Professor Eric S. Rabkin is the Arthur F. Thurnau Professor of English Language and Literature at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, where he has taught since 1970. He earned his Ph.D. at the University of Iowa. Professor Rabkin received the University Teaching Award in 1990, the LS&A Excellence in Education Award in 2000, and the Golden Apple Award in 2006. He has written or edited over 160 publications, including 31 books.

Guidebook Contents

Part 1 of 2

Lecture 1: The Brothers Grimm & Fairy Tale Psychology
Lecture 2: Propp, Structure, and Cultural Identity
Lecture 3: Hoffmann and the Theory of the Fantastic
Lecture 4: Poe—Genres and Degrees of the Fantastic
Lecture 5: Lewis Carroll—Puzzles, Language, & Audience
Lecture 6: H. G. Wells—We Are All Talking Animals
Lecture 7: Franz Kafka—Dashed Fantasies
Lecture 8: Woolf—Fantastic Feminism & Periods of Art
Lecture 9: Robbe-Grillet—Experimental Fiction & Myth
Lecture 10: Tolkien & Mass Production of the Fantastic
Lecture 11: Children's Literature and the Fantastic
Lecture 12: Postmodernism and the Fantastic

Masterpieces of the Imaginative Mind:
Literature's Most Fantastic Works
Taught by: Professor Eric S. Rabkin,
University of Michigan
Part 1

Course Guidebook
Eric S. Rabkin, Ph.D.
Arthur F. Thurnau Professor of English Language and Literature,
University of Michigan

Eric S. Rabkin is the Arthur F. Thurnau Professor of English Language and Literature at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Born (1946) and raised in New York City and educated at Stuyvesant H.S., Cornell University (A.B., 1967), and the University of Iowa (Ph.D., 1970), he joined the Michigan faculty as an assistant professor in 1970, became associate professor in 1974, and full professor in 1977. His current research interests include fantasy and science fiction, graphic narrative, the quantitative study of culture, traditional literary criticism and theory, and academic computing.

As a teacher, Dr. Rabkin is especially known for his large, popular lecture courses on science fiction and fantasy and for his many teaching innovations. He has received the University Teaching Award (1990), the LS&A Excellence in Education Award (2000), and the Golden Apple Award (2006), given annually by the students for the outstanding teacher at the University of Michigan.

As an administrator, Dr. Rabkin has filled many roles at the University of Michigan. He was co-founder and first director (1976–1982) of the university-wide Collegiate Institute for Values and Science; Associate Dean for Long Range Planning for the College of Literature, Science and the Arts (1979–1983); College Minority Affairs Officer; Interim Chair of the Department of Linguistics and, simultaneously, Interim Director of the English Language Institute (1982–1984). As the University’s Acting Director of Academic Information Processes (1997–1998), he helped lead improvement and innovation in the development and uses of academic information technology both intramurally and extramurally. He currently leads the faculty/student collaborative Genre Evolution Project (http://www.umich.edu/~genreevo).

Dr. Rabkin has more than 160 publications, including 31 books written, co-written, edited, or co-edited, including Narrative Suspense (1973); The Fantastic in Literature (1976); Science Fiction: History, Science, Vision (with Robert Scholes, 1977); Teaching Writing That Works: A Group Approach to Practical English (with Macklin Smith, 1990); It’s a Gas: A Study of Flatulence (with Eugene M. Silverman, 1991); Stories: An Anthology and an Introduction (1995); and Mars: A Tour of the Human Imagination (2005).

Dr. Rabkin has lectured widely, to both general and academic audiences, on fantasy, science fiction, fairy tales, humor, American literature, literary theory, culture studies, pedagogy, composition, administration, and information technology. He has had lecture tours in the United States, Europe, and Australia and, from 1990 through 1996, offered a regular commentary on language and culture topics on WUOM-FM radio.
The professor has served as a consultant to more than 60 publishers, journals, and other organizations and is the founder of Write On Target, a corporate communications consulting firm.

Dr. Rabkin’s awards include a fellowship from the American Council for Learned Societies (1973), research funding from the American Philosophical Society (1991), and the University of Michigan Distinguished Faculty Achievement Award (2005).

He lives in Ann Arbor with his wife, Elizabeth Rabkin, a retired elementary-school teacher. They have two children, David Ivan (b. 1970) and Rachel Ann (b. 1975), and two grandchildren.

---

### Table of Contents

Masterpieces of the Imaginative Mind: Literature’s Most Fantastic Works

**Part I**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lecture</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lecture One</td>
<td>The Brothers Grimm &amp; Fairy Tale Psychology</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture Two</td>
<td>Propp, Structure, and Cultural Identity</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture Three</td>
<td>Hoffmann and the Theory of the Fantastic</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture Four</td>
<td>Poe—Genres and Degrees of the Fantastic</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture Five</td>
<td>Lewis Carroll—Puzzles, Language, &amp; Audience</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture Six</td>
<td>H. G. Wells—We Are All Talking Animals</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture Seven</td>
<td>Franz Kafka—Dashed Fantasies</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture Eight</td>
<td>Woolf—Fantastic Feminism &amp; Periods of Art</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture Nine</td>
<td>Robbe-Grillet—Experimental Fiction &amp; Myth</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture Ten</td>
<td>Tolkien &amp; Mass Production of the Fantastic</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture Eleven</td>
<td>Children’s Literature and the Fantastic</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture Twelve</td>
<td>Postmodernism and the Fantastic</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timeline</td>
<td></td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glossary</td>
<td></td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biographical Notes</td>
<td></td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td></td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Masterpieces of the Imaginative Mind: Literature's Most Fantastic Works

Scope:

Walter Benjamin wrote that “[t]he fairy tale, which to this day is the first tutor of mankind, secretly lives on in the story. The first true storyteller is, and will continue to be, the teller of fairy tales.” Fairy tales, of course, are fantastic. Despite the sophisticated preference the 20th century showed for realism, the vast majority of the greatest works of literature, from ancient myths and epics to modern Nobel Prize-winning novels, rely on the fantastic.

This course has two parts; the first discusses the fantastic in its many varieties, and the second, its most important modern variety, science fiction.

The discussion of the fantastic covers many specific works and many general theoretical frameworks for understanding those works. We begin with fairy tales, how they came to be gathered and published, how they reflect the world in which they are told, and what they say about human psychology. They suggest the function of narrative in our pre-literate heritage. The world of fairy tales is fantastic—animals talk there—but not true fantasy, because once in the fictional world, its rules are known and stable. Sophisticated writers, such as E. T. A. Hoffmann, reworked fairy tales by making them ever more fantastic, changing the ground rules as we read, and thus, produced true fantasy, stories that challenge our ability to understand not only the stories themselves but potentially everything in human existence. Hoffmann’s own favorite story was “The Golden Pot,” which he subtitled “A Modern Fairy Tale.”

Edgar Allan Poe’s stories fall into several fantastic genres. He called one of those tales of ratiocination, but we would divide them into detective stories (such as “The Purloined Letter”) and science fiction (such as “The Descent into the Maelstrom”). Some seem to straddle genres, such as “The Pit and the Pendulum,” which could be read as horror or as science fiction. By examining a series of Poe’s works, including some of his poems, we can see that similar materials can be handled less or more fantastically. Thus, true oral fairy tales and basic detective stories are both about midway on a continuum of the fantastic between the most sober, stable realism and the most mind-challenging fantasy.

Using and refining these theoretical insights, we can see how Lewis Carroll’s Alice books give us both true fantasy and an understanding of why we often associate the fantastic with children’s literature. H. G. Wells’s science fictions show the seriousness possible when the fantastic is used for political and philosophical inquiry. Franz Kafka’s works use the fantastic to convey the alienation of the modern world of inhumane institutions. Virginia Woolf and Alain Robbe-Grillet use the fantastic to attempt to free us from the unconscious constraints imposed by, respectively, patriarchal society and shared linguistic
habits. J. R. R. Tolkien tells almost Arthurian tales, but in a new, more fantastic way, to provide both psychological and spiritual consolation, a function common in much children's literature, including that by Beatrix Potter and Dr. Seuss. Finally, however, the extreme application of the fantastic in the development of any given genre leads to thoroughly modern myths and magical realism in such Postmodern writers as Italo Calvino and Laura Esquivel.

