

# SOCIAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL IDEAS THROUGH HETEROTOPIA: ASIMOV, DICK AND MIEVILLE

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## Abstract

*The analysis of three science fiction novels: Isaac Asimov's "The Gods Themselves" (1972), Philip Kindred Dick's "Ubik" (1966) and China Mieville's "The City & the City" (2009) strives to uncover structural parallels and the inherent evolution in their development, plot structuring and presentation. It is centered on the exhibited relation to the structure and general mechanics of space. The interpretations of space are based on Michel Foucault's heterotopias, the rhizome of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, and Michel de Certeau's absent space, which show how the active force of space and the complexity of the genre identity are interconnected, and how they interact with the social and philosophical engagement of the works and their wider cultural context. These prominent works of American and British science fiction provide a rich source material for an outline of the process of interplay of genre identity and socio-philosophical engagement, and an overview of how this interplay affects their plot, style and the protagonists.*

**Keywords:** Heterotopia, Science Fiction, Asimov, Dick, Mieville

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The idea of space in postmodernity is not defined only geographically and psychologically; it is also applicable to the system of literary theory, as the texts are also spaces just as space is intrinsic to art and language. Since textual complexity can be comparable to spatial complexity (Krevel, 2018), theory has to rely on terminology that can emphasize the layers and subtleties involved in something as intricate as describing texts as a form of space.

As far as the terminology of space is concerned, there is a common ground in Michel Foucault's heterotopias (Foucault, 1986), rhizome of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004), and Michel de Certeau's absent space (de Certeau, 1984). They all lack depth and bear the sign of surface-focus and ahistoricity. They all try to encompass the idea of postmodern space and take into account its expanse and internal structure. And they can be applied to the study of three novels that show some significant common ground already with the idea of space present in the titles themselves, but exhibit an even more significant connection in their relationships with space, with genre and with political engagement (Bowler, 2017). Interestingly, the three works very similarly take significant care to evade the limiting boundaries of a single genre, but show a much diversified attitude to the hybridity of space, as we will demonstrate. What is more, this diversified attitude in all three cases directly addresses the political and social events current at the time of publication of the works, therefore further reinforcing their openly political agenda. In this way, the specific relationship with space, evasion of genre boundaries, and directly political content are interlinked and offer a unique opportunity for the exploration of the mechanism of their connection.

To explore these relationships, we shall observe in broad strokes how in the process of development of the novel, the structuring of the plot and the presentation of the setting in each of the three cases, the number of spaces involved rises and the role of the space in the workings of each novel changes. At the same time, there seems to be a direct relationship between the role of space, the active force of space and the complexity of the genre identity of the work. We shall investigate each of the novels and try to determine their inherent attitudes toward space as well as the generalities and specifics of the three authors and their more or less overt relationships with contemporary world and society. Genre-wise we shall observe the evolution of a rather straight-forward mixture of urban fantasy and science fiction with a strong inherent social component in Isaac Asimov's "The Gods Themselves" (1972), which operates on the premise of a rather simplistic division of space and fantastic invisibility or erasing. We shall continue with the evolved hybrid genre of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's science fiction, which glides toward the rhizomatic, labyrinthine space conceptualized by Philip Kindred Dick in "Ubik" (1966), with its forgetting protagonist hidden in plain sight, and the tour de force by China Mieville in his novel "The City & the City" (2009), where fantasy and detective novel parade a surprising dystopian novum of the institutionalized practice of unseeing.

## 2. METHOD

The research deals with the issue through the study of novels by three of the leading and most prominent writers of the post-war period who represent American and British science fiction at one of its highest and most accomplished stages of development. And since the background (setting) and plot (story problem and resolution) are the essentials in a science fiction story, the study adopts a socio-historical approach to determine the various factors and powers in the fictional worlds of science fiction that have led to the depiction of characters in a way that many critics have condemned. This objective can be achieved through the comparative critical approach that has played a crucial and important role in science fiction criticism, especially in the second half of the twentieth century.

## 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1. Isaac Asimov's "The Gods Themselves"

Isaac Asimov's "The Gods Themselves" has a singular history. The novel is composed of three parts, each bearing as its title one third of the line from Schiller's "Jungfrau von Orleans" which Mike Bronowski quotes at the end of the first section: "Against stupidity/the gods themselves/contend in vain" (Asimov, 1972). It began when Robert Silverberg requested that Isaac Asimov write a story about an impossible isotope; Isaac Asimov responded with the material that now constitutes "Against Stupidity," originally titled "Plutonium 186." But "Plutonium 186" grew so long that it exceeded Robert Silverberg's needs, so Isaac Asimov decided to incorporate it into a novel about an energy crisis (Kakela, 2016).

