

TIME ODDITY, PARADOXES AND THE GOTHIC

ESTRANHEZA TEMPORAL, PARADOXOS E O GÓTICO

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RESUMO: Partindo-se da perspectiva pós-estruturalista do hibridismo de gêneros-modos, este artigo visa a explorar a conexão entre a Ficção Científica e o Gótico; mais especificamente, partindo da ideia de Brian Aldiss e David Wingrove, em *Trillion Year Spree* (1986), de que a Ficção Científica é criada pelo Gótico, tentamos argumentar que a Ficção Científica também pode criar o Gótico. Mais explicitamente, argumentamos que, através dos paradoxos das narrativas que se utilizam do conceito da Viagem não linear pelo Tempo, a Ficção Científica cria efeitos Góticos e acarreta em resultados Góticos, uma vez que a ideia do paradoxo já é inerentemente reacionária ao cientificismo e ao racionalismo Iluminista e, portanto, Gótica em sua própria concepção *uncanny*.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Ficção científica; Gótico; Viagem no tempo; Paradoxo; Pós-estruturalismo.

ABSTRACT: From the Post-structuralist perspective of the hybridity of genre-modes, this article's goal is to explore the connection between Science Fiction and the Gothic; more specifically, from Brian Aldiss and David Wingrove's idea, in *Trillion Year Spree* (1986), that Science Fiction is created by the Gothic, we tried to argue that Science Fiction can also create the Gothic. Explicitly, we argued that, through the paradoxes of narratives that work with the concept of non-linear Time Travel, Science Fiction creates Gothic effects and leads to Gothic results, once the very idea of the paradox already is inherently reactionary to the Enlightenment's scientism and rationalism and, therefore, Gothic in its very *uncanny* conception.

KEYWORDS: Science fiction; Gothic; Time travel; Paradox; Post-structuralism.

GOTHIC SCIENCE FICTION AND THE PARADOX STORY

Gothic texts are not rational; in fact, negative aesthetics, especially *Darkness* — as opposed to the Light associated with rationality — characterizes them.

If knowledge is associated with rational procedures of enquiry and understanding based on natural, empirical reality, then Gothic styles disturb the borders of knowing and conjure up obscure otherworldly phenomena or the “Dark arts”, alchemical, arcane and occult forms normally characterized as delusion, apparition, deception. (BOTTING, 2014, p. 2)

There are two reasons, then, why Gothic and Science Fiction seem, at first, to be contradictory genre-modes — and by genre-modes we mean that both Gothic and Science Fiction are not limited to the historical classifications of literary genres, or forms, and, therefore, denote broader literary methods, moods, or manners, much like the *tragic*, the *comic*, the *ironic*, the *didactic*, the *pastoral*, the *satiric*, etc. However, Gothic and Science Fiction are still connected to the particulars of genre, and due to this we chose to categorize them in the thematically appropriate hybrid concept of genre-modes.

In any case, the first reason why Gothic and Science Fiction seem to be contradictory genre-modes is that, as stated, the Gothic is irrational, whilst Science Fiction is rational. But, in *Trillion Year Spree* (1986), Brian Aldiss and David Wingrove introduce the argument that Mary Shelley’s Gothic novel *Frankenstein* (1818) created the specter of Science Fiction, meaning that Science Fiction is Gothic’s hideous progeny. In their own words, “*Frankenstein* marked the beginning [of Science Fiction] and Science Fiction is a Gothic offshoot”. (2001, p. 8) Thus, the literary genre-mode that explores the Enlightenment of science, rationality, human progress and technology, comes from a contradictory type of artistic expression. However, according to Sara Wasson and Emily Alder,

Gothic can (...) be a function of a particular kind of dreadful narrative voice bespeaking either overwrought affect, paranoiac sensibility or perverse emotional deadness. (...) As such, the

Gothic mode can readily be deployed in representations of believable worlds following natural laws. (2011, p. 3)

Thus the first contradiction between Gothic and Science Fiction — the limits of one and the other — are porous and complicated. The second one sprouts from their relationship with Time: whilst Gothic deals with the past, Science Fiction deals with the future.

