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**FACTORS OF INTERNATIONAL DOMINANCE OF AMERICAN SCIENCE FICTION OF THE 20TH CENTURY**

**XX ASR AMERIKA ILMIY FANTASTIK ADABIYOTINING XALQARO HUKMRONLIGI, OMILLARI**

**ФАКТОРЫ МЕЖДУНАРОДНОГО ДОМИНИРОВАНИЯ АМЕРИКАНСКОЙ НАУЧНОЙ ФАНТАСТИКИ XX ВЕКА**

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**Abstract:** The article analyzes the factors that influenced the development of American science fiction as dominant in this genre, and as confirmation of the hypotheses put forward, the author's own research results as well as the opinions of leading literary critics are presented. Modern SF since 1945 was primarily an American phenomenon, and much of the genre was written either by Americans or by authors who adopted the American idiom. This dominance was the product of various related factors which include mainly the English language that became the world language of literature and science and many other fields after the war and the geographical concentration of writers, publishers and readers in America including even foreign writers and immigrants. More important was the process of dynamic social and economic change that moved through American society feeding new perspectives and arousing interest in the future. Apart from the negative and positive effects of this process of change, the American society of the post-war decades was a society of all opportunities and which welcomed new technology, which enjoyed novelty with a strong curiosity about the prospect of more change, and which was looking for more expansion and more success. It was within this environment that SF developed into an American model to be exported and imitated all over the world. It is then worth exploring the major factors lying behind the creation of this unique model and its international dominance. In spite of its short history, the success of American SF during the post-war decades was the result of the various factors already discussed, and if it came to sweep the international scene as one of the most widely popular literary genres in the modern world, it was not only with its iconic figures in both novel and film who became idols for modern fans and readers or its themes that have explored the urgent concerns of humanity about the future, but it was incontestably with its iconic characters that have become distinctive symbols of the genre.

**Key words:** American science fiction, mainstream, dominance, society, Gunn, Asimov, speculative fiction.

**Annotatsiya:** Maqolada Amerika ilmiy fantastika rivojiga va uning ustunlikka erishishiga ta'sir ko'rsatgan omillar tahlil qilingan, tasdig'i sifatida muallifning tadqiqot natijalari hamda yetakchi adabiyotshunoslarning fikrlari keltirilgan. 1945-yildan beri zamonaviy ilmiy fantastik adabiyotida asosan Amerikadagi voqealar ko'rsatilgan va janrning ko'p qismini amerikaliklar yoki amerikalik fuqarolikni qabul qilgan mualliflar yozgan. Bu hukmronlik turli xil omillarning natijasidir, ular bittasi –ingliz tilini rivojlanishi, uni jahon urushdan keyin adabiyot va ilm tiliga aylanishi, ko'plab yozuvchilar va nashrlar AQShdagi geografik konsentratsiyasi, hatto chet ellik yozuvchilar va immigrantlardir. Amerika jamiyatida yangi istiqbollarni ochib beradigan va kelajakka qiziqish uyg'otadigan dinamik ijtimoiy va iqtisodiy o'zgarishlar jarayoni muhimroq edi. Bu o'zgarish



jarayonining salbiy va ijobiy ta'siridan tashqari, urushdan keyingi o'n yilliklardagi AQSh jamiyati har xil imkoniyatlarga ega bo'lgan jamiyat bo'lib, yangi texnologiyani ma'qul ko'rди, ular yangi o'zgarishlarga ko'proq qiziqish bildirildi. Aynan shu muhitda ilmiy fantastik adabiyoti butun dunyo bo'ylab eksport qilinadigan va taqlid qilinadigan Amerika modeliga aylandi. Bu noyob modelni yaratish va uning xalqaro hukmronligi ortida turgan asosiy omillarni o'rganishga arziydi. Qisqa tarixiga qaramay, urushdan keyingi o'n yilliklar davomida Amerika ilmiy fantastik janrining muvaffaqiyati allaqachon muhokama qilingan turli omillar natijasidir va u zamonaviy dunyodagi eng mashhur adabiy janrlardan biri sifatida xalqaro sahnani qamrab oldi.

