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Utopias and Dystopias in *Last and First Men* (1930) by William Olaf Stapledon

Abstract: This paper aims at analyzing utopias and dystopias in *Last and First Men* (1930) by William Olaf Stapledon. Taking into consideration that this narrative was already defined as a scientific romance and an anatomy with allegorical status, as well as McCarthy's observation that Stapledon's writing resists simple categorization and that its classification as science fiction or utopian literature is inadequate, this paper suggests several definitions for Stapledon's work. The author also takes into account the ongoing dispute between utopian studies and science fiction scholars about the strong interaction between utopia and science fiction in the twentieth century. The possibilities of applying the conceptual integration theory to such a complex work of fiction as *Last and First Men* is explored.

Keywords: Utopia; Dystopia; William Olaf Stapledon; Conceptual Integration Theory; Blending; Parable; Science Fiction.

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Several critics have already correctly observed that Stapledon's fiction has not been granted enough academic attention. And those researchers who ventured to study his works agree only on very few points. One of these points is that his fiction belongs to the genre of science fiction.¹ In fact, according to Leslie Fiedler, "this generic placing is almost the only thing about him on which critics agree."² This is the oldest tendency in Stapledon studies, which later gave birth to several other trends.³ Another tendency in Stapledon studies is to describe his works as utopian⁴ or dystopian fiction.⁵ This approach is corroborated by the fact that Stapledon was a friend of H.G. Wells's, as well as a member of the H.G. Wells Society, the "Federation of Progressive Societies and Individuals" and shared with Wells scientific and utopian concerns. However, one should also take into consideration that Patrick McCarthy admitted "that Stapledon's writing resists simple categorization and that its classification as science fiction or utopian literature is inadequate."⁶ Hence, it seems appropriate to suggest that Stapledon's works present an amalgamation of these genres. Or, using the conceptual blending theory, we may say that *Last and First Men*

contains inputs from both utopia and science fiction.⁷

At present, there are ongoing debates about the nature of interaction between utopia and science fiction. Although it is neither the aim, nor the scope of this article to study these debates in depth, it is useful to point out some most important issues of this dispute, since it can enhance our understanding of the interaction (or blending) of utopia and science fiction in Stapledon's *Last and First Men* (1930). Trying to define an interaction between utopia and science fiction in *Last and First Men*, the following observation by Fátima Vieira can be useful:

At the advent of science fiction, it was not difficult to distinguish it from literary utopia, as the former made a clear investment in the imagination of a fantastic world brought about by scientific and technological progress, taking us on a journey to faraway planets, while the latter stayed focused on the description of the alternative ways of organizing the imagined societies.⁸

It is exactly the sophisticated amalgamation of all these trends that characterizes Stapledon's narrative under consideration. As Edward James claims, "in the 20th century utopia has not disappeared; it has merely mutated, within the field of sf, into something very different from the classic utopia. Hoda Zaki, whose *Phoenix Renewed* (1988) is the only published monograph on sf utopias, was on the point of recognizing this".⁹

Peter Fitting also argues along the same lines and emphasizes the mingling of utopia and science fiction in the twentieth

century: "Despite some dismissals of science fiction's significance for utopian writing, it is impossible to study the utopias and dystopias of the past fifty years or more without acknowledging the central role of science fiction."¹⁰ The scholar continues: "The intersection of modern science fiction and utopia begins with what I consider the foundational characteristic of science fiction, namely its ability to reflect or express our hopes and fears about the future, and more specifically to link those hopes and fears to science and technology."¹¹

As many scholars state, one of the most important contributions of science fiction to utopia is that the former enriched classical utopia with science and technology. While "the traditional utopia takes the human condition as a given, and hopes to make the human fit into utopia by legislation and education; the modern form of utopia regards a more perfect society to be the result of evolution and technology".¹² Indeed, in Stapledon's *Last and First Men* utopias are achieved by means of assisted evolution (eugenics) and advanced technology. As James reminds us, "[t]he traditional utopia is about envisioning ways in which human society might be reorganized on earth. Its mechanisms are legislation, education or institutional changes, occasionally changes in technology or environmental management."¹³ James emphasizes that "the sf writer has not been prepared to accept such a limited view of human development"¹⁴ and this is exactly the case of Stapledon, who enriches utopia with (assisted) evolution and advanced technology. Stapledon holds that only the evolution of many different human species might eliminate all the negative characteristics in the current human nature and achieve the

combination of necessary human qualities for the construction of utopia. Stapledon is very cautious about creating a harmonious utopian state in a short period of time, and this idea is reflected in his narrative. According to him, humankind must first defeat such dangerous factors as greed, egoism and aggression, as well as improve its means of communication in order to create utopia.

