Yesterday’s Tomorrows

Yesterday's Tomorrows:
On Utopia and Dystopia

Edited by

Pere Gallardo and Elizabeth Russell

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INTRODUCTION

YESTERDAY'S TOMORROWS: ON UTOPIA AND DYSTOPIA

PERE GALLARDO AND ELIZABETH RUSSELL

When we hosted The Utopian Studies Society conference in Tarragona in 2012, the idea for the title "The Shape of Things to Come" was partly influenced by Slavoj Žižek's book *Living in the End Times* (2011)[1]. Žižek leaves out the preposition *of* in what would be The End *of* Times. If the book title is read in conjunction with Adam Kirsch's quote on the book cover, declaring Žižek to be "The most dangerous philosopher in the West", the reader might then look closely at other details. For example, the cover illustration is an untitled image by the Austrian artist, Gottfried Helnwein. Helnwein, in turn, based his illustration on a romantic painting by Caspar David Friedrich which is known by various names: "The Wreck of Hope", "The Polar Sea" or "The Sea of Ice" and shows the complete destruction of a wooden ship by massive peaked slabs of ice pointing left. There are no survivors in either Friedrich's or Helnwein's paintings. This intertextual game then reveals that Helnwein's illustration is actually a copy of Friedrich's with one notable difference: the ice slabs are mirror images of each other. The front cover of Žižek's book shows the movement of the slabs going left, the back cover shows them moving right. It seems, therefore, that the end times and the end *of* times are rapidly closing in on each other and that the diminishing space in between is where Žižek and, indeed, Helnwein will speak. This is a space in which the "dangerous" philosopher is at his best, where he brings together philosophy and popular culture and takes up positions that tag him as very controversial, immensely likeable but seriously disconcerting at the same time.

[1] http://wwwa.urv.cat/deaa/utopia/international/home.html

This looking forwards and backwards from the diminishing space of the present is conveyed in this book, *Yesterday's Tomorrows*: *On Utopia and Dystopia*. It contains thoughts and discussions on utopian spaces and dystopian places from architecture, political theory, intentional communities and from fact and fiction. The articles are grouped together with chapter headings which have been an attempt to divide them into coherent categories. As in all work on utopian and dystopian thought, this has resulted in an overlapping of ideas, which is positive as it creates an interdisciplinary dialectic space between authors and readers.

Kenneth Hanshew's description of the future society in Stanisław Lem's *Return from the Stars* "Human society has become rational, caring and humane, yet also soft" anticipates the conclusions of his study. By turning his eyes to *Return from the Stars* and *The Futurological Congress*, Hanshew delves into Lem's seemingly schizophrenic attitude as regards the futurological possibilities Science Fiction and Utopia may offer, and concludes that Lem was able to "[engage] in ethical and philosophical questioning, while satirizing the science of futurology".

Timothy Miller analyses several cases of millennialist gatherings both in the past and in recent times (2000, 2012). Such gatherings, which are frequent in Western societies, are inextricably related to the nature of the places where they occur. Thus, whether it is Münster, Chicago, Jerusalem, or Bugarach, to name but a few, Miller contends that "place is central to the millennial expectation" as "[it] provides a groundedness, a concrete reality, to millennial expectations".

Representations of apocalypse, Burcu Kayisci explains, are depictions of the chaos prior to the end of the world and the subsequent time of bliss that will succeed it. However, the apocalyptic discourse does not need to sound as gloomy as its contents. After discussing Kurt Vonnegut's *Cat's Cradle* and *Galapagos* Kayisci suggests that humour and the apocalypse are not irreconcilable concepts, and examines the comic interpretation of the myth of the apocalypse drawing on the ideas of critics such as Kenneth Burke and Stephen O'Leary.

Along similar lines, Annette M. Magid suggests that "since most apocalyptic scenarios are used to project social criticism, the element of hope is intrinsic in human nature". Thus, her discussion revolves around some landmarks in modern and contemporary fiction and cinema and concludes that the American film industry's fascination with the genre starts from "the conjecture that something remains", which obviously contemplates the possibility of a new start.

On a more political line, Diane Morgan sets out to discuss Proudhon and Dejours' ideas on property, anarchism and the hypothetical management of

crises, and determines that crises are to be seen as part of our social culture. As such, they should be tackled with an all-encompassing approach which includes an analysis of the nature of property, the possibility of developing alternative ways of social organization, and the repudiation of cynicism as a concept with an influence on social relationships.

The chapter on disturbing utopias groups together scholars' readings of films and texts which have in common one thing: that the scholars (ie: the authors of the articles) find their readings troubling. There is a problem with terminology: words which should have a clear meaning but do not. How can a utopia be utopian if it seems to be apolitical? What is the point of defining a film as being "neo-Marxist" if it conveys no political message? What term could be used for a feminist who enjoys male-authored fiction?

Barbara Klonowska's article defines Danny Boyle's film *The Beach* as a satirical utopia where the search for a perfect society has been replaced by the search for a better society. "Better" in this film version comes to mean devoid of ideology and ethics, the desire for improvement or any other consciousness-raising programmes. The objective is to seek pleasure for pleasure's sake. This involves all the hedonist comforts of a consumer society together with a life in paradise: the Beach. Violence emerges in this pleasure park when the utopians are confronted with civil responsibilities.

