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EDITORIAL

What Gets You What You Want?

This question could have a lot of answers, but that's because it lacks a context. We might narrow it if, like me, you take any interest in this question or its answer. Ask *when* the question arises first, and the answer narrows it down considerably when it's revealed that the answer is "now". What constitutes "now" is the next thing that might occur to the person giving this question any consideration. Now is the time you are on the computer when reading this, and the same now will exist if you return to this site and this item (Origin); it is the time before and after reading this, defined by the computer and operated by the clicks that bring it on and turn it off. The definition of now is, of course, mine, but it needs to be defined by someone, or it remains undefined, or if defined by you, it is not the same thing being considered unless the definition duplicates my own. In other words, I posed the question, so I need to be somewhat referenced in its consideration. In my consideration of having done this posing of a question, I feel somewhat the same way a writer feels when he has placed something before the reader, and after that it goes its own way, but here it's held in place by the computer system, and if answered it's more apt to be what the writer (here, me) intended to be asking. But further definition of the question is required before I can believe that the reader knows what I am saying, for, insubstantial as it remains, it cannot be considered to be properly understood, from the writer's viewpoint, by the reader, and with this in mind, it is an unsuccessful communicative attempt. We must have some idea what we are asking and answering, and not an abstract one if we are to be satisfied.

With all the talk above (this paragraph) about communicating and being understood,

it seems to me upon reading over what I have up to this point written that it might not be clear to a reader what I have said. It's an intricate attention given to the significance of the title, and the reader might miss what I am saying due to a lack of the same involvement that I have in a topic that is basically, the relevance of the title to anything. I haven't been saying much that would constitute an editorial. Perhaps some readers will decide, if they decide anything about it, that I have taken a course in general semantics (which author L. Ron Hubbard recommended) and read also THE MEDIUM IS THE MESSAGE by Marshal McLuhan, which latter volume puts across the idea that being able to communicate might be what the communicator has to talk about, and suggests that a man might write a letter to show off having a new typewriter and be more interested in having that than saying something. Similarly a product emphasis on a television commercial might be mainly pointing out that it is being advertised on television, which might not be the case with its competition. "Via air mail" might signify the importance of a message found within, which might be otherwise not attention-getting. "From the Department of Public Safety" on an envelope might speak for itself, and the contents of the letter be of lesser importance. "Government Issue" on a message might give it an authority it does not otherwise have. So communicating might come to be an end in itself, as I have suggested above in reference to my editorial, and I am indeed interested in good communications and the improvement of the means, grammatical or otherwise, of conveying these communications. Double-talk may be regarded (erroneously) as valid communication if it is sent by the right means from the right source. We have this problem in science and science fiction, wholly inexplicable scientific statements which are in fact double-talk and expressed in unknown formulae, with equations not completed, and having the intention of baffling and one-upping the reader and perhaps putting up a block in front of what he is trying to say. A not understandable scientific statement is an impregnable fortress where there are arguments, and the message, "You can't beat me in scientific dispute", implicit in what has been, for example, posted, is the only message there is that is actual, carried by the medium of posting potentiality and the substantiation bestowed by a successful posting, one that is not argued. With many such messages you are up against a blank wall, a communications barrier, which I think is what we are being faced with here, with computer regulations sometimes operating against us and barriers of intentionally indecipherable procedures. We need to look over our means of communicating and get improvements made which will enable us to do a better job overall of successful interchanges. Noting that the three major science fiction

magazines have had forums on the net, and noting further that all three of these forums have now collapsed, recalls to mind what actual Roman forums were like. There was confusion, fighting, and pandemonium at them when they were not successfully kept under control, and there were methods of argumentative discussion such as sophism which kept any intelligent interchange of opinion from being successful. One can see also, in lingering on this thought, that a writer might be so beguiled by the thought of writing well that he lacks the proper attention for what he is saying, just as an orator may get so charmed by his own oratorical gifts that he says what sounds well rather than what is meaningful. So, how much good are we getting out of our discussions of science fiction and fantasy? People here and in Tightbeam and the Review and TNFF are striving to get their ideas across, and are successfully calling attention to various things that are of importance to us, but it would be better if everyone were coming across well and there was not as much confusion as there is about what is being said. Official statements are sometimes more official than they are statements. We have to get what we are saying into good form and manage to get around all the intentional and unintentional blocking that exists on the net, and substantiate what we have said when we have managed to express an important idea about our setup which might lead to our improvement and expansion.

