

Legendary Mythical Creatures And Their Influence In Post-Modern Science Fiction

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Abstract

*This paper discusses the role of mythical animals in postmodern science fiction, but especially in how they are reframed in the futuristic contexts. Creatures that have their historical background in mythology and folklore—dragons, unicorns, and centaurs, for example—are recast in postmodern science fiction as genetically modified beings, artificial intelligence, or hybrid organisms combining the supernatural with the technical. These mythological animals not only represent the fantastical elements but also serve as potent metaphors for contemporary issues of identity, transhumanism and the moral limitations of scientific progress. This analysis reveals how these reimagined creatures navigate difficult philosophical, ethical and moral conundrums, thus echoing contemporary society's aspirations and fears, by discussing movies such as *The Matrix* and *The Terminator*. From folk tales of old to the high tech, these mythical beings open an avenue to view how human beings are relating with technology, the environment, and how mankind will be in the future. Lastly, the research puts into perspective how science fiction subverts the traditional tales regarding reality, identity and the fate of human existence by using the mythological.*

Keywords: *Legendary mythical creatures, postmodern science fiction, human ambition, folklore, hybrid fantasy, scholars of antiquity, natural history.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Legendary mythical creatures have always played an important role in human storytelling. These are creatures beyond any cultural barrier, yet representing the core of the human experience: strength, mystery, the unknown and the paranormal. For thousands of years, people have been fascinated by mythological creatures-whether they were dragons of European mythology or trickster figures of African folklore. These legends have been passed down through generations and are still relevant in shaping the narratives of culture today. They were developed from oral traditions, old mythologies and religious writings.

These beings have inspired more than just mythology and religious cults, though their origins date back to the pre-scientific age. With the emergence of modernity and postmodernity, especially in the science fiction postmodern genre, these beings have received new life and meaning. Since the genre encourages self-referential storytelling, fractured tales, and the intermingling of genres, the historical figures that these beings represent have been recreated and rewritten. In postmodern science fiction, mythical creatures no longer need to be fantasized or mythologized; rather, they need to be reinterpreted, imagined anew, and incorporated into the new futures that so often blur the lines between scientific and supernatural, natural and the artificial. The humanoid robot, the avian human and their automation into the distant future have given a definition to cyborgs. Their endearing

dynamics have many times opened them to scientific criticism too like from the Audobon society.

In postmodern science fiction, which expresses the interest in deconstructing traditional genres and themes, pseudo-scientific conspiracy theories become part of the plot and come forth in new complex forms with nesting spaces as well as crevices. Such beings may have the capability of taking over the world through their lethal weapon, an AI generated genetically modified organism, or may also be a symbolic representation of human hopes, concerns, and worries concerning this fast-changing world. They provide a stage for in-depth research into complex philosophical issues such as the mystery of identity, the ethical concerns that proceed along with scientific development, the limits of human knowledge and power, and the fusion of science and ancient mythological traditions.

1.1. The Blurring of Boundaries Between Fantasy and Science Fiction

The futuristic movies established as trailblazers have been seen to dissolve what had been the boundary between science fiction and fantasy – while at the same time exploring possible future societies using the traditional focus of scientific imagination on technological innovation shaped with ethical considerations. Phantasy, the archaic spelling of the term, on the other hand, has relied primarily on oral traditions, mythology, sorcery, and the supernatural to outline areas outside scientific discourse of the manga, graphic novels, animations etc. However, it is challenged by the sense of otherness that cohabits in the ludicrous and also in the technology of the speculative fiction—a mostly cobots occurrence. Such fusions of the improbable obfuscate between what seems fanciful and anime conventions and cater to one or more subcultures within the main subcultures like the doujinshi or the cosplay or the large internet subculture, so scientifically possible. These urban fantasies allow the liminal space, characterised by the intrusion of the supernatural elements into the realistic framework of a story, accompanied by uncertainty about their existence— creating the emergence of the new story. It allows the creation of hybrid worlds: worlds that are both technologically sophisticated and firmly anchored in old myths and folklore (fantastique), a simple vessel for wish fulfillment that transcends human reality in worlds presented as superior to our own.

