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EDITORIAL

Are We Independent in Our Outlook?

Science fiction fans and readers are notably out of the usual range of social considerations, and have been a departure from the norm for as long as science fiction has been being sold. It is clear that that would be so among regular readers of it, and the observation is verified by most writing by science fiction fans being in some way unusual and off the beaten trails. Fandom has always made this similarity noticeable. If they have a common goal it is breaking through the barriers to social progress and "the limitations to thought imposed by mundane social reasoning." Without this forward advance thinking there is apt to be stagnation, so it is well if science fiction readers maintain their contact with mundane culture—which we see being done heavily, and at other times avoided entirely in these times. How well science fiction relates to common culture and what deficiencies exist in such contact is worthy of study.

Being therefore outside of the norm, we have an unestablished position in society, including literary society, and might lose our recourse to other forms of literature if we are in a literary discussion. Here in this bureau we might all be considered outside of any history and unresearchable. However, this is our history and research bureau, and we obviously would not regard science fiction or its fans as foreign to history and not to be considered by researchers. Fandom has a history, in fact, but it is not very well known and has to be pieced together, which we try to do here, and science fiction is relevant in terms of its time of publication to the development of science fiction fandom. What we are interested in is what science fiction means to us and how it relates to other literature and the development of ideas. (There has been much talk about science fiction's development of ideas of late, and consideration of it as being speculative fiction and perhaps meriting the use of this term to describe it as a literature.)

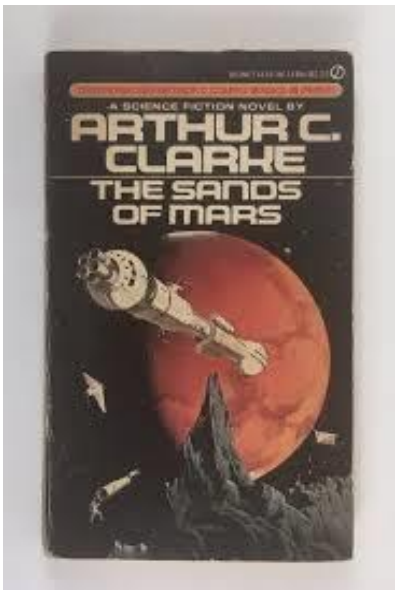
So does it matter what we come up with in terms of ideas perhaps derived from science fiction reading, as far as our place in the modern world or our relationship to society as it exists around us is concerned, especially considering that the ideas we have do not relate well to a social norm or to any really practical considerations? It might matter what we come up with from our reading in the terms just mentioned, but where it really matters is what it does for US. Everybody wants some matter for consideration and those favoring science fiction want that form of matter. When our thoughts become confused by what we read in the news, science fiction is at any rate not confusing, because it is not that much attached to directly active doings or things about which our considerations might matter. (Here we have the concept of science fiction as escape literature, escape from the cares imposed upon us by modern living.)

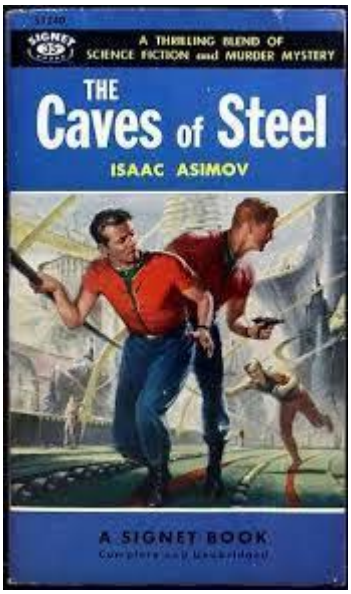
Now we come upon the matter of independence of attitude. There are many things we are dependent upon, ranging from food through money and including public services, which might be no bother to us unless these dependencies are made so by others, so we have a need for whatever independence we can develop with these as our considerations. Some science fiction fans back in the 60s took off with freedom of thought and speech (a political matter) to "freeing the mind" from imposed constraints and clichés of living and began studying zen and other mind-freeing concepts, desiring also independence from those upon whom they had been dependent, and from social patterns that seemed non-workable or profitable to them. Many ended up belying their place in science fiction fandom, possibly to substitute this non-essential consideration for the belial of their elders, their "fathers and teachers", that took place as they separated themselves from their familiar places in society. Generally these people disappeared from science fiction fandom also, because they could not "support such a habit" when they had set themselves adrift from the more substantial things involved in the lives they had been living. So that leaves a lot of people without any personal support except group mindedness for their independent selves.