My opening paragraph is an attempt to describe and contend with the mess we keep getting into and is thereby so contrived and intricate that it is difficult to follow, and may serve as an example of what I have been talking about, the jargon that arises from dealing with a complicated problem or situation. We are here to improve our circumstances, that is, not be merely readers of science fiction and fantasy but discussers of it, and our aim is getting things the way we want them and the way they should be. We want to learn more and hope that we can understand the things we are being told by those discussing things of interest. The original idea behind this bureau was making it a place where questions could be answered and science fiction could be defined and its importance analyzed, and this is what we have been trying to do. Our discussion leads us to a better understanding of what we have and more ability to communicate about it. Let us follow that communication road with good intentions.

Dealing with communications problems is difficult, and until we have found ways of doing so, it's best for use to be doing the best we can. In this issue we do that.

FANZINE RETROSPECTIVE

by Jon D. Swartz
N3F Historian

The previous Fanzine Retrospectives examined fanzines published in 1937, 1949, and 1951, respectively. This time we return to the 1940s to look at an issue of another prominent fanzine from that decade.

THE SCIENCE FICTION FAN for May 1940 (Volume 4, #10)

The Science Fiction Fan began publication under the editorship of Olon F. Wiggins—widely recognized at the time as Denver's most outstanding SF fan—with an initial issue dated July 1936. The issue under review here, published nearly four years later, had the following editorial board: Olon F. Wiggins, Editor; P.J. Searles, Associate Editor; Donald A Wollheim, Contributing Editor; and James M. Rogers, Art Editor.

Format/Policies: This issue was hectographed, one half page sized, and consisted of twenty total pages counting covers. The first four issues of The Fan had been printed, but most of the subsequent issues were hectographed. In 1940 a one-year subscription cost $1.00 in cash, money order, or one and a half cent stamps (!).

Contributors/Contributions: The most entertaining contribution to this issue was by Robert A. Madle. His article was entitled "So You're Going to Print Your Fan Magazine". Among the fanzines used to illustrate the folly of printing a fanzine, in addition to The Fan, were the following former fanzines: **The Time Traveler** (Allen Glasser, Conrad Ruppert), **Science Fiction Digest** (Conrad Ruppert, Forrest J. Ackerman, Julius Schwartz, Ray Palmer), **Science Fantasy Correspondent** (Willis Conover, Corwin Stickney) [reviewed in the first "Fanzine Retrospective"], **Science Fiction World** (Hayward S. Kirby), **Unique Tales** (Russell Leadsbrand), **The Phantagraph** (Donald A. Wollheim), **Science Fiction News** (Daniel McPhail), **Science Fiction Critic** (Claire P. Beck), and **Fanciful Tales** (Wollheim, Wilson Shepherd). Madle concluded his article by mentioning two zines that, at the time he was writing, still were being printed: **Fantasy News** (Will Sykora) and **Stardust** (W. Lawrence Hamling). Editor Wiggins, who was to chair the 1941 Worldcon in Denver (Denvention), contributed several items to this issue, probably including an unsigned article listing the advantages/disadvantages of the average SF story. Advantages cited: 1) Develops imagination; 2) Gives reader a general under-standing of science; 3) Gives reader practice at criticism; 4) Gives reader something utterly alien to ordinary life that will take his mind from worries and troubles of latter; 5) Presents new ideas, new visions of future, new plans, *etc.* that give scientists many of their inspirations; 6) Gives people interest in science—some become famous scientists; and 7) Gives a hobby that causes correspondence and meetings of new friends on their common interest. Disadvantages cited: 1) Prevents reader from distinguishing between realities and unrealities; 2) Gives reader false scientific facts, occasionally; 3) Gives reader bad literary style; 4) Gives reader natural inclination towards "blood and thunder" stories; 5) Sometimes gets too far ahead of scientist to be a sparkling goal; 6) Gives some people lack of interest in science because long scientific theories in stories bore them; and 7) Creates organizations, some being commercial and means of advertising. An amusing conclusion to the article was a tally that totaled "seven strong points, zero weak" for the advantages named, and "five strong, two weak" for the disadvantages. Apparently, the author of the article also served as his own critic!