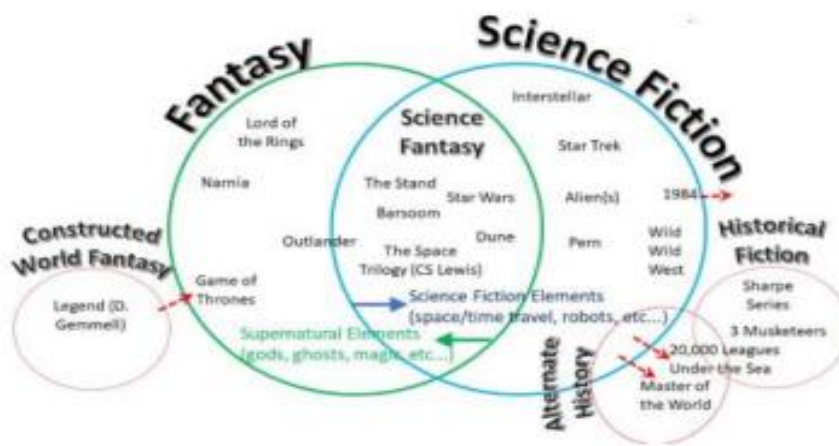


Figure 1: Fantasy and Science Fiction.

Whether it be the godlike creatures made digitally or an organism produced by genetic engineers, the mythological figure in postmodern science fiction demands that the reader or viewer doubt the boundaries between reason and science. When the fantastical is reframed within future-oriented, science-obsessed cultures, "reality" or "possibility" can hardly be established. In fact, postmodern science fiction is seen here in conjunction with the structuralist theory of the more complex social and cultural order, such as the blending of 'strange' and 'apparently new.' As human cultures become more and more dependent on technology to solve issues previously considered supernatural, science, technology, and mythology are becoming increasingly interesting interconnections. Freud's theory of the unconscious may be made integral to the understanding of the fantastic's connection to the human psyche.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Sanjukta Chakraborty (2022) demonstrated the archetypes as either re-enacted or rationalized. She emphasized that specific myths grew out of a particular cultural background. Science fiction was initially inspired by mythology, which implies that the imagination transforms into the actual world. Myths served as epiphanies of the basic secrets of life at the dawn of human existence. Societies developed complicated systems of supernatural beings, each with peculiar powers and legends of their habits, plus myths of creation and resurrection when there was no scientific knowledge of any kind. It is in its efforts to convey a thrilling and life-improving understanding of the wonder of the cosmos and existence that it derives its legitimacy. The next science fiction was on a celestial body and celestial body travel, and the first was unmistakably utopian. Thus, the genre developed from the expanding principles that characterize science, as the spirit of science consists of initiative and inventiveness.

Alexandra Balasa (2023) explored how liminal bodies operate at the individual and societal level in speculative fiction to investigate relationships between myth, magic, religion, and science without creating any temporal precedence that favours legitimizing the institution of contemporary science over magic. Through its complex representation of how hybrid bodies are both hated as "Other" and admired as liminal in a way that makes them both dangerous and necessary for the progress of society and individuals, science fiction simultaneously approaches the concepts of myth, magic, religion, and science. The urge to use magic and/or science to make sense and contain bodies that live in several literal or figurative categorical designations will inevitably lead to chaos, as demonstrated by the analysis of science fiction literature regarding the destructive and generative capabilities of liminality.

