



Universidad de Valladolid

Facultad de Filosofía y Letras
Grado en Estudios Ingleses

**The Rise of a New Genre: Dystopian Fantasy in
Brandon Sanderson's *The Final Empire***

Bryan Caballero Gutiérrez

Tutora: Marta María Gutiérrez Rodríguez

Departamento de Filología Inglesa

Curso: 2022-2023

'I will take responsibility for what I have done,' Dalinar whispered. 'If I must fall, I will rise each time a better man.'

Brandon Sanderson, *Oathbringer*.

ABSTRACT

Even though innovation inside literary fiction has been widely studied, there is scarce information and research carried out about the new subgenres that appear as a product of the hybridization of traditional genres. This undergraduate dissertation tries to fill that empty space by analyzing a potential new subgenre, dystopian fantasy. This is achieved by constructing a framework consisting of the most relevant elements for both fantasy and dystopian fiction and using it to analyze Brandon Sanderson's *The Final Empire*. The selection of this specific novel derives from its massive success and from the influence it has had in other media despite its contemporaneity. The analysis of this novel provides tangible examples, which in turn solidify the theoretical framework and make it more reliable. The consolidation of this framework promotes the further exploration and analysis of other comparable stories, as a means to relabel them as necessary.

Keywords: The Final Empire, Sanderson, Dystopian fiction, Fantasy, Dystopian fantasy, hybridization.

RESUMEN

Aunque la innovación en la ficción literaria se ha estudiado de manera exhaustiva, hay escasa información y estudios sobre los nuevos subgéneros que han surgido de la hibridación de los géneros tradicionales. Este trabajo de fin de grado intenta llenar ese vacío con el análisis de un posible nuevo subgénero, la fantasía distópica. Para ello, se ha construido un marco teórico formado por los elementos más relevantes de la ficción fantástica y de la distópica, que se utilizan para analizar *El Imperio Final*, de Brandon Sanderson. La elección de esta novela deriva de su éxito masivo y de su influencia en otros medios a pesar de su contemporaneidad. El análisis de esta novela proporciona ejemplos tangibles, que a su vez solidifican el marco teórico y lo hacen más fiable. La consolidación de este marco promueve la exploración y análisis de otras historias similares, como método para reetiquetarlas según sea necesario.

Palabras clave: El Imperio Final, Sanderson, Ficción distópica, Fantasía, Distopía fantástica, Hibridación.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction	1-2
2. The Birth of Dystopian Fantasy	3-11
2.1 The Phenomenon of the Fantasy Genre	3-7
2.1.1 The Magic Element.....	5-6
2.1.1.1 The Components of the Magic Element	6-7
2.2 The Dystopian Genre	7-9
2.2.1 Towards the Building of a Dystopia	8-9
2.3 Fantasy and Dystopia Nowadays	9-10
3. The Worlds of Brandon Sanderson	11-13
4. <i>The Final Empire</i> , the Analysis of a Dystopian Fantasy	14-33
4.1 Authoritarianism, the Imperial Structure of Scadrial	14-21
4.1.1 The Steel Ministry, or the Clerical Class	15-16
4.1.2 The Noble Class	17-18
4.1.3 The Skaa	18-19
4.1.4 The Terrismen	19-20
4.1.5 The Destruction of the System	20-21
4.2 The Dichotomy of Trust and Betrayal and Other Elements of Paranoia	21-23
4.3 The Magic Systems of <i>The Final Empire</i>	24-28
4.3.1 Allomancy	24-26
4.3.2 Feruchemy	26-28
4.4 Mythology in <i>The Final Empire</i>	28-33
4.4.1 Non-Human Creatures of <i>The Final Empire</i>	29-30
4.4.2 When Humans Become Legends	30-31
4.4.3 Inanimate Yet Legendary Elements	32-33
5. Conclusions	34-35
6. Works Cited	36-37

1. Introduction

When dealing with literary genres that are so distant, it is no surprise when we claim that fantasy and dystopian fiction are more different than similar. The very basis of their core as genres are contrary. The major theorists in the field agree that fantasy is about the construction of the impossible (James and Mendlesohn 1), whereas dystopian fiction works with a viable scenario based on the particular problems humans face (Han et al. 12). This implies that, even though they are both distant from reality (in different degrees), there is a key element that differentiates them: plausibility.

The dystopian genre reflects the fears and flaws of mankind and projects them in a fictional setting. This setting, although fictional, is created to resemble a possible outcome for our world. Thus, plausibility is fundamental during the process of creation of a dystopian story. Furthermore, when used correctly, it also functions as an active element that endows the story with tension. This effect, however, is almost impossible to achieve in fantasy. And most of it has to do with the fantastic elements that are essential for this genre, as these are incompatible with the general concept of plausibility.

Nonetheless, in spite of these undeniable differences, these two genres share one key characteristic. As any other fictional genre, they are the product of the imagination of the author, which make them malleable. Hence, the bounds of the elements that a story presents is only limited by the writers themselves. Therefore, we could argue that there are no impediments for the projection of the elements of a particular genre into another, no matter how different these might be. In fact, we discuss that this is a logical event, as in pursuit of innovation, authors throughout history have played with the different tools that literature offers. And genre, as one of those tools, is also subject to innovations. In this last idea we find our strongest support to suggest that this situation is happening between fantasy and dystopian fiction, in what could have been the birth of a new subgenre, dystopian fantasy. This new subgenre would be the creation of a generation of fantasy authors that has developed throughout the last two decades. They use worlds filled with fantastic elements to project the concerns and restlessness that are part of their reality.

This piece of research aims to illustrate the existence of this new subgenre. For this, we will analyze how some concrete constituents established as essential when building fantasy and dystopian worlds are presented in a novel which we argue belongs to this new subgenre. For this purpose, we have selected the first best-seller of the author who heads this generation of fantasy writers, Brandon Sanderson's *The Final Empire*. In this novel, we will search for the elements of authoritarianism, the dichotomy of trust and betrayal, the magical system, and the mythology of the novel.

2. The Birth of the Dystopian Fantasy

As implied in the introduction, the motivation behind this subgenre might be related to the political and social concerns of authors that have experienced the change of millenium, the fragility of the political systems, and the extremist attacks to western civilization. We argue that this is the product of how these authors capture those emotions in a familiar field. And this they achieve by aiming for the balance between the magic element and the dystopian features for it to be organic, as we will analyze below.

But before delving into the analysis of the constituents in the story of our interest, we must first grasp the concepts that represent the two genres that form the dystopian fantasy, fantasy and dystopian fiction. Additionally, we should define the terms that will be the focus of our study for a better comprehension of what this new genre can be.

2.1 The Phenomenon of the Fantasy Genre

It is no secret that fantasy has become in recent decades an impactful phenomenon that has reached almost every aspect and form of cultural expression. Literature, but also other traditional arts (such as music for instance) and more contemporary ones (e.g. cinematography or video games), have been heavily inspired by fantasy. This, we argue, has to do with two characteristics of the genre: first, the undeniable flexibility that it has to fill in stories that display fairly diverse settings (Walters 74). And second, the ability to present those ideas that are a product of the speculation of the human mind, which otherwise would be impossible to shape in our reality (Butler 4). Nonetheless, to get to this point, we first need to discuss its consolidation as a genre.