**Kalit so'zlar:** Amerika fantastik adabiyoti, asosiy oqim, hukmronlik, jamiyat, Gann, Azimov, spekulativ fantastik adabiyot.

**Аннотация:** В статье анализируются факторы, оказавшие влияние на становление американской научной фантастики в качестве доминирующей в данном жанре, а в качестве подтверждения выдвигаемых гипотез приводятся результаты собственных исследований автора, а также мнения ведущих литературных критиков. Современная фантастика с 1945 года была в первую очередь американским феноменом, и большая часть жанра была написана либо американцами, либо авторами, принявшими американскую идиому. Это доминирование было результатом различных связанных факторов, в том числе в основном английского языка, ставшего мировым языком литературы и науки, а также многих других областей после войны, а также географической концентрации писателей, издателей и читателей в Америке, включая даже иностранных писателей и иммигрантов. Более важным был процесс динамичных социальных и экономических изменений, которые происходили в американском обществе, открывая новые перспективы и пробуждая интерес к будущему. Помимо отрицательных и положительных эффектов этого процесса изменений, американское общество в послевоенные десятилетия было обществом всех возможностей, которое приветствовало новые технологии, пользовалось новизной и испытывало сильное любопытство к перспективам дальнейшего изменений и которое искал большего расширения и большего успеха. Именно в этой среде научная фантастика превратилась в американскую модель, которую можно было экспортировать и копировать во всем мире. Затем стоит изучить основные факторы, лежащие в основе создания этой уникальной модели и ее международного господства. Несмотря на свою короткую историю, успех американской научной фантастики в послевоенные десятилетия был результатом различных факторов, которые уже обсуждались, и если он стал одним из самых популярных литературных жанров в современном мире на международной арене, не только его знаковые персонажи романа и фильма, которые стали кумирами современных поклонников и читателей, или его темы, которые исследовали насущные заботы человечества о будущем, но, бесспорно, именно его знаковые персонажи стали отличительными символами жанра.

**Ключевые слова:** научная фантастика США, мейнстрим, доминирование, общество, Ганн, Азимов, литература размышлений.

**INTRODUCTION.** Although the period of J.Campbell and *Astounding* was generally labelled the *Golden Age* of science fiction (SF) with the establishment of the genre as a widely popular and potent category of American literature, it was arguably the post-war era that witnessed the international dominance of American SF with the location of most of the magazines and book publishers in the USA and the association between SF and American culture of the post-war decades which had considerable influence on the spread of the American model in the USA and abroad before even the revival of British SF in the 1960's. Therefore, modern SF since 1945 was primarily an American phenomenon, and much of the genre was written either by Americans or by authors who adopted the American idiom. This dominance was the product of various related factors which include



mainly the English language that became the world language of literature and science and many other fields after the war and the geographical concentration of writers, publishers and readers in America including even foreign writers and immigrants. More important was the process of dynamic social and economic change that moved through American society feeding new perspectives and arousing interest in the future. Apart from the negative and positive effects of this process of change, the American society of the post-war decades was a society of all opportunities and which welcomed new technology, which enjoyed novelty with a strong curiosity about the prospect of more change, and which was looking for more expansion and more success. It was within this environment that SF developed into an American model to be exported and imitated all over the world. It is then worth exploring the major factors lying behind the creation of this unique model and its international dominance.