The Electron Pumps, which have provided free, clean energy to Earth through an exchange of electrons with a parallel universe, threaten such an imbalance of electrical charge in our own universe that its total annihilation is imminent. All three of the stories (set on Earth, in the para-universe, and on the Moon, respectively) portray the efforts of individuals who have divined the threat to avert the catastrophe. These efforts are blocked by the self-interest – this rather than stupidity is the real danger in the novel – of those for whom the free ride of the present cancels out concern for potential disaster in the future.

Yet despite their interrelationship in the plot, the three sections do not fit together comfortably to form a unified whole. Admitting that the novel lacks unity in this respect, one should then consider whether, given its structure, unity should be expected, and if so, whether there are other levels upon which that unity might be found. This endeavor leads first to consideration of a somewhat wider question, the prevalence in science fiction of longer narratives, constructed like "The Gods Themselves" from a number of smaller ones: the composite novel (Vairapandi, 2018). Although this form occurs outside of speculative fiction, and although, conversely, science fiction includes many novels that are not composite, the proportion of composite novels in the genre is rather high. Several reasons, both practical and philosophical, account for this phenomenon. For those writers who achieved prominence during and immediately after the "Golden Age," novel-length publication in the predominantly hardcover market was simply not a possibility. They confined themselves to short stories, or at least highly episodic narratives, for the science fiction magazines. When book-length publication later became a reality, the first move for many writers was to collect several short stories, perhaps with minor changes, to form a more or less coherent narrative. Isaac Asimov's "I, Robot" and Ray Bradbury's "Martian Chronicles" are two such collections of stories masquerading as novels manqué. Other novels more tightly unified but with origins in separate short stories comprise a distinguished list of science fiction: "A Canticle for Leibowitz", "Foundation" trilogy, "City", to name just a few.

Long form publication is now quite accessible to science fiction writers, but their affinity for the short story form and the fragmented narrative has not disappeared. In some ways the exigencies of early science fiction publishing only complemented some basic tendencies of the genre. On the one hand, the simplest space operas, as well as many more complex works, follow the narrative pattern of the quest, which divides an overall movement towards a specific goal into a number of discrete, preliminary adventures. Furthermore, because science fiction writers often create new worlds, races, and future societies, the delineation of much of this new territory through discrete, interconnected stories often takes precedence over the linear and lengthy development of a few characters from beginning to end of their adventures. The composite structure creates a hybrid that well serves this preoccupation of science fiction with expanding spatial and temporal horizons.

This clear division is in accordance with Michel Foucault's understanding of heterotopias. When defining the difference between the new and the old models of dominance, Michel Foucault draws an impressive series of analyses, thereby drawing a picture of the new power that in Isaac Asimov's work comes to the fore in

contradiction between the Earth and the Moon societies. He expands on the idea of the difference between the ways of realizing authority, domination and punishment (Foucault, 2007). The Earth is an example of the old power, concentrated on the public space and public authority, which put its subjects into an extremely minimized, less visible position. It scared the population into submission through very visible, frightening ways of punishment (public executions), which from the modern perspective seem completely out of touch with our current humanitarianism. The Moon, the new power, however, abolishes the idea of public space.

The power is hidden and all of the subjects are now under scrutiny. Surveillance data can be easily checked by authorities whose mode of operation is hidden, but strongly implied, as is the case in “The Gods Themselves”. The novel was written before the eruption of the various invasion of privacy scandals, which was particularly significant in the USA. The novel therefore resides in a Foucauldian heterotopia, the first principle of which maintains that there is probably not a single culture in the world that fails to constitute heterotopias (Milenkovic, 2019). That is a constant of every human group. But the heterotopias obviously take quite varied forms, and perhaps no one absolutely universal form of heterotopia would be found. We can however class them in two main categories. In the so-called primitive societies, there is a certain form of heterotopia that I would call crisis heterotopias, i.e., there are privileged or sacred forbidden places, reserved for individuals who are, in relation to society and to the humane environment in which they live, in a state of crisis.

