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The official monthly publication of the National Fantasy Fan Federation's History and Research Bureau. Origin recalls the past and seeks the future, dealing with both science fiction and fantasy and their place in the literary culture. Read our zine and contemplate our position in things.

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EDITORIAL

The Sound of Laughter in the Hills

Off a ways there may be fun and merriment, but here where our interests are concentrated we have little chance to look up and out across those broader horizons. I find a sort of discursiveness to our present net activities and the net achieves a kind of concentration that has that broader range indicated rather than sensed. Like the following: Joe Siclari of the Fan History Project wrote to the last month's issue of TNFF about the Fan History Project, assuming it would be of some interest here, and in the issue prior to that one he was also talking about the fan history project, and he has been a member of the NFFF right along, but several attempts to contact him *via* the email given on the roster received no response. I compared that with Ted White, who was also on the roster and was not responding to email sent to his roster address; he finally came across and said he had never been a member of the NFFF. Therefore someone must have enrolled him as a public member without his knowing it, perhaps after acquiring a fake identity on the net using a business computer. Someone also enrolled an HP Lovecraft title character. These (the two questionable memberships) might be jokes or a form of infiltration meant to result in communicative confusion and other forms of damage. But Siclari, anyway, has come to life in the organization with his recent letters to TNFF.

The Fan History Project is not altogether contactable, as there is a barrier of complexity in attempting to do so, and although there are email addresses, these won't get you much of a reply, except where certain formal business is involved. Interpersonal contact is mostly lacking there, and completely lacking for some people who may have located it on the net. There is an opportunity to join it and contribute to it, but the contributions you make are not acknowledged and are processed formally by a method that is out of sight. Bulletins are sent out to those who join the project, but after one or two they cease coming, and a person has to re-request them in order to get them again, and after that comes across it too ceases after a bulletin or two. You can see where I'd

like to contact Siclari and ask him a few questions, but I have not been able to achieve this contact, and a person I knew who might have had some insight into this told me that Siclari is known to be rather unresponsive, or at any rate slow in getting around to correspondence, which implies that he is a busy man. Assuming he may receive and read Origin, I mention him here in another attempt to contact him.

It is, I think, easy to see why I might be interested in getting good contact with the Fan History Project. This is the History and Research Bureau, and what we research is the history of science fiction and of fandom. The Fan History Project is rather parallel to our bureau activity, and is a good contact to have—some of my own research has been there—but it lacks the feeling of any true contact. They have posited themselves as a reference site, and don't do any chatting, except, one might surmise, among themselves. Someone who joins them is in the position of an acolyte. I think I may be voicing some of the objections to our nearby fanac that Jeffrey Redmond has expressed to me in personal correspondence relating to our activity. He seems to find our sf doings somewhat cultish. Well, one of the questions I have been wanting to ask them is who started that project? It's somewhat attributed to Richard Eney in the literature I have received from the project. But a single person didn't start the project, and a project functions off another organized activity, and I have been wondering what that other organized activity is. Maybe in their congregating they have drifted away from their original organization and are now "marooned in space" in a sort of "saucer of loneliness". It is rather deadly not to be interpersonally relating in a fan organization. Fandom interrelates; under what circumstances does it not do so? They have been able to show increasing results in their project and are now demonstrating what all they have found, but it would be nice if there could also be some commentary on what they have found. A "tribe that lost its head"? This could be a description of the project; and I wonder if in its history it could be any way related to Gil Gaier's project to list science fiction reading and et cetera which he was doing along with Don D'Amassa. That project disappeared from human scanning as it seemed to involute; I was receiving their fanzines is how I witnessed any of this. It went off doing its own thing until nobody heard from it again. It was called "The Project" and took place in Gaier's fanzines.

Do we do history and research here? You have just seen me doing it in the above paragraph, which describes some research of history in fandom which I have been doing. The communications TNFF has received from the fan history project have gotten me to broach this topic again, which I have not done for several years; there didn't seem any readiness for the point of view which I have. But a contact or communication like that is readiness. The NFFF has always been doing history and research, among its other activities, so I am glad to have gotten this bureau started. Perhaps we can further our fannish interests by getting more active along these lines.

