

THE IMAGINED CITY IN SILO (APPLE TV, 2023) An urban design as a tool of social conditioning

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ABSTRACT

The television series Silo (Graham Yost, 2023–present), streamed on the Apple TV platform and based on the novels by Hugh Howey, depicts a vertically structured city buried hundreds of levels underground. Set in a dystopian future where climatic conditions have rendered the Earth uninhabitable, this urban design aims not only to preserve the lives of the survivors but also to organise, hierarchise, and subjugate them. This article analyses how, in this work of fiction, the city's spatial configuration functions as a mechanism of social conditioning, promoting stability and the management of vital resources, often at the expense of individual freedoms and personal development.

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1. Introduction

The aim of this article is to analyse the television series *Silo* (Yost, 2023), an Apple TV original production. This work aligns with the classic themes of science fiction literature, particularly those concerning the construction of utopian or dystopian worlds and societies. The series is based on Hugh Howey's literary saga, which began as self-published short stories on Amazon and was later compiled into three volumes with the support of a publishing house (Howey, 2023a; O'Reilly, 2014). The collection was well received by both critics and the general public, generating interest from various film companies seeking to adapt the story for the big screen. Ultimately, Graham Yost led the development of the television adaptation for Apple TV. At the time of writing this article, a second season has already been confirmed, continuing the original narrative.

Howey himself states (2023b) that his principal inspirations include Plato's allegory of the cave, as well as the enduring tension between Hobbesian and Lockean worldviews. His fiction also clearly draws on classic dystopian references, most notably Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), and, perhaps to a lesser extent, Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* (1953).

Howey's work incorporates the key elements that Aulestia and Páez (2017, p. 449) identify as characteristic of cinematic dystopias: socio-political, ecological-telluric, technological, and biological. It also reflects the tropes that Vial-Dumas (2024, p. 5) highlights as recurrent in science fiction dystopias: an all-powerful and omnipresent political force, embodied in an authoritarian or oppressive state apparatus, and a technological component employed to enforce rigid and pervasive control over the population.

The aim of this article is to explore how the urban design of an imagined city can function as a mechanism of social conditioning, ensuring stability and the management of vital resources, even at the cost of individual freedom and personal development.

1.1. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative methodology through a case analysis of audiovisual sequences in *Silo* that highlight the structural and architectural features of its urban environment, especially regarding their impact on individual freedom and personal development. This type of analysis has proven effective in previous studies of both television fiction (Huerta Floriano & Pérez Morán, 2024) and film fiction (Calvete-Lorenzo et al., 2024).

The sample consists of the entire first season, which was the only one released at the time of writing, comprising ten episodes. However, for contextual purposes, and given that the series is an adaptation, occasional reference will be made to the literary texts by Hugh Howey on which the audiovisual work is based: the novels *Wool* (2012), *Shift* (2013), and *Dust* (2013).

Additionally, works cited by Howey himself on his website as key influences (Howey, 2024), most notably Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, will serve as a theoretical framework for analysis.

1.2. Plot Summary

Silo presents a dystopian future in which the planet's atmosphere has become incompatible with life, forcing humanity to take refuge underground. For centuries, society has inhabited a vast structure designed as a nuclear shelter with a capacity for ten thousand people. The inhabitants of this society have long since forgotten or, more accurately, erased their history. They do not know how long they have lived in these conditions, nor how much longer they will remain.

Apart from a few prominent members of the community, the inhabitants are unaware whether other silos like theirs exist or where they might be located. The only certainty is that anyone requesting to go outside faces certain death and that is an event broadcast live to the community on screens placed in common areas of the complex.

The first season follows the investigation of several crimes within the silo. The narrative culminates in the protagonist, Juliette Nichols, leaving the structure and discovering not only the possibility of life outside but also the existence of several other silos with which her own has no communication.

The narrative in the literary work reveals that humanity has been confined within fifty silos sharing similar characteristics. The architects of these vast structures are the same individuals responsible for the planet's devastation, making both the destruction and the subsequent confinement part of a single,

deliberate plan. Inhabitants of several silos eventually become aware of their predicament and attempt to escape, aided by the silo builders themselves, who have extended their lifespans for centuries through nanotechnology.

