Science fiction is at the intersection of numerous fields. It is a literature which draws on popular culture, and which engages in speculation about science, history and all types of social relations. This volume brings together essays by scholars and practitioners of science fiction, which look at the genre from these different angles. After an introduction to the nature of science fiction, historical chapters trace science fiction from Thomas More to the present day, including a chapter on film and television. The second section introduces four important critical approaches to science fiction drawing their theoretical inspiration from Marxism, postmodernism, feminism and queer theory. The final and largest section of the book looks at various themes and sub-genres of science fiction. A number of well-known science fiction writers contribute to this volume, including Gwyneth Jones, Ken MacLeod, Brian Stableford, Andy Duncan, James Gunn, Joan Slonczewski and Damien Broderick.
THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO

SCIENCE FICTION

EDITED BY

EDWARD JAMES

AND

FARAH MENDLESOHN
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GARY WESTFAHL, who teaches at the University of California, Riverside, writes a bi-monthly column for the British science fiction magazine *Interzone* and contributes occasional film reviews and commentaries to the Locus Online website. He is also the author, editor or co-editor of fourteen books about science fiction and fantasy; his authored books include *Cosmic Engineers: A Study of Hard Science Fiction* (1996); *Islands in the Sky: The Space Station Theme in Science Fiction Literature* (1996); and *The Mechanics of Wonder: The Creation of the Idea of Science Fiction* (1998).
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FOREWORD

We met in a bedroom of the Royal York Hotel in Toronto in 1971, at the first meeting of the Science Fiction Research Association. There had been an earlier, organizing meeting in New York; it is remembered, in part, for the blackboard exhortation by Dena Brown (then married to Charles Brown, who not long before had started publishing *Locus*, still the main news and reviews magazine of the science fiction field): ‘Let’s take science fiction out of the classroom and put it back in the gutter where it belongs.’ In those days, some fans considered the embrace of academia next to the kiss of death.

That was where we were, in Toronto, caught between our pulp traditions, our love for Edgar Rice Burroughs and A. Merritt and E. E. ‘Doc’ Smith, and the realization that science fiction was capable of greater sophistication and that it was worthy of study, of scholarship, even of being taught to students. We had already seen evidence that it could be literature in the pages of *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, of *Galaxy*, even of *Astounding*; Kurt Vonnegut Jr was showing that science fiction could break out of the backwaters of general expectations into the eddies of the mainstream, even into best-seller lists, and earn critical acclaim as well, even if it meant taking the label off the books.

The writer and editor Judith Merril was there in Toronto; and the critic Leslie Fiedler, a symbol of the new academic acceptance of science fiction; and Gerald Jonas, who was working on an article for *New Yorker*, had published a science-fiction story himself and later would become the science-fiction book-review editor of the *New York Times*. Robert Scholes showed up at a later meeting, I think. He was another academic convert who would present a series of insightful lectures three years later at Notre Dame (and get them published under the title of *Structural Fabulation*, just as Kingsley Amis had broken the critical ice in a series of lectures at Princeton a decade earlier, published as *New Maps of Hell*).

I do not remember who else was in the hotel room in Toronto, but Phil Klass was there. He had been one of those authors, writing as William Tenn,
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who had revealed science fiction’s potential; he had given up writing to teach English at Penn State University. I remember Phil’s presentation in Toronto when he compared his encounter with science fiction with his first glimpse of the model of the solar system at the Hayden Planetarium, the same experience of knee-trembling epiphany of scope. But most of all I remember standing with Phil in front of a window looking out upon the Royal York Hotel grounds and Phil saying, ‘We should come up with a canon before someone else does.’

That was where science fiction was back in 1971, filled with hope and anticipation but lacking almost all the tools of scholarship, the reference works, the indexes, the histories, the encyclopedias, the studies and the canon. The present volume, with its list of distinguished international scholars and published by a university press whose parent institution goes back to the Middle Ages, is a symbol of how far science-fiction scholarship has come in thirty years.

Where did it come from?