In order to do so, we have to go back to the first instances of fantasy as an independent genre at the beginning of the 19th century. Due to the derogative opinions that relevant authors such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge had on these elements, other writers wanted to separate themselves from what fantasy represented. The idea that ruled the literary world all throughout the 19th century was that the use of those elements in the production of literary works would result in an inferior kind of work. This, allegedly, had

nothing to do with the new product of an inspired imagination (Coleridge 156). In an environment where all these ideas were established, there was an instance where the use of these fantastic elements was accepted, which is when creating children's literature. The simplest explanation for this is that presenting an idea or moral in a disguise that is attractive for this type of reader was and is thought to be helpful for easing its transmission. Even so, what this produced was a tendency towards associating or classifying every piece of writing which contained fantastic elements as children's literature. This left out of the question the creation of a label which underlied works that were primarily fantastic. Examples of these are *At the Back of the North Wind* (1871), from Scottish writer George MacDonald, or even *Alice in Wonderland* (1865), from English writer Lewis Carroll. These examples might be regarded as children's fiction when given a superficial reading, but, in reality, they have a more complex meaning. In spite of their disregarding as 'serious' literary works, these were heavily influential as precursors of the creation of the structure of the fantasy genre.

The lack of a category of its own was a situation that was kept all throughout the 18th and first half of the 19th centuries. In fact, the term fantasy was not used to refer to a literary genre. However, that changed in the second half of the 20th century. In 1949 the definition was first coined by *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction (F&SF)*. As its name indicates, it was an American publication of stories belonging to both genres in a pulp¹ magazine format. Coincidentally, the two works of fantasy that would mark the consolidation of the genre would be published: C.S. Lewis' *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe* (1950), and J.R.R Tolkien's *The Lord of The Rings* (1954). This second example is especially significant, since *The Lord of the Rings* is a sequel to *The Hobbit*, published two decades before, and which, thanks to that tendency we previously mentioned, was labeled as a children's fiction story.

The impact that these stories would have would be so great, that the genre's popularity rose and cemented what would be the transformation from a disregarded genre

¹ Pulp magazine: publication printed on cheap paper for its mass-distribution. (Nicholls and Ashley, 2023).

to being part of the mainstream. In posterior studies, these events would be regarded as a before and after in the history of the genre, having noteworthy relevance the works of J.R.R Tolkien, which according to experts like Shippey are considered to still influence authors and artists in several disciplines (qtd. in Drout 380-382). The structure of Tolkien's sagas is summarized by Clute and Grant in their *Encyclopedia of Fantasy* (1999). Most of his fantasy plots and many of those influenced by them are formed by a series of segments. The first one, THINNING, refers to the decline of a world due to a malignant force. This is followed by a sense of WRONGNESS that leads to the consecution of a QUEST to restore the order by the protagonist. This causes the protagonist to achieve RECOGNITION, which causes the final turn of the plot that has a positive or even emotional and relieving ending named EUCATASTROPHE by Tolkien himself.

Nevertheless, previous to all we have discussed, and apart from the mentioned proto-fantastic works that were published before the sudden growth of fantasy, we could argue that most of what conforms the genre is product of the refinement of certain concepts which were already present in the literary world (Attebery 177). These concepts appeared way before the mentioned proto-fantasy or our first "fantastic" novel and were part of the literature since its very beginnings as a medium. Some of the first novels that were either written or translated to the English language had those elements that are nowadays attached to the fantasy genre, such as *Beowulf* or *Táin Bó Cúailnge*. Elements like the presence of imaginary or supernatural beings belonging to the mythology or folklore of a certain culture, characters whose strength or capabilities were beyond those of the common humans, or the physical presence of gods thrived in this early literature, and have survived the evolution of the medium, reaching our contemporary productions. These elements could be related to the idea of 'the impossible', which we might also call 'the magic element'.

2.1.1 The Magic Element

The magic element is a term that we propose as the possible equivalent of the fantastic charge that a story encompasses. In the case of modern fantasy fiction, we have witnessed a disposition towards either high or epic fantasy. These are characterized by their

action taking place in a pseudo-medieval world different to ours, filled with magic creatures and powers and, more often than not, a quest that must be fulfilled. To illustrate this idea, according to the research organization on books ‘WordsRated’, out of the top ten best-selling fantasy sagas of the last two decades, six belong to the high epic fantasy subgenre.

But the first productions that showed the magic element in their storylines are far different, and we can argue that those are the fairy tales belonging to the oral tradition. In these, the magic element usually works to disguise a moral and make it easier to remember and transmit it but is not core to the development of the story. This ‘mold’ for the fairy tales was not altered throughout centuries and has reached our days.

Those oral tales substantially influenced several aspects of the first written productions of English literature. As said in previous paragraphs, only a few of the first productions such as *Beowulf*, managed to differentiate itself from other works that made a lighter use of fantasy at the time. And that use of the magic element as an active constituent in *Beowulf* would be determinant more than a thousand years later, in the construction of J.R.R Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*. This influence would ultimately be key for the development of contemporary fantasy, because, as already stated, Tolkien’s sagas would symbolize a new start of the genre and would impact almost every following fantasy work. Thus, the components that characterized Tolkien’s magic element were set as a canon.

2.1.1.1 The Components of the Magic Element

As previously stated, there is a wide collection of features that an author can introduce to endow their work of magic. Any slight change on any factual part of our world that derives from the scientifically plausible, will inevitably result in a magic element. Nonetheless, there is a consensus on how certain elements of worldbuilding, when directed towards the impossible, are key for the foundation of a magic world.

One of the most relevant elements that affects this process of worldbuilding is how the fantastic world that the story presents compares with our actual world. This idea is closely related to the revision of the theory of possible worlds proposed by Herman et al.

Following it, we set as a model our actual world. From it, taking into account the logical inconsistencies of the fantastic elements, there might be alternative worlds where the story develops (Herman et al. 446). These variations go from the slight presence of the magic element to dystopias, or even timelines in which there is life on other planets, and all the spectrum in between.

Another element that can add the feeling of magic is the species that populate said world, what are their languages and costumes, also their mythology, and the representation in the story as creatures who exist or not. Last, is the magic system per se, the set of abilities or powers that characters in the story might possess and what rules they follow. As was already hinted, in *The Final Empire*, the magic system and mythology are the components that carry the magic element, and thus, will be the subjects of our study.

When referring to the magic system, it is the set of rules that are applied to the construction of the impossible, what can and cannot be achieved through the use of magic in a certain world. This, to some extent, is similar to the definition of ontological rules given by Ryan (qtd. in Wolf 74). Nonetheless, the focus of the magic system is only put in the functioning of magic, and not in entire storyworld. Meanwhile, mythology, in strict terms, is usually defined as the series of tales and folklore belonging to a certain society or nation (qtd. in Wolf 115). This is an interesting aspect to consider, as it can be an ignorant society's method of representing a reality they do not understand, as we will see.

2.2. The Dystopian Genre

In a similar fashion to the other genre of our study, dystopian fiction has been arising as one of the most symbolic genres of contemporary literature. As we have mentioned previously, studies discuss that the success of this genre is directly proportional to the political or social distress of a period. This unrest can be a product of different factors, such as the fear of technological advance, military conflict, or the environmental situation, among others. In fact, a perfect example to illustrate this is the increase in the

sales of dystopian fiction in 33.49% during the COVID-19 pandemic from 2022 to 2021, according to 'WordsRated'.

