On Some Stylistic Peculiarities of Science Fiction

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Abstract
In examining SF it is essential to begin with the specifically stylistic dimension of it. Style is widely taken to be a privileged category in the analysis of any literary kind, a kind of touchstone of the literary itself and it is especially relevant to the study of SF – a modern, non-traditional language phenomenon. Viewed in the light of this attitude and the belief underlying this stance, it should be mentioned that SF style, conditioned by the ontological juxtaposition of factitiousness and fictitiousness, implies plentiful use of "real" and invented technical terms, a host of invented present or future scientific jargon, a whole series of neologisms and coinages, fantastic literalized or non-literalized metaphors, and many other linguistic and stylistic means. My assertion will be that science fictional style is largely self-contained as certain stylistic means tend to occur in no other discourse or genre.

Key words: stylistic peculiarities, science fiction vs. realistic fiction, literality of metaphor.

Introduction
The last decade of the 20th century and the start of the 21st have been marked with the emergence of a number of new forms of communicating information which confront the academic community and challenge the status quo and more conventional perspectives in linguistics, particularly in the context of English Studies. Due to modern technological developments and reformation in education new sources of investigating English language which have traditionally been neglected[1] should be and are already being focused on.[2] The unique genre of Science Fiction (SF or sci-fi) is one of the so-called neglected genres that has long been ignored by many researchers and English departments. Professionals in the fields of linguistics and literary criticism tended to ignore the genre considering it not serious fiction worthy of scholarly study and its analysis was left to the fans. Moreover, many written works where the tendency of science fiction is strongest have rarely received stylistic commendation, canonical hostility to science fiction has often justified itself on specifically stylistic grounds (Freedman 2000). However, this most thoughtful and imaginative literary fiction deserves more attention of linguists and educationalists today as it has already offered compelling evidence that it represents and provides historical, cultural, socio-political communicative insights. The aim of this paper is to demonstrate that Science Fiction is also a rich source of linguistic study.

The Stylistic Characteristics of the Genre

SF is a literary genre which, besides its classical written form of short stories and novels, is found in everyday communication of people, art, fashion and design, television, films, the Internet, cartoons, comic strips, computer games and other media. In a sense SF seems to be concerned with engineering and hard sciences such as physics, astronomy, chemistry (Hard SF) but in fact it is mostly based on soft sciences and especially the social sciences such as anthropology, sociology, psychology, political science (Soft SF or Social SF) thus being more concerned with society, different human groups, circumstances, ideas, themes and emotions that are not centrally tied to scientific-technological or engineering speculations. The aesthetic part of it is coexistent with the profoundly ideological informative side. The juxtaposition of technological, social, mental, moral, psychological notions and the author's creative impulse is so clearly expressed in the literary tradition of SF that it is sometimes regarded as Literature of Cognitive Estrangement; a great deal of SF goes beyond escapism in order to inspire new visions for the recreation of the new models of society. Thus, the discourse of SF is connected (in a visional mode) to the central concerns of the society, human problems and solutions and has a social and intellectual function. The rational, intellectual content and social and emotive functions are equally essential elements for this "smart" fiction.

During the short history of existence (from its Early Formative Years and Golden Age of 1937 to the New Wave in 1960s, the Second Golden Age and flourishing Feminist Science Fiction in late 60s and 70s, Cyberpunk and Ribofunk since 1980-1990s)[1], English language SF has for decades imagined encounters with the alien thanks to hypothetical technologies that transport us through space and time, alternative history, alternate or parallel worlds, thought experiments in physiology, psychology, sociology and other sciences, experimental models of society. It is a rational + visional/fantastic writing about alternate possibilities in settings that are contrary to known reality. The settings of imaginary worlds or imaginary extension to our own world refer to our past contradicting known historiographical facts or archeological record, outer galaxies, aliens, technology, the future of the Earth, the Universe and mankind, phenomena contradicting known facts or supposed laws of nature, founding new, different and more fair utopian or dystopian political or social systems, discovering and applying new scientific principles and words born and popularized not by science but by SF (*time-travel, biotechnology, nanotechnology, parapsychology, spacesuits, robots, mutants, ciborgs, morph, empath, force-field, web cast* etc).[4]

At first sight these settings help to further separate the genre of SF from a sense of reality because the unreal is seen as a product solely of the imagination and fantasy but actually SF is more concerned with the real world than many other literary genres. Exploring in logical but creative language the consequences of functioning of such unreal settings is the traditional purpose of SF clearly separating it from other discourse types and genres of fiction and making it popular among young and adult readers thus increasing cognition and literacy rates worldwide.

