

= Typewriter in the Sky =

Typewriter in the Sky is a science fiction novel written by Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard . The protagonist Mike de Wolf finds himself inside the story of his friend Horace Hackett 's book . He must survive conflict on the high seas in the Caribbean during the 17th century , before eventually returning to his native New York . Each time a significant event occurs to the protagonist in the story he hears the sounds of a typewriter in the sky . At the story 's conclusion , de Wolf wonders if he is still a character in someone else 's story . The work was first published in a two @-@ part serial format in 1940 in Unknown Fantasy Fiction . It was twice published as a combined book with Hubbard 's work Fear . In 1995 Bridge Publications re @-@ released the work along with an audio edition .

Writers have placed the story within several different genres , including science fiction , a subgenre of science fiction called recursive science fiction , and fantasy . Masters of the Occult author Daniel Cohen noted the book contributed to Hubbard 's reception among influential science fiction authors of the 1940s . It is regarded as classic science fiction by The Houghton Mifflin Dictionary of Biography in its entry on Hubbard , as well as by writer James Gunn , and publications including the Daily News of Los Angeles , and Chicago Sun @-@ Times . Writers have placed Typewriter in the Sky within the Golden Age of Science Fiction . Authors Mike Resnick and Robert J. Sawyer classed the story within the science fiction subgenre recursive science fiction , and writer Gary Westfahl wrote that Hubbard may have been influenced by the 1921 Luigi Pirandello play within the recursive fantasy subgenre , Six Characters in Search of an Author . The book is listed in Fantasy : The 100 Best Books , and Rivals of Weird Tales : 30 Great Fantasy and Horror Stories from the Weird Fiction Pulps placed it among the best quality fantasy writing of the 20th century . Writers characterized the overarching theme within the book as dealing with an individual caught between two different worlds .

Typewriter in the Sky was generally well @-@ received , and regular readers of Hubbard 's stories at the time widely appreciated the work . Anthony Boucher and J. Francis McComas wrote in a 1951 review that the story was amusing though it could have used copy editing , and Groff Conklin described its concept as silly . The New York Times review the same year said it had a lively pace . Damon Knight was critical of the depiction of the protagonist 's fate , and concluded the ending of the book made up for this defect . Books including The Classic Era of American Pulp Magazines and Pulp Culture : The Art of Fiction Magazines characterized the work as one of Hubbard 's best stories . Adam Roberts pointed out Hubbard likely based the character of pulp fiction writer Horace Hackett on himself .

Subsequent to the story 's publication , commentators have speculated that its influence impacted themes in later science fiction works . Paul Di Filippo wrote that the 1949 book What Mad Universe by Fredric Brown may have drawn from Hubbard 's tale . Umberto Rossi asserted in a book on writer Philip K. Dick that Typewriter in the Sky likely influenced Dick 's first published short story " Beyond Lies the Wub " (1951) , in addition to his novel The Cosmic Puppets (1957) . Harlan Ellison compared it to the 1989 film The Purple Rose of Cairo . Gary Westfahl likened the Typewriter in the Sky to the 2006 film Stranger than Fiction , going so far as to suggest the two had virtually an identical narrative .

= = Plot summary = =

The story begins in Greenwich Village , New York . The main character , Mike de Wolf , is a struggling pianist . His friend , Horace Hackett , is an author and popular pulp fiction writer . Hackett is portrayed in the book as a skilled writer able to quickly produce voluminous amounts of material for pulp magazines . Hackett writes under stress , as he is facing a deadline . Hackett attempts to persuade his book publisher that he has almost finished writing his latest novel , while in actuality he has already depleted his advance payment prior to coming up with an idea for a story . Hackett 's publisher pressures him and he rapidly decides to place his friend Mike as the central character in his story .

Hackett writes about Mike as the villain in his book , a swashbuckling adventure story . Mike enters the bathroom of Hackett 's basement @-@ level apartment , and hears the sound of someone typing on a typewriter . After electrocuting himself , Mike loses consciousness . He subsequently awakens to find himself on a beach in the year 1640 , as a character within his friend 's novel . He inspects himself to find he has a saber attached to his person , and is wearing strange attire .

Mike learns he is regarded in this world as the villain , Spanish Admiral Miguel de Lobo , a " pirate potboiler " . He knows that the villains in stories written by Hackett often do not come to a favorable end , and is therefore anxious to exit the situation safely . Mike recognizes the specific work into which he has been transported : a tale by his friend called " Blood and Loot " . Assuming the role of the villain , Mike realizes he must face off against a formidable opponent in the story , its protagonist named Tom Bristol .