That same tendency has taken place since the 'flourishing' of the genre, between the 1930s and the 1950s. We cannot ignore the existence of texts that could be considered dystopian previous to those decades, and we also have to acknowledge the fact that the term was coined in 1868 by the philosopher John Stuart Mill in one of his parliamentary speeches, as can be verified in his *Public and Parliamentary Speeches Part II* (1869). However, it was not until the publication of Aldous Huxley's *A Brave New World* in 1932 and George Orwell's *1984* in 1949 that the genre started to actually thrive. Contemplated as anti-utopias, these symbolic works established a pattern that still directs the path that the new additions to this genre follow (Sargent 72). This is relevant as the genre has kept using the set of ideas that were first posed by those traditional dystopian novels. However, this has not been accepted without discussion, as many researchers pose a much broader understanding of the genre. This understanding regards dystopian fiction as not only an opposition to utopia, but also a negative caricature of our actual society. A caricature product of the development of the dangerous political currents and other ideas that are part of our 'real' world, presented in a near future, and it is doomed to fail (Stockwell 211). Whether that definition fits the current state of the dystopian genre is still being debated; what is clear is that the traditional novels that established the structure of the genre are still impactful.

2.2.1 Towards the Building of a Dystopia

As any other genre, authors that build a dystopian story usually include in their works a preset of features that are common to every novel belonging to the genre. As just explained, in this case most of those features are obtained from what are considered the great classics of dystopian fiction, Orwell's and Huxley's novels. Experts like Howe coincide that certain concepts allow to expand the idea of dystopia (14), and these are the following:

- It needs to sow the seed of doubt on what hypothetically could work perfectly, such as questioning the methods that could be used to achieve a ‘happy’ society.
- It must develop a complex story from a dramatically simple idea, for example, the story of a society that is constantly monitored.
- It has to be able to introduce details that support the ideas developed as canonically possible.
- While not transgressing the relation of the elements presented with reality, these have to attempt to question the reader's views on what is possible.
- It has to rely on the ability of the reader to connect the story and features of the literary work to the real historical events they might refer to.

These ideas, when applied to worldbuilding, are used to expand the important characteristic elements that the genre uses. These could be the construction of a future that holds the advance of real world’s technology, or the subjects of our study, which are the building of a believable authoritarian society and the creation of tension through paranoia.

If we had to define it, authoritarianism is, according to *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Politics*, a style of government in which the rulers demand unquestioning obedience from the ruled. This concept is present in most dystopian novels, for its political tendencies call to oppression and unrest, which are perfect components for this type of literature. And, following this, we have the dichotomy of trust and betrayal. This dichotomy is the illustration of the opposition of an individual, in this case the hero, and trusting a larger social unit, which would be the rebellious group (Czyganyik 246). The tension resulting from the contraposition of the interests of both is vital in this type of literature, as we will explain below.

2.3 Fantasy and Dystopia Nowadays

As we have hinted during the explanation of both genres, we are witnessing the return of fantasy and dystopian fiction to the mainstream. We have already mentioned how modern media played an important role in this in sections 2.1 and 2.2., and how traditional

works from both genres are still impactful. But that is not everything to nowadays' fantasy and dystopian fiction.

Even though the classic novels still reverberate in their corresponding genre, these are also suffering a process of modernization. In pursuit of making distinctive stories and innovating, authors are experimenting with the concept of genre, producing a certain hybridization, which to an extent is what we are trying to prove in this paper. However, this process, according to researchers, does not manage to create a new subgenre or category, but just expands the frontiers of that particular genre. This is explained in the context of dystopian fiction by Jessica Norledge in *The Language of Dystopia*: "The presentation of supernatural power within supposedly dystopian fictions, is after all, increasingly commonplace with new themes being woven with traditional dystopian forms to expand the boundaries of the genre itself" (197).

What this has produced, is a 'dilution' of the genres used to label novels. Thus, due to this 'dilution', we could say that some subgenres or labels that are used are starting to fall short when categorizing literary works. Due to this, there has been a resurgence of Modernist ideas, which understand genre as an inorganic production that should be avoided, as it limits the author's creativity. Despite this, relevant researchers such as Lily Alexander still consider genre as a natural division born to beneficiate business or literary communication, and advocate for their use and development to fit the current literary situation (qtd. in Wolf 260), a stance that resonates with our ideas. Sanderson's novel, we claim, might be able to demonstrate that Norledge's proposal on the expansion of the genres is insufficient. For us, it would be a reduction to label it as either 'expanded' fantasy or dystopian fiction, and so it would be to just reject the genre distinction as the Modernist approach intends. *The Final Empire*, we argue, allows us to build an example out of him and create a new tag that is fitting to this new literary trend.

3. The Worlds of Brandon Sanderson

Before moving on to the main matter of our study and dive into the world of *The Final Empire*, it would be interesting to first have a little more knowledge about the author and the writing universe that he is building, the Cosmere.

To begin with, we have already commented on Sanderson being a part of a prolific circle of writers that found in fantasy their space of comfort. In them, they not only build new worlds and societies, but also make use of them to somehow reflect certain fears or feelings of uneasiness product of the unrest that surrounded them. Furthermore, it is relevant to mention that this generation coincidentally started writing between the end of the 90s and beginning of the 2000s. This is a period filled with insecurities due to the constant conflicts, the political instability, and even the psychological fears that awakened in sections of the population due to the change of millennium. There are several authors who are nowadays at their prime that form said generation. From Steve Erikson or J.V Jones, to Joe Abercrombie or Anne Bishop, everyone has added something new to the genre and the different possibilities it proposes. Nonetheless, doubtlessly, the most iconic representative of this group is Brandon Sanderson.

The American writer has gained the title of ‘the Tolkien of the 21st century²’ by not only being a constant source of literature, but also by maintaining the quality of his books in spite of the increase in production (especially in recent years). Several elements from the way he structures his fiction are accountable for the success of the author, being the writing style, the magic systems or the ‘coherent’ fantasy he offers some examples.

His writing style is characterized by a high-middle register language in narration, which is used to make special emphasis in details of the landscape to better illustrate the world he is building. In terms of structure, he writes in what has been called ‘avalanche’ style, which he defines as the construction of a complex plot that is perfectly knotted, for

² This name has been given recently by several Spanish newspapers, such as La Razón or El Mundo, which have recently treated his meteoric rise in popularity in Spanish-speaking countries.

every single twist, turn, or idea that has been left open in the development is answered in an explosive climax (Sanderson “FAQ”).

The second feature, the magic systems he elaborates, are imaginative and feel both real and wondrous simultaneously. This is achieved through the use of sciences as bases of the magic, as in his sagas magic is bound to fields like geology, geography, climatology, or metallurgy among others. Another characteristic of the magic Sanderson proposes is that it is rounded, which means, the laws that apply to that magic are never violated, and are usually affected by elements such as gravitational and physical laws. This endows the magic with a science-fiction turn. This helps to build the sensation of authenticity, as you have a convincing explanation to why magic works a certain way, and it is not just left as a ‘matter of magic’.

Finally, the feature of coherence affects every detail and aspect of the novels. From worldbuilding, to the psychology of the characters, to even magic. The best method to explain this is through an example, which could be how the fauna and flora of the worlds that the author assembles are a product of the climate, as in *The Stormlight Archive*. In what is Sanderson’s biggest saga, the author shows how, due to the constant storms that devastate the world, land animals such as cows have developed a shell similar to some aquatic animals. Similarly, plants have obtained through evolution the ability to retract themselves to avoid dying from drowning. These small details create the feeling of coherence, and again, help the reader to believe the story, in spite of being in a big measure fantastical.