Yet here, too, recent decades have seen complications of such neat differentiation. Alternative history “Steampunk” Science Fiction, for example, unsettles the notion that Science Fiction always occurs in a future world. (ALDER; WASSON, 2011, p. 4)

Furthermore, “monstrosity appears in the future and the past, in the mind and in culture at large, taking form in individual, social and textual bodies”. (BOTTING, 2008, p. 131) As such, the threads that stitch Gothic and Science Fiction together — hybrid creatures since their inception — are otherness, monstrosity and, therefore, *fear*. Time Travel fiction, for instance, stitches the past and future together, calling back to Einstein’s famous idea that “the distinction between past, present and future is only a stubbornly persistent illusion”. The distinction between Gothic and Science Fiction, thus, can be seen in the same way, and so we can combine both genre-modes into a single, oddly pseudo-oxymoronic, one: *Gothic Science Fiction*.

David Wittenberg wrote that

since all narratives do something like “travel” through Time or construct “alternate” worlds — one could arguably call narrative itself a “Time machine”, which is to say, a mechanism for revising the arrangements of stories and histories. In this more expansive view, literature itself might be viewed as a subtype of Time Travel, rather than the other way around, and Time Traveling might be considered a fundamental condition of storytelling itself, even its very essence. (2013, p. 1)

However, for the purposes of this article we will be limiting our discussion to what Wittenberg deemed *the paradox story* — a formal turn in Time Travel

fiction caused by the popularization of Einstein's theory of relativity. Our main argument, then, is that *the paradox story* can create and lead to fiction with Gothic elements. Moreover, we accept that Gothic creates Science Fiction, but we also believe that Science Fiction creates Gothic — a paradoxical relationship reminiscent of Time loops.

“Indeed, all the Time Travel paradoxes (...) stem from *retrocausality*. Effects undo their causes” (GLEICK, 2016, p. 235), but we are not looking at these paradoxes as impossibilities, only mere oddities. As David Lewis wrote,

Time Travel (...) is possible. The paradoxes of Time Travel are oddities, not impossibilities. They prove only this much, which few would have doubted: that a possible world where Time Travel took place would be a most strange world, different in fundamental ways from the world we think is ours. (1976, p. 145)

Such a topic is interesting and relevant to our human condition not only because we are all traveling through Time one second at a Time, and thus we are all, in this way, Time Travelers, but also because we “[our]selves are stories — Time Travel stories” (WITTENBERG, 2013, p. 78), and so the study of *the paradox story* is an endlessly exciting, and narcissistic, endeavor.

THE PARADOXES OF TIME TRAVEL

In Netflix's *DARK* (2017—2020), the character of Adam explains to a younger version of himself (Jonas Kahnwald) his motivations for acting, in the eyes of the disbelieving youth, in such nefarious and evil fashion:

We've declared war on Time. God is our antagonist. We are creating a new world: without Time, without God. How is that? In short, the God mankind has prayed to for thousands of years, the God that everything is bound with, this God exists as nothing other than Time itself. Not a thinking, acting entity; a physical principle with which you can no more negotiate than you could with your own fate. God is Time. And Time is not compassionate.

The instant we're born our lives start to trickle away, like the sand in this hourglass. Death is always inevitable. Our destiny is nothing but the connection of cause and effect. In light, in shadow. (ODAR, 2019)

Such a Homeric task can only disfigure one's morality. Thus Adam is willing to sacrifice everything, even things dearest to his own heart, in order to reach the respite of Timelessness. What he wants is to cease *being*. Adam has chosen *not to be* because he sees himself as a monstrosity, once his existence is the cause of so much pain and destruction in his world, for his birth is founded upon a Time loop, where the youngest son (Mikkel Nielsen) of his grandfather (Ulrich Nielsen) goes back in Time to eventually become Jonas's father (Michael Kahnwald).

Adam is a physically deformed Gothic monster whose character development is that of a Greek or Shakespearean tragedy; he is the dramatized exploration of Schopenhauer's maxim: "man can do what he wills but he cannot will what he wills". In other words, mankind has no control over its desires, no matter how frowned upon by society they might be — i.e. Humbert Humbert's obsession with his *nymphets* in Nabokov's *Lolita* (1955).

As a matter of fact, in his 1959 essay "On a Book Entitled Lolita", Nabokov writes about what first inspired him to write the novel, revealing that it was a newspaper story about "an ape in the Jardin des Plantes, who, after months of coaxing by a scientist, produced the first drawing ever charcoaled by an animal: the sketch showed the bars of the poor creature's cage". (1997, p. 311)

Such is the character of Adam, and such is all of us: caged creatures stuck in Time. But, as one character from BBC's iconic *Doctor Who* (1963—1989; 2005—) would put it, "Time Travel has always been possible in dreams" (METZSTEIN, 2013), and so we dream of Time Traveling non-linearly, and of being free from fate and destiny.