Fandom should be a cohesive whole as well as being a spreading of interests which

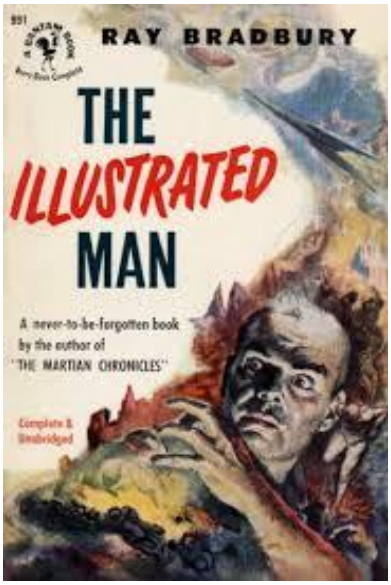
seeks “Beyond these Horizons”. There should be real good contacts existing in fandom or it is, like, nothing, or some special interest groups which are out of sight of one another. There can be special interest groups, but if in fandom they should be in known realms, able thus to locate a place for themselves in fandom and consider themselves to be a real part of it, which it is a good thing to be if one is (or many are) trying to be a part of it. If they are not part of fandom, what’s that unidentifiable flying terrain over there? No publication exists as yet which consolidates it and brings it to organized consciousness, although there have been such publications in the past, including the fanzine reviewers in the science fiction magazines. A comprehensive view of fandom should be available to one and all (all of the science fiction and fantasy fans, anyway).

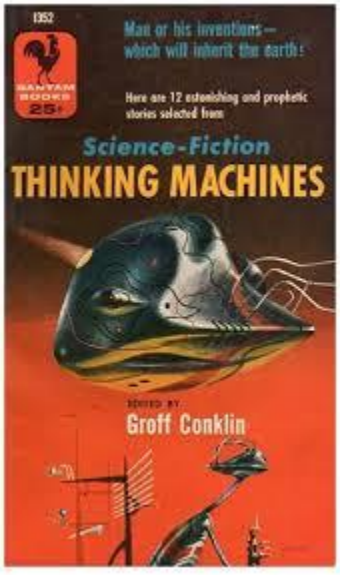
Page from “The Enchanted Duplicator”, the story of a neophyte fanzine editor trying to find the way to true fandom. This story was, I believe, published by Walt Willis and is one of the distinctive pieces of fan literature in the archives of science fiction fandom. It shows that fandom has a spirit to it and that it has a meaningful existence and, as is said, is something other than a mere hobby. It is worth reprinting and passing along through the historical archives.

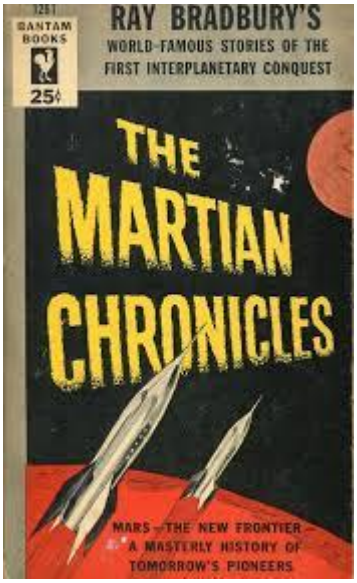
EARLY BANTAM SCIENCE FICTION PAPERBACKS by