2. Analysis: The Urban Design in the *Silo* Series

2.1. Vertical City Structure and Form

The silo is constructed on a vertical concrete foundation, extending hundreds of metres below the Earth's surface. It has more than 140 levels and contains residential flats arranged for families living one above another, much like a conventional multi-storey building. At the surface, just above the long ramp marking the sole exit to the outside, a video camera functions like a periscope, providing inhabitants with a real-time view of the planet's poisoned atmosphere.

One might question what qualifies as urban in a structure that, both structurally and functionally, resembles a single building. However, it would be erroneous to regard the silo merely as a flat block.

Firstly, the population of the silo is approximately ten thousand inhabitants, occasionally exceeding this limit, although strict rules and regulations govern population control, as will be discussed later. Ten thousand people constitute a significant population for a neighbourhood community.

Population fluctuations primarily result from natural growth. Inhabitants live their entire lives within the silo, from birth to death, generation after generation. Notably, the remains of the deceased are not interred in cemeteries but are buried in the crop farms beside ripe fruits to accelerate decomposition, as depicted in episode 5, *The Janitor's Boy* (Yost, 2023b). In this way, the dead nourish the living in a continuous cycle, rendering the silo akin to a terrarium or an ant colony.

Secondly, extending the colony analogy, the silo functions not only as a physical structure but also as a social system governed by a codified set of rules known as The Pact, and organised through various interdependent processes. The lower floors house the Mechanical and Supply departments, responsible primarily for maintaining the generators that power the entire structure, as shown throughout the series. The intermediate floors contain hydroponic farms and livestock stables, providing fresh food to the population, visible from the opening scenes of episode 1, *Freedom Day* (Yost, 2023a). The upper floors accommodate the IT department, which manages inhabitants' information, regulates birth rates, and oversees external exploration. Beneath all floors lie the waste management and recycling systems, healthcare services, and crucially, the judicial, police, and political systems, complete with a judge, sheriff, and mayor.

Throughout the first season of the television drama, the main plot is set in motion by a series of murders that threaten the Police department and appear to be deliberately concealed by the judicial system. One of the victims is the mayor, who, in an act with clear electoral undertones, had decided to traverse the hundreds of metres of the silo's vertical structure, greeting its inhabitants and voters. These events are depicted in episodes 2, *Holston's Pick* (Blair & Pappas, 2023), and 3, *Machines* (Escajeda, 2023).

Consequently, the silo functions as far more than a mere building; it operates as a full municipality, a colony within a terrarium. In other words, it constitutes an urban environment. This understanding gains added significance when considering the literary work not yet adapted for television, which features not a single silo but fifty. When the story's protagonist is expelled from Silo 18 by corrupt authorities, she unexpectedly survives and finds refuge in Silo 17, where she confronts a system in decline. This can be understood, metaphorically, as an inter-urban journey.

Peter Preston and Paul Simpson-Housley argue in *Writing the City* (1994) that a city is more than a demographic or economic aggregation; it is also defined by an "emotional and sensitive" dimension (Preston & Simpson-Housley cited in Tünzün, 2018, p. 174). The silo represents the entire ecosystem familiar to its inhabitants throughout their lives. Beyond its walls, life appears impossible. It serves as an extreme example of "climate urbanism" (Long & Rice, 2019), wherein the urban infrastructure is designed fundamentally, and almost exclusively, to preserve life in a climate that is otherwise inhospitable.

In this context, design criteria focus on creating a resilient environment grounded in multiple logical variables such as connectivity, adaptive spatial design, and structural robustness (Çubuk, 2023), while

deliberately excluding elements deemed non-essential for survival. However, as we will observe, the ultimate objective also encompasses ensuring death.

The design of the complex is predominantly urban and industrial, although certain levels include spaces typical of the primary sector, such as crop farms and livestock facilities. The miners' guild, which is prohibited from digging horizontally, deposit their extracted materials into a concrete structure where most resources are recycled. Beyond the Mechanical and Supply departments, the majority of inhabitants are employed in the tertiary sector, including merchants, IT specialists, and civil servants. The silo also features cafeterias, canteens, a market area, and an electric generator that serves as the vital heart sustaining the entire structure.