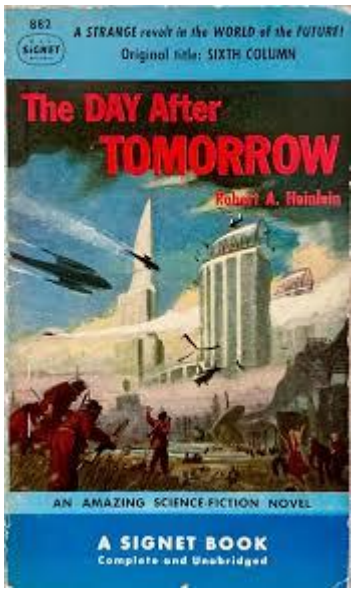
And where would that leave us, if we remain with science fiction? It would leave us with something to think about, that may be a better consideration than we have been giving to what exists around us now, here in our science fiction interest. It is better to consider things than just experience them, and as researchers we are here to do that. That's the real activity we want to be engaged in—discovering our existential place and position in this modern world, and perhaps rediscovering ways to relate to others, giving us a more settled living experience than we may heretofore have been having.

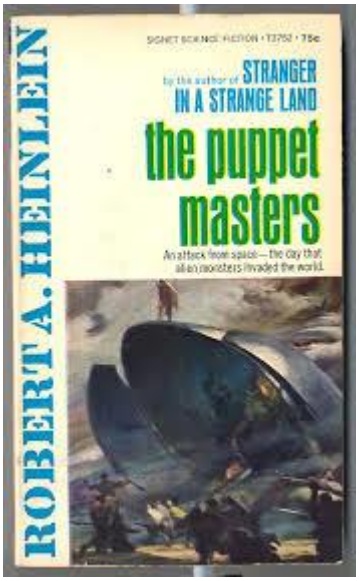
Early New American Library Science Fiction Paperbacks

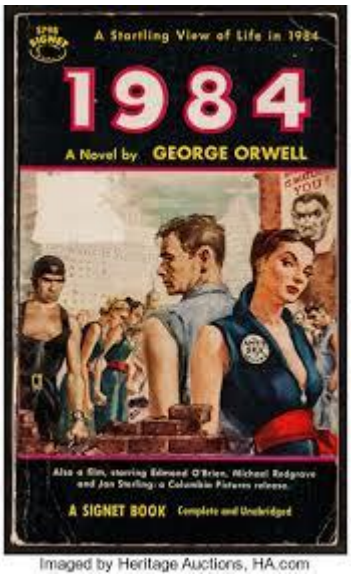
by Jon D. Swartz, N3F Historian











The New American Library of World Literature, Inc., more commonly known as the New American Library or NAL, was an American publisher based in New York, founded in 1948. NAL was created when the British and American branches of Penguin Books couldn't agree on a common editorial policy.

NAL's stated focus was on affordable paperback reprints of classic and scholarly works. Its Imprints included Signet (fiction books) and Mentor (non-fiction books). Since the 1940s, many science fiction (SF) books have been reprinted as Signet paperbacks.

Mentor Books

In addition to the Signet reprints, Mentor books on science have been popular with SF readers since the 1940s, especially LIFE ON OTHER WORLDS (1949) by Dr. H. Spencer Jones. At the time Jones was Britain's Astronomer Royal.

There were other Mentor books of interest to SF fans in the late 1940s and early 1950s. These included THE BIRTH AND DEATH OF THE SUN by George Gamow, NEW HANDBOOK OF THE HEAVENS by Hubert J. Bernhard and others, MAN MAKES HIMSELF by F. Gordon Childe, THE FRONTIERS OF ASTRONOMY by Fred Hoyle, and THE UNIVERSE AND DOCTOR EINSTEIN by Lincoln Barnett (and graced with a Forward by Albert Einstein himself).

Later, Mentor would reprint such popular science books as THE DOUBLE HELIX, THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES, THE LIMITATIONS OF SCIENCE, THE FUTURE OF INDUSTRIAL MAN, HUMAN HEREDITY, THE SEA AROUND US, and KING SOLOMON'S RING.

In 1955 a new impriont, Mentor Philosophers, was added to the Mentor line. These ultimately consisted of six volumes, published over a two-year period, selling for fifty cents, and covering the basic writings of the major philosophers from the Middle Ages to modern times. In 1956, a series of Mentor books on archeology was also begun.

Signet Books

It was NAL's Signet Books, however, that were the most popular with SF fans of the 1940s and 1950s.

Signet published reprints of SF books by A.E. van Vogt (MISSION: INTERPLANETARY [*aka* THE VOYAGE OF THE SPACE BEAGLE] and DESTINATION: UNIVERSE!), Edmond Hamilton (BEYOND THE MOON [*aka* THE STAR KINGS]), George Orwell (1984 and ANIMAL FARM), Alfred Bester (THE STARS MY DESTINATION, STARBURST, THE DEMOLISHED MAN), Isaac Asimov (THE CURRENTS OF SPACE, THE MARTIAN WAY AND OTHER STORIES, THE CAVES OF STEEL, THE END OF ETERNITY, and I, ROBOT), Arthur C. Clarke (THE DEEP RANGE, THE CITY AND THE STARS), Wilson "Bob" Tucker (THE TIME MASTERS), James Blish (THE SEEDLING STARS, GALACTIC CLUSTER), Brian Aldiss (NO TIME LIKE TOMORROW), Murray Leinster (OPERATION: OUTER SPACE), Philip Wylie

(NIGHT UNTO NIGHT), Fred Hoyle (THE BLACK CLOUD), and other popular authors of the Golden Age of Science Fiction.