The title of Pere Gallardo's article is certainly thought-provoking in that it brings together Hollywood and Neo-Marxism in his discussion of Niccol's film when Hollywood was one of the most effective instruments of the media in projecting the American dream as a self-made utopia, based on material and social comforts. Any suggestions or suspicions of communist ideology were weeded out by the McCarthy witch-hunters. As Gallardo claims, Niccol's *In Time,* has little in the way of offering a strong ideological content but perhaps that is not the main aim of the film. Isabel Santaularia's article tackles gender politics in her article on CBS's *Jericho* but concludes that, although the gender map of societal norms may be more progressive because it foregrounds women's agency, it still maintains these norms within a patriarchal framework. Masculinities in SF has become an important area of negotiating new spaces, new identities and new labels. Bill Phillips' analysis of Heinlein's 1959 *Starship Troopers* illustrates scenarios where violence is necessary for the survival of humankind and the threat of destruction by alien beings opens up a space where Heinlein can propound his ideas on politics. Nietzsche's famous quote "'Man is for war, woman for the recreation of the warrior"

might be understood as a pun on recreation/re-creation and it is in this sense that Bill Phillips points out that humanity has to be "emasculated": they will not give up their dystopias unless by force. Sara Martin's article takes up the challenge of posing questions on gender issues which need new labels. Her extensive reading of male-authored SF from a feminist standpoint brings her to negotiate a reading space which she can enjoy but which creates problems. Can a feminist enjoy male-authored, anti-patriarchal SF? Her answer is a definite yes and in utopian fashion she proposes a committed struggle which is based on sharing aims. Krzysztof M. Maj's discussion of the Polish SF writer, Janusz A. Zajdel, introduces new terminologies such as "lunanthropists" who are escaped refugees from Earth to Paradyzja after humanity has been sprayed by a mutagen which causes only baby boys to be born, thereby bringing about an apocalypse. Dystopia here holds many of the features that limit freedom and free will such as Level of Humanity points, spying, enforced labour—all camouflaged under protection and security of the state.

The chapter on communication issues begins with the utopianness of the internet. Bülent Somay, who has translated much of Žižek's work into Turkish, picks up the Slovenian philosopher's 2008 dilemma regarding the following contradiction: is the internet a free intellectual space which can be shared by all or is the virtual projection of private property, disguised as "intellectual property", developing towards a totalitarian future? Certainly, SF has long entered this debate, as Somay illustrates, but the internet creates problems that need to be solved now, not sometime in the future. In this era of crisis, James E. Block's article sees the Occupy movement as offering a political and social alternative. Starting off from Harris's novel *The Fear Index*, Block maintains that utopian movements based on social change must have their origin in hope and love. Moreover, this love, "Eros", is translated into the authentic consent of both adults and adolescents to engage in meaningful engagements with the world. Manuela Salau Brasil's article deals with the Occupy movement where to "occupy the world with utopias" does not necessarily mean planning and predefining the future but using one's imagination to open up and explore other alternatives. Ernst Bloch is one of the theorists who have contributed to this idea and who has influenced other theorists, such as David Harvey. The Occupy movement and the Outraged or Indignant Movement have emerged and eventually organised themselves in situations of deep social and political crisis. Nicholas Anastasopoulos analyses the communitarian movement within the context of modern Greece, a country which has become suspicious of so-called "public" reforms and has lost the sense of social cohesion. In spite of this, new forms of grassroots initiative have

emerged which are struggling to rebuild the country from hope. *The Fear Index* appears again in the article by John Style, who points out that Harris expressly regards his novel as being influenced by Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Investments on the stock market profit from the knowledge of behavioural patterns: the experiences of people exposed to fear and panic can be predicted. Monitor these emotions locally and globally through the internet and the monster becomes uncontrollable. "Hörspiele", the German term for audioplays or hearing plays without images are the focus of discussion by Andrew Milner's article. Orson Welles's now famous broadcast from 1938 on H.G. Wells's *The War of the Worlds* spread panic amongst a number of the listeners who took it to be based on fact, rather than fiction. Milner contrasts Wells's play with one by Friedrich Dürrenmatt and Paul Cornell's dramatized version of an Iain M. Banks novel. The characteristics of SF in these Hörspiele are the use of neologisms, the dialogical quality and effects of estrangement. Milner claims that these qualities have been widely ignored by academic scholars because they do not fit easily into present-day genres. Film technology in the production of dystopias is the subject of Ludmiła Gruszewska-Blaim's article. Her main objective is to distinguish and analyse the tropes in the imaginary world of films. Thus, she looks at beginnings and endings and the methodological aspects of bringing dystopia to the screen. Methodological analysis is useful, she claims, especially as it guarantees the combination of the estrangement process whilst also promoting the pleasure of viewing.

José Eduardo Reis begins from the assumption that "a common form of knowledge is generated by the conscious aspiration to dream of a better world, often geared by nostalgia for a lost paradise or hope for a brighter future". Then, drawing on the work of Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela, experts in cognitive science, reaches the conclusion that memory has a prominent role when it comes to representing that potentially better world.