The imagined city deconstructs the structural and communicative foundations of modern urban environments, immersing the viewer in a vertically organised society arranged by floors. It is a city characterised by corridors instead of streets, and an immense central spiral staircase replacing grand avenues. In the literary work, it is revealed that only Silo 1, which is reserved for the developers, possesses an elevator in lieu of the central staircase.

Although the entire silo is enclosed, it is possible to distinguish between private and public spaces based on street furniture and access restrictions. Assuming that all areas without restricted access or private ownership constitute public spaces (Yücel & Uzgör, 2021), the silo contains transit zones, such as corridors and the central staircase, and relaxation areas, including cafeterias located at various levels and those adjacent to the farms. These spaces recur throughout the series, particularly the canteens, which serve as gathering points for inhabitants from both upper and lower floors, as seen from the opening scenes. These canteens hold particular significance and feature large screens projecting images of the outside world.

In addition, cafés and restaurants appear in less prominent locations, for example, a covered terrace along one of the corridors where Sheriff Holston and his wife converse in episode 1, *Freedom Day*, or the dining area near the farms where Mayor Jahns and Deputy Sam share a meal during their election march in episode 3, *Machines*.

All lighting within the silo is artificial, provided either by electrical fixtures or mirror-covered panels installed on the upper ceiling. The concrete walls in communal areas are mostly bare, while coloured tiles or painted walls are visible inside individual flats. Throughout both private and communal spaces, the walls bear the marks of centuries of wear and decay. They are cracked, blackened by time, and dimly lit, which imparts an overall gloomy atmosphere.

This deterioration intensifies in the lower levels. In the Mechanics department, the walls exhibit greater damage with larger cracks and sections nearing collapse, accompanied by a heavier sense of gloom. Around the massive generator, walls remain unpolished, and the yellowish glow of sodium-vapour lamps bathes the area.

There is no urban decoration in common areas or passageways, except during the Freedom Day celebration in episode 1, when corridors, balconies, and the central staircase are adorned with colourful banners. However, episodes 2 (*Holston's Pick*) and 5 (*The Janitor's Boy*) briefly reveal graffiti on the lower floors' walls, highlighting the rebellious spirit of the Mechanics department.

2.2. The City's Hidden Neighbourhoods

Several locations in the series stand out by depicting environments beyond the typical confines of the silo. The main ones include the cornfields, the waste chutes, the Surveillance department, and Juliette's lair.

The cornfields first appear in episode 8, *Hanna* (Wang & Escajeda, 2023), where the protagonist's childhood and her mother's attempts to construct a magnifying optical device for more advanced work are revealed. While this area resembles a rural landscape due to its agricultural function and scale, highlighted by a chase scene set there, it is nonetheless characterised by artificial lighting that imparts an uncanny, surreal quality, contrasting sharply with the authenticity of true countryside settings.

The waste chutes are first mentioned in episode 4, *Truth* (Aubuchon, 2023), during a flashback revealing the protagonist's past as a scrap dealer. However, they gain significant narrative importance in episode 10, *Outside* (Golan, 2023), when the protagonist uses them to escape her captors, avoiding detection by the numerous surveillance cameras scattered throughout the facility. These chutes are

large vertical downspouts running the full height of the silo, offering a concealed alternative route between floors, hidden from the main staircase.

The Surveillance department is depicted as a darkened room filled with monitors, where operatives constantly oversee a network of hidden cameras and microphones, which are often concealed behind mirrors throughout the residents' flats. Introduced in episode 6, *The Relic* (Avelino, 2023), this department becomes central to the plot, confirming the viewers' suspicions of the extensive surveillance imposed on the silo's inhabitants.