It all started in the pulp magazines invented in 1896 by Frank A. Munsey. Mostly filled with adventure stories in a variety of locales and periods, they became more specialized beginning in 1915 with the introduction of Detective Story Monthly and then Western Story Magazine in 1919 and Love Stories in 1921. Hugo Gernsback, an immigrant from Luxembourg, had been publishing popular-science magazines with science fiction stories in them. In 1926 he mustered his resources (and his courage) and founded Amazing Stories. Soon competitors began to appear, fans and new writers were attracted and a genre was born.

Science-fiction stories and science-fiction writers had been around before, but what they wrote was not quite science fiction and it was not even called science fiction (Gernsback gave it, in 1929, the name that would stick): Verne’s adventure novels were called ‘voyages extraordinaires’ and Wells’s stories and novels were ‘scientific romances’. Although some critics have claimed that the direction in which Gernsback moved the new category was a blind alley and that it would have been better existing as a kind of mainstream variant, it is difficult to imagine how science fiction would otherwise have developed its sense of identity, a body of informed readers, shared assumptions that sometimes rigidified into conventions and a dialogue among writers, editors and readers that carried science fiction onward and upward.

Of course that is what the critics have attacked: the sense of identity that led to inwardness, insularity, ghetto-ism, fandom, conventions, self-congratulatory awards and all the other paraphernalia. Better, they say, the freedom, the lack of cohesion, the individual artistry of the mainstream.

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Foreword

Rightly or wrongly, the Gernsback tradition, modified by a succession of influential magazine editors beginning with John W. Campbell at Astounding/Analog and passing through Tony Boucher and J. Francis McComas of Fantasy and Science Fiction, Horace Gold and later Frederik Pohl of Galaxy and Michael Moorcock of New Worlds, shaped the way science fiction developed. That is what we deal with today, even when the mainstream seems to have broadened to accept the fanciful, and writers who have emerged from the Gernsback tradition seem to be free to venture where they will.

What may be significant, but has been largely overlooked, is that virtually all of the pulp magazines have disappeared except the science-fiction magazines. My conclusion from this (influenced, no doubt, by my early recognition that the science-fiction magazines were different from the other pulps) is that science fiction only seemed to be a part of the pulp-magazine tradition. Rather than emerging from the adventure pulps, science fiction was an outgrowth of the popular-science movement. Even today, Analog carries the designation: ‘Science Fiction and Fact’. While the other category pulp magazines were supplanted by television, science fiction continues (diminished in circulation but surviving), even in the face of burgeoning science-fiction programming in film and on television.

The teaching of science fiction was started by fans. Sam Moskowitz taught evening classes at the City College of New York in 1953 and 1954. Mark Hillegas taught the first regularly scheduled course at Colgate University (New York State), in 1962, followed by Jack Williamson at Eastern New Mexico University and Tom Clareson at the College of Wooster (Ohio). From there courses proliferated, not only in English departments but in physics, chemistry, sociology, anthropology, history and others. Such courses are both less adventurous and better organized today.

Scholarship was another extraordinary journey. A single academic study, by Philip Babcock Gove, was published in 1941, followed in the postwar period by J. O. Bailey’s Pilgrims Through Space and Time and Marjorie Hope Nicolson’s Voyages to the Moon. But most of the tools of scholarship, like the postwar publication of science fiction in books, was provided by amateurs, by dedicated fans, some of them ascending to scholarly objectivity, such as Donald H. Tuck, Donald B. Day, the New England Science Fiction Association, Everett F. Bleiler and Sam Moskowitz.

Academic journals were created, first by fans in academic positions, then by more traditional scholars; Tom Clareson created Extrapolation in 1959, and Foundation began in Britain in 1972 and Science-Fiction Studies in 1973. All have moved around and changed editors from time to time, but they manage to persist and serve slightly different communities. Academic conferences on science fiction, that began with a section at MLA in the late 1950s, grew
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into the Science Fiction Research Association’s annual meeting, the Eaton Conference at the University of California, Riverside and the International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts, now in Fort Lauderdale; more specialized conferences now are held frequently throughout the year, and in recent years there have been important conferences in Britain, France, Greece and elsewhere.

