

ORIGIN22



December 2019

Official Organ of the National Fantasy Fan Federation's History and Research Bureau, and representing the new world outlook. Look inside to see details.

Editor and Bureau Head: John Thiel, 30 N. 19th Street,
Lafayette, Indiana 47904. Email: kinethiel@mymetronet.net .

Staff: Jon Swartz, 12115 Missel Thrush Court, Austin,
Texas 78750. Email jon_swartz@hotmail.com

Judy Carroll, 975 East 120 South, Spanish Fork, Utah
84660. Email AutumnSeas8012@gmail.com

Jeffrey Redmond, 1335 Beechwood NE, Grand Rapids,
Michigan 49505-3830. Email redmondjeff@hotmail.com

Contents of the issue:

Editorial, page 3

Astounding's Earliest Issues, compiled by Jon Swartz, page 4

Women in Science Fiction Writing, by Jeffrey Redmond, page 13

Fandom Recap, by John Thiel, page 18

Robert Bloch on Fandom, by John Thiel, page 20

A View of the National Fantasy Fan Federation, by Judy Carroll, page 22

EDITORIAL



What About Our Origins?

I mentioned over in Facebook's Dell Magazines Forum that Sheila Williams had said that IASFM got very few letters of comment when they had a letter column, and my own experience with my netzine Surprising Stories is the same as that. Of the four science fiction magazines at the forefront, only Analog has a letter column. It seems as if they are unnecessary and probably uninteresting to readers and don't contribute anything to the magazine that has one.

One must remember, however, before forming this evaluation, that, as we have pointed out several times in Origin and verified among several sources of information, science fiction fandom originated in the letter columns of magazines and is supported by correspondence. And that is where we are, in science fiction fandom.

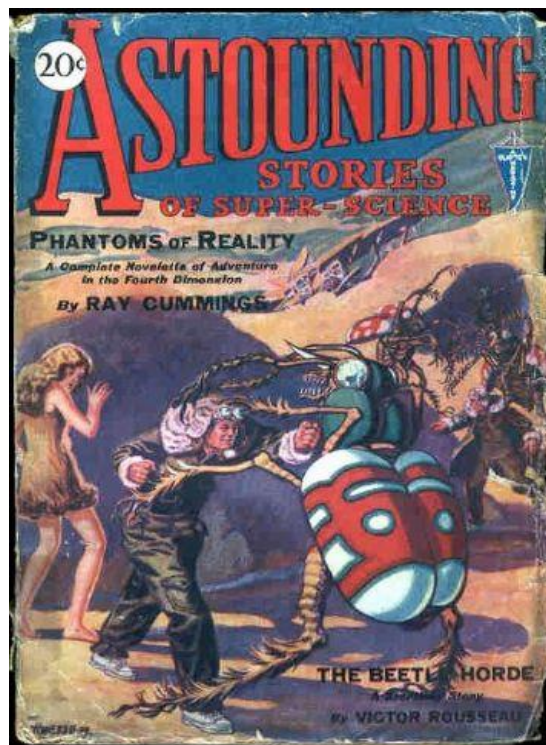
Has our major source of origin vanished? Origination is something that is maintained once it has been commenced, for the perpetuation of what has been originated, by replenishment. When we are left without a source, we are free-floating in space and doing about as well as we might continue to be doing. The spirit might continue but its material manifestations tend to slide away over the course of time.

Well, perhaps we have achieved nirvana by this process (and without half trying, not having been subjected to the rigors of Zen discipline) but it's sometimes nice to be noticed, and people do like to return from nirvana, albeit timidly and carefully at first. I suggest that we keep the torch lit, and that we try to make, within what we have, a moving and expansive thing, so that science fiction, in noticing all the relevant activity, might profit from the influence fandom is thereby making, as should result from there being a fandom. There is no completeness, no closure without this process finding its casually predestined ends. What happens to a dream deferred? poet Langston Hughes asked. He suggested in the summation of his consideration that it might explode. Let us have a better outcome than that of our dreams.

ASTOUNDING' S EARLIEST ISSUES compiled by Jon Swartz

Already we have secured stories by some of the finest writers of fantasy in the world—men such as Ray Cummings, Murray Leinster, Captain S.P. Meek, Harl Vincent, R.F. Starzl and Victor Rousseau. So—order your next month's copy of **Astounding Stories** in advance!—The Editor

Issue # 1, January 1930



The Beetle Horde: Victor Rousseau (man-sized beetles attack a defenseless world/Part 1 of a 2-part novel)

The Cave of Horror: Captain S.P. Meek (unseen horror of mammoth cave strikes again—a Dr. Bird story)

Phantoms of Reality: Ray Cummings (a bloody revolution is unleashed in the Fourth Dimension)

The Stolen Mind: M.L. Staley (the protagonist's mind is stolen from his body)

Compensation: C.V. Tench (a professor disappears, but the diamond from his ring remains)

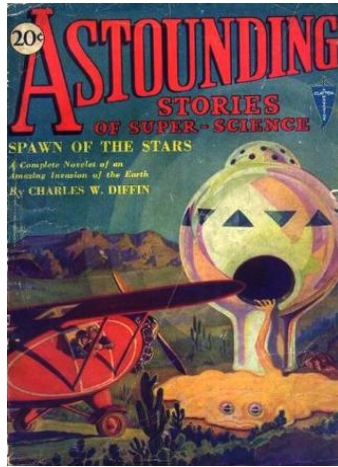
Tanks: Murray Leinster (infantrymen are left to fight the war of 1932)

Invisible Death: Anthony Pelcher (a millionaire manufacturer is threatened by an invisible killer)

Cover by Wesso (Hans Waldemer Wessolowski) illustrating a scene from "The Beetle Horde".