**DISCUSSION.** Since the founding of the genre, science has been the guiding force of SF, and for many decades SF writers formed a large community cut off from the mainstream literary culture by their outspoken support for the values of science and technology. Science and technology have always been the key to progress and have always represented society's investment in its own future. It was this concern about the future that made and still makes science the core and center of the SF field. Even in its moments of rebellion against science and technology, SF has continued to be molded and shaped by scientific thought, and more important than detailed correctness is the imaginative debt which SF writers owe to scientific outlook with its experimental and rigorous spirit. In his essay "Running Out of Speculative Niches", **David Brin** asserts that "Science itself is a major character" [10, p. 20], and in an essay titled "Is There a Technological Fix for the Human Condition?" **Gregory Benford** states, "it is not enough to merely use science as integral to the narrative. SF must use science in a speculative fashion. The physical sciences are the most capable of detailed prediction so they are perceived in fiction as more indicators of future possibilities, or stable grounds for orderly speculation". [2, p. 3]

SF has also been able to reciprocate in the sense that many of the most fascinating ideas in science originated not in laboratories but from the minds of imaginative SF writers such as rocket ships, computers, space travel, and genetic transformation. SF historian and writer **James Gunn** observes that, "Many inventions, Buck Rogers's backpack rocket to robots, lasers, computers, have first been described in SF stories. But the literature owes an equal debt to science, from which it drew not only inspiration but many of its ideas" [6, p.71]. Predictions made in SF were of two kinds; those which were later achieved by scientists such as man-landing on the moon, rocket ships, bionics, and cloning, and those which are not likely to be achieved, they are not technologically feasible, and they are still considered mere fantasy such as time travel and teleportation. This interaction between science and SF can be detected from the fact that several generations of scientists and engineers have grown up reading SF, and later in life became SF writers such as Carl Sagan, Isaac Asimov, and many of the most prominent figures in the field have scientific backgrounds and held degrees in various scientific fields such as Robert Heinlein (engineer), James Blish (biologist), Larry Niven (a degree in mathematics), Kurt Vonnegut studied mechanical engineering, and Vernor Vinge (professor of mathematics and computer scientist).

Although some kind of SF flagrantly violates scientific rules and has very little to do with scientific thought and theory, it still keeps those virtues of experimentation and speculation that it derives from its unique relationship with science. In this respect, **Kathryn Cramer** argues that "writing stories within the rules of the universe as we know it and yet discovering fantastic possibilities of new ways of life is the central endeavour of the SF writer. Physical law tells us that many things are impossible given existing technology, but the ever-expanding frontier of scientific knowledge shows us how to do many things of which we would never have dreamed" [5, p.88]. K.Cramer reinforces the belief that truth is sometimes stranger than fiction, and this was perhaps the



case for the post-war decades in the USA when science and technology played an even more important role in the growth and spread of American SF in America and in many countries around the globe. The USA were thought of as an inherently dynamic society which already represented the future. More than in any other country in the world after the war, scientific progress and technological development were more immediately put in the service of consumer-oriented capitalism that the focus was directed toward modernising all aspects of industrial production and the extension of scientific management into even the control of human life and human behaviour. In fact, science grew more complex and harder to grasp and all the technological breakthroughs of the post-war era demonstrated that the gap was being bridged between SF and science fact. There had been intense research concerning many aspects of life and the universe, and many inventions and discoveries were successfully made in various fields including astronomy, medicine, biology, physics, and chemistry. Such revolutionary achievements include DNA structure, Einstein's *General Field Theory* developed during the 1960's in theoretical physics in what is called the *Golden Age* of general relativity, the first hydrogen bomb, satellite communications, the spread of the nuclear power to various fields especially the military, high-speed rocket planes, and the launching of the space programme.

