

Utopia and Science Fiction: A Contribution to their Generic Description

Utopian literature, science fiction (SF), fantasy, the fantastic — these are terms often used but less often convincingly defined. To be sure, Darko Suvin's descriptions of the literary utopia and SF have gained a wide following among textual critics as Tzvetan Todorov's of the fantastic genres. Yet, the majority of critical inquiries, and particularly the bibliographical sources available for comparative research into this purportedly "fuzzy" generic field, are still sadly lacking in typological rigor.¹ Given this state of affairs, we set out in this article to survey the relevant classificatory ventures into this area of literature once again, and follow by proposing some systematic definitions of utopianism, SF, and the fantastic genres.

Initially, we focus on studies of the literary utopia and SF. From the wider variety of materials available here, we have chosen for discussion those investigations which are most recent, influential, and which describe most clearly the main roads taken to determine the generic particularities of utopianism and SF. These brief *Forschungsberichte* are succeeded by our own attempts at defining the fictional kinds under consideration with the help of the model of generic competence developed by Marie-Laure Ryan. Subsequently, we explore some genres related to the literary utopia and SF, and propose in this context definitions of the three major types of fantastic literature (the uncanny, marvellous, and pure fantastic) along the lines suggested by Roger Caillois and Tzvetan Todorov. A systematic analysis of the relations obtaining between the fictional genres discussed earlier is then undertaken in terms of our theoretical framework.

1. This is perhaps most detrimental to a comprehensive study of science fiction, as the sheer wealth of texts annually appearing in print (according to Sadoul 1973, 15, approximately 30,000 SF novels and stories from 1925 to 1971 in Great Britain and the United States alone) *per se* requires gargantuan efforts of material research.

In conclusion, we compare our findings with some prominent critical tenets pertaining to the generic interrelations, especially subordinations, in this field of inquiry.

I. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Before embarking upon these tasks, let us briefly delineate the genre-theoretical approach that informs our discussion of the existing literature and our own attempts at typological demarcation in the following pages. Genres are viewed here as entities that are constructed (and "exist") in the interaction of members of a culture and speech community with groups of texts.² We specify the notion of genre with Ryan (1979b and 1981a) in terms of a generic competence, that is, as the (implicit) knowledge of a body of rules regulating text production and reception. The various generic requirements are formulated within the general framework of a semantically based transformational grammar extending to the textual level.³

In particular, a set of *pragmatic rules* determines the mode of transmission (type of performance), illocutionary force and orientation (action, information, or pleasure) of a genre, furthermore differentiating among fictional and non-fictional text categories.⁴ A set of *semantic rules* specifies the logico-semantic coherence features of genres,⁵ their narrativity or non-narrativity,⁶ and distinguishes realistic from non-realistic text classes.⁷ Content requirements of a greater degree of specificity may also be part of a text's generic codification on the semantic plane. Whenever a genre requires certain particularities of syntax, lexicon, phonology and graphic realization, a set of *surface rules* will restrict the possible transformations

2 This ontological stance of (moderate) constructivism has been proposed by Hempfer (1973).

3 See also van Dijk and Kintsch (1983).

4 For a definition of fictionality see Ryan (1980).

5 We call a text (or genre) *unambiguously coherent* whenever it is possible to construct a single (globally coherent) macrostructure. *Ambiguously coherent* are those texts which necessitate the construction of two or more macrostructures; and texts or genres are *incoherent* on the semantic plane whenever it is impossible to form a macrostructure at all (cf. Ryan 1979b, 321, and van Dijk and Kintsch 1983, 150f.).

6 Narrativity is defined here as in Ryan (1979a, 137-41).

7 We term a text *realistic* if the set of schemata activated during its processing (cf. van Dijk and Kintsch 1983, 397) wholly derives from (is included in) the "ortho-world-model" (Schmidt 1984, 259) — the set of knowledge clusters forming our encyclopaedia. Whenever the schemata necessary to process a text (genre) exceed the store of cognitive schemata comprising our ortho-world-model, this text (genre) is called *non-realistic*. Note that we depart here from Ryan's (1980, 414-19) truth-conditional approach.

from the textual depth to its surface structure. Typological description within this conceptual frame, then, consists of identifying a given genre's pragmatic, semantic, and surface codification (if any) as economically as possible.

1. UTOPIAN FICTION

1.1 Review of the Literature on Utopianism

Many literary scholars note with regret that, in twentieth-century usage, the term "utopia" is used to denote vastly different (groups of) things, and that its meaning as a critical concept is often vague or imprecise. Already in 1940, Fritz Krog states: "Offensichtlich wohnt der Bezeichnung Utopie die Neigung inne, ihre Grenzen zu erweitern und je länger desto mehr ins Ungewisse zu verschwimmen."⁸ More recently, Klaus Berghahn and Hans Ulrich Seeber (1983) lament the "Hochkonjunktur" utopianism is currently experiencing, along with the "inflationären Erweiterung und Ausdifferenzierung der Bedeutung [of this concept]" (8).

Extensionally, the term under consideration is used in modern criticism to denote at least three different domains (sets of things), namely (1) what is commonly called "utopian thought," (2) all material manifestations of utopian thought, and (3) utopian fiction, a set of literary works subsumed under the genre label "utopia."⁹ Various theories of utopianism claim one or more of these three extensions as their intended domain of validity. The first denotation, for instance, appears in the context of the sociological/philosophical debate surrounding utopianism, whose most prominent and influential theorists are Karl Mannheim and Ernst Bloch. The semantic features of the predicate "utopia" are the subject of controversy here.¹⁰ In Karl Mannheim's sociology of knowledge, for example, utopias are conceived of as "alle jene seinstranszendentalen Vorstellungen ... die irgendwann transformierend auf das historisch-

8 Quoted from Biesterfeld (1982, 8).

9 A fourth domain covered by the term "utopia" encompasses the various communitarian experiments originating from utopian doctrines. For a brief discussion of utopian communities over time see Sargent (1967, 228 ff.). An extensive analysis of nineteenth-century communes from a historical and sociological point of view is presented by Kanter (1972).

10 Short surveys of this broad sociological and philosophical debate are provided in Sargent (1967, 222-26), Berghahn and Seeber (1983, 7-14), and Suvin (1979, 38 f.). For an introduction to Ernst Bloch's thought, see his *Der Geist der Utopie* (1918), and *Freiheit und Ordnung* (1946).

gesellschaftliche Sein wirkten,¹¹ as opposed to ideological processes of thought which, according to Mannheim, affirm existing social reality.

In literary criticism, most scholars reserve the term *utopia* for the *Staatsroman* in the tradition of Plato and Thomas More. Under the influence of Mannheim's (or Bloch's) philosophical definitions of utopianism, however, some critics (notably in the German realm) argue that all art, including literature, should be viewed as an expression or manifestation of utopian "daydreaming." Witness Gert Ueding's remarks introducing an essay collection on "utopianism" in the works of such authors as Johann Valentin Andreae, Jean Paul, Theodor Fontane, Henrik Ibsen, and Robert Musil, entitled *Literatur ist Utopie* (Ueding 1978b): "Literatur ist Utopie in dem gewiß sehr weiten Verstande, daß sie nicht identisch mit der Realität ist, die uns als Natur und Gesellschaft gegenübertritt. Sie ist Utopie in dem sehr viel präziseren Sinne, daß ihre Beziehung zu dieser Realität wie die der Erfüllung zum Mangel ist" (1978a, 7).¹² In Ueding's framework, the intended extension of the construct "utopia" is evidently utopian thought, all its manifestations, as well as the so-called *Staatsroman*. It is thus substantially broader than both the domain of validity intended in Mannheim's theorizing and the intended extension of the various critical approaches concerned with a (re)construction of the generic characteristics of utopian fiction.