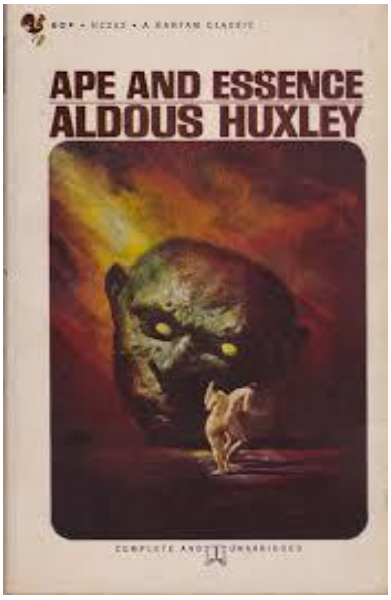
Jon D. Swartz, N3F Historian

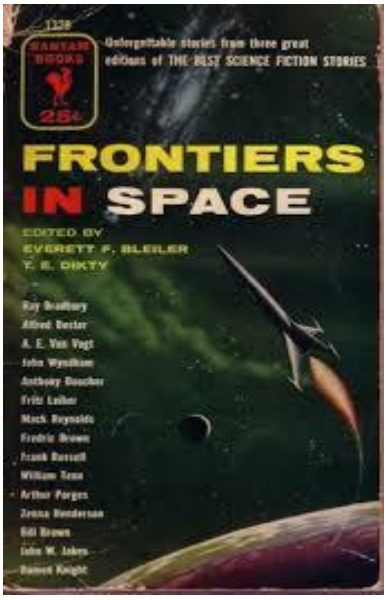
A nostalgic journey for some

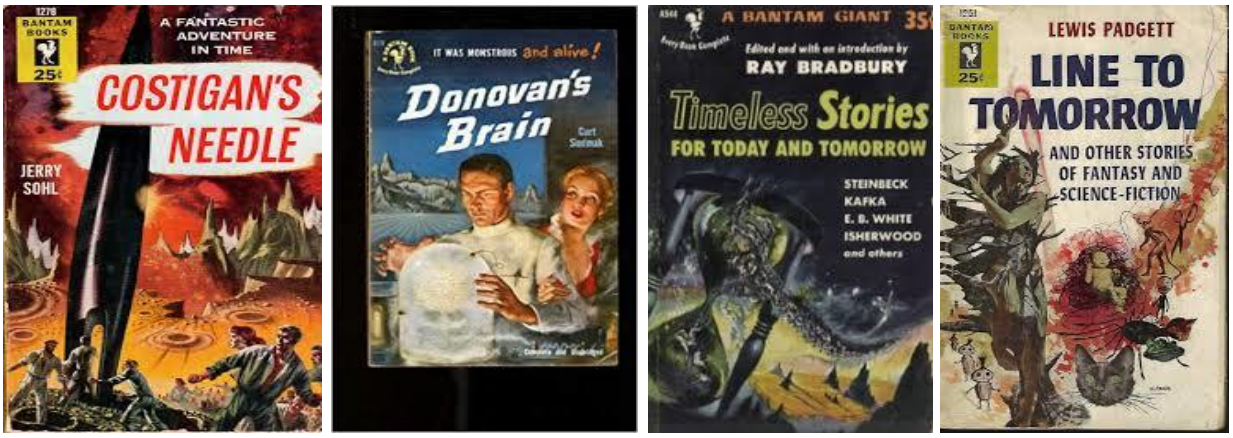












A look at mid-20th Century science fiction reading

Bantam books is an American publishing house owned entirely by the parent company Random House, a subsidiary of Penguin Random House; it is an imprint of the Random House Publishing Group. It was formed in 1945 by Walter B. Pitkin, Jr., Sidney B. Kramer, and Ian and Betty Ballantine.

It has since been purchased several times by companies including National General, Carl Lindner's American Financial and, most recently, Bertelsmann; it became part of Random House in 1998, when Bertelsmann purchased it to form Bantam Doubleday Dell.

Bantam began as a mass market publisher, mostly of reprints of hardcover books, but with some original paperbacks as well. It expanded into both trade paperback and hardcover books, including original works, often reprinted in-house as mass-market editions. Science fiction (SF) books were a prominent part of its early paperback publications.

Bantam Science Fiction Novels/Author Collections

SF authors published by Bantam over the years included the following: Jean M. Auel (THE CLAN OF THE CAVE BEAR), Isaac Asimov (FANTASTIC VOYAGE), and James Blish's STAR TREK series of books. Other SF authors and their books were Charles Beaumont (YONDER), Ray Bradbury (THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES, THE ILLUSTRATED MAN), Fredric Brown (SPACE ON MY HANDS, WHAT MAD UNIVERSE, ROGUE IN SPACE, HONEYMOON IN HELL), Philip K. Dick (A MAZE OF DEATH), Stephen R. Donaldson (FORBIDDEN KNOWLEDGE), William Gibson (MONA LISA OVERDRIVE), James Gunn (STATION IN SPACE), George R.R. Martin (GAME OF THRONES), Anne McCaffrey (THE ROWAN), Lewis Padgett (LINE TO TOMORROW), Robert Sheckley (PILGRIMAGE TO EARTH, IMMORTALITY, INC.), Neal Stephenson (SNOW CRASH), and Bruce Sterling (HOLY FIRE).