Stapledon demonstrates a long-standing profound interest in and knowledge of human psychology and human nature, and this can be traced in many of his works, including *Last and First Men*. For example, Leslie Fiedler appreciates Stapledon for a “unique vision of the breadth of the physical universe and the depth of the human psyche.”¹⁵ A detailed analysis of *Last and First Men* may reveal a very strong psychological component to Stapledon’s study of human nature and society, which is another characteristic feature of Stapledon’s utopia.

In considering the positive human qualities indispensable for the creation of a better society, Stapledon makes several propositions. As I wrote elsewhere,¹⁶ Stapledon’s histories of each of the different human species can be read as individual parables offering different solutions to the main problem of cosmic fulfilment. For example, introducing the parable of the Big Brains into narration, Stapledon tries to demonstrate that it is not possible to develop one human quality, even the best one, at the expense of the others, they are not the cosmic ideal. Also, the parable of the Fifth Men manifests that to attain the complete fulfilment of the species’ potential, a greater cooperation and unification is necessary. Finally, the Last Men create utopia and attain cosmic fulfilment.¹⁷

This parabolic storytelling structure remains embedded, however, in the Marxist schema that underlies Stapledon’s future history. The ultimate goal lies not in a set of revised institutional arrangements but in the pursuit of another way of being, a radical and revolutionary departure from all previous social, historical and economic structures. Instead of being subject to blind fate, humanity’s intervention into its own genetic make-up embodies not only the seizure of its future destiny but also the novel’s main theme of self-realization, ultimately at the cosmic level.¹⁸

Interaction and blending of genres are not new in the utopian genre and took place many times. Suffice it to mention that at a certain stage of its evolution utopian literature was blended with travel literature, fantasy, literature of discoveries, science fiction. Many scholars point out a very strong interaction of utopia and science fiction in the 20th century. It is reflected in Suvin’s expression “utopian SF”¹⁹ or in Frederick Jameson’s *Archeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* that focus on both utopianism and science fiction. Some scholars believe that similarities and interaction between utopia and science fiction are so strong that they can be confused, especially given the fact that, as Vieira writes,

in recent decades, science fiction has been permeated by social concerns, displaying a clear commitment to politics; this situation has given rise to endless debates on the links that bind the two literary genres: researchers in the field of Utopian Studies have

claimed that science fiction is subordinate to utopia, as the latter was born first, whereas those who have devoted their study time to science fiction maintain that utopia is but a socio-political sub-genre.²⁰

Indeed, Darko Suvin calls utopia a sub-genre of science fiction: "Strictly and precisely speaking, utopia is not a genre but the socio-political subgenre of science fiction".²¹

Another important fact that influenced the evolution of utopia and science fiction, as well as their strong interaction was a complete and profound change in our understanding of the nature of time, and consequently, of the spacetime continuum due to Einstein's special and general relativity theory, published in 1905 and 1915, respectively. Hence, "Einstein introduced time as the fourth dimension in his relativity theory, and the idea of the fourth dimension penetrated the arts, philosophy and literature; it appeared in the works of H.G. Wells, Olaf Stapledon [...]"²².

Indeed, the importance of Einstein for Stapledon's euchronia is made obvious. The scientist's name is mentioned several times in the first lines of the introduction of *Last and First Men*. Some other revolutionary works of fiction like Wells' *The Time Machine* (1895) also greatly influenced utopia and science fiction.