Now, theories of utopianism that do not share (at least roughly) the same intended extension are incommensurable, since they do not claim to hold for the same set of entities. Conversely, a meaningful confrontation of the semantic features which the concept "utopia" assumes in the context of various approaches can only be undertaken within the borders of theory-groups that aim at providing true statements about more or less the same class of things, that is, those that have roughly the same intended domain of validity. In the case of the *utopia*, however, the diverse frameworks conceptualizing utopianism do not even claim to hold for sets of entities that are similar in kind. Hence, a comparison of the construct "utopia" as semantically specified in theories of utopian thought, with genre definitions meant to hold true for the *Staatsroman*, for instance, cannot but be futile. In the subsequent pages, we will therefore restrict our discussion to those approaches to utopianism which are exclusively concerned with the *utopia* as a literary genre, or subset of all *fictional texts*.

1.2 TERMINOLOGY

Before turning to some recent genre descriptions of fictional *utopia*, it may be mentioned that there exists no critical vocabulary agreed upon amongst scholars dealing with this branch of literature. Terms as semantically disparate as "konstruktive Utopie" (Seeber 1970), "evolutionistische Utopie" (Tuzinski 1965), "eutopia" (Sargent 1975) or, in the majority of studies, simply "utopia" (Gerber 1955, or Erzgräber 1981) are taken to denote what can broadly be called the "positive *utopia*." For the "negative *utopia*," the list of critical terms is even longer: "dystopische Satire" (Seeber 1970), "devolutionistische Utopie" (Tuzinski 1965), "dystopia" or "distopia" (Negley and Patrick 1952), "cacotopia" (Hillegas 1967), "anti-*utopia* (counter-*utopia*, contre-*utopie*, Gegenutopie)" (Servier 1967, Hantisch 1975, Erzgräber 1981),¹³ "inverted *utopia*" (Walsh 1961), and "Warnutopie" (Gnüg 1982) — to name just a few — compete with one another.

In order to clarify our own use of critical vocabulary amid this Babylonian multitude of terminological choices, we will briefly consider the etymology of the humanist neologism "utopia," coined by Thomas More in his *De optimo reipublicae statu, deque noua Insula Utopia* (1516).¹⁴ More has rendered the notion "utopia" ambiguous. The syllable "u" contained in *Utopia* signalizes the Greek "ou" as well as "eu," since both can be substituted by the English phoneme [u]. The word "utopia" includes hence both "outopia" (Greek adverb "ou" = not; noun "topos" = place; suffix "ia"), which can be translated as "nonexistent place" or "nowhere,"¹⁵ and "eutopia" ("eu" = good, happy) meaning a "good place" (cf. Tuzinski 1965, 3 and 9). That the pun resulting from the term's ambiguity is intended by More is evident in the eulogistic poem attached to his *libellus*:

Wherefore not Utopie, but rather rightly.

My Name is Eutopie: a place of felicitie. (119)

Parallel to More's neologism "eutopia," the word "dystopia" (Greek adverb "dys" = bad), literally translated as "bad place," has been formed. While "eutopia" and "dystopia" do not imply the existence or nonexistence of the places they refer to, "outopia" does not give any indication concerning the qualitative nature of the nonexistent place it denotes. More had been able to render both the fictitious character of his insula (nonexistence) and

13 The term "anti-*utopia*" seems to prevail in German scholarship.

14 We provide here the second part of the title of the *editio princeps*.

15 In his 1975 translation of the *libellus*, Robert M. Adams notes that "More sometimes spoke of his book by a Latin equivalent, Nusquam, from Nusquam, nowhere" (2).

11 Mannheim, *Ideologie und Utopie* (1928/29); quoted from Schmidt (1978, 23).

12 This broad use of the notion "utopia" is also underlying Gnüg (1982), a collection of German philosophical and literary critical essays.

its quality (happiness) in a single term. The use of "eutopia" and "dystopia" as critical notions, however, poses the problem that both terms do not express the literariness of the works categorized under these headings.

For the sake of tradition rather than terminological precision, we nevertheless propose to use the word *utopia* (in the sense of "outopia") as a general label for the various classes of utopian fiction. *Eutopia*, the "positive outopia," is used in our vocabulary for the literary representation of good places; *dystopia*, the "negative outopia," for the depiction of bad ones. With Lyman Tower Sargent (1975), we reserve the term anti-utopia for "that large class of works, both fictional and expository, which are directed against Utopia and utopian thought" (138).¹⁶

1.3 PREVIOUS GENRE DESCRIPTIONS

Let us now survey some genre descriptions put forth by prominent scholars of the literary utopia over the last quarter century. In 1960, Hubertus Schulte-Herbrüggen defines: "Eine Utopie ist ein literarisches Idealbild einer imaginären Staatsordnung" (111). It is evident that Schulte-Herbrüggen does not describe the *differentia generica* of the utopia (at large), but rather has the positive utopia in mind here, leaving a parallel definition of the dystopia to the reader's imagination. This equation of the utopia with the utopia (in our sense) is a commonly encountered handicap of studies in our field of investigation. It can be found even in the work of such a well-known theoretician of utopianism (and, of course, science fiction) as Darko Suvin, whose generic description of the literary utopia quoted below has gained a large following since its appearance in 1978. Suvin writes:

Utopia is the verbal construction of a particular quasi-human community where sociopolitical institutions, norms, and individual relationships are organized according to a more perfect principle than in the author's community, this construction being based on estrangement arising out of an alternative historical hypothesis. (49)

Scattered throughout the chapters of Suvin's *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, the terms "dystopia" and "anti-utopia" (apparently taken to be synonymous)¹⁷ are used in a variety of contexts without having ever been defined. Again, the reader is left to guess that a substitution of Suvin's phrase "organized according to a more perfect principle" (emphasis added)

¹⁶ To classify a text as "dystopian" and/or "anti-utopian" involves hence, in our understanding, discrete properties.

¹⁷ See, for instance, Suvin's use of these terms on p. 67 of his study.

with "organized according to a *better/worse* principle," or the like, could grasp this scholar's understanding of the (positive as well as negative) utopia.

Ingrid Hantsch's delineation of literary utopianism is decidedly clearer on this point. The author claims that there are no good reasons to operate with a tripartite distinction between the eutopia, dystopia, and anti-utopia, since she assumes that all dystopias display an inherent anti-utopian impetus. In Hantsch's 1975 model, the dual differentiation between the utopia (positive) and anti-utopia (negative) hence suffices, the former being defined as follows:

Literarische Utopien sollen ... jene Texte heißen, die in der Absicht, optimale Ordnung der Kollektivität zu erstellen, mittels literarischer Techniken ein fiktionales Staats- und Gesellschaftssystem implizit oder explizit darstellen, das totalitär ist und durch Statik und Isolation die redundanten Merkmale der Ritualisierung, Soziotypisierung und der linguistischen Sozialisation hervorbringt. (96)

For Hantsch, the negative or anti-utopia, instead, constitutes the "logische und strukturell vollkommene Mutation des vorgegebenen Utopiemodells" (109). She maintains that "die Antiutopie Projektion und Verdichtung von als negativ empfundenen Zeittendenzen in die Zukunft [ist]" (128), just as the utopia is the (positive) alternative to a given contemporary *present*.

There is sufficient evidence, however, that Hantsch's identification of the dystopia with the anti-utopia is not warranted.¹⁸ As Hans Ulrich Seeber observes, the label "anti-utopia" is affixed to texts (like Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*) which cannot be said to be directed against identifiable utopias, "es sei denn, man belegt jede in der Gegenwart wirksame und als gefährlich eingestufte Entwicklungstendenz (Technisierung, Kollektivierung etc.) als 'utopisch'" (1983b, 169). Far from displaying any anti-utopian critique, some dystopias, such as Gerd Brantenberg's gender-role reversal novel *Egalia's Daughters* (1977), even make explicit what most others only imply, namely the eutopia projected by the dystopian construction.¹⁹ The utopia/anti-utopia dichotomy posited by Hantsch seems therefore untenable on empirical grounds.