Just as the mainstream publishers took over the task of publishing from the fans, academic scholars began to assume their traditional roles in the field, bringing to the study greater rigour, better focus and more resources. But even the scholarly field, inside and outside the academy, remains motivated more by a love for the field itself than occurs in other disciplines. Some science-fiction academic publishing houses have come and gone, including Advent (a fan publishing enterprise), Starmont House and Borgo Press. Greenwood Press and McFarland are still active in the field, and a number of university presses have been receptive to science-fiction texts, including Oxford University Press, one of the pioneers, beginning in the 1960s with Bruce Franklin’s Future Perfect, I. F. Clarke’s Voices Prophesying War and Mark Hillegas’s The Future as Nightmare, a series of single-author studies in the 1980s, and continuing with Edward James’s Science Fiction in the Twentieth Century in 1994. Today both Wesleyan and Liverpool University Presses maintain specialist science-fiction series, and Cambridge University Press has commissioned this book.

Now we enter a new period marked by general acceptance of science fiction as a respectable area of scholarship, widespread popularity of science fiction in film (the top ten best-grossing films of all time are mostly science fiction or fantasy) and the approximately two thousand books of science fiction and fantasy published each year (many of them, to be sure, and often the most popular, media tie-ins). But we now have most of the basic critical tools we need. John Clute and Peter Nicholls have produced substantial encyclopedias; Hal Hall, indexes to reviews; William Contento, indexes to collections and anthologies; and substantial contributions also from Marshall Tymn, and Mike Ashley in Great Britain. And the scholars are gathering.

James Gunn
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The editors would like to thank Brian Ameringen, Austin Benson, Paul Barnett, Jim Burns, David A. Hardy, David Langford, Michelle Le Blanc, Caroline Mullan, Colin Odell, Claude Pehrson, Roger Robinson and Jim Thrall for their help, and all the contributors (particularly John Clute and Ken MacLeod) for their cooperation and assistance. We should like to dedicate the book to George Hay (1922–1997), founder of the Science Fiction Foundation, who worked tirelessly for the academic recognition of science fiction in Britain.
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1914  George Allan England, *Darkness and Dawn*
1915  Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Herland*  
      Jack London, *The Scarlet Plague*
1918  Abraham Merritt, ‘The Moon Pool’
      David Lindsay, *A Voyage to Arcturus*
1923  E. V. Odle, *The Clockwork Man*
1924  Yevgeny Zamiatin, *We*
1926  Hugo Gernsback starts *Amazing Stories*  
      *Metropolis* (dir. Fritz Lang)
1928  E. E. Smith, *The Skylark of Space*
1930  Olaf Stapledon, *Last and First Men*  
      John Taine, *The Iron Star*  
      *Astounding Science-Fiction* launched
1932  Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*
1934  Murray Leinster, ‘Sidewise in Time’  
      Stanley G. Weinbaum, ‘A Martian Odyssey’
1935  Olaf Stapledon, *Odd John*
1936  *Things to Come* (dir. William Cameron Menzies)
1938  John W. Campbell, Jr. (as Don A. Stuart), ‘Who Goes There?’  
      Lester del Rey, ‘Helen O’Loy’
1939  Stanley G. Weinbaum, *The New Adam*
1940  Robert A. Heinlein, ‘The Roads Must Roll’  
      Robert A. Heinlein, ‘If This Goes On –’  
1941  Isaac Asimov, ‘Nightfall’  
      L. Sprague De Camp, *Lest Darkness Fall*  
      Robert A. Heinlein, ‘Universe’  
      Theodore Sturgeon, ‘Microcosmic God’
1942  Isaac Asimov, ‘Foundation’ (book 1951)  
      Robert A. Heinlein, *Beyond This Horizon* (book 1948)
1944  C. L. Moore, ‘No Woman Born’
Chronology