The works of Marx and Engels and their new understanding of time, history, utopia and progress have significantly contributed to the change in the nature of utopia and science fiction and their interaction. As Fátima Vieira observes,

Marxism in fact merged the sentiment of determinism provided by its

scientific theories with the idea of a utopia set in the future, thus redefining utopia in terms of reality: on the one hand, the idea was presented as something essentially accomplishable at the end of the historic process; on the other hand, the way this would be done had already been clearly delimited. The present should therefore be seen in terms of its fulfilment in the future. This perception of time was the most important change that Marxist thought effected in utopian literature, as it saw the fulfilment of utopia as part of historical development. Having absorbed the way Marxism conceived the future, literary utopias [...] faced history as a process of growth of humanity, until it would reach a mature state, from which the ideal society would finally emerge. These utopias were thus truly euchronic, as they normally described a posthistorical socialist-communist society on a world-scale.²³

This is very true of various utopias depicted in Stapledon's *Last and First Men*. Indeed, as I observed earlier, "Stapledon's history [of the future] is narrated according to Marxist principles, whereby successive socio-historical conditions form the sound material base for the next stage of development. Stapledon takes into consideration all the possible conditions to the best of his knowledge, including the latest scientific discoveries, such as radioactivity, nebulae, white dwarfs, star evolution, the expanding universe and general relativity."²⁴

Stapledon was aware of the latest cosmological discoveries of his epoch, since he was a passionate astronomer; in Oxford

he attended lectures of various prominent scientists, like Rutherford and other celebrities, as his diaries at the Stapledon Archives confirm. Stapledon employed in the narrative the discoveries of the evolution of stars, the expanding universe (original universe's singularity by G. Lemaître in 1927, the galactic redshift by E. Hubble in 1929), as well as the special and general relativity theory of Einstein. For example, the Eighth Men discovered that the Sun would collide with a huge gas cloud and in time, the resulting explosion would destroy all the planets, probably, with the exception of Neptune, so they decided to move to Neptune. The Last Men learnt to travel in distant space and time, had the most advanced science, created utopia but still are doomed to be destroyed by an extremely quickly heating Sun.

The above-mentioned progress of natural and social sciences opened large possibilities for placing an ideal utopian society not on an isolated island or in a far-off land but in the future. As Fátima Vieira observes, "The projection of the utopian wishes into the future implied a change in the very nature of utopia - and thus a derivation neologism was born. From eu/utopia, the good/non-place, we move to euchronia, the good place in the future."²⁵ Hence, Stapledon's *Last and First Men* can be further described as a euchronia. The concept of euchronia has some important advantages and functions. As Fitting observes,

the uchronia allows the possibility of showing how the utopian society evolves out of the author's own world, and in many cases the transition to the new social order is specifically

addressed, and often serves as the principal intrigue. This leads to the second element that science fiction brings to the utopian genre, namely an awareness of the effects and importance of science and technology.²⁶

In "1771 the French writer Louis-Sébastien Mercier published the first euchronia, *L'An 2440: Un rêve s'il en fut jamais* (translated into English as *Memoirs of the Year Two Thousand Five Hundred*").²⁷ Though Stapledon's *Last and First Men* was not the first euchronia, it was and remains one of the most impressive euchronias that embraces 2 billion years of the future history of the human species. By creating such an impressive euchronia, Stapledon greatly inspired utopian thinking. Moreover, it should be pointed out, that, "despite the scientific and economic determinism of his approach, Stapledon's central dilemma is spiritual rather than material",²⁸ even compared to Wellsian utopias, and this makes Stapledon's utopia rather unique and fragile. As I observed, "Although more spiritually-oriented than Wells, Stapledon's belief in utopia as something dynamic, long, and hard fought-for is Wellsian in orientation, built on collisions, on conflict [...], as the Russian utopianist Yevgeny Zamyatin averred of Wells."²⁹

As already mentioned, Stapledon's fiction "resists simple categorization".³⁰ *Last and First Men* is a science fiction narrative (or scientific romance) Earlier I defined it as an allegorical anatomy, study of the body politic³¹, study of the body politic. As I observed, "in his anatomy, Stapledon used satire to reveal and ridicule the vices of the contemporary human society, such as Americanization of the whole planet,