Finally, we present the definition of literary utopianism advocated by Hans Ulrich Seeber who strives to provide a synthesis of the generic determinations proposed in previous scholarship. Seeber holds that the utopia is characterized by the following constituents:

¹⁸ Note that Hantsch is not the only proponent of this position. Among others, Philmus (1973, especially 63), shares her views.

¹⁹ Other recently published dystopias which cannot readily be labelled anti-utopias are Bersianik's *L'Eugélonne* (1976); Fairbairn's *Benefis* (1979); or Haden Elgin's *Native Tongue* (1984).

1. Entwurf einer alternativen Ordnung des menschlichen Zusammenlebens, meist eines geschlossenen Gesellschaftssystems, das im Vergleich zur jeweiligen Ursprungsgesellschaft besser (positive Utopie) oder schlechter (negative Utopie), zumindest aber "anders" und hypothetisch möglich sein muß. 2. Die andere Ordnung verweist (explizit oder implizit) kritisch auf die Mißstände der jeweiligen Entstehungsgesellschaft (utopische Intention). 3. Rhetorik der Fiktion, die durch die Versinnlichung des Abstrakten (Beschreibung, Narration, Dialog) dem Entwurf die Illusion des Wirklichen und "Wahrscheinlichen" gibt. Vom Dargestellten geht so ein überredender Impuls aus. (1983a, 17)

Seeber underlines that, in his view, a text must display all three of these features in order to be counted as a literary utopia.

The four genre descriptions cited above — which we take to be representative of the much larger number of definitions advanced by scholars of utopianism over time²⁰ — share a common core of three definitional elements. All of them state that a literary utopia must be (1) fictional, (2) represent a state or social system as its central theme, and (3) indicate that this social system ought to be evaluated as better/worse than contemporary society. These necessary or core meaning criteria of the construct "utopia" are supplemented by further criteria specific to each of the four approaches.²¹

Suvin complements the shared definitional core with two additional elements. Firstly, he maintains that the utopian construction is based on estrangement, a concept he derives from the Russian Formalists' notion of defamiliarization (*ostranenie*) and from Bertold Brecht's theorizing on the *Verfremdungseffekt* (cf. Suvin 1979, 4-7). We are dealing with estranged, non-naturalistic (or metaempirical) fiction, Suvin argues, whenever the interrelations among human beings and their relations to the empirical world are illuminated in a literary text "by creating a radically or significantly different formal framework — a different space/time location or central figures for the fable, unverifiable by common sense." Naturalistic fiction, on the contrary, "is accomplished by endeavouring faithfully to reproduce empirical textures and surfaces vouched for by the human senses and common sense" (Suvin 1979, 18).

The literary utopia, then, clearly belongs to the non-naturalistic, estranged stream of fiction, since it "endeavours to illuminate men's

relationships to other men and to their surroundings by the basic device of a radically different location for the postulated novel human relations of its fable" (Suvin 1979, 53).²² Suvin's concept of estrangement captures approximately the same phenomena as our notion of "non-realism."²³ With Suvin, we hold that the definitional criterion of non-realism is indeed of central importance for a satisfactory (operational) determination of the generic characteristics of utopian fiction, since it is the non-naturalistic quality of the literary utopia that sets it apart from realistic texts sharing the utopian theme.²⁴

The second criterion added by Suvin to the stock elements of the aforementioned definitions of fictional utopianism is pointed to by his phrase "arising out of an alternative historical hypothesis." Suvin contends that the utopia, while being "outside empirical or known history," represents simultaneously an "alternative, *hypothetically possible* ... history on Earth" (Suvin 1979, 58; emphasis added). This hypothetical realizability of the literary utopia — its being a "merveilleux réel" (Barthes 1976, 101), where the "Illusion des Wirklichen und 'Wahrscheinlichen'" is created, as Seeber puts it²⁵ — entails two further trademarks of this genre: its overall semantic coherence, and its introduction of only a limited kind of *nova*, or novel knowledge schemata.

In order to present a viable historical alternative to contemporary social organization, a utopia must, and indeed invariably does, present itself in an *unambiguously coherent* manner (to use our terminology).²⁶ It is this characteristic feature that constitutes the utopia's difference from the so-called pure fantastic text (Todorov). Moreover, the novelty of utopian fiction is, in the majority of texts, restricted to the presentation of new socio-cultural institutions, whereas the utopian work does usually not tamper with

22 For comments on the non-naturalism of utopian fiction see also Ruyer's early definition of this literary kind (1950, 3).

23 We define a text or genre as non-realistic whenever the schemata necessary to process it exceed the store of knowledge forming our ortho-world-model.

24 Many texts of Socialist Realism describing the marvels of Soviet society, for instance, would be otherwise indistinguishable from literary utopianism.

25 Seeber's genre description is unclear on this point. While mentioning the criterion concerning the utopia's "hypothetical possibility" already in the first part of his definition, he re-iterates it in the context of what he calls "rhetoric of fiction." In his opinion, the "Illusion des Wirklichen und 'Wahrscheinlichen'" created in utopian literature seems to be a direct outcome of this genre's fictionality, a highly problematic assertion indeed. Seeber's additional remark concerning the utopia's persuasiveness ("Vom Dargestellten geht so ein überredender Impuls aus") is probably meant to point to the didacticism of utopian fiction, a trait that we will conceptualize on the pragmatic plane, in the context of the overall *orientation* of utopian texts (cf. Section 2 below).

26 A utopian text's global meaning can thus be captured in a single macrostructure.

20 A broader spectrum of genre definitions of the utopia is reviewed by Suvin (1979, 40-58) and by Seeber (1983a, *passim*).

21 Here and elsewhere in this part of our study, we have made use of Margolin's 1981 essay "On the 'Vagueness' of Critical Concepts." Note that Margolin's typology of the semantic vagueness of critical predicates is more detailed and precise than our cursory analysis of the construct "utopia" in various theoretical contexts.

the (contemporary) reader's understanding of the physical world (space, time, human biology, etc.). Even when human biology is conceptualized anew, as for instance in some nineteenth-century feminist utopias that depict all-female societies reproducing parthenogenetically (cloning was not yet known), the reader is provided with some pseudo-scientific or pseudo-historical explanations enhancing the novum's plausibility. Suvin points out, however, that there is an increasingly large number of utopian texts that do not conform to this generic "rule of thumb"; the utopian allegory of the Houyhnhnmland in Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, to mention an early example, or Ursula Le Guin's crechie-society in *The Word for World Is Forest* (1972) are cases in point. In our opinion, it is therefore advisable to omit this latter criterion from the list of obligatory generic principles constituting the literary utopia.²⁷

On similar grounds, we also propose to omit Hantsch's supplementary definitional elements: totalitarianism, stasis, and isolation (along with their secondary companions: ritualization, linguistic socialization, and "Soziotypisierung") from a description of the *differentia generica* of utopian fiction. These allegedly central characteristics ("Primärmerkmale") of the literary utopia, although doubtlessly observable in many utopian texts, represent, in our view, semantic options rather than constitutive features of this genre, and are more typical of the negative than of the positive utopia (with whose definition Hantsch is concerned), at least in its late twentieth-century form.²⁸ Such eutopian designs as the near-future "Mattapoiset" in Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976), for instance, can hardly be called static or totalitarian.²⁹ Isolation of space (eutopia) and time (euchronia) may be a trait more emblematic of utopian texts, but is a semantic particularity superfluous to an economical definition of the genre under investigation.