The story takes place on the high seas in the Caribbean during the 17th century during a conflict among colonists . When a major event occurs , Mike hears the sound of a typewriter in the sky . Mike 's reality literally changes each time the author makes a change to the story . Mike realizes that during times when he hears the audible sounds of the typewriter , his actions and words are not of his own volition , and when such sounds are absent he is able to make decisions for himself . Mike falls in love with a woman in the story , and grows frustrated after realizing that she is just another of Hackett 's fictional creations . At the end of the work , Mike returns to New York , and is left with lingering doubts whether he is still a character in someone else 's story . He muses whether a " typewriter in the sky " is creating the world . Mike looks up into the sky in search of this mystical device or its controller : " Abruptly Mike de Wolfe stopped . His jaw slackened a trifle and his hand went up to his mouth to cover it . His eyes were fixed upon the fleecy clouds which scurried across the moon . Up there ? God ? In a dirty bathrobe ? "

= = Publication history = =

Typewriter in the Sky was first published in 1940 as a two @-@ part serial in Unknown Fantasy Fiction . The first part of the serial initially sold in 1940 for US \$ 0 @.@ 20 . Master Storyteller : An Illustrated Tour of the Fiction of L. Ron Hubbard author William J. Widder said in an interview with Publishers Weekly that 1940 became an annus mirabilis for Hubbard , " a kind of year every author wants " . Widder said in addition to Typewriter in the Sky , Hubbard 's successful 1940 fiction stories published in Unknown included Fear , Final Blackout , and Death 's Deputy . Hubbard first registered copyright for the book on May 15 , 1951 , and later renewed copyright on September 17 , 1979 . In 1951 it was published by Gnome Press as a combined work with Hubbard 's Fear , and again in 1977 as Fear & Typewriter in the Sky , published by Popular Library . In the UK , the combined work was first published in 1952 as number 409 in the Cherry Tree Book series by Kemsley Newspapers Limited . The title for this 1952 UK edition was Typewriter in the Sky : An Adventure in Time .

Typewriter in the Sky was republished in 1995 by Bridge Publications . Science fiction author Kevin J. Anderson wrote an introduction to the 1995 edition of the book . The same year Bridge Publications released an audio edition read by Jim Meskimen . The audio edition was an abridged version of the story and ran two hours thirty minutes in duration . L. Ron Hubbard 's literary agency Author Services Inc. announced that Typewriter in the Sky would be included in " a 12 @-@ volume series of 23 classic science fiction and fantasy novels and short stories " published by Easton Press of Norwalk , Connecticut in September 1995 . In 2008 Heritage Auctions , Inc. valued a rare combined copy of Typewriter in the Sky and Fear at between US \$ 100 and \$ 200 .

= = Genres = =

Daniel Cohen wrote in Masters of the Occult (1971) that works including Typewriter in the Sky , Fear , and Slaves of Sleep " moved Hubbard into the front rank of science fiction writers of the late 1940s . " Writing in Dream makers : The Uncommon Men and Women Who Write Science Fiction (1983) , Charles Platt called the book , " one of Hubbard 's most well @-@ known and playful pieces " . The St. James Encyclopedia of Popular Culture (2000) described Typewriter in the Sky and

Fear as Hubbard 's " most famous stories " in the genre of science fiction . The Houghton Mifflin Dictionary of Biography (2003) in its biographical entry on L. Ron Hubbard characterized Typewriter in the Sky and Slaves of Sleep among classics in science fiction , as did The Riverside Dictionary of Biography (2004) . The book was similarly described as a science fiction classic by author James Gunn in his book The Witching Hour (2003) , and media publications including the Daily News of Los Angeles , and the Chicago Sun @-@ Times . Eric Solstein and Gregory Moosnick placed the work within the Golden Age of Science Fiction .

In the book Resnick at Large (2003) , authors Mike Resnick and Robert J. Sawyer cited Typewriter in the Sky as an example of the subgenre of science fiction ? recursive science fiction , described as " science fiction about science fiction " . In the work , The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Science Fiction and Fantasy : Themes , Works , and Wonders (2005) , Gary Westfahl commented , " Recursive fantasy fiction ? that is , a fantasy about writing fantasy ? is scarce . Luigi Pirandello 's play Six Characters in Search of an Author (1921) offered a non @-@ genre model . " Westfahl noted that Hubbard 's book was " an early genre example , perhaps inspired by Pirandello " . Umberto Rossi wrote in The Twisted Worlds of Philip K. Dick (2011) that Typewriter in the Sky included a game in the form of metafiction within its plot development .