idolization of the power of money and business, aggressiveness, unwillingness to solve conflicts in peaceful way³² as in the case of the First Men; overestimation of the role of science and intellect as in the case of the Fourth Men, etc. To illustrate his intellectual concepts, Stapledon uses different species of men almost in the same way as Swift used different lands visited by Gulliver in *Gulliver's Travels*. Thus, it is possible to arrive at the conclusion that *Last and First Men* is anatomy with allegorical status, for which Stapledon is using an encyclopedic form.³³ It is interesting to point out that Suvin holds that "utopia belongs to a narrative form and tradition which Frye has persuasively called anatomy."³⁴ As far as the narrative analysis of *Last and First Men* is concerned, it must be observed that the narrative employs a frame structure, which is rather common for utopian literature and scientific romance. While in the classical utopia a traveler visits Utopia and then describes it to the others, in this euchronia, it is the representative of the Last Men who knows all the future history of the eighteen human species, its utopias and dystopias succeeding each other and describes it to a representative of the First Men, who lives in the times of Einstein. The representative of the Last Men describes the future history of different human species from *Homo sapiens* (the First Men) to the Eighteenth Men (the Last Men) and humankind's striving for survival to make the best of itself. This human desire "to make the best of itself" is utopian in its nature, especially if we take into consideration what Ruth Levitas suggests to be a constant element in utopia. "In the attempt to find an invariable, constant element in utopia, Ruth Levitas proposes 'desire for a better way of

being and living'."³⁵ Hence, humanity's desire to make the best of itself throughout the history of eighteen human species is truly utopian in its nature. The Last Man judges various utopias in this long history through the lens of the goals achieved by various species, such as "attaining the highest kind of fulfilment possible for the human species, that is, the cosmic ideal of mankind's self-realization of its place within the universe and the supreme awakening of all the spirits."³⁶ The main narrative may be divided into three distinct episodes: the life of humankind on Earth (the first five species), the life on Venus (the next three species) and the life on Neptune (the Ninth Men onwards). Hence, we can further define *Last and First Men* as anatomy with allegorical status, where we have an amalgamation of utopia and science fiction, since Stapledon enriched science fiction narrative with utopian concerns.

In *Last and First Men*, Stapledon manifests his utopian concerns upfront in the preface: "We all desire the future to turn out more happily than I have figured it. In particular we desire our present civilization to advance steadily toward some kind of Utopia."³⁷ The words utopia/utopian are often present in *Last and First Men*.

However, Stapledon warns us from the beginning that his concepts of utopia are different from many utopian writers. For him, utopia is not a kind of a paradise, but rather changes not only in man's environment but also in his fluid nature, leading to the achievement of spiritual maturity and the philosophic mind. Stapledon explains:

When your writers romance of the future, they too easily imagine a

progress toward some kind of Utopia, in which beings like themselves live in unmitigated bliss among circumstances perfectly suited to a fixed human nature. I shall not describe any such paradise. Instead, I shall record huge fluctuations of joy and woe, the results of changes not only in man's environment but in his fluid nature. And I must tell how, in my own age, having at last achieved spiritual maturity and the philosophic mind, man is forced by an unexpected crisis to embark on an enterprise both repugnant and desperate.³⁸

Stapledon believes that the human species as it exists now (the First Men in the narration) is not able to achieve any utopia due to serious drawbacks in human nature. Stapledon demonstrates the example of Patagonian civilization of the First Men, who might have achieved some kind of Utopia if it were not for their flawed human nature: "The resources of the whole planet were available, and the world population was less than a hundred million. With this source alone they could never, indeed, have competed in luxury with the earlier World State, but they might well have achieved something like Utopia."³⁹ Here, the reference to the World State clearly indicates that Stapledon was influenced by the Wellsian concepts of Utopia and World State, demonstrated by Wells in his fiction like *The Shape of Things to Come*.

Patagonians of the First Men discovered atomic energy which enriched their civilization but due to greed, aggressiveness, inability to solve conflicts peacefully the First Men were destroyed in the atomic explosion. In the long evolution,

the Second Men appeared and achieved material wealth and prosperity, that can be considered classically utopian. "The world-community reached at length a certain relative perfection and equilibrium. There was a long summer of social harmony, prosperity, and cultural embellishment."⁴⁰ Indeed, as Stapledon points out, "The Second Men had long been accustomed to a security and prosperity that were almost utopian"⁴¹. When the Second Men reached that almost utopian prosperity, they decided that it was high time to improve also the human nature:

There was a widespread feeling that the time had come for man to gather all his strength for a flight into some new sphere of mentality. The present type of human being, it was recognized, was but a rough and incoherent natural product. It was time for man to take control of himself and remake himself upon a nobler pattern. With this end in view, two great works were set afoot, research into the ideal of human nature, and research into practical means of remaking human nature.⁴²