Theoretical discussions on SF so far have articulated the urgent need to define this broad literary genre. But the fact is that SF hasn't had a neat, final definition so far. The

common view and the general approach is to consider it an art dependent of intellect: speculative fiction, imaginary science, scientific romance, storytelling about future, technology of emotions, etc. Art is specifically used to support the cognitive reflection in science, in a wider sense art and cognition are intimately associated. Therefore, science is the frame and the fantasy and visions of the author are the content of SF. Sometimes SF is proclaimed to be "the mythology of the modern world" (LeGuin 1993) and this approach can be well justified: although SF began to emerge with the development of science itself, as a means of understanding the world through speculation and storytelling, it really has antecedents back to mythology. SF commonly uses techniques both from the realistic and the fantastic traditions of narrative to tell a story of which a referent, implicit or explicit, is the mythos of modern world (described as a virtual world) and can educate the imagination beyond the constraints of mainstream mindsets. SF is also qualified as "a modern fairy tale". As in fairy tales and mythology the discourses of narration and description play an important role in it. And as in fairy tales and mythology the origin of the imagery, the motive of the narrative is to be found in the contents, assumptions and views of the present world. At this juncture, it should be stressed that the stylistic device of literaliszation of metaphor is realized exceptionally in fairy tales and SF.

Good examples of literalized metaphor are the following word-combinations from fairy tales or SF: *red river* (1), *silver/white sun* (2), *to speak to one's own soul* (3). In a mundane narration they will probably depict metaphorically a bloody scene (1), a cold, unfriendly sun (2) or one's inner speculation with the self (3) while in SF and in a fairy tale narration these mundane metaphors acquire a literal meaning: the river is actually red-coloured (1), the sun – silver/white-coloured or made of silver (2) and one can actually live separately from one's soul and even communicate with it/him/her (3).

In examining SF it is essential to begin with the specifically stylistic dimension of it. Style is widely taken to be a privileged category in the analysis of any literary kind, a kind of touchstone of the literary itself and it is especially relevant to the study of SF (Freedman 2000), a new, non-traditional language phenomenon. "SF works differently from other written categories, particularly those categories traditionally called literary. It works the same way only in that, like all categories of writing, it has its specific conventions, unique focuses, areas of interest and excellence, as well as its own particular ways of making sense out of language. To ignore any of these constitutes a major misreading – an obliviousness to the play of meanings that make up the SF text", declared the famous SF writer and analyst Samuel R. Delany (Delany 1977). In the light of this point, it should be noted that an appropriate SF protocol implies adherence to certain linguistic technique and stylistic rules typical of the discipline. The imaginative answer to the question "What would happen if?", which is central to SF, conditions its style which includes common technical terms, plentiful use of invented technical terms, a host of invented future scientific jargon, a whole series of military, artistic, linguistic (alternative, artificial languages) and everyday neologisms and coinages, fantastic metaphors, epithets and many other linguistic and stylistic means. The language sounds convincing both due to the author's preliminary knowledge of sciences and scientific literature and his skill and knowledge as a professional philologist who has an abiding respect for the English lan-

guage, who is well aware of principles of using stylistic tools, expressive means and coinages, who reminds the readers "what great potential there is in overhauling verbs, creating slang, and assaulting the senses with vivid descriptions" (Myer 1997). Viewed in the light of this attitude and the belief underlying this stance, it should be mentioned that science fictional style is largely self-contained; certain terms tend to occur nowhere else, while, say, newspaper language may be found in all other discourses. The researcher linguists must be at least a little computer literate to be able to analyze the words and the fans must be at least a little academically/linguistically oriented to uncover SF meanings and enjoy them.

The points discussed so far reveal that the precise language characteristic of a genre is realized through its style and even the analysis of one or a couple of pieces of SF narration may illustrate many peculiarities concerning the genre in general.