S H Binney (2018) studied the 'fantastic-marvellous' or 'the fantastic- uncanny' through different folkloric intertexts. The intrusion of the supernatural elements or the marvelous to the fantastic in the French literature theorist, Tzvetan Todorov's work and from the fairy tale toward folklore have figured critical traditions of each country leading to controversies by Stanislaw Lem. Recent fictions have been playing with a broader spread of traditional story forms rather than the fairy tales popularized by the Grimms and Disney. For this, I call them folklore-inflected fictions. Formally speaking, this shift is indicative of the move into the fantastic, for which I will use two recent books: *The Snow Child* (2012) by Eowyn Ivey and *A Summer of Drowning* (2011) by John Burnside. While the weird is constructed differently in these texts, Todorovian hesitation is maintained through a star configuration of landscape, folklore, dreams, and hallucinations. This paper explores how fictions with

elements of folklore feature into the greater movement of a reconsideration of realism that has been sweeping through current fiction and criticism, of which their application of the fantastic forms a part.

G Panteli (2016) based on film adaptations of Pinocchio, it shows that the story of the intelligent robot/cyborg who desires to be human is the most contemporary manifestation of the Pinocchio myth. This study illustrates how all case studies are connected to Carlo Collodi's novel through the confrontation scene, a specific textual passage that involves the heart of the Pinocchio myth, as Pinocchio is confronted by both the Blue Fairy and his corporeality. This develops from the traditional in cyborg studies in the genre Blade Runner to Spielberg's A.I. Artificial Intelligence where it connects the robot with Pinocchio directly through Battlestar Galactica that is the least technophobic and most transhumanist among all. In Chapter 2, two metafictional novels that challenge every single aspect of the Pinocchio myth will be investigated: Robert Lowell Coover's 'carnavalesque re-emersion,' *Pinocchio in Venice* and Jerome Charyn's *Pinocchio's Nose* or as they called him the Nose monster. In a world where the two main characters each undergo the transformation of body from flesh to wood, post humanity marks the inversion of the original tale. This essay emphasizes the role writing and the authoring play in each of the books as well as in the story of how the Blue Fairy gave Pinocchio the longing for humanity. Chapter 3 reviews interpretations of Pinocchio retellings, futurology and posthumanism together.

Though for a brief spell I have digressed and dealt with human versions of the humanoids but our mythical beings, the Caladrius, the Chamrosh, Werewolves, Kraken and Mermaid and many other fictional hybrid beings harness both symbolic and literal spiritual value, as dreamt up by cultures from all over the world. The water spirits and their tales are found all over the world—beings with magical powers, benevolent and peaceful; and often granting protection. An immediate and late adaptation of this concept mythologically is the apelike creature, said to live in the Himalayan heights—Yeti. The Nepalese Sherpas tell cautionary stories of Yeti, who are mysterious and also unfriendly to humans. The humanoids like the Ra.One and G.One who get into the mainframe of our real world through new technology and Jenny's computer, in film Ra.One are maybe an adaptation of the ancient traditional circles and its existence through legendary creatures. It is so believed that these mythical creatures had been described in historical accounts long before history emerged as a branch of science. The mythical beasts and their theories of existence or non-existence is believed to bear shared biology and according to Carolyn Larrington, Professor, Oxford University, are rooted in general human experience. To me, their existence has been evolved to evoke curiosity of the unknown.

3. MYTHICAL CREATURES IN POSTMODERN SCIENCE FICTION: A RE-IMAGINED ROLE

3.1 The Concept of the Hybridization of Genres

Traditional science fiction revolved around space exploration, technological development, and speculative scientific findings. In contrast, mythological creatures were mostly limited to the realms of religious texts, fiction, and folklore. Magic and mythology are where supernatural occurrences and mythical beings were supposed to happen. Thus, in turn, both genres tended to remain distinct. On the other hand, in postmodern science fiction, lines blur progressively and thus allow mythological monsters to be seamlessly placed within futuristic

settings. In such a hybridization, this permits the incorporation of mythological creatures, like dragons, unicorns, griffins, and phoenixes, which often reinvent the meaning to stand for contemporary technological achievements and societal concerns. For example, in the works of Christopher Paolini, *The Inheritance Cycle*, the protagonist, Eragon's dragon, Saphira try to overthrow the evil king, Galbatorix—thus playing crucial role in the political, social, and technological dynamics of their world besides being a symbol of natural force. As metaphors for the merging of nature, myth, and science, these dragons are not only magical but also genetically modified beings integral to a highly developed civilization.