These dreams have already served fiction greatly, for example in Netflix's *The Haunting of Hill House* (2018), the character of Nellie proclaims that "our moments fall around us like rain, or snow, or confetti". (FLANAGAN, 2018) Combining this Einsteinian perspective of Time with the horror elements of Shirley Jackson's

influential novel, this adaptation utilizes the Time loop as a way to horrify the audience, revealing, in episode 5, that Nellie is stuck, forever haunting her past self. A similar device is used in Netflix's *The Haunting of Bly Manor* (2020). It seems, then, that in fiction, Time already functions as The Doctor once put it:

People assume that Time is a strict progression of cause to effect, but actually from a non-linear, non-subjective viewpoint, it's more like a big ball of wibbly-wobbly, Timey-wimey stuff.
(MACDONALD, 2007)

But with the Einsteinian ability to see the essence beyond the appearance of Time, paradoxes become apparent, and "all the paradoxes are Time loops. They all force us to think about causality. Can an *effect* precede its *cause*?" (GLEICK, 2016, p. 232) The answer, in fiction, is, of course, yes, because it's the very essence of the composition of fiction. As Poe wrote in "The Philosophy of Composition" (1846)

I prefer commencing with the consideration of an effect (...) Having chosen a novel, first, and secondly a vivid effect, I consider whether it can best be wrought by incident or tone — whether by ordinary incidents and peculiar tone, or the converse, or by peculiarity both of incident and tone — afterward looking about me (or rather within) for such combinations of event, or tone, as shall best aid me in the construction of the effect. (2009, p. 55)

In *DARK*, when Adam and Jonas are talking to each other, the latter expresses an inability to believe that he will ever want what his older self wants, whereas the former exclaims that he remembers feeling and saying the exact same thing. Their exchange is similar to a psychoanalytic session, where the same character, in different points of his life, has to come to terms with both his past and his future at the same Time in the present. Such a similarity is natural of this genre-mode, for

Time Travel is a genre-mode of psychological implication, a scenography in which selves meet themselves, kill their progenitors, and plumb the significance of their own histories for their present instantiations or avatars. Time Travel, in essence,

becomes what Lacan thought the psychoanalytic session was, a “realization of the [subject’s] history” in a present discourse, or even “the restitution of the subject’s wholeness (...) in the guise of a restoration of the past”. (WITTENBERG, 2013, p. 64)

Thus everything that Jonas feels, Adam has already felt; and everything that Adam is saying, he has already heard himself say before, and is saying only because he heard a previous Adam say it when he himself was in Jonas’s shoes. There is no origin to the endless cycle of Jonas’s self-realization and Adam’s self-actualization. This is commonly known as *the bootstrap paradox* — named so after Robert A. Heinlein’s 1941 short story “By His Bootstraps”. But, instead of beginning our discussion with this specific type of *paradox story*, we will start off by quickly discussing another type of paradox, which is also explored in *DARK*, *the predestination paradox*, for this type of paradox predates Time Travel fiction itself.

Jonas’s negative feelings toward Adam are still alive by the end of their session — and are further deepened as the narrative moves to its climax —, and so he tries to avoid, at all costs, becoming Adam. His future self functions similarly to the monstrous painting of Dorian Gray in Oscar Wilde’s 1890 novel. Jonas wants to change his future, he wants to kill the future where he becomes Adam, but he might just end up killing himself instead and becoming the monster he doesn’t want to be; just like Dorian ended up killing himself instead of his horrid picture, with the result that the picture’s deformities came into being in Dorian’s own beautiful countenance, turning him into the ugly monster he so feared to be. Ergo, trying to change what’s destined to happen helps make it happen — much like what happens to Oedipus, who commits patricide and incest, becoming father to his own siblings and husband to his mother. In other words, Oedipus becomes a Gothic monster because he transgresses society’s moral territories when it comes to familial bonds and relationships.