The image for such a society is Peter Lamont. On Earth Peter Lamont, an intense and very emotional fellow, fills Dua's role. She and he appropriately act in tandem as the discoverers of the Pump dangers, communicating their fears to each other but unable to compel those in authority to act on their findings. Both need the expert help of their Rational counterparts, Odeen and that patient decoder of ancient languages, Mike Bronowski, to give factual solidity to their intuited sense of danger. And both find a stumbling block in the Parental. Like Tritt, Frederick Hallam is dull and stubborn, intent on protecting his own narrow interests at the expense of anyone and anything else. Asimov more overtly links him with Tritt by mentioning his sobriquet, the Father of the Electron Pump, at every opportunity. This may provide another reason, besides an attempt to make points with feminists, that Isaac Asimov uses the male pronoun to designate Parentals in the para-universe.

What Isaac Asimov does brilliantly is take on the whole concept of the multiverse (here limited to dual-verse) usually found in science fiction (Gunn, 2020). He cleverly juxtaposes the idea of the duality of two worlds existing simultaneously, the world of the bluntly oppressing real and that of the mysteriously dangerous fantastical. The fact that Isaac Asimov later won numerous science fiction awards, such as the Nebula and Hugo, clearly demonstrates his ability to open up his preferred genre of science fiction. And in this way he offers his readers and protagonist a possibility of change and maybe, ultimately, the possibility of a life that is free from constraints of the emerging world. But 37 years later, when “The City & the City” appeared, the situation seems more complex, more hybrid and much less optimistic.

### 3.2. Philip K. Dick's “Ubik”

The story of “Ubik” takes place in the North American Confederation in 1992 at a time when space travel and psi powers are commonplace. The novel introduces two corporations that engage in a business war involving the use of psi powers, and the story is told primarily from the point of view of Joe Chip, a debt-ridden technician who works for the Runciter Associates, a prudence organization (an anti-psi firm), located in New York and headed by Glen Runciter. The organization employs people called “inertials” with counter talents and with the ability to neutralize and block certain psychic powers for the purpose of securing other people's privacy and businesses. Runciter's main adversary, Ray Hollis, heads another organization of psychics who use their psionic talents, such as telepathy and precognition, for industrial spying. Glen Runciter is assisted in his work by his wife and former partner Ella who died a decade earlier at the age of twenty and was placed in “cold pac” in a state of half-life in a Zurich moratorium. A state of half-life is a form of cryonic suspension which is defined as a kind of quick freeze with suspended animation that greatly prolongs the remaining impulses of cephalic activity in those who have just died. A person in half life has limited consciousness and communication ability when revived by technicians, but this ability slowly fades away over time (Dick, 1966).

“Ubik” is told by a third person narrator and it is almost entirely Joe Chip who is the protagonist and the major view point of the novel while the few sections narrated from Runciter's point of view are included to complicate the events that occur to Joe Chip and the group of inertials. The novel opens with the exposition of two corporations that are engaged in a business war, involving the psi powers that have become a common commodity in the future world Philip K. Dick has created.

The reality breakdown experience begins for Joe Chip and the group of inertials, who apparently survive the Luna explosion, when everything around them begins to devolve and degenerate, giving the impression that the real world they inhabit is gradually falling apart and giving way to decay and entropy. Vending machines

offer clotted cream and ancient cold coffee, the current money becomes obsolete and is no longer accepted by the slot machines and vidphones, and cigarettes become dry and stale and break apart. As a first attempt to understand the meaning of these occurrences, Joe's fellow inertials speculate that the explosion on the moon is the cause.

Meanwhile, the frightening process of deterioration goes further by threatening the lives of the inertials who begin to die one after the other in a horrifying way that recalls the most dreadful scenes of horror stories. In fact, critics have written more about the puzzle in "Ubik" than about any other aspect in the novel or any other Philip K. Dick novel, because finding an explanation that reconciles all the events in the story is the only route that leads to drawing a full and clear picture of the characters and understanding their role and status. Although critics have responded variously to the contradictory facts of the story, its complexity, and its confuse ending, there is a consensus that the central experience that Joe and his fellow inertials go through is a reality breakdown experience in which Joe Chip, as the protagonist of the story, is unable to draw a distinction between reality and illusion (Pascalau, 2014). Indeed, he finds himself living in a new world that has shifted back in time with all the concomitant manifestations of regression and decay that lead him to meditate on the nature of this "reality" and to strive to understand what powers have taken over in shaping it. Joe is eventually left with no right direction, unable to find out whether this reality is real or an illusion that Philip K. Dick presents in the form of half-life. In fact, the concept of half-life is one of Philip K. Dick's best metaphors he has used brilliantly in this novel and he has exploited its possibilities to the fullest (Burton, 2015). The concept is neither unscientific nor writer's own invention; in reality, during the period when Philip K. Dick wrote "Ubik", the legal definition of death had been altered when American physician Robert Ettinger proposed the idea of freezing newly dead bodies through a process called cryopreservation until a cure could be found in the future by using highly advanced medical technology (Ettinger, 1966). Philip K. Dick took up the idea and fertilized it with his brilliant imagination, culminating in the possibility of a technology that allows communication between the brains of the frozen persons and those of the living. The result is the appearance of Moratorium in "Ubik" which has allowed Philip K. Dick to explore the most important question of what goes on in the subconscious minds of his frozen characters who have an existence halfway between life and death.