Curt Siodmak's famous SF novel, DONOVAN'S BRAIN, which has been reprinted many times after first being published in 1943, was a very popular Bantam paperback in

1950. The cover, attributed to paperback artist Robert Stanley (1918-1996), shows him and his ballerina-trained wife Rhoda as two of the characters in the story.

Stanley worked for Bantam in the 1940s and then moved to Dell in the 1950s. He often used himself and family members for his artwork.

Bantam also published a series of Bantam Giants, extra large paperback books that sold for 35c. Many were historical romances, but there were also some SF and fantasy titles, such as Aldous Huxley's BRAVE NEW WORLD, Ray Bradbury's THE CIRCUS OF DR. LAO AND OTHER IMPROBABLE STORIES, and TIMELESS STORIES FOR TODAY AND TOMORROW, John Collier's FANCIES AND GOODNIGHTS, plus novels by Bradbury and Jerry Sohl.

Early Bantam SF Anthologies

SHOT IN THE DARK (1950),
edited by Judith Merrill

An early Bantam paperback SF anthology was SHOT IN THE DARK, edited by Judith Merrill, with stories by such popular authors of the time as Isaac Asimov, Theodore Sturgeon, Fredric Brown, Robert Heinlein, Ray Bradbury, Murray Leinster, and William Tenn.

In addition, there were classic stories by such famous authors as Jack London, Edgar Allan Poe, H.G. Wells, and Stephen Vincent Benet. Other prominent authors with stories in the book were Gerald Kersh, Lewis Padgett, Anthony Boucher, Margery Allingham, James Thurber, Edison Tesla Marshall, R. Austin Freeman, Philip Wylie, Leigh Brackett, and Alexander Samalman.

This was the first of many SF anthologies that Merrill was to edit during her long career, including a series of SF anthologies for Dell. The fantastic cover art was by H.E. Bischoff, illustrating "The Halfling", a story in the book by Brackett.

It's interesting to this writer that Merrill, a former member of the New York Futurians, included stories by such prominent early Futurians as Frederik Pohl (James MacCreigh), her former husband; John Michel (Hugh Raymond), and Isaac Asimov.

This anthology was published in January, 1950, and was marketed as a collection of mystery stories, although the term science-fantasy was used on the back cover—and the next-to-last page of the book had ads for hardcover SF books by Asimov, Leinster, Sturgeon, Heinlein, Bradbury, and Brown (all of whom had stories in the anthology), plus SF books by Jack Williamson and S. Fowler Wright. Moreover, all of the books listed could be ordered by mail from Bantam Books in New York.

Later, of course, Bantam praised its line of SF paperbacks by Charles Beaumont, Jerry Sohl, and James Gunn, and announced proudly at the end of such titles as THE LANI PEOPLE by J.F. Bone: "SCIENCE FICTION—It can be so great that it can almost drive you

right out of your mind…the most imaginative science fiction in soft covers is published by Bantam Books…"

TIMELESS STORIES FOR TODAY AND TOMORROW (1952),
edited by Ray Bradbury

Described on the cover as "adventures into the unknown by brilliant literary figures of today and tomorrow", this thick Bantam Giant anthology included genre stories by "literary" authors, some of whom had also written some memorable SF. Bradbury provided an informative introduction as well as one of his early stories.

