Into the Space: Analysis of the Impact of Space and Technology in Selected Stories of Ray Bradbury's *The Illustrated Man*

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Kim Stanley Robinson declared Ray Bradbury "one of the first break-out stars from the Science Fiction community into mainstream American culture."[1] Bradbury's writing shows the potentiality for the science fiction genre to incorporate a diverse palette of sub-genres, and as a medium for understanding and forewarning the repercussions of advanced technology. *The Illustrated Man* (1951), one of Bradbury's major short story collections, is predominantly concerned with escape from the mundane normative life or towards a magnificent space journey. In these stories, the element of escape, embedded in desire, comes from the weariness of normative life, and any institution (including marriage as well as scientific institutions) becomes a restrictive figure. For the characters, space here—whether in the literal sense or in the carving of alternate space, with its expansive chaos—offers an escape from the confinement of the restrictive economy. Bradbury illustrates the navigation of the human psyche amidst the technological avalanche, and does so by exploiting "cognitive estrangement".[2] This technique renders the strange familiar through the distorted or exaggerated version of reality. The setting of *The Illustrated Man*, initially an alternate Wisconsin and occasionally on other planets, constructs a new estranged world for readers who, throughout the narratives, come to recognize it as an exaggerated version of their impending reality. While the setting in Bradbury's work is one of the crucial aspects of excoriating the technological impact on society, it is the exploration of human emotions that accentuates, as

[1] Quoted in David Seed, *Ray Bradbury* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2015),11.

[2] A defining characteristic of science fiction, according to Suvin. See Darko Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), 4.

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Damon Knight has articulated, "the fundamental prerational fears and longings and desires: the rage at being born; the will to be loved; the longing to communicate; the hatred of parents and siblings, the fear of things that are not self."[3] This paper aims to present, through selected short stories from *The Illustrated Man,* the intersectionality of space, fantasy, and desire as powerful potentials to not only understand Ray Bradbury's vision but also to contemplate technology's relational impact on humans.

The core theme of the collection, seeking escape, is foregrounded in the narrative from the bookend "Prologue"—in the carnival setting. The unnamed illustrated man's initial attempt to escape the pain of a broken leg led him to a fateful decision: to undergo a tattooing procedure.[4] However, the skin illustration shop's mysterious tattoo artist, an old woman with mystical abilities, alters his course of escape by turning him into a totem of stories concerned with escape. The old woman here is anything but ordinary, and looks "a thousand years old one moment and twenty years old the next, but […] she could travel in time."[5] Her illustrations cover his whole body, which not only presents eighteen tales but also the fate of the observer of the illustrations. Each illustration in itself is a canvas within which a particular story unfolds in an animated form. The use of visual mediums is a notable aspect of Bradbury's works; in his essay "Art and Science Fiction" he emphasized the role of visuality, such as illustrations and artworks, in our quotidian lives as well as in the SF genre, which he pronounced "the fiction of ideas,"[6] and how constructing the text in a visualized format brings out the essence of this genre—as it tethers on the imaginative aspect of the text. The primacy of visuality and the act of seeing in his stories show a multiplicitous understanding of our relation to a technological world—for example, in the story "I, Rocket" (1944), where the story is narrated by the rocket itself, thereby restructuring the angle or the gaze of the observer so that a new understanding of our positionality is created. The possibility of an alternate space other than the familiar in Bradbury's stories provides a site where the complicacy within human disposition in the face of technological advancements can be explored.

The following discussion considers three major aspects of space in *The Illustrated Man*.

I. Destroyer and Destroyed

The Illustrated Man's first story, "The Veldt," explores the experience of the Hadley family in the Happylife Home, an advanced mode of residence where automated systems embedded in the house cater to its inhabitants' needs and provide them with an alternate space, the nursery, where imaginations have the potential to become a part of reality through the mere act of thinking. The nursery has been installed to improve the imagination and cognitive abilities of the children, Peter

[3] Damon Knight, "When I Was in Kneepants: Ray Bradbury," in *Bloom's Modern Critical Views:Ray Bradbury*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York, NY: Chelsea House Publishers, 2001), 4.