1945  Murray Leinster, ‘First Contact’
1946  Groff Conklin, ed., *The Best of Science Fiction* (anthology)
      Raymond J. Healy and J. Francis McComas, eds., *Adventures in Time and Space* (anthology)
1947  Robert A. Heinlein, *Rocket Ship Galileo*
1948  Judith Merril, ‘That Only a Mother’
1949  Everett Bleiler and T. E. Dikty, eds., *The Best Science Fiction Stories*
      George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*
      H. Beam Piper, ‘He Walked Around the Horses’
      George R. Stewart, *Earth Abides*
      Jack Vance, ‘The King of Thieves’
      *Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* launched
1950  Isaac Asimov, *I, Robot* (linked collection)
      Ray Bradbury, *The Martian Chronicles* (linked collection)
      Judith Merril, *Shadows on the Hearth*
      *Galaxy Science Fiction* launched
      *Destination Moon* (dir. Irving Pichel)
1951  Ray Bradbury, *The Illustrated Man* (loosely linked collection)
      John Wyndham, *The Day of the Triffids*
1952  Philip José Farmer, ‘The Lovers’
      Clifford D. Simak, *City* (linked collection)
      Theodore Sturgeon, ‘The World Well Lost’
1953  Alfred Bester, *The Demolished Man*, winner of the first Hugo Award for Best Novel
      Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*
      Arthur C. Clarke, *Childhood’s End*
      Hal Clement, *Mission of Gravity*
      Ward Moore, *Bring the Jubilee*
      Frederik Pohl and C. M. Kornbluth, *The Space Merchants*
      Frederik Pohl, ed., *Star Science Fiction Stories* (anthology)
      Theodore Sturgeon, *E Pluribus Unicorn* (collection)
      Theodore Sturgeon, *More than Human*
1954  Poul Anderson, *Brain Wave*
      Isaac Asimov, *The Caves of Steel*
      Hal Clement, *Mission of Gravity*
      Tom Godwin, ‘The Cold Equations’
1955  James Blish, *Earthmen, Come Home* (fix-up)
      Leigh Brackett, *The Long Tomorrow*
      Arthur C. Clarke, ‘The Star’
      William Tenn, *Of All Possible Worlds* (collection)
Chronology

      Arthur C. Clarke, *The City and the Stars*
      Robert A. Heinlein, *Double Star*
      Judith Merril, ed., *The Year’s Greatest Science-Fiction and Fantasy* (anthology)
      *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (dir. Don Siegel)
      *Forbidden Planet* (dir. Fred M. Wilcox)

1958  Brian W. Aldiss, *Non-Stop* (US: *Starship*)
      James Blish, *A Case of Conscience*
      Ivan Antonovich Yefremov, *Andromeda*

1959  Philip K. Dick, *Time Out of Joint*
      Robert A. Heinlein, *Starship Troopers*
      Daniel Keyes, ‘Flowers for Algernon’ (book 1966)
      Kurt Vonnegut, Jr, *The Sirens of Titan*

1960  Poul Anderson, *The High Crusade*
      Philip José Farmer, *Strange Relations* (linked collection)
      Walter M. Miller, Jr, *A Canticle for Leibowitz*
      Theodore Sturgeon, *Venus Plus X*

1961  Gordon R. Dickson, *Naked to the Stars*
      Harry Harrison, *The Stainless Steel Rat*
      Robert A. Heinlein, *Stranger in a Strange Land*
      Zenna Henderson, *Pilgrimage: The Book of the People* (linked collection)
      Cordwainer Smith, ‘Alpha Ralpha Boulevard’

1962  J. G. Ballard, *The Drowned World*
      Philip K. Dick, *The Man in the High Castle*
      Naomi Mitchison, *Memoirs of a Spacewoman*
      Eric Frank Russell, *The Great Explosion*

1963  First broadcast of *Doctor Who*

1964  Philip K. Dick, *Martian Time-Slip*
      Robert A. Heinlein, *Farnham’s Freehold*

1965  Philip K. Dick, *Dr Bloodmoney*
      Harry Harrison, ‘The Streets of Ashkelon’
      Frank Herbert, *Dune*, winner of the first Nebula Award for best novel
      Jack Vance, *Space Opera*
      Donald A. Wollheim and Terry Carr, eds., *The World’s Best Science Fiction: 1965* (anthology)