The first (opening) and the following passage below are pieces from the cyberpunk story by Paul Di Filippo "Stone Lives" published in "The Cyberpunk Anthology" (ed. Bruce Sterling. NY: Arbour House, 1986).

> *Odors boil around the Immigration office, a stench soup. The sweat of desperate men and women, ripe garbage strewn in the packed street, the spicy scent worn by one of guards at the outer door. The mix is heavy, almost overpowering to anyone born outside the **Bungle**, but Stone is used to it. The constant smells constitute the only atmosphere he has ever known, his native element, too familiar to be despised. Noise swells to rival the stench: harsh voices raised in dispute, whinning voices lowered to entreat. "Don't sluff me, you rotty bastard!". "I'd treat you real nice, honey, for a share of that". From the vicinity of the door into immigration, an artificial voice reciting the day's job offerings, cycling tirelessly through the rotty choices. "– to test new aerosol **antipersonnel toxins; 4M will contract to provide survivors with a Citrine rejuve. High-orbit vakheads needed by McDonel Douglas. Must be willing to be imprinted –".* (p.178)

> *June's body is a tracery of lambent lines, like some arcane capillary circuitry in the core of **Mao/Kung Fu-tzu**. Following the current craze, she has had a subdermal pattern of microchannels implanted. The channels are filled with synthetic **lucifirase**, the biochemical responsible for the glow of fireflies, which **she can trigger now at will. In the afterglow of lovemaking, she has set herself alight.*** (p.194)

The opening passage could of course be the straightforward opening of a mundane story or a novel, that is, a piece of writing in which the generic tendency of science fiction is reduced to the barest minimum: a crowd of men and women living in misery and poverty desperately trying to find a job or leave their underdeveloped, poor native land. The stylistic register of the paragraphs, however, marks it unmistakably as SF. The key factor here is the mood or atmosphere of the passage – evidently based on linguistic units

referring to circumstances unknown in our own empirical environment, yet, sounding so ordinary and natural for the everyday life in the world of the text. The first signal is the invented name of the place: *Bungle,* which immediately associates with punning – *bungle-jungle.* The earlier sentences of the passage have already made it clear that the place is no better than a jungle. *Antipersonnel toxins; 4M will contract to provide survivors with a Citrine rejuve* and *high-orbit vakheads* directly register the style in the way of technological innovation. In fact, the mood of the passage does figure as an important motif in the story. But in the context of the opening paragraph, its chief function is to signal the science-fictional character of the language, to emphasize that technology and emotions are apparently connected in ways familiar and unfamiliar to us and thus to impel us to read the latter differently than we would read the language of a mundane fiction.

The sentences in the second passage are more flexible, sinuous, complex than those in the first one as they have got more style. Yet, there is a real danger in misinterpreting their metaphorical codes. The opening sentence of the second passage through an oriental sounding name (*Mao/Kung Fu-tzu*) alludes to June's Vietnamese origin. The second sentence reminds the reader that no matter how normal things may appear in a piece of SF (*Following the current craze, she has had a subdermal pattern of microchannels implanted),* you can always expect some punk to pop into the scene with the *lucifirase,* a good example of a newly coined SF term. The verb *trigger* is used in a sense other than the expected metaphorical one as it is applied to actually turning on the glow system of the body. The passage gradually becomes more effective: starts out normally grounded (implantations are quite common today), then becomes typically science fictional with the heroine turning the lights of her body on at will and reaches a climax exemplified in the stylistic device of literalization of metaphor which, as mentioned above, is a typical discourse marker for SF style. The metaphor is expressed in *she has set herself alight,* which, in other discourses would be associated with passion but in the SF content, in addition to symbolizing love, has been literalized, i.e. the heroine has in fact turned on the *lucifirase* matter filling her subdermal microchannels and made her body luminous.