Other Features/Contents: Remaining contents were as follows: a sort of reverse Frankenstein story by Dick Wilson ("Young Dr. Morden or A Man to Forget")—the longest piece in the issue—in which the creature, created by parts of dead bodies by a mad professor at Stein University, turns out to be a model citizen named Hugh Success (!); "Sidelight in 'Skow'" [about the Skowhegan Junior Astronomical and Rocket Society]

by James Avery, with the introductory statement: "This article was written before Avery was forced out of the fan field—you know that story" [see Note below]; and several other short pieces, presumably written by the editor: an announcement of the upcoming World SF Convention in Chicago ("The first World Convention in New York last year wasn't exactly a success because a number of nasty things that happened and the generally high-handed attitude of the chaps who were running the shebang") [with some fans associated with the Illini Fantasy Fictioneers mentioned, including Mark Reinsberg of **Ad Astra**, Bob Tucker of **Le Zombie**, and local fan Richard Meyer]; Smack in the Nuclei" (by **The Iconoclast**) ["financial parasites" versus "scientific minds"]; and the "Road Leading to Success", a brief note on the secret of success in life (conclusion: be more efficient in what you do).

Cover artwork and interior illustrations, many with color, were not signed but appear to be the work of a single artist. Presumably they were by James M. Rogers, the fanzine's Art Editor. There were no ads in this issue.

Conclusions

Critics have had many positive remarks to make about The Science Fiction Fan. For example, Jack Speer has written that during Second Fandom (1937-1938), The Fan was beginning to be recognized as the leading fan magazine. In addition, Sam Moskowitz had mostly favorable comments to make about the fanzine's contents over the years, praising in particular the efforts of Paul Searles (and dubbing him the actual editor of the fanzine). Searles later became a book reviewer for the New York **Herald-Tribune**. On the other hand, Moskowitz, who had had a falling-out with Wiggins in 1938, complained that the fanzine's "policies were almost completely controlled by the Futurians". Whatever critics have written, however, it should be noted that in its time The Fan was a very popular fanzine and was published on a monthly schedule for nearly five years.

Of the individuals whose work is cited herein, the following are either current or former members of First Fandom: Ackerman, Beck, Evans, Glasser, McPhail, Madle, Moskowitz, Pavlat, Reinsberg, Tucker, Schwartz, Speer, Warner, and Wollheim.

Note: Warner has reported that Avery was "extracted from fandom" by his parents because of a threat of legal action from Street & Smith after Avery had published an item stating that the publisher was having financial problems.

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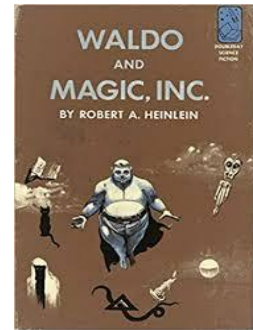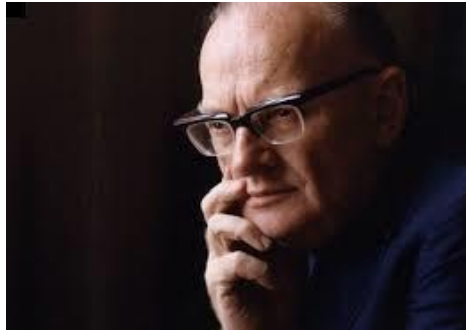Warner, Harry, Jr. ALL OUR YESTERDAYS, Advent, 1969.