[Wesso also did most of the magazine's interior illustrations during the magazine's first year of publication.]

February, 1930 issue (Vol. 1, No.2)



Old Crompton's Secret: Harl Vincent (an old man's body retains the memory of his crime)

Spawn of the Stars: Charles Willard Diffin (monsters from the skies seek to annihilate man)

The Corpse on the Grating: Hugh B. Cave (a corpse is still alive)

Creatures of the Light: Sophie Wenzel Ellis (a super-human creation has contempt for the human race)

Into Space: Sterner St. Paul (a disappearance and the coming of a new satellite to Earth)

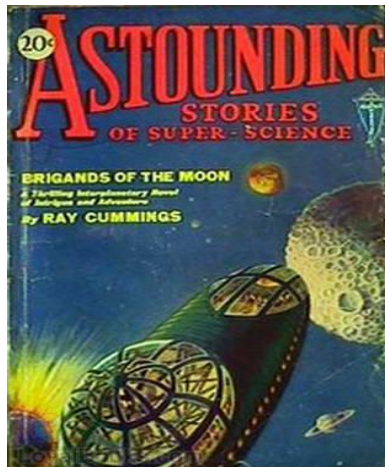
The Beetle Horde: Victor Rousseau (part two of the novel begun in issue number one)

Mad Music: Anthony Pelcher (a catastrophe is connected to a mad musician)

The Thief of Time: Captain S.P. Meek (a bank teller loses a stacked pile of bills when no one had been near)

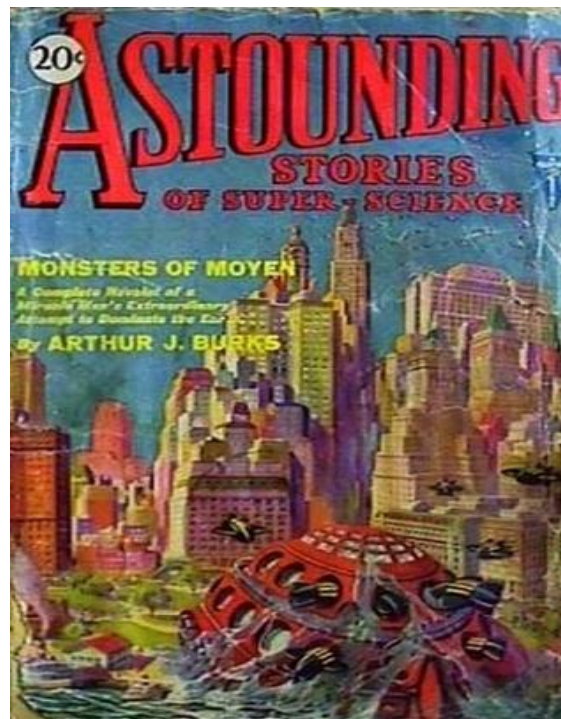
Cover by Wesso, illustrating a scene from "Spawn of the Stars".

March 1930 issue (Vol. 1, No. 3)



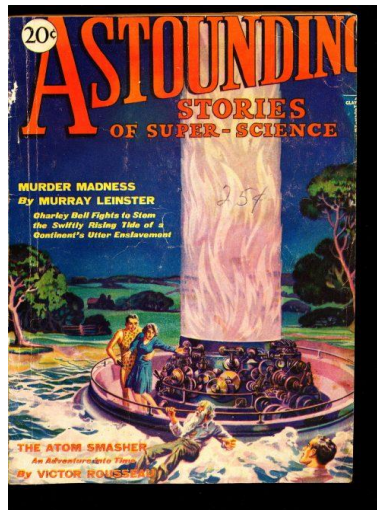
Cold Light: Captain S.P. Meek (a body broken into sharp fragments like shattered glass, is found)
Brigands of the Moon: Ray Cummings (the Moon has a rich cache of radium ore/part 1)
The Soul Master: Will Smith & R.J. Robbins (an eccentric scientist's de-astralizing experiment)
From the Ocean's Depths: Sewell Peaslee Wright (a branch of mankind that had returned to the sea is found)
Vandals of the Stars: A.T. Locke (a flame flares across space and 10,000 warriors plan to subjugate the Earth)
Cover by Wesso, illustrating a scene from "Brigands of the Moon".

April, 1930 issue (Vol.2, No. 1)



The Man Who Was Dead: Thomas H. Knight (a skeleton that is alive)
Monsters of Moyon: Arthur J. Burkes (the Western World is next!)
Vampires of Venus: Anthony Pelcher (vampires are ravaging Venus)
Brigands of the Moon: Ray Cummings (second installment of the novel)
The Soul Snatcher: Tom Curry (atom rays from 20 miles away)
The Ray of Madness: Captain S.P. Meek (plot behind the president's eye trouble)
The Readers' Corner (with a letter from Indiana's Conrad H. Ruppert, promoting the new Science Correspondence Club)
Cover by Wesso, illustrating a scene from "Monsters of Moyon".