In other words, "The Second Men were gathering their strength for a great venture in artificial evolution."⁴³ but this venture was interrupted by the Martian invasion and the war with the invaders. The war with the Martians and a Martian virus undermined the forces of the Second Men and the species slowly deteriorated for a very long time, until due to "a subtle chemical re-arrangement of the germ-plasm, such that there ensued an epidemic of biological variation. Many new types

appeared, but in the long run one, more vigorous and better adapted than the rest, crowded out all competitors and slowly consolidated itself as a new species, the Third Men."⁴⁴

This new species of the Third Men created a society that can be seen as utopia by some. This society was ruled by elite and biologists:

The world-community was now a highly organized theocratic hierarchy, strictly but on the whole benevolently ruled by a supreme council of vital priests and biologists. Each individual, down to the humblest agricultural worker, had his special niche in society, allotted him by the supreme council or its delegates, according to his known heredity and the needs of society. This system, of course, sometimes led to abuse, but mostly it worked without serious friction. Such was the precision of biological knowledge that each person's mental calibre and special aptitudes were known beyond dispute.⁴⁵

Also in the scheme of this society, we can trace the influence of Wells, who used to put at the head of his World State intellectual elite, as in *The Shape of Things to Come*. In Stapledon's Third Men, we also have intellectual elite (biologists) and priests.

By using what we would call biotechnologies today, the Third Men improved many medical aspects of their physical bodies, eliminated pain, cured many diseases, making their living conditions even more utopian. However, up to this stage of development of the Third Men, the

progress of some civilizations and their achievement of utopian-like society (see Patagonians, previous utopia of the Third Men) was achieved only due to natural evolution, education and laws. Already the theocratic hierarchy of the early Third Men was based on the laws of genetics that determined any individual's function and hierarchy in this society. In other words, until this period, classical instruments of utopia were employed (laws and education) to construct echronias of the Second and early Third Men. At this stage, Stapledon introduced to utopia advanced technology and assisted evolution from the genre of science fiction: "Finally, the Third Men decided to decisively improve the human being"⁴⁶ by assisted evolution, eugenics and to create new species, the Fourth Men. Here, Stapledon endeavors to examine the empirical evidence and the theoretical soundness of the hypothesis according to which human intelligence is not the only quality of paramount importance for the human species and should not be developed at the expense of other human qualities. Stapledon tests this hypothesis by introducing the parable of the Fourth Men, Great Brains into *Last and First Men*.

It must be emphasized that the utopian desire of the Third Men to improve human species led to a dystopian reality in the long run, because the Third Men did not have a clear understanding of what exactly should be improved in the human nature in order to achieve utopian existence, thus, instead of utopia, they found themselves in dystopia. The Third Men used to think that

What is most distinctive in man is intelligent manipulation, brain and hand. Now hand is really outclassed

by modern mechanisms, but brain will never be outclassed. Therefore we must breed strictly for brain, for intelligent co-ordination of behaviour. All the organic functions which can be performed by machinery, must be relegated to machinery, so that the whole vitality of the organism may be devoted to brain-building and brain-working. We must produce an organism which shall be no mere bundle of relics left over from its primitive ancestors and precariously ruled by a glimmer of intelligence. We must produce a man who is nothing but man.⁴⁷

This idea of the Third Men becomes one of the leading inputs in the conceptual blending of the parable of the Great Brains. The Great Brains are passionate researchers; they discover almost all the possible laws of the world but still are very dissatisfied and unhappy, since their research comes to a dead-end: "They had a growing sense that though in a manner they knew everything, they knew nothing"⁴⁸ The emerging structure arises in the blend, which must be projected back to the inputs: "With painful clarity they realized that, in spite of their vast weight of neural tissue, in spite of their knowledge and cunning they were practically no nearer the ultimate truth than their predecessors had been".⁴⁹ By means of this parable, Stapledon underlines the importance of a holistic or all-encompassing development of human nature: "Man [...] was essentially an animal, though uniquely gifted. His whole nature must be developed, not one faculty at the expense of others".⁵⁰

The Great Brains finally realize that they miss something very important in

life: human emotions, social life, physical experience, and love for arts. It was clear that they suffered from "the limitation of the insight into values".⁵¹ They take all their own drawbacks into consideration and construct a more perfect human species, the Fifth Men, in whom they hope to "attain the goal of perfect knowledge vicariously".⁵²