There is no doubt that these revolutionary developments had a great impact on the imagination of SF writers with the vision of evolution beyond man which was usually presented in the form of a wholly artificial environment where the inheritors of human civilisation will be organisms with artificial brains or machines that will liberate themselves from their human constructors. In addition, the prospects of space travel, an old dream of mankind, had become real and practical with the launching of the space programme and this encouraged American SF writers to engage into speculation about future possibilities of discovering some mode of faster propulsion to colonise and inhabit other planets. In fact, after winning the war and achieving unprecedented economic and technological progress, space became a new frontier in the American imagination and the ultimate target of America's drive towards perpetual expansion. More important than the myth of the frontier inherent in American culture and politics was the idea of survival when the Earth will no longer be able to support human life and when enforced migration to other planets will be the only alternative. Facing the choice of embarking on space travel and leaving the Earth or becoming extinct because of some man-made disaster makes any further development in space travel appear as a positive form of evolutionary adaptation that was imaginatively highlighted in American SF of the post-war era. On the other hand, the increasingly pervasive influence of science and technology on human life and more particularly the government and military control of the scientific research have been since the end of the Second World War the major concern of American SF writers. It was that concern about the future of humanity that made American SF go into the lead becoming an object of attention for readers and scholars who were seeking an adequate understanding of the radically complex world they were living in. SF critic **Veronica Hollinger** describes the situation: "Developments in technoscience are rendering our lives more and more science-fictional, and the case has often been made that the term "SF" now refers not only to a popular narrative genre, but also to an increasingly widespread mode of cultural description and analysis. SF has become an aspect of the quotidian consciousness of people living in the post-industrial world, daily witnesses to the transformations of their values and material conditions in the wake of technological acceleration beyond their conceptual threshold" [7, p. 43].

The term 'technoscience', coined by Belgian philosopher Gilbert Hottois, was first used in the 1970's by science critics such as Bruno Latour, a French sociologist of science, as a concept which suggests that the distinction between pure traditional science and applied technology no longer holds, and that many knowledge fields have become trans-disciplinary with scientific practice intertwined with power represented by transnational capitalism and politics. Technoscience, which was intended to describe the new environment of the post-war decades, has become more a political and cultural practice that lost much of the objective and neutral values that had once characterized pure science.



Government and military control of scientific research became a distinctive feature of the Cold War period when the whole society was really threatened by the possibility of nuclear extinction. The result was that SF writers became increasingly active in politics and became embroiled in the post-war controversy which revealed the extent to which scientific research was subject to political and military exploitation. As soon as the label *Cold War* was applied to the conditions of the post-war era, it became a metaphor for SF writers whose writings were rapidly degenerating into political allegory. Indeed, the typical urgencies of the period and more particularly the fear of nuclear war affected the writers' perceptions of the changed status of SF which became more serious, more respectable and more expressive of the fears and traumas inherent in that age. **Isaac Asimov** dated the shift precisely: "The dropping of the atomic bomb in 1945 made SF respectable" [1, p. 18], and **James Gunn** affirmed that, "from that moment on thoughtful men and women recognized that we were living in a SF world" [6, p. 91]. Certainly war period stories such as Cleve Cartmill's "Deadline" (1944) and Robert Heinlein's "Solution Unsatisfactory" (1941), which had already described the A-bomb and predicted a state of threatened peace, gave more credibility and force to SF that was so quick to engage with the Cold War and the entailments it carried. SF scholar **Thomas Alan Shippey** describes the new status of SF during the Cold War period by stating that SF writers like weighing speculating possibilities... they could feel that the world was at last conforming to their notions of how things ought to be, with the scientist firmly established at the top of the totem pole and politics calculable in terms of research and development. Besides, many years of painful scorn for the fantastic element in SF were being most satisfactorily repaid... That showed SF had to be taken seriously [8, p. 11].