1966  Samuel R. Delany, *Babel-17*
      Harry Harrison, *Make Room! Make Room!"
Chronology

Robert A. Heinlein, *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*
Damon Knight, ed., *Orbit 1* (annual original anthology)
Keith Roberts, ‘The Signaller’
*Star Trek* first broadcast in the USA
1967
Samuel R. Delany, *The Einstein Intersection*
Harlan Ellison, ed., *Dangerous Visions* (anthology)
Roger Zelazny, *Lord of Light*
1968
John Brunner, *Stand on Zanzibar*
Philip K. Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*
Thomas M. Disch, *Camp Concentration*
Stanislaw Lem, *Solaris*
Anne McCaffrey, *Dragonflight*
Judith Merril, ed., *England Swings SF* (anthology)
Alexei Panshin, *Rite of Passage*
Keith Roberts, *Pavane*
Robert Silverberg, *Hawksbill Station*
*2001: A Space Odyssey* (dir. Stanley Kubrick)
1969
Michael Crichton, *The Andromeda Strain*
Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Left Hand of Darkness*
1970
Larry Niven, *Ringworld*
1971
Terry Carr, ed., *Universe 1* (annual original anthology)
Robert Silverberg, *The World Inside*
1972
Isaac Asimov, *The Gods Themselves*
Harlan Ellison, ed., *Again, Dangerous Visions* (anthology)
Barry Malzberg, *Beyond Apollo*
Joanna Russ, ‘When It Changed’
Arkadi and Boris Strugatsky, *Roadside Picnic*
Gene Wolfe, *The Fifth Head of Cerberus*
Science Fiction Foundation begins the journal *Foundation*
1973
Arthur C. Clarke, *Rendezvous with Rama*
Thomas Pynchon, *Gravity’s Rainbow*
Mack Reynolds, *Looking Backward, from the Year 2000*
James Tiptree, Jr, *Ten Thousand Light Years from Home* (collection)
Ian Watson, *The Embedding*
*Science-Fiction Studies* begins publication
1974
Suzy McKee Charnas, *Walk to the End of the World*
Joe Haldeman, *The Forever War*
Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*
1975
Samuel R. Delany, *Dhalgren*
Joanna Russ, *The Female Man*
Chronology

Robert Shea and Robert Anton Wilson, *Illuminatus!*

1976 Samuel R. Delany, *Triton*
Marge Piercy, *Woman on the Edge of Time*
James Tiptree Jr, ‘Houston, Houston, Do you Read?’

1977 Mack Reynolds, *After Utopia*
*Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (dir. Steven Spielberg)
*Star Wars* (dir. George Lucas)

Octavia E. Butler, *Kindred*
John Crowley, *Engine Summer*
Frederik Pohl, *Gateway*
Kurt Vonnegut Jr, *Slaughterhouse-Five*
*Alien* (dir. Ridley Scott)

1980 Gregory Benford, *Timescape*
Gene Wolfe, *The Shadow of the Torturer* (The Book of the New Sun, 1)

1981 C. J. Cherryh, *Downbelow Station*
William Gibson, ‘The Gernsback Continuum’
Vernor Vinge, ‘True Names’

1982 Brian W. Aldiss, *Heliconia Spring* (Heliconia 1)
*Blade Runner* (dir. Ridley Scott)

1983 David Brin, *Startide Rising*

1984 Octavia E. Butler, ‘Blood Child’
Samuel R. Delany, *Stars in My Pocket Like Grains of Sand*
Gardner Dozois, ed., *The Year’s Best Science Fiction: First Annual Collection* (anthology)
Suzette Haden Elgin, *Native Tongue*
William Gibson, *Neuromancer*
Gwyneth Jones, *Divine Endurance*
Kim Stanley Robinson, ‘The Lucky Strike’ and *The Wild Shore*

1985 Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid’s Tale*, winner in 1987 of the first Arthur C. Clarke Award for Best Novel published in the UK
Greg Bear, *Blood Music* and *Eon*
Orson Scott Card, *Ender’s Game*
Lewis Shiner and Bruce Sterling, ‘Mozart in Mirrorshades’
Bruce Sterling, *Schismatrix*
Kurt Vonnegut, *Galápagos*