[4] Phil Nichols, "The Illustrating Man: Photos, Paintings and Tattoos in the Short Stories of Ray Bradbury" (Conference paper presented at The Image In The Short Story In English, Université Angers, March 2010). https://www.academia.edu/468520/The_Illustrating_Man_Photos_Paintings_and_Tattoos_in_the_Short_Stories_of_Ray_Bradbury

[5] Ray Bradbury, "Prologue," in *The Illustrated Man* (United Kingdom: Harper Collins, 2013), 5. Note that the table of contents of *The Illustrated Man* varies between editions, with significant differences in the story selections contained in the respective US and UK editions.

[6] David Seed, *Ray Bradbury* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017),12.

and Wendy, but instead, it brings to life their repressed destructive emotions. The hyperreal projection of the African veldt in the nursery presents an almost tangible sensory experience to its users, but in the course of the story, it starts turn its projection into reality. The parents, George and Lydia, show a delayed realization of the malfunctioning of the room, and their parental negligence furthers the children's destructive symptoms. The veldt's projection serves as a canvas through which the children express their subconscious desire for their parents' demise. It is a potent emotion germinated within them due to their parents' constant absence and rigidity. The family psychiatrist, David McClean, assesses the children's overdependency on technology for emotional needs as an estrangement from their juvenility that has the potential to turn pernicious. McClean argues that the nursery has become a conduit for destructive thoughts. He contends that,

> [t]his room is their mother and father, far more important in their lives than their real parents. And now you come along and want to shut it off. No wonder there's hatred here. You can feel it coming out of the sky. Feel that sun. George, you'll have to change your life […] turn everything off. Start new.[7]

McClean's evaluation unveils the issues in family dynamics, particularly the children's attachment to the nursery, as it becomes an alternate space and escape from parental control for them. George, driven by his determination to regain control over his children's lives, decides to shut off the nursery room along with the entire house. The action triggers an intense emotional response from the children, who go into a state of hysteric withdrawal. Peter's statement, "I wish you were dead,"[8] expresses his deep-seated resentment and hatred for his father. Despite the children's reaction, George remains resilient in his resolve to move away from the Happylife Home. However, the parents' plan remains unsuccessful as the children trap them inside the nursery, where the lions—part of the hyper-realistic projection from the beginning—surround them. In this climactic moment, they finally comprehend the foregrounded projections in the nursery, and the familiarity of the screams they had heard previously, the product of Peter and Wendy's deep animosity towards them. The narrative of the story plays with the momentum of space, the constant back and forth of past, present, and future, as the characters, especially the parents, experience durational time (lived time) simultaneously.

The nursery in the short story presents the liminality of desires. To George and Lydia, the house is primarily a way of cutting off the excess load of day-to-day household activities, whereas for Peter and Wendy, the house, especially the nursery room, succeeds in taking over the parental role by consistently fulfilling their fantasies of escape to exotic spaces and creatures. However, the nursery's hyperreal projection starts fulfilling the urge of parricide within the children; it crosses the threshold of just being a projective technology. This is not just a tale of unsupervised kids or negligent parents, but is also about the hazards of navigating the difficult terrain of new knowledge and tools in too short a period; that is, coping with colossal technological evolution.

In her analysis of the story, Lahna Diskin notes a thread between the names of the characters in James Barrie's *Peter Pan, or The Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up,* and those of the children in Ray Bradbury's "The Veldt." In both works, Wendy and Peter share a common fascination with the concept of never-never land, an alternate dimension that transcends the restrictions and conventions imposed by normative institutions and oppressive adults. This realm

[7] Bradbury, *The Illustrated Man*, 13.

[8] Bradbury, *The Illustrated Man*, 15.

exists beyond the spectrum of time and remains unaffected by the changes. However, Barrie's story allow for the possibility of returning to normality, but in "The Veldt," there is no such return for Peter and Wendy, as even after committing parricide they remain unscathed and unperturbed.[9] Subsequently, the conclusion of the story brings a foreshadowing of impending doom as vultures surround McClean, who had attempted to intervene and alter the children's association with the nursery room. The final scene suggests that the children, driven by their attachment to the hyperreal technology, are willing to destroy anyone who poses a threat to their association with the nursery.

