



# Role of Science Fiction in Empowering Present and Future

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## Abstract

It is clear that literature is not made merely for the entertainment purpose but it also inspires the people to make their life more happy and comfortable. Literature is very important for the society in various ways. But here in this paper I have focused on the impact of literature on technology. Literature helps the scientist and technologists by providing them new innovative ideas. Science fiction inspires many scientist for their inventions. H. G. Wells, Edward Bellamy, Ray Bradbury, Jules Verne, Aldous Huxley, George Orwell, Arthur C. Clarke, John Brunner, Mary Shelley, E. M. Forster, Hugo Gernsback and Robert Heinlin were such a science fiction writers who provides many innovative ideas to the scientist through their fiction which became reality in the current time. And those innovations are now the integral part of everyone's life. Thus, literature, and science fiction particularly provides an idea and inspiration to scientist to work in proper direction and make the human life more comfortable through their inventions.

**Keywords:** *Science fiction, technology, entertainment, empowering*

## Full Text

According to Plato's theory of mimesis (imitation) the arts deal with illusion and they are imitation of an imitation. Thus, they are twice removed from reality. As a moralist, Plato disapproves of poetry because it is immoral, as a philosopher he disapproves of it because it is based in falsehood. He is of the view that philosophy is better than poetry because philosopher deals with idea / truth, whereas poet deals with what appears to him / illusion. He believed that truth of philosophy was more important than the pleasure of poetry. He argued that most of it should be banned from the society that he described in the Republic. Aristotle replied to the charges made by his Guru Plato against Poetry in particular and art in general. Plato says that art being the imitation of the actual is removed from truth. It only gives the likeness of a thing in concrete, and the likeness is always less than real. But Plato fails to understand that art also give something more which is absent in the actual. The artist does not simply reflect the real in the manner of a mirror. Art is not slavish imitation of reality. Literature is not the photographic reproduction of life in all its totality. It is the representation of selected events and characters necessary in a coherent action for the realization of artist's purpose. He even exalts, idealizes and imaginatively recreates a world which has its own meaning and beauty.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century we come in touch with many new innovative technologies which were unbelievable to imagine before few years for ordinary people. But our visionary science fiction writers were the exceptions from it. What they have imagined many years before is now reality. The concepts of debit card, tanks, video chat, moon landing, surveillance state, Geostationary Satellite Communications(GSC), electric cars, ipad, virtual reality games, atomic bomb, earbud headphones, automatic door, escalator, submarine, radar, etc. were already depicted in science fiction many years before their inventions. So we can say that it is this fiction which directly or indirectly inspires the scientist and innovators to invent such a machines.

H.G. Wells was one of the most prophetic minds of the 20th century, writing tale after tale that spun fantasy from the day's science. In 1898, HG Wells created the Heat-Ray gun to be used by Martians in his novel *The War of the Worlds*. In the 21st century, the US army fulfilled this prophecy by creating the Active Denial System – a non-lethal microwave gun which penetrates the outer layer of the skin and is primarily used to disperse crowds.

In his 1903 story *The Land Ironclads*, published in the Strand Magazine, he took the then-current technology of metal-hulled warships and put them on land, creating war machines that are the precursors to the modern tank.

The war correspondent came within bawling range. 'What the deuce was it? Shooting our men down!'

'Black,' said the artist, 'and like a fort. Not two hundred yards from the first trench.' He sought for comparisons in his mind. 'Something between a big blockhouse and a giant's dish-cover,' he said.

'And they were running!' said the war correspondent.

'You'd run if a thing like that, with a search-light to help it, turned up like a prowling nightmare in the middle of the night.'...

...In that flickering pallor it had the effect of a large and clumsy black insect, an insect the size of an iron-clad cruiser, crawling obliquely to the first line of trenches and firing shots out of portholes in its side. And on its carcass the bullets must have been battering with more than the passionate violence of hail on a roof of tin. (Wells, 160)

The first tanks were deployed on the battlefield in 1916 during the battle of the Somme.

Automatic doors were invented by *Dee Horton and Lew Hewitt* in 1960. But H. G. Wells has described automatic doors in his novel *When the Sleeper Wakes* in 1899, long before its inventions. In his novel he described automatic door like

The two men addressed turned obediently, after one reluctant glance at Graham, and instead of going through the archway as he expected, walked straight to the dead wall of the apartment opposite the archway. And then came a strange thing; a long strip of this apparently solid wall rolled up with a snap, hung over the two retreating men and fell again, and immediately Graham was alone with the new comer and the purple-robed man with the flaxen beard. (Wells, *Three Prophetic Science Fiction Novels* of H.G. Wells. 22)

Writer Edward Bellamy's novel *Looking Backward (1888)* was remembered for presenting the idea of "universal credit." People of his future utopia carry a card which allows them to spend "credit" from a central bank on goods and services without paper money changing hands. Now we are using the credit and debit cards with decentralized banks and electronic balances making it possible to access your funds from just about anywhere on Earth. Actually this concept is already visualized in 1888 and now modern technology make it practical.