Van Vogt's Destination:Universe, originally published in hardback by Pellegrini & Cuddahy in 1952, was a special Signet reprint for me and my SF-reading friends. After ten stories by van Vogt, there was a postscript in which van Vogt wrote to new and old readers of SF, explaining his views about SF and writing it. Since he was one of our favorite authors at the time, this postscript was of particular interest to us, especially a section of the piece in which he wrote specifically to HIS fans. In this section, he stated that he had written about 1,500,000 words of SF in the past 10 years—and felt he was no great producer!

At the time, however, Signet almost seemed to specialize in Robert Heinlein books, issuing reprints of such titles of his as TOMORROW, THE STARS, THE PUPPET MASTERS, THE MAN WHO SOLD THE MOON, THE GREEN HILLS OF EARTH, and THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW (*aka* SIXTH COLUMN), all in the early 1950s.

This trend continued when Heinlein's BEYOND THIS HORIZON was issued by Signet in 1960.

Many of these early SF paperback reprints carried the following statement on their covers: "A Signet Book—Complete and Unabridged".

Most of the cover art on these books was done by artist Stanley Meltzoff.

Other Signet Heinlein books followed in the early 1960s, including STARSHHIP TROOPERS, FARNHAM'S FREEHOLD, THE MENACE FROM EARTH, METHUSELAH'S CHILDREN, and ORPHANS OF THE SKY. Later, Signet even packaged and sold a boxed set of five different SF novels by Heinlein.

In addition, other significant SF authors and their SF books were published by Signet in the 1960s and 1970s. These included THE STATUS CIVILIZATION by Robert Sheckley, ISLANDS IN THE SKY and THE OTHER SIDE OF THE SKY by Arthur C. Clarke, NO TIME LIKE TOMORROW and STARSHIP by Brian Aldiss, THOSE WHO WATCH by Robert Silverberg, and THE SHORES OF ANOTHER SEA by Chad Oliver.

Much of the cover art for these later Signet books was by Richard Powers.

In the early 1960s, several classic genre works were also published as Signet paperbacks. These classics included LOOKING BACKWARD (Edward Bellamy), GULLIVER'S TRAVELS (Jonathan Swift), EREWHON (Samuel Butler), THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER (Edgar Allen Poe), THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GREY (Oscar Wilde), FABLES AND FAIRY TALES (Leo Tolstoy), THE CELESTIAL RAILROAD AND OTHER STORIES

(Nathaniel Hawthorne), and DRACULA (Bram Stoker).

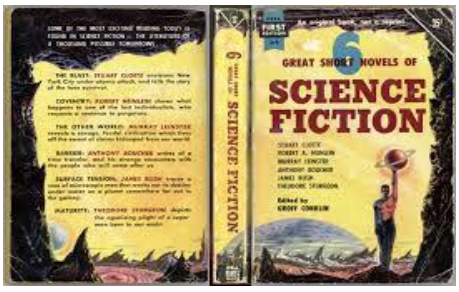
In subsequent decades, Signet would reprint many of Stephen King's best-selling genre novels in paperback.

Stanley Meltzoff


Stanley Meltzoff (1917-2006) was a painter, known primarily for his marine paintings. Born in New York City, he graduated from the City College of New York and became an instructor at Pratt Institute. Serving in Italy during World War II, he was an artist and journalist for the U.S. military magazine **Stars and Stripes.** Returning to New York City after the war, he spent years alternating between teaching and creating art before becoming a full-time illustrator in 1949.

During the 1950s, Meltzoff created dozens of paperback covers for Signet paperbacks, and also did artwork for Madison Avenue advertising agencies. He also painted covers and interior spreads for several popular slick magazines, including **Life, National Geographic, The Atlantic,** and **Scientific American.**

Richard Powers





Richard M. Powers (1921-1996) was primarily an SF illustrator. He was inducted into the Science Fiction Hall of Fame in 2008. He began by working in a conventional pulp paperback style, but quickly evolved a personal surrealist style influenced by the cubists and surrealists, especially the painters Pablo Picasso and Yves Tanguy.

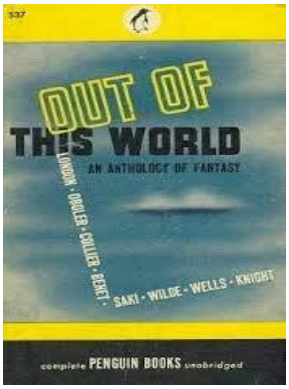
From the 1940s through the 1960s, he did art for the many dust jackets for Doubleday SF books, including first editions of PEBBLE IN THE SKY by Isaac Asimov in 1950 and ROGUE QUEEN by L. Sprague de Camp in 1951.

During the 1950s and 1960s, Powers served as an unofficial art director for Ballantine Books. At a later age, he dabbled in abstract art and collage, before dying in 1996 at the age of seventy-five.