The second story of the collection, "Kaleidoscope," deals with the impact of the spatial void on the human psyche. "Kaleidoscope" begins with the fall of several astronauts as their rocket blows up and they are thrown out into space. This fall unravels in them a disembodiment of the self, transforming their existence from corporeality to auditory noise in outer space. This diminution symbolizes the value of human existence to the vastness of the universe, where our existence is just chatter. In the space void, apart from the dismemberment of their corporality, the astronauts experience a sense of otherness, punctuated by the fracturing of the rocket and the realization of the vulnerability of their minute existence: "space, thousands of miles of space, and these voices vibrating in the center of it. No one visible at all, and only the radio waves quivering and trying to quicken other men into emotion."[10] This distance in the space overwhelms the emptiness and disintegration of their lives. As the narrative progresses, Hollis' dismemberment is presented in an alienated mode where the mutilation happens alongside a humorous realization that "Oh, death in space […] cut[s] you away, piece by piece, like a black and invisible butcher."[11] James Arthur Anderson, in his structuralist reading of the collection, notes that in this story the paradigm of repeated employment of the ellipses here both shortens the time in between the scenes and opens up the depth of seconds that visualizes the prolonged agony of an imminent death/instant death.[12] The comparison of space to a butcher also brings forth an understanding of the immense cruelty of the universe inflicted upon the human race, which is unable to traverse or comprehend space in its entirety. Hence, space, as a major character of the story,[13] demands a dynamic interpretation of the self to the universe. Anderson contends that in Bradbury's stories fantasies come true, but the cost of actualizing them also brings with it a calamitous event. In the end, Hollis' will to live—despite the realization of unfulfilled desires and the impending doom of his journey into the cosmic void—propels him to an unexpected act of self-infliction and harm toward his colleagues. The estrangement of the circumambient atmosphere leaves Hollis grappling with the harsh reality of his mortality and unfulfilled aspirations. This internal conflict is demonstrated in a moment of meanness. Accelerated by a desperate desire to assert control, and debilitated by Applegate's hurtful remarks, he chooses to silence a fellow astronaut's incessant screaming and degrade the achievements of his colleague, Lespere, juxtaposing his happy life with his unfulfilled life. The binary of speech/silence presents a symbolic order in the story; until the astronauts can

[9] Lahna Diskin, "Bradbury on Children" in *Writers of the 21st Century: Ray Bradbury,* ed. Martin Harry Greenberg and Joseph D. Olander (New York, NY: Taplinger, 1980), 152.

[10] Bradbury, *The Illustrated Man*, 26.

[11] Bradbury, *The Illustrated Man*, 29.

[12] James Anderson, *The Illustrated Bradbury* (San Bernadino, CA: Borgo Press, 1990), 24.

[13] Anderson, *The Illustrated Bradbury,* 25.

hear each others' voices, a minute hope for survival and connection is alive, but as their voices fade or are silenced, life "resembles the flicker of bright film"—an ephemeral event.[14]

The question of the quality of death raised by Hollis in his subsequent rumination highlights a negation of the negated life: "If one has already died once, then what was there to look for in dying for good and all, as he was now?"[15] This occurrence of negation accords in him an acceptance of the discontentment of his life:

> And I? thought Hollis. What can I do? Is there anything I can do now to make up for a terrible and empty life? If only I could do one good thing to make up for the meanness I collected all these years and didn't even know was in me! But there's no one here but myself, and how can you do good all alone? You can't.[16]

The space brings out the concealed emotions within the astronauts—the positive and negative emotional approaches dominant in their lives are shown to chain the connection between desire and regret. Applegate grapples with his long-concealed animosity towards Hollis, so for the final act, he strategically employs the false revelation of blackballing him from the Rocket Company to hurt Hollis so as to gain a sense of superiority even amid their demise into nothingness. The captain faces a sense of powerlessness in the face of the uncontrolled descent, as the lack of control or plan to rectify their condition leaves him with a realization of feebleness in the illusion of power contained in the authority and certainty of his role. Hollis carries the regret of never confronting his fear of being in a relationship, ultimately opting for space travel as a means of escaping his inability to live the desired life. However, at the threshold of death, this unfulfilled desire generates within him a will to live once again. On the other hand, Lespere and Stone take a relatively positive approach toward their impending doom. Lespere is at peace with his imminent death, as he has no regrets about his life. Stone experiences awe in his death as he gets immersed amidst the Myrmidone cluster, surrounded by kaleidoscopic colors. Amid the silent, faded voices of his colleagues, Hollis succumbs to his inevitable death in the form of a meteor as seen from Earth. Before his death, he wonders if anyone will see him; this desire within Hollis for someone to understand him shows how the void brings out the importance of minute but significant needs of quotidian life. The story ends with a boy getting excited because he gets to see a falling star, which Hollis now is. The end in itself highlights the impact of desire, as it is one of the factors that drives us to live and find joy within ourselves. Both stories under this section start off the collection with the general frame of technology as destroyer and humans as destroyed. However, "Kaleidoscope" presents a layered dimension of understanding of humans as destroyed, as the end signifies a ray of fulfillment amidst the destruction, while "The Veldt" deals with the ethical complications of bringing up children in an advanced world, presenting a bleak outlook for the next generations.