The second part of this course discusses the fantastic genre that is most important today, science fiction, and traces its development from its precursors in the ancient world, including Plato's Republic and Lucian's Lycornomnepius, to such 17th- and 18th-century works as Cyrano's Other Worlds and Jonathan Swift's Gulliver's Travels. Science fiction claims plausibility for its fantastic elements against a backdrop of science. Where some writers of Gothic romance, such as Ann Radcliffe, had added a fantastic twist to their novels by ending them with a naturalizing explanation, Mary Shelley in Frankenstein moved that explanation to the beginning of the work and, thus, produced the world's first true science fiction novel.

As a variety of Romantic literature, we see science fiction develop in the stories of Nathaniel Hawthorne and Edgar Allan Poe. With Jules Verne, science fiction becomes a literature of conquest. But almost in reply, H. G. Wells uses science fiction to criticize imperialism. Both writers fall to some extent within the oldest tributary of the mainstream of science fiction, utopianism, which descends in four great historic movements from the ancient world to the Christian Renaissance to the Industrial Revolution to the modern industrial state. Like some utopian fiction, such as More's Utopia, science fiction, with its astronomical leaps of perspective and focus on the power of the individual's acquiring knowledge, naturally raises questions normally dealt with by religion. Science fiction, especially in America, also has a pulp fiction heritage that influenced its choice of themes and politics. Ray Bradbury bridged the pulp and high cultures, and Robert Heinlein mastered the new, more thoughtful, yet still popular form. Isaac Asimov and Arthur C. Clarke, working at the same time, tried to retain some utopian hopes. But as the world globalized, so did science fiction, and the cultural diversity and feminism of Ursula K. Le Guin ascended. Finally, science fiction began to experiment in the same way mainstream literature had for three-quarters of a century and quickly produced the New Wave, then cyberpunk. On reflection, we see these experimental reactions to our information age as simultaneously new science fiction and threads in the fabric of Postmodernism. With Nobel Prizes awarded to such writers as Gabriel Garcia Márquez (One Hundred Years of Solitude) and José Saramago (Blindness), the fantastic, both in general and as science fiction, has regained its place at the center of storytelling. We live in a science fictional world.

Lecture One
The Brothers Grimm & Fairy Tale Psychology

Scope: Half a century before the unification of Germany, two very unusual scholarly brothers named Grimm, fervent nationalists and great philologists, set out to demonstrate the classic roots of the German language and its function as a treasury of fundamental human culture. In pursuing this aim, they gathered folk tales that supposedly came down from antiquity. These powerful stories do teach morals but not the morals we may expect. Nonetheless, the Grimm brothers' collection unexpectedly swept through the world and made folklore a new field of study. To understand how such tales as "Hansel and Gretel," "Little Red Riding Hood," and "Rapunzel" project such transnational power, we need to understand how they appeal symbolically and psychologically both to the archetypal grandmother teller and to child audiences of many ages.

Outline

I. The fantastic drives works, such as "Cinderella" and Frankenstein, whose characters have escaped their pages to share our lives. In this course, we will explore the fantastic in literature and culture.

A. Although we naturally will touch on ancient works, such as the Odyssey, we will focus on works from the beginning of the 19th century onward, because from this point on, we can use solid knowledge of each author's life and culture to understand the texts.

B. Although the theoretical frameworks we will develop to discuss the fantastic often apply universally, we will focus on works from Western culture because our familiarity with that culture allows us to probe its works most deeply.

C. These lectures are distributed into two parts.

1. The first part focuses on the broad range of fantastic literary genres, from fairy tales to magical realism. It both offers analyses of specific works and develops general theoretical frameworks for understanding the significance of those works and of the fantastic.

2. The second part focuses on science fiction, arguably the most important of the fantastic genres in our time.

II. There is no better place to begin a study of the masterpieces of the imaginative mind than with the works of two scholarly brothers, Jakob (1785-1863) and Wilhelm (1786-1859) Grimm, who set out to demonstrate the significance of German culture half a century before there
A unified German state. To do so, they sought to demonstrate their culture's ancient roots.

A. Although Jakob was a bachelor and Wilhelm married, the brothers lived and worked together their entire lives.

B. They were pioneering philologists who discovered the very first law of phonological change, what we now call Grimm's law. This demonstrated the connection between German and the classical European languages.

C. Although they were not the first to record fairy tales, their method intended to demonstrate the antiquity of those tales by reproducing them from supposedly oral sources.

1. Earlier collections, such as those of Charles Perrault (1628-1703), were aimed at courtly readers.

2. The Grimms' collection was known as *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, that is, *Children's and Household Tales*. The Grimms thought that tales passed from teller to teller, rather than from writer to writer, would give a "natural" insight into the oldest sources of culture, thus making the "folk," such as contemporary German peasants, even more important culturally than the writers of antiquity.

III. The Grimms' insight that folk tales, or fairy tales, are prehistoric is now universally accepted.

A. Fairy tales are "the first tutor of mankind" according to Walter Benjamin (1892-1940), the pioneering culture critic.

1. Benjamin identified fairy tales by their conventional ending: "and they lived happily ever after."

2. Most people today, including such folklorists as Max Lüthi, identify fairy tales by their conventional beginning: "once upon a time."

3. The plurality of the Grimms' retold stories is revealing in that they have no common ending, but they do have a common beginning: "in olden times, when it was of use to wish for something."

4. We can see both the antiquity and the conventional consolation of fairy tales in "Rapunzel."

B. Fairy tales are ubiquitous.

1. Such works as the Stith Thompson Motif Index (created by a professor at Indiana University, which still has a leading folklore department) record the existence of common folktale elements, as well as whole stories, even in cultures with no ancient connection.

2. "Cinderella," for example, occurs with different footwear and different causes of the heroine’s orphan state, but the framework of the story is universal.

C. It is correct to say that fairy tales teach morals. This is true for those shaped by oral transmission through generations and for those, like many of Aesop’s fables, that may have been invented by a professional storyteller rather than through an oral process over generations.

1. In "Cinderella," diligence is rewarded.

2. In "The Three Spinster, it, however, the "moral" is that beauty is better than honesty.

3. The morals of fairy tales "tutor" us, whether or not we accept those morals as good.

IV. Fairy tales work with a fundamental, familiar, familial psychology.

A. Fairy godmothers (and mothers in general) are marked by their desire to feed you. Witches, the anti-mothers, would eat you.

B. Fairy tales collectively represent a world in which females exist in only three states: asexual girlhood, sexual adulthood, and post-menopausal old age.

C. Many fairy tales deal with common issues, such as the anxiety one may feel in anticipating moving from the comparative simplicity of childhood to the demanding world of adulthood. We can see variations of that theme for audiences of different ages by comparing "Little Red Riding Hood," "Sleeping Beauty," and "Snow White."

D. An analysis of the backstory of "Hansel and Gretel" helps us understand why that tale is a mainstay of our common culture.

1. The archetypal child listener is motivated in part by the promise of being able to work out certain perhaps unconscious feelings of guilt and/or abandonment, symbolically.

2. The archetypal grandmother teller is motivated in part by the opportunity to express safely her perhaps unconscious ambivalence toward someone who will supplant her.

E. By offering a satisfying symbolic experience for all concerned, fairy tales have remained essential parts of human culture from before recorded history.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:
Lüthi, Max. *Once Upon a Time: On the Nature of Fairy Tales*.
Questions to Consider:
1. What are the differences between making up a story for a child and telling a child a story you already know?
2. What roles do traditional stories play in how you view the world?

Scope: Vladimir Propp, studying Russian folk tales, was able to demonstrate the astonishing structural universality of what we call fairy tales but only when they are truly oral compositions. Using Propp’s work, we see that the Grimms manipulated the stories they published. Those that most violate Propp’s structure, such as “The Table, the Stick, and the Ass,” are also among the least successful. But those that follow the structure, even when they reveal highly literary influences, such as “The Frog Prince,” nonetheless retain great power. Proppian analysis foreshadowed powerful studies that illuminated such national epics as *The Odyssey* and *Beowulf*. Seeing how diverse values can be conveyed using the same underlying structure, we can understand the implicit morals fairy tales teach about gender roles, power fantasies, and the importance of Hamlet’s ghost, as well as the contribution of the Grimms toward the millennial fantasy of Nazism.