May, 1930 issue(Vol.2,No.2)



Into the Ocean's Depths: Sewell Peaslee Wright (men challenge a sea race)

Murder Madness: Murray Leinster (a tyrant attempts to control the world/part 1 of a 4-part novel/Leinster's first genre novel)

Brigands of the Moon: Ray Cummings (third part of the novel)

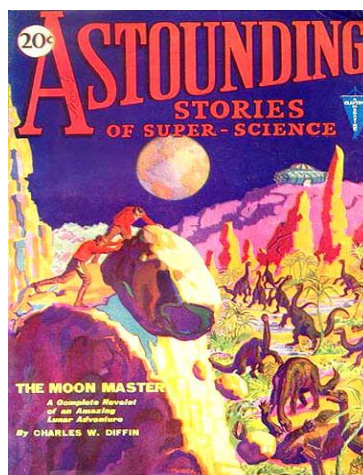
The Jovian Jest: Lilith Lorraine (a vast universe sends a message)

The Atom-Smasher: Victor Rousseau (destinies rocket through the Fourth Dimension)

The Readers' Corner (with a letter from California's Forrest Ackerman, asking for more interplanetary stories)

Cover by Wesso, illustrating a scene from "The Atom-Smasher".

June, 1930 issue (Vol.2, No.3)



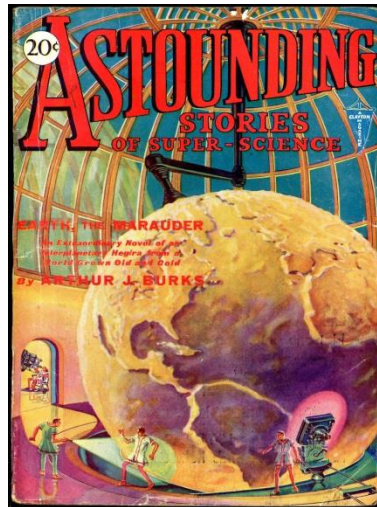
Out of the Dreadful Depths: C.D. Willard (a nameless horror is sucking human life out of ships)

Murder Madness: Murray Leinster (part two of the novel)

The Cavern World: James P. Olsen (a great oil field has gone dry)

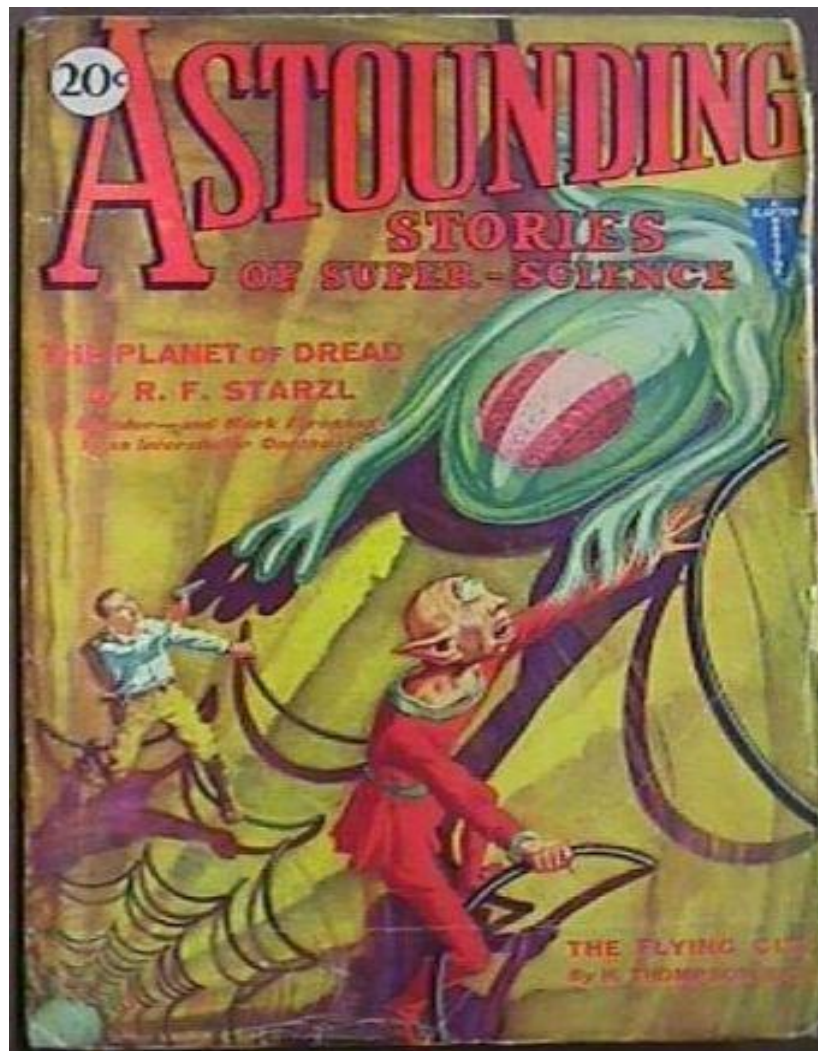
Brigands of the Moon: Ray Cummings (conclusion of the four-part novel)
Giants of the Ray: Tom Curry (monsters stream up the shaft of a radium mine)
The Moon Master: Charles W. Diffin (a complete novel/trapped by a barbaric Moon race)
The Readers' Corner (with a letter from Chicago's Jack Darrow, asking for more frequent publication)
Cover by Wesso, illustrating a scene from "The Moon Master".