The stories included were "The Hour After Westerly" by Robert M. Coates; "Housing Problem" by Henry Kuttner; "The Portable Phonograph" by Walter Van Tilburg Clark; "None Before Me" by Sidney Carroll; "Putzi" by Ludwig Bemelmans; "The Demon Lover" by Shirley Jackson; "Miss Winters and the Wind" by Christine Noble Govan; "Mr. Death and the Redheaded Woman" by Helen Eustis; "Jeremy in the Wind" by Nigel Kneale; "The Glass Eye" by John Kier Cross; "Saint Katy the Virgin" by John Steinbeck; "Night Flight" by Josephine W. Johnson; "The Cocoon" by John B.L. Goodwin; "The Hand" by Wessel Hyatt Smitter; "The Sound Machine" by Roald Dahl; "The Laocoon Complex" by J.C. Furnas; "I am Waiting" by Christopher Isherwood; "The Witness" by William Sansom; "The Enormous Radio" by John Cheever; "Heartburn" by Hortense Calisher; "The Supremacy of Uruguay" by E.B. White; "The Pedestrian" by Bradbury: "A Note for the Milkman" by Sidney Carroll; "The Eight Mistresses" by Jean Hrolda; "In the Penal Colony" by Franz Kafka; and "Inflexible Logic" by Russell Maloney.

Helpful title and author indexes were also provided.

FRONTIERS IN SPACE (1955),
Edited by Everett F. Bleiler and T.E. Dikty

A later Bantam anthology included the following fourteen stories, all taken from the BEST SCIENCE FICTION STORIES of 1951-1953: "Oddy and Id" by Alfred Bester; "Process" by A.E. van Vogt; "The Star Ducks" by Bill Brown; "To Serve Man" by Damon Knight; "The Fox in the Forest" by Ray Bradbury; "Nine-Finger Jack" by Anthony Boucher; "Dark Interlude" by Mack Reynolds and Fredric Brown; "Generation of Noah" by William Tenn; "The Rats" by Arthur Porges; "Ararat" by Zenna Henderson; "The Moon is Green" by Fritz Leiber; "Survival" by John Wyndham; "Machine" by John W. Jakes: and "I Am Nothing" by Eric Frank Russell. The back cover described these stories as "the best of the best".

THE UNEXPECTED! (1948),
edited by Bennett Cerf

An earlier Bantam anthology, advertised as 'stories that take you by surprise", contained several authors of genre fiction, including John Collier, Robert Bloch, Saki

(H.H. Munro), O. Henry, Ambrose Bierce, Lord Dunsany, Carl Jacobi, and A.E. Coppard.

Some of the stories included had originally appeared in **Weird Tales** and in various Arkham House publications.

Ian Ballantine

Ian Keith Ballantine (1916-1995) was a pioneering American publisher who, after working for Penguin Books, founded and published the innovative paperback line of Ballantine Books with his wife, Betty. As a team, the Ballantines were involved in the formation of Bantam Books in 1945, and he was the first president of Bantam (from 1945 to 1952).

Some Conclusions

The early Bantam SF paperbacks were eagerly sought by me and friends.

One of the later Bantam series of books was Bantam Spectra, a science fiction imprint. Spectra published SF/F/Horror from prominent genre authors. Over the years Spectra authors collectively won thirty-one awards in the fields of SF and fantasy, and were nominated 132 times.

Sources

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Note: This article was written several years ago. It has been revised somewhat for publication in Origin.

ROMANCE IN SCIENCE FICTION by Jeffrey Redmond

pictures show John Carter and Dejah Thoris

A look at popular stories in science fiction

Science Fiction (sometimes shortened to sci-fi or SF) is a *genre* of speculative fiction that typically deals with imaginative and futuristic concepts such as advanced science and technology, space exploration, time travel, parallel universes, and extraterrestrial life. It has been called the "literature of ideas", and often explores the potential consequences of scientific, social, and technological innovations.

Scientific romance is an archaic, mainly British term for the genre of fiction now commonly known as science fiction. The term originated in the 1850s to describe both fiction and elements of scientific writing, but it has since come to refer to the science fiction of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, primarily that of Jules Verne, H.G. Wells and Arthur Conan Doyle. In recent years the term has come to be applied to science fiction written in a deliberately anachronistic style as a homage to or pastiche of the original scientific romances.