Typewriter in the Sky is well regarded within the genre of fantasy ; author David Wingrove noted in The Science Fiction Source Book (1984) , " His [Hubbard 's] best work is outstanding within the pulp tradition : " Typewriter in the Sky " is a fine fantasy about a man who gets trapped within a story written by a pulp writer " . The book is listed in Fantasy : The 100 Best Books (1988) , by James Cawthorn and Michael Moorcock . Robert E. Weinberg , Stefan R. Dziemianowicz , and Martin Harry Greenberg write in Rivals of Weird Tales : 30 Great Fantasy and Horror Stories from the Weird Fiction Pulps (1990) that Typewriter in the Sky is classed among stories published in Unknown which " still rank as some of the best fantasy produced in this century " . A review of the book upon its 1995 re @-@ release in the Spartanburg Herald @-@ Journal characterized the story as both fantasy and science fiction , calling it a " classic science fiction fantasy adventure " ; and placed it within the Golden Age of Science Fiction . St. James Guide to Science Fiction Writers (1996) called the story " Hubbard 's most successful fiction " . Marco Frenschkowski wrote in a 1999 article for the Marburg Journal of Religion in a bibliography of L. Ron Hubbard , and called Typewriter in the Sky : " Classic fantasy tale about a man who discovers he is part of someone else 's imagination . " Writing in A Short History of Fantasy (2009) , authors Farah Mendlesohn and Edward James characterized the book as " The best of Hubbard 's stories " and noted that it " is better seen as a rationalized fantasy " . In a 2009 article on Hubbard 's writings , Booklist classed Typewriter in the Sky and Fear as among classics within science fiction and fantasy .

= = Themes = =

Alexei Panshin and Cory Panshin wrote in The World Beyond the Hill : Science Fiction and the Quest for Transcendence (1989) , " Typewriter in the Sky can be understood as an old @-@ fashioned alien exploration story , with a new basis of transfer from one world to another ? the thoughts of an outside intelligence . " Writing in a 1992 article for the journal Science Fiction Studies , David N. Samuelson pointed out that the literary conceit of " assuming human beings are necessary for the universe we know " predated Typewriter in the Sky as well as What Mad Universe (1949) by Fredric Brown . Authors Lionel Fanthorpe and Patricia Fanthorpe wrote in The World 's Most Mysterious People (1998) that Hubbard accomplished a difficult task of writing about two different worlds at the same time , " even through the medium of fiction Hubbard succeeds in posing deep metaphysical questions about the mind 's interpretation of experiential data , and its response to the questions about the nature of being . " Writing in The Encyclopedia of Fantasy (1999) , John Clute and John Grant characterized the work as the best of Hubbard 's stories in the Arabian @-@ fantasy theme . In their book Mysteries and Secrets of Time (2007) , Fanthorpe and Fanthorpe place the book within the sub @-@ topic of " the idea of being caught inside someone else 's dream " . In his 2011 book The Twisted Worlds of Philip K. Dick , author Umberto Rossi analyzed Hubbard 's story and called it a parody intended to spoof the experiences of hack writers .

In her 1987 monograph work on Scientology Renunciation and Reformulation : a Study of Conversion in an American Sect , Harriet Whitehead wrote that the book helped Hubbard build on experience writing about a theme of " a hidden reality subjacent to the apparent one " . Bent Corydon , author of L. Ron Hubbard , Messiah or Madman ? , named a chapter of the biography " Typewriter in the Sky " . In their work Encyclopedia of New Age Beliefs (1996) , authors John Ankerberg and John Weldon observed , " compare Scientology theory with L. Ron Hubbard 's science @-@ fiction works , e.g. , Ole Doc Methusala , Slaves of Sleep , Death 's Deputy , The Final Blackout , The Dangerous Dimension , The Tramp , Fear , King Slayer , and Typewriter in the Sky . " In his 2011 work The Church of Scientology : A History of a New Religion , Hugh B. Urban compared Typewriter in the Sky character Horace Hackett 's omnipotent abilities to Hubbard 's subsequent ideas developed in the powerful spirit in Scientology doctrine , the Operating Thetan . Urban wrote : " perhaps the most striking element in Hubbard 's early fiction that reappears in his later Scientology writings is his emphasis on the unlimited , even godlike power of the writer himself . For the writer has the all @-@ creative power to generate entire universes out of his own imagination , to populate them , and to destroy them . The clearest example of this divine power of the author appears in Typewriter in the Sky (1940) " .

= = Reception = =

Writing in the October 1951 issue of The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction , Anthony Boucher and J. Francis McComas wrote favorably of Typewriter in the Sky , and characterized it as " an entertaining adventure @-@ farce badly in need of editing " . Reviewing the same edition , Groff Conklin termed it " a silly idea inexpertly carried out " . The New York Times reviewer Villiers Gerson found Typewriter to be " an ironic and jaunty adventure story . " Damon Knight gave the book a mixed review , commenting , " The problem [of how de Wolf can ' change the story and avert his doom '] is a tough one , and Hubbard does not so much solve it as slide around it This weakness is more than compensated for by the ending of the story itself ? Three immortal lines " .