1986 Lois McMaster Bujold, *Ethan of Athos*
Orson Scott Card, *Speaker for the Dead*
Chronology

1987
Ken Grimwood, *Replay*
Pamela Sargent, *The Shore of Women*
Joan Slonczewski, *A Door into Ocean*
Iain M. Banks, *Consider Phlebas*
Octavia E. Butler, *Dawn: Xenogenesis 1*
Pat Cadigan, *Mindplayers*
Judith Moffett, *Pennterra*
Lucius Shepard, *Life During Wartime*
Michael Swanwick, *Vacuum Flowers*

1988
John Barnes, *Sin of Origin*
Sheri S. Tepper, *The Gate to Woman's Country*

1989
Orson Scott Card, *The Folk of the Fringe*
Geoff Ryman, *The Child Garden*
Dan Simmons, *Hyperion*
Bruce Sterling, ‘Dori Bangs’
Sheri S. Tepper, *Grass*

1990
Colin Greenland, *Take Back Plenty*
Kim Stanley Robinson, *Pacific Edge*
Sheri S. Tepper, *Raising the Stones*

1991
Stephen Baxter, *Raft*
Emma Bull, *Bone Dance*
Pat Cadigan, ‘Dispatches from the Revolution’
Michael Crichton, *Jurassic Park*
Gwyneth Jones, *White Queen* (Aleutian Trilogy 1)

1992
Greg Egan, *Quarantine*
Nancy Kress, ‘Beggars in Spain’
Maureen McHugh, *China Mountain Zhang*
Kim Stanley Robinson, *Red Mars* (Mars 1)
Neal Stephenson, *Snow Crash*
Vernor Vinge, *A Fire Upon the Deep*
Connie Willis, *Doomsday Book*

1993
Eleanor Arnason, *Ring of Swords*
Nicola Griffith, *Ammonite*
Peter F. Hamilton, *Mindstar Rising*
Nancy Kress, *Beggars in Spain*
Paul J. McAuley, *Red Dust*
Paul Park, *Coelestis*

1994
Kathleen Ann Goonan, *Queen City Jazz*
Elizabeth Hand, *Waking the Moon*
Chronology

Mike Resnick, *A Miracle of Rare Design*
Melissa Scott, *Trouble and Her Friends*

1995  Greg Egan, *Permutation City*
Ken MacLeod, *The Star Fraction* (Fall Revolution 1)
Melissa Scott, *Shadow Man*
Neal Stephenson, *The Diamond Age*

1996  Orson Scott Card, *Pastwatch: The Redemption of Christopher Columbus*
Kathleen Ann Goonan, *The Bones of Time*
Mary Doria Russell, *The Sparrow*

1997  Wil McCarthy, *Bloom*
Paul J. McAuley, *Child of the River*

1998  Graham Joyce and Peter Hamilton, ‘Eat Reeecebread’
Keith Hartman, ‘Sex, Guns, and Baptists’
Nalo Hopkinson, *Brown Girl in the Ring*
Ian R. MacLeod, ‘The Summer Isles’
Brian Stableford, *Inherit the Earth*
Bruce Sterling, *Distraction*
Howard Waldrop, ‘US’

1999  Greg Bear, *Darwin’s Radio*
Neal Stephenson, *Cryptonomicon*
Vernor Vinge, *A Deepness in the Sky*

2000  Nalo Hopkinson, *Midnight Robber*
Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Telling*
Ken MacLeod, *Cosmonaut Keep* (Engines of Light 1)

2001  Terry Bisson, ‘The Old Rugged Cross’
Ted Chiang, ‘Hell is the Absence of God’
John Clute, *Appleseed*
Mary Gentle, *Ash*
Maureen McHugh, *Nekropolis*
China Miéville, *Perdido Street Station*
Joan Sloncenski, *Brain Plague*

2002  Greg Egan, *Schild’s Ladder*
Jon Courtenay Grimwood, *Effendi*
Kim Stanley Robinson, *The Years of Rice and Salt*