Perhaps the most mysterious location is the vast cave where Juliette and her murdered partner secretly shared their love. Situated underground beneath the top floor, it is a massive cavity housing an abandoned tunnel-boring machine above a large water tank. This place appears in episode 2, *Holston's Pick*, and represents one of the most significant departures from the literary work, where the cave neither exists nor is known to the protagonist. In the books, Juliette must defy the explicit prohibition against horizontal digging to discover a similar hidden space along the structure's margins.

Another scarcely known space for the silo's inhabitants is the exterior world. Nestled at the bottom of a valley, the only image they have of their surroundings is a small hill topped by a dry tree, visible only through the cafeteria screens. Only those condemned and sent outside gain a broader view, though they rarely survive long enough to share their experiences, and even then, their perceptions do not fully correspond to reality. Juliette Nichols becomes the first and only silo resident to live long enough to walk the hill and, in the final moments of *Outside*, the season's last episode, witness the full scale of the complex: fifty pits housing other silos, and, on the horizon, the ruined cityscape of Atlanta serving as an architectural epitaph.

3. Discussion

3.1. Huxley's City as a Social System

Howey's work, as previously noted, echoes Aldous Huxley's renowned utopia, a connection explicitly acknowledged by the author himself (2023b). Perhaps the most prominent parallel lies in the silo's fundamental order being based on eugenics. While it does not reach the extreme of classic science fiction dystopias where humanity is entirely laboratory-engineered, Howey's narrative establishes human reproduction as a mechanism governed by adaptation, survival, and pedigree.

Procreation is tightly controlled. All women receive contraceptive implants during adolescence, which are only removed when the authorities permit conception through a system known as the "lottery". As detailed in the literary works, this lottery is managed by algorithms within the department, which consider not only the silo's population limits but also physical, mental, and, as suggested in the television adaptation, political traits.

In the series' opening episode, *Freedom Day*, the married couple Sheriff Holston and his wife Allison win the conception lottery, granting them permission to start a family. A doctor, behind a curtain, removes Allison's contraceptive implant. However, swayed by a neighbour's conspiratorial hints, Allison grows convinced that her implant was never actually removed. She eventually confirms this suspicion herself by extracting the intact implant with a kitchen knife. The implication is that a higher authority has judged her unsuitable to reproduce, likely due to her family background, and has chosen deception and manipulation over transparency.

At this point, it is important to recall that, according to the literary work, each of the fifty silos that constitute the survival plan is part of a larger, hierarchical network. This network determines which silo will ultimately be selected for the final phase of survival. According to the creators' master plan, only the silo deemed best adapted, based on probabilistic calculations performed by the central computer servers, will be chosen to inhabit the New Earth when the time comes. The remaining silos will be "shut down", a euphemism for their complete destruction.

Furthermore, whereas in Huxley's *Brave New World* the degree of sedimentation in the embryo flask determines whether individuals develop as Alphas, Betas, or Epsilons, in Howey's narrative it is the urban fabric that enacts this social stratification. In particular, the immense spiral staircase that connects, and simultaneously divides, the various levels of the silo becomes a key symbol and mechanism of this hierarchy.

According to the books, all silos were originally designed to have an elevator each, but these were deliberately removed to influence the social order and structure within. The absence of lifts means that children born on the lower floors tend to remain there, while those born on the upper floors generally stay above. A child born into a family of farmers will likely become a farmer; similarly, the offspring of mechanics usually become mechanics. Those seeking a different life from their parents often end up in undesirable roles such as porters, scrap merchants, or miners, which are occupations that few aspire to. Although transferring between trades, that is, moving from one level of the silo to another, is not explicitly forbidden, the physical configuration of the silo makes such mobility difficult by design.

This is exemplified in the character of Juliette, the protagonist, who, despite being the daughter of a doctor from the middle floors, chooses to flee to the lower levels during adolescence after her mother's suicide and a series of conflicts with her father, as depicted in Episode 4, *Truth*. The frequent references to this anomaly by other characters underscore that such movement is exceptional rather than the norm.

The literary work also indicates that the spiral staircase is the silo's sole means of vertical communication. Only Silo 1, described as the residence of the builders, who have artificially extended their lifespans, has an elevator. All other silos, including Silo 18 where the TV series is set, are explicitly forbidden from designing or constructing any elevator mechanisms or developing new technologies beyond existing ones, such as optical magnification through lenses.