### 3.3. China Mieville's "The City & the City"

Beszel and Ul Qoma are two cities that occupy the same place. Spatially, they are indivisible but at the same time there is an intentional invisible border that divides them. This separation is guarded by most inhabitants, although there are nationalists in each city who believe that the whole place should be one metropolis at the expense of the other, and unificationists who think that they should merge. The divide is guarded by something rather undefined, called the Breach. "Nobody knows what or who the Breach is. The only thing that is clear is that it does not interfere with the actions of the citizens unless they either see the other city or unlawfully cross over. Nobody really knows what happens with the offenders, but they are never to be seen again" (Javorsek, 2018). That is why everybody is extremely careful and the residents have been taught to see and unsee things around them. Some areas of the city are total, which means that they belong in only one city, while some of them are "crosshatched" so that a street or a house might be both in Beszel and in Ul Qoma.

A term "crosshatched" is introduced by John Clute in 1997 to describe places where the demarcation line between realities or worlds is not clean and clear-cut, or where two or more worlds may simultaneously inhabit the same territory: "when borderland conventions are absent, there is an inherent and threatening instability (wrongness) to regions of crosshatch; a sense of imminent Metamorphosis" (Clute & Grant, 1997).

The central character of the novel is Tyador Borlu, an Inspector for Beszel's Extreme Crime Squad. He has to solve the murder of a young American archaeology student who was part of a team excavating a precursor site – a site from the period before the cleavage of the two cities. The plot thickens when the detective discovers that the victim was in fact not murdered in Borlu's hometown Beszel, but may have been killed in Ul Qoma. Borlu learns that the dead girl was, in fact, a resident of Ul Qoma, and it appears that the murder might be a case of breach, which would mean that the responsibility for finding the killer could be delegated to the mysterious forces of Breach. But things become more complicated, as "breach" is denied and it becomes clear that one of the victim's particular interests was a theory maintaining that there is a third, invisible city occupying the same area as Beszel and Ul Qoma, a city between the cities called Orciny. The novel ends in a gloomy, pessimistic way: nothing is resolved, everyone resumes their lives, and the only change happens in Borlu. The actual murderer, the Canadian scholar Bowden, tries to escape by placing himself in the same position as the Breach: "He would be in Breach, which, unbelievably, he was not yet. He walked with equipoise, possibly in either city. Schrödinger's pedestrian [...] He did not drift but strode with pathological neutrality away from the cities' centers, ultimately to borders and the mountains and out to the rest of the continent". Bowden sets up a life on the borderline and provides Tyador with a model for how to understand his own role as part of the Breach: "I was learning from him how to walk between them, first in one, then the other, or in

either, but without the ostentation of Bowden's extraordinary motion – a more covert equivocation". The novel ends with Borlu's words: "I live in the interstice yes, but I live in both the city and the city" (Mieville, 2009).

The fragmented and multi-layered space of China Mieville's novel seems to be close to Michel de Certeau, who builds on Michel Foucault's heterotopias, and adds the distinction between place and space, where a place (lieu) is the order with which elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence. That excludes the possibility of two things being in the same location (place). The elements taken into consideration are beside one another, each situated in its own "proper" and distinct location, which implies an indication of stability. A space, however, exists when one takes into consideration direction, velocities, and time variables, which means that space is composed of intersections of mobile elements. Space occurs as the effect produced by the operations that orient it, situate it and temporalize it. Space is a practiced place. A street, which is geometrically defined by urban planning, is transformed into a space by walkers. In the same way, an act of reading is the space produced by the practice of a particular place: a written text, i.e., a place constituted by a system of signs.