The last item exceeding the common core of the four genre definitions at issue is what Seeber — somewhat misleadingly — terms the "utopian intention," namely the explicit or implicit gesture of social critique the

utopia is directing toward its contemporary world. Now, whenever a social-critical impetus is implied in a fictional text, this fiction is commonly called *satirical*. Let us define the satirical mode with Ingrid Hantsch as follows:

Die satirische Schreibweise definiert sich als semiotische Systemerstellung, verstehbar als kommunikativer Akt innerhalb der Dimensionen "Autorintentionalität" und "Hörer-intellektualität," wobei die pragmatische Absichtlichkeit die semantische, syntaktische und ästhetische Information der Texte überlagert, sie funktionalisiert und mediatisiert, und dadurch subtextuell die signifikante Beziehung zwischen Textwirklichkeit und realempirischer Wirklichkeit zeichnerhaft so regelt, daß letzterer gegenüber negativ wertende kritische Energie frei wird. (1975, 55)

Seeber may have quite consciously avoided referring to the concept of "satire" in his definition, since the nature of the relationship between utopia and satire is a perennial apple of scholarly discord. Hantsch reserves the satirical vein exclusively for the dystopia (her "anti-utopia"), in which she holds it to be dominant (106 ff. and 369). Suvin claims that the "explicit utopian construction is the logical obverse of any satire. Utopia explicates what satire implicates, and vice versa" (1979, 54).³⁰ He speculates that the significance of writings in the utopian tradition can be "gauged by the degree of integration between its constructive-utopian and satiric aspects: the deadly earnest blueprint and the totally closed horizons of 'new maps of hell' both lack aesthetic wisdom" (55).

From these comments we conclude that Suvin, unlike Hantsch, admits to the (potential) presence of satirical elements in both eutopias and dystopias, a position we subscribe to here. We therefore propose to use the qualifier "satirical" for all those utopias — whether positive or negative — that display features conforming to Hantsch's definition of this mode.³¹ However, to include the literary utopia's (explicit or satirical) social-critical impetus in a definition of this genre, as is advocated by Seeber, does not seem to be justified, since social critique does not constitute a *distinguishing* characteristic of this literary kind.

In sum, we maintain that five distinctive traits are necessary and sufficient to differentiate the literary utopia from its generic neighbours, namely: (1) fictionality, (2) unambiguous coherence, (3) non-realism, (4) the utopian theme (alternative society), and (5) an axiological specification (better/worse society). While the first of these criteria will be accounted for in the context of the genre's pragmatic regulation, the other four distinctive traits can be

27 Alternately, it would be possible to group texts of the Swift/Le Guin variety into a subgenre labelled "utopian allegory," a procedure that would to some extent account for Suvin's comment that "utopias are in a strange and not yet clarified way an allegorical genre akin to the parable and analogy" (1979, 60).

28 In fact, the textual evidence Hantsch musters to support the inclusion of these alleged "Primärmerkmale" into her genre definition of the *eutopia* stems largely from such dystopias as George Orwell's 1984 and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, an approach that seems especially problematic in the context of Hantsch's framework which identifies the dystopian with the anti-utopian text.

29 C.R. La Bossière even suggests that "no utopographer has ever defined utopias as either 'perfect' worlds or 'permanently stable' worlds" (1976, 47).

30 Similar positions are taken in Negley and Patrick (1952) and in Elliot (1970).

31 We are also in agreement here with Ketterer (1974, 97), and with Sargent (1975, 144).

conceptualized in our framework as the semantic rules governing utopian fiction.

2. GENERIC REQUIREMENTS: UTOPIAN FICTION

We are now able to formulate the pragmatic, semantic and surface principles regulating the generic codification of the literary utopia.

2.1 Pragmatic Rules

On the pragmatic plane, the generic constraints on utopian fiction determine that a text belonging to this literary kind is *written* or *spoken* (channel), and appears in *printed form* or is — less often — *performed* (context). The illocutionary force of a utopian text is that of the *assertion*, a speech act classified by Searle among *representative* illocutionary acts; to ensure its felicitousness in communication, the literary utopia must hence obey the appropriateness conditions governing this speech act and its class. Utopian literature is *fictional*. That is, involves an act of impersonation (non-observance of the pragmatic rule of co-reference) (cf. Ryan 1980, 130). It is *primarily* oriented toward *pleasure*, but displays strong *secondary* orientations toward *information* and *action*. These secondary orientations account for the didactic impetus of utopian fiction observed by many scholars.³²

2.2 Semantic Rules

On the semantic plane, a text belonging to the utopian genre is *unambiguously coherent* (obligatory rule) That is, a single (globally coherent) macro-semantic representation can be construed from its textual surface. Many utopian works follow the principles presiding over narrative texts (generic option), although the utopia belongs to those "Protean" genres that may occur in all three literary "Naturformen." The fictional utopia is invariably *non-realistic*. Constraints on the genre's subject matter determine that it must be about at least one "*particular quasi-human community*" and its "sociopolitical institutions, norms and individual relationships" (to borrow Suvin's phrasing) that are explicitly or implicitly characterized as better (eutopia) or worse (dystopia) on the textual surface (axiological component). In other words, the content and axiological features of at least one macro-proposition on the utopian text's depth must be determined by the *eutopian* or *dystopian* theme. Anti-utopias are further restricted on the semantic plane

insofar as they are also bound to include a critique of literary or non-literary utopianism in their thematic make-up.

2.3 Surface Rules

There are no surface requirements formally codifying utopian fiction.

II. SCIENCE FICTION

1. Review of the Literature on Science Fiction

It has become a critical commonplace to contend that science fiction (SF) cannot be defined uncontroversially (cf. Jehmlich 1980, 5; or Parrinder 1980, 1), since "the SF label it so flexible in practice ... that it is simply not capable of clear definition" (Nicholls 1979, 161). Yet, it appears to us that there is much wider agreement among scholars about the shape of this genre — in respect to the term "science fiction" itself, its intended extension, and its meaning as a critical concept — than can be mustered for many other literary kinds, and particularly for the literary utopia.

Most importantly, the label "science fiction (unlike "utopia") is exclusively applied to artistic works, not to "real-life" phenomena. The various approaches to science fiction are hence commensurable, since they are meant to be valid for entities that are similar in *kind*. The texts included in the evidence sets adduced as relevant to and supporting statements about the generic nature of (literary) science fiction are also roughly the same in the majority of contemporary SF studies. In other words: we find considerable consensus as regards the approximate boundaries (although, of course, not the exact demarcation) of this genre; from about 1970 onward, the greater part of scholars include both "hard" and "soft" science fiction into SF territory, whereas fantasy texts and the pure fantastic (in Todorov's sense) are barred from its premises. Most conceptualizations of science fiction thus share more or less the same intended extension, that is, are meant to hold true for nearly coextensive sets of literary works.

As we shall demonstrate below, the manifold and *prima facie* disparate definitions proposed for the literary kind at issue furthermore attempt to capture very similar groups of traits deemed typical of SF, albeit their critical vocabulary denoting these traits is often widely divergent and frequently confusing. Before discussing the problems alluded to here in some more depth, however, let us present a short critical history of the category label "science fiction" itself.

