

Science fiction craving invades student minds

Among the many fads, fantasies and fanaticisms which flicker through the negligibly intelligent minds of students is a craving to read science fiction.

Most of us outgrew this childish fetish by the time we were 14. But alas, some people, while not adopting the physical appearances of "little green men," have adopted their Martian minds.

Science fiction began with people like Edgar Allen Poe, Mary Shelley, H.G. Wells and Jules Verne. From there it moved downward to pulp fiction. Unfortunately, it didn't stay there.

Its birth in pulp fiction was sired by an immigrant from Luxembourg named Hugo Gernsback who in April 1929 published the first of many issues of *Amazing Stories*, calling them "scientification." It wasn't long before the phrase became "science fiction." Gernsback now has an award named after him (The Hugo) which is akin to the Hollywood "Oscar."

Pulp scene

At that time, science fiction shared the pulp scene with westerns and detective fiction. This lasted until the advent of television to which the westerns and detective stories moved.

Pulp fiction had now hit the big time. Indeed, today we have super-pulp because the western has moved to the city in the television series entitled *McCloud*.

But where was science fiction? It was a few years until sci-fi was big on television, i.e. *Star Trek*. But until that time the only move it made was to drugstore bookstands in among the girlie magazines.

Love people

It probably would have stayed there had it not been for Haight-Ashbury love people who began having affairs with sci-fi authors such as Robert Heinlein. We can only assume that using of drugs so dulled their senses that they didn't know any better.

Since Haight-Ashbury, everything from astrology to Jesus has bloomed, and it's not surprising that sci-fi got its share of blossoms.

UNL's English department now teaches 12 sections of sci-fi junk as opposed to six sections of Shakespeare. Hopefully, this will be one flower that fades quickly.

One Webster definition of literature is, "Artistic

writing as distinguished from hack work." Unfortunately, quite a few students would rather spend three hours credit on hack than on Shakespeare or Milton.

Illiterate

The reasons science fiction stories must be relegated to hack status are many and obvious. First, most sci-fi writers, while technologically intelligent, are technically (in the writing sense) illiterate.

What we usually get is the Forces of Evil opposed to the Forces of Good with an alien villain and a determined hero. In the more "sophisticated" books, we get a little plot padding with the introduction of some heavy, relevant issue such as race or ecology.

Imagination is present, but it never reveals itself through good writing. The plots are usually a series of half-developed scenes. The characters, if not

Unfortunately, the sci-fi fans, like the authors, are not objective about their fetish. For example, even reputed author Issac Asimov is capable of saying "Science fiction is the only kind of writing that makes sense in a changing world." Can he seriously think that Captain Kirk and Mr. Spock make more sense than Homer, Plato or David Hume?

Second, I don't understand what he means by a changing world. When was it ever static?

Ignorance revealed

Arthur C. Clarke, another "biggie" in science fiction, has revealed his ignorance by saying "Science fiction is virtually the only kind of writing that's dealing with problems and possibilities; it's a concerned fiction." Are we to assume that *To Kill a Mockingbird* was not "concerned fiction"?

The most illuminating statements come from Robert Heinlein, author of such popular works as *Stranger In A Strange Land* and *Time Enough For Love*.

When interviewed about his writing technique, Heinlein said, "I start out with some characters and get them into trouble and when they get themselves out of trouble the story's over. By the time I can hear their voices they usually get themselves out of trouble."

At least this explains why his characters never develop.

'Never rewrite'

Heinlein also brags that "I never rewrite." It's obvious.

How long we must put up with this latest adolescent fixation is uncertain, but things don't look good. Stanford University is now offering a course called "A Marxist Approach to the Science Fiction of Socialist and Capitalist Countries," and a raft of critical books are being published.

One of these is *The Universe Makers* and its author, Donald Wollheim, says, "This is a science fiction world and the writings of this field have clearly shaped the world of today."

I'm beginning to believe that the age of ignorance is upon us.

bruce nelson cynic's corner

stereotyped, are rarely very deep and never impose themselves on anybody, let alone the reader.

Marvel vs. blob

If the drama of life and human pathos are only the good guys versus the bad guys (or things), then give me Shakespeare. Captain Marvel fighting a blob hardly compares to the mental agonies of Lear or Hamlet.

The basic problem is that all fictional elements, such as character, are subordinated to one idea. We see the same problem in detective fiction where all the elements are submissive to the plot.

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at the
Royal Grove

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Lady to one drink at
1/2 - price
Every Tuesday Night

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for two weeks
TEXAS CIRCUS
EVERYNIGHT -
NEW Dynamic Lighted
Dance Floor

MON - Recession nite
Cheap beer &
bar drinks all nite long

TUES - Ladies nite
1/2 price drinks with
every complimentary
coupon

WED - Wimmer Weimer
Wed. 20 cent hot dogs
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