The earliest use of the term "scientific romance" is thought to have been in 1845, when critics applied it to Robert Chambers' VESTIGES OF THE NATURAL HISTORY OF CREATION, a speculative natural history published in 1844. It was used again in 1851 by the **Edinburgh Ecclesiastical Journal and Literary Review** in reference to Thomas Hunt's PANTHEA, OR THE SPIRIT OF NATURE. In 1859 the **Southern Literary Messenger** referred to Balzac's URSULE MIROUET as "a scientific romance of mesmerism".

In addition, the term was sometimes used to dismiss a scientific principle considered

by the writers to be fanciful, as in THE PRINCIPLES OF METAPHYSICAL AND ETHICAL SCIENCE (1855), which stated that "Milton's conception of inorganic matter left to itself, without an indwelling soul, is not merely more poetical, but more philosophical and just, than the scientific romance, now generally repudiated by all rational inquirers, which represents it as necessarily imbued with the seminal principles of organization and life, and waking up by its own force from eternal quietude to eternal motion". Then, in 1884, Charles Howard Hinton published a series of scientific and philosophical essays under the title SCIENTIFIC ROMANCES.

"Scientific Romances" is now commonly used to refer to science fiction of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as in the anthologies UNDER THE MOONS OF MARS: A HISTORY AND ANTHOLOGY OF "THE SCIENTIFIC ROMANCE" IN THE MUNSEY MAGAZINES, 1912-1920 and SCIENTIFIC ROMANCE IN BRITAIN: 1890-1950. One of the earliest writers to be described in this way was the French astronomer and writer Camille Flammarion, whose RECITS DE L'INFINITI and LA FIN DU MONDE have both been described as scientific romances. The term is most widely applied to Jules Verne, as in the 1879 edition of the AMERICAN CYCLOPAEDIA, and H.G. Wells, whose historical society continues to refer to his work as "scientific romances" today.

Edgar Rice Burroughs' A PRINCESS OF MARS (1912) is also sometimes seen as a major work of scientific romance, and Sam Moskowitz referred to him in 1958 as "the acknowledged master of the scientific romance", though the scholar Everett F. Bleiler views Burroughs as a writer involved in the "new development" of pulp science fiction that arose in the early 20th Century. The same year, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle published THE LOST WORLD, which is also commonly referred to as a scientific romance.

1902 saw the cinematic release of George Melies's film LE VOYAGE DANS LA LUNE (A Trip to the Moon); the time period and the fact that it is based partially on works by Verne and Wells has led to its being labelled as a scientific romance as well.

In recent years the term "scientific romance" has seen a revival, being self-applied in works of science fiction that deliberately ape previous styles. Examples include Christopher Priest's THE SPACE MACHINE: A SCIENTIFIC ROMANCE, published in 1976, Ronald Wright's Wells pastiche A SCIENTIFIC ROMANCE: A NOVEL, published in 1998, and the 1993 roleplaying game FORGOTTEN FUTURES. Though it uses the term, Dennis Overbye's novel EINSTEIN IN LOVE: A SCIENTIFIC ROMANCE does not imitate science fiction of the past in the manner of the other novels mentioned.

Brian Stableford has argued, in SCIENTIFIC ROMANCE IN BRITAIN, that early British science fiction writers who used the term "scientific romance" differed in several significant ways from American science fiction writers of the time. Most notably, the British writers tended to minimize the role of individual "heroes", took an "evolutionary perspective", held a bleak view of the future, and had little interest in space as a new frontier.

Regarding “heroes”, several novels by H.G. Wells have the protagonist as nameless, and often powerless, in the face of natural forces. The evolutionary perspective can be seen in tales involving long time periods, such as THE WAR OF THE WORLDS and THE TIME MACHINE by Wells, or STAR MAKER by Olaf Stapledon. Even in scientific romances that did not involve stretches of time, the issue of whether mankind was just another species subject to evolutionary pressures often arose, as can be seen in parts of The Hampdenshire Wonder by J.D. Beresford and several works by S. Fowler Wright.