The predestination paradox is also explored in James Cameron’s 1984 film *The Terminator*, where

a cyborg assassin (...) travels back in Time to kill a woman before she can give birth to the man who is destined to lead a

future resistance movement; the cyborg's failure leaves detritus that makes its own creation possible (...). The idea of the self-fulfilling prophecy is ancient, though the term is new, coined by the sociologist Robert Merton in 1948 to describe an all-too-real phenomenon: "a *false* definition of the situation evoking a new behavior which makes the originally false conception come true". (For example, a warning of gasoline shortage causes panic buying that leads to gasoline shortages.) People have always wondered whether they can escape destiny. Only now, in the era of Time Travel, we ask whether we can change the past. (GLEICK, 2016, p 231-232)

To put it in another way, we accept that the past influences the future, but we now wonder if the future can also influence the past. This is where we return to the aforementioned *bootstrap paradox* (also referred to as *the ontological paradox*, or simply as a *causal loop*). As The Doctor explains it,

So there's this man. He has a Time machine. Up and down history he goes, zip zip zip, getting into scrapes. Another thing he has is a passion for the works of Ludwig van Beethoven. And one day he thinks, what's the point of having a Time machine if you don't get to meet your heroes? So off he goes to eighteenth century Germany. But he can't find Beethoven anywhere. No one's heard of him, even his family don't know who the Time Traveler's talking about. Beethoven literally doesn't exist. (...) This is called *the bootstrap paradox* (...) The Time Traveler panics, he can't bear the thought of a world without the music of Beethoven! Luckily he'd brought all his Beethoven sheet music for Ludwig to sign. So *he* copies out all the symphonies and concertos and gets them all published. He *becomes* Beethoven. And history continues with barely a feather ruffled. But my question is this: who put those notes and phrases together? Who *really* composed Beethoven's Fifth? (O'HARA, 2015)

Perhaps the benchmark story that plays with *the bootstrap paradox* is Robert A. Heinlein's "All You Zombies" (1959) which "remained unrivaled of its type until 1973, when David Gerrold's *The Man Who Folded Himself* appeared — but Gerrold needed an entire novel to outdo the Heinlein story". (D'AMMASSA, 2005, p. 5-6)

Either way, once the setting is established by Heinlein, the story unfolds quickly and cleverly, leading, eventually, to the realization that the protagonist is both his own mother and father. In essence, the protagonist is a self-sufficient character who can be seen as the personification of Time itself and, therefore, of God. This is most evident in the climax of the story, where the protagonist exclaims, “*I know where I came from — but where did all you zombies come from?*” (2013, p. 16)

The narrative, then, explores the hermaphroditic face of God, which is to say that it illuminates the Gothic facet of divinity, for what is female cannot also be male. And in this way one can argue that “All You Zombies” is a nihilistic examination of the Dark and monstrous side of a clueless deity, who is judged by the cynical eyes of a race whose ideal of beauty lies in purity, and ugliness in the hybrid child of Hermes and Aphrodite. In the Spierig brothers’ 2015 film adaptation, *Predestination*, this theme of bad faith judgment and prejudice is given more of a spotlight; with the script making sure to show us how alienated the protagonist is from other people, and how despised *they* are.

Moving on to Chris Marker’s *La Jetée* (1962), which served as the basis for Terry Gilliam’s 1995 film *Twelve Monkeys*, the protagonist is a nameless man haunted by the memory of a woman he saw as a child. She was standing at the end of a pier, watching, horror-struck, the falling shape of a man, who ends up dead. Shortly afterwards, World War III starts, and a nuclear holocaust destroys the world. Obsessed with the image of this woman, the protagonist becomes the perfect candidate for Time Travel.

The message here is that Time Travel is for the imaginative: an idea that recurs in literature, for example in Jack Finney’s *Time and Again* (1970). Time Travel begins in the mind’s eye. Here, in *La Jetée*, it’s a matter not just of transportation but of survival. *The human mind balked. To wake up in another Time meant to be born a second Time, as an adult. The shock would be too much.* (GLEICK, 2016, p. 242)

Of course, the nameless protagonist is revealed to be the man whose death he witnessed as a child in the beginning of the story. And from the perspective of

the woman on the pier, he is a man of mystery, who vanishes periodically. “*She calls him her Ghost*. It occurs to him that in his world, his Time, she is already dead”. (GLEICK, 2016, p. 243) So, in this way, she is his Ghost just as much as he is hers.

The bootstrap paradox is also responsible for Narcissus-type meetings, where characters meet themselves in masturbatory ways, as is shown in Audrey Niffenegger’s 2003 novel *The Time Traveler’s Wife*:

I’m in my bedroom with my self. He’s here from next March. We are doing what we often do when we have a little privacy, when it’s cold out, when both of us are past puberty and haven’t quite gotten around to actual girls yet. I think most people would do this, if they had the sort of opportunities I have. I mean, I’m not gay or anything. (NIFFENEGGER, 2013, p. 55)

Thus, Time Travel is, here, a question about the *narrative* present: “what happens when you encounter ‘another’ you — and who then (or which) is ‘yourself’”? (WITTENBERG, 2013, p. 70). Therefore, *the bootstrap paradox* explores fractured identities, meaning that it roots selfhood in the disparate, hybrid quicksand of Post-Modernity — the self made up of other selves stitched together, like the pastiche of corpses that composes Frankenstein’s monster.