As Ursula K. LeGuin notes "Literalization of metaphor is a characteristic of science fiction. In teaching the craft to people new to it, I use Delany's phrase 'subjunctive tension' to alert them to a challenge not present in realistic fiction: the way in which the open context of science fiction brings the language alive" (LeGuin 1993:30). We come across many examples of this tool in Paul Di Filippo's story: *Stone is a living camera* (he can take pictures using his eyes), *when he still retained his eyes* (when the camera was still installed in him), *don't take the eyes back* (he didn't want the camera to be taken out), *practicing his new eyes* (using the eye camera), *his eyes go dead* (the camera was switched off). Through the highly important marker of literality of metaphor SF signals not only its stylistic uniqueness but the difference between the present and future as well.

We come across numerous cases of literalized metaphors in R. Zelazny's "Jack of Shadows" (Toronto: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, Ltd., 1971) where the mortal hero can die deaths and resurrect after each through gaining strength and flesh from shadows.

*"Everyone knows that **darksiders have more than one life. How many have you?"***

"It is not as if you would be dead forever."

*"It is a long way back from the Dung Pits of Glyve at Western Pole of the world, and one must walk. It sometimes takes years **to constitute a new body.**"* (p.11)

*And again after a long while he felt himself falling – falling as from a great height, **gaining a substance,** until he realized that he was lying on his back staring upward **with the full weight of his being once again on him**.* (p.14)

*It was always with a certain sadness that he reflected on the loss of blood from any **new body which also happened to be his own**.* (p.16)

*Flocks of meteors constantly strung the sky, reminding him of the appearance of heavens on **the day of his last resurrection**.* (p.133)

Interestingly enough we come across the same resurrection phenomenon (and respectively an extended literalized metaphor) in F.M. Busby's "If this is Winnetka, You Must be Judy" ("Best Science Fiction Stories" edited by Lester Del Ray. NY: ACE books, 1977).

Having died, he still feared death. It would be merely a different way of ending. For he had no clear idea how much of his life had been lived, back and forth in bits and pieces. One day he would use up the last unlived segment, *and then...he supposed he simply wouldn't wake up. At his best estimate* ***he had lived something less than half his allotted time-years.*** (p.19)

Making clear as to what literality of metaphor is, LeGuin brings the example "He was absorbed in the landscape." (LeGuin 1993:30) which in an ordinary story is a quite safe sentence to create the image of an artistic nature admiring the beautiful scenery, while in SF narrative the same phrase should be used very carefully as it may be depicting a piece of cannibal landscape devouring its victims or a scenery eating the characters. Interestingly enough in Roger Zelazny's "Jack of Shadows" we come across another such phenomenon, a monster stone, faintly glowing and pink which lay in the valley and is later slain by the protagonist who literally ate the stone instead of being eaten by it.

"I lie before you little one. Come to me".

"I see just a moldy rock".... He staggered as he beheld the heap of skeletons that were lying behind the glowing stone. ***"Yes. I must position them there so that newcomers to this place will not grow fearful and***

avoid the circle of my influence. It is there that you, too, will lie, bloody
one". (p.25)

I am Shadowjack, the thief who walks in silence and in shadows! I
was beheaded in Igles and rose again from the Dung Pits of Glyve. I
drank the blood of a vampire and ate a stone. I am the breaker of the
Compact. I am he who forged a name in the Red book of ells. I am the pris-
oner in the Jewel. (p.85)

The mammoths seen by man, whales in Kurdistan, the angel who walked and stood in
those high plains saying he was named Man, Mary Rainwood who *gazed upon her own*
double and talked with her from R.A. Lafferty's "And Name my Name" ("Best Science
Fiction Stories" edited by Lester Del Ray. NY: ACE books, 1977) are also good exam-
ples of literalized metaphors.

Exemplifying an important stylistic/discourse marker for Science Fiction writing in
general, the stylistic device of literalization of metaphor is still awaiting to be thorough-
ly investigated.

One more point in connection with the investigation of the style of SF must be
emphasized, and it is the title. In "Stone Lives", the hero's name Stone sounds complete-
ly mundane until the final part of the story when he turns out to be a clone specially
brought up in Bungle to become tough, hard and durable as stone to be able to change
the beautiful, gaudy, exciting, noble-sounding but unfair 22nd century hi-tech urban world
founded by his mother, Alice Citrine. Through the extended metaphor *Stone lives* and a
final genuine metaphor *clean up the mess* (change the world for the better) the author
expresses his optimistic striving for a radical social change and victory over technologi-
cal and political dominance. This optimism is not just individual attitude; rather, it is
directly based on specificities of present life of mankind, on collective human intellect
and experience expressed in a cyberpunk dynamism. Indeed, we may go so far as to say
that stylistically SF is of all genres the most devoted to humanism and the humanity.