Regarding space, C.S. Lewis’ Space Trilogy took the position that “as long as humanity remains flawed and sinful, our exploration of other planets will tend to do them more harm than good”, and most scientific romance authors had not even that much interest in the topic. As for bleakness, it can be seen in many of the works by all the authors already cited, who are deemed humanly flawed—either by original sin or, much more often, by biological factors inherited from our ape ancestors. Stableford also notes that some of the British scientific romances were saved from “being entirely gloomy” by their philosophical speculation (calling them works of “modest armchair philosophizing”). He cites E.V. Odle’s THE CLOCKWORK MAN, John Gloag’s TOMORROW’S YESTERDAY, and Murray Constantine’s PROUD MAN as examples of this type of scientific romance.

Nonetheless, not all British science fiction from that period comports with Stableford’s thesis. Some, for example, reveled in adventures in space and took an optimistic view of the future. By the 1930s there were British authors such as Eric Frank Russell who were intentionally writing “science fiction” for American publication. At that point British writers who used the term “scientific romance” did so either because they were unaware of science fiction or because they chose not to be associated with it.

After the Second World War the influence of American science fiction caused the term “scientific romance” to lose favor, a process accelerated by the fact that few writers of scientific romance considered themselves “scientific romance” writers, instead viewing themselves as just writers who occasionally happened to write scientific romances.

Even so, the influence of the scientific romance era persisted in British science fiction. John Wyndham’s work has been cited as providing “a bridge between traditional British scientific romance and the more varied science fiction which has replaced it”. Some commentators believe scientific romance had some impact on the American variety.

If and when Hollywood can get beyond androids, robots, and space ships, there may be some science fiction movies made with more romance and relationships. These will be more interesting to female audiences, and will allow for better character development. Perhaps if more women became producers, directors, screenplay writers, and studio directors, this will happen. Romance science fiction is definitely something with a future.

THE BEGINNING OF THE BEGINNING: SF and Fandom's Background

by John Thiel

WIKIPEDIA DEFINITION OF SCIENCE FICTION: "Science fiction is a *genre* of speculative fiction that typically deals with imaginative and futuristic concepts such as advanced science and technology, space exploration, time travel, parallel universes, and extraterrestrial life. It has been called the 'literature of ideas', and often explores the potential consequences of scientific, social, and technological innovations.

Science fiction, whose roots go back to ancient times, is related to fantasy and horror and contains many subgenres. However, its exact definition has long been disputed among authors, critics and scholars.

Science fiction literature, film, television, and other media have become popular and influential over much of the world. Besides providing entertainment, it can also criticize present day society, and is often said to maintain a 'sense of wonder' ".

"Science fiction's great rise in popularity during the first half of the 20th Century was closely tied to the popular respect paid to science at that time, as well as the rapid pace of technological innovations and new inventions. Science fiction has often predicted scientific and technological progress. Some works have predicted that new inventions and progress will tend to improve life and society. Others warn about possible negative consequences."

"Science fiction fandom is the 'community of the literature of ideas', the culture in which new ideas emerge and grow before being released into society at large. Members of this community are often in contact with each other at conventions or clubs, through

print or online fanzines or on the internet using websites, mailing lists, and other resources. SF fandom emerged from the letters column in Amazing Stories magazine. Some fans began writing letters to each other, and then grouping their comments together in informal publications that became known as fanzines. "

The first fanzine, **The Comet**, was published in 1930 by the Science Correspondence Club in Chicago, Illinois.

FANCYCLOPEDIA: "Fandom is what we call the participating community of fans that grew out of the 1930s letter columns, in which they interact with one another in sf clubs, *via* correspondence, fanzines and online fora, and at science fiction conventions. Science fiction led to fandom's creation, and continues to be the major focus, yet a liking for the genre does not of itself make you part of fandom. You must have contact. While fandom can be a very loose association, its members identify with fandom and with each other, and communicate with other fans.

Sociologically, fandom consists of fans who are in contact with others, indulging in fanac and maintaining interest in the community. It is a subset of the whole sf community; it overlaps but does not encompass Prodom and doesn't include the vast majority of consumers of science fiction."

One can recognize in the above the writings of P. Howard Lyons and Dick Ellington, somewhat of a legacy left to present day science fiction. Howard Browne's writing is also harkened to in historical and definitive writings. The net now has a lot of resources for studying science fiction and its history.

