

**Reading Notes from *A Companion to Science Fiction*,  
ed. David Seed (Blackwell Publishing) and Wikipedia**

**Chapters:**

“Science Fiction Magazines: The Crucibles of Change” by Mike Ashley

“‘Monsters of the Imagination’: Gothic, Science, Fiction” by Fred Botting

“The Origins of Science Fiction” by George Slusser

- ✓ **Scientific developments** during the 1890s captured the attention of the public. Specifically, the inventions of Thomas Edison, Nikolai Tesla, and the approach of a new century fascinated the public.
- ✓ Historically, before the genre is named as science fiction, there were several **other names used to describe** those stories that we now understand as sci-fi. Here is a mini list of these terms:
  - “scientifiction”, a term coined by Hugo Gernsback in the popular magazine *Amazing Stories* (1926)
  - “scientific romance”, by H. G. Wells,
  - “le merveilleux scientifique”, a French term used by J.H. Rosny,
  - “voyage extraordinaires”, another French term by Jules Verne,
  - “ratiocination”, by Edgar Allen Poe.
- ✓ The **gap between humanistic and scientific views** has contributed to the development of science fiction as a genre.
- ✓ There is an influence of the **Cartesian thought** on the genre.
- ✓ Some argue that “Science fiction is all about science.”; but some contend, with reason, that “Science only provides stimuli.”
- ✓ In Britain, science and fiction were understood as entirely separate entities.
- ✓ In France, however, science and fiction were in mutual interaction; accordingly, there were more diverse works that could be categorized as science fiction.

- ✓ One **common denominator of the genre**: it is a scientific development or phenomenon, or a technological/scientific apparatus such as a new gadget, a new discovery that functions as the main impetus behind the theme, form, and tone of a sci-fi story.
- ✓ Re the origins of the genre, there are more questions and challenges than clear-cut answers. Moreover, there is **no set of “single ancestors”**. Science is developing and continuously influencing fiction; so, it is obvious that the genre is still evolving.
- ✓ Generation of science adventure writers **emerged from pulp magazines**, which were originated from dime novels.
- ✓ **Hugo Gernsback** established the trendsetting magazine “**Amazing Stories**” in 1926. His main intent was to encourage inventions and to create, maybe, a new Edison. The focus was more on science than fiction. (**Hugo Awards** given to sci-fi today owes its name to Hugo Gernsback)
- ✓ In addition to the regular call for short stories with new technological tools/ideas in them, he published reprints of Jules Verne, Edgar Allan Poe, and H. G. Wells. (Although Gernsback went bankrupt due to his payment issues, it was a crucial step in the development of the genre.)
- ✓ **Space operas** that are very popular today came into being in those days; these works focused on fiction rather than science.
- ✓ In 1937, editor of “**Astounding**” magazine, John Campbell changed the evolution of the genre. He believed that extensive footnotes to the stories were unnecessary; stories had to be more personal and focus on providing logical scientific explanations.
- ✓ 1939 was the golden age both for “Astounding”; the two giants of the sci-fi genre, **Isaac Asimov and Van Vogt**, appeared in the magazine for the first time.
  - In his first attempt, van Vogt received a rejection letter, which encouraged him to try again. He sent another story, entitled "Black Destroyer", which was accepted. (Wikipedia)
  - It was Asimov who coined the term **robotics**, in his story “Liar!” (Re Asimov, in 1966, the first three books of his “Foundation series” won guess which award? ☺ for "Best All-Time Series" (Hugo award!) (Wikipedia)

- ✓ After World War II, science fiction works started to focus on nuclear war, mutations, and superpowers. Most of them were keenly interested in **space explorations**. Following **titles of the popular sci-fi magazines** in the English-speaking world are an interesting proof of this fact:
  - Beyond, Comet, Galileo, Galaxy, Nebula, Planet Stories, Satellite, Space, Space and Time, Space Stories, Star, Uneath, Unknown Stories, are but a few☺
- ✓ A magazine called “**Galaxy**” popularized a new format. Works started to become well-written and sophisticated, and reflected changes in society.
- ✓ Another change took place in the UK in 1964: With the help of John Carnell and Michael Moorcock, science fiction became **more liberated** in language, sexual portrayals, and social portrayals. Science fiction magazines **became the voice against repression**.
- ✓ Although the market withered again in the 1980s, today it is more popular than ever. Science fiction media magazines are very powerful now due to the popularity of **cosmic space operas** like “Star Trek” and “Star Wars”.
- ✓ **Gothic and Sci-fi** are similar in the sense that they both cause **fear** in their audiences.
- ✓ Sci-fi tries to cause **fear as a warning for the future**. It tries to predict and prevent a disastrous future.
- ✓ Gothic tries to cause **fear for suspense and story, in the present**.
- ✓ The mixture of gothic and sci-fi can be monstrous as one deals with the present, the other future. However, *Frankenstein* manages as a perfect mixture.
- ✓ As in gothic fiction, science fiction is marked by the emergence of different **monsters** like beast-men, vampires, zombies, Mr. Hyde, and the like.
- ✓ **Tech noir** emerges in the form of **dark futuristic stories**.
- ✓ Tech noir separates sci-fi from gothic and creates futuristic monsters like killer robots and evil AIs.
- ✓ “**CyberGothic**” is the term coined to define the gothic monsters of the future, vampires, monsters and zombies disguised as evil AI and killer robots.