Memory, however, is a tricky element, particularly when it relies on nostalgia. Katarzyna Baran's contribution to this volume focuses on the novel *The Giver*, by Lois Lowry, and analyses the relationship between memory, death and freedom. By reading the novel as an anti-critical utopia Baran suggests that, despite Lowry's superficial questioning of the present socio-cultural context, the novel "can still prove a valuable and stimulating text for young adults, provided it is contextualised and examined thoroughly".

Dharmender Dhillon adopts a more theoretical approach to utopia in his article. He reassesses the work of Ernst Bloch and his distinction

between *abstract* and *concrete* utopia. By comparing Bloch's work with Theodor Adorno's, Dhillon demonstrates that Bloch's expressions in favour of concrete utopia have the opposite effect and actually reinforce the idea that the abstract utopia is the most genuine form of utopia.

It is precisely this hesitation about the nature of utopia that leads Elizabeth Russell to discuss Haruki Murakami's novel *1Q84*. Russell's contribution analyses Murakami's novel in relation to Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and speculates about the potential differences between both works. Whereas, on the one hand, Murakami's novel is political fiction, Orwell's text is fictional politics; though both novels present worlds where violence, surveillance and the policing of bodies are present. *1Q84*, which Russell suggests can be read as a love story, unfolds in a blurred territory between the real and the unreal, until both areas merge and the sense of reality and good and evil lose their contours, thus forming a disturbing landscape with constant references to Orwell's novel.

Cristina Andreu finds in Doris Lessing's science fiction a vehicle whose destination is "the transformation of reality itself". For Andreu, Lessing uses the conventions of science fiction and Marxist social criticism to help us transcend the limitations of known reality, and concludes that Lessing urges us to consider utopian thought as a possible bridge to a new way of seeing and thinking.

In this sense, this "known reality", as Andreu calls it, materializes in the article by Stankomir Nicieja, which is an analysis of Gary Shteyngart's novel *Super Sad: A True Love Story*. The crisis of the American economic and political model and the rise of China lead Nicieja to see two analytical standpoints. On the one hand, those political thinkers who understand the current crisis as a result of America's lack of assertiveness. On the other, those who admit "the relative demise of the West as inevitable". For Nicieja, and despite its limitations, Shteyngart's novel may offer a thought-provoking perspective.

The survival of mankind or rather, the survival of the individual, has a rich tradition within fiction. The Robinsonade is a subgenre which Susanna Layh explores from a different perspective, as she discusses it in relation to apocalyptic fiction. Lay contends that the genre has undergone an evolution to adapt to post-apocalyptic contexts and discusses whether recent robinsonades function according to the traditional principle of dystopian warning and if "the utopian principle of hope has a chance to survive" in those new contexts.

Of all these apocalyptic tales, perhaps Cormac McCarthy's novel *The Road* is a leading example. "What to live for in a world in which everything is dead?", questions Michał Palmowski in his article, and he

goes on to explore the similarities between McCarthy's novel and the philosophy of Nietzsche and Sartre to conclude that *The Road* may be read as "an allegorical statement on the human condition" rather than just another post-apocalyptic tale.

The book closes with two approaches to Margaret Atwood's work, in particular her novels *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood*. In the first one, Petter Skult contends, much against the general belief, that both texts should be read as "doubly apocalyptic" as their apocalyptic depictions do not add anything new to a potentially utopian brave new world. Instead, Skult suggests, they should be read as pre-apocalyptic warnings. In his turn, Sławomir Kuźnicki sees *Oryx and Crake* as an ecological cry to "preserve nature as it should be" and concludes that science itself is not responsible for the fictional apocalypse in the novel and the present plight of the human race. Rather, it is humankind's incapacity to add an adequate ethics to scientific development. In other words, to look back into the past, into our yesterdays, and to look forward into the future—our tomorrows—with responsibility and courage.

PART I

SPECULATIONS ON ELSEWHERE AND MANAGING THE CRISIS

CHAPTER I

STANISŁAW LEM'S FUTURES AND FUTUROLOGY

KENNETH HANSHEW

Abstract

Futures Studies may promise plausible predictions. Yet, in F*antastyka i Futurologia* Stanisław Lem pointed out the impotency of futurology, describing it as a preemie that not only attempts to speak from its cradle but also to do so intelligently, and branded the popular *The Year 2000* (1967) by the leading futurologists H. Kahn and A. Wiener as an instruction book in futurology's failures and mistakes. Lem's critical views on others work and futurology did not, however, prevent him from writing his own speculative visions of humankind's future. This article revisits Lem's theoretical writing on futurology as background for the examination of Lem's own utopian futures in *Return from the Stars* and *The Futurological Congress* in order to more completely grasp Lem the futurologist and science fiction writer.

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Although many Poles would perhaps prefer it otherwise, Stanisław Lem is the most well-known Polish author beyond Poland's borders, overshadowing the canonical works of Adam Mickiewicz, Juliusz Słowacki or Henryk Sienkiewicz to name but a few. Lem's fame is not difficult to understand: few writers espouse pansophy or write both literary theory texts as well as acclaimed novels, short stories and essays which defy a limited national context. Lem's timely anticipation of future developments in robotics and artificial intelligence has also helped him earn a place in the pantheon of world science fiction. Lem's speculative visions of humankind's future are, however, somewhat surprising when

one considers Lem's relationship to Futures Studies, which he so carefully explicated in 1969 in his theoretical work, *Fantastyka i Futurologia* [*The Fantastic and Futurology*], that has not been translated into English. The following study takes Lem's theoretical writing on futurology, science fiction and utopia as the point of departure for an excursion into Lem's own speculative futures in *Powrót z gwiazd* [*Return from the Stars*] and *Kongres futurologiczny* [*Futurological Congress*] with a twofold goal: to have a better understanding of Lem the futurologist and literary theorist as well as to determine whether Lem adheres to his own theories by practicing what he preaches.