II. Can We Hope for Survivance?

This section considers the form of survivance amidst the exterritorial colonial project and the sustaining of creativity in an age of technological advancement. "The Exiles" shows the cruelty of

[14] Anderson, *The Illustrated Bradbury,* 24.

[15] Bradbury, *The Illustrated Man*, 29.

[16] Bradbury, *The Illustrated Man*, 31.

the human colonial project on Mars. Narrated in a humorous tone, the progression of scientific rationality has banished any literary work that contains supernatural elements. Thus, the narrative comments on the issue of censorship and its ramifications for creative and literary space. Set against the backdrop of Mars, the story follows a group of authors and their literary characters. Edgar Allan Poe, Ambrose Bierce, Charles Dickens, William Shakespeare, Algernon Blackwood, Robert Louis Stevenson, and L. Frank Baum all find themselves exiled from Earth on account of the content of their works. These authors desire to exist and for their literary legacy to prevail. Yet this inclination to persist and preserve oneself amidst exaltation generates an otherness in them. Most of the banished authors, such as Poe, Bierce, Blackwood, and Shakespeare, have accepted their exiled status and endeavor to retaliate against their oppressors. But it is in Dickens' figure that the rejection of the self is present. He declares, " I don't belong here, anyway. My books were burned by mistake. I'm no supernaturalist, no writer of horrors and terrors like you, Poe; you, Bierce, or the others. I'll have nothing to do with you terrible people!"[17]

Dickens' abhorrence against authors like Poe, Bierce, and others reflects the supposed scientific rationality of the exclusion of fantasy works and, on the other hand, indicates a dissociative stance from his works. Dickens' intermediality here raises a complicated issue in the literary space regarding the authorial stance on categorization and intentionality of texts. Bradbury himself resisted the categorization of his works as science fiction, since for him, "[s]cience fiction is really sociological studies of the future, things that the writer believes are going to happen by putting two and two together."[18] The story also discusses the immortal nature of authors and their works: as long as the texts exist and people remember them, the author achieves a form of immortality. However, it also renders the authors in a vulnerable position, as the survival of the authors depends on the continued existence of their texts.

The story begins with Shakespeare's three witches performing a ritual that impacts the human invaders. The humans do not have any scientific evidence to support their belief, yet they recognize the persistent supernatural effect on them before their departure, "[b]ats, needles, dreams, men dying for no reason. I'd call it witchcraft in another day. But this is the year 2120, Smith. We're rational men. This all can't be happening. But it is!"[19] The only conceivable rationale for the supernatural predicament stems from the books they had banned. These books, "the last copies, kept for historical purposes in the locked museum vaults,"[20] serve as their sole means to obliterate an author's existence and cease all supernatural events. Although the act itself is successful in terminating most of the authors' corporeality, humans overlooked the integral impact of these literary works on their lives, as the texts persist in their collective memory, as evident in Smith's remembrance of the Emerald City from Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900). Consequently, the potentiality of L. Frank Baum's being alive as a result of Smith's memory is here. In the end, the captain orders Smith to report for psychoanalysis, as Smith's remembrance in itself is an act of corruption. The books here take on an alternate dimension of space that has the potential of a vortex-like influence on humankind for generations and how it has the means to persist despite all the repressive adversities.

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[17] Ray Bradbury, *The Illustrated Man*, 119.

[18] Harold Lee Prosser and R M P, "A Demand for 'The Social-Sciences Perspective," *Science Fiction Studies* 11, no. 1 (1984): 106–7, http://www.jstor.org/stable/4239607.

[19] Bradbury, *The Illustrated Man*, 114.

[20] Bradbury, *The Illustrated Man*, 114.

