



THE CHANGING FACE OF MAN AND THE EVOLUTION
OF THE MACHINE:
A STUDY OF FRANKENSTEIN, EREWON, WE AND THE CYBERIAD

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SUMMARY

Literature that adopts technology as its theme has this century earned the title 'science fiction', and there is little doubt that it taps a vital concern of popular interest. Yet while technology has a formative influence on twentieth-century culture, it remains isolated in many ways from the tradition of art, which has typically regarded both the methodology and the subject of science as irreconcilable with its own aims.

A closer examination, however, reveals that since the first stirrings of the industrial revolution there have been literary forays into the no-man's land between literature and science, art and technology. These works reveal much of the specific period and level of technology and document the changing outline of human society. This thesis traces the reciprocal relationship between man and his technological environment.

The principles of science fiction criticism are relevant to this kind of study, although its express purpose is not to classify the works under observation as such. The thesis aims rather at establishing a continuity between the different writers. Chapter one traces the changing face of man in the Doppelgänger motif in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein. Chapter two examines the emergence of the machine as a powerful force that interacts with man's destiny, as described by Samuel Butler in Erewhon. In chapter three the machine-city of Eugene Zamyatin's We represents the dystopian complement of the utopian model of the perfection of society through technology. The ideal science of the early modern utopias has been

transformed into the dystopian nightmare. Chapter four concentrates on the robot as a symbiosis of computer intelligence and human creativity. The theme of evolution is picked up from chapter two to suggest that man is experiencing a period of rapid change analogous to the evolutionary process. Stanislaw Lem is taken as an example of a science fiction writer who achieves a serious and skilled discussion of literary and scientific enquiry. The texts referred to are The Cyberiad, The Star Diaries and A Perfect Vacuum.

The conclusion postulates that both science and art share a deep fund of creativity and traces the progression in the works discussed of the machine which has become an integral part of twentieth-century man's environment.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any degree or diploma in any university, and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, no material previously published or written by any other person, except that to which due reference has been made in the text.

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