July, 1930 issue (Vol. 3, No. 1)



Beyond the Heaviside Layer: Capt. S.P. Meek (trapped by monsters of the Heaviside Layer)
Earth, the Marauder: Arthur J. Burks (Earth is out of her orbit/part one of a three-part novel)
From an Amber Block: Tom Curry (an amber block gives up its prey)
The Terror of Air-Level Six: Harl Vincent (a pillar of flame terrorizes Earth)
The Forgotten Planet: Sewell Peaslee Wright (an outlaw world is a leper of space)
The Power and the Glory: Charles W. Diffin (professor reveals a path of glory to his student)
Murder Madness: Murray Leinster (part three of the novel)
The Readers' Corner (with a letter from New York's Allen Glasser, promoting The Sciencecers)
Cover by Wesso, illustrating a scene from "Earth, the Marauder").

August, 1930 issue (Vol. 3, No. 2)



The Planet of Dread: R.F. Starzl (planet Inra's monster-ridden jungles)

The Lord of Space: Victor Rousseau (a black Caesar arises on Eros)

The Second Satellite: Edmond Hamilton (frog-vampires on Earth's second satellite)

Silver Dome: Harl Vincent (Amazing secret of the silver dome)

Earth, the Marauder: Arthur J. Burks (part two of the novel)

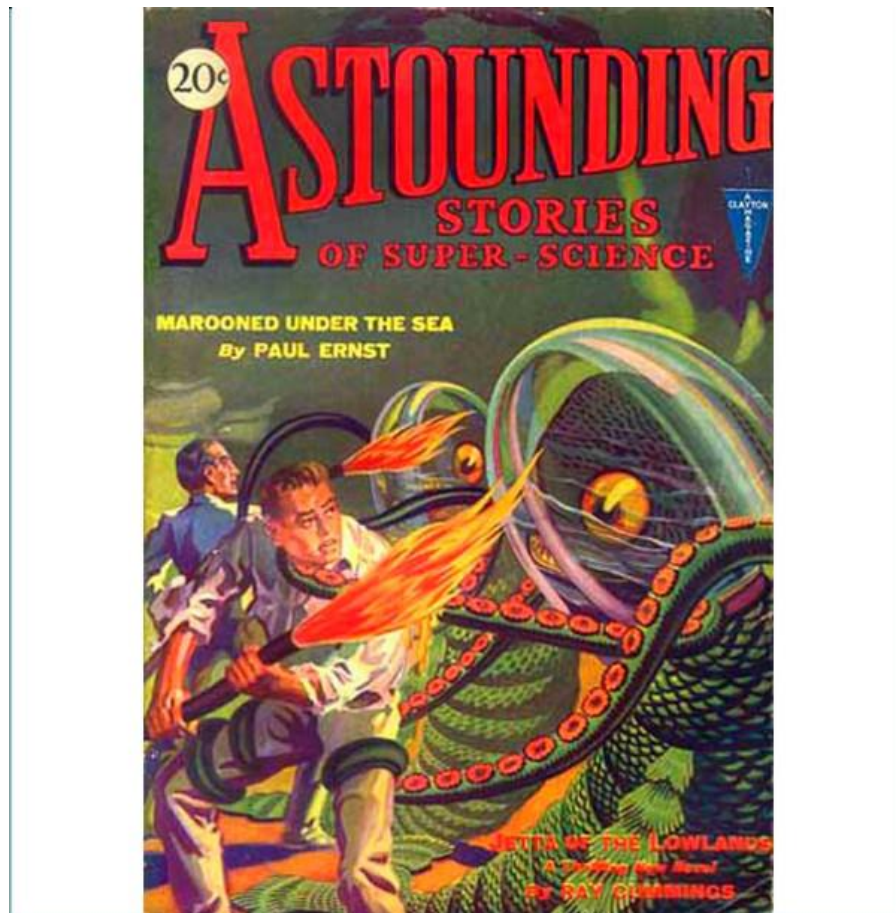
Murder Madness: Murray Leinster (conclusion of the four-part novel)

The Flying City: H. Thompson Rich (a horde of dwarfs are hungry for the Earth)

The Readers' Corner (with a letter from Texas SF fan Jack Williamson, praising the world of Harl Vincent)

Cover by Wesso, illustrating a scene from "The Planet of Dread".

September, 1930 issue (Vol.3, No.3)



A Problem in Communication: Miles J. Breuer, M.D. (deciphering an extraordinary code)

Jetta of the Lowlands: Ray Cummings (part one of a three-part novel about a dangerous assignment)

The Terrible Tentacles of L-472: Sewell Peaslee Wright (Commander Hanson of a special patrol service)

Marooned Under the Sea: Paul Ernst (incredible monsters of the sea floor)

The Murder Machine: Hugh B. Cave (hypnotic thought waves control men's minds)

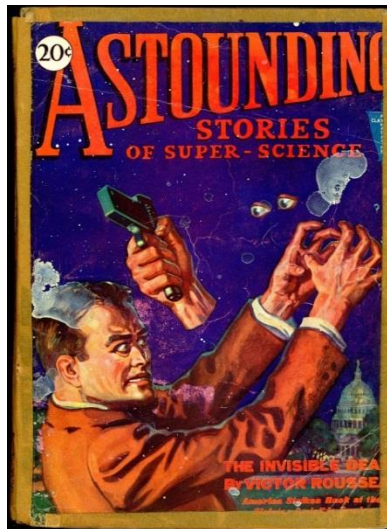
The Attack from Space: Capt. S.P. Meek (invisible invaders)

Earth, the Marauder: Arthur J. Burks (conclusion of the three-part novel)

The Readers' Corner (with another letter from Chicago's Jack Darrow, this one rating the stories from a previous issue)

Cover by Wesso, illustrating a scene from "Marooned Under the Sea".