Note: This article was originally published in First Fandom's **Scientifiction** many years ago. It has been revised somewhat for reprinting in Origin.

Lovecraft's "At the Mountains of Madness"
On view is Cthuhu, one of his many appearances

Art by Hannes Bok

Magic in Science Fiction by Jeffrey Redmond

A look at science fiction as it relates to fantasy

Science fiction is supposedly based on plausible technologies. But magic is supposedly in the realm of fantasy, where the physical laws of the universe as we understand them are easily brushed aside. However, things aren't actually quite that simple. There's the quote from Arthur C. Clarke: "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic."

Can the combination of magic and science work in fiction?

We may read many different genres, while gravitating towards science fiction and fantasy. We can read a few books that combine them both, nost noticeably in Chris Fox's Magitech Chronicles, as well as the book Alex White's A BIG SHIP AT THE EDGE OF THE UNIVERSE. At first glance it cannot be certain what can be realized about this combination of technology and magic.

There's the above quote from Arthur C. Clarke. And he also said, "Magic is just science we don't understand yet." If we could pull someone from a hundred years ago to the present day and show them the internet, they'd consider it magic. Tell them about automatic doors, or self-driving cars, or artificial intelligence, and they'd either be in awe of these god-like manifestations, or they'd cower in the face of such demonic forces.

As we ponder this, we come to see that science fiction and fantasy merge more than previously realized, and that there are many similarities between the two genres.

The prime example is STAR WARS, with the Force. It's a mystical force that allows users to control matter with their minds (among other things)—which sounds suspiciously like magic. But what of all the technologies used in science fiction—faster than light travel, teleportation, and so on? Sometimes there is an attempt to explain

things, but often they simply exist in the story universe, and the reader is left to accept their reality in the story—much like magic in the world of Harry Potter.

It goes back to that first Arthur C. Clarke quote: "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic."

You could argue that each technolkogy serves a distinct role in science fiction, whereas magic can be used as a "get out of jail free" card—but some of the best fantasy books treat magic in a very similar way to science. Brandon Sanderson is a great exponent of using magical systems, where there are rules over what it can and can't do. For instance, the magic in his Mistborn series is based around metals, and each type of metal gives different abilities. Then there is the training and study that must go into using these magics—just as characters in science fiction often need to train in the use of technologies. So Luke trains to use the Force, and Harry Potter studies at Hogwarts so that he can use more magic. Neither technology or magic can be freely used by the uninitiated.

This appears to be the case in the books that combine both tech and magic—neither are devices for instant solutions to problems. It's interesting that one of the characters in White's book has no magical ability. It doesn't seem to hold her back much. In Fox's series, he pushes magic into the realm of religion and belief, but still there are rules—a god's power can only be used in proportion to the amount of belief their worshippers can give. This gives possibilities for a more social angle, with characters working to encourage that worship to assist their particular gods.

Books that blend science fiction and fantasy are nothing new, though. In Stephen King's DARK TOWER series, the mainly fantasy feel is occasionally layered with a sprinkling of sci fi. Anne McCaffrey's Pern books have a strong fantasy trope (dragons), and the settings often feel like fantasy worlds. But they're also science fiction books. And, sometimes, older science fiction can read like fantasy because the science, speculative at the time, has now been disproven. Think of Jules Verne's JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH, or Arthur Conan Doyle's THE LOST WORLD.

Of course, the combination of technology and magic isn't for everyone. Ultimately, it's down to personal preference. At any given moment we can enjoy this blend of magic and science, and be interested in seeing where other writers will take this growing trend. There absolutely is magic in Science Fiction. At least, there is if you consider the basic definition of magic.

Magic is anything enabling actions beyond our current capability or understanding.

With this definition, magic can include bio-engineered aliens, faster than light travel, artificial gravity generators, cloning tanks, and so much more. Different types of magic systems often appear in science fiction stories. The primary archetypes or forms of magic in science fiction can be identified.