All these techniques were used to build the Cosmere, a universe formed by the worlds that are presented in some of his novels, and which will ultimately interact. One of the sagas that belongs to the Cosmere is *Mistborn*, which has as its opening book the novel of our study, *The Final Empire*. It is worth mentioning that this saga is composed of four eras, in which we have the same base world, but the periods in which each story is developed are different. Two of them are already finished, the pseudo-medieval era and the old western/industrial revolution era. The remaining two will be published in the years to

come, one in a cold war-like period, and another one in a time of space exploration. This is relevant because the periods that the author has chosen to inspire himself are characterized for being times of discord and fear, either religious, existential, technological, or military. Therefore, we have contexts in which the dystopian ideas could be easily merged, supporting the idea of this saga being the illustration of the symbiosis of fantasy and dystopia.

As a concluding observation, it is remarkable to mention that due to how Sanderson conceives the parts of a saga as just divisions of a big creation, we might encounter times in which *The Final Empire* seems to differ in certain aspects of Sanderson's method of writing. Examples of this could be the lack of answers to questions that the story might pose. As just a part of a big creation, a question or enigma posed in the first book might be replied to in the second or third installment of the trilogy. With that in mind, we are now ready to jump into the world of *Mistborn*.

4. *The Final Empire*, the Analysis of a Dystopian Fantasy

As noted in previous sections, the main goal of this study is to display the most characteristic constituents of each of the genres that have possibly merged in the creation of dystopian fantasy. The elements of the study are authoritarianism, trust and betrayal dichotomy, the magic systems, and mythology, which we have defined in sections 2.1.1.1 and 2.2.1.

Taking this into account, and already having a wide context on the terms of study, it is time to start with the first of them, authoritarianism, the social order of *The Final Empire*.

4.1 Authoritarianism, the Imperial Structure of Scadrial

The discussion of social structure is inevitable once we establish a link to the dystopian genre, as the social struggle or social unrest are some of the primary motives used to create tension. The social order is presented as what we could call an authoritarian order, as usual in dystopian novels. As we explained in 2.2.1, the core of authoritarian systems is obedience. In this story, this is not different, but we are given a twist to this concept due to the medieval-like setting, thus presenting an order that has characteristics distinctive of feudal systems. In this, we have a high clerical class, a high nobility class, and a low class whose members receive the name of skaa, who are all at the service of their ruler. Added to those we have the special case of Terrismen, who are not included in the social order, as we will explain below.

To better comprehend how this social structure works, we shall start by giving an overview of the elements that characterize it. First, we must consider that this order is known as “the Final Empire” (thus the name of the book), as it is thought that either it will never end or it will be the last empire the world will live to see. The reasoning behind this belief is the fact that the head of this system, which is known as Lord Ruler, the Sliver of Infinity, or simply “Father”, is thought to be immortal. This supernatural nature along with the various powers he seems to possess has allowed him to prolong this empire for around a

thousand years at the beginning of the story. In what comes close to a reign of terror, he is the ultimate recipient of all the political powers and uses them to control every aspect of life that could signify potential problems to his empire, which encompasses all of the world in which the story develops, Scadrial. Examples of this are, for instance, the control of the information or scientific investigation, but also the crucial element of banning reproduction between the high and low classes, which we will delve into later on.

As we just discussed, the extension of the empire is vast, and most of the relevant operations and events take place in the capital where Lord Ruler resides, Luthadel. In spite of this, there are plantations, cities, and populations all around the world, which tend to work as background. To ensure that the social order, the laws, the collection of taxes, or any other command are followed everywhere, most of these tasks are delegated to an institution of his creation, the Steel Ministry.

4.1.1 The Steel Ministry, or the Clerical Class

The Steel Ministry is a bureaucratic body divided into several sections called Cantons. In the fashion of other dystopian novels' institutions such as *1984*'s Ministries, each Canton specializes in a different area of bureaucracy, exerting control over several aspects of society. In this novel, however, we encounter that this same political structure also works as a religious entity. Mimicking the religious doctrines of real empires, the focus of this religion is showing devotion and submission to the head of the social order, the Lord Ruler. Every member of the Steel Ministry, no matter the Canton they work for, is expected to express said devotion and have to be ready to act as commanded without questioning their god, which we have previously established as part of the definition of the authoritarian system (see 2.2.1).

The creed of the Steel Ministry focuses on the adoration of the Lord Ruler not as an omniscient and omnipresent entity, but as a sliver of a more complex being that had those powers. Not only that, he, as part of god, is also regarded as the savior and creator of the world they inhabit. On the bureaucratic level, the Cantons that shape the Steel Ministry are

four: the Canton of Inquisition, the Canton of Finance, the Canton of Orthodoxy, and the Canton of Resource. All of them have certain duties related to their field of action, and their members, who have the name of obligators, must carry them out. There are distinctions of ranking inside the own Cantons, which are marked by intricate tattoos that surround their eyes.

However, out of all of them, the Canton of Inquisition distinguishes itself in several ways. This Canton has a duty as any other, as it is in charge of dealing with law enforcement and providing punishment to those that went against the Ministry's protocol. It also gathers information from skaa who are suspected to possess magic powers, and also from nobles or obligators who are thought to be insurgent. Nonetheless, its members do not receive the title of obligators, but instead are known as Steel Inquisitors or just Inquisitors. They display grotesque modified bodies and have access to the full set of powers that the magic of this world, called allomancy as we will discuss in future sections, offers. They make use of their appearance to inspire terror, but also of their magical abilities to soothe the population of the capital. They do this to avoid any possible rebellion, in what we consider another parallelism with Orwell's *1984*'s Two Minutes Hate, as there is an active control of the population's emotions:

They make use of their Mistings," Marsh said. "Good use of them. They have bases throughout the city—Soothing stations, as they call them. Each one contains a couple of Ministry Soothers whose only duty is to extend a dampening influence around them, calming and depressing the emotions of everyone in the area. (Sanderson 444)

Due to their monitoring of other Cantons, we see that throughout the story there is a constant tension between the Canton of Inquisition and the others. Their fierce compliance with the desire of their Lord and their obedience, hints at some sort of brainwashing, and is the definitive demonstration of the authoritarian presence in the story.

4.1.2 The Noble Class

When discussing the noble class, we can say that it works as expected from the name it is given. Nobles are favored with a privileged status just for the sake of being part of the nobility. The nobles are presented as a class that lives in a different reality, almost a bubble, as we see in the contraposition of the grim and dirty world, the poverty, and the constant fall of ashes, with the unnecessary boasting, the music, and the vibrant colors and decoration that are shown in the nobility balls. In them, we see how nobles are not aware or ignore the situation of skaa, which makes more evident the distorted reality nobles live in. Any of the described parties exemplifies this:

Enormous, rectangular stained-glass windows ran in rows along the hall, and the strange, powerful lights outside shone on them directly, throwing a cascade of colors across the room. Massive, ornate stone pillars were set into the walls, running between the windows. (215)

We have to mention that not all the nobles have the same impact on society, as there is a clear difference in the political and economic relevance between the big noble families that reside in Luthadel (known as Great Houses) and the rest that live in the countryside. However, all of them equally benefit from the advantages that their nobility status offers. A perfect example of these that is core to the development and outcome of the story is that the nobles and their noble offspring were gifted the possibility of possessing magic powers. This puts them in a comfortable position in terms of potential military power, which, as we might infer, they use to improve their position in the internal noble ranking.

In addition to this, thanks to their position they can acquire skaa slaves as long as they pay for them to the Lord Ruler. As with any other property, these slaves can be treated in any way their noble lord seems fitting, which usually involves extreme physical abuse which leads to death or even sexual assault. Indeed, if the sexual abuse is perpetrated, the slave has to be killed to avoid breaking the law that bans reproduction between noble and skaa. This is a perfect showcase of how nobles and skaa are regarded as two completely different beings, being the second close to an animal or an object.