Links to Information Resources

People wanting to take off on some research of their own might find these links helpful:

FANAC FANHISTORY PROJECT: http://fanac.org
FANCYCLOPEDIA: http://fancyclopedia.org/Fanhistory_Resources
ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION: http://www.sf-encyclopedia.com
SCIENCE FICTION FOUNDATION: https://www.sf-foundation.org
FANZINE BACKLOGS: http://efanzines.com
INTERNET SPECULATIVE FICTION DATABASE: http://www.isfdb.org/cgi-bin/index.cgi
ANSIBLE LINKS (focal point): https://news.ansible.uk/ansilink.html

HARD AND SOFT SCIENCE FICTION by Judy Carroll

Science in conflict with the humanities

I define science fiction as the art of the possible. Fantasy is the art of the impossible.—Ray Bradbury

I've often heard the terms hard science fiction and soft science fiction. I haven't paid too much attention to the difference between the two. I figured hard science fiction gave a lot of details like how a starship would run and the math and science behind it, and in soft science fiction starships would run with very little explaining about how they functioned.

I finally broke down and decided to get a definition of the two.

Hard Versus Soft Science Fiction
Submitted by musack on Tuesday, 2017-08-22 09:37
bels website

"There are a couple of differences between hard and soft science fiction. The biggest distinction is that the more realistic or plausible the science or math is, the 'harder' the SF is considered to be. Hard science fiction is generally more scientifically rigorous than soft science fiction, which is often flexible in terms of the rules and laws of science. Hard SF, in general, also tends to focus more on the "hard" sciences like physics, astronomy, mathematics, engineering, and chemistry. On the other hand, soft SF usually focuses more on the 'soft' sciences such as sociology, anthropology, and psychology."

All definitions of hard and soft science fiction that I read agree with the above statement, varying only with the addition or subtraction of a science or a tweek, here and there…until I ran across Ben Bova's definition of hard science fiction.

HUFFPOST
What is Hard Science Fiction?
Ben Bova, Contributor
Co-editor, "Carbide-Tipped Pens"
02/02/2015 11:38 am ET Updated Apr 04, 2015

"Many people associate science fiction with the fanciful, even the fantastic. Yet, to my mind, science fiction is not only the most breathtaking genre of modern literature, it is

the most realistic.

I'm speaking of what is commonly called 'hard' science fiction, stories in which some aspect of future science or technology is so central to the tale that if you took out the science or technology, the story would collapse.

Think of Mary Shelley's FRANKENSTEIN: take out the scientific element and there's no story left.

'Hard' science fiction is based on reality, the real world, as science has discovered and explained it. But it goes a step farther, beyond the known and into realms that have not been discovered and explained—yet.

The rule of thumb for a writer of 'hard' science fiction is that the writer is free to use anything his or her imagination can invent and depict—so long as no one can show that it contradicts the tenets of known science.

The scope of 'hard' science fiction is truly breathtaking: the entire universe and all of the past, present and future are the canvas on which we work."

I checked several lists of what is considered "hard" and "soft" science fiction and discovered that I lean toward soft. Of the many books listed I had read only a total of fourteen from all lists—three hard and eleven soft science fiction. I also discovered from those lists that some of my reading is really out of date. I have a tendency to stick with authors I know and not venture into the realm of the unknown with authors I have never read.

I think the reason I read more soft science fiction is because it is easier to understand. I'm perfectly content to know the starship is functional and can get the crew and passengers to their destinations without having to know about "thrust drives" or quantum physics. (Forgive me if I am using these terms incorrectly. I'm not a science person.) Brief information is all I need, and I am content to go my semi-ignorant way through the story. (One book had so many words I didn't understand I couldn't figure out what was an actual "thing" and what was made up for the story. I started out looking up every "suspicious" word. There were so many of them they detracted from the story. I never finished it.)

I am curious to know how many of our members prefer hard science fiction and how many prefer soft science fiction. If any of you care to tell me your preferences and the reason behind it, I would like to include it in the October Origin. My email address is BlueShadows2012@gmail.com .

Conclusion of issue; see you next month