This corresponds to the structure and workings of the two cities in China Mieville's novel, of the strict location and superimposition of something additional, which can be realized only by the involvement of participants, in this case the inhabitants who actively maintain the status quo. Michel de Certeau even subverted the originality of alternative space, and foresaw an absent space as the space of the Other, and the space where neither the territory of the Other nor of the self becomes absolute. With its sympathy for the Other, the absent space sought by Michel de Certeau is a complementary space serving as an antidote to revolutionary rationalism impregnated with scientific positivism. For Michel de Certeau, absent space encompasses an ethical turning which reflects on Otherness (Jang, 2015). Hence, in accordance with China Mieville's concept of space, the role of the Other in contemporary society, as depicted in "The City & The City", is intensified and diversified. There is an insurmountable abyss between the conformist society of the majority, and the minority of the Other. At the same time, in the era of increased surveillance, war on terror and minimized private freedom, the idea of rebellion is completely perverted.

China Mieville's engagement with questions of genre has been complex and interesting. Characterizing his writing as "New Weird", he is an ardent fan of weird fiction, especially the works of Mervyn Peake and H. P. Lovecraft. He has also stated that he would like to write a novel in every genre (Pistelli & van Worden, 2005). When discussing the delineation between fantasy and science fiction, he clearly showed that the demarcation between them is too fuzzy to be maintained. As China Mieville explains: "What they share is as important as what distinguishes them. What they share is the starting point that something impossible is true. Whether it is not possible because it is not yet possible or whether it may never become possible, this starting point of radical alienation from actuality is the fantastic moment that both 'science fiction' and 'fantasy' share. [...] What unites the genre of fantasy/Gothic and the genre of the science fiction is that they literalize their metaphors" (Shapiro, 2008).

He openly criticizes the theories of the fantastic of the post-Tolkien works which, in his opinion, offer only a simplistic reading of the genre, and thus cater only to the demands of the market. He strongly opposes such a delineation of the genre at the expense of the specificities of artistic form. Or, as he explains, no one would ever dream of denigrating Franz Kafka on these grounds, no matter how well he sells, while they might otherwise in the case of a story in which a character wakes up and discovers that by magic he has turned into giant cockroach. He wonders what distinguishes Franz Kafka's use of the fantastic from Tolkien's. He clearly refuses to accept any limitations of a specific genre and demands complete freedom of expression. We could even argue that the freedom of literary expression which he demands and the number of genres which he freely exploits in "The City & the City" are closely connected to the complexity of the space dimension, and in contrast with the limited freedom and sovereignty of the characters in the novel.

As Roger Luckhurst muses: "My contention would be that the genres undergoing inventive hybridization and regenerative "implosion" – Gothic, sf, and fantasy – experienced such a revitalization in the 1990s because they could still find spaces outside the general de-differentiation or "mainstreaming" effect sought by the strategy of cultural governance. The low value accorded to the Gothic-sf-fantasy continuum allowed these genres to flourish largely below the radar of a cultural establishment often complicit, in complex ways, with the new methods of governance" (Luckhurst, 2003).

#### 4. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

We have observed Isaac Asimov, China Mieville and Philip Kindred Dick navigate through genres and seen how genre diversification is closely connected to the authors' relationships to space, which, moreover, seems to influence the explicitly political content of their novels. Isaac Asimov in "The Gods Themselves", which is set in the pre-millennial USA, uses a rather simple duality of space with the Earth and the Moon, through which he

illuminates the increasingly aggressive society of the Earth. The first principle of Michel Foucault's heterotopias is the defining moment of control in this case and division, where the idea of borders and boundaries are only just emerging. Isaac Asimov is therefore able to stay in his preferred milieu of just one genre – science fiction with urban elements – and exercise a rather pronounced socio-philosophical commentary (Blum, 2016). The plot still offers the protagonists an opportunity to exert their free will. Some transformation between social classes is still possible, and the idea of the “dangerous” Other is only vaguely implied.

Philip Kindred Dick' “Ubik” is set just after the Golden Age. The novel explores the ways in which selfishness and corporate greed create and maintain the boundaries which are closing in on every individual. Philip Dick introduces the otherness based on religion, race and gender. Michele Foucauldian rewards and punishments operate in a multiverse, a fragmented space, and are closely connected to fragmented definitions of self (Moghadam & Porugiv, 2018). The idea of the rhizome seems the most all-encompassing, as it is a model of culture which does not want to obey any organizational structure, and comprises the highest number of definitions and variants. The novel makes the rebellion and attack on the establishment more aggressive and more open, but at the same time it is more fragmented and less efficient, which leaves the protagonists defeated and the establishment unscathed. The genre follows the idea of fragmented space; it is multifaceted, unapologetically open and diverse.