Like most double titles, such as "Science Fiction and Utopia" or "Science Fiction and Fantasy," Lem's *Fantastyka i Futurologia* suggests from the outset a complicated relationship between the two terms, more than a simple opposition and yet not quite identical. In the only section dedicated specifically to futurology, Lem is quick to point out in his typical fashion the state of futures studies during their first wave of popularity in the nineteen sixties. Lem condemns the popular *The Year 2000* written in 1967 by the leading futurologists H. Kahn and A. Wiener as "a treasure trove of futurology's failures and mistakes" (2008-2010a: 131) and maintains futurology is impotent, "a premature birth that not only attempts to speak from its cradle but also to do so intelligently and succinctly" (2008-2010a: 124). Is this attack on futurology not at odds with Lem's own speculative fiction, revealing a schizophrenic attitude toward speaking of the future? Despite first impressions, it does not. Lem criticizes and ultimately rejects futurology not because of its goals, but its method, or rather, its lack of methodology. Lem traces out in essay fashion the traditional path to establishing a new scientific field: a new phenomenon is observed, a hypothesis is created, and additional observations lead to antithesis and then synthesis; i.e. Lem points to the scientific method. He argues that futurology has not followed this path; indeed, it has not even carefully identified its subject, a prerequisite for the scientific method, and thus remains speculation. Lem may greet the idea of speculation in his fictional writing, however he rejects futurology as a science or rather as a field that pretends to be a science.

Lem's second term, *fantastyka*, is clearly the more important of the two title words and rather than an opposite, it is that which subsumes the extrapolations and possible futures of futurology. The Polish term *fantastyka* eludes precise definition as it includes various forms of fictional literature, stretching from fantasy to science fiction, horror fiction and it also means fantastic. This causes Lem himself to note that the precise definition of the fantastic is one of the most difficult tasks one can take on

(2008-2010a: 19). To avoid entangled theoretical discussions of what Lem's fantastic may be, it is preferable to examine the texts Lem cites as examples thereof and which qualities he emphasizes in his search for an answer. In this way, one discovers Lem accentuates the particular branch of fantastic literature generally described as science fiction, marked not by rockets and aliens, but rather cognitive estrangement and rationally constructed, possible (even if improbable) fictive universes with their own natural laws. These characteristics are not only descriptive but also prescriptive: Lem is quite ready to dismiss any break from this standard as a betrayal of science fiction as he does in the case of Ray Bradbury (2008-2010a: 160). Apart from these elements of science fiction, Lem pays particular attention to science fiction's role in imagining future worlds. Although he suggests that non-future oriented science fiction is no less valuable, "Quite the opposite—it must be the main type, anchored in real social problems as all literary works are [Wręcz przeciwnie—to ona właśnie musi być głównym nurtem science fiction, ponieważ taki, tj. uwikłany w realną współczesną problematykę—jest charakter wszelkiej literackiej pracy]" (2008-2010b: 445), his own literary works and following notes on speculation suggest otherwise:

> […Science fiction is able to do everything literature can do (but in its own manner) and according to its own traditions and its purposes. However, the former exceeds the scope of the latter in the realm of the hypothetical because literature has never intended a serious prediction of the future]… zdolna czynić to wszystko (tyle że po swojemu), co czyni literatura zgodnie ze swymi tradycjami, ze swym powołaniem, potrafi w tym jednym sektorze—hipotezotwórczym—wykraczać poza brzeg zadań dotychczasowych pisarstwa. Albowiem intencji poważnego przepowiadania nigdy literatura nie żywiła. (2008-2010b: 445-446).

Lem maintains that science fiction essentially has a futurological function which makes it a unique type of literature. However, it is not identical to futurology since it does not pretend to predict the future. Science fiction's status as literature affords it greater freedom. Lem argues that the difference may be greater because of due to poetic license. To create a model, the author is entitled to adopt a thesis which is not probable from an empirical point of view, whereas the futurologist may not dare to do so. [Ta różnica może być głębsza, ponieważ licentia poetica pozostaje nadal w mocy i przez to pisarz jest w prawie dla celów modelarskich przyjmować założenia tak ze stanowiska empirii nieprawdopodobne, że go w ich ustanawianiu futurolog nie będzie śmiał naśladować]" (2008-2010b: 446). While the science fiction author should

not create worlds at random, he is still not confined to probability in the same way as the futurologist. Most importantly, the latter cannot follow impulses which are "simply in the air" "*z powietrza*", although these have so often been responsible for great changes in the past. Lem thus stresses the futurological function both as key to science fiction literature as well as suggesting that literature's futurology surpasses the capability of the "science" of futurology.