October, 1930 issue (Vol. 4, No.1)



Stolen Brains: Capt. S.P. Meek (scientific sleuth goes after a brain stealer)

The Invisible Death: Victor Rousseau (America fights invisible empire)

Prisoners of the Electron: Robert H. Leifred (earthlings against primeval monsters of an electron's jungle)

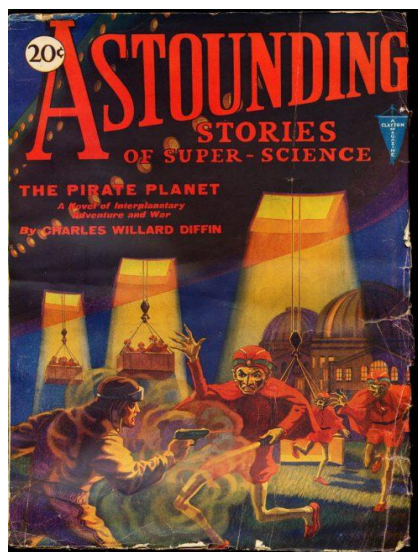
Jetta of the Lowlands: Ray Cummings (part two of the three-part novel)

An Extra Man: Jackson Gee (Drales' invention, 1932)

The Readers' Corner (with a letter from New York fan Mortimer Weisinger, who liked Leinster's "Moon Madness")

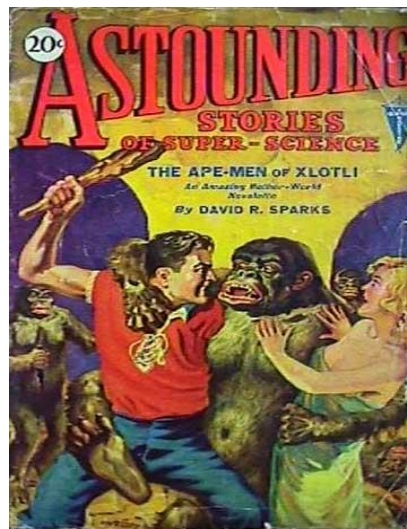
Cover by Wesso, illustrating a scene from "The Invisible Death".

November, 1930 issue (Vol.4, No.2)



The Wall of Death: Victor Rousseau (a wall of deadly jelly from the Antarctic)
The Pirate Planet: Charles W. Diffin (a mysterious visitant hovers over Earth/first of a four-part novel)
The Destroyer: William Merriam Rouse (losing control of hands, then brain)
The Gray Plague: L.A. Eshbach (a savior for plague-ridden Earth)
Jetta of the Lowlands: Ray Cummings (conclusion of the three-part novel)
Vagabonds of Space: Harl Vincent (a thought-warning from space)
The Readers' Corner: A long letter from New York fan P. Schuyler Miller
Cover by Wesso, illustrating a scene from "The Pirate Planet".

December, 1930 issue (Vol.4, NO.3)



Slaves of the Dust: Sophie Wenzil Ellis (a rat with a man's face)
The Pirate Planet: Charles W. Diffin (part two of the novel)
The Sea Terror: Captain S.P. Meek (gold leads to a monster of the deep)
Gray Denim: Harl Vincent (riding the skies like a god)
The Ape-Men of Xlotli: David R. Sparks (a mid-Earth conflict with a serpent)
The Readers' Corner: another letter from a California fan, Forrest J. Ackerman, asking if there are plans for a quarterly or an annual
Cover by Wesso, illustrating a scene from "The Ape-Men of Xlotli".

Jim! That's quite a first year!—editor

WOMEN IN SCIENCE FICTION WRITING

by Jeffrey Redmond

Why wouldn't women write science fiction? These have done so.



Mary Shelley



Joanna Russ



Ursula LeGuin



The author with Isaac Asimov, Toronto, 1970

Anne McCaffrey



Margaret Atwood



Alice Sheldon

A woman, Mary Shelley, is said to have invented the Science Fiction genre. So why are so few female Sci Fi writers household names? Two hundred years ago, Mary Shelley sat down to write a ghost story, and created science fiction. Women still pen the genre's finest, exemplified by Ursula K. LeGuin, who died recently. Yet they are so often overlooked.

It's been two centuries. That's how long we've had science fiction. From the birth of Frankenstein, to the death of Ursula K. LeGuin. Two hundred years. This was originally meant to be just the story of Frankenstein, written by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley and published on 1 January 1818. But with the death of one of the greatest science fiction writers of the past century, Ursula K. LeGuin, at the age of 88, something else was brought into focus: the role of women in science fiction.

The genesis of Frankenstein, Or, The Modern Prometheus, to give its full title, is a tale

as oft told as Shelley's actual story of scientist Victor and his monstrous creation. Aged just eighteen, she was visiting the Villa Diodati near Lake Geneva in Switzerland, with her husband the poet Percy. The property was rented by Lord Byron and John Polidori for the summer of 1816, and the Shelleys were staying close by.

One evening, Byron suggested that they all write their own ghost story. Mary Shelley writes in her introduction to the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein*: "I busied myself to think of a story—a story to rival those which had excited me to this task. One which would speak to the mysterious fears of our nature, and awaken thrilling horror—one to make the reader dread to look around, to curdle the blood, and quicken the beating of the heart."

That she certainly did. *Frankenstein's* monster has its place in the horror hall of fame. Everyone knows the creature. But do we really know the story? The basics, of course, imprinted on our collective cultural psyche from umpteen movie adaptations. Victor Frankenstein breaks the last taboo by daring to play god and create life, harnessing electricity to reanimate an eight foot monster made from the stitched together parts of stolen corpses, which then goes on a terrible rampage.