Outline

1. Vladimir Propp (1895–1970), in *The Morphology of the Folk Tale* (1927), reported one of the most astonishing discoveries in all of cultural studies, the universality of the structure of true oral folk tales. These were precisely the kinds of stories the Grimm brothers had purported to publish.
   A. Propp’s discovery included four “theorems.”
      1. The functions of characters serve as stable, constant elements in a tale, independent of how and by whom they are fulfilled.
      2. The number of functions known to the fairy tale is limited.
      3. The sequence of functions is always identical.
      4. All fairy tales are of one type in regard to their structure.
   B. Propp’s work has been tested successfully around the world.
      1. With one fascinating exception, Propp’s theorems hold true across cultures.
      2. The one exception is that multiplied elements, such as the number of tests the hero must meet, varies from two in East Asia to four in South Asia and Native America to three in Europe and North Africa. But this regular variation reveals a complete universality within oral traditions and a regular variation across oral traditions.
   C. Propp’s work laid the foundation for the study of the founding tales of diverse cultures.
      1. Albert Lord’s *The Singer of Tales* (1960) demonstrated the oral composition of the original *Odyssey* and *Beowulf*. By showing
how functions create a framework that can be clothed with standard verbal formulae, such as “wine-dark sea,” Lord also showed how we can identify the marks of the scribal hand in the versions we have of those ancient tales.

2. Using Lord’s insight into scribal manipulation and Propp’s discovery of universal structure, we can see that the most successful Grimm fairy tales follow oral tradition. Thus, highly modified works, such as “The Table, the Stick, and the Ass,” although clever, are largely forgotten, while conforming works, such as “The Frog Prince,” succeed despite having ancient literary antecedents.

II. A common feature of true fairy tales is the exploration of the role of authority.

A. For males, such as the Gallant Tailor, a happy ending is lying your way to become a king.

B. For females, such as Rapunzel, Cinderella, and the princess in “The Frog Prince,” a happy ending is marrying the prince who will become king even if that means being forced, like the princess, to yield to the authority of father and husband.

C. Other authority, for example, that of the witch in “Rapunzel,” can be flouted, because the heroine, like the tailor, has youth. Even though Rumplestiltskin makes and wins a fair bargain with the princess, he loses because he is old and lonely while she is young and lovely.

D. The exploration of the role of authority is common in fantastic works that are influenced by fairy tales. While Cinderella has no doubt about relying on her fairy godmother in a work intended to be told to children, Hamlet is endlessly torn about how to deal with the exhortations of his ghost father, who appears in the opening scene of the play. Clearly, the same fantastic elements may be used differently for different audiences.

III. The Grimm brothers quite consciously built their tales on the framework of universal narratives in order to establish a common culture.

A. The Grimm brothers sought to demonstrate the fundamental significance of a single German-language culture, thus helping lay the groundwork for the wars that led to the creation of a single German state.

B. That single culture had many features we question today.

1. Beautiful people deserve better fates than ugly people, other things being equal.

2. We can see the sexism of these tales by comparing the effects of Hansel’s actions with those of Cinderella’s.

3. We can see the anti-Semitism of the Grimms by examining one of their favorite tales, “The Jew Among the Thistles,” and its foreign sources.

IV. The Grimm brothers rightly saw that fairy tales could be a source of national, cultural identity. Today, every nation raises its children on versions of their stories, for better and for worse.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:
Lord, Albert. The Singer of Tales.
Ovid. Metamorphoses.

Questions to Consider:
1. Why do you think popular memory of “The Frog Prince” is so different from the Grimms’ version?
2. On balance, do you think traditional stories, such as “Cinderella” and “The Gallant Tailor,” are good or bad for our culture?
Lecture Three
Hoffmann and the Theory of the Fantastic

Scope: E. T. A. Hoffmann was a polymath of the Romantic era. As a writer of fantastic fiction, he shows us how the fantastic functions at the narrative levels of style, theme, character, and plot. His works exemplify the fantastic both as a psychological affect generated by art and as true literary fantasy (works that fully exploit the fantastic). Hoffmann’s true fantasies, such as “The Golden Pot,” demonstrate the crucial intellectual power of structural ambiguity, while the lives of his characters, as in “Councillor Krespel” and “The Doubles,” suggest the centrality of art as a psychological tool. In such works as “The Sandman” (which Sigmund Freud used to explicate his own theory of the role of psychological fantasy in art), and “Ritter Gluck,” Hoffmann offers a Platonic aesthetic theory that connects his own work with Homer’s and with our reading experience.

Outline

I. Ernst Theodor Wilhelm Hoffmann (1776–1822) was a Romantic polymath.
   A. Hoffmann had a restless desire to create.
      1. He produced significant work as an author, a government legal councillor, a music critic, a caricaturist, and a composer.
      2. He changed his own middle name, Wilhelm, to Amadeus to honor Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.
      3. The Tales of Hoffmann, however, is not by Hoffmann. It is an opera (1881) by Jacques Offenbach based on Hoffmann’s “The Sandman,” “Councillor Krespel,” and “The Lost Reflection.”
      4. Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky’s ballet The Nutcracker (1892) uses Alexandre Dumas’s adaptation of Hoffmann’s “The Nutcracker and the Mouse King.”
   B. The terms romance and romantic have six related definitions that bear on the study of the arts.
      1. Romance languages are those descended from Latin, the language of Rome, a city northern Europeans viewed as exotic, mysterious, and flamboyant.
      2. Romantic content is erotically or otherwise heightened over the merely natural. This use of the term romantic, like fantastic, is often opposed to realistic.
      3. Romantic attitudes and themes stress the importance of the ego and strong emotion.

II. The fantastic in literature is a psychological affect created by the quick, complete reversal of fundamental assumptions held by the reader at a given moment as the reading proceeds. Put more technically, the fantastic is the affect generated by the diametric, diachronic reversal of the ground rules of the narrative world.
   A. In “Ritter Gluck,” these reversals happen at all four levels of narrative that conserve diachronic information (that is, information that extends through time): style, thematic development, character development, and plot.
   B. Hoffmann called “The Golden Pot, or a Modern Fairy Tale,” his own favorite of his stories. Like “Ritter Gluck,” it concerns art and ends in permanent structural ambiguity. These works are true literary fantasy.

III. Hoffmann’s works give us insight into the psychology of fantasy.
   A. Hoffmann portrays art in his own stories as both a fantastic compulsion and as a practical tool in our lives, as in “Councillor Krespel” and “The Doubles.”
   B. In “The Uncanny” (1919), Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) grounded his own theory of the fantastic in his analysis of Hoffmann’s “The Sandman.”
      1. Art is motivated by trauma.
      2. Art arises from the unconscious.
      3. Art is compensatory.
      4. Art is repetitive.
C. Hoffmann believed in depth psychology, which posits the existence of an underlying unconscious (or subconscious) mind that can be more powerful than the conscious mind.

1. Hoffmann’s psychology in such works as “The Sandman” supports the tripartite model of the psyche promulgated by Freud.
2. Hoffmann’s psychology in such works as “The Doubles” supports the quadripartite model of the psyche promulgated by one of Freud’s most prominent disciples and later antagonists, Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961).

IV. Hoffmann’s own artistic compulsions, however, also support a Platonic theory of art.
A. Art is a matter of inspiration—or compulsion—from above, as suggested in “Ritter Gluck.” Hoffmann’s works themselves served as inspirations to others.
B. Art is a matter of striving for ideal forms, as suggested in both “The Doubles” and “The Sandman.”
C. For Hoffmann, and for many of the world’s great imaginative artists, the achievement of art depends upon both embracing and disciplining the fantastic.

Essential Reading:
Hoffmann, E. T. A. The Tales of E. T. A. Hoffmann.

Supplementary Reading:
Freud, Sigmund. The Uncanny.
Jung, Carl Gustav. Man and His Symbols.

Questions to Consider:
1. When is fantasizing positive in our lives; when negative?
2. When are the effects of fantasizing in art positive in our lives; when negative?