Robert Heinlein

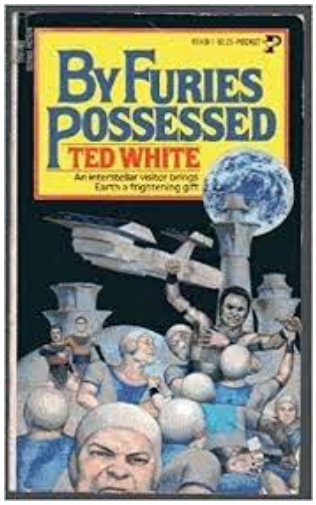
Robert Anson Heinlein (July 7, 1907-May 8, 1988) was an American SF/Fantasy author. Often called the "dean of science fiction writers" during his lifetime, his works continue to have an influential effect on the genre, and on modern culture more generally. During the Golden Age of SF, he was known as one of the "Big Three" with fellow SF authors Isaac Asimov and Arthur C. Clarke. Heinlein won six Hugo awards, and—as of this time—has had his work adapted into four major movies and five popular television series.

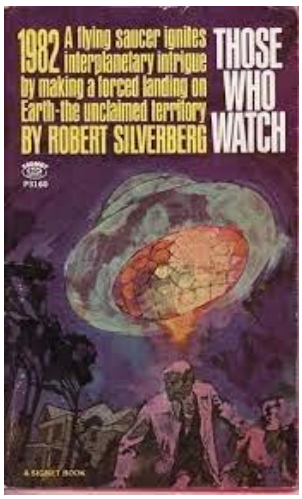
Out of This World



There is evidence that in the early 1950s Signet reprinted the genre anthology OUT OF THIS WORLD, edited by Julius Fast. Readers may recall that Out of This World was the first genre paperback issued by American Penguin Paperbacks in the early 1940s. This event is evidence of the continuing connections between the two publishers (see NAL Paperbacks Through the Ages below).

Later Signet SF





In the 1970s, Signet published such noteworthy SF novels as Robert Silverberg's THOSE WHO WATCH, Ted White's BY FURIES POSSESSED, and Poul Anderson's A CIRCUS OF HELLS. New editions of the Heinlein books, originally published in the 1950s, were also re-issued.

In addition, genre anthologies such as THE STARS AROUND US and SWORDS AGAINST TOMORROW (both edited by Robert Hoskins) were published as Signet paperbacks for the first time.

NAL Paperbacks Through the Ages

By the late 1950s NAL had grown to be the largest paperback publishers in the country. Their motto was “Good Reading for the Millions”. Of particular interest to paperback readers and collectors was the unprecedented quality of the book covers.

The Signet covers were considered to be more than just illustration; at Signet cover art was advertised as REAL art, and the unstated comparison led readers to believe that the words inside could be considered REAL art as well.

Signet Books originally sold for twenty-five cents, but in the early 1950s, they increased the price to thirty-five cents. Then, they inaugurated Signet Triples, selling for seventy-five cents, but none of the Triples published in the 1950s were considered to be SF.

In April 1952, NAL published their first issue of NEW WORLD WRITING, a periodical publication that had its last (eleventh) issue in May, 1957. It was a “little magazine” in paperback form and contained essays, literary criticism, art, cartoons, poems, and drawings. In 1952 there were 171 NAL titles used in university/college/school courses in the United States, markets highly valued by NAL over the years.

In 1954, another new series, Signet Key Books, was added, a non-fiction series that sold for twenty-five cents. These books were written to appeal to the layman, and were not intended to be as scholarly as the Mentor titles. Later, Signet Classics was added as another new imprint, and quickly outsold the other “classic” lines from other paperback publishers.

NAL continued to enjoy great success after the 1950s. By 1965, their Mentor and Signet imprints sold over fifty million of their combined titles each year.

In 1985 New American Library acquired E.P. Dutton, an independent hardcover and trade publisher. During this period there was pressure for paperback publishers to add hardcover divisions. NAL had started publishing hardcover books in 1980, with mixed success, but felt at the time that Dutton would give them an edge in that area.

In 1987, the company was reintegrated back into the Penguin Publishing Company.

Then, in 2015, NAL was merged into a realigned Berkley Publishing Group. Today, Berkley is part of the Penguin Group USA, which prints in mass-market paperback, trade paperback, and hardcover book formats.

[Editor’s note: These mergers seem to indicate barkruptcy occurring in the publishing industry.-JT]

Some Conclusions

My teenage friends and I liked the Signet and Mentor paperbacks a lot. In the early 1950s they published some of our favorite SF and science books. We had no idea at the time that there was a connection with Penguin paperbacks.

The format of the Signet/Mentor paperbacks was somewhat different from those of most of the other paperback publishers of the time. Being slightly taller, they stood out on the newsstand racks that we eagerly scanned each week for new SF titles.

Today, the first printings of early Signet SF books—especially those written by Heinlein—are eagerly sought by paperback collectors. On the other hand, these first printings of the Heinlein titles, when available, are usually quite pricey.

Sources

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Davis, Kenneth C. TWO-BIT CULTURE: THE PAPERBACKING OF AMERICA. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1984.