Communication within the silo is also severely restricted. Only members of the security forces have the right to use radio equipment, and even then, only on limited frequencies. Paper is considered a luxury, and electronic communication is similarly constrained. This limited access to communication tools becomes one of the few privileges granted to the protagonist, Juliette, when she is appointed sheriff in episode 4, *Truth*, enabling her to establish contact with other silos. Consequently, interaction among inhabitants is primarily oral and confined to their immediate environment. This, combined with the silo's structural configuration, heavily influences the organization of labour guilds and largely determines the social roles and contributions of its inhabitants. This arrangement strongly echoes Huxley's dystopian vision, in which inter-class interaction is discouraged, fostering a form of class endogamy intended to promote social stability.

However, if there is one theme from Huxley's classic that Howey most clearly draws upon in his dystopian world, it is the deliberate cultivation of ignorance and oblivion. Both authors depict societies wholly alienated from cultural, scientific, historical, and religious traditions. Humanity's collective knowledge has been reduced to a singular, controlled source. In Howey's work, this is embodied in two fundamental texts: *The Pact* and *The Legacy*, the latter accessible only to the heads of Informatics in each silo. All information predating the construction of the silos is strictly forbidden, and all artefacts from that era, referred to as "relics", are immediately confiscated and removed from circulation, whether a hard drive containing classified data or a seemingly innocuous PEZ candy dispenser, as depicted in episode 6, *The Relic*.

This erasure is entirely premeditated. The silo's inhabitants attribute the destruction of the books and servers to a distant revolt unknown to any of the generations currently living within. However, the obliteration of knowledge dates back even further and was deliberately orchestrated by the architects of the silo's construction, who preserved only a privileged fragment of information for those designated to govern each new generation.

These individuals are carefully selected by the IT department and, as detailed in the literary work, must undergo a rigorous process of adaptation and extensive study, culminating in an oath sworn via radio before a superior authority based in Silo 1. This system creates, much like in Huxley's dystopia, a dominant social group that is well-informed and entrusted with governance, while simultaneously constricting the intellectual horizons of the other social sectors, whose knowledge is deliberately limited to what their assigned professions require.

The IT elite gain access to a private chamber through a concealed entrance. It is a sanctum of curated knowledge containing numerous volumes presenting a carefully edited and manipulated history of humanity. This restricted space also serves as a secure refuge, equipped to sustain a single individual for decades, essentially functioning as a bunker within a bunker.

Thus, through its guild-based social stratification, the exclusive control of communication channels like the central staircase, and the allocation of private sanctuaries for the ruling elite, the urban configuration of the silo actively enforces an artificial social order preordained by its designers.

3.2. The City as an Orwellian Superstructure

If anything distinguishes Huxley's work from Orwell's, it is the method by which social order is maintained. In Huxley's dystopia, control is exercised through genetic predetermination, ignorance of reality, and widespread social passivity and conformity, all catalysed by the use of psychotropic substances, most notably the drug *soma*, described as "a single cubic centimetre [that] cures ten melancholic feelings" (Huxley, 2013, p. 69). In contrast, Orwell's vision presents a society in which order is imposed by a powerful state superstructure that subjugates its citizens through propaganda, constant surveillance, torture, and an unending state of war.

As previously noted, Howey's work, along with Yost's adaptation, can be understood as synthesising these two approaches. In addition to the genetic predetermination inherent in the society, the urban configuration itself promotes a form of propaganda enacted live upon all inhabitants: the "cleansings".

Whenever a convict is sentenced to "clean up", or when a suicidal individual voluntarily requests it, the silo door is opened, allowing the person to step outside and face certain death. This act reaches its propagandistic peak through two key manipulations. First, the condemned are dressed in survival suits provided by the silo's governing authorities, ostensibly designed to prolong life. In reality, these suits are engineered to hasten death, with their use serving only to create the false impression that the Ruling department cares for even those condemned to die. Second, the "cleaners" experience an augmented reality through the visors of their suits, showing them a vibrant, thriving external world full of life and greenery. The true purpose of this deception is to coax them into cleaning the lenses of external cameras under the illusion that they are conveying to their fellow inhabitants that the atmosphere outside has become breathable. In truth, their efforts merely allow those inside to see more clearly the harsh reality: a barren wasteland incompatible with life. This grim spectacle reinforces the propaganda of terror that underpins the fragile social stability of all those confined within the silo.