In this parable, the idea that intelligence is (not) the most important human quality is elaborated in the blend according to the principles of eugenics. In fact,

The parable of the Great Brains contains the eternal philosophical dispute about the nature of man: what is more important in human beings, feelings or the intellect, the soul or the body? It demonstrates Stapledon's conviction that intellect is not the most essential aspect of the human species; instead, it only gains true significance in concert with other aspects so as to create a whole human being and, consequently, a harmonious society.⁵³

It is interesting to observe in the parable of the Big Brains the simultaneous co-existence of two different human species, which was in no way utopian. Stapledon's fiction offers many examples of peaceful and effective utopian-like symbiosis of different species, for example, in *Star Maker* or even later on in *Last and First Men* but such utopian-like symbiosis is possible only between highly spiritually developed species, while the Third and Fourth Men are not sufficiently developed for that. Stapledon demonstrates how the utopian desire of the Third Men to create a better species and better society led to dystopian reality. The

Fourth Men paid attention only to their research, they were obsessed with attaining the ultimate knowledge, while their brains depended completely on the machinery and service of the Third Men. However, the Big Brains despised the Third Men, who they considered inferior. As the time went on, these dystopian trends grew only worse, there were rebellions of the Third Men, deadly responses from the Fourth Men, until no representatives of the Third Men were left alive (except for a few who were caged for experiments). In this future society of two very different and (further on) fighting species we can trace also some Wellsian influence of his dystopian society of Morlocks and Eloy from *The Time Machine* (1895), whose unsurpassable antagonisms were determined by their different functions, and socio-economic conditions and physiologies. In *The Time Machine*, the Eloi “armed with a perfected science” triumphed not only over Nature but they triumphed “over Nature and the fellow-man.”⁵⁴ In a similar way, the Fourth Men triumphed in the long run over Nature and especially, over their creators, the Third Men, whose poor remnants were only left in cages for scientific experiments.

Little by little, the Fourth Men began to realize that what was wrong with themselves was not merely their intellectual limitation, but, far more seriously, the limitation of their insight into values.⁵⁵ They decided to correct their mistakes, seeking to “produce a kind of being, free from [their] limitations, in whom [they] may attain the goal of perfect knowledge vicariously. The producing of such a being [...] will afford the highest kind of fulfilment possible.”⁵⁶

The new species, the Fifth Men, eugenically produced by the Fourth Men

created utopian conditions, a kind of material paradise.

Conceive a world-society developed materially far beyond the wildest dreams of America. Unlimited power [...] completely abolished the whole grotesque burden of drudgery which hitherto had seemed the inescapable price of civilization, nay of life itself. The vast economic routine of the world-community was carried on by the mere touching of appropriate buttons. Transport, mining, manufacture, and even agriculture were performed in this manner.⁵⁷

Needless to say, that there was no more need for hard labor: “not only was there no longer need for any human beings to spend their lives in unskilled monotonous labour, but further, much that earlier races would have regarded as highly skilled though stereotyped work, was now carried on by machinery. Only the pioneering of industry, the endless exhilarating research, invention, design and reorganization. [...] Materially every individual was a multi-millionair”.⁵⁸ The culture of the Fifth Men was influenced in many respects by their “telepathic” communication with one another and finally, all kind of conflicts and wars were left in the past. Due to telepathy,

each individual was immeasurably more able to participate in the experience of others than were beings for whom the only possible communication was symbolic. The result was that, though conflict of wills was still possible, it was far more easily resolved by mutual understanding than had ever been the case

in earlier species. Thus there were no lasting and no radical conflicts, either of thought or desire. It was universally recognized that every discrepancy of opinion and of aim could be abolished by telepathic discussion.⁵⁹

Though it seems that this utopian species of the Fifth Men was ideal from the point of view of a utopian writer, they still had to be improved, according to Stapledon, because despite the telepathic communication between many individuals, there was no super-individual, or group-mind:

in the fifth human species 'telepathy' was only a means of intercourse between individuals; there was no true group-mind. On the other hand, telepathic intercourse occurred even on the highest planes of experience. It was by 'telepathic' intercourse in respect of art, science, philosophy, and the appreciation of personalities, that the public mind, or rather the public culture, of the Fifth Men had being. [...] With the Fifth Men 'telepathic' communication was, as it were, a kind of spiritual multiplication of mental diversity, by which each mind was enriched with the wealth of ten thousand million. Consequently, each individual was, in a very real sense, the cultured mind of the species; but there were as many such minds as there were individuals. There was no additional racial mind over and above the minds of the individuals. Each individual himself was a conscious centre which participated in, and contributed to, the experience of all other centres.⁶⁰