While one may be inclined to agree with Lem's assessment of futurology's science, it is difficult to contend that science fiction offers more accurate visions of the future than those of even a pseudo-science and thus its futurology may seem questionable. However, this is not Lem's argument. Although he may draw attention to futurology's many false prognoses, Lem side-steps the issue of accuracy, arguing instead for the meaningfulness of visions of the future: true prognoses may be devoid of any meaning whereas false ones offer valuable information (2008-2010a: 135). The impact literature has on shaping human thought is significant for Lem, not hypotheses which are later proven true. Lem supports his argument with examples from literature. Jules Verne's submarines, while an accurate prediction, had little influence on changing how his readers' perceived the world, while Robert Heinlein's vision of doomsday in *Solution Unsatisfactory* was inaccurate, yet extremely meaningful (2008-2010a: 136). Lem's futurological science fiction empowers its readers to envision possible outcomes and to mentally play out their ramifications without claiming any pretence to the visions' probability.

Free from the confines of the futurologist's statistical probability, Lem's ideal science fiction writers still do have several obstacles to overcome, if they are to produce meaningful literature. The first obstacle is the relationship of the future world to that of the reader, a spectrum of simple allegory (uninteresting according to Lem) to such different autonomous worlds that are unintelligible and meaningless (2008-2010a: 320). Lem points to his own *Solaris* as an example of a work approaching a radical break from the world of the reader that allows multiple interpretations (2008-2010a: 291). The second obstacle is language itself. Language is not the clothing of thoughts but shows how future people think differently. Although it is typical in science fiction time travels to the future to rely on a few exemplary new words or have the narrator indicate a new language, Lem rightfully argues that this is unsatisfactory both from a futurological and aesthetic point of view and offers guidance in solving this problem (2008-2010a: 32-37). One would expect that the theorist would apply these principles to his own writing.

As in the pair *fantastyka* and *futurologia*, so too one term subsumes the

other in Lem's pairing utopia / science fiction. Lem only briefly addresses early utopian writing as a longing for a better life and a beginning of science fiction, before going on to exclusively refer to eutopian and dystopian science fiction, in essence treating the utopia as a subgenre of science fiction, as social science fiction, before Darko Suvin explicitly proposed this (1973: 144). Yet unlike Suvin and others, Lem does not stress the historical context of a work to label a work dystopian or eutopian but rather envisions ambiguous science fiction that has a prolonged and changing reception, which opens diverse, conflicting readings (2008-2010a: 291). It may seem that Lem has begun arguing for the ambiguous utopia theoretically, it is still to be seen whether he realizes this in practice.

Lem's *Return from the Stars,* published in 1961, predates *Fantastyka i Futurologia* by almost ten years and anticipates the latter. The novel opens in typical dystopian fashion in media res with the protagonist: "I didn't have anything, not even a coat. They told me I didn't need it. They allowed me to keep my black sweater, its okay. And I fought them for a shirt. I said I would slowly experience withdrawal": "[Nie miałem żadnych rzeczy, nawet płaszcza. Mówili, że to niepotrzebne. Pozwolili mi zatrzymać mój czarny sweter: ujdzie. A koszulę wywalczyłem. Powiedziałem, że będę odwykał powoli]" (1999: 5). The first-person narrator has literally almost lost the shirt off his back, before the former astronaut is transferred from a lunar station to Earth's surface after ten years ship time and 127 Earth years. This is a result of traveling at near light speeds in an expedition to the star system Fomalhaut. The feeling of loss and estrangement are amplified by the narrator who remains nameless until page thirty and his first experiences on a future Earth. Landing at the port, he is not met as planned by an agent from the agency of assimilation, *adapt*, and must therefore make his way through the world alone. He relays to the reader in an objective scenic portrayal the foreignness of the future. The city is like a labyrinth, where he is bombarded by advertisements and signs in a changed language, a language he has no full command of, making it difficult to even ask the way or understand the answers. A simple breakfast reveals to the reader how much language has changed: "Ozot, kress or herma?" "Don't you have coffee?" "Yes. Kress, ozot or herma?" "Coffee and that… well, whatever goes with it best." "Ozot" he said and left" [Ozot, kress czy herma?" A kawy nie ma?" Jest. Kress, ozot czy herma?" Kawa i, tego… no, to, co najlepiej pasuje do kawy." "Ozot" powiedział i odszedł"] (199: 63). Yet despite the formidable language barriers, a sign of Lem's linguistic futurology, the narrator realizes in his first exchange with a young girl he met in a bar that the problem is greater than language: "The language hadn't really even changed that much—I

just didn't understand. Anything. They [the people] had changed [Język nie zmienił się nawet tak bardzo—tylko nie rozumiałem. Niczego. To oni się zmienili]" (1999: 32). At the time, Hal Bregg does not realize how true this is.