III. Is there Space for Us?

This section focuses on the site of space itself and how the intersectionality of desire, escape and space is navigated amidst the family structure.

"The Rocket Man" deals with the impact of space exploration on a family which struggles with the consequences of space travel. The narrative unfolds through the point of view of the son, Doug, who narrates his experience of alienation due to his father's homecomings from interplanetary journeys. Central to the narrative is the exploration of all the characters' unfulfilled desires around space itself. While his father's interplanetary journeys inspire him to be a Rocket Man, he is also aware of the emotional strain of being a part of a rocketeer's family. In the case of Doug's mother, Lily, the estrangement relegates her to a state of distanced self who conceptualizes her husband in an already deceased frame—a protective measure against the constant uncertainty and potential loss associated with his vocation. Despite her attempt at distancing herself, Doug recognizes her psychological dependence upon her husband. This dependence is instantiated by mundane yet significant acts—such as letting the grass in the garden grow in anticipation of her husband's return so that he can tend it, and leaving the broken electronics as they are, so that he will repair them—accentuating the complexity within Lily, who remains in a perpetual stasis of waiting. The estrangement causes in Doug an intermedial state of a certain distance from his father, and a compulsion to perform the role of the filial child in front of his father. He is acutely aware of the recursive patterns of his father's transition from interplanetary returns to subsequent absences. The father's deliberate avoidance of any account of his journeys during the initial night of homecoming signals a temporary immersion in domesticity, but this anchoring exists for only a brief period, as both of them anticipate the father's inevitable return to space while yearning for an alternative outcome.

Doug, in conversation with his father about space, asks a generic question, "What's it like, out in space?"[21] — instead of articulating the issues regarding his absence, such as why didn't he bring any gifts from his interplanetary travels for him, as other fathers do for their children, or why didn't his father show any interest in his life? Raising these questions opens up the eventuality of suffering and disappointment. His father's conflicted acknowledgment of initially expressing exhilaration of space travel, and the subsequent downplaying of it as routine to comfort his family, reveals how his aporic stance articulates the paradox of yearning for the place where he is not—"[b]ecause when you're out there you want to be here, and when you're here you want to be out there. Don't start that. Don't let it get hold of you."[22] The Earth, its familial relationship, and the commitment to normative life fail to bind him for any length of time. However, Space and its magnificent allure become a spectral site through the absence of normative life, rendering his existence in both spaces an escape and a confinement. The father's promise, towards the conclusion, of a last journey to space and the subsequent settlement on Earth takes a tragic turn as his ship falls into the sun. Even though Doug and Lily had prepared themselves for the possibility of such an event, the news significantly disturbs them. Earlier, the nighttime was a bane for Lily due to her husband's preference for stars over her; now both Lily and Doug have altered their routine to avoid the sun, for example, "breakfast at midnight and lunch at three in the morning,

[21] Bradbury, *The Illustrated Man*, 81.

[22] Bradbury, *The Illustrated Man*, 85.

and dinner at the cold dim hour of 6 a.m. We went to all-night shows and went to bed at sunrise,"[23] and the only days they ever went for a walk were rainy days. The alterity of normative life due to the volatility of Space raises the issue of the influence of desire in the face of eradicating oneself from normativity, and exploring the extraordinary at the cost of the ordinary.

In contrast, the last story in the book, "The Rocket," presents a slightly different perspective on desire and the influence of Space in the family. The protagonist, Fiorello Bodoni, is fascinated with rockets, and dreams of traveling to Mars. His desire to escape his mundane state of existence and experience the freedom and transcendence of being a rocketeer is evident from the opening of the story: "[f]or a few moments he would be free of the smells of old food in the small house by the river. For a silent moment he would let his heart soar alone into space, following the rockets."[24] Furthermore, through Bodoni's and Bramante's conversation about rockets, a different perspective on conformity towards mundanity is presented as a rational choice, as Bramante believes that Bodoni's desire is unrealistic within a world of social inequality, as the ability to fly rockets and partake in the development and comfort of technology is reserved solely for the privileged class, thereby perpetuating a sense of social inequality and exclusion among the lower class, as evident from the phrase "[t]his is a rich man's world."[25] However, Bodoni expresses his determination to use his hard-earned savings of three thousand dollars to fulfill his desire to fly to Mars, driven by the allure of the rockets that he hears every night, and the longing to experience something extraordinary. Bramante considers Bodoni's aspirations as injudicious and reminds him of the potential consequences of his action on his family, such as resentfulness, yearning, and obsession for the unattainable experience Bodoni would have had, which will lead to a lifelong struggle of unfulfilled desires. Here, traveling to space itself is an act of transcendence. To counter the negative possibilities of such aspirations, Bramante suggests Bodoni "buy a new wrecking machine, which you need, and pull your dreams apart with it, and smash them to pieces,"[26] thus pushing him toward an unfantastic and grounded road.

