

Characterization in science fiction assignment

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Characterization in Science Fiction Kirill Kachinsky 03/30/2010 Introduction

By analyzing Isaac Asimov's, "The Caves of Steel" as a work of the Science Fiction genre and its comparison to similar works in the genre as well as supporting texts, it will be clear to see how characterization amongst the five literary elements merely serves as a secondary discussion point within the work, as its non involvement proves valuable for the other literary element development.

Caves of Steel character analysis "Caves of Steel" by Isaac Asimov proves to show throughout, that the lack of character detail and development allows for other literary elements such as setting and narration to benefit and create more interest for the avid Science Fiction reader. Characters such as Robot Daneel, Commissioner Enderby and Elijah Baley make it possible for the narrator to concentrate on the setting of the story, providing the readers with a grand visual of a futuristic city and an acute understanding of the development of social interaction in a foreseeable future.

Flat characters in Science Fiction as vehicles for literary element development As for the fear of manufacturing the uncontrollable that was mentioned in the earlier section, primitive technology and its exploration is seen in the story, "The Lost Machine" by John Wyndham. Even though "The Lost Machine" is social science fiction and focusing on the human aspect more rather than the technical aspect of its genre predecessors, none the less the flat characterization of human characters is present.

The story centers on a robot exploring Earth and realizing that our technology is primitive because we're afraid of anything that's superior to

us; humans are portrayed as archaic beasts compared even to the robot as one human tries to sell the robot to another human, “ I’m takin’ it to a place I know of??? it ought to be worth a bit. ” Once again the simplicity of a greedy human becomes a vehicle for the robot to further describe and interpret the people of Earth and its surroundings in its own point of view, or rather once again, making narration a key literary element in the story.

The benefit and/or drawback of flat characterization The benefits of flat characterization are obvious. There is much more room for development of literary elements that are key to the genre of Science Fiction. But of course to every advantage there is a disadvantage, such mentioned earlier and put forth by Clyde F. Beck; a simple argument in which characterization should be more developed to engage the reader.

In “ A Conversation with Isaac Asimov,” Asimov simply states it’s a trade off in Science Fiction of one for the other, since the setting is so descriptive, in and of itself it is a character, “ I meant also that spending time on background takes time away from your characters. You don’t have characterization as it’s usually understood by most people. If you consider your background society as a character, that society has all kinds of “ characterization. Asimov’s statement holds true upon almost any Science Fiction novel, whether discovering or destroying worlds, the key literary elements do not include characterization, that element would most likely best well in a drama. Conclusion Caves of Steel like many Science Fiction works of literature contain certain prominent literary elements such as setting, style and narration.

Although the literary element of characterization is not as prominent as the others, its absence is none the less important to any work of Science Fiction as its emptiness becomes the vehicle for the development of a “ good” work of Science Fiction; a work full of descriptive setting, a setting that almost takes place of a fully developed character. Works Cited Asimov, Isaac. *The Caves of Steel*. New York: Bantam, 1991. Print. Ingersoll, Earl G. Isaac Asimov, Gregory Fitz Gerald, Jack Wolf, Joshua Duberman, and Robert Philmus. “ A Conversation with Isaac Asimov. ” *Science Fiction Studies* 14. 1 (1987): 68-77. Print. Smith, E. E. *The Skylark of Space*. Lincoln, Neb. : University of Nebraska, 2001. Print. Westfahl, Gary. “ The Popular Tradition of Science Fiction Criticism. ” *Science Fiction Studies* 26. 2 (1999): 187-212. Web. Wyndham, John, and Angus Wells. *The Best of John Wyndham: 1932-1949*. London: Sphere, 1973. Print.