In a 1988 article for the Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts , Harlan Ellison called the work " great pulp fiction I can still reread with pleasure " . George Malko noted in Scientology : The Now Religion (1970) that Typewriter in the Sky was " eagerly welcomed by devoted fans " . Michael Ashley wrote in Who 's Who in Horror and Fantasy Fiction (1978) , " Typewriter in the Sky (1940) is a rollicking farce of a man written into another 's story " . Everett F. Bleiler found it to be " a routine adventure story carried through competently , with a good central idea " . Janrae Frank of The Washington Post commented , " Much of his best work of the ' 40s and ' 50s , Fear , Slaves of Sleep , Typewriter in the Sky , is written in exactly the same style and won reader polls at the time . "

In his biography of the author , Bare @-@ Faced Messiah (1987) , Russell Miller characterized Typewriter in the Sky as one of Hubbard 's works which " would come to be regarded as classics " , along with Fear and Final Blackout . In a biography of Hubbard written by Kent State University professor Donald M. Hassler in The New Encyclopedia of Science Fiction (1988) , he noted , " Typewriter in the Sky (1940 / 1951) , which anticipates plot gimmicks now popular among experimental metafictionists , ought to be taken seriously by the critics who will evaluate his strange genius " . In a review upon the 1995 re @-@ release of the book , Ann Patterson @-@ Rabon of the Spartanburg Herald @-@ Journal concluded : " A short novel , ' Typewriter ' is a perfect afternoon read : quick , fun and only as deep as you care to go . " Sandy Bauers of Knight News Service called the 1995 audio publication of the work " swashbuckling fun " .

Peter Haining wrote in The Classic Era of American Pulp Magazines , " Typewriter in the Sky , which first appeared in Unknown in 1940 , is widely considered to be one of his best works . " Pulp Culture : The Art of Fiction Magazines by Frank M. Robinson and Lawrence Davidson , listed Typewriter in the Sky among Hubbard 's " best work " . A 2005 Publishers Weekly review of Hubbard 's novel The Ultimate Adventure wrote that it " may not measure up to the best of Hubbard 's work from the pulp era " , citing Typewriter in the Sky and Fear as higher quality novels . British writer Adam Roberts wrote of the book in his biography of Hubbard for the edited work Fifty Key Figures in Science Fiction , calling it a " neatly self @-@ reflexive " story . Roberts noted the

character of pulp fiction writer Horace Hackett was " a Hubbardian self @-@ portrait " .

= = Influence = =

In a review of the book *What Mad Universe* (1949) , Paul Di Filippo of *Sci Fi Weekly* posited that the book 's author Fredric Brown may have been influenced by Hubbard 's story . Umberto Rossi wrote in *The Twisted Worlds of Philip K. Dick* (2011) that writer Philip K. Dick was likely influenced by *Typewriter in the Sky* . Rossi noted *Typewriter in the Sky* came out in a paperback format in 1951 , and a year later Dick succeeded in getting his first short story , the tale " *Beyond Lies the Wub* " published . Rossi said *Typewriter in the Sky* was " the text that admittedly inspired " *The Cosmic Puppets* (1957) by Philip K. Dick . In the book *Harlan Ellison 's Watching* (1989) , by Harlan Ellison , *Typewriter in the Sky* is compared to *Purple Rose of Cairo* , " I bet if L. Ron Hubbard had written *Purple Rose of Cairo* they 'd have given it a Hugo ... I mean , it is sort of a hip , updated version of *Typewriter in the Sky* . " Gary Westfahl quoted Hubbard 's work in a book of noteworthy science fiction quotations , *Science Fiction Quotations : From the Inner Mind to the Outer Limits* (2005) .

Writing for *Locus Online* , Gary Westfahl compared the screenplay of the 2006 film *Stranger than Fiction* to Hubbard 's story , and commented , " In taking its premise into this unlikely territory , the film provides a fascinating contrast to a classic fantasy novella with a similar theme , L. Ron Hubbard 's ' *Typewriter in the Sky* ' (1940) . A lawsuit alleging that screenwriter Zach Helm improperly stole his story from Hubbard could accurately state that both works have the same basic plot . " In a review of *Stranger than Fiction* for *Cinematical* , Jette Kernion similarly compared the film 's plot to Hubbard 's story , noting that the two stories share " some strikingly similar plot elements " . In a fictional recounting of Hubbard 's accomplishments , followers of Scientology cite *Typewriter in the Sky* among works which " inspired millions " , in the Obie Award @-@ winning 2007 satirical musical written by Kyle Jarrow , *A Very Merry Unauthorized Children 's Scientology Pageant* . Westfahl subsequently likened the 2009 television series *FlashForward* to the story , writing : " one can even regard *FlashForward* as a form of metaliterature involving characters in a work of fiction who discover that they are characters in a work of fiction being pushed toward a particular fate , with predecessors that include L. Ron Hubbard ? s [' *Typewriter in the Sky* (1940) and the film *Stranger Than Fiction* (2006) " .