Lecture Four
Poe—Genres and Degrees of the Fantastic

Scope: Edgar Allan Poe sought explicitly to have each of his stories culminate in an overpowering emotional effect for the reader. In such works as “The Oval Portrait,” “The Black Cat,” and “William Wilson,” he taps into some of humanity’s deepest fantasies: fear of dying, fear of loneliness, fear of oneself. By examining these works, as well as other supposed horror stories, including “The Tell-Tale Heart” and “The Cask of Amontillado,” we see how a writer can use the fantastic less or more in representing similar materials. Poe’s formal variations on a theme allow us to sketch a continuum of the fantastic that provides a framework for relating all fantastic literature. In addition, what Poe called “tales of ratiocination” (which we would place under detective fiction or science fiction) provide a starting point for showing how the fantastic is crucial in the whole process of genre development.

Outline
I. The writing of Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849) has too often been dismissed for reasons that do not hold up under scrutiny.
A. Biographical complaints include the notion that he was an alcoholic and a pervert.
   1. Poe may have been allergic to alcohol, not alcoholic. In any event, alcoholism obviously does not itself confer artistic talent.
   2. His 1836 marriage to his first cousin, Virginia Clemm (born 1822), was public, legal, devoted, and ended only with her death (1847) from tuberculosis (diagnosed in 1842).
B. People complain that his writing is simply too slick.
   1. “The Raven” (1845), read in light of Virginia’s illness, seems to be an almost Hoffmann-like attempt to use the writing of poetry to calm the poet against the calamity of his wife’s foreseen death.
   2. “Annabel Lee” (1849), so easily parodied by a sing-song reading, is, like “The Raven,” an emotional fairy tale of devotion.
C. On the basis of his own review of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s Twice-Told Tales (1842), an essay now often called “The Short Story,” people complain that Poe’s work is too mechanical.
   1. Poe calls for an author to construct his story in order to generate in the reader a “single…preconceived effect.”
   2. A work that some would say supports this complaint against mechanical construction is “The Cask of Amontillado” (1846). However, a close reading of the story reveals that it gives not a
“single effect,” in the sense of “only one superficial effect,” but rather, “a richly layered yet thoroughly unified effect.”

II. Much of Poe’s most famous work engages common human fears.
   A. “The Cask of Amontillado,” read through an identification with the victim, Fortunato, addresses fear of chance and death unforeseen. Read through an identification with the narrator, it addresses a fear many of us feel about our own potential for violence.
   B. “William Wilson” (1839), like Hoffmann’s “The Doubles,” asks if we really control ourselves or if we are the pawns of dark urges.
   C. “The Tell-Tale Heart” (1843) shows the disorder of a mind too fixated on a sense of being slighted.

III. Poe’s works can be arrayed along a continuum of the fantastic.
   A. “The Tell-Tale Heart” and “The Black Cat” (1843) use the fantastic to differing degrees.
   B. Any genre can go from its basic pattern toward the more fantastic.
      1. In Poe, this works with deranged narrators.
      2. In Hoffmann, this works with unambiguous and ambiguous tales.
      3. Fairy tales can also become more fantastic, as Hoffmann suggests in the subtitle of “The Golden Pot, or A Modern Fairy Tale.”

IV. Poe’s so called “tales of ratiocination” are, according to “The Short Story,” able to convey “truth” in their single effect.
   A. “The Pit and the Pendulum” (1843) is what we would now call science fiction. It suggests that our salvation may be beyond our own intellectual powers.
   B. “The Purloined Letter” (1845), the first fully achieved Tale of the Great Detective, offers, as W. H. Auden has written, “the fantasy that hidden guilt will be revealed.”

V. Poe’s masterful combination of conscious artistry and deep resonance with common human fears becomes clear when we consider the relations between Poe’s fantastic poetry and fantastic fiction.
   A. “The Oval Portrait” (1842), which speaks of love lost to art, echoes “Annabel Lee.”
   B. “The Bells” (1849) is famously derided for offering more sound than sense. However, a careful reading of its four stanzas, and a comparison of them to “The Black Cat,” shows that these works move the reader through a common psychological trajectory.
      1. “The Black Cat” is hypotactic, meaning that the connections among its parts are made explicit.
      2. “The Bells” is a paratactic version of the same story, parataxis being the presentation of a tale with key connections omitted. This economical presentation, if it works for a reader, induces the reader to construct imaginatively the missing connections and, thus, to feel them personally.
      3. Poe’s achievement in many genres is to induce us to feel fear, yet to know that we are in a fantastic world created by a precise and skillful artist, a world we need not flee but can admire.

Essential Reading:
Poe, Edgar Allan. The Portable Poe.

Supplementary Reading:
Booth, Wayne C. The Rhetoric of Fiction.

Questions to Consider:
1. Are there particular kinds of viewpoint characters who, though they are very different from you, attract your attention most strongly? If so, what makes them attractive to you?
2. What are the moral and political effects of identifying with a character whose mind is very different from our own?
Lecture Five
Lewis Carroll—Puzzles, Language, & Audience

Scope: Lewis Carroll was an adequate mathematician, an extraordinary photographer, and the author of what many consider to be the greatest children's book of all time, *Alice in Wonderland*. Yet only adult analysis of *Alice* reveals its powerful, dark, underground side, a side that some have argued comes from the author's own supposed psychoses. *Alice* is a work that strikes us very differently depending upon the time in life when we read it. Comparing it to Carroll's *Sylvie and Bruno*, meant only for children, or to his books of mathematical puzzles, we can see that taken together, *Alice* and *Through the Looking-Glass* constitute a classic composite fantasy that delights children by its sympathetic indulgence of their desires for novelty, play, and power and captures adults by motivating us to rethink the roles of language, convention, and art in our lives.

Outline

I. Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (1832–1898) wrote the *Alice* books under the name of Lewis Carroll. He was, like Hoffmann, a polymath and, like Poe, often thought to be a pervert; however, he needs to be understood in his own context.

A. Quite expectedly, as a mathematics don in residence at Oxford University, Carroll was an Anglican clergyman and a bachelor.

B. Unexpectedly, he was the second greatest English photographer of the Victorian period (after Margaret Julia Cameron).

1. He had a thriving business selling photographs in several genres.
2. When the first objection was raised to his posed children's nudes, works created only with maternal permission and never sold, Carroll destroyed all his originals and plates. All Carroll originals we have of this type have been carefully preserved by the families of their subjects.

C. Carroll adored intellectual play with children.

1. His logic texts contain amusing examples, such as the 24-pig puzzle.
2. He wrote the first draft of *Alice's Adventures under Ground* for Alice Pleasance Liddell, the youngest daughter of his dean.
3. Only after Greville MacDonald, son of clergyman-author George MacDonald, applauded it did Carroll redraft and publish.

II. The *Alice* books form a composite novel.

A. *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) is a sunny, summer novel, written to stand alone.

1. The opening chapter shows how art and the fantastic can offer an escape from boredom for children.

2. The prefatory verses, however, while full of wordplay for children, show an attentive adult the book's abiding concern with the approach of death.

B. *Through the Looking-Glass* (1872) is a dark, winter novel, meant to complete in a new way the freestanding earlier publication.

1. The prefatory verses, despite announcing "the love-gift of a fairy-tale," serve as a nostalgic lament for the real Alice growing up.

2. The opening chapter exploits reversal to create the fantastic. Carroll's own misunderstanding of the functioning of mirrors, however, once understood, highlights the source of fantasy's power.

C. The later half of the composite novel, by using the game of chess rather than the mere personification of cards, is intellectually denser than the first half.

D. Overall, the composite novel is a true fantasy, using the fantastic exhaustively at the levels of style, character development, thematic development, and plot.

III. Read by a child, *Alice* offers jokes, puzzles, and power fantasy.

A. Many of the jokes depend on nonsense and wordplay.

1. Famous examples include "The Walrus and the Carpenter," "Jabberwocky," and "the wood...where things have no names."

2. For adults, however, these examples each reveal a concern with death.

B. Such puzzles as "Why is a raven like a writing desk?" also reach a dual audience.

C. Alice, despite her insignificance as a Victorian child, is a fairy tale protagonist living in a world of puzzles that are, by definition, soluble.

1. In seeking the Garden, she is thwarted but ultimately arrives there.

2. In the Garden of Talking Flowers, she is made mute but finds joy there.

3. Alice acknowledges being reduced to the status of a character, but as a fairy tale protagonist, she ends each volume happy.

IV. Read by an adult, *Alice* offers a wealth of significant, serious, sobering subjects.

A. The opening chapter offers the first of the myriad subtle death jokes foreshadowed by the prefatory verses.
B. Carroll, a master poet, comments on language and logic in the pronoun poem the White Rabbit reads as evidence at Alice’s trial.