32 Berghahn and Seeber therefore propose to classify the literary utopia among operative literature (1983, 19).

1.1 Terminology

The origins of the term "science fiction" have been traced back to the nineteenth century, when it was introduced by William Wilson in his *A Little Earnest Book upon a Great Old Subject* (1851). In the wake of Wordsworth and Coleridge, Wilson predicts the rise of "Science-Fiction" as a new form of didactic literature in which "the revealed truths of science may be given interwoven with a pleasing story which may itself be poetical and *true*—thus circulating a knowledge of the Poetry of Science clothed in a garb of the Poetry of Life."³³

In our century, "science fiction" owes its widespread adoption as a genre term to Hugo Gernsback. As editor of *Amazing Stories*, Gernsback had, in 1926, coined the word "scientifiction" to describe the contents of this magazine (cf. Parrinder 1980, 2). He used the notion of "scientifiction" for "the Jules Verne, H.G. Wells and Edgar Allan Poe type of story — a charming romance intermingled with scientific fact and prophetic vision."³⁴ In his 1929 editorial to the first issue of *Science Wonder Stories* — the successor of *Amazing Stories* — Gernsback then (re)introduced "science fiction" to his readership, a term that rapidly gained in popularity and which began to be applied not only to magazine fiction, but also to paperback novels from the 1950s onward (see Parrinder 1980, 2; and Asimov 1981, 12). Nowadays, this category label is nearly uncontested, although alternatives such as "speculative fiction" (Robert Heinlein) or "possibility fiction" (Robert Conquest) have occasionally surfaced in SF criticism.³⁵

1.2 Previous Genre Descriptions

We have already maintained above that the innumerable definitions of science fiction as a genre put forth by critics over time should be seen as variations rather than as altogether — or even significantly — different conceptual alternatives. Consider the following characterizations of SF which appeared in print from the late 1950s to the early 1980s:

Science fiction is the realistic speculation about possible future events, based solidly on adequate knowledge of the real world, past and present, and on a thorough understanding of the nature and significance of the scientific method. (Heinlein 1959, 22)

33 Quoted from Moskowitz (1976, 313). Moskowitz credits John Eggeing, the owner of a London SF bookstore, with the discovery of Wilson's tract (312).

34 Quoted from Nicholls (1979, 159).

35 Cf. Heinlein (1965, 13-19) and Conquest (1976, 30-45, especially 34). For some alternative terms see Nicholls (1979, 160).

The distinguishing feature of science fantasy involves the rhetorical strategy of employing a more or less scientific rationale to get the reader to suspend disbelief in a fantastic state of affairs. (Philmus 1970, vii)

SF is ... a literary genre whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition, and whose main formal device is an imaginative framework alternative to the author's empirical environment. (Suvin [1972] 1979, 7-8)³⁶

[B]y portraying a world that is always in some respect fantastic [i.e., in some respect different from our own], science fiction differentiates itself from realism; ... by invoking the scientific ethos to assert the possibility of the fictional worlds it describes, science fiction differentiates itself from fantasy. At issue ... is not ... the literal possibility or impossibility of the fictional world but, rather, the kind of relationship between the text and the empirical world that the story asks the reader to pretend to be true. (Rose 1981, 20)³⁷

These four definitions are exemplary insofar as they clearly state the characteristics attributed to SF in a multitude of other determinations of this genre. All of the above-cited descriptions of science fiction allude to non-naturalism as a distinctive trait of this literary kind. Heinlein's "speculation," Philmus's "fantastic state of affairs," Suvin's "estrangement", or Rose's clause that science fiction is "portraying a world that is always in some respect fantastic [different from our own]"³⁸ — all are meant to point to the metaempiricity of SF, and to distinguish it from realistic (naturalistic) texts. Since the genre at issue is hence invariably classified as belonging to the larger supra-genological class of non-naturalistic fiction, the need to differentiate it from such other metaempirical genres as the marvellous ("fantasy") or the pure fantastic (in Todorov's sense of these terms) quickly arises. For such classificatory purposes, the conflation of the notions "fantasy" and "fantastic" with "non-naturalism" — widespread in SF studies and evident in some of the definitions quoted above — has proven to be especially unfortunate and misleading, causing much of the proverbial "muddle" of SF genre criticism. Henceforth, we will therefore use our own theoretical vocabulary and term this first feature characteristic of science fiction *non-realism*.

36 This definition was first published in Suvin (1972), it re-appears unaltered in Suvin (1979).

37 For a broader sampling of definitions of science fiction see Nicholls (1979, 159-61).

38 Rose's phrasing reminds one of two earlier definitions. Rabkin writes: "a work belongs in the genre of science fiction if its narrative world is at least somewhat different from our own" (1976b, 91); and Amis asserts that science fiction treats "of a situation that could not arise in the world we know" (1976, 11).

A second criterion shared by the four definitions of science fiction reviewed here concerns what Michel Butor has called "the special kind of plausibility" (1971, 163) — or "possibility," as Rose names it — of its fictional world. Heinlein's qualification of the genre as "*realistic speculation*" (emphasis added) vaguely refers to this phenomenon, suggesting that science fiction ought to be both internally "logical" and valid as a scientific or technological extrapolation. The latter Heinleinian requirement restricts the genre to so-called "hard" science fiction akin to futurological forecasts; as noted above, this overly narrow limitation of the field has been repudiated in artistic practise as well as in more recent SF criticism, where extrapolative science fiction is regarded as a subcategory of the genre at large.³⁹

The criterion of the science fictional text's "internal plausibility," however, is re-iterated in numerous other definitions of this literary kind, among them the ones sampled here.⁴⁰ Philmus describes this feature by drawing attention to the "scientific rationale" employed in order to persuade the reader to "suspend disbelief" in the science fiction world. The supposedly factual approach of science fiction to its subject matter is also, *inter alia*, conceptualized in Suvin's notion of "cognitive estrangement" as specified in *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*. Suvin contends that science fiction—unlike such other non-naturalistic genres as myth, fairy tale, and the marvellous whose estrangement is non-cognitive, or *metaphysical* in essence — is characterized by virtue of a "sophisticated, dialectical, and cognitive *epistémè*" manifest in its discourse, akin to the *epistémè* of naturalistic literature, science, and materialist philosophy (1979, 20). By taking off "from a fictional ('literary') hypothesis and developing it with totalizing ('scientific') rigor," the

39 Cf., for instance, Suvin (1979, especially 27-30 and 75 ff). Suvin broadly divides SF into the twin fields of *extrapolation* in which certain cognitive hypotheses forming the thematic core of the work are temporally extrapolated, and *analogy* which presents new visions of the world by developing a fictional model (mathematical, historical, biological, etc.) that functions as a modern parable (cf. 29-30); Suvin clearly favours the latter field of SF. It may be mentioned here that one of the rare occasions where Heinlein's restrictive limitation of SF to extrapolation *sensu stricto* is taken up again in contemporary SF criticism in Asimov's 1981 attempt at defining the genre (3-4).

40 See also Delany's (1977) definitions of naturalistic fiction, fantasy, science fiction and its subcategories according to the level of "subjunctivity" proper to these literary types. Delany claims that naturalistic fiction is characterized by the level of subjunctivity expressed in the phrase: *could have happened*; fantasy by: *could not have happened* ("reverse subjunctivity"); and science fiction stories by: *have not happened*. Subgenres of science fiction are yielded by distinguishing among text groups whose events *might happen* (predictive SF), *will not happen* (other SF), or *have not happened yet* ("cautionary dystopias"), etc. (cf. 43-44). Delany's categorizational scheme employs the criterion of (non-)realism in combination with that of the future possibility or impossibility of a SF design. Note that Delany includes the dystopia into SF territory.

(metaempirical) novelty introduced in a science fiction text is hence validated by cognitive logic (6; cf. also 63).⁴¹ Estrangement, then, taken by Suvin to be both the underlying attitude and dominant formal device of science fiction, captures the non-realistic quality of texts belonging to this genre, whereas the dialectical conjunction of estrangement with cognition points to the rational, logical treatment of the fictional *novum* marking the SF world's difference from actuality.