The explanation for this extreme favoritism is no secret, as we are told that the noble class is formed by the progeny of those who supported the Lord Ruler before the creation of the Final Empire. Thus, by mere deduction, we can guess that the resistance to the creation of the empire were the skaa.

4.1.3 The Skaa

The skaa are the lowest class of the society, and their situation is a consequence of being the descendants of the defeated opposition during Lord Ruler's rise to power. Due to this, they are subject to abuse and slavery, and treated as mere objects. In the best of cases, they only aspire to become master craftsmen in a guild, belonging this way to a low working class.

As in almost any novel of the dystopian genre, the low class is dominated to prevent them from rebelling, and this novel is no different. For this purpose, several tools are used to undermine the fighting spirit of the skaa, especially the following three main methods: controlling their forces and access to information, controlling their potential access to the magic of allomancy, and directly influencing their emotions. Their forces are undermined by keeping them occupied at all times with pointless tasks (ej. clearing the streets from the ash that is constantly falling) and letting them starve. The access to information is restricted, not only by not giving them access to basic knowledge but also by forbidding them from moving from one city/plantation to another. When it comes to avoiding them from accessing allomancy, they keep track of the sexual relations that they maintain with nobles or obligators, which are usually the result of abuses or prostitution. Finally, as we have mentioned in section 4.1.1, there are several stations spread through Luthadel from where the Inquisitors directly affect the emotions of the capital's skaa. The use of allomancy on their emotions leaves them in a state of depression and reluctance.

Added to this, we also have the fact that the few skaa rebellions that had been organized since the creation of the empire had ended in terrible defeats and massacres of the skaa population due to the abysmal difference in power: "(...)“Tell me, what has your

rebellion accomplished during its thousand-year struggle? Where are your successes and your victories? The Massacre of Tougier three centuries ago, where seven thousand skaa rebels were slaughtered?” (73)

The sum of all this creates a submissive population that, in spite of being a vast majority, feels hopeless and is just content with staying alive and surviving. That is until a skaa that has survived the worst punishment that can be imposed organizes them, using every tool in his hands to make his rebellion succeed.

4.1.4 The Terrismen

As we previously noted, the case of the Terrisman is special, as they do not occupy a position in the social order. Being the remnants of a past civilization, they occupy a strange place in imperial society. Nowadays, they are trained by the empire to be the perfect stewards and servants for the noble classes. As such, they are highly valued, and in some aspects, they are given a degree of estimation and respect.

However, their reproduction is directly controlled by the empire, and even when respected, they are practically slaves, as they are trained to be servants practically since birth. On top of that, all Terrisman stewards are eunuchs, as an additional way to control their reproduction. This all equalizes their situation of oppression with that of the skaa.

As we will explain later on when dealing with the magic systems of the story, Terrismen can potentially possess a unique magic system known as feruchemy. The Lord Ruler, aware of this due to his Terrisan origin, decided to eradicate all of them. He did so to prevent anyone from inheriting the two systems of magic of this world, for this could imply his demise.

Nonetheless, he is not aware that, among the few remaining Terrismen, some of the stewards are also feruchemists. This is the case of one of our most relevant secondary characters, Sazed. He is carrying out another battle of his own and does so by using his feruchemical abilities to build an encyclopedia of all the religions that existed in Scadrial

before the start of the empire. In doing so, he defies a system that systematically deletes any information that has its origin in the times before the Lord Ruler. But he does not limit himself to that, as he also instructs, aids in her emotional opening, and saves our heroine on several occasions. This makes him another important piece of the outcome of the story: the destruction of the imperial system.

4.1.5 The Destruction of the System

Taking all this information into account, we now need to understand that this overview is just how Scadrial's society is supposed to work, but it does not necessarily imply this is the case. As Stockwell's definition of dystopia acknowledges (see 2.2), the genre seeks to demonstrate how a caricaturesque system that, in theory, has to work will eventually fall. And, in this case, the element that causes this fall is the main component of the system, its population.

In *The Final Empire*, there is a great effort made by the Lord Ruler to reassure the control and total submission of the skaa. Through the methods mentioned in 4.1.3, their fighting spirit is gone, but they keep working diligently due to their will to live. Then, he also tries to secure the loyalty of the nobility by giving them privileges and access to certain economic activities, as stated in 4.1.2. This, what would ideally create is a society in which the low class works hard to guarantee their survival, and the happy nobility complies with the desires of their emperor. The result of this was supposed to be a society that, while not being perfect, has the ingredients to function correctly.

That would be the case if it was not for the principal flaw that this system has, and it is that humans do not conform. From the very beginning we see how nobility does not respect the few limitations they are imposed, despite their advantageous position. The most relevant contempt is having offspring with skaa, giving them the possibility of inheriting allomancy. This gives a window to the skaa who, having little to lose, now have allomancy to improve their chances of succeeding. This encourages them to risk their lives in search of an improvement for their kind.

These ideas are what contribute to the destruction of what we argue is a dystopian society. However, it is undeniable that this is not the prototypical dystopian society. We claim that, in order to adapt it to a fantastic and medieval setting, some divergences had to be made to ensure that both genres merged properly. An example of this is the treatment of plausibility. When we discussed Howe's ideas on what shapes a dystopia in 2.2.1, we found that many of them revolve around the idea of plausibility. In this novel, that aspect has to lose priority in favor of the fantastic. Even so, another element that we have discussed is used to provide a sense of credibility, coherence. As in any case we are talking about fiction, once the reader is invested in the story, we argue that it is more relevant for them to regard something as coherent within the world presented, than it is for them to find it plausible. And this last idea would comply with Howe's considerations on dystopia.

4.2 The Dichotomy of Trust and Betrayal and Other Elements of Paranoia

As we have already discussed, paranoia as an active element to create tension is one of the most common tools used in dystopian literature. There are different paths to achieve this feeling, and Mistborn uses several of them to accomplish its purpose. For instance, we could say that a big part of this effect comes from worldbuilding and the functioning of the society we have just explained.

The environment created for the development of the story is perfectly fitted for this task of making us feel insecure and anxious about our surroundings. We have already discussed the injustice that prevails in society, but also the atmospheric situation that produces crop shortage is an important factor to take into account. As the nobles will not slow down on their lifestyle, the low class of skaa is the one that suffers the scarcity of nourishments and the consequent starvation.

From the perspective of a young skaa crook, all this is taken to a new level. In a city where the opportunities for skaa to thrive are scarce, people will take any chance to achieve it, even if that means harming others. The hero of the story, Vin, has to be careful, as she

cannot make the mistake of trusting anybody, because trusting is the only way you can get betrayed. That is a lesson that was well taught by her brother, who ultimately betrayed her to make sure she did not forget about it.

Left alone while having to pay her brother's debt to a band of male thieves and scammers, she has to be extremely careful due to her being a woman. This is so because, despite her unkempt and tomboyish aspect, she acknowledges the possibility of being violated. In fact, she is threatened several times with being sold as a prostitute by the chief of the thieves. This maintains her in a constant state of alertness, which indeed feeds that paranoia. The representation of this is given by her hearing the voice of her brother inside her head, remembering that she cannot trust anybody: "Then he towed her away. Vin continued to struggle weakly, but she was growing numb. In the back of her mind, she heard Reen's voice: See. I told you he would leave you. I warned you. I promised you. . . ." (Sanderson 560)

This is a recurrent theme throughout the story, and a huge burden that Vin carries even when she finally finds people who are worth her trust. All those years of abuse and indoctrination into accepting that everybody will betray her have affected her to such a degree that even after opening up to those trustworthy friends, she still keeps certain behaviors that are proper of someone who is in a dangerous situation. An example could be her keeping a hidden supply of food in her room, in spite of having full access to all the food she wishes with no restrictions.