Therefore, atomic doom stories began appearing in the magazines less than a year after the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as a response to a whole range of social, technological and political changes taking place during the Cold War period. While some writers like James Blish concentrated on the apocalyptic and cataclysmic end of the world through a nuclear disaster, others like Robert Heinlein and Judith Merrill rejected the fatalism of total nuclear destruction and tackled instead the issue of survivalism by insisting that the nuclear war would bring about a radical transformation of society. The wide range of stories about nuclear war and post-nuclear nightmares published during the post-war period led to complain that too many stories still nag away at atomic, hydrogen and bacteriological war, the post-atomic world, reversion to barbarism, mutant children, world dictatorships, problems of survival war, more war, and still more war. Moreover, stories dealing with Cold War fears and anxieties revolve around not only nuclear holocaust and its consequences but also the conditions inherent in that age and the overlapping issues of arms race, espionage, fears of foreign attacks and invasion, and the rise of totalitarianism. In reality, the Cold War made permanent many of the features of World War II's warfare state, and these included a technologically sophisticated military supported by an industrial-scientific complex, large state intelligence agencies (CIA and FBI) with both international and domestic activities, and a clearly defined enemy (the Soviets) that possessed the power and ideology to challenge an American vision of world order. Therefore, arms race was immediately launched trying to achieve the technological lead by constructing the most sophisticated weapons. In fact, Americans remained largely ignorant of the horrors of nuclear war because the American government maintained an extremely restrictive and even repressive control of the dissemination of such information and of any nuclear-related images, and much of what Americans learned about the impact of nuclear holocaust had to come from SF. Thus, it is not surprising that many of the most important SF works of the Cold War period dealt with the possibility of a nuclear disaster and its aftermath, and among the most famous of these works are George R. Steward's "Earth Abides" (1949), Judith Merrill's "Shadow on the Hearth" (1956), Bernard Wolfe's "Limbo" (1952), Mordecai Roshwald's "Level 7" (1959), Pat Frank's "Alas Babylon" (1959), Walter Miller's "A Canticle to Leibowitz" (1959), Philip K. Dick's "Dr. Bloodmoney" (1965). In addition to the nuclear weapons, the computer was another technological device that increased the



fear of loss of control in a state of extreme tensions. The first US computer ENIAC was set up in 1946 for ballistic research; it was sponsored by the American military and used by the army for calculating artillery-firing tables and for target accuracy. Some SF writers of the period have drawn on the computer's potential for horror and destruction including Harlan Ellison in "I Have no Mouth, and I Must Scream" (1967) which is about the super-computer AM that brought about the genocide of almost all of humanity and Paul Anderson in "Sam Hall" (1953) which extrapolates the fear of a central data bank on citizens during the McCarthy period when everyone's loyalty is checked. Besides, American writer **John Harvey Wheeler**, best known as co-author with Eugene Burdick of Cold War novel "Fail-Safe" (1962), confirmed that with the world brought under continuous surveillance operations, capable of pipping masses of strategic information into real-time computer analysis systems, the military prospect is for the advent of an age of pre-emptive warfare, triggered and directed by computer [9, p. 14]. Another facet of the Cold War that found echoes in American SF was the war of information so that the restrictions on any material relating to technological research and military industry became even tighter after the wartime control when the post-war security agencies were established. Secrecy became institutionalized in mechanisms of control and espionage was part of the game to gain technological lead in weapons research and industry. Those scientists who were capable of furthering weapons research for gaining technological superiority and reinforcing "national security" were quite valuable brains, but they could be also treacherous and disloyal. Indeed, the war during the post-war years was a war of "brains" (scientists) that were treated as objects holding valuable information and it was quite legitimate to reify characters so that they become indistinguishable from the information they carry. The most famous of these stories are Wilson Tucker's "Wild Talent" (1954), Paul Anderson's "Security Risk" (1957), Ernest Kenyon's "Security" (1956), Cyril. M. Combluth's "Gomez" (1954), and Algis Budrys's "Who?" (1958) in which the war was in all the world's filing cabinets and the weapon was information.

