



SF 1920-1940

OE_ISF_HS30054, Unit 2

AMAZING & ASTOUNDING



- First magazine to publish exclusively SF was *Amazing Stories*
- First published in 1926, editor Hugo Gernsback
- Gernsback included a letter column in *Amazing Stories*
- Led to creation of organized sf fandom, as fans contacted each other using addresses published with letters
- *Astounding* re-published in 1933, editors Street & Smith Publications
- Soon became leading sf magazine

AMAZING & HUGO GERNSBACK



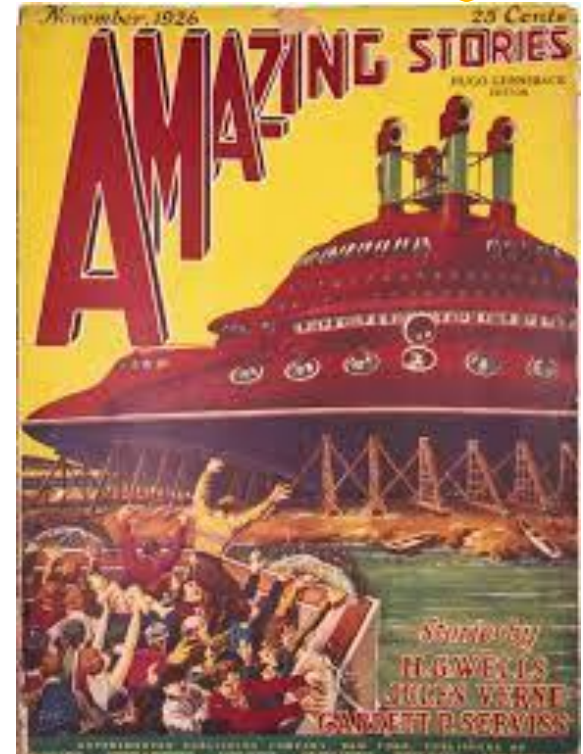
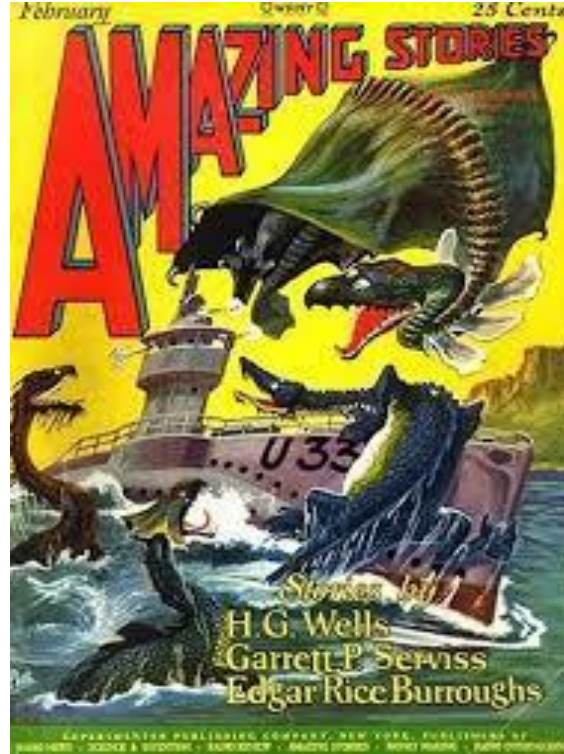
- In 1926, Hugo Gernsback founded **Amazing Stories** magazine, devoted exclusively to science fiction stories
- Science fiction magazines had been published in Germany before
- *Amazing Stories* was first English language magazine to solely publish science fiction
- Resulted in development of American science fiction as a self-conscious genre
- Gernsback used ‘*scientifiction*’ to describe this incipient genre
- Gernsback encouraged stories featuring scientific realism to educate his readers about scientific principles
- Much of what Gernsback published was referred to as ‘gadget fiction’, or technological inventions

AMAZING & HUGO GERNSBACK



- Such 'scientifiction' stories were not viewed as serious literature but as sensationalism
- Nevertheless, a magazine devoted entirely to science fiction was a great boost to public awareness
- *Amazing Stories* competed with several other pulp magazines, including *Weird Tales* (primarily fantasy stories), *Astounding Stories*, and *Wonder Stories*, throughout 1930s
- During Gernsback era science fiction fandom arose through 'Letters to Editor' columns of *Amazing* and its competitors
- In August 1928, *Amazing Stories* published Skylark of Space and Armageddon 2419 A.D., while *Weird Tales* published Edmond Hamilton's *Crashing Suns*, all of which represented beginning of space opera as a sub-genre

SOME AMAZING STORIES COVERS



BOOM IN SFF MAGAZINES



- Between 1939 and 1941: boom in science fiction and fantasy magazines
- Standard Magazines published *Startling Stories* and *Thrilling Wonder Stories*
- Popular Publications published *Astonishing Stories* and *Super Science Stories*
- Fiction House published *Planet Stories*, melodramatic tales of interplanetary adventure
- Ziff-Davis launched *Fantastic Adventures*, fantasy companion to *Amazing*
- *Astounding* had a new editor editor, John W. Campbell, in 1938

ASTOUNDING & JOHN W. CAMPBELL



- In late 1930s, John W. Campbell became editor of ***Astounding Science Fiction***
- Second magazine devoted to science fiction
- Originally published as *Astounding Stories of Super-Science* in 1930
- Campbell's tenure at *Astounding* is considered to be beginning of Golden Age of science fiction
- Campbell shifted focus away from pulpy adventure stories
- He chose to publish hard science fiction stories celebrating scientific achievement and progress