Far from being the only method to achieve this feeling of paranoia, the novel uses other elements that are typical in the genre. As already explained, the existence of skaa that have allomantic abilities is not tolerated. Coincidentally, our two main characters, Kelsier and Vin, are two of the most dangerous allomancers, named Mistborns, who have the full set of powers. This makes them outlaws that have to continuously flee from the law enforcers, which in our story are these tremendous beings that also have allomantic abilities and are experts on tracking their objectives. Thus, the characters are under a constant threat even when they are not directly breaking the law, which again generates this paranoid

effect on Vin. This last idea is aggravated after the disappearance of Marsh, Kelsier's brother, who was their intel in the Steel Ministry.

This is further explored in the sections where Vin is entrusted with the task of infiltrating the nobility gatherings. Being a skaa, she has to take the false identity of Lady Valette Renoux while having no knowledge of the demeanors of the nobility and with little time to prepare herself. During the first balls, she has this feeling that her real identity is going to be uncovered by the rest of the female nobles. This is mainly due to her lack of grace when walking and dancing or the limited knowledge of certain aspects of the courtesan lifestyle, but also because of the reactions she has to certain events, such as seeing the way the skaa servants are treated: "In the mists, beyond the eyesight of regular people, the soldier drew out a dagger and slit the boy's throat. Vin jumped, shocked, as the sounds of the boy's struggling tapered off." (303)

All of this seems to be slowly fading away as the protagonist gains more confidence in herself and her abilities. This disposition to distrust seems to come back after Kelsier sacrifices himself against the Lord Ruler. This obviously affects her, as her mentor did what he had sworn he would never do: to abandon her, and thus, he betrays her. However, we see that the perception of this sacrifice changes greatly due to her growth as a character and the support of the rest of her allies. This is so as shortly after she understands that Kelsier was willing to sacrifice himself because he knew she would use his sacrifice to ensure the success of their rebellion. As we can observe, this dichotomy of trust and betrayal is inherent to the progress and outcome of both the plot and the characters, and perfectly exemplifies the organic development of a relationship in a dangerous environment, which is inherent to dystopian fiction.

Nonetheless, as we have seen during the previous points, this dichotomy we have just dealt with and the organization of the society we have discussed previously would not be shaped as it is if it was not for the magic elements present in the story.

4.3 The Magic Systems of *The Final Empire*

One, if not the most, distinguishing characteristic of Sanderson's Mistborn saga is the treatment of magical powers. As we already stated, in the Cosmere most of the magic forms follow what has been coined by Brandon Sanderson himself as "hard magic systems". These systems are characterized by being defined by a clear set of rules and limitations that give a framework of the possibilities that magic can explore.

Additionally, these systems strive for consistency in the way they function. They do so even when it means sacrificing the sense of wonder in favor of the coherence of the world that is being built. This also allows the reader to logically deduce how a magical conflict is going to be solved, as the reader is able to perfectly grasp how that magic works. Here, we will not encounter a new spell that will save our heroes, but rather they will have to make their ingenuity shine to discover new possible uses of their magic.

In the case of *The Final Empire*, we have two magic systems, called allomancy and feruchemy. As we also said previously, in the Cosmere all magic forms have a relation with a certain field of knowledge, and in the case of these two it is metallurgy. Both of them explore different approaches to magic powers that could be the product of the use of metals, while still sharing some common ground.

4.3.1 Allomancy

Allomancy explores the possibility of different metals and alloys having distinct magical properties. These can be subtracted for their use through the ingestion of flakes of the metals. Inside the stomach, a supply of them is created for the user to flare, and doing so provides the user with different abilities that vary depending on which metal or alloy they have flared. We have to consider that most of these powers are heavily rooted in the laws of physics and logic, as we will explain when dealing with each metal. The people that can carry out this flaring process are called allomancers, and there are two types: mistings and mistborns. Both of these types of allomancers have to experience a traumatic event of any type that pushes their mental state to their limit, which is known as Snapping. In spite

of this, there is a main difference between them, mistings can only flare one metal, while mistborns can flare all of them, even simultaneously. This puts them in a different league in terms of power, and makes them valuable assets in the story's society, as we have discussed previously. In the book it is hinted that whether an allomancer is a mistborn or a misting is related to the purity of the lineage, being the odds higher the more noble the bloodline is.

The metals and alloys that have magical properties in *The Final Empire* are eleven, and most of them come in pairs that somehow complement each other. These are iron and steel, tin and pewter, zinc and brass, bronze and copper, gold and malatium, and then atium, which is not complementary to any other metal. Even though the considerable amount of metals and powers might produce a feeling of complexity, understanding its functioning is quite simple, mostly due to how strongly defined it is by the author (see Table 1).

Metal/Alloy	Abilities provided to the allomancer	Misting nomenclature
Iron	Ability to sense any close source of metal and pull it towards themselves.	Lurcher
Steel	Ability to sense any close source of metal and push it, propelling them away.	Coinshot
Tin	Extreme enhancement of all the physical senses.	Tineye
Pewter	Extreme enhancement of strength, resistance and balance.	Thug
Zinc	Ability to sense the emotions of those who surround them, while being able to 'reach' these emotions and appease them.	Soother
Brass	Ability to sense the emotions of those who surround them, while being able to 'reach' these emotions and intensify them.	Rioters
Bronze	Ability to sense allomantic pulses originating from other allomancers that are actively using allomancy.	Seeker
Copper	Ability to hide the allomantic pulses that their allies or themselves produce when using allomancy.	Smoker
Gold	Ability to see different versions of themselves, had they	Augur

	made different choices in the past.	
Malatium (Eleventh Metal)	Ability to see who another person was or who they could have been if they had made different choices in their life.	Unknown.
Atium	Ability to see shadows of the enemies that perform the actions that said enemies will do in a few seconds.	Unknown in <i>The Final Empire</i> .

Table 1. Metals and Alloys in *The Final Empire*.

When explaining allomancy, apart from the specific individual rules for each of the metals, there are a final series of rules that should be taken into account when discussing the general functioning of allomancy. These further limit how this magic works, and again, widen the feeling of coherence.

The first rule indicates that the purity of the metal or alloy is essential to subtract its power, and so not every source of metal is valid to obtain power. The second rule has to do with the supply of metals that are contained in the stomach. If the allomancer has a supply, but is not using it in a short period of time, they have to flare all the remains of their stomach. This is so because, even though they are allomancers, the flakes are still metallic parts, and therefore toxic. Finally, the third rule indicates that the supply of metal is equivalent to the number of metal flakes ingested, and thus, is limited. Once all the metal is flared, the allomancer has to refill their supply with flakes diluted in any liquid, which they have to prepare beforehand in order to ensure the purity of the metal and carry at all times, should they need them.

4.3.2 Feruchemy

The second magic system that is displayed in *The Final Empire* is feruchemy. Despite being less explored in this book, as the people who can use it, the Terrisman, are secretive about it, we are given an overview and a few examples of how it works.