Both the literary and television versions of the story hinge on a dual deception. Allison, her husband the sheriff, and Juliette all come to suspect that the images of the outside world are manipulated. The twist lies in the fact that Allison and her husband are misled by the footage shown on the cafeteria screens, which constantly exposes the population to what appears to be a toxic, post-apocalyptic landscape. Only Juliette comes to understand that the real falsification occurs within the helmets worn by the "cleaners", where a doctored image conceals the truth about the external environment. When she manages to convince her social stratum of mechanics, supply people, and the like, they prepare a genuine insulated cleaner's suit for her. She refuses to be seduced by the false images of her visor, refuses to clean the lenses, and, thanks to the suit, manages to walk over the hill while a revolution breaks out inside her silo, as the falsehood becomes apparent.

Secondly, the surveillance system is integrated into the silo's very structure. From the very first episode of the Apple TV series, the camera angles and detailed shots emphasise Sheriff Holston's interest in covering the mirrors of his flat with large bouquets of flowers. It doesn't take much for viewers to speculate about the existence of video surveillance, a speculation confirmed in the final episodes of the season. In the novels, although this intimate espionage is less explicit, other control systems are alluded to, such as the fact that the managers of Silo 1 possess technology capable of measuring the tension and nervousness of the candidates for head of IT, who is the only true leader of each silo, in the shadows, above even the mayors.

This provides a double surveillance system: one that is exercised secretly by the Judicial department within each of the silos and, the other that is exercised by the administrators of Silo 1 over all of them.

Thirdly, torture is not applied individually but as a generalised punishment to society as a whole through various means. The first and most obvious is emotional. All the inhabitants of the silo are forced to live with the constant reminder of the cause of their confinement. Through the screens set up in canteens and other places, the inhabitants, in addition to seeing the desolation of the outside world, have to endure the image of the decomposing corpses of all those friends and neighbours who have been sent to "clean up". This reminder particularly affects Sheriff Holston, who endures the image of his wife's corpse outside for two years until he himself asks to go out to die with her.

On the other hand, the "rebel" silos are exterminated in an agonising process by decision of Silo 1. As described in the literary work, when a silo is "shut down", the supply of a deadly gas is activated from the intermediate plants via pipelines integrated into its structure. This causes collective unrest and a human avalanche, either downwards, where the inhabitants await death by overcrowding, or upwards

to the surface. After the gas, the silo opens its gates, releasing its terrified inhabitants and exposing them to the nanoparticle-contaminated air outside, which is contaminated, in fact, by the silos' own actions.

The final method of mass execution, once the IT department's algorithm has determined which of all the silos is worthy of inheriting the planet after their scheduled hundreds of years of confinement, is much more expeditious. The silos, as described in the literary work, are designed to collapse within seconds from the remote detonation of explosive charges placed precisely in the central staircase. Silo 1, despite not having stairs, also has this self-destruction system between floors, a system concealed from its inhabitants precisely because of the elevator.

However, if Howey's saga owes anything to Orwell's work, it is the law of silence and the policy of censorship that govern the silo. Sheriff Holston himself, throughout the first episode, demonstrates that he abides by this established norm. In the silo, there are subjects that cannot be named and matters that cannot be discussed on pain of being sent to the mines or "cleaning up" outside. Information and dialogue are either restricted or hindered, as noted above, by the very architectural layout of the space, which is designed not only to protect life but also to obstruct social relations, access to information, and dissent.