Though in the whole horror fraternity of *Dracula*, the Wolf Man and the Mummy, *Frankenstein's* monster is completely science fiction, created by science, not the supernatural. And Mary Shelley's novel is far more nuanced than the Hollywood cartoonish image we have of the bolt-necked, green-tinged monster lumbering around in pursuit of screaming women.

After abandoning his creature in disgust, guilt drives Frankenstein to track down the monster in the Alps. There the creature reveals it has spent their time apart becoming quite erudite, educating itself from a cache of books, and developing acute emotional and social sensibilities by observing, at a distance, a poverty-struck family. But with this growing self-awareness comes the knowledge of the creature's place in the world, and of what he has and does not have. And what he wants.

Directing Frankenstein to create a woman to share the unique space the monster occupies, the creation finally does embrace his darker side when Frankenstein refuses, and the monster kills his creator's wife on their wedding night.

A powerful story, and one that has endured. But there's a curious thing. Mary Shelley's detailed explanation of how the novel came about, quoted briefly above, does not appear in the first edition. There is a different introduction in that novel, which states: "Two other friends (a tale from the pen of whom would be far more acceptable to

the public than anything I can ever hope to produce) and myself agreed to write each a story, founded on some supernatural occurrence. The weather, however, suddenly became serene, and my two friends left me on a journey among the Alps, and lost in the magnificent scenes which they present, all memory of their ghostly visions. The following tale is the only one which has been completed."

It's curious because it's very self-deprecating. Mary Shelley is essentially saying that the boys got distracted from the job of writing ghost stories because they went to have some laddish fun outside, though if they had finished the task then their work would easily have been better than anything she could write. And she's almost apologetic in her presentation of it, because it's the only one that there is to offer from that night at Villa Diodati.

We now know this to be wrong, because a fraction of Byron's story did appear at the end of his poem "Mazeppa", and Polidori's *THE VAMPYRE* was later published in 1819. The introduction is all the more astonishing, though, because Mary Shelley didn't actually write *Frankenstein*. Her husband Percy Bysshe Shelley did, and he was edited and polished throughout by Byron.

Fast forward to 1983, and the author Joanna Russ publishes a book called *HOW TO SUPPRESS WOMEN'S WRITING*. The cover of that book has become famous not for any image or visual but for what has become a mantra which explains the thrust of Russ's argument: "She didn't write it. She wrote it but she shouldn't have. She wrote it, but look what she wrote about. She wrote it, but she only wrote one of it. She wrote it, but she isn't really an artist and it isn't really art. She wrote it, but she had help. She wrote it, but she's an anomaly. She wrote it BUT..."

Excuses. Reasons. Explanations. Women's writing generally has been marginalized and subdued since book publishing began, but it's often through a whispering campaign rather than actually taking typewriters away from women or banning them from writing. Sowing the seeds of doubt. Justification, saying, well, okay, this book is not bad, but I bet she couldn't do it again. Or some man must have helped her. Or, find she's a good writer, but she's a one-off. Most women don't write like that.

It's no coincidence that the author of this book, Joanna Russ, was also a science fiction author up to her death in 2011. Russ began to get published in the 1960s with the short story collection *PICNIC ON PARADISE* in 1968, the same year that Ursula K. LeGuin published *A WIZARD OF EARTHSEA*. Russ's most often cited book is *THE FEMALE MAN*, from 1975. It features four women in different parallel universes who visit each

other's realities, and compare and contrast the lives and treatment of women.

Russ and LeGuin were writing in a period of great science fiction, those post Second World War years, with their technological advances and exploration of space melting into Cold War, and the ever-present threat of nuclear annihilation. But ask most people who are the major science fiction writers of the second half of the 20th Century, and they'll provide a list of mostly male names.

If you don't believe me, take a look at ranker.com, a website that allows users to rank pretty much anything. Go to the list of Greatest Science Fiction Authors: Isaac Asimov, Philip K. Dick, Arthur C. Clarke, HG Wells, Robert A. Heinlein, Frank Herbert, Ray Bradbury. Giants all, no disputing that. The first woman's name appears at number 10 on the list, Ursula LeGuin. We don't see another one until 29—Mary Shelley, followed at 30 by the author of the Pern series, Anne McCaffrey. There are thirteen women in the top one hundred in all, most of them appearing in the lower reaches, as ranked by the seventy thousand users (both males and females) who have engaged with this particular topic.

Why aren't there more? Maybe because science fiction, particularly in the golden age years, was just seen as something men did. Maybe because the boys' club atmosphere put women off. Maybe women weren't welcome. The first edition of *Frankenstein* was published anonymously.

In 1967, a new science fiction author came on to the scene, James Tiptree, Jr. It was at least a decade before the author of dozens of thoughtful, intelligent and often subversive short stories was revealed to be a woman named Alice Sheldon. In an interview with Isaac Asimov's *Science Fiction Magazine* in 1983 she said of her pseudonymous career, "A male name seemed like good camouflage. I had the feeling that a man would slip by less observed. I've had too many experiences in my life of being the first woman in some damned occupation."