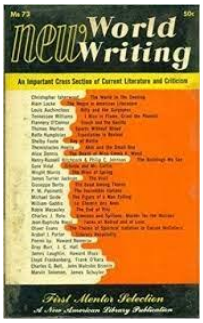
Lovisi, Gary. COLLECTING SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY. Brooklyn, NY: Alliance Instant Expert, 1997.

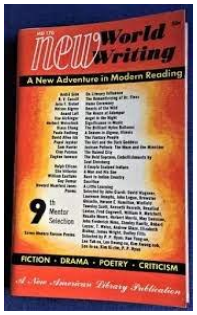
Lupoff, Richard A. THE GREAT AMERICAN PAPERBACK. Portland, OR: Collectors Press, 2001.

Schick, Frank L. THE PAPERBOUND BOOKS IN AMERICA: THE HISTORY OF PAPERBACKS AND THEIR EUROPEAN BACKGROUND. NY: Bowker, 1958.

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

[Editor's note: Very timely for present reading still.]





One issue of this had a story by fanzine editor Dave Ish, "The Fantasy People", in it.--JT

Response to N3F advertising in fandom at large by John Thiel

We are still tentative in describing the NFFF on Facebook pages, but I have made a rather clear statement on the SF Fandom page. This is my own Facebook page, with a membership of around 700 people, but I am wary about my own posting on it because I am avoiding arguments with Facebook about it. Also I am avoiding negative reactions from its membership, who are rather sensitive to anything that seems to go contrary to strictest form. They have a superstition that advertising SF materials is similar to spam, and will possibly be regarded as such by Facebook, which does not have that much of an understanding of science fiction fandom. Jeffrey Redmond also has Facebook pages, two of them, with a vast number of subscribers to those pages, and his advertising is attractive but rather noncommittal. He advertises the N3F in both of these. I have not asked him yet if he would care to get more personal and to cases in his advertising on these pages, having some discussions with his memberships for all to view.

My comment posted on SF FANDOM was as follows:

I am wondering why people are not joining the National Fantasy Fan Federation. It is the most significant fan organization now going, has had the longest connection with science fiction and fantasy fandom, and is the best managed and most active of them all. Why not be at the top in the fandom organization of your choice? There is nothing to lose and a lot to be gained by joining it.

To that I received these answers:

Vincent Cleaver: And I've never heard of it. Sorry.

Steve Fahnestalk: You may have heard it called the N3F.

Ron Bryant: I was a pro and card-carrying Neffer back in the early 80s. (link.)

Allen Beatty: I was a member back when I was an actifan.

Leah Zeldes: Well, I filled out the online form to rejoin as a public member at the urging of George Phillies, back in August, but I heard nothing back. So I tried again, recently, and I still heard nothing. And I thought: That's the whole history of the N3F right there. A lot of talk, that comes to nothing.

JT: There's blocking going on, which we're starting to solve. Tell Phillies about it. Surely he'll want to find out why that was.

Mark Blackman: It has the reputation of being for Gosh Wow neos.

JT: It sure isn't that way now. That must refer back to an era.

Tony Cvetko: It's one of those things of which I'm aware, but don't know much about.

JT: Public membership is free, and you can have that while you study whether you

like being in it. Also Ron Bryant has the address above; you should check out their site. There's a lot of information about it right there.

Jean Lamb: I'm a Neffer, you're a Neffer, don't you want to be a Neffer too?

Lindsay Crawford: Leaving a comment so I can get back to this when I have more time. I'm interested in joining, have some N3F zines from the 70s in storage due to be catalogued.

Robert Whitaker Sirignano: It has a history of accomplishing very little.

JT: It accomplished itself, mainly, but it reaches out.

Jeff Barnes: I was, but I let my membership lapse when life became chaotic. I remember you sent me an issue of your zine back then. I kept meaning to write something for it but didn't have anything I thought would fit.

JT: Sorry not to have heard back from you.

Barnes: I think I did send an email to say thanks but then I kind of dropped the ball on sending you a contribution.

JT: That's Ionisphere I sent, I believe. I do remember the name from then. Why not renew now?

Garth Spencer: In respect of promoting the N3F, I am organizing my next fanzine to include reviewing their publications—specifically for ideas and information raised in recent issues. In respect of sustained memory, I have done my part to collect fanhistory. I have specifically collected convention-running stories. In fact, I have sent an experienced conrunner information for his reviews. These days, of course, it may be more apt to list contemporary active fannish blogs, v-logs, podcasts and social network groups.

JT: I've been noticing you more and more recently, you seem to have a serious constructive interest in science fiction and fandom. Why don't you join the organization, Garth? You'd obviously be a great asset to the group, and in close contact with the History and Research Bureau.

[Garth answered this by saying that he had not been active enough recently and pointing out that he was three months behind on his netzine. I've not replied to him yet.]

Juanita Coulson: Is that still around?

This is my first experiment with an active interchange about the N3F. It looks good.

Analyzing a Science Fiction Film by Jeffrey Redmond

Taking a look at motion picture science fiction

Learning how to analyze a science fiction film requires suspension of disbelief and a sense of imagination.