As in utopian travel literature, the first-person narrator's wanderings through the city reveal a future Earth that seems to have achieved much that was unattainable in both his and the reader's past. During Hal's search for entertainment and accommodation, he discovers to his great surprise that everything from food to hotels is free. Women and men are not encumbered by the social codes he knows; codes allowing women to pick up casual acquaintances just like men. New too are the robotic servants the narrator sees as waiters, clerks and information guides. Despite the obvious advantages for the lost time-traveler, he clings to the worn, silly garments of his past as he futilely looks for now-deceased relatives and grasps for his past life by visiting the bank, which determines his location by caller ID, and by purchasing an automobile in an antique shop which he drives recklessly. Unable to make the transition to this new life and distrusting *adapt*, Hal makes a voice request by phone to consult a doctor for astronomic health and is directed to Dr. Juffon, who "coincidentally" practices in the same street as his hotel. Dr. Juffon confirms Hal's impression that Earth now enjoys an era of *dobrobyt* "being well-off" that not only concerns material possessions but also the human body; thanks to special hormonal treatments and applications no one is old until the age of eighty. The doctor quickly identifies the difficulty Hal will face in establishing a new life: he is from a harder time and the age of space exploration has ended. In order to adapt, he will need to find a place for himself to give his life meaning. Surprisingly from a doctor but not in a utopian narrative, Juffon suggests Hal must find love and a woman to spend his life with. *Return from the Stars* thus anticipates positive changes: greater equality, longevity and automatization, yet the future is not without its shadows. "Progress never comes without a price [Postęp nigdy nie przychodzi za darmo]", the doctor reminds Hal (1999: 81).

Though his contact with others hinted at the causes of the change, it is Hal's study of the history books of modern Earth that reveal the path to this more perfect society: *beztryzacja*, an acronym for the scientist names Bennet, Trimaldi and Zacharov who discovered a means to almost completely eliminate human aggression. Not through repression and prohibition, but by engineering humans so that they are incapable of thinking of violence and killing. Thus began, in the future history book's words, "a new era of humanism" (1999: 131). Human society has become rational, caring and humane, yet also soft. The humans of the future are

unable and unwilling to kill anyone or anything, even livestock for food, or to risk lives in further space exploration. Not only brutality has been eliminated, but also the positive side of passion: "Zlikwidowaliśmy piekło namiętności, a wtedy okazało się, że za jednym zamachem i niebo przestało istnieć [We eliminated the hell of passion and it turned out that heaven had ceased to exist at the same time]" (1999: 79). Romance has been destroyed once and for all.

Whether the future Earth is better or worse, i.e. dystopian or eutopian, is the subject of the narrator's and Olaf's, his fellow crewman, debates and a question raised in the narrative. Hal and Olaf mourn the loss of risk taking, of putting everything on the line, of which the new humans are incapable. Olaf misinterprets this ability with being human and views *beztryzacja* as a horrendous crime by which "they killed the man in man [oni zabili w człowieku—człowieka]" (1999: 167). At the same time, however, Hal questions the rewards of their valiant space explorations: a collection of data and a few samples hardly seem to amount to great gains in knowledge or justify the loss of life. These debates are complemented by elements questioning the desirability of the better world. The humans of the future seek to control the old humans by "hypnocogs", dream suggestion devices that they should listen to every night. Even the traditional utopian literary device to become part of the new world, a love story, creates more questions than it answers. Lacking nothing material, yet feeling ill at ease with the new language and conventions, Hal becomes infatuated with Eri, a plain looking anthropologist resembling the women of his own era, who is coincidentally sharing a vacation house with him. It would seem the story will be resolved as Dr. Juffon advised. The plot of this romance is, however, anything but simple: Eri is a happy newly-wed. Hal, truly acting as a savage romantic of the past, abducts Eri, who first accompanies him out of fear for her husband's safety, knowing that Hal is one of the few men alive capable of murder, and later out of her sense of compassion for the self-destructive primitive man. Hal cannot bear such pity, when he desires romantic love, and his ability to wake Eli's carnal instincts is too fleeting to be meaningful. He therefore attempts suicide in his antique car but is saved when Eri risks her own life for him. While the remaining members of the crew gather to plan a new mission, Hal has married Eri and seems to choose to live in the future, knowing that *beztryzacja* was not done at the genetic level, allowing a return to older instincts in future generations if necessary. Yet this happy end is undercut in the knowledge that Eri's meeting Hal is most likely a planned anthropological field study and that she does not love Hal romantically as he desires but in the only way possible: "'Ale ja nie chcę tak…'—

szepnąłem. ‘Inaczej nie może być’…” (1999: 221). The romance is missing, a foreign passion to the new world.

Andrzej Stoff decries Lem’s novel as anti-utopian, as an indictment of totalitarian attempts at a better future, and also rejects it as a utopia, suggesting the future society is not described in enough detail (1990: 40), yet this reading does not do justice to the novel’s ambivalence and presupposes a narrow definition of a literary utopia. While the novel does not offer the insight of More’s *Utopia* in religious or legal codes, it does survey the automatized production by robots, the state of public welfare and presents an enlightened discussion of children’s education through the depiction of a society “organized according to a more perfect principle” (Suvin 1973: 132). This is more than enough to be considered utopian. The question lingers, however, if the cost of utopia is too high, transforming eutopia into dystopia. Certainly humans have not devolved into the simple Eloi of H.G. Well’s *Time Machine* and governmental control is only hinted at, indeed, Hal enjoys great freedom, which he often abuses for destructive purposes, calling the absolute value of freedom itself into question. The narrative even relativizes the lack of risk-taking against the meager rewards, avoiding the judgment that Stoff suggests. The shadows in paradise are best revealed by giving some attention to the role of robots, the true producers of the future. While humans live a life of pleasure and even the “barbaric” Hal finds compassion, thinking robots decide on the viability of their own kind, letting those they deem unfit to be dismantled even as these cry out in “human voices” for mercy (Lem 1999: 147). Hal’s unsettling account of this scene reveals a double standard of life in utopia even as it questions what beings are truly alive. Lem’s *Return from the Stars* thus presents a plausible future vision, extrapolating on genetic engineering and robotics, placed between warning and hope, an ambiguous text filled with new language and a new society that does not end in simple analogy or predictions, thus fulfilling his own criteria for science fiction.