“Feruchemy is completely internal,” Kelsier said in an offhand voice. “It can provide some of the same things we get from pewter and tin—strength, endurance, eyesight—but each attribute has to be stored separately. It can enhance a lot of other things too—things that Allomancy can’t do. Memory,

physical speed, clarity of thought . . . even some strange things, like physical weight or physical age, can be altered by Feruchemy.” (Sanderson 437)

Instead of subtracting the properties of the metal, feruchemy consists in using objects made of different metals to store different physical attributes for its posterior use. The objects, which are usually shaped as necklaces, earrings, or bracelets, have to be in contact with the feruchemist for them to be able to store and retrieve the abilities. There are examples of abilities that are similar to those in allomancy, but there are others that are completely different, such as the storing of memory.

The potential objective of any Terrisman feruchemist, which are known as Keepers, is to gather all the possible information about a certain subject for its storage and its posterior distribution after the empire falls. In order to do so, they can use their other abilities to their advantage. However, it has an important limitation, as the abilities that are stored have to be withdrawn from the feruchemist body. The simplest way of explaining this is through an example. The feruchemists can store an ability in different degrees. If they want to store strength, for example, they can do so little by little, withdrawing just a small amount of their strength. This would make them feel slightly weak, and it would take them long periods to fill their strength supplies. Nevertheless, if they prefer to do so, they can stay completely weak and defenseless as long as they estimate for these supplies to be filled faster. At the time of making use of these abilities, the process is the exact equivalent. They have the ability to withdraw the strength from their metallic objects in small quantities, so they have a small boost of the ability during a long period of time. Even so, they also have the option to withdraw all the strength at once, gaining a massive amount of the ability, but during a shorter period of time.

Just as in the previous system, the functioning is quite limited and heavily framed in a set of rules. Some of them have been already discussed, such as the limitation of the use of power being directly connected to the amount of power that they have decided to reserve, but one of the most relevant is yet to be discussed. As we have stated, the powers withdrawn are stored in a metallic object, usually jewelry. However, the amount of power

an object can contain is proportional to the size of said object. Thus, a ring can store only a relatively small amount of power, while an armband or any other piece of metallic armor could store a more significant quantity. However, the reason behind this choice is the coherence with the storybuilding, as a person wearing an excessive amount of large metallic pieces would be suspicious, which is not beneficial for the protagonists of the story.

We argue that this, along with all the other mentioned rules, work as a device used to create a more credible fantasy. This is related to what we found with the dystopian elements discussed. We argue this because with such a defined functioning of the magic systems, the possibility of the unexpected and impossible has been drastically limited. The magic element is indeed present, but it has been diminished in favor of introducing the dystopian question. And it could be discussed that this happens again in the last subject of study, mythology.

4.4 Mythology in *The Final Empire*

In *The Final Empire*, it could be discussed that we do not work with a broad mythology, which is the usual thing in fantasy genres overall. We have to take into account two factors that might explain this. First, the base of Scadrial, the world of the story, is Earth, and so the flora and fauna of this world would be equal to that of our real world. The only difference is that the average temperature of the environment has got to a point where the mountains are constantly expelling ashes. This would intrinsically suppose the inability to survive for many of the species of the animal and plant kingdoms. Second, as we have defended from the beginning of this study, this literary piece strives for plausibility even in those elements that are part of the fantasy genre. Therefore, not overpopulating this world with magical creatures benefits the cohesion of this dystopian fantasy the author is building.

However, this narrowness of mythology does not necessarily mean that it is irrelevant to the story. Far from being just ornaments, most of the creatures that compose this mythology play a key role in the development of the story, and those who are not

determinant in this book, will be so in the sequel. This will be indicated and exemplified as we analyze the different elements that shape this fantastic device. But before we get into the subject, I would like to establish a division of *The Final Empire*'s mythology into three different categories. The first one is formed by what we consider to be the non-human creatures of this story, or said in other words, those who are not noble, skaa, or Terrisman. In the second category, we have what we will refer to as legends. The second category is formed by those beings or elements that, in spite of being real, have become legends and are almost part of the folklore of this society. Finally, the third category involves all those inanimate elements that also are part of this folklore.

4.4.1 Non-Human Creatures of *The Final Empire*

In the course of the story we encounter mainly three creatures that seem to either not have a human origin, or they apparently have a human origin, but the modifications they have suffered in their body are so extreme that they stray from humankind. These three creatures are the Mistwraiths, the Kandra, and the Koloss.

The mistwraiths are translucent creatures that have malleable bodies that can shape their skin around any skeletal structure they consume. Their mass is considerable in size, as they combine parts of the skeleton from several animals, granting them a macabre aspect. In the story, they are part of the folklore, and are thought to have abilities that they do not possess: “Not in the mists outside the city,” Hrud insisted. “The mistwraiths are out there. They’ll grab a man and take his face, sure as the Lord Ruler.” (Sanderson 62) Far from that, as the story progresses, we are shown that despite their grotesque appearance, they are harmless and have the tendencies of any other scavenger animal, having no real intelligence and just acting by instinct and using their senses for their survival.

Related to these, we have the Kandra. Kandra are shown to be the next evolutionary step to mistwraiths, for they also feast on the bodies of the dead. The main differences are that Kandra are intelligent, and also that they are capable of adapting their body to the skeletal structure they have ingested. However, they can make use of said structure to

obtain the appearance of the creature or human ingested, producing elements such as hair to make a perfect copy: ““Oh, he looks just like Lord Renoux,” Kelsier said. “Exactly like Lord Renoux, actually. We just can’t let him get near an Inquisitor. . . .”“Ah,” Breeze said, exchanging a glance with Ham. “One of those. Well, then.”” (122)

Their existence is not public knowledge, and they are just part of the stories and tales of skaa folklore. This makes them excellent spies and also great replacements used by nobles to infiltrate any social circle they want access to. This, along with the functioning of their powers, has given them a negative reputation among those who know about them being real. As an additional note, to obtain their services, you have to establish a contract and a payment.

Finally, we have Koloss. Their presence is merely trivial in this book, being core to the following sequels. However, we are told that they are a great force to be reckoned with, but whose ferocity obliged the Lord Ruler to deploy them far from civilization: ““That’s a flaw we need to exploit. Koloss troops make wonderful grunts, but they have to be kept away from civilized cities.”” (110) The knowledge of their existence is just known by the ruins they left in previous populations, but have not been directly seen by anyone in centuries. Nevertheless, the fact that they are allegedly real, but do not intervene has a clear purpose. And that purpose is no other than showing the Lord Ruler’s overconfidence. The trust he has in his own power is far justified, as for centuries he has dealt with all the problems and insurrections he has faced. Still, we can argue that if he had used these creatures, the outcome of the story would have been different.

4.4.2 When Humans Become Legends

As discussed in previous paragraphs, there are human figures that, in spite of being present in the story, have seen their legends amplified by exaggeration and tale-telling. We have two in this story, which are the Lord Ruler and the Survivor. Despite having demonstrated their powers, their reputation has been incredibly inflated, as we will comment below.

In the case of the Lord Ruler, we encounter a Terrisman that has been in touch with divine powers, and that has a powerful mixture of magical arts, feruchemy, and allomancy. This has allowed him to be extremely long-lived and has granted him access to extreme strength, but that figure is far distant from the god emperor we are presented with. From the beginning of the book, he is depicted as this massive force that has created and saved Scadrial. Far from the truth, we later discover that he is a vengeful Terrisman named Rashek, who ended the life of the true Hero of Ages and took all the power for himself.

Furthermore, another of the great capacities that he is thought to have is immortality. This is mentioned several times when our protagonists are searching for a method to end him. As we see later on, this is not real either. Despite having a great regenerative factor among other abilities, when separated from his feruchemical bracelets, he is easily defeated.