In addition to the threat of nuclear holocaust and the feverish and frenzied arms race, the fear of infiltration and subversion was rampant in 1950's America and evolved into a mass hysteria and a panic fed by unscrupulous politicians like Senator Joseph McCarthy whose committee's congressional hearings and blacklists affected deeply the cultural and intellectual life of the nation and the lives of all people caught up in them. In fact, by launching a hunt for domestic spies and suspected communists serving foreign powers, the inquisitors pursued their prey into all organized American institutions for the purpose of preserving a perpetual national security. The result was that Americans avoided controversy and became social conformists for fear of getting into trouble by taking part in political activities. It was in that climate of conformism and McCarthyite fears of internal subversion that Russian attacks on the USA and occupation were imagined with popular dystopias and a series of SF narratives dealing with both the rise of totalitarianism and the ideological take-over of the country. The most interesting of such stories comprise essentially Ray Bradbury's "Fahrenheit 451" (1953), Jack Finney's "The Body Snatchers" (1955), and Cyril. M. Combluth's "Not This August" (1955). Then it is commonplace that post-war American SF reflected all the latent anxieties and changes inherent in the Cold War period, and the Cold War provided in parallel the genre with unprecedented popularity and international respectability. This close relationship between the Cold War and SF led eventually to the development in the 1980's of what was called "nuclear criticism" named later by the Australian Kenneth K. Ruthven in his book "Nuclear Criticism" (1993). Though it was not a critical school and was a short-lived trend, it has given priority to the study of the apocalyptic paradigm in nuclear SF and has opened a discussion of how writers attempted to locate the experience of nuclear disaster. In this category of works, which include among many others David Dowling's "Fiction of Nuclear Disaster" (1987), Martha A. Bartter's "The Way to Ground Zero: The Atomic Bomb in American Science Fiction" (1988), and Paul Brian's "Nuclear Holocausts: Atomic War in Fiction" (1987), critics attempted to examine how the possibility of a civilization-ending nuclear war affected



the production and reception of SF literary texts, and argued that scholars should reflect this in their research. Besides, the field saw the foundation in 1988 of the journal *Nuclear Texts and Contexts* by the International Society for the Study of Nuclear Texts and Contexts in Washington State University which continues to provide an important and crucial forum for critical debate.

On the other hand, after the vogue for realistic novels of nuclear catastrophe and the spread of the counter-culture movement in the 1960's, the generation of SF writers known as the New Wave began to exploit post-nuclear nightmares as a way of expressing the psychological impact of uncontrolled change in society on the individual by *concentrating on the individual psyche as the key social unit*. Indeed, the counter-culture movement exercised a deep influence on American SF which allowed the export of American culture of that tumultuous period to the rest of the world, and succeeded to gain more attraction and popularity on the international literary scene.

**RESULTS.** A much more important factor in the world-wide dominance of American SF of the post-war decades was the extraordinary development of American SF cinema which was basically centered on the conditions of the Cold War period and which boomed during the 1950's when Hollywood's major studios as Universal, Warner Bros and Paramount dabbled in the genre bringing to fame the names of such producers as George Pal, Roger Corman, Jack Arnold, and John Frankenheimer. For many years the focus of early SF cinema was on fantasy and horror films which were produced especially during the 1930's dealing with disaster, space opera, and mad scientists. The mostly remembered of these films are "The Last Man on Earth" (1924), "Things to Come" (1936), "Frankenstein" (1931), "The Invisible Man" (1933), "Deluge" (1933), and "Lost Horizon" (1937). While the 1940's were almost empty years and there was little noteworthy cinema in the field, the 1950's witnessed a SF movie boom centered in the USA, and it was George Pal's "Destination Moon" (1950) which was believed to announce the start of a genuinely American SF cinema that has continued to dominate the world ever since.

