlan Ellison's remark when he finally met his idol Isaac Asimov: "Why, you're a nothing!" (Or so Asimov tells it; I tend to believe him, having seen the same look on fans' faces at one convention after another when they meet the legend that wrote the immortal novel they will remember eternally.)

This reaction of acute depression is a natural one, because s-f writers are by and large as dull, ordinary-looking and badly-dressed as door-to-door vacuum cleaner salesmen. Worse than that they are pompous. They believe you want their opinion on everything and are therefore prepared to answer any question. They hope you will quickly ask them the significance of all life, how to become suddenly powerful and rich, how to make out with expensive girls -- and are childishly eager to tell you, with relish, of all their own bumbling efforts in all these directions. Never model yourself after any s-f writer... except Frank Herbert. He is, in my mind, a great writer -- but even more, a great and kind human being, with a twinkling, genial worldly wisdom you should pay attention to, and which you may never see the like of again.

S-f writers are almost universally failures in some basic sense, and have taken refuge in their profession because of this, whether they know it or not. S-f writing, as a career, is a difficult compensation for some deeper, earlier failure in us. Not so with Frank: he radiates the natural strength of a man who need not apologize to God nor the authorities for what he is or what he has accomplished. I would call him a vastly balanced man, the ideal of the Greeks: at home in all he does, with everyone, capable and at ease, out to prove nothing, fearing nothing, understanding in an almost physical way all the various things we must understand in order to get by. I like him. Hell, I love him. In all the years I've known him not once have I ever heard him speak badly of anyone nor have I heard even the meanest creature concoct an insult in his direction.

Frank Herbert is, in all respects, a big man, well above the petty, beyond the cruelties that whirl around us all in our usual gatherings. You have, I'm sure, read his writing and know how excellent and important they are; you came here with that experience. Now you have this good and fine man before you, a superb author rising

above his own writing, spinning his works' dignity out of his own dignity, their depths out of his own. Had he been a plumber or a bricklayer he would still be Frank Herbert and it would still be our privilege and joy to know him. We are merely lucky that he also writes, as well as exists as the human being, the man that he is. Otherwise he might not be here; otherwise we might not have met him, nor even known who and what we had for all time missed.

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Appendix 2 – Philip K. Dick letter

[TO FRANK HERBERT] November 23, 1973

Dear Frank

Today Mike Bailey in Vancouver—no, that's not right Today I received a letter from Mike, saying there will be a Third Vancouver S-F Convention and that you are the Guest of Honor, and as you may know, I was the previous Guest of Honor, and he asked me if I would write something about you for their program book, and I did know you well enough to do that and so forth, and I feel I do, and so I did, and I am herewith enclosing my carbon of it for you to see now, because February is a long way off and I didn't see the similar one Ray Nelson wrote about me until I got there and it was already printed and distributed and it said beavers had built dams in my bathtub and that was although funny not strictly true and I wondered how many people at the convention believed it, and isn't this a long sentence?

All kidding aside, I am proud to write a piece about you for V-Con III, as they call it, and I hope nothing in it offends you (see enclosed two-page piece). It all came straight from the heart, and I mean every word of it. I hope and trust they use it as is.

Also, how are you and what's doing? I sold two novels this year to Double day and a story and that's about it. Oh, yes, I also sold DO ANDROIDS DREAM OF ELECTRIC SHEEP? to U.A. for $25,000, but as we all know, all I'll ever see is the option money which is $2,000 because that's how movie deals go (no offense to U.A., but that's how it goes). Also, I read the interview with you in Vertex, and envy goaded me into leaning on them until they did one with me, which will appear this December. In the pictures with it I tried to look more virile than you in yours, but failed. Well, so it goes, as Vonnegut says (I have an improvement on that: Well, so it went). In other news, Tessa and I are married now and have a four month old baby named Christopher, and a '67 Dodge and finally a new TV set. This is truly dull, what I'm droning on about, but the main thing is CONGRATULATIONS! on being the Guest of Honor at Vancouver; I never had such a good time in my life as when I did that in '72. There are some awfully nice guys and chicks up there: Mike Bailey and Rob Leung and Susan Walsh and the Broxons, and maybe the lovely little black-haired girl I fell in love with will wander in through the front door as she did in '72. Ask Mike about her — Jamis is her name and I still hear from her. But I prattle, so I'll close now, wishing you and yours God's good will, and as I keep saying, I hope "Concern ing Frank Herbert" is okay by you.

With warm regards,

Phil Dick