It took millions of years of evolution before the Last Men could finally achieve this ideal. In the parable of the Last Men, all the most important ideas Stapledon had about the ideal society, spirit and its aspects, the realization of an individual's potential, the personality-in-community, the realization of the species' potential, the fulfilment of the cosmic ideal and the "supreme awakening of all the spirits"⁶¹ are used as inputs for the magnificent impressive blend which can be described as Utopia. One of the most important features of the Last Men is their subordination of private cravings to the good of the species and society: "As a human individual he or she is somewhat of the same type as a member of the Fifth species. As in the Fifth species, so in the Eighteenth, each individual has his private needs [...] but also, in both species, he subordinates these private cravings to the good of the race absolutely and without struggle".⁶²

Contrary to the Fifth Men, the Last Men have created a group-mind: "By means of the harmonious activity of the special organs a true group-mind emerges, with experience far beyond the range of the individuals in isolation".⁶³ But there is even a higher mode of awakening than a group-mind, namely, a cultural awakening, which the Last Men are able to achieve:

The system of radiation which embraces the whole planet, and includes the million brains of the race, becomes the physical basis of a racial self. The individual discovers himself to be embodied in all bodies of the race. [...] He now stands above the group minds as they above the individuals. [...] The racial mind transcends the minds

of groups and individuals in philosophical insight into the true nature of space and time, mind and its objects, cosmical striving and cosmical perfection.⁶⁴

These new possibilities available to the Last Men due to telepathy dramatically affect their societal structure. It was “a society dominated, as no previous society, by a single racial purpose, which is in a sense religious”.⁶⁵ The society is an anarchy, it functions without any armies or police forces; it needs neither government nor laws. Suggestions about the improvement of the society’s functioning are submitted directly to the whole world-population in “telepathic conference”, so that “the only serious possibility of conflict lies now between the world population as individuals and the same individuals as group minds or racial mind”.⁶⁶

This paper has focused on Stapledon’s *Last and First Men*, which was defined in Frye’s terms as anatomy with allegorical status for which Stapledon is using an encyclopedic form. It was also defined as an amalgamation of utopia and science fiction. Using the conceptual blending theory, we obtain that the narrative has inputs from both utopia and science fiction. It was observed that, although Wellsian in orientation, Stapledon’s utopia is more spiritual, which makes it more special and fragile. *Last and First Men* is a future history of the eighteen human species, hence, it can also be defined as euchronia. Though it is not the first euchronia, it is by far the most comprehensive future history that embraces two billion years of human history and contains an unsurpassable amount of encyclopedic knowledge; it greatly influenced and stimulated utopian thinking.

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NOTES

1. Iren Boyarkina, *Musical Metaphors and Parables in the Narratives of Olaf Stapledon*, PhD dissertation, Rome, University of Rome Tor Vergata, 2014.
2. Leslie Fiedler, *Olaf Stapledon: A Man Divided*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1983, p. 4.
3. Iren Boyarkina, *op. cit.*, 2014.
4. See, for example, Timothy Murphy, "Physiology Is Destiny: The Fate of Eugenic Utopia in the Fiction of H. P. Lovecraft and Olaf Stapledon", in *Utopian Studies* vol. 29, no. 1 (2018), p. 21-43. Robert Shelton, *Forms of Things Unknown: The Alien and Utopian Visions of Wells, Stapledon and Clarke*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1982. Eugene Goodheart, "Olaf Stapledon's Last and First Men", in Rabkin Eric (ed.), Greenberg, Martin (ed.), Olander Joseph (ed.), *No Place Else. Exploration in Utopian and Dystopian Fiction*, Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Press, 1983, p. 78- 93.
5. Gregory Claeys, "The Origins of Dystopia: Wells, Huxley and Orwell", in Gregory Claeys (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 107-135.
6. Patrick McCarthy, *Olaf Stapledon*, Twayne, 1982 qtd. in Iren Boyarkina, *op. cit.*, 2014.
7. The conceptual blending theory by G. Fauconnier and M. Turner has been already successfully applied to many spheres of human activities. In my PhD, it has been demonstrated that the conceptual blending theory and the conceptual metaphor theory provide a set of tools for the effective analysis of the narratives by Olaf Stapledon. A theory of conceptual integration has been chosen for the analysis of the parable, which is viewed as the projection of the story. Boyarkina, *op. cit.*, p. 173.
8. Fatima Viera, "The Concept of Utopia", in Gregory Claeys (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 8.
9. Edward James, "Utopias and Anti-utopias", in Edward James, Farah Mendelson (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 227.
10. Peter Fitting, "Utopia, Dystopia and Science Fiction", in Gregory Claeys (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 135.
11. *Ibidem.*, p. 135.
12. Edward James, "Utopias and Anti-utopias", in Edward James, Farah Mendelson (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 227.
13. *Ibidem.*
14. *Ibidem.*
15. Leslie Fiedler, *op. cit.*, p. 142.
16. Iren Boyarkina, *op. cit.*, p. 177.
17. *Ibidem*, 2014.
18. Iren Boyarkina, "Utopia in the Future Histories of H.G. Wells and Olaf Stapledon", in *Foundation: The International Review of Science Fiction*, no. 129, (2018), p. 13.
19. Darko Suvin, *Defined by a Hollow. Essays on Utopia, Science Fiction and Political Epistemology*, Peter Lang, 2010, p. 11.
20. Fatima Vieira, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