We like to see time travel, so we love science fiction. Unlike other genres of film, science fiction warrants its own criteria to be effectively evaluated. First, like any film, we measure a movie for its entertainment value: cinematography, acting, and plot (the basics). Science fiction cinema has an extra step. Audiences have to ask, is this good science fiction? The most important thing to realize when learning how to analyze a science fiction film is that qualifying as sci-fi takes more than putting actors on a stage set in space. Plenty of films purport to be science fiction but fall flat under analysis, because they fall back on fantasy or rely on absurd logic.

Imagine there's an isolated planet covered in sand dunes, where no crop can grow, but it is billowing with civilization. Where do those people draw water from if it never rains? What food do they eat? Inconsistent universes fall apart, torn apart by the scrutiny of a black hole. Once one fallacy is discovered the rest fall in place. The genre is a proposition of what can happen, or it depicts possibilities in our universe based on the current limitations of science. Interstellar's black hole is an amazing rendering of what an actual black hole may look like.

Christopher Nolan employed the help of physicist Kip Thorne to help him build a world from the ground up. It was considered one of the best space travel movies, and the work that went into making it believable largely contributed to that. Thorne's book THE SCIENCE OF INTERSTELLAR elaborates on just how much number-crunching was done to ensure that the film can withstand scientific scrutiny. Science fiction is meant to be the meetings of two titans of human endeavor, science and art.

Bad science fiction can still win Oscars and Academy Awards to the resounding applause of audiences around the world, such as GRAVITY. The film, starring Sandra

Bullock and George Clooney, not only lacked a coherent plot (a personal analysis not to be explored here), but failed to meet any form of scientific fact checking. What kind of astronaut insists on conversing with a colleague whose suit is quickly draining of oxygen? Answer: one who is not a real astronaut. There is also a heartfelt scene where Bullock weeps and her tears dreamily float away. There is a principle known as surface tension that causes tears to stick to your face like remnants of a PB&J sandwich in space. Yet, Gravity was called "One of the best science fiction movies in years."

Ray Bradbury said, "I define science fiction as the art of the possible. Fantasy is the art of the impossible. Science fiction, again, is the history of ideas, and they're always ideas that work themselves out and become real and happen in the world." When the elements of a purported science fiction film fail to meet the current understanding of science, the fimmakers do a disservice to audiences everywhere. They misrepresent reality due to their laziness. The label "science fiction" ought to be held to a standard of realism that inspires audiences to learn more after seeing the film. Do not call your film science fiction because it employs time travel, and then fails to hold any consistent logic.

Science fiction films are tied to their visual effects. While not every sci-fi film has to be a spectacle (MOON or THE MAN FROM EARTH), many of them push the boundaries of special effects and cinematic possibilities. Space battles make frequent appearances in sci-fi films and can trace their routes back to the "future war" novels of the 19th Century. Many such stories were written prior to the outbreak of World War I. George Griffith's THE ANGEL OF THE REVOLUTION (1892) featured "terrorists" armed with then-nonexistent arms and armor such as airships, submarines, and high explosives. The inclusion of yet-nonexistent technology became a standard part of the genre.

Fictional space warfare tends to borrow elements from naval warfare. David Weber's HONORVERSE series of novels portrays several "space navies" such as the Royal Manticoran Navy which imitate themes from Napoleonic-era naval warfare. The Federation Starfleet (Star Trek), Imperial Navy (Star Wars), and Earthforce (Babylon 5) also use a naval-style rank structure and hierarchy. The former is based on the United States Navy and the Royal Navy. Naval ship-classes such as frigate or destroyer sometimes serve as a marker to show how the craft are assembled and their designed purpose.

Sci-Fi horror is its own unique genre that is particularly interesting to analyze. If you are a sci-fi fan that loves a good scare and want somewhere to start learning how to analyze a science fiction film, take a look at the scariest sci-fi movies of the 90s. The US

government reported that there were more alien invasions in the 1990s than any other decade. Of course, this was only in the movies. When it comes to the ten most terrifying sci-fi horror movies of the 1990s, fans enjoyed them because they were both frightening and satisfying.

The combination of fear and science fiction proved to do well in the box office, but what did it do to our minds? Movies like DEEP BLUE SEA made our wariness of sharks even greater, while the 1990 film HARDWARE made us second guess all of the ever-evolving technology that is all around us. Sci-fi horror movies have a way of making us wonder, "Could this happen to us?" which is sometimes the most terrifying of all.

If you are more of a television fanatic than a movie watcher, there is still plenty of sci-fi out there for you to analyze and enjoy. Sci-fi anime tv shows, in particular, are a growing genre that has found a fanatic fan base. Animation is a fantastic medium to portray unrealistic scenarios, so science fiction anime is only limited by the artist and the imagination. Since World War II, Japan has become one of the most scientific and technologically capable nations in the world. It only makes sense that they would produce anime which explored many of the concepts found in science fiction. Often, the film serves as a backdrop for opening a discussion on difficult topics, such as the nature of consciousness, "war", or "artificial intelligence". Beautifully crafted worlds help explore daunting philosophical issues.