Ray Bradbury published his dystopian classic *Fahrenheit 451* in 1953 at that time portable audio was a reality. But headphones were massive, ungainly over-the-ear contraptions that weighed a ton. That's why he described...

And in her ears the little Seashells, the thimble radios tamped tight, and an electronic ocean of sound, of music and talk and music and talk coming in, coming in on the shore of her unsleeping mind. (Bradbury, -42)

He's precisely describing the earbud headphone, which didn't come into serious popular use until 2000.

When George Orwell wrote *1984* in 1949, the concept of a dystopian state monitored by an interconnected web of security cameras seemed absurd. Fast forward to the 21st century and there are over 32 closed circuit television cameras within 200 yards of the house Orwell wrote his book.

The telescreen received and transmitted simultaneously. Any sound that Winston made, above the level of a very low whisper, would be picked up by it; moreover, so long as he remained within the field of vision which the metal plate commanded, he could be seen as well as heard. There was of course no way of knowing whether you were being watched at any given moment. (Theorwellreader.com, 2016)

Video surveillance is an inescapable part of public life, with cameras in both public and private spaces. Add in GPS tracking of individuals and NSA surveillance without a warrant and all we're missing is a Big Brother to make the world that Orwell created real.

In 1911 Hugo Gernsback wrote *Ralph 124C 41+* in which he described one gadget as 'telephot' which works like a modern smartphones. He describes his telephot like

Stepping to the Telephot on the side of the wall, he pressed a group of buttons and in a few minutes the faceplate of the Telephot became luminous, revealing the face of a clean-shaven man about thirty, a pleasant but serious face.

As soon as he recognized the face of Ralph in his own Telephot, he smiled and said, "Hello, Ralph." "Hello, Edward. I wanted to ask you if you could come over to the laboratory tomorrow morning. I have something unusually interesting to show you. Look!"

He stepped to one side of his instrument so that his friend could see the apparatus on the table about ten feet from the Telephot faceplate. (Gernsback, 9)

Now this concept has become reality. In this age video chat and video call are used by everyone. What Hugo Gernsback had imagined in 1911 about the video calling it became reality in 2003 when skype started this service. In the same novel Hugo Gernsback has also predict precisely about the Radar. He describes Radar in this novel like

A pulsating polarized ether wave, if directed on a metal object can be reflected in the same manner as a light ray is reflected from a bright surface... By manipulating the entire apparatus like a searchlight, waves would be sent over a large area. Sooner or later these waves would strike a space flyer. A small part of these waves would strike the metal body of the flyer, and these rays would be reflected back to the sending apparatus. Here they would fall on the Actinoscope, which records only the reflected waves, not direct ones.

...From the intensity and elapsed time of the reflected impulses, the distance between the earth and the flyer can then be accurately estimated. (Gernsback, 207)

Guglielmo Marconi didn't create a working device that could detect remote objects by signals until 1933 but Hugo has professed it many years before its invention.

Robert Heinlin's short story *The Roads Must Roll* (1940) depicts the risk of a transportation strike in a society based on similar-speed sidewalks. In this story Heinlin described escalator like

They glided down an electric staircase, and debouched on the walkway which bordered the north-bound five-mile-an-hour strip. "Have you ever ridden a conveyor strip before?" Gaines inquired. "It's quite simple. Just remember to face against the motion of the strip as you get on." (Silverberg 57)

Jules Verne was one of the most prolific and inventive sci-fi writers of the 1800s. One of his most famous works, *From the Earth to the Moon*, predicted many aspects of the 1969 manned lunar landing of Apollo 11. Verne's astronauts were launched from a Florida site in an aluminum capsule. He even did remarkably accurate calculations as to the amount of force that would be needed to propel the rocket out of Earth's atmosphere. Of course, his method was an enormous cannon buried in the ground, but you can't have everything.

In the early part of the 20th century, American science fiction tended to present a positive image of a future in which scientific progress had made the world a better place. By mid-century, after several horrific wars and the invention of the atomic bomb, the mood of science fiction had changed. The stories grew dark, and science was no longer necessarily the hero. Literature and technology are correlated in such a way that they can transform the society in utopian world if it is used positively.

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