Postmodern science fiction thus questions the old views as regards what can be achieved by a genre hybridization, as in the case of combining mythology and technology. This is because, rather than restricting mythical creatures strictly to fantasy's domain, the conflation of Artificial Intelligence with magic, religion and the sublime creates intellectual property. These are ways to anthropomorphise technology through genetic alters, or signs that can go against established principles of nature. This may lead to the paranormal open up.

3.2 Reinterpretation of Archetypes and Themes—the dream of efficiency and productivity

Often, in postmodern science fiction, the traditional archetypes and themes of the myths are reworked in the texts. Updating animals for modern audiences, they also comment on issues integral to the core of modern civilization: issues of identity, transhumanism, or where one's biology ceases and technology begins. Mythical animals assume new forms and purposes in this environment, which often symbolize humanity's desire to transcend what it considers "natural" and overcome its biological limitations. Thus, in the science fiction of postmodernity, the centaur—a classic representation of man against beast, or culture against savagery—has transformed into a cyborg or a genetic experiment. Here, such texts can be those that portray centaurs as those beings that challenge societal views of human identity through the transformation into a symbol of the merger of technology and human consciousness. The books, as seen in Joe Haldeman's *The Forever War*, where genetically altered or engineered creatures face the constraints of human identity and ethics in a post-conflict world and by human technological advancement, demonstrate such reinterpretation.

It is the same with other mythical beasts, such as the sphinx or minotaur: their interpretation in postmodern science fiction and how they are made the symbols of threats which scientific research and human ability may evoke. The postmodern science fiction setting transforms these creatures from archaic desires and anxiety merely of being symbolic into living being whose tale can be directed as a device to answer ethical philosophical questioning about humans' relationship and treatment toward nature, toward technological creation and the human body.

4. MYTHICAL CREATURES IN POSTMODERN SCIENCE FICTION: A REIMAGINED ROLE

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Postmodern science fiction thus questions the old views as regards what can be achieved by a genre hybridization, as in the case of combining mythology and technology. This is because, rather than restricting mythical creatures strictly to fantasy's domain, science fiction helps them evolve into artificial intelligences, genetic alters, or signs that can go against established principles of nature. In science fiction retellings of mythological monsters, new pathways in exploring complex issues regarding the relation of technology and science to the paranormal open up.

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relationship and treatment toward nature, toward technological creation and the human body. Classic fairy-tales have been remodeled by updating these archetypes in postmodern science fiction. This creates a very important space for the investigation of topics like genetic engineering, artificial intelligence, and morality in technological progress. The postmodern science fiction legendary creatures are thus not just imaginative creatures but reflections of people's concerns and aspirations when faced with very fast developing technologies.

5. MYTHICAL CREATURES AS ALLEGORIES FOR HUMAN STRUGGLES AND TRANSCENDENCE

Myths extended from being only imaginary creations in postmodern science fiction to full allegories concerning the inner and outer battles of human beings. Several social, psychological, or philosophical issues readers and characters have had to face have been dealt with through animals. Existence of mythological animals in the novel may represent struggle to exist, a decision between good and evil, and hope for transcendence in relation to human characters.

a) The Phoenix: Rebirth, Self-Destruction, and Transcendence

Some of the most famous are the Phoenix, a creature that dies in flames and then rises from its ashes, which has been used as a metaphor for individual or societal rebirth in postmodern science fiction, which transcends to the resilience, renewal themes amid devastation, as well as showing cyclical changes between life and death in accordance with the concepts of change and resurrection.