Conclusion
SF is developing and booming today as the penetration of science and new technolo-
gy into society has created a deep interest in the English language and literature explor-
ing technologies which influence the global society. Today the unique language and style
of Anglo-American SF, represented in all varieties of advanced communication, has sig-
nificant impact upon the behavior of individuals in the society, world culture, thought,
science and education. Considering that investigation of a discourse is part of the infla-
tionary process by which genres survive, develop, teach and propagate, it should be said
that SF style with its panoply of linguistic means represented in and based on fact and
fiction, reason and emotion, consciousness and imagination, literality and metaphoricity
lies in all its potential to be explored by linguists.

Notes:

1. According to American linguists and educationalists national ethnocentrism, strongly reinforced since the middle decades of the 20th century by World War II and the Cold War, expected literature as taught at schools and universities to promote a sense of national identity and greatness. Genres of writing which did not readily serve such ends (Autobiographies, Diaries, Essays, Detective Fiction and Science Fiction) tended to be neglected as "inferior" (Kraus 1997).
2. As the world evolves gradually from the concept of ethnocentrism, we in the early 21st century are learning to rediscover new and formerly neglected genres of writing and draw on them for researching and teaching materials.
3. With the dawn of new technologies H.G. Wells, W. Morris, E. Bellamy, W.S. Burroughs became famous SF writers. In mid 20th century, the SF generation included A. Asimov, E. Elmer, A. Bestter, T. Sturgeon, A. Huxley, G. Orwell, A. Clarke. In the 60s and 70s writers like M. Moorcock, J. Ballard, B. Aldiss, J. Brummer, A. Burgess, F. Herbert, S.R. Delany, R. Zelanzy, H. Ellison, U. LeGuin, M. Atwood, Z. Henderson explored new trends, ideas, writing styles. The Cyberpunk of 1980s included W. Gibson, B. Stterling, J. Shirley, L. Mixon. Ribofunk was made most famous by P. di Fillipo and G. Egan.
4. Such ideas or images which long ago abandoned fiction to enjoy tremendous vitality as "icons" of modern SF and common elements of the global culture can be infinitely reused. The term "icon" in this sense was first used by Professor Garry K. Wolfe. (Wolfe 1979). The first dictionary devoted to science fiction *Brave New Words: The Oxford Dictionary of Science Fiction* (2007) edited by Jeff Prucher covers science-fictional words and their associated concepts. It also shows that many words we consider everyday vocabulary, had their roots in SF. In addition, its full citations and bibliographic information document the SF vocabulary transfer into other subcultures or mainstream English.

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Գիտաֆանտաստիկ գրականության որոշ ոճական առանձնահատկությունների մասին

Ժամանակակից, ոչ-ավանդական համարվող գործառական դրսևորման՝ գիտաֆանտաստիկ գրականության ուսումնասիրության մեջ հատկապես կարևորվում են ոճական առանձնահատկությունները, որոնք հիմնված են այդ ժանրի բանական-երևակայական գոյաբանական հակադրամիասնության վրա: Գիտաֆանտաստիկ ոճի յուրորինակությունը պայմանավորված է ժանրում առատորեն կիրառվող իրական և հորինված տերմիններով, ներկան և ապագան պատկերող հորինված խոսքաձևերով, նորաբանություններով, փոխաբերականացմամբ, փոխաբերության ուղղակիացմամբ և այլ լեզվաոճական միջոցներով:

О некоторых стилистических особенностях научной фантастики

Стиль является важнейшим аспектом анализа любого литературного произведения, и это особенно актуально при изучении научной фантастики - современного, нетрадиционного языкового явления. Этот стиль обусловлен онтологическим сопоставлением фактичности и фиктичности и предполагает обильное использование "реальных" и выдуманных технических терминов, множеств настоящих или будущих научных жаргонов, целый ряд неологизмов, метафоризации и литерализации метафор и многих других лингвистических и стилистических средств.