It is, in fact, beyond the scope of this limited space to attempt a full exploration of SF cinema in the USA in the post-war decades. However, this overview should provide an understanding of the role played by SF cinema in making the genre in both novel and film the most influential American cultural phenomenon in the modern world. In spite of the fact that SF films of the period suffered low and shrinking budgets, bad scripts, and simple and cheap special effects compared to computer-generated effects, SF movie boom of the 1950's was made up of a series of films that hit the screens and were mostly popular. **Keith Booker** asserts that, "there are good reasons why the decade is often thought of as a sort of Golden Age of SF film. In terms of sheer numbers, there were more SF films produced in the 1950's than in any decade before or since. In addition, the SF films, however conservative, often explored the Anxieties of the decade in ways that more mainstream films were not able to do within the paranoid political climate of the period" [4, p. 3]. Given the political climate of the post-war period, almost all SF films of the 1950's concentrated on the Cold War metaphors by typically stressing the themes of nuclear holocaust, anti-communist hysteria, and the fear of the dehumanizing consequences of life in the modern world. In fact, the decade's fascination with science and technology was associated with a variety of paranoid fears that were apparent in a number of recurring tropes including space travel, alien invasion and attacks by exotic monsters or radioactively generated monsters, mutants and giant insects, the military-scientific collaboration, and scenes of mass destruction, all in a way that managed to address the concerns of Americans during the Cold War period. In the field of space travel, films depicting the exploration of outer space were rare in the decade because of technical and budgetary difficulties, and in the few films dealing with space, the worlds depicted seem more Earth-like and were not totally convincing. However, space films of the 1950's were intended to depict the increasingly insane competition between the USA and Russia in their blind pursuit of technological lead and superiority. The most popular space films of the period include "Destination Moon" (1950), "Rocketship X-M" (1950), "When Worlds Collide" (1951),



"Conquest of Space" (1955), "Forbidden Planet" (1956), "This Island Earth" (1955), and "Earth vs. the Flying Saucers" (1956). By portraying the inherent fears and political paranoia of the Cold War period, SF films of the 1950's clearly demonstrated Hollywood's ideological orthodoxy in the midst of the communist witch-hunts of the period which had already identified the film industry as a convenient target. Indeed, the atmosphere reflected the intellectual conformism that reigned in the film industry of the 1950's although certain films such as "Five" (1951), "The 27th Day" (1957), "The Day the World Ended" (1955), and "On the Beach" (1959) have been interpreted by critics as left-wing making of fantasy content a cover or a frame for discussion of many real issues which were hardly open to serious consideration in other popular medium. For instance, SF expert **Peter Biskind** claims that, "In the difficult climate of the 1950's, the genre of SF provided freedom for uncompromising left-wing statement because it was so thoroughly removed from reality" [3, p. 55]. Actually, fantasy elements served too much SF during that period, but fantasy has also been recognized as an essential part that has provided the genre with more fascination and the quintessential element of the sense of wonder, and as **Thomas Alan Shippey** notes, "Reality and fantasy intertwine; without that intertwining SF would have lost half its fascination" [8, p. 63]. More typical of the turn SF books took during the 1950's was the adoption of horror and the gothic traditions which helped to trigger a spate of big-monster movies that tended more toward SF and less toward pure fantasy of the previous decades. Alien invasion books were closely related and overlapping sub-genres, both growing out of the anxieties of the period and the fear of human annihilation.

**CONCLUSION.** In spite of its short history, the success of American SF during the post-war decades was the result of the various factors already discussed, and if it came to sweep the international scene as one of the most widely popular literary genres in the modern world, it was not only with its iconic figures in both novel and film who became idols for modern fans and readers or its themes that have explored the urgent concerns of humanity about the future, but it was incontestably with its iconic characters that have become distinctive symbols of the genre. In fact, the presentation of characters in American SF and more particularly in the post-war era is perhaps one of the issues that requires thorough consideration and deeper analysis for the wide range of character types involved and the wide variety of dimensions they embody in SF stories. If human beings constitute part of SF narratives as characters, they are not the only ones and their presentation might even be seen as different from that in the mainstream novel. Taking not only the planet Earth but the whole universe as its province and taking speculation about the future as its doctrine, SF has come with an extension in the range of characters including, in addition to humans, such figures as robots, automatons (androids, cyborgs), mutants, supermen, and aliens. Thus, in this article I attempt to examine a series of works by the leading American SF writers of the post-war decades for a comprehensive study and exploration of the presentation of characters in American SF of the period and of the extent to which these characters expose a unique model of characterization in the history of modern fiction.

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