Figure 3: The Phoenix, a myth about reinvention

The most notable one is in the Matrix trilogy, where the main character Neo dies and then gets resurrected before he finally becomes "the One" to transcend the boundaries between the real world and the virtual one. Neo's path suggests one can become a better being, technologically as well as spiritually, by self-sacrifice and personal progress, in the cycle of destruction and resurrection like that of the Phoenix. Humanity has always sought a meaning

in its life and sought to escape the existential crises and embraced another way of living, all through this allegory.

b) The Golem: Humanity's Struggle with Creation and Responsibility

The golem is another such mythical creature that has been remade as an allegory in postmodern science fiction. The golem is a creature often made by human beings to do service or to protect his creator in the old traditions of folklore. However, in most modern reinterpretations, the golem symbolizes the unintended outcomes of the endeavours of humankind to use technology, biotechnology, or artificial intelligence to play God.

Works such as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* or the *Terminator* series cast golems as being the offspring of human ambitions, born from the imperative to control and dominate the world of existence. In general, humanity's fear that it may lose control of its inventions is echoed through the fact that works on this theme often turn against their creators or stray beyond the limits set for them. In this sense, the golem is a metaphor for the dangers of unchecked technological progress and a cautionary note on responsibility, pride, and the moral consequences of scientific discovery.



Figure 4: The Golem

The golem's transformation from subservient creature to the independent being reflects the human conflict regarding ethics in genetic engineering and artificial intelligence: the viewer is prompted by that metaphor to think about all the implications of artificial autonomy, the meaning of making life, and the hidden ethical and societal consequences arising from the tinkering with nature.

c) The Sphinx: The Quest for Knowledge and the Limits of Human Understanding

Traditionally, the Sphinx is depicted as a human head and a lion's body, often symbolizing knowledge, mystery, and the limits of human understanding. Ancient myths claim that the Sphinx posed riddles to visitors and that anyone who failed to solve the riddle would be killed. The Sphinx has become a common metaphor for people's search for purpose in a world that is becoming increasingly complex and technologically advanced in postmodern science fiction.



Figure 5: The Sphinx

Such situations in the books of authors like Douglas Adams' *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* and Frank Herbert's *Dune* series often make the characters think about their limitations and the notion they have concerning reality, technology, and space. The challenges that characters in these books have to face—that makes them change their mindset or else pay a terrible price for it—are the riddles of the Sphinx. These legendary animals challenge protagonists to confront the unknown and consider the boundaries of human understanding as well as the essence of life itself through their mysterious presence.

In this sense, the Sphinx represents not only the recognition of forces that lie beyond human understanding but also the constant pursuit by humanity to uncover knowledge. The Sphinx becomes a symbol of the paradox of human curiosity in postmodern science fiction, whereby the more that is learned, the more is known about how little is actually known.

GOD REPLACED BY ALGORITHM

In our pursuit of exploring religious interpretations of occurrences and our understanding of the 'language of code' we go back to the primary understanding in Kabbalah that 'language is the building block of creation' seeking the long history of conflating the machine and the divine trying to create meaning and interpretation into spaces where meaning was impending yet void. This I feel has been created to perpetuate the 'deterministic myths of technology.' Before the Industrial Revolution and the so-to be-taken, first sci-fi narrative in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, almost 200 years old warning us of the imminent impediment in replacing inscrutable ancient Gods with a scientific automation and their miraculous environmental impact might just be oversimplification of the anthropomorphic imagery and its complicated ethical debates. Modern mind must have questioned whether technology was a better god than the omnipresent previous God. In ancient times, deities were asked about weather patterns and to control them or get their benevolence humans worshipped and appeased the supernatural powers. Now these predictions and workings are delivered in our mobiles through predictive updating apps and GPS trackers. Thus our fallible agency is hereby replaced by technological perfection.

CONCLUSION

Vincent Mosco has called these myths “storylines of our times” and it can be said following the steps of Rainer Rehak that the mythologized discourse might lead to the technology of future times not because of its actual capabilities but maybe because of its “assumed functionality” reinforcing existing power structures and dominant social narratives. Eventually, these beasts, through AI’s “divine hand” (Brevini, 2021) became the third law, in which lie the danger and promise that the drive towards advancement presents and the quest to reinvent humanity.

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