C. Some of his poems, such as “An Aged, Aged Man,” are also clever poetry criticism, although Carroll also criticizes criticism with Humpty Dumpty.

D. The most fundamental problems offered by the book are of two kinds.
1. What are the limits of language and logic for understanding our world?
2. How can we accommodate ourselves to the limitations of our lives? The valedictory verses offer overt and covert answers to this question.

V. With Alice, Lewis Carroll became the first towering figure in the new publishing category called children’s literature.
A. Other writers, such as MacDonald, helped populate this field. It arose out of a new idea of children as a special class of intellect rather than simply adults-in-training.
B. Some of Carroll’s other children’s works, such as Sylvie and Bruno, failed because of their didactic sobriety and comparative lack of the fantastic.
C. Alice, however, sets the standard for broadly effective children’s literature. It ranks third, only behind Shakespeare and the King James Bible, in the number of words and phrases it has contributed to our culture.

Essential Reading:
Carroll, Lewis. Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass.

Supplementary Reading:
Carroll, Lewis. Mathematical Recreations of Lewis Carroll: Pillow Problems and a Tangled Tale.
Taylor, Roger, Edward Wakeling, and Peter C. Bunnell. Lewis Carroll, Photographer.

Questions to Consider:
1. In what ways—good, bad, and neutral—do you identify the fantastic with childhood?
2. In what ways does the fantastic help deal with intellectual problems?

H. G. Wells—We Are All Talking Animals

Scope: In the first decade of the 20th century, before the extended triumph of realism in the marketplace of literary criticism, H. G. Wells was considered by many to be the preeminent novelist working in English. His debate with Henry James illuminates the history of how we view the fantastic. In such works as “The Strange Orchid,” Wells touches lightly on the psychosexual drives that social structures of class and gender often repress. In such works as The Invisible Man, Wells shows how science offers a fantasy of revenge against such repression. And in such works as The Island of Doctor Moreau, the scientist unrestrained by society fulfills ancient fairy tale fantasies while simultaneously adulterating all that is natural. In what Wells called his “scientific romances,” the fantastic highlights the eternal tension between society’s need for stability and the disruptive desires of individuals.

Outline
I. Herbert George Wells (1866–1946) wrote superb fiction and nonfiction.
A. At the turn of the 20th century, Wells and Henry James were considered the two foremost living writers of English prose.
1. James publicly asserted that the novel must explore individual psychology, as in The Portrait of a Lady (1881 and 1909).
2. Wells publicly asserted that the novel must explore the powerful social forces that shape us, as in The Food of the Gods (1903).
B. Wells’s The Outline of History—Being a Plain History of Life and Mankind (1920) was the first attempt to trace the interconnected history of all of humanity. Wells focused on social forces, including changing material conditions (such as new weapons), rather than on the lives and deeds of remarkable individuals.

II. In his fiction, Wells built his analyses of the modern world on fairy tale foundations.
A. “The Plattner Story” (1897) shows a desire to belong to a larger group.
1. The protagonist’s fantastic adventure is told in appealing fairy tale terms.
2. The narrator’s credibility, however, depends on scientific confirmation.
B. “The Strange Orchid” (1897) seems to be the story of the one extreme experience in the quiet life of an eccentric gentleman.
1. The backstory, however, suggests that the protagonist represents the Victorian middle class.
2. The living situation suggests repressed sexuality.
3. The setting suggests the modern need for romance.
4. The description suggests ancient erotic myth, like “Rapunzel.”
5. The plot suggests both a critique and a ratification of Victorian fantasies.

III. The Invisible Man (1897) tells a fantastic tale of the relation of the individual to society.

A. Griffin, the title character, like many of Poe’s characters, feels great personal bitterness.
B. The novel reflects and critiques Victorian attitudes.
   1. Repressed sexuality arises in the treatment of nudity and invisibility.
   2. Religion resonates in such names as Thomas Marvel and Griffin and in Griffin’s desire to be a god.
   3. Imperialism drives Griffin.
C. The ending, however, implies that society must maintain stability against unique individuals, just as it was tragically successful in shaping Griffin.
D. Wells’s conscious use of the fantastic to offer a specific critique here is clarified by comparing the rules of invisibility in The Invisible Man with those in “The Plattner Story.”

IV. The Island of Doctor Moreau (1896) is a deceptively simple novel.

A. The novel functions on two levels.
   1. The story Prendick tells concerns a series of monstrous experiments that imply criticisms of misused science and of European colonialism.
   2. The story we can infer about Prendick implies a critique of the way personal guilt can be hidden by class and language.
B. Language is crucial in the novel.
   1. Both Moreau and Prendick use language as a colonial tool.
   2. Both Moreau and Prendick unwittingly imply more than they say about themselves.
C. Prendick’s narration reflects a recurring confusion about what is and is not human. Our vocabulary acknowledges that confusion in the common meanings of such words as brutal and beastly and such phrases as dumb creature.

1. Prendick first sees M’ling as a man. Prendick’s later recognition of the truth accords with Freud’s analysis in “The Uncanny.”
2. Prendick’s supposed misunderstanding of Moreau’s experiments shows a culpable human- (Euro-) centrism.
3. The novel ends with a supposedly changed Prendick reminiscent of Jonathan Swift’s Gulliver returned from living with the utopian horse-creatures called Houyhnhms.

D. Walking across the island toward the Beast People, “Moreau, Montgomery, myself [Prendick], and M’ling” exemplify the Hobbesian great chain of being.
   1. Among those links, M’ling presides over transition.
   2. M’ling is associated with the beach, which throughout art is typically the zone of conflict for elementally contending forces.
E. The question Wells here and often leaves with us is this: Which way shall we go, toward the colonial or toward the respectful, toward the egotistical or toward the social, toward the isolated or toward the integrated? It is no surprise that he is the first writer to popularize the use of the word ecology. No progress can be made without the imagination of humans, but all humans must recognize that they, too, are subject to great forces beyond them, that indeed, we are all talking animals.

Essential Reading:
Wells, H. G. The Island of Dr. Moreau.

Supplementary Reading:
Huntington, John. The Logic of Fantasy: H. G. Wells and Science Fiction.

Questions to Consider:
1. In what ways do the messages of Wells’s novels add or detract from his artistry?
2. In what ways is it appropriate or inappropriate to mix the issues of religion and the techniques of the literary fantastic?
Lecture Seven
Franz Kafka—Dashed Fantasies

Scope: Franz Kafka, a frail Jew writing in German in Christian, Czech-speaking Prague, was triply alienated by a failure to achieve an intimate adult relationship, by being the deprecated Other, and by associating himself with a foreign culture. Yet in many ways, this precisely mirrors the widespread modern condition we have come to call Kafkaesque, struggling vainly against every sort of indifference to find a connection with a person, belief, or social institution that will support us. In such parables as “A Common Confusion,” “An Old Manuscript,” and “Before the Law,” Kafka makes these failures poignantly clear. Nonetheless, in his masterpieces, including The Metamorphosis and “The Judgment,” we see that his knowledge of existential failure led to artistic success. Still, reading “The Truth about Sancho Panza” and “A Hunger Artist,” we can understand why Kafka (fortunately, unsuccessfully) ordered his unpublished manuscripts destroyed.

Outline

I. Franz Kafka (1883–1924) lived a triply alienated life.

A. He was a frail, German-speaking Jew born in Christian Prague.
   1. Although German was often the language of Prague’s intellectuals, they were all aware of being different from the Czech-speaking majority. For the Christian intellectuals, this difference often felt like a mark of superiority; for the non-Christian intellectuals, this difference often felt like a mark of Cain, privileged though shunned.
   2. Judaism originally mattered little to Kafka—except as a mark for others to use against him.
   3. In his later 20s, he was moved by Yiddish theater, became close friends with one of the actors, and began his serious study of Judaism. In other words, he came to his heritage through art, but that heritage, like his art, gave Kafka neither social justice nor personal happiness.

B. The term Kafkaesque has entered modern languages to indicate the implacable futility felt so commonly today amid the inhumanity of institutions in our industrialized world. The global currency of the term acknowledges that Kafka’s writing epitomizes this alienated condition.