The third work is of a later date, when the consequences of the aftermath of September 11 are extremely palpable and the optimism of the end of the 20th century has evaporated. China Mieville's “The City & the City” insists on unseeing those on the other side of the social, philosophical and physical boundaries imposed by the hidden establishment whose machinery of surveillance and punishment is already in the zone of the fantastic and magical. The space is not as fragmented as it is in “Ubik”, but more elaborate. Space very efficiently underscores the idea of otherness and oppression. The concept of space follows Michel de Certeau's distinction between place and space, and focuses on the idea of absent space as the space of the other. China Mieville's protagonists almost give up on fighting the institution and are ready to self-regulate, they give up freedom voluntarily. The idea of an oppressive magical apparatus is enough to keep them at bay. China Mieville as the author, on the other hand, very vocally defends his right to free expression and multifaceted genre works, and is not ready to succumb to the wishes of the market (Schimanski, 2016).

All three authors are critically acclaimed and at the same time immensely popular key writers. In this paper we explored how authors' reactions vary according to the relationship that the author and his work are willing to express towards their society, and how much social and philosophical engagement they have encoded in the structure of the relationships and the nature of the literary world, and thus of the text itself. It has become evident that these structures correspond to the postmodern idea of space, to the relationship of place and space in the context of textuality. As the degree of engagement increases, so does the textual complexity and its corresponding spatial complexity. And, as we explore the structuring of the plot and presentation of the setting in the three novels, we discover how the number of spaces, the role of the space and the relationship between the protagonist and the space intensify. We have shown how the relationship between the role of space as a force of action in the novels corresponds to the complexity and fluidity of the genre identity of the work, the degree of encoded social and philosophical criticism of contemporary reality, but also to the nature of the protagonists and their involvement in the working of the space and the mechanics that governs it within the work itself.

This progression scales out: from a protagonist whose personal engagement propels him through the membrane that separates the duality of his Michel Foucauldian heterotopia and enables him to identify as a hero, to pierce the boundary in both directions and to, in the end, choose his own preferred reality, identity and genre, through a rebellious and revolutionary anti-hero who, while “ubiking” through a fragmented multiverse, is fragmenting himself and is becoming frugal and accidental. Through his shifts of perspective and memory the protagonist is in fact melding with the rhizomatic center-less structure of the world he is trying to rebel against: a world we can choose to comprehend as fantastic, science-fictional or very real. And, finally, with “The City & the City”, the novel progresses to the final stage of textuality which overlays multiple places, spaces, genres and perceptions without ever fully anchoring itself to any reality, except the one which comes forward through the viewpoint of the protagonist, whose self-censoring, self-governing quest for truth and resolution guides him through self-deception, self-regulation and the ultimate unseeing. There he eschews any desire to pierce the veil or reach for the hidden reality, and instead resolves his quest for the truth by becoming a part of the membrane himself. He becomes one with the veil and the oppressive force that enforces and regulates the separation of the self and Other.

In this progression, the relationships of the society and the individual, the space and the structure, the attitude towards genre identity and political engagement, show a clear pattern that most strongly expresses itself in the hybridity of space, which is the nucleus of all three novels.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The research deals with the element of revealing social and philosophical ideas of the age through the idea of heterotopia in American and British science fiction in light of the great changes in the modern world and in the fictional worlds of the future which have the direct effect on the treatment of the genre. The development and treatment of the idea of heterotopia in science fiction has often been regarded as a weakness and science fiction writers have usually been condemned for their neglect of creating complex worlds inhabited by characters with psychological depth and intricacies of personality and for paying more attention to the science-fictional elements such as plot, setting, and themes. By adopting a comparative approach in the study of novels by the leading American and British science fiction writers of the post-war era, the article attempts to demonstrate that the character-centered novel which has dominated realist mainstream fiction since the nineteenth century does no longer fit the genre science fiction which is more concerned with the different changes and transformations in society and their effects on man and his existence on Earth and in the universe than with individual persons and their personal concerns and problems. Selected novels by Isaac Asimov, Philip K. Dick, and China Mieville demonstrate that characters are treated not as individuals with personal autonomous identities, but as representatives of all humanity that faces various pressures in society in the form of technological progress, bureaucratic government agencies, multinational corporations, and the military machinery. In this respect, the work examines the different factors depicted in the narratives which constitute the major focus of the writers and which make the characters appear as a collective entity lacking the traits of independent individual personalities, reflecting the real condition and existence of man in the modern world.

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