Lem’s *Futurological Congress* offers not only visions of the future, but also reflects Lem’s own theoretical writings on science fiction and futurology. Ijon Tichy, protagonist from Lem’s *Diary of a Starman,* finds himself in the capital of the fictive Latin American country Costa Ricana at the eighth futurological congress. Tichy does not willingly attend the conference, he is coerced by Professor Tarantoga, who states “astronautics today are a form of escape from the problems of the world. Everyone who has had enough, sets off for the stars [astronautyka jest dziś formą ucieczki od spraw ziemskich. Każdy, kto ma ich dość, wyrusza w Galaktykę…]” (Lem 2003: 5). Certainly this is Lem’s jab at the view that the literature about space, science fiction, is above all the literature of escapism, which

contradicts his own view of science fiction's social function. That Lem's most famous science fiction character, Tichy, must listen to this accusation is particularly humorous. Tichy's further protest that he doesn't know anything about futurology "na futurologii się nie znam" (2003: 5) illicits a similarly revealing reaction from the professor: "generally no one knows anything about pumping, and yet we all come running, having heard the cry 'to the pumps' [na ogół nikt nie zna się na pompowaniu, a jednak spieszymy na stanowiska, usłyszawszy okrzyk 'do pump']" (2003: 5). One must not read between the lines to infer that no one really knows anything about futurology. The validity of futurology's science is further called into question by Lem's satire of scholars, both the stationary and traveling ones, and the outlandish proposals for solving the world's overpopulation problem with giant mobile skyscrapers or synthesizing food and drink—even champagne—from feces. These first lines of introduction reveal the text's metatextual dimension, commenting both on the role of science fiction and futurology's expertise.

The *Futurological Congress* carefully avoids falling into the trap of allegory, of which Lem warns in his theoretical writings. On the one hand, the text's frame appears to offer a realistic, allegoric anchor to ensuing fantastic visions. Tichy's stay at the conference is soon overshadowed by political events in Costa Ricana, a clash between a dictatorial regime supported by the United States and the opposition that proposes taking American hostages. The international Hilton, in which the futurological congress on overpopulation is being held, is surrounded during the fighting between government and rebel troops and its delegates evacuated to the sewers as the government resorts to the use of hallucinogenic bombs, *bemby*, which change the most evil into the most benevolent and thus easily controllable. Tichy has already experienced the hallucinogenic effects by drinking the local water. Apart from the *bemby*, the events hardly seem fantastic: the population explosion was a fear of the time, political instability characteristic of Latin America and the ill effects of drinking the local water common knowledge even today. Yet on the other hand, the fact that the real Costa Rica was demilitarized and the hallucinogenic effects of the water undermine any allegory. Moreover, Tichy's encounter with the feathered women and the pink room filled with sexual libertines and their pornographic food, his elaborate plans for the perfect egg delivery system and his drug-induced hallucinations tax the boundaries of the realistic. The story's frame thus serves neither as allegory nor as a realistic anchor.

In the sewer, the story's frame gives way to several drug-induced visions of the future, each longer than the last and yet sharing elements

both with the frame and each other, thus indicating their shared unreliability. Certainly, the first person narrator's frequent questioning of his reality as real or hallucination, makes all his observations suspect. The suspicion of unreliable narration is strengthened by uncanny wish-fulfillment and recurrences of motifs in separate visions. Tichy expresses the desire to see Professor Trottelreiner and in the next sentence unexpectedly finds the professor next to him, similar to how desires work in a dream. Robert Philmus has pointed out that Tichy's awakening as a small black woman after an unsuccessful escape or his abduction by two women harken back to his strange encounters in the narrative frame, that his dreams are a continuation of his reality (1986: 319). Further support of this may be found in recurrences of details. The sewer rats appear in both visions and frame, connecting them, and the theme of garbage recurs in all visions. A knife appears at a key moment in both the second and third hallucination and military rescue attempts of U.S. troops in these two visions parallel the events in the narrative frame. The danger of overpopulation is also shared by the final vision of the future and the frame. Particularly, the reappearance of the sewer in the last and most detailed world as a place of refuge suggests the frailty of the world's reality as well as the impossibility of determining what is real and what is not.

It is this final vision of the future of the year 2039 that reveals both Lem's speculations on the attainment of eutopia or dystopia while reflecting his conception of valuable science fiction, as well as the future of futurology. Tichy awakes from cryogenic sleep after his last failed operation to a world in which "universal affluence reigns [Panuje powszechny dobrobyt]" (1999: 84) and a seemingly better future New York, an unbelievable idyllic scene "Idylla. Nie do wiary!" (1999: 88). Attempting to make the transition to modern life, Tichy is assisted by a nurse and keeps a diary, in which he describes how New York is a multilevel garden, pumped with light via soloducts, a factory for pneumatic robots is close to his apartment, everyone is assured life's basic necessities, the skies are always blue—if the weather is so desired—, the global arms race has come to an end and world peace has been achieved, while anyone may purchase fine art, even an original Rembrandt or receive the Nobel Prize at a corner store. If the narrator's last innocent observation and the reference to pumping, found also in the narrative frame in connection with futurology, does not raise the reader's distrust of this better world, then it is certain to be awakened by Tichy's notes in passing that there are no animals in the future, no books and that daily newspapers decompose after twenty-four hours, recalling modern dystopias.