Something similar happens with Kelsier, the Survivor. Being the only skaa that had survived the punishment of the Pits of Hatshin, his name starts to be known, and all kinds of feats are attributed to him. The truth is that, after witnessing the death of his lover in the pits as she saved him, he Snaps, a process which we have discussed in section 4.2.1. After obtaining his Mistborn powers, he escapes his punishment while avenging his lover. But not only this, other actions that he performs, such as smiling at all times, even in times of sorrow, add to his legend.

However, he does not deny this legend, but instead he uses it in his favor, as we see several times during the development of the story. This legend is only extolled after his death as a martyr. Even more, when the Kandra OreSeur acts as him in resurrection fashion, becoming a symbol. The product of this is the creation of the Church of the Survivor, whose members worship Kelsier as a kind of savior. But, as it happened with Lord Ruler's case, his religion and most of the beliefs around his figure are hearsay.

4.4.3 Inanimate Yet Legendary Elements

In this final category, we have three elements that are indeed magical, but the legend around them, as it happened in the previous category, has been magnified. The three examples that we find here are the mist, the eleventh metal, and the Well of Ascension.

In the case of the mist, as we see from the very beginning, the skaa population in general has an irrational fear of it, for “Men who venture into the mist lose their souls(...)” (6). We could argue that this is a pathological fear that has been inherited from one generation to another or could be another tool used to control the skaa. The reasoning behind this idea is that the fear will make them stay in their huts with no necessity for surveillance. Another argument that could support this idea is that nobles do not share this fear, as they do not require being controlled. All this, nonetheless, is a mere theory, as it is never stated in the novels. Apart from the mist itself, the fear might also be related to the legends of the creatures that emerge when the mist appears, such as the mistwraiths. Still, the mist, as it happened with the mistwraiths, is merely harmless.

Another element of this category is the eleventh metal or malatium. Being treated as a legend throughout most of the story, it was thought to give a special ability that could be used to defeat the Lord Ruler. Far from reality, it gives the allomancer the ability to see who a person was in the past or who they could have been, had they made different choices. While it is true that to a certain extent, the use of this metal gives Vin some clues of who is in reality the Lord Ruler, it has no combat power, which is what Kelsier was expecting to obtain due to its legend.

Finally, we have the Well of Ascension. This legendary location was part of the Terrisan religion, which predicted that a chosen human known as the Hero of Ages would make a journey to this destination. The goal of this journey was to obtain the divine power that resided in the well, ascending as a god-like creature. While there is truth in the fact that the Well had this power, as the Lord Ruler obtained it and completed the Ascension. In the process, he gained several abilities, but most of those divine powers faded away. Then,

from the god-like creature the legend promised, we are left with a powerful human, who is far from the ascended sliver of god he was supposed to be.

All of these legendary elements that we have discussed have a common feature: they are part of a society's folklore. As we have observed, sometimes, folklore is different depending on the social stratum we are studying. This is related to how the social order shapes the beliefs and behavior of the population, as we have acknowledged when discussing this book's society. What this means is that, in the narrative we have built around this book, we find that its mythology works in favor of the coherent development of the dystopia. We can make an association between how the skaa built certain beliefs and how restrictive the control over this social class is. Their lack of instruction and null access to information makes the perfect match with this less extensive mythology. We have the presence of the magic element, as there is indeed mythology, but in this instance, it is used to develop a complex dystopian issue. This, as it happened when explaining previous elements, resonates with Howe's suggestions about dystopian fiction.

5. Conclusions

Throughout this undergraduate dissertation, we have reviewed what we considered the most relevant constituents of fantasy and dystopian fiction in the context of *The Final Empire*. This has granted us the opportunity of observing how the connections we have established and portrayed with examples of the book seem to be proof enough that our initial premises ought to be considered.

The elements of both genres are essential for the story to develop this specific way. In fact, this symbiosis, as we have seen in section 4.3.2, is taken to a point where the components of the magic element benefit from the presence of dystopian features and vice versa. The authoritarian model is respected and well implemented and there is an undeniable presence of tension in the story thanks to elements such as the trust and betrayal issue. All of this while still respecting the foundations of fantasy, the presence of a sophisticated magic system and a small yet rounded mythology.

We believe it is inconceivable for all of this to be the result of multiple coincidences. As we have also observed, there is a meticulous balance in the incorporation of these elements into the development of the story. Had this detail not been paid attention, we would have obtained an extremely incoherent novel, which is the opposite of what we have dealt with. Each dystopian constituent has been thoughtfully accommodated for their fantasy counterparts to be a perfect match. And so it happens the other way around.

Therefore, we argue that this research, apart from proving the existence of the dystopian fantasy, has also allowed us to establish a discussion regarding the state of the genre distribution in general. The implications of this are that there could be several subgenres that are an outcome of amalgamation which are not taken into consideration at this moment and should be given a fitting label. As a final remark, we have to acknowledge that the research proves our premises to be correct only in the book of our study. For this, it could be argued that *The Final Empire* works as an isolated example, thus not serving as a paradigm. Nevertheless, we believe that

this paper offers a delimited framework whose theoretical notions might be applied to any other comparable literary work. This offers us the possibility of expanding this research, although our stance is that the results would still be favorable.

6. Works Cited

- Attebery, Brian. "Introduction: Fantasy and Oral Tradition." *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, vol. 29, no. 2 (102), (2018). pp. 175-178.
- Butler, David. *Fantasy Cinema: Impossible Worlds on Screen*, Wallflower, 2009.
- Clute, John, and John Grant. *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*. Orbit, 1999.
- Coleridge, Samuel T. *Biographia Literaria*, excerpted in *Selected Poetry and Prose*, ed. Donald R. Stauffer, 1951, pp. 379-380.
- Curcic, Dimitrije. "WordsRated", 12 Jan. 2023, wordsrated.com/fantasy-book-sales-statistics/
- Cziganyik, Zsolt. *Utopian Horizons: Ideology, Politics, Literature*. Central European University Press, 2017.
- Drout, Michael D.C, and Shippley Thomas. "Literature, Twentieth Century: Influence of Tolkien." *J.R.R. Tolkien Encyclopedia: Scholarship and Critical Assessment*, Routledge, 2013. pp. 376-380.
- Han, John J., et al. *Worlds Gone Awry: Essays on Dystopian Fiction*. McFarland, 2018.
- Herman, David, et al. *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*. Routledge, 2008.
- James, Edward, and Farah Mendlesohn. *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature*. Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- McLean, Iain, and Alistair McMillan. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Politics*. Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Mill, John S. *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, Volume XXIX - Public and Parliamentary Speeches Part II*. University of Toronto Press, 1869.

Nicholls, Peter, and Mike Ashley. "Pulp." *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*. Eds. John Clute and David Langford. SFE Ltd/Ansible Editions, 20 Feb. 2023. sf-encyclopedia.com/entry/pulp.

Norledge, Jessica. *The Language of Dystopia*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2022.

Sanderson, Brandon. "How Would You Describe Your Writing Style?" *Brandon Sanderson Faqsite*, 14 Oct. 2018, faq.brandonsanderson.com/knowledge-base/how-would-you-describe-your-writing-style/.

Sanderson, Brandon. *The Final Empire*. Tor Books, 2007.

Sargent, Lyman Tower. "Utopia—the Problem of Definition." *Extrapolation*, vol. 16, no. 2, 1975, pp. 137–148, <https://doi.org/10.3828/extr.1975.16.2.137>.

Stockwell, Peter. *Poetics of Science Fiction*. Routledge, 2000.

Walters, James R. *Fantasy Film: A Critical Introduction*. Berg, 2011.