Yet another well-known theoretician of science fiction, Marc Angenot, approaches the phenomenon of the "plausibility" of SF texts from a different perspective. Angenot states that, in semiotic terms, "SF characteristically is fictional discourse based on intelligible *syntagmatic* rules [i.e., rules that combine signs in a linear sequence of utterance] which also govern, and are governed by, delusive *missing paradigms* [i.e., missing paradigmatic systems of binary oppositions complementary to a given sign which determine its meaning]" (1979, 10). An "absent paradigm" may, for example, be a whole Martian language implied by the use of Martian vocabulary in a SF work. The "paradigmatic mirage" of science fiction, this author maintains, leads the reader to engage in a conjectural reconstruction of the missing paradigms. Hence, the reader is made to believe "in the possibility of reconstructing *consistent* paradigms — whose semantic structures are supposedly homologous to those in the fictive textual 'world'" (emphasis added).⁴²

We hold that the *minimal* prerequisite for the creation of the special kind of hypothetical verisimilitude which is generally deemed typical of a SF text is its (global) logico-semantic coherence. An assessment made by Ronald Munson as early as 1973 may serve to support this assumption: "Science fiction," Munson writes, "is not limited by the actual, but can describe and employ for fictional purposes any logically possible situation or state of affairs. By 'logically possible situation' I mean simply one that is *not self-contradictory*" (36, emphasis added). Doubtlessly, science fiction — as utopian fiction — summons a whole array of additional rhetorical devices in order to enhance the pseudo-authenticity of its fictional design. While an analysis of

41 The two parameters Suvin uses to differentiate science fiction from other literary kinds, estrangement and cognition, are already somewhat intermingled in his broad conceptualization of "estrangement" (cf. especially 6).

42 It may be mentioned in passing that Andrzej Zgorzelski, in Zgorzelski and Angenot (1980), has objected to Angenot's tenet that the feature of an "absent paradigm" is proper to science fiction only. Zgorzelski affirms that: "What Angenot sees as textual difference between 'his-worldly' paradigms [realistic texts] and the 'aradigmatic mirage' of SF appears rather to be the difference of the reader's reaction towards the known paradigms of a natural language and to the unknown paradigm of the literary super-code of a given text" (241). He convincingly argues that all literature thus engages its reader in a conjectural mode of reading.

its rhetorical strategies may highlight many of the particularities of science fiction,⁴³ we believe the requirement that a SF text be *unambiguously coherent* (in the sense specified above) to be sufficient for an economical classificatory determination of this genre.

The third trait of science fiction itemized in all afore-quoted definitions — and perhaps the only one that is to some extent truly controversial — concerns the genre's affiliation with science, knowledge, or cognition. We emphasized earlier that Heinlein's confinement of science fiction to those "futurological" works which present extrapolations from contemporary trends of "hard" (natural) science and technology as their main themes has become obsolete in critical theory as well as in literary practise. Most scholars agree, however, that science fiction has to be about "science" in a wider sense of that term which included both the "hard" and "soft" (social) sciences and the humanities (*Geisteswissenschaften*).

Robert Scholes thus prudently formulates that science fiction (or "structural fabulation") "is a fictional exploration of human situations made perceptible by the implications of recent science" (1976, 55). Similarly, Eric Rabkin asserts that the difference of the SF world from actuality "is apparent against the background of an organized body of knowledge," and that the "variation from accepted knowledge is one of the defining characteristics of the genre of science fiction" (1976, 91). The "more or less scientific rationale" Philmus attributes to science fiction, and Rose's remarks about the "scientific ethos" evoked in this literary kind point to the function of scientific (or pseudo-scientific) rhetoric in SF texts.

Perhaps the most complex notion proposed in this context is, again, Suvin's concept of "cognitive estrangement." It was mentioned before that Suvin holds science fiction to be distinguished from other non-realistic genres by the presence of cognition as "the sign and correlative of a *method* ... identical to that of a modern philosophy of science" (1978, 45). The cognitive (Galilean) estrangement of science fiction hence appeals to the logic of contemporary science, whereas the genres of supernatural or metaphysical estrangement (myth, folk tale, Gothic, etc.) invoke the intuitive logic of the occult (cf. Suvin 1979, 8 ff.; and Parrinder 1980, 21). In Suvin's use of the concept, cognition also implies "a creative approach tending toward a dynamic transformation rather than toward a static mirroring of the author's environment" (1979, 10). His notion of cognition is thus substantially wider than that of "science," embracing not only the subject matter science fiction treats of, but rather encompassing the whole range of the logical and imaginative faculties of human intelligence embedded in, and

stimulated by SF discourse.⁴⁴ In our opinion, there is no need to make a definite choice among the various conceptual specifications suggested for the "science" component of science fiction. Whether we opt for the notions of science, knowledge, or cognition (cognitive estrangement), the generic principles governing science fiction that are associated with these notions must be understood as specific *semantic* requirements presiding over this literary kind which can be rather loosely determined (as "science") for classificatory purposes.

In conclusion, our preceding discussion has shown that the four genre descriptions of science fiction under review — along with many others — share a common core of three criteria held characteristic of this literary kind, namely (1) its non-realism, (2) its unambiguous (global) semantic coherence ("plausibility"), and (3) the presence of "science" in the widest sense as a dominant thematic element (on the afore-specified grounds, Heinlein is excluded here). A fourth feature, the fictionality of SF texts, is obviously taken to be self-evident or implicit in the term "science fiction" itself, and therefore left unstated (not so, however, in Suvin's definition). The fact that none of the genre determinations reviewed here delineates additional criteria supplementing this common core of central generic traits indicates that these traits are held to be both necessary and sufficient for the generic identification of science fiction, a circumstance which substantiates our claim that the shape of this literary kind is indeed much less disputed than has been commonly supposed.

2. Generic Requirements: Science Fiction

Let us proceed to a specification of the generic principles governing the production and reception of science fiction in terms of our own conceptual framework.

Pragmatic Rules

On the pragmatic plane, the generic constraints regulating science fiction determine that a text belonging to this *literary* kind is *written*, spoken, or — in the case of SF comics — drawn (channel), and that it appears in *printed form*, or is *performed* (context). The illocutionary force of a SF text is that of the *assertion*, a *representative* speech act; science fiction hence conforms to the felicitousness conditions of this illocutionary act (and its class). Since the pragmatic rule of co-reference presiding over non-fictional texts is

43 Stimulating enquiries into this aspect of science fiction can be found in Rabkin 1982; and especially in Brooke-Rose (1981, 85-102).

44 That Suvin's approach is not only descriptive, but here also clearly normative, has already been pointed out by Parrinder (1980, 21).

suspended in science fiction, works of this genre are *fictional*. Science fiction is primarily *pleasure* oriented, but presents a secondary *information* orientation which is often held to enhance the intellectual satisfaction experienced during the reception of a SF text.⁴⁵

Semantic Rules

On the semantic level, a science fiction text adheres to the principles determining *unambiguously coherent* genres, and *non-realistic* genres. Science fiction frequently conforms to the rules that regulate narrative texts (generic option); with the utopia, however, it belongs to those literary types that may take the shape of all three "Naturformen."⁴⁶ Specific constraints on its subject matter establish that science fiction must be about *science* (in the broadest sense of that word); these constraints determine that at least one proposition of a SF text's macrostructure is related in content to science.

Surface Rules

There are no requirements limiting the transformations of deep-structural propositions into sentences or lexical items on the SF text's surface.

Generic Neighbourhood

In this section, no attempt shall be made to trace the literary utopia and science fiction back to their generic ancestry, to investigate their interrelations in literary diachrony, or to account for their place within the larger generic neighbourhood in which they are situated (*voyage extraordinaire*, myth, fairy tale, etc.). For historical and systematic surveys of these areas of concern, the reader is referred to inquiries provided elsewhere.⁴⁷ Abstaining thus from any actual "botanizing in our field," to use Suvin's apt phrase, we will narrow our focus to a brief exploration of the way in which utopian and science fiction can be said to differ in *principle*

from some immediately adjoining genres, notably from those subsumed under the *Sammelbegriff* fantastic literature.