Women do write science fiction. Women have always written science fiction. But often they have been ignored, or sidelined, or simply slid under the radar. If they're very good at writing science fiction, they can get co-opted out of the genre and into "literary fiction". Take, for example, Margaret Atwood, whose work is out and out science fiction, from *THE HANDMAID'S TALE* to *ORYX AND CRAKE*. Atwood once famously said her work wasn't science fiction at all, because that was all about "talking squids in outer space". It was perhaps when Atwood relented on that and embraced her science fiction genes that things began to change. More notice was taken of those who had gone

before, and successive new generations of genre writers had their ranks noticeably swollen by women.

There's an excellent website run by Ian Sales at FMistressworks.wordpress.com that is dedicated to reviewing books by women writers, both new ones and lost gems from the past. The name might sound a bit clunky, but it's a direct response to the series of yellow liveried books that reprints classic SF novels under the banner SF Masterworks. It's a good place to start if anyone wants to build a reading list of woman-penned science fiction.

But why should we anyway? Well, perhaps because science fiction written by women seems, on the whole, to be vastly superior to that written by men. Why? Good question.

Maybe because we're always navigating an alien territory, where the Other is the default, but where we have learned to walk in his shoes. Maybe because women are more often required to consider experiences outside their own and exhibit empathy? Or perhaps women want to create something really different, while many men want the status quo along with spaceships?

Maybe because more women than men write character-driven books that address complex issues? Is it just imagination, or are far too many men's SF books just post-apocalyptic shoot 'em ups?

One reason might be because women have always had to try harder, imagine wider, and write better to even get published. Or perhaps male writers have had it easy and don't push themselves nearly as hard as they could. Standard sci fi fare is human males fighting male space aliens, while scantily-clad females wait to be rescued. Along with spaceships, robots, time travel, and any kind of plot device.

If the story becomes a movie, Hollywood will be sure to have enough blue screen special effects, with loud explosions and a symphonic music score. Most of it written, directed, and produced by men, of course.



FANDOM RECAP by John Thiel

We've been going over early fandom and have presented the early years of it several times, correlating details, so that we can present the early history of it here and retain it in our records. Of course, nothing can beat the human memory for recounting the details of a history, but people remembering that far back are rare and a lot of people have also lost interest in fandom. It's a shame how hard it is now to get at fandom's history, but fandom is one of those things that are not noticed in solid historical accounts. Everything we manage to get is beneficial to our present understanding of fandom. I have managed to locate a copy of UP TO NOW, a description of early fandom up to a certain point by Jack Speer, and here he is going over the terrain we have covered starting with fandom's beginnings. Check it against the earlier accounts you have read here.

"For this writer, mere guesses must suffice for the early contacts between fans. Many, probably, when editors no longer felt like carrying the discussion in the readers' columns, continued arguments over scientific matters in private correspondence, and some controversies on non-scientific points may very likely have also been continued privately after they had progressed too far for general interest. Or a particularly sparkling letter published might cause other readers to desire to write its author, aside from any particular points brought up. At any rate, many science fiction fans did contact each other, but for a time didn't realize that others were doing the same thing.

Forrest J. Ackerman and alias Jack Darrow popularized the letter-every-month habit with regard to the professional magazines, and built up extensive correspondences. Then, according to McPhail, one year in the early thirties Forrest Ackerman took a trip east from his home in California, and visited many correspondence friends on the way. This helped unify the field. Some local groups took to publishing official organs, which became the first fan magazines. The West Coast publication **The Time Traveler** was the first to achieve general circulation. **Science Fiction Digest**, published at the other end of the country, must have gotten some mention in readers' columns, and built up a small circulation that was nevertheless nation wide, with some subscribers in England. This magazine eventually absorbed The Time Traveler, and shortly changed its name to **Fantasy Magazine**, to include facts pertaining to the weird fiction field. The issue after its second anniversary, Fantasy Magazine began dedicating issues to the Big Three of scientifiction, and to other special fields, including **Weird Tales**. Its first dedication was

to the field-leading **Astounding Stories** of Street & Smith, and it received mention in Brass Tacks. When **Wonder**'s time came, they did even more, seeing to it that every member of the SFL got a copy of that issue.

A bit earlier, taking cognizance of the existence of the fan world, Charlie Hornig, who turned out a few issues of the unsuccessful **Fantasy Fan**, and then teen-age managing editor of Wonder Stories, recommended to editor Hugo Gernsback the formation of a Science Fiction League. This was undertaken with enthusiasm, and being well featured by a commercial magazine of large circulation attracted many sciencefictionists to the 'fan' field. At the same time a Swap Column and other features of interest to veteran fans were inaugurated. Later, the SFL Department began giving semi-annual Bachelor of Scientifiction tests which increased the interest of membership. It was the Golden Age of Fandom."

Looking back to Jon Swartz's listing of the first year of Astounding, we see the very things spoken of in this piece of writing—Swartz mentions the commentators in the letter column of the magazine, and we see fandom starting to get into full swing in the letter column of that magazine, though there had been earlier work in fandom occurring via the Amazing Stories letter column. We're glad to have been able to capture so much of this original history and will be continuing in our efforts.



"cosplay"—a stage in fandom's history?

Robert Bloch on Science Fiction Fandom by John Thiel

Robert Bloch wrote a definitory article about science fiction fandom which appeared in the September 1956 issue of **The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction**. The introduction to the article, by Anthony Boucher, gives some idea of the *milieu* of the times as regards science fiction fandom. Here's his introductory notes:

"This is, I think, the first calculated effort to introduce the active science fiction *fan* to the science fiction *reader*. Every attempted analysis of 'organized fandom' that I have seen has been addressed either to a strictly fan audience or to the intellectual snob who knows nothing of s.f. [...] [This] seems a fitting moment to present a picture of fandom addressed to the large majority of readers who know and like science fiction, but wonder why it looms so large in the life of the intensively devoted fan. There could be no more apt interpreter than Robert Bloch, whose science-fictional life has been eagerly divided between professional and amateur activity, and who can, therefore, entertainingly make clear to you why *Some of My Best Fans Are Friends*."