It is the bridge between imagination and technological advancement, where the dreamer's vision predicts change, and foreshadows a futuristic reality. Science fiction has the ability to become "science reality".

From Arthur C. Clarke to Douglas Adams, Isaac Asimov, and beyond, science fiction has surpassed the boundaries of the typical "genre". With visionary predictions, technological advancements have transcended the fictional boundaries of imagination and have materialized into our daily lives. The fruition of change first starts as a simple idea, formulated in the style of a question: "What if I could fly?" "What if robots ruled the world?" "What if our world is merely a dream?" For it is man's innate quest for knowledge that makes a man ask "Why?" and "What if?" With an inquisitive and curious nature, we crave to experience the unknown and the unimaginable, until we ourselves can make it imaginable—thanks to science fiction.

We encourage you to keep asking "Why?" and "What if?" Our world would not exist as it is today without the innovative minds of dreamers and scientists alike. Throughout the years, science fiction has predicted the future; maybe your idea is next. As William

Shakespeare said, “We are such stuff as dreams are made of”. Let us continue to dream.

Isaac Asimov, the man behind I, ROBOT, BICENTENNIAL MAN, and countless other relevant works, published an essay in 1964, imagining the world in 2014 where he predicted that appliances will not have electric cords, “for they will be powered by long-lived batteries running on radioisotopes”. In a world where everyone was plugged in for energy, Asimov simply asked the question, “What if we didn’t have to be plugged in?” to create a futuristic one. Significant technology is the byproduct of science bringing science fiction to reality.

One of the many predictions Star Wars offered was the promise of a “speedier bike”, *aka* the hoverbike. Even the United States Army has voiced interest in including a hoverbike into their artillery, as it would be “a way to get soldiers away from ground threats by giving them a 3-D capability”. Also, they could fly. Now, the hoverbike is a feasible reality, thanks to Aero-X, which makes low altitude flight realistic and affordable. It rides like a motorcycle, with one main difference—it can fly! Not only does this hoverbike have “fun” applications (aka, you can race your friends in the air) but it can be used for more practical applications, such as crop dusting, herd management, infrastructure mapping, and search and rescue. Aero-X has created a visionary craft usable in all fields and professions.

In STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION, viewers were introduced to smooth, flat, touch-based control panels throughout the Enterprise-D. This touch interface was not only used in the ship’s design, but also for numerous handheld portable devices known as PADDs, or Personal Access Display Devices. The PADD is a mobile computing terminal that perhaps inspired Apple’s iPad, among other tablets. Not only that, but now the iPad features finger scanning. James Bond, anyone?

In Edward Bellamy’s 1888 utopia Looking Backward, the protagonist falls asleep in 1887 and wakes up in 2000 to find that cards are used as money. Today, credit cards are ubiquitous, and in American society, cards are preferred to cash. One of the great things about science fiction becoming reality, is that there are no limits. What comes after the card? In recent years, implanted chips have been gaining momentum in replacing credit cards, as they would be attached to your body. We’re not sure if we’re ready for a future like that just yet, but we can imagine it.

Seeing loved ones through a screen is marvel, but it seemed like a distant future to Stanley Kubrick and Arthur C. Clarke in 1968. Even though 2001: A Space Odyssey doesn’t feature any personal mobile communication devices, it does feature the “video

phone booth" where, with the correct number (to be physically dialed) you can call your loved ones back on Earth. Branded as a "Picturephone", Dr. Heywood R. Floyd calls it a "telephone", and pulls out a credit card (like the ones we have today) for his payment. Today, video calls are ubiquitous, thanks to Skype and Facetime. Next stop, teleportation.

A Philip K. Dick book to film adaptation, THE MINORITY REPORT's depiction of touch screen technology is being made into a reality. With many prototypes out there, and countless working virtual keyboards, many prototypes generate a private air-touch display that does not need voice activation or a physical keyboard or screen for input. As of now, goggles are needed to create the virtual display. Variations of the air touch technology are starting to appear as well, most commonly linked to the Google Glass.

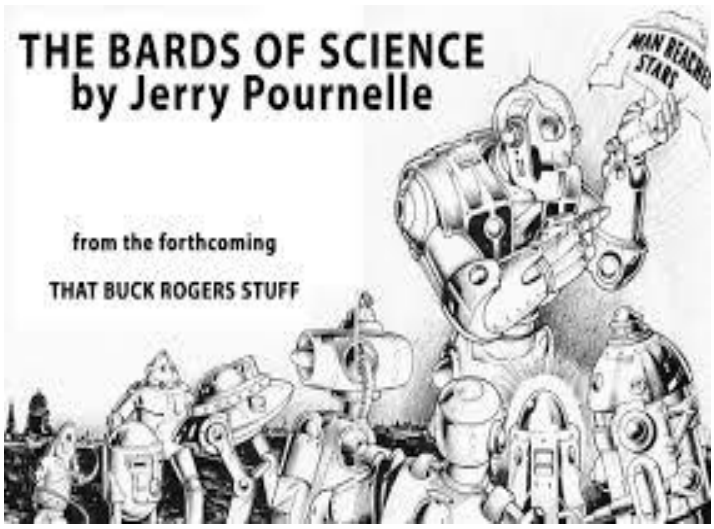
Not only did the Jetsons predict the robot vacuum, but they also paved the way for automated food machines and a robotic maid. Robotic assistants were prevalent in the Jetson's society; who's to say our world won't become that one day? The Jetsons predicted a string of changes that have already occurred, personifying the concept of science fiction becoming a reality. From everyday needs to occasional luxuries, mechanical counterparts are constantly depicted in aiding mankind.