CHANGE IN FORMAT



- Only eight sff magazines survived World War II
- All were still in pulp magazine format except for *Astounding*, which switched to digest format in 1943
- Quality of fiction in other magazines improved: *Startling Stories* and *Thrilling Wonder* published excellent stories and challenged *Astounding*
- Magazines in digest format began to appear, including *Other Worlds*, edited by Raymond Palmer
- In 1949, first issue of *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* appeared
- In October 1950, first issue of *Galaxy Science Fiction* was published
- Both were digests, and between them soon dominated the field

PULP vs DIGEST

- Pulp magazines (also referred to as ‘the pulps’) were inexpensive fiction magazines published from 1896 until around 1955
- ‘Pulp’ derives from wood pulp paper on which magazines were printed, due to their cheap nature
- Typical pulp magazine had 128 pages, and was 7 inches (18 cm) wide by 10 inches (25 cm) high, and 0.5 inches (1.3 cm) thick, with ragged, untrimmed edges
- Digest size is a magazine size, smaller than a conventional or ‘journal size’ magazine, but larger than a standard paperback book
- Approximately 14 cm × 21 cm or 5½ by 8¼ inches (also has two other size options)
- Sizes evolved from printing press operation end
- Convenient size for readers to tote around or to leave within easy reach (e. g. Reader’s Digest magazine)



Pulp vs Digest

pencil
for
scale



FRITZ LANG & *METROPOLIS*



- Fritz Lang's movie *Metropolis* (1927) depicted first cinematic humanoid robot
- Society depicted as machine-dependent and slave labour-dependent
- Indicative of both hopes and fears of situation between world wars
- *Metropolis* was extremely successful
- Its art-deco inspired aesthetic became guiding aesthetic of science fiction pulps for some time

METROPOLIS: POSTER & SCENE FROM MOVIE



MODERNIST WRITING IN SF

RESPONSE AFTER WORLD WAR I



- Writers attempted to respond to the new world in post-World War I era
- In 1920s and 30s writers not connected to science fiction were exploring new ways of telling a story
- There were new ways of treating time, space and experience in narrative form
- Franz Kafka, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, T. S. Eliot, and others featured stories in which time and individual identity could be expanded, contracted, looped and otherwise distorted
- While this work was unconnected to science fiction as a genre, it showed impact of modernity (technology, science, and change) upon people's lives
- Decades later, during New Wave movement, modernist literary techniques entered science fiction

MODERNIST WRITING & *ALIENATION*



- Czech playwright Karel Čapek's plays *The Makropulos Affair*, *R.U.R.*, *The Life of the Insects*, and the novel *War with the Newts* were modernist literature which invented important science fiction motifs
- *R.U.R.* is noted for introducing the word 'robot' to the world's vocabulary
- Strong theme in modernist writing: **alienation**, the making strange of familiar surroundings depicted in such a way so as to make them seem and feel strange and unknown
- This theme makes settings and behaviour usually regarded as 'normal' appear like bizarre practices of an alien culture
- This is a technique to make audience of modernist writings question everything
- This technique was heavily borrowed by science fiction

RISE OF DYSTOPIAN NOVELS



- Tradition of literary science fiction novels began to develop
- Many of these were dystopian novels
- They portrayed dissonance between perceived utopian conditions and full expression of human desires
- Yevgeny Zamyatin's 1920 novel *We* depicts a totalitarian attempt to create a utopia that results in a dystopic state where free will is lost
- Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) is an ironic portrait of a stable and ostensibly happy society built by human mastery of genetic manipulation
- Science fictional elements of these works were ignored by mainstream literary critics for quite some time

RISE OF DYSTOPIAN NOVELS



- George Orwell wrote a highly regarded literary depiction of dystopia, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, in 1948
- He envisions a technologically governed totalitarian regime that dominates society through total information control
- Zamyatin's *We* is recognized as an influence on both Huxley and Orwell (Orwell published a book review of *We* shortly after it was first published in English, several years before writing *1984*)
- Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Dispossessed: An Ambiguous Utopia*, much of Kurt Vonnegut's writing, and many other works of later science fiction continue this dialogue between utopia and dystopia

KAREL ČAPEK R.U.R.

ROSSUM'UN EVRENSEL ROBOTLARI

ÇEVİREN:
YUSUF ERADAM



WINTAGE CLASSICS



INTRODUCED BY MARGARET ATWOOD

YEVGENY
ZAMYATIN

A NEW TRANSLATION BY BELA SHAYEVICH

WE

'The best of
science fiction
ever written'
Wall Street Journal

'The best
single work
of science
fiction ever
written'
Gordon K. Le Guin

IMPACT OF SF ON PUBLIC



- Orson Welles's *Mercury Theatre* produced a radio version of *The War of the Worlds* which, according to urban myth, panicked large numbers of people who believed it to be a real newscast
- Idea of visitors or invaders from outer space became embedded in the everyday consciousness of people
- During World War II, American military planners studied science fiction for ideas
- British military planners did the same, and also asked authors to submit outlandish ideas which the government leaked to the Axis as real plans
- Germans developed flying bombs known as V1s and V2s reminiscent of 'rocket ships' ever-present in pulp science fiction
- Jet planes and atom bomb were developed
- 'Deadline', a Cleve Cartmill short story about a fictional atomic bomb project, prompted FBI to visit office of *Astounding Science Fiction*

SF BECOMES MODERN FOLKLORE



- Asimov said that ‘[t]he dropping of the atom bomb in 1945 made science fiction respectable. Once the horror at Hiroshima took place, anyone could see that science fiction writers were not merely dreamers and crackpots after all, and that many of the motifs of that class of literature were now permanently part of the newspaper headlines’
- With the story of a flying saucer crash in Roswell, New Mexico in 1947, science fiction had become modern folklore

THANK
YOU!