1. The Genres of Fantastic Literature

Our discussion of the fantastic genres neighbouring the utopia and science fiction will be undertaken along the lines suggested by Tzvetan Todorov in his influential 1970 study *Introduction à la littérature fantastique*; note that Todorov's work heavily relies on Roger Caillois's 1965 study on the French fantastic tale.⁴⁸ Following Caillois, Todorov identifies three main types of fantastic literature: the uncanny (*l'étrange*), the pure fantastic, and the marvellous. For the pure fantastic, Todorov postulates two central generic requirements. Firstly, a text of this genre must be ambiguous in such a way that its reader is caused to hesitate between a natural and supernatural explanation of apparently supernatural events presented in the work; this ambiguity (and hence the reader's hesitation) must be preserved until the text's end. Secondly, the pure fantastic work must discourage the reader from a poetic or an allegorical (non-literal) decoding; both would be inimical to an appreciation of the peculiar nature of the fantastic. Todorov adds a third, optional rule, stating that the hesitation experienced by the receiver may be (and is, in most fantastic texts) shared by the main character, a compositional strategy which thematizes the hesitation between natural and supernatural explanations within the textual boundaries and enhances the impact of the text's ambiguity on the reader who tends to identify with the protagonist (cf. 28-45 and 63 ff.).

Whenever the reader may resolve the textual ambiguity by either a natural explanation (hallucination, dream, etc.) or a supernatural explanation (magic powers), we leave the realm of the pure fantastic. In the former case, we are confronted with what Todorov names the "uncanny" (natural explanation), in the latter with the "marvellous" (supernatural explanation). Two further intermediate types or subgenres are posited by Todorov: the fantastic-uncanny and the fantastic-marvellous, differentiated from the pure marvellous and uncanny by the greater length at which they sustain the ambiguity, and thus the reader's hesitation, along the continuum of a text's unfolding. In extreme cases, the information that allows for a disambiguation of a work in natural or supernatural terms may be withheld until the very end of a text (see 46-59).⁴⁹

48 Other approaches to the fantastic, such as Rabkin (1976a), or Marzin (1982), cannot be considered here.

49 Todorov posits further subcategories of the marvellous: hyperbolic, instrumental, and scientific, the latter of which he equates with science fiction.

45 See especially Suvin's comments on this point throughout his 1979 study.

46 Certainly the best-known SF play is Čapek's *R.U.R.* For some SF poems, see Eileen

Kernaghan's "Letter from Mars-Dome #1" (62-63) or D.M. Price's "Future City" (177-78), both in Merrill 1985. To include the feature of narrativity into a definition of science fiction, as has been suggested by Amis (1976), or Rabkin (1976b), who talks of the "narrative" world of science fiction (91), is therefore not justified.

47 For a synopsis of the most prominent studies of the literary utopia's historico-genetic place see Bisterfeld 1982. Cf. also Pfister and Lindner (1982, 11-38). The generic environment of science fiction is discussed in such inquiries as Scholes (1976, Suvin 1979, especially 7-9, 21-27, and 54 ff.) and Rabkin (1980). See also Brooke-Rose (1981, 72 ff.).

Translating Todorov's classificatory approach into our theoretical vocabulary, we can see that it is constructed with the help of three basic parameters: (1) the presence of supernatural elements in a text's thematic arrangement, a constraint on subject matter regulating all types of fantastic literature; (2) coherence features on the global text level; and (3) realism vs. non-realism. While the first of these three coordinates separates fantastic literature from other literary kinds (myth and fairy tale are not considered by Todorov), the latter two allow for a demarcation of the three principal fantastic genres — the uncanny, marvellous, and pure fantastic.

In our terms, the uncanny presents itself *prima facie* as "non-realistic" insofar as it forces the reader to establish *local* semantic coherence via activation and instantiation of both empirical and non-empirical schemata (cf. van Dijk and Kintsch 1983, 152-55). However, Todorov's definition of this genre requires that the reader be able to disambiguate the uncanny text by way of a *natural* explanation of the encoded supernatural events. It must hence be possible to attain *global* coherence — that is: construct a macro-propositional semantic representation of the text surface — with the help of cognitive units from the ortho-world-model alone. On the global plane, a work of the uncanny is thus *unambiguously coherent* and functions as a *realistic* text as defined in our model.

In the case of the marvellous, instead, the reader must — according to Todorov — be able to resolve the textual ambiguity by a *supernatural* explanation. Both local and global coherence are therefore obtained by means of the instantiation of, *inter alia*, knowledge clusters about magic which stem from the subset of our encyclopaedia (ortho-world-model) whose members are (known) non-empirical schemata. Like the uncanny, the marvellous is hence characterized by (global) *unambiguous coherence*, whereas its generic difference from its typological sibling consists in the *non-realism* it displays.

The pure fantastic oscillates between the two poles represented by the (realistic) uncanny and the (non-realistic) marvellous. Its *ambiguous coherence* (causing the receiver's hesitation) necessitates the construction of two (by definition coherent) macrostructures, one of which is arrived at with empirical knowledge units (natural explanation), the other one with non-empirical schemata (supernatural explanation). Like the saddle point in analytical geometry which — depending on the perspective of the observer — appears as a maximum or minimum, the pure fantastic can be conceived of as (n)either realistic (n)or non-realistic, according to which of its two macrostructures is focused upon.

The pure fantastic work is, of course, both realistic and non-realistic at once, presupposing a "*confrontation* of two models of reality" within its

textual boundaries (Zgorzelski 1979, 298).⁵⁰ Yet, in our definition of the concept "realism" which requires that the set of cognitive schemata needed to arrive at a macropropositional representation of the surface text be totally included in the set of schemata forming our knowledge of actuality, the pure fantastic has to be classified as *non-realistic*. It is obvious here that our typological approach, albeit sufficing for a generic delimitation of (the three main types of) fantastic literature from utopian and science fiction, is not capable of accounting as fully for the pure fantastic's *differentia generica* as Todorov's (Caillois's) theory of fantastic literature.

2. Generic Requirements: The Uncanny, Marvellous, and Pure Fantastic

The central generic principles presiding over the main and intermediate types of fantastic literature on the pragmatic, semantic, and surface levels can be set forth as follows:⁵¹

Pragmatic Rules

The genres (and subgenres) of fantastic literature are governed by identical sets of pragmatic rules. They are *written* or *spoken* (channel), and appear in *book form* or are *performed* (context); their illocutionary force is that of the *assertion* (a *representative* speech act); the fantastic genres are *pleasure* oriented and *fictional*.⁵²

Semantic Rules

On the semantic plane, the uncanny, marvellous, and pure fantastic (as well as their transitional types) share the constraint that they are bound to include thematic elements related to the *supernatural*. Fantastic genres are predominantly, but not necessarily, embedded in narrative discourse (generic option). While the uncanny and marvellous (along with the fantastic-uncanny and fantastic-marvellous) follow the rules governing over

50 A broader model conceptualizing five supra-genological types of fiction, among them "Fantastic Literature," is developed in Zgorzelski (1984).

51 The criterion marking the generic difference of the subtypes of the uncanny and the marvellous, namely the length at which the reader's hesitation between natural or supernatural explanations is sustained, is disregarded here.

52 Ryan even proposes to translate Todorov's definition of the pure fantastic exclusively into generic principles on the pragmatic plane (1979b, 319). Since the criteria of ambiguous coherence and non-realism which form an integral part of Todorov's definition can be formulated only on the semantic level, Ryan's proposal seems untenable.

unambiguously coherent texts, the pure fantastic obeys those of *ambiguously coherent* ones. The principles governing *non-realistic genres* are adhered to by the marvellous and pure fantastic, whereas the requirements of *realism* rule the uncanny.