The last paradox we’ll be discussing here is the so-called *grandfather paradox*, which is the one where, in a nutshell, a Time Traveler goes back to the past and kills his grandfather before the latter has the chance to become a father in the first place. And if the Time Traveler’s father never existed, then how can the son of this man come to exist at all; and how can someone who never existed kill anyone?

The most interesting topics to explore, here, are those related to branching Timelines — multiple universes, parallel worlds, alternate histories; all of which have one thing in common: the exploration of the question *What If?* And as such, free will is implicit in these types of stories. Humanity, thus, is not shackled by fate or destiny. Suppose, then, as Robert Frost proposed, that “two roads diverged in a yellow wood”, but this Time you could travel both roads and be one Traveler. You could take the road less traveled by, *and* the one more traveled by; you would just have to do it in different branches of Time. In Physics, this is called Quantum

Entanglement, which is yet another element explored in Netflix's brilliantly scripted series *DARK* — in our opinion, the best, and most intricate and complex piece of media that works with Time Travel.

As David Lewis explains it,

Tim travels not only in Time but also from one branch [of Time] to another. In one branch Tim is absent from the events of 1921; Grandfather lives; Tim is born, grows up, and vanishes in his Time machine. The other branch diverges from the first when Tim turns up in 1920; there Tim kills Grandfather and Grandfather leaves no descendants and no fortune; the events of the two branches differ more and more from that Time on. (...) it is a story in which Grandfather both is and isn't killed in 1921 (in the different branches); and it is a story in which Tim, by killing Grandfather, succeeds in preventing his own birth (in one of the branches). But it is not a story in which Tim's killing of Grandfather both does occur and doesn't: it simply does, though it is located in one branch and not the other. And it is not a story in which Tim changes the past. 1921 and later years contain the events of both branches, coexisting somehow without interaction. It remains true at all the personal Times of Tim's life, even after the killing, that Grandfather lives in one branch and dies in the other". (1976, p. 151-152)

This type of paradox is perhaps the oddest of them all, for it can *offer* us with the slightest of opportunities to free us from the responsibility of having to make choices and risk making the wrong ones, but it also threatens us with the possibility of making bad situations even worse in our attempts to fix past mistakes. For example, what if in the Time Traveler's mission to kill baby Hitler, he instead makes sure that Hitler grows up to be the tyrant we know him to have been; or what if toying with Time leads to Hitler winning World War II, as seen in Philip K Dick's *The Man in the High Castle* (1962)? As the proverb says, "with great power comes great responsibility".

The grandfather paradox, therefore, does not really free us from responsibility; it instead creates even more paths to lead us to perdition and

downfall. Ergo, the probability of human tragedy — of negative aesthetics, of dystopias — is infinitely more likely than the contrary.

ENDGAME

What we have deemed the paradoxes of Time Travel and defined as Time Oddities instead of impossibilities, are the result of the influence of post-Einsteinian Physics on literature, most specifically in Science Fiction. And what it enables in fiction is a “metaliterature of Oedipus and Narcissus, a literature about encountering (or reencountering) oneself, about meeting (or remeeting) one’s progenitors, about negotiating (or renegotiating) one’s personal and historical origins”; (WITTENBERG, 2013, p. 64) and what it implies about identity is that

The self is the narrative of its own Time Travel, a fantasmatic invention of a mechanism by which it completes an excursion into its own past, and therefore the possibility — literal in a Time Travel story, presumably fantasmatic in real life — of a consummate viewpoint upon its full series of cross-sections. (WITTENBERG, 2013, p. 76-77)

Time Travel is not, however, exclusive to Science Fiction. For instance, in J. K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (1999), Time Travel is a part of the narrative, even though the novel is categorized simply as Fantasy. The same can be said for one of the earliest examples of Time Travel fiction ever written: Charles Dickens’s “A Christmas Carol” (1843), which presents Time Travel through the influence of Ghosts.