II. Kafka’s shortest works, typically called parables, re-present his felt life transformed through the fantastic.

   A. “A Common Confusion” is one of the greatest but most enigmatic short stories of the 20th century.
      1. Its structural truths emerge from subtle ambiguities of language, which we can see from the title itself and the very first sentence.
      2. Its psychological truths about individuality and perception emerge from the almost algebraic generality of its plot.
      3. Its social truths emerge from its ultimate allegorical critique of religion.

   B. “An Old Manuscript” focuses on the psychological and the religious, suggesting the antiquity of the failure of social institutions to serve the needs of individuals.

   C. “Before the Law” focuses on the psychological and the legal, suggesting the failure of modern social institutions to serve us any better in modern times.

III. In many of his masterpieces, Kafka, like Hoffmann, seems to use the fact of creating written art to imply the possibility of some salvation, even though Kafka’s art is about the inevitability of loss.

   A. The Metamorphosis (1915), which so famously begins with Gregor Samsa awakening to find he has become a gigantic insect, is a fairy tale set in the gritty modern world:
      1. Gregor’s transformation, like the unwarranted success of Hansel and Gretel, supports the infantile fantasy known as the illusion of central position.
      2. Gregor needs to escape his condition as a traveling salesman. Even his name suggests his need to escape.
      3. Gregor’s own metamorphosis leads to metamorphoses for each member of his family.
      4. Gregor becomes a pitiable Christ figure who, surprisingly, potentiates the resurrection of his sister.

   B. “The Judgment,” too, allegorizes Christianity to remind us of key moral issues.
      1. The father’s references to St. Petersburg suggest the old man’s superiority to the young man.
      2. The charwoman here, as in The Metamorphosis, serves to put the Christ figure in his failing place.
      3. The compulsive plot suggests the implacability of destiny in the modern world.

IV. With such a worldview, it is not surprising that, despite creating works of enduring art, Kafka remained a man in despair.
A. “The Truth about Sancho Panza” is a Kafka parable suggesting that only those without aspirations can be made happy by literature.

B. “A Hunger Artist” is a Kafka parable suggesting that even a willingness to suffer cannot achieve permanently useful art.
   1. It was sent to a publisher in 1923.
   2. It appeared only after Kafka’s death in 1924. Kafka’s tuberculosis had made him, like Gregor, too difficult to feed, and like the Hunger Artist, he apparently died of starvation.

C. It is no wonder that Kafka asked that his unpublished manuscripts be burned at his death. It is also no wonder that his executor and friend, Max Brod—fortunately—defied him. Was this Kafka’s ultimate ambiguous failure or the triumph of his imagination?

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:
Kafka, Franz. Amerika.
Kafka, Franz. The Trial.

Questions to Consider:
1. In what ways would you think Kafka’s writing shows that he is or is not a religious person?
2. Was Max Brod right to disobey Kafka’s will and have his manuscripts published?

Lecture Eight
Woolf—Fantastic Feminism & Periods of Art

Scope: Although Virginia Woolf’s Orlando has been slighted as lightweight in comparison to such works as To the Lighthouse, which critics use to rank her among the founding giants of Modernism, this brave fantasy is a subversive, satiric masterpiece. Emily Dickinson’s poems, often unacknowledged fantasies, such as “I heard a fly buzz when I died,” reflect the socially imposed crippling of volition in women. Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s classic story “The Yellow Wall-Paper” explores the origins of some madness in gender-based repression. Woolf, who died a suicide, addressed these conditions in famous essays, including A Room of One’s Own, and in Orlando, in which the title character shifts sex and lives his/her young adulthood over four centuries. In its focus on the role of writing to free a woman’s—or person’s—thoughts and in its progressive modulation of style, Orlando also demonstrates how literary periods themselves reflect humanity’s fantastically shifting understanding of Nature.

Outline
I. Virginia Stephen Woolf (1882—1941) is famous as a founder of literary Modernism and as a powerful voice for feminism.
   A. Virginia Woolf was one of the Bloomsbury group of London-based intellectuals that included Vanessa Stephen Bell (artist), Clive Bell (critic), John Maynard Keynes (economist), E. M. Forster (novelist and critic), Roger Fry (critic who assembled the First Postimpressionist Exhibition, 1910), and Lytton Strachey (biographer of The Eminent Victorians, 1918).
   C. Woolf’s serious, superb, psychologically subtle realistic novels include To the Lighthouse and Mrs. Dalloway.
   D. Woolf’s powerful feminist essay, A Room of One’s Own (1929), argues for the necessity of security and independence for anyone’s self-realization.
   E. Many great women writers have struggled with the challenge of social repression of themselves and their imaginations, a condition that can split the self.
1. Emily Dickinson (1830–1886), living a spinster's life in Amherst, Massachusetts, exploited the cadences of hymns to explore the conditions of her life in fantastic poems, such as “Because I could not stop for death” and “I heard a fly buzz when I died.”

2. In the classic short story called “The Yellow Wall-Paper” (1892) by Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860–1935), a sexist, loving husband fatally attempts to repress his wife’s imagination.

3. Virginia Woolf—who always suffered a crisis of sapped imagination whenever she finished writing a major work, despite a supportive social group—finally died a suicide.

II. Orlando (1928) was well received by the public but thought lightweight by the critics.

A. The title character of this comic, fictional biography begins at 16 in the reign of Elizabeth I, later metamorphoses from male to female with almost no comment, and is in her early 30s at the book’s end in the 20th century.

B. The book has been called a love letter from Woolf to its dedicatee, Vita Sackville-West, an object of Woolf’s erotic attraction in life.

C. The book includes a delightful love story but offers much more than that.

1. From the first pages, the book explores issues of gender in social expectations about violence, clothing, property, and independence.

2. Stylistically superb satires address many targets, for example, doctors.

3. Woolf’s critique of biographies, such as her own father’s famous Dictionary of National Biography, reflects her Kafkaesque understanding of time.

III. Literary periodization silently underlies Orlando’s progress in style and plot.

A. Writing is an essential element within the novel.

1. The novel has many self-reflexive moments, in which the work forces us to recognize it as art. Ironically, self-reflexivity always makes a reality claim for the work of art, no matter how fantastic that work may be.

2. Orlando meets many writers and struggles herself to write successfully.

3. Only after passing through much experience and many periods does Orlando succeed.

B. A literary period is a set of shared, culturally dominant beliefs and values.

C. Each literary period includes a characteristic understanding of Nature.

1. In the Classical period, Nature defines us.

2. In the Middle Ages, Nature is God’s harsh book.

3. In the Renaissance, Nature is to be exploited.

4. In the Enlightenment, Nature is to be understood and manipulated.

5. In the Romantic period, Nature is a source of virtue.

6. In the Victorian period, Nature is an economic resource.

7. In the Modernist period, Nature is alien from humanity.

8. In the Postmodern period, Nature is a phenomenological construct, that is, an intensional act of consciousness.

D. Orlando unfolds historically and stylistically from the Renaissance to the Modern period, although the continuing bass line to this melodic modulation is the Enlightenment style of Laurence Sterne in Tristram Shandy (1759–1767).

IV. In Orlando, vacillation finally subsumes the Enlightenment’s balanced antitheses. The heroine thus achieves an integrity that allows her to embrace Nature on an equal footing.

A. Vacillation characterizes the book’s style.

B. Vacillation is reflected in the plot, with its silent acceptance of violations of the rules of gender and chronology.

C. Vacillation supports the productive androgyny needed for Orlando’s marriage.

D. Having achieved integration, Orlando culminates in three parallel ways.

1. The fiction ends on the day of the book’s real publication, thus merging fiction and fact.

2. Orlando’s writing is honored, and she bears a son. Her earned integrity allows her biological and imaginative offspring freedom in a man’s world.

3. The final ambiguity of a “wild goose,” as with all true fantasies, is never resolved. It persists, urging us to consider the nature of reality.

Essential Reading:
Woolf, Virginia. Orlando.

Supplementary Reading:
Woolf, Virginia. A Room of One’s Own.
Questions to Consider:

1. Woolf, like Kafka, has a main character react dispassionately to a fantastic metamorphosis. How do those reactions influence your sense of connection with each of those characters?

2. In what ways does the device of allowing Orlando an extended life enrich or impoverish your ability to take this story seriously?