21. Darko Suvin, *op. cit.*, p. 43.
22. Iren Boyarkina, "Passages Through Spacetime: Science and Fiction", in Iren Boyarkina (ed.), *Passages Through Enclosures and the Spacetime Continuum in English and American Science Fiction*, Cambridge, Cambridge Scholars Publishers, 2022, p. 7.
23. Fatima Vieira, "The Concept of Utopia", in Gregory Claeys (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 14.
24. Iren Boyarkina, *op. cit.*, 2018, p. 12.
25. Fatima Vieira, "The Concept of Utopia", in Gregory Claeys (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 9.
26. Peter Fitting, "Utopia, Dystopia and Science Fiction", in Gregory Claeys (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 135.
27. Fatima Vieira, "The Concept of Utopia", in Gregory Claeys (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 10.
28. Iren Boyarkina, *op. cit.*, 2018, p. 12.
29. *Ibidem*, p. 14.
30. Patrick McCarthy, "Olaf Stapledon and Literary Modernism" qtd. in Iren Boyarkina, *op. cit.*, 2014, p. 195.
31. Iren Boyarkina, *op. cit.*, 2014.
32. *Ibidem*, p. 179.
33. Iren Boyarkina, *op. cit.*, 2018, p. 6-20.
34. Darko Suvin, *op. cit.*, p. 30.
35. Ruth Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia*, 2011, p. 4 qtd. in Iren Boyarkina, *op. cit.*, 2018, p. 6.
36. Iren Boyarkina, *op. cit.*, 2014.
37. Olaf Stapledon, *Last and First Men*, Gateway, 1999, p. 3.
38. *Ibidem*, p. 6-7.
39. *Ibidem*, p. 97.
40. *Ibidem*, p. 131.
41. *Ibidem*, p. 151.
42. *Ibidem*, p. 131
43. *Ibidem*, p. 148.
44. *Ibidem*, p. 166-167.
45. *Ibidem*, p. 181.
46. *Ibidem*, p. 182.
47. *Ibidem*, p. 182-183.
48. *Ibidem*, p. 194.
49. *Ibidem*, p. 198.
50. *Ibidem*, p. 187.
51. *Ibidem*, p. 199.
52. *Ibidem*, p. 199.
53. Iren Boyarkina, *op. cit.*, 2018, p. 13.
54. H.G. Wells, *The Time Machine*, Black Cat-Cideb, 2018, p. 37.
55. Olaf Stapledon, *op. cit.*, 1999, p. 194.
56. *Ibidem*, p. 195.
57. *Ibidem*, p. 200.
58. *Ibidem*, p. 200.
59. *Ibidem*, p. 202.
60. *Ibidem*, p. 202.
61. *Ibidem*, p. 286.
62. *Ibidem*, p. 274.
63. *Ibidem*, p. 275.
64. *Ibidem*, p. 277.
65. *Ibidem*, p. 280.
66. *Ibidem*, p. 285.