With that said, it is not of our interest to discuss the limits of genres and subgenres, because the very nature of our discussion is hybrid. Our intention here is only to problematize neat, Structuralist categorizations and to trespass the counter-intuitive potency of the relationship between Gothic and Science Fiction. It is of our belief that the mainstream does not connect Gothic and Science Fiction, at first, because of Science Fiction’s exploration of positive aesthetics. The most

popular aspect of Science Fiction is perhaps the category of the Space Opera — *Star Wars*, *Star Trek*, etc. This type of fiction is inherently optimistic and positive, for it shows the human race inhabiting the universe with other alien species; meaning that mankind got over its racial civil wars, its xenophobia, and even survived global warming and climate change — as well as a myriad of other hopeful developments in human history.

In contrast, Science Fiction explores pessimism and nihilism in Dystopias — works like George Orwell's *1984* (1949), Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932); novels which are seldom thought of as Science Fiction, for they lack the most ridiculed elements of Space Operas. In fact, Dystopian fiction is treated with the seriousness of name-brand Realistic literature *because* it is not like Space Operas, which, to the mainstream, is all that Science Fiction consists of. Thus, the correlation between Gothic and Science Fiction is also not considered at first glance because the negative aesthetics of the Gothic and the positive aesthetics connected with Science Fiction seem incompatible to many thinkers.

However, the writing of far-future Utopian fiction was in vogue when H. G. Wells decided to explain how a contemporary person could bridge the gap of Time and get to Utopia. Such a choice helped his 1895 novel *The Time Machine* to succeed, for the narrative voice was utterly contemporary and accessible to the readers of the Time. We would argue that *The Time Machine* does not present the reader with a Utopian future, but with a highly sinister, cannibalistic version of things to come, ending with an apocalyptical image of a *Dying Earth*. Max Nordau's *Degeneration* (1892—1893), a forefather to fascist thought, had an influence over Wells's text, once the novel presents humanity as having gone through a process of degeneration: mankind going backwards in the evolutionary scale. In this way, we think that H. G. Wells wrote one of the earliest examples of Dystopian (or Anti-Utopian) fiction by subverting the expectations of the Utopia. (Much like George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* (1996—) subverted the expectations of Modern Fantasy set by J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (1954—1955), and thus is deemed, by some, as Anti-Fantasy.)

We would also add that Time Travel, and Science Fiction, are connected with the Gothic, once H. G. Wells utilized them to do such subversion (from Utopia to Dystopia — from Light to Darkness). But to be more expansive: one can imagine the future either hopefully, or hopelessly.

As Adam Roberts puts it,

Gothic Science Fiction is in one sense about the way the dereliction of the past always inflects the shiny new spaces of the present and the future. In Aeschylus's *Agamemnon*, Cassandra was gifted with prophecy by her rapist, Apollo; and at the same Time cursed with the fact that nobody would believe her prophecies. The implication in the play is that people don't believe her prophecies because they don't *understand* them: at the level, that is to say, of simple semantics. I wonder about an alternate spin on this famous myth — that everyone knows Cassandra has been gifted by a God with the power to predict the future; that everybody comprehends her prophecies perfectly well, but that *nevertheless* they do not believe her. They do so not out of any kind of stubbornness of the human spirit, so much as the radical impossibility of the future manifesting itself in the present. Or to put it a little more precisely — what Cassandra prophesies — is, in a word, death; and death is something that haunts us from the past rather than the future. The eerie spaces of Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* (1765), Gothic's ur-text, are the repressed memories of past familial trauma and murder. What gives Gothic Science Fiction its peculiar, counter-intuitive potency is precisely the way it parses this eerie, spectral pastness as the future. (ROBERTS, 2014, p. xii)

The limits between Gothic and Science Fiction are porous and confusing, just like fiction itself: we, for example, consider Virginia Woolf's *Orlando: A Biography* (1928) a Time Travel novel, whilst others do not. Some say the plays of Samuel Beckett have nothing to do with Science Fiction, whilst we would argue that both *Waiting for Godot* (1953) and *Endgame* (1957) are set in post nuclear holocaust Dystopias. MARVEL's *Avengers: Endgame* (2019) is officially categorized as a Science Fiction film, even though there are elements of Norse Mythology in

its universe, so shouldn't it be considered Fantasy? Perhaps Arthur C. Clarke's maxim that "any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic" is true. So maybe the Norse Gods are simply technologically more sophisticated than Iron Man. This is to say that paradoxes can exist; they are not impossibilities, but oddities that make fiction much more interesting and intriguing due to their inherent Gothic uncanniness.

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