Scope: The publication of Alain Robbe-Grillet’s *The Erasers* motivated the creation of the term the *New Novel*. On first reading, it is a detective story pushed to the condition of true fantasy. Its radical style, Robbe-Grillet claimed, has important epistemological consequences and, in that way, is both a fantastic development of Émile Zola’s idea of the experimental novel and the fulfillment of Roland Barthes’ prediction about the evolution of writing. On closer examination, the novel also reveals itself as a reworking of the materials of the Oedipus myth as the structural anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss understood it and as a critical reexamination of Freudian ideas about psychological fantasy. Indeed, for a clever minority of readers or re-readers, there is a last fantastic trick that converts this apparently ambiguous detective novel into a stable work of aesthetic didacticism.

Outline

I. For most people, on first reading, *The Erasers* (1953), by Alain Robbe-Grillet (1922–), seems to be a fantastic, compelling, but deeply confusing detective novel. Yet because of what close reading and re-reading reveal, it had huge critical and popular success and even led to the creation of a new critical term, the *New Novel*.

A. *The Erasers* is told primarily from the viewpoint of a detective, Wallas, sent to a provincial town to solve a murder.

1. Many of his observations are less obviously reflective of gathering clues about this murder than of inquiries into his own sense of reality. What should he make of coincidences? Can anything significant be read in the pictures he thinks he sees in random assemblages of flotsam on stagnant canal water?

2. Much of what is reported in the novel, such as the behavior of the café manager or of the riddling drunkard, seems irrelevant to solving the crime.

3. Astonishingly, in the penultimate regular chapter, Wallas himself suddenly seems to kill the man whose murder he had been sent to solve.

4. At the very end, neither we nor the detective know who truly killed Dupont or how to understand reality.

B. The story is told in a relentlessly meticulous, flat style that seems cinematic.

1. Like a dogged detective, the text pays enormous attention to superficial detail, as in the famous description of a tomato slice.
2. The novel's movements from one passage to another often mimic tracking, panning, and montage techniques from film.

II. The Erasers was received at publication not only as a novel but as a cultural experiment.

A. The term experimental novel goes back to Émile Zola (1840–1902).
   1. In such works as Germinal (1885), Zola sought to represent society in a believable way, to set characters and social forces in motion, and then to see what they would do.
   2. This served both Zola's artistic and political ends.

B. Roland Barthes (1915–1980), in Writing Degree Zero (1953), studied the evolution of French narrative prose.
   1. He was able to place Zola within an evolutionary pattern based on Zola's style.
   2. Barthes saw the evolution of style as pointed in a specific direction. Barthes' theory seemed to be confirmed by The Erasers. However, the theory did not account for the novel's contents.

C. At about the same time, Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908–) was publishing some hugely influential ideas about culture.
   1. In Structural Anthropology (1958), he argued that culture itself has invisible, controlling structures. Like Vladimir Propp, he was extending the methodological insights of Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913).
   2. In chapter XI, "The Structural Study of Myth" (originally 1955), Lévi-Strauss used analyses of several versions of the Oedipus myth to argue that the key elements of a true myth in a deep sense coexist even though they must be sequenced in any given telling. This parallels St. Jerome's notion that "Christ dies for us daily."
   3. Careful readers of The Erasers had already noticed that many of its details, such as the description of the patterns on a curtain, also seem drawn from the Oedipus myth.

III. On re-reading, The Erasers changes from a detective story to a philosophical exemplum.

A. Once we recognize the importance of Oedipus to the novel, all its elements fall into place.
   1. Details, such as the flotsam and the drunkard and both his successful and his unsuccessful riddle, become appropriate.
   2. Details of merely overheard conversation, such as that between two bus passengers, reinforce a Lévi-Straussian reading of the power of myth.

B. This discovery, which Robbe-Grillet allows us rather than his detective, also comments on the importance of Freudian theory for our lives.
   1. In "The Uncanny," Freud's discussion of "the familiar in an unfamiliar place" seems to mirror the detective's experience. Thus, the murder the detective uncannily commits seems inevitable for him.
   2. The central key to "erasing" the power of ever-present myth, however, is available if we free ourselves from habitual ways of making images of the flotsam we see around us. This revises Freudian psychoanalysis.

C. Robbe-Grillet's experiment is important both artistically and politically.
   1. On a first reading, The Erasers gives a fantastic twist to the prior evolution of detective fiction. This is central to creating a new subgenre, the New Novel. The Erasers on first reading is a true fantasy, sitting at the extreme opposite end of the continuum from realism.
   2. On re-reading, what is left, represented in a new cinematic style, is a pattern that we can understand. To Robbe-Grillet, this understanding resolves the reader's mysteries and ambiguities, undoes a confining "humanism," retrieves the otherness of Nature, and allows us to "lay claim to...freedom."

Essential Reading:
Robbe-Grillet, Alain. The Erasers.

Supplementary Reading:
Freud, Sigmund. Totem and Taboo.

Questions to Consider:
1. How might reading this book change the way you read other detective fiction?
2. In what sense do you think this book, or any book, can liberate you?
Lecture Ten
Tolkien & Mass Production of the Fantastic

Scope: English has a unique fantasy heritage in the Arthurian materials, used by authors medieval to modern, such as Thomas Malory and T. H. White. The modern Arthurian musical Camelot lent its name to John F. Kennedy's truncated presidency. William Morris, pioneering Victorian manufacturer and polymath artist, rejected an offer to be England's Poet Laureate, honoring in part his Arthurian poems. J. R. R. Tolkien, a brilliant philologist, revised the spirit of these ultimately nostalgic materials to create a reassuring fantastic medievalism, what he himself called "a fairy story." In "Farmer Giles of Ham" and "Leaf by Niggle," Tolkien's comforting politics and religion, respectively, emerge. Examination of the work of Tolkien's friend C. S. Lewis, particularly the children's series about Narnia and the science fictions, including Perelandra, clarify Tolkien's democratic consolation. The epic success of his Lord of the Rings trilogy launched the true mass production of the literary fantastic.

Outline


A. Middle-earth, Tolkien's most famous fictional setting, draws on Old English literature, such as Beowulf, with its monsters; Norse saga, with gods and heroes; Welsh legend, with sorcerers; Teutonic mythology, with world-shattering battles; and on Christianity and the Arthurian materials.

B. English literature has a unique heritage in the Arthurian materials.
   1. "The wise man of the wood," like the Grimm's Rumplestiltskin who spins straw into gold, exists in many cultures. "The undiscovered king," like Moses found floating among the bulrushes, exists in many cultures. But historically, only English literature has integrated these archetypal stories, weaving Merlin and Arthur into a single fantastic tapestry.

   2. The Arthurian materials have yielded myriad popular works, including Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (c. 1375), in which Arthur's boastful nephew foolishly beheads a vegetation demigod, and Le Morte d'Arthur (1485) by Sir Thomas Malory (1405–1471).


   C. Tolkien's personal background bore on his artistic creation.
   1. A superb philologist, he knew a diversity of time-tested narratives and the words that resonated through them. His linguistic inventions ring true.
   2. His love of poetry and work as a translator inform his style.
   3. His committed Roman Catholicism flavors the morality of his tales.

II. Tolkien's most famous work is The Lord of the Rings (1954–1955), a fantastic epic consisting of The Fellowship of the Ring, The Two Towers, and The Return of the King.

A. The trilogy meshes earthy, sensible "hobbits" with figures of legend.
   1. Frodo, recruited by Gandalf, a Merlin figure, must help destroy an ancient, magic ring before evil sorcerer Sauron can seize it and enslave the world.
   2. Frodo's "fellowship" includes humble hobbits, magic elves and dwarves, and a dashing loner, Aragorn, ultimately revealed to be a hidden king.
   3. Through grit, self-sacrifice, and Gandalf's help, the ring, despite its tempting power, is destroyed; Middle-earth is saved, and the hobbits' Shire returned to domestic peace.
   4. We can see Gandalf as Merlin, Aragorn as Arthur, and Frodo and friends as solid English folk, but in Tolkien's world, unlike Malory's, the folk are our focus. In a sense, Tolkien makes us the true heroes.

B. Like the Arthurian materials, Tolkien's are extensive. The Hobbit (1937) and The Silmarillion (1977) are prequels. Other works are simply set in the same world.

C. The Lord of the Rings appeals for many reasons.
   1. Like a Proppian folk tale, Tolkien's distillation of traditional materials resonates immediately.
   2. Tolkien's own storytelling is often stylistically gorgeous.
   3. The works are easily allegorized. Is the questing Fellowship the Allies against Sauron's Hitler, a resurrection of Jesus' disciples, or the middle class resisting privilege? Tolkien always refused to say.