HAL 9000 represents an artificially intelligent helper who turns to the dark side. In 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY, HAL (Heuristically Programmed Algorithmic Computer) is a sentient computer that (or, should we say, who) controls the systems of the Discovery One spacecraft. HAL speaks in a soft, calm voice, and a conversational manner. The closer the ship comes to the obelisk, the more HAL malfunctions. A.I. helpers have haunted the realm of science fiction, typically depicting negative scenarios. Thanks to Apple's Siri, we now have a real-life HAL—well, almost. Mankind's biggest fear in the science fiction world is the rebellion of the very machines we created (see TERMINATOR or I, Robot). For now, Siri seems harmless. For now…

INSIDE AND OUTSIDE SCIENCE FICTION FANDOM

by Judy Carroll

Some folks just don't get it. But times change.



While thinking about what to write for this article I realized I may be the only one in my family that can be considered a big fan of science fiction—the only one who will indulge in a wide range of science fiction books, movies and TV series.

Some of my relatives will only consider one type or "brand" of science fiction—such as the Marvel Universe or Star Wars. Some will argue the merits of Star Trek *vs.* Babylon 5 TV series. Some are avid readers, but very few read science fiction. You might be able to entice them to read something by Dean Koontz, Stephen King or Stephanie Meyer (The Host). But I don't recall anyone banning science fiction as a genre. Only certain types or ratings. I guess I've been pretty lucky.

The world outside my family was a different matter.

Sometimes, admitting to liking science fiction brought strange looks, frowns, an occasional chuckle, lectures on wasting your time and a comment about your lack of reality—especially if you were female. Science fiction was for those of us that didn't "fit in" with the "normal" members of society. If I had been given the choice between "fitting in" with society or continuing my interest in science fiction I would have chosen science fiction.

There is a kind of togetherness or camaraderie that happens when you discover someone else who likes science fiction.

When I was a teenager I would go to the mall to visit the bookstores. I would make my way past potential customers hovering around the crowded sections of the store—romance, cooking, war, true crime. There always seemed to be a busyness—a sense of urgency and a static buzz in the air. The science fiction section was in the back right corner of the store. As I drew closer to my destination the crowd would dwindle until there were only a few people leisurely perusing the shelves. There was no feeling of urgency. It was always calm and one could think and take one's time looking for what one sought.

I have always found science fiction to be very creative. I marvel at what the mind can do—to be able to create aliens, their planets and societies is fascinating to me.

In science fiction the same events and feelings that happen here, in our reality, happen in the worlds of science fiction—war, death, plagues, hatred, rivalry, love, family, kindness, betrayal, *etc.* A lot about ourselves and our world can be understood through science fiction.

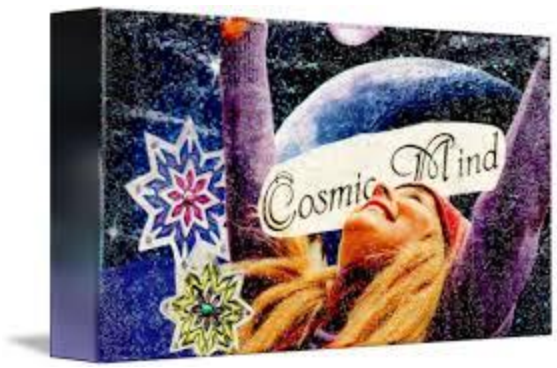
When I was in high school we studied WWII. I couldn't imagine how some members of Hitler's Youth could turn on their family and friends. Years later I understood how this could happen. I watched "V", a TV miniseries that had aired in the 1980s.

Many people are starting to realize that science fiction has a lot to offer…whether it's a look at a possible future, a drastic change made to the past, a short release from reality or just a wonderful adventure.

In 2016, after watching Star Trek Beyond in the movie theater, one relative announced to me that he really liked the movie and couldn't wait to see the two previous Star Trek movies. Though I was pleased with his response I was surprised. His mother was a big Star Trek fan and he had grown up with different Star Trek series available on TV. Well, better late than never.

The science fiction genre is developing right before our eyes. It's advanced from a baby with limited abilities, an unsteady toddler, an inquisitive child, an unsure teen, to a self-assured young adult with dreams for the future.

Science fiction is now being recognized as a genre worth exploring. More people than ever before are involved, in some way, with this fantastic experience. Now we receive smiles and nodding heads when we openly say, "I love science fiction!"



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