Magic Archeypes in Science Fiction

This is not an exhaustive list by any means, but here are a few to make sure we're in the same solar system.

Advanced Technology

This is one of the more common archetypes you see in fiction. Whether it comes in the form of strange weapons and tools wielded by an alien race or the everyday tools used by future humans, this is still magic.

The phasers from STAR TREK, a cortical stack from ALTERED CARBON, and the Epstein Drive from THE EXPANSE are all examples of advanced technology.

Lost/Ancient Technology

Another common archetype that involves the discovery or use of devices created by a previous race or civilization.

The Stargate from STARGATE SG-1, the Mass Effect Drive from the MASS EFFECT series, or the Halo worlds from HALO are all outstanding examples. It isn't necessary to name your series after the technology, but it certainly seems to be popular.

Alien Races and Abilities

This is a near-perfect reflection of what we see in Fantasy. Out in the vast reaches of space, we encounter various races with strange and wondrous powers.

The incredible power and fluidity of amorphs from SCHLOCK MERCENARY, the life-sucking abilities of the Wraiths in STARGATE ATLANTIS, or even the Na'vi in AVATAR are all perfect examples of this archetype.

When identified, it's clear that these are magic systems hiding in plain sight. But what kinds of systems are they?

The Types of Magic in Science Fiction

Hard-Rational Magic

If you're familiar with the types of magic, you guessed that most of the magic in science fiction falls in the hard-rational quadrant, and you'd be right. Providing that structure and predictability is essential for creating that "scientific" feeling we know and love.

It doesn't take much for this to happen. In fact, even the smallest leap from

understanding into speculation is enough to turn technology into magic. When you're reading a "Hard Science Fiction" story, you're just reading about an extremely hard and rational magic system. The sheer weight of truth and logic behind it is what makes this such a powerful and popular type of magic in science fiction stories.

Soft-Rational Magic

While not so common as a hard-rational magic system, we promise that you have seen this type of magic in science fiction before.

This type of magic frequently masquerades as lost-ancient tech. Its behaviors are consistent and repeatable, allowing characters to use or abuse it in creative but predictable ways. While hard-rational magic goes to great lengths to make sure the audience understands how and why it works, soft-rational magic makes no such attempt.

Because the system doesn't need much explanation, the creator often has more room to display a wider range of incredible abilities. The less time spent explaining why it works, the more time a storyteller can spend showing the cool parts of the system.

Hard-Nebulous and Soft-Nebulous Magic

It is rare to find these types of magic in science fiction, at least in many experiences. Sometimes you need a rebulous magic system and sometimes you don't.

The ability to theorize and predict is an enormous part of making a system feel scientific. Nebulous systems are, by definition, difficult to predict or recreate, making them an unpopular choice for most storytellers in this genre.

These systems are fantastic for creating a sense of wonder and/or fear which is why most examples you find will sit in the Space Horror sub-genre where science fiction and horror overlap. Aside from that, nebulous systems often manifest in science fiction as some form of faster-than-light travel or as an ability possessed by the big, bad guy of the story.

To sum up, you can find all kinds of magic systems in science fiction stories, though soft-nebulous and hard-nebulous systems are far less common.

Hopefully this has convinced you that magic is more than just spells and incantations. You can twist it into a thousand unique forms and place it into any story imaginable. That means you can use the same process of building magic systems to create cool and logical technology for your science fiction story.

If you're looking for guidance specifically centered on building technology for your story, you should check out Mythcreants. They have dozens of posts on the topic and

you can always find something useful in their articles. Many have a personal favorite in Seven Common Problems with Space Fic Technology.

<u>Brandon Sanderson's Laws of Magic</u>

The idea of hard magic and soft magic was popularized by Sanderson for world building and creating magic systems in fictional settings. The terminology of hard and soft originate from hard and soft sciences, hard science fiction, hard fantasy and soft science fiction and both terms are approximate ways of characterizing two ends of a spectrum.