Unlike Hal, Tichy cannot delve into history books to read how the transformation occurred, causing him to repeat his unanswered questions. Even if such books were available, language has changed so much, he might not understand them as Tichy's newspaper reading and flipping through webster's dictionary shows: "Profut błędny niedoindeksowany szkodzi konkurencji tak samo jak rekurrencji [Wrong, not completely indexed Profat harms competitiveness the same as recurrence]" (1999: 97-98). Tichy seems even at moments of optimism to sense that something is not quite right: "A passing impression, that the people, such beautiful, tall, nice, polite and calm people are in addition sort of, sort of specific, special, there's something about them that surprises or at least causes me to pause. But I have no idea what that could be [Ulotne wrażenie, że ludzie, tacy ładni, duzi, mili, grzeczni i spokojni, są jeszcze do tego jacyś—jacyś osobni, specjalni—coś w nich jest takiego, co mnie dziwi, a co najmniej zastanawia. Tylko co to być może—pojęcia nie mam]" (1999: 88). Time and again he believes to hear these special, healthy people gasping for breath in public (1999: 89, 90), which his nurse denies, and questions the reality of this world.

The supposed eutopia is the fruit of *farmakokracja* "pharmocracy" (1999: 118): all people take a variety of pills to enhance their intelligence, abilities and even appearance. "In this society everything seems possible [W tej cywilizacji wszystko wydaje się możliwe]" (1999: 101) notes Tichy, even learning is replaced by the quick swallowing of a pill. Tichy's resistance to these chemicals is anticipated even as one would anticipate a Neanderthal's aversion to fire; he cannot be convinced of their complete benevolence. Mr. Symington, however, reveals to Tichy the full spectrum of the new civilization: "[our age] has fulfilled Bentham's dream of the greatest amount of good for the greatest number of people but that is only one side of the coin… Now everyone can do something unkind to his fellow man without hurting him" [Spełniła marzenia Benthama o największej ilości dobra dla największej ilości ludzi—ale to tylko jedna strona medalu. ...Każdy może teraz robić bliźniemu, co mu niemiłe—wcale mu nie szkodząc]" (1999: 119). Unlike the society in *Return from the Stars*, people have not become good, they have only been given an outlet for their vices that does not harm others—and improves the sales of *murderaid,* a hallucinogenic pill. The ethical problems of this solution are compounded by hints at government surveillance. When Bill wishes to interview Tichy in his apartment, not per telephone, because it may also function as a transmitter, Tichy recalls a book painting a black picture of the future as a dystopia in which all are under constant observation (Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*) (1999: 98), a notion that is not dispelled

by Aileen and Bill's laughter and protest but rather confirmed when a large strange bird "because it is on wheels" peers into Tichy's apartment (1999: 127). In addition, Tichy learns in his readings in the new, barely understandable language that not all is perfect in the future: there are problems with corruption and production. The first impressions of eutopia are thus revised.

Professor Trottelreiner, whose name inverted means "complete idiot" in German, offers a futurological view of futurology itself, which has changed both its function and name. The former futurologist is now a leading *będzieista* "willbeier (from the Polish verb to be)" (1999: 130), and futurology has now, finally defined its subject of study, addressing Lem's critic of the science. Trottelreiner does not deal with prognosis for all branches of science and society, but specifically with the possible development of language in the future. The thesis of the *będzieista* is that man can only govern what he can understand. Further, what he can understand is that which he can pronounce. Thus, the new futurology explores what concepts are possible and may become meaningful in the future (1999: 131). Lem's fictional futurology surpasses the real futurology of his theoretical writings by its ability to envision its own future and to explore mere possibilities.

Trottelreiner not only confirms Tichy's suspicions, but reveals a grim, overpopulated future world in which hallucinogens, *maskons* "maskers", keep reality hidden, while harming people with their side-effects. Spoken as a true extrapolative futurologist, Trottelreiner shows how the development of the new pharmaceutical society was only a natural development from the hallucinogens of the past; people simply could no longer tell the difference between reality and hallucination. Indeed, the entire process of disarmament was a curious by-product of the chemical revolution: all countries were drugged into believing they had colonies in space, thousands of tanks, etc., yet these were all products of their imagination. This development reflects the surprises of history mentioned in *Fantastyka i Futurologia*, of which fiction, not science, may avail. Due to the potential for abuse and the need to address the real situation, true-seers, a group to which Trottelreiner belongs, are allowed to use anti-hallucinogens to remove the effects of the *maskons*. Tichy also uses them and before his eyes the wondrous city turns into a filth-covered, cold, impoverished place, in which malnourished people climb up elevator shafts, for there are no elevators, and run from place to place, mistakingly believing they are driving cars. In a final scene, Tichy confronts Symington, who futilely attempts to convince him of *maskons* benevolence as there is no hope for humanity, the population explosion cannot be