Surface Rules

None of the fantastic genres is formally codified by surface constraints.

3. Systematic Comparison: The Utopia, Science Fiction, and Fantastic Literature

The question of the systematic relationships obtaining between the literary utopia, science fiction, and the three main types of the fantastic (as defined above) can now be settled with ease. Pragmatically, utopian and science fiction are clearly separated from fantastic texts by their secondary orientations toward *information* (and *action*, in the case of the utopia), a feature which sheds light on the "quasi-medieval" didacticism⁵³ of these literary kinds. On the semantic plane, the pure fantastic stands out among its generic neighbours by its *ambiguous coherence*, and the uncanny by its *realism*.

Of central import for a differentiation between the utopia, fantastic literature, and science fiction remains, however, the criterion of their respective constraints on *subject matter*, although there is a tendency among critics to discard this element of genre demarcation as rather too pedestrian (cf., for instance, Philmus 1970, vii; and Jehmlich 1980, 10 f.). While certainly not *sufficient* for a generic subdivision in our field, a consideration of the thematic nuclei typical for the literary kinds at issue forms a *necessary* part of any classificatory scheme that lays claim to operatinality.

None of the five genres is bound by specific surface requirements. It is moreover, important to keep in mind that none of them must necessarily present itself as narrative discourse, although the appearance of utopias in dramatic form, or of fantastic and SF lyrical poetry, has been — as yet — of

minor extent. This Protean character of the literary types investigated here is all too frequently forgotten.⁵⁴

To conclude, we can finally counter some prominent positions concerning the generic interrelations and/or subordinations in our area of concern. According to our classification, none of the major genres in question can be said to constitute an other's subgenre, since none of them shares *all* generic requirements with another type, while merely presenting some additional rules. In this respect, our findings contrast with Suvin's who claims that, in systematic terms, the "utopia is not a genre but a *sociopolitical subgenre of science fiction*" (1979, 91). Suvin bases this classificatory tenet on the assumption that the worlds of science fiction texts can be constructed "only between the utopian and antiutopian horizons" (61-62): that is, must always present societal models which are positively or negatively valued in relation to actuality. Hence, he considers science fiction as wider in its thematic scope than the literary utopia (sharing, moreover, the utopia's axiological traits), so that the former includes the latter text type.

In our opinion, these arguments do not hold on empirical grounds. Firstly, by no means do all works of science fiction develop an identifiable (or even full-fledged) societal model; and secondly, an ascertainment of the value features of a SF world is frequently impossible, since this world is often presented as merely different from, not as better or worse than our own. This holds especially true for so-called extrapolative science fiction. Systematically, Suvin's classification of the literary utopia as a subordinate type of science fiction can hence not be validated in our approach. As a matter of course, we are in agreement with Suvin and others, however, that the two genres interact and overlap when viewed in their historical dimensions.

To regard science fiction as a subtype (or development) of the marvellous, as Todorov suggests, seems equally untenable. This author maintains that, in science fiction ("le merveilleux scientifique"), "le surnaturel est expliqué d'une manière rationnelle mais à partir de lois que la science contemporaine ne reconnaît pas ... [la science-fiction actuelle] ... Ce sont des récits où, à partir de prémisses irrationnelles, les faits s'enchaînent d'une manière parfaitement logique" (1970, 62). The reasons for Todorov's decision to associate science fiction with the marvellous, and not with the uncanny which is characterized by allowing for a natural explanation of its supernatural events — and thus somewhat closer to the rational and logical explanations Todorov observes in science fiction — remain unclear (see also

53. Suvin's informal comment on the "quasi-medieval" nature of science fiction (which includes, in his view, the literary utopia) is taken up and elaborated upon by Russ (1976). In this essay, Russ associates science fiction with the didacticism of Medieval art and culture.

54. This oversight is observable with particular regularity in Anglo-American SF criticism, where the conflation of the terms "fiction" and "narrative" common to English-language scholarship evidently leads many critics to translate "science fiction" as "science prose."

Brooke-Rose 1981, 78-79 and 82). At any event, however, it seems impossible to subsume the scientific or pseudo-scientific subject matter under the thematic heading "super-naturalism," and an inclusion of SF texts into the generic territory of the marvellous — or for that matter, the uncanny — is hence unconvincing. The widespread equation of "fantasy" (used to denote Todorov's "marvellous" by many critics) and science fiction can be refuted by the same token.⁵⁵

SUMMARY

In our theoretical framework, the literary utopia, science fiction, and the main genres of the fantastic (marvellous, pure fantastic, and uncanny) represent systematically distinct (but historically interacting) fictional text types, each of which is governed by a proper set of pragmatic and semantic principles regulating its production and reception in literary communication. Among the five genres considered, the utopia and science fiction seem to be most closely related to the marvellous, since these three literary kinds are at variance in orientation, thematic make-up, and axiological traits only. The pure fantastic's ambiguous coherence features and the uncanny's realism, instead, identify the latter kinds as more distant members of the generic neighbourhood surrounding utopian and science fiction.

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⁵⁵ For discussions of "fantasy" (the marvellous) vis-à-vis science fiction that proceed along similar lines see also Mobley (1974) and Amis (1976, 14 ff.). Note that our position here is shared by Suvin, albeit on different grounds (1979, 8-9). It may be mentioned that Rabkin (1976a, 147) and Hantsch (1975) attempt to broaden the generic boundaries even further, establishing a "super-genre" consisting of the utopia, science fiction, and satirical literature (Rabkin), or by treating utopian and science fiction under the tutelage of satire (Hantsch). In our view, Rabkin's and Hantsch's approaches are too inclusive to be considered here.

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Feminist Deleuzions: James Joyce and the Politics of "Becoming-Woman"

How, finally, should a feminist reader approach Joyce? ... From certain parallax perspectives, Joyce's postmodern *oeuvre* can be envisaged as contiguous with the projects of feminist fabulation. Like *écriture féminine*, his writing annuls classical notions of identity and origin, of metaphysical authority and textual closure. Exploring those schizoid gaps between socially constructed binary oppositions, it plays with an endless dissemination of sexual difference that eludes the Oedipal configurations of patriarchal power.¹

The author of the passage above aligns herself with those readers of Joyce who would reclaim his avant-garde text for feminism, arguing that his writing is not just anti-patriarchal, but "contiguous with the projects of feminist fabulation," "like *écriture féminine*" (cf. Benstock, 1985; Christine Van Boheemen, 1987).² What Suzette Henke's *James Joyce and the Politics of Desire* adds to the analyses of French feminists Hélène Cixous and Julia Kristeva, and to critical applications of their analyses by primarily American scholars, is a reading of Joyce through the anti-Oedipal writings of French theorists Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (Cixous, 1968, 1984; Kristeva, 1974, 1978, 1980). Henke's celebration of the "schizoid" Joyce³ and the androgynous Bloom, Joyce's "new womanly-man," claims, in part, to present a Deleuzian reading/recuperation for feminist Joyceans. Given that feminists

- 1 Suzette Henke, *James Joyce and the Politics of Desire* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990. Pp. 288 US\$ 14.95) 211. References to this work will be hereafter cited in the text.
- 2 In her entry on Joyce in *The Gender of Modernism* (1990) Bonnie Kime Scott notes that these critics together with Suzette Henke (*Politics of Desire*) "have applied post-structuralist theory, including its feminist versions by Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray [sic], and Hélène Cixous, to Joyce's presentation of the family romance and the writing of a feminine language" (199).
- 3 Henke's use of "schizoid" in the opening quotation is one of several references to "the schizoanalytic positions of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari" (10), that is, to their most celebrated work, *L'Anti-Oedipe* (1972). See also 106, 111, 120, 122, 162.