This was the title of Bloch's article, demonstrating his erudition, and here is its opening:

"One afternoon in the autumn of 1939, a car pulled up at the curb in front of an eight-room house in the Kensington section of Brooklyn.

Three U.S. Treasury Department agents emerged from the automobile. With drawn revolvers, the T-Men bore down on the dwelling. It was around two o'clock in the afternoon, but the front shades of the building were drawn, as though its occupants were still asleep—as indeed they were.

But not for long. The agents rang the bell, hammered on the door, and bellowed their various equivalents of 'Open in the name of the Law!'

Eventually they were admitted by two sleepy-eyed young men, who blinked in confusion when informed, 'This is a raid!'

Badges gleamed impressively—and the revolvers even more impressively. In grim silence, the T-Men ransacked the house, searching methodically from basement to attic.

The neighbors, it seemed, had tipped them off. The place had been under suspicion and surveillance for some weeks now—because of the odd comings and goings of its many occupants, because of the dearth of furnishings, and for other, more significant reasons.

The Treasury investigators exchanged triumphant glances as they corroborated the most important rumor concerning the premises. 'This is it,' they said. 'Look at all those printing presses and mimeograph machines. Guess our tip was right after all. You guys are counterfeiters, aren't you?' they demanded.

The two young men protested their innocence. But it took a lot of explaining to finally convince the government investigators that there was no counterfeiting going on. The explanation, while simple enough, was hardly convincing to outsiders.

The two young men were science fiction fans.

Or so the story goes, allegedly, according to historian Sam Moskowitz in his book, *THE IMMORTAL STORM*. An entire group, calling themselves the Futurians, had rented the residence for communal living—arriving and departing at all hours, holding forth over the mimeographs and presses to print up their 'fan magazines.' The reactions of their neighbors and of the United States Government represents one attitude.

Let us consider another. Mr. Damon Knight, well-known writer and critic, discussing science fiction conventions in an article written last year, comments as follows:

'I used to wonder what it was that gave the best con-reports their oddly religious tone. [Ghu—Bloch wasn't onto that at that time—ed.] I see now there is no oddity involved—a convention is a religious event. Programming is merely an excuse for congregation: you get the same mystic feeling of brotherhood, and I suppose for similar reasons, as you do in a convalescent ward or a ship's company. Nearly all the mundane things that preoccupy and divide us have been temporarily left behind; we're suddenly made aware of the closeness between me and thee. This is religious or it's nothing, and God knows we need it.'

And there we have it, from both sides.

Science fiction fans are an eccentric fringe-group, creatures of odd hours and odder habits, who may well be suspected of major criminal activities.

Or science fiction fans are a mystic brotherhood, linked together by transcendental bonds of the spirit.

Which interpretation is correct?"

This article parallels some of what we have been quoting in *Origin*, but is written from a different perspective. Its closer description of science fiction fans than people writing from what they know of the makeup of fandom makes fandom much clearer.

A VIEW OF THE NATIONAL FANTASY FAN FEDERATION by Judy Carroll

Since we are coming to the end of another year I would like to discuss the past, present and future of the N3F.

I first joined the N3F many years ago, having heard about the club through relatives who were members. At that time everything was sent through postal mail—TNFF, N'APA, and other special publications, Round Robins, etc.

The club had an abundance of bureaus—many that we have today and others, such as Blind Services, Comics, Overseas, Youth, and Filk Singing, to name a few.

I enjoyed the N3F and became a member of many of the bureaus. My favorite bureau was the Round Robins.

I waited eagerly for the mail to discover what other Round Robin members thought of the latest Science Fiction movie, book or Television series. As always, most members also included a little about what was going on in their lives—Bob's farm was flourishing, Peggy went to a family reunion, Allison and her husband, John, celebrated fifteen years of marriage. I developed an attachment to these people. Their joy became my joy. Their sorrow became my sorrow.

Through my involvement with the Round Robins and other bureaus, I had a "kinship" with many of the members. Reading a Letter Of Comment (LOC) many times became almost personal—as if I were reading a letter from a relative.

Life took a strong grip and I slowly faded from the N3F horizon. In May of 2015, I joined the N3F again.

Things have changed over the years. (I guess I thought it would stay the same forever. But nothing does.) Today there aren't as many bureaus or members as there had been. There seems to be less activity in the bureaus and even less activity between the members. The sense of family has almost disappeared. Why is that? What has happened to change the strong bond past members had with one another?

I've been thinking about what happened to the N3F from my past experience to my present. The only thing I can come up with is the rapid growth of technology. Life isn't user friendly any more. Not in the old way. Now don't misunderstand me. I would have a hard time giving up my computer, my cell phone, my tablet, my Netflix Streaming.

I'm not suggesting we give up any of our technology. I'm suggesting that we slow down. Stand back and look at it from a distance. Instead of a text make a phone call. Let your voice be heard. Instead of an email write a letter. It's more personal.

What does this have to do with the N3F? I think we need to be more personal in our

relationship with the club as a whole, and the members as individuals. The more we get to know each other as people and not as faceless entities the stronger the N3F will become. We will truly stay a strong voice recognized throughout Science Fiction Fandom.