3.3. *An Urban Revolution*

The uprising led in the fiction by Juliette Nichols' character is an urban revolution both structurally and culturally, or "conceptually", to use the terminology of Sheppard et al. (2015, p. 1953). As McCann (2017, p. 320) observes, drawing on the work of Swyngedouw (2005), city governance often embodies two opposing forces: the promise of democracy paradoxically coexists with authoritarian practices that result in a democratic deficit. In Howey's work, democracy is merely apparent within the silos' interior context. Elections take place and there is a mayor, but his decision-making power and real authority are severely limited, always subordinated to the external legislation established in The Pact and to the informal control of the IT department, which holds the true power by managing information across all the silos.

Following Long and Rice (2019, p. 1003), as the climate threat increases, the rhetoric of resilience reinforces the political agenda of security over individual freedoms. This particularly affects systems of circulation and reproduction. The silo, or the silos in the literary work, exemplify this reality.

Hugh Howey's work presents an imagined city that defies traditional conventions like no other. It is a complex designed both to house life and to destroy it. An urban infrastructure designed to ensure stability and social order, yet one that ultimately subordinates the freedom and development of its inhabitants to this very objective.

The social order, derived from eugenics and controlled by a computerised system called the "lottery", has no other purpose than to preserve the future existence of the population. As the literary work shows, Juliette Nichols herself, the protagonist and main opponent of the regime of social control established in the silos, is horrified to discover that the "wild" children of the extinct Silo 17 are procreating among themselves as soon as they reach puberty. She is also acutely aware of the problem of space and resource management that excessive population growth, resulting from free will or lack of contraceptive regulation, would imply (Howey, 2023a, p. 513).

In the same vein, Howey's work suggests certain benefits derived from social conditioning. With a controlled population pre-assigned to precise tasks, the subsistence of the entire system can be ensured and, furthermore, its inhabitants can be provided with a certain degree of comfort despite the post-apocalyptic reality. In the silo, although the inhabitants are subjected to ignorance and brutal social control, all have their basic needs covered: food, shelter, hygiene, and basic services. The silo provides them with comfortable flats, education within the boundaries of the Pact, medical care, as well as a sewage and waste management system. It also has the technology to ensure breathable air for all its inhabitants in the context of the post-apocalyptic Anthropocene. They are even allowed the fantasy of some democratic political control while ensuring the reality of humanity's survival for hundreds of years.

The urban fabric and its architecture are fundamental elements in favouring this control. The limitation of communications and the organisation of space around an immense central staircase favours social conditioning. It is very difficult for the inhabitants to establish friendships or relationships with citizens from levels and occupations that are far removed from their own. Nevertheless,

propagandistic actions have fast and effective channels of dissemination, such as the live broadcasting of “cleansing” convictions on the screens. The same is true of surveillance systems. While sending an oral message is complicated, and sending a written letter on paper is expensive, the live broadcast of the death of the “cleaners” reaches every corner of the structure quickly, easily, and free of charge, despite the need for a larger and more complex technological apparatus.

The silo city is the only ecosystem that its inhabitants know throughout their existence while also being the place predestined to bring about their extinction. The brutalist set design of the Apple TV series offers an always claustrophobic and constricted feel; always menacing. The gassing and collapse systems built into the urban skeleton itself turn the silo into a city whose design determines not only the life of its inhabitants, but also their death.

4. Conclusions

One might ask what metaphor Howey’s work offers us as real cities face a future increasingly beset by the challenges of climate change and the problems of depopulation or overpopulation. Science fiction of a speculative nature often becomes a very appropriate genre for exploring one’s own current fears about scenarios that, while seemingly far away in time, are somehow beginning to unfold.

In his work, the author alludes to a triple reality: the post-apocalyptic world of unbreathable air, which is not compatible with life and is a direct consequence of human action; the Hobbesian system represented by the Computer Science department and its authoritarian regime, which allows stable survival but subjects its inhabitants to the tyranny of ignorance, social conditioning and lack of freedoms; and finally, the struggle of the protagonist Juliette Nichols and her Mechanics department for a free, assembly-based, unbound individual and collective development, based on exploration and knowledge but, consequently, indebted to large doses of responsibility.

If we stick to the outcome of Howey’s literary work, it is the responsible ones who will inherit the Earth.

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