Hard magic systems follow specific rules, the magic is controlled and explained to the reader in the narrative detailing the mechanics behind the way the magic "works", and can be used for building interesting worlds that revolve around the magic system. Soft magic systems may not have clearly defined rules or limitations, or provide limited exposition regarding their workings, and are used to create a sense of wonder to the reader.

Sanderson's three laws of magic are creative writing guidelines that can be used to create magic systems for fantasy stories.

An author's ability to solve conflict with magic is directly proportional to how well the reader understands said magic.

Weaknesses, limits and costs are more interesting than powers.

The author should expand on what is already a part of the magic system before something entirely new is added, as this may otherwise entirely change how the magic system fits into the fictional world.

Additionally, there is a zeroth law.

Always err on the side of what's awesome.

"Well, it isn't the best place I've been in but it's near to it."

THE FUTURE OF SCIENCE FICTION
by Judy Carroll

We've been studying SF's past—what about its future?

I was asked the following question: What will science fiction's future be like?

My first thought—I have no idea.

My second thought—Worse than I've ever imagined.

My third thought—We are already there.

Let's start with my third thought.—We are already there.

I'm looking forward to what technology science fiction writers will develop, and how soon some of them will become a reality.

In some ways we are already in the future. Think about the science fiction books and movies you have come in contact with. Remember the house that greets the owner when he enters and will do things when asked, such as closing the curtains and selecting music. We have Alexa from Amazon.

What about the vehicles that have no drivers and buzz around in a future city picking up passengers or delivering orders? We have Domino's Pizza. Domino's partnered with Nuro—a robotics company—to provide us with this service.

Have you ever watched an old black and white movie from the 50s which introduced a computer that took up a large room and had dozens of blinking lights and made a constant buzzing sound? Today, we have many types and sizes of computers, some of which we can carry around and have conversations on with people around the block or in another country. We can take pictures and listen to music.

Now, think of the wildest thing you can think of and odds are, technology-wise, you will see it within your lifetime. Here are just a few things that have been invented from

the 1950s through 2010:

    1950s
-The black box flight recorder.
-The hovercraft.

    1960s
-Light Amplification by Simulated Emission of Radiation.
-UNIX.

    1970s
-GPS.
-The Microcomputer.

    1980s
-Stealth Planes.
-The Space Shuttle.

    1990s
-World Wide Web.
-Text Messages.

    2000s
-Camera phones.
-The Amazon Kindle.

    2010s
-Virtual Reality Headsets.
-Artificial Intelligence.

    My second thought: Worse than I've ever imagined.
    I think science fiction will see many more imaginative ideas and characters.
    I prefer stories where good guys win. The future where there are more positive than negative events and people. I don't see an alien invasion or a space flight with aliens in our future. I see the future of science fiction as the possibilities of what can happen. Not with alien races, but with ourselves—our connection with one another on this planet.
    There are many well-written books about Dystopian societies. If we take to heart the message of how wrong these societies are, and that they can easily come into being—if

we drop our guard, unaware of the darkness progressing—then we can help have a more positive future.

My first thought: I have no idea.

Sometimes I look at science fiction as a model of humankind—past, present, and future.

Science fiction shows the possibilities our future could hold. The possibility of meeting and getting along with an alien race or the likelihood we will band together as an earthly family and fight against them because we don't understand them.

Science fiction can foretell of things to come—not with known or unknown alien races—but within ourselves and the people we connect with, and the people we have yet to connect with, in a meaningful way. Science Fiction is the conflict of ourselves—against ourselves—the diverse people who inhabit this planet.

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Tech Nostalgia: The top 10 innovations of the 2000s

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Best Inventions/ 18 Greatest Innovations From the 2010s

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2010s

18 Inventions that Changed Our Lives in the 2010s.

Afterwords: This issue seems to me to be the best we've had, more personable, more to the point and purpose of the bureau, and with a good statement of our goals along with a maintaining of our present services. The columns remind me of an earlier N3F when discussions of this sort were the going thing. The issue should serve as a basis for further improvements.

Enjoy yourselves until we meet again!