Bodoni, although cognizant of Bramante's argument, can't let go of his desire to travel to Mars in a rocket, so in the afternoon, after receiving an offer of a rocket ship, Bodoni decides to withdraw money from the bank to buy the broken rocket, as even with its flaw the rocket encapsulates all his aspirations, and a minute potentiality of fulfilling them. He sits in the pilot's seat of the broken rocket and imagines taking off, but when take-off doesn't actualize, it leads him to frustration and dejection. Bodoni then makes an unexpected decision to give his family a fantastical experience of the journey to Mars on the rocket ship. He exhausts his bank account to make the necessary modifications to the rocket and create the illusion of space around the rocket, to give his children a memorable experience of an outer space trip that he never had in his life. Bodoni successfully maintains the illusion of the rocket's journey to the children for days without a hitch. Eventually, the fantastical journey comes to an end, and the family walks back to their home.

The twist here in the story, unlike that of "The Rocket Man," highlights Bradbury's vision of prioritizing human relationships over absolute dependence on technology, but also raises the conflict between reality and fantasy for humans. For Bradbury, fantasy is a significant part of

[23] Bradbury, *The Illustrated Man*, 88.

[24] Bradbury, *The Illustrated Man*, 155.

[25] Bradbury, *The Illustrated Man*, 156.

[26] Bradbury, *The Illustrated Man*, 156.

human life, and this stance is carried forward in his vision of science fiction, which isn't embroiled with technicalities and scientific jargon but focuses on the main subject—humans. His preoccupation with humans isn't limited to presenting a unidimensional perspective but is entangled in the difficulty of understanding them in relation to contemporary or potential technological developments. One such case can be seen in "The Rocket," where even after fulfilling his children's dream, Bodoni is posited in a liminal position between his desire and reality, unable to fulfill his dream of interplanetary travel.

However, a noted setback of *The Illustrated Man* is its primary focus on *men* and technology: female characters are mostly relegated to the background, or to a dismal state. The theme of desire and fantasy with female characters could broaden the horizons of the collection, especially how technology is able to provide resources to reduce any unequal status to a certain level in society. Even regarding the subject of space exploration, the focus on female characters as rocketeers could have the potential to explore family dynamics in relation to it in depth, as most of the female characters are depicted stereotypically with the role of either mothers or wives.

Conclusion

Through three sections, this paper has shown how Bradbury's disillusionment with technology is reflected from the dichotomy of destroyer and destroyed to its reverberations in the literary community in the Prologue and five key stories.

The Illustrated Man, in its criticism of the romanticization of space travel, a strand of hope for survivance amidst the detrimental effects of constant exposure to advanced technology, engages with the issues of adaptation and co-existence as they hold a major part in our world. However, this collection also prompts one to reflect on the conditions of the late 1940s era and the contemporary oversaturated technological landscape and its impacts on our lives, as the stories still provide a relatable context to readers.

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Abstract

Ray Bradbury's *The Illustrated Man* (1951) presents space as a convoluted site of exploring one's inherent desire to carve a space for oneself or to explore extraordinary spaces. The stories variously examine how space technology provides an anticipation of freedom from the normative life, cumulating the desire for the other, unknown world, and show how the liminality (or the failure) of desire, results in the emergence of cataclysmic events or unresolved ends. Each story unwinds into different aspects of the theme, examining how the desire for space and to be in space affects individuals, families, and society as a whole.

The present paper analyzes key stories from the collection—namely "Prologue," "The Veldt," "Kaleidoscope," "The Rocket Man," "The Exiles," and "The Rocket"—to explore the intersectionality of space, fantasy, and desire as powerful components in understanding the impact of technology, as well as the subsequent gap created by it within ourselves.

Keywords *The Illustrated Man*, space travel, "The Rocket Man"