III. The ingredients of Tolkien's epic are clear in his shorter works.
A. “Farmer Giles of Ham” (1949), set in a version of Middle-earth, demonstrates Tolkien’s love of language and his preference for comfortable democracy. Key moments include Giles using a tame dragon to take the abusive king’s crown and the opening and closing play on the switch from Latin to English.

B. The Adventures of Tom Bombadil (1962) gathers poems from the marvelous woodsman of the Ring trilogy, such as “Errantry,” which shows us the seduction of language, and “The Hoard,” which shows us the good we might be seduced from.

C. “Leaf by Niggle” (1964) is a gentle and deeply moving Christian parable.

IV. Tolkien’s writing both includes and invites theoretical discussion.


1. Fairy stories, unlike the Alice books, must never discuss their own magic.

2. Fairy stories offer “Fantasy” (“Imagination” and “Unreality”), “Recovery” (of defamiliarizing vision), “Escape” (liberation), and consolation.

3. The Gospels are the epitome of fairy stories.

B. We can understand Tolkien’s success by comparing his work with that of others.

1. Tolkien was one of The Inklings, a writers’ group that included Charles Williams (1886–1945) and C. S. Lewis (1898–1963). Lewis’s Space trilogy (1938–1945) for adults and Narnia series (1950–1956) for children reveal a doctrinal difference between adult- and youth-oriented religious fantasies that suggests the importance of writing morally forgiving narratives.

2. The Erasers suggests how daunting intellectual challenge can be.

3. Tolkien’s trilogy offers adventure for the active, poetry for the contemplative, and simple consolation for us all. Chosen as the best book of the 20th century in many reader surveys, The Lord of the Rings knocked open the door to fantasy publishing in our time.

Essential Reading:
Tolkien, J. R. R. The Lord of the Rings.

Tolkien, J. R. R. The Tolkien Reader.

Supplementary Reading:
Lewis, C. S. The Chronicles of Narnia.

Questions to Consider:
1. In what ways does the quest of Tolkien’s diverse characters in The Lord of the Rings trilogy speak to conditions of our contemporary lives?

2. Are fantastic works, such as “Farmer Giles of Ham” and “Leaf by Niggle,” made stronger or weaker as art by their didacticism?
Lecture Eleven
Children's Literature and the Fantastic

Scope: Children’s literature, a publishing category that emerged in the Victorian period to exploit a specialized market, is both simpler and less conventionally realistic than adult literature, even while traditionally restricted in its materials. Looser constraints on style and invention invite the fantastic. As we examine works by Beatrix Potter, Margaret Wise Brown, Dr. Seuss, and Norton Juster, we see, though, that “simpler” has some quite specific implications for character, plot, theme, and style. In addition, children’s literature has a visual component absent from our understanding of adult literature. The richest children’s literature continues, like fairy tales and the Alice books, to offer adult readers, too, their own pleasures. Adult enjoyment of children’s literature opens the way, in turn, for fantastic adult fables, such as George Orwell’s Animal Farm.

Outline

I. Why have we come to associate the fantastic so strongly with children’s literature?
   A. Commercial children’s literature emerged with the idea of children as a distinct market. In the 18th century, children were still considered adults-in-training.
      1. In The Blue Boy (1770) by Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788), the painted subject, although a “boy,” has the haughty pose and expensive clothes of a wealthy, albeit small, man.
      2. In Charles Perrault’s (1628-1703) version of “Little Red Riding Hood” (1697), Red remains eaten and the moral warns “children...especially well bred young ladies” against “various kinds of wolves.”
      3. Even when the Grimm brothers collected tales that they knew were told to children, their books (1812-1822) were intended for adults.
   B. The power of the fantastic to teach adults was still accepted into the Romantic period, as we see with such cautionary novels as Frankenstein (1818). But as realism came to seem more fit for adults, as in Pride and Prejudice (1813), the fantastic was ever more relegated to supposedly uncritical children.
   C. Heinrich Hoffmann (1809-1894) wrote and illustrated Struwwelpeter (1845) as a new kind of children’s book. It was the most popular children’s book after Alice until the 20th century. Mark Twain translated it into English for his own children.
   D. As the Victorian period advanced, children of wealth did not work but were schooled. The privileged ones were allowed fantasies with more gentle morals.
      1. Alice in Wonderland (1865) was drafted for a real 7-year-old. Although it is playful and allows Alice ultimately to win, adult readers see its darker side, as when the Queen of Hearts shouts, “Off with her head!”
      2. The Tale of Peter Rabbit (1901) by Beatrix Potter (1866-1943) aimed to please a 5-year-old. Unlike the published Alice, it did not aim at adults. Small but disobedient Peter evades the dangerous Mr. McGregor. Back home, his mother does not scold Peter; she comforts him with chamomile tea. A child needn’t “think logically” to learn the moral.

II. Whether or not children think “logically,” they certainly can understand literature subtly.
   A. The classic Goodnight Moon (1947) by Margaret Wise Brown (1910-1952) shows a bunny protagonist in a room hung with pictures that make literary allusions.
      1. The cow jumps over the moon in one.
      2. In another, the “three bears” sit in a room with the jumping cow picture.
      3. The picture of a rabbit fishing for a bunny, rather than suggesting cannibalism, quotes an illustration (from Brown’s very popular The Runaway Bunny [1942]) of a mother rabbit trying to retrieve her child.
   B. The beloved books of Dr. Seuss (Theodor Seuss Geisel, 1904-1991) train the imagination. In If I Ran the Zoo (1950), words and pictures grow ever more fantastic. The child protagonist ultimately returns to reality but with the comforting, implicit moral that his imagined time will someday come.
   C. The wordplay in the much admired Phantom Tollbooth (1961) by Norton Juster (1929- ) is so clever that even adults can enjoy it. The moral, that education is good, whispers throughout the work rather than blaring at the end.
III. Literature today aimed primarily at children (as opposed to young adults) generally demonstrates the following features.

A. Characters: Typically, the hero is a child or animal; relationships are among children and/or animals and/or with a parent figure (such as Juster’s talking watchdog, Tock); and, unlike adults-only literature, children have full autonomy.

B. Plot: The plot is usually simple, often episodic, clearly goal-directed, motivated by a single emotion, and achieves a happy ending (Tolkien’s “consolation”).

C. Theme: The theme is simple, typically embodied in a single problem susceptible to a permanent, didactic solution. As with “Cinderella,” if adult issues of sex or society are relevant, they are not likely to be discussed explicitly.

D. Style: Children’s books, restricted in vocabulary, often use cute or periphrastic language. They can employ verse and nonsense thematically, as in Juster, or just for fun, as in The King Who Rained (1970) by Fred Gwynne (1926–1993).

E. Format: Format matters. Illustrations go where they belong and may even, as in Goodnight Moon, help tell the story. Dimensions (the Nutshell Library); font style, size, and color (Dr. Seuss); and even texture (Pat the Bunny [1940]) count.

IV. Adults, supposed to have outgrown children’s literature, still use it for four reasons.

A. Adults may enjoy it on its own terms, either as nostalgia or as discovery.

B. Some children’s books, such as Alice, are also adult books.

C. Some authors, such as Edward Gorey (1925–2000), use the forms of children’s literature to comment on children, as in his grim Gashlycrumb Tinies (1962).

D. Some authors use the simplicity allowed by adopting the forms of children’s literature to deal simplistically with the complex problems of the adult world, as in the political fable Animal Farm (1945) by George Orwell (1903–1950).

E. In short, children’s literature nurtures the fantastic for readers of all ages.

Essential Reading:
Brown, Margaret Wise. Goodnight Moon.
Hoffmann, Heinrich. Struwwelpeter.
Juster, Norton. The Phantom Tollbooth.

Supplementary Reading:
Gorey, Edward. Amphigorey.
Orwell, George. Animal Farm.

Questions to Consider:
1. What are the comparative strengths and weaknesses of books aimed primarily at children, such as Goodnight Moon, and those aimed at an audience of many ages, such as Alice in Wonderland?
2. Why should or should not adult books make the same integrated use of visuals that the best children’s books do?
Lecture Twelve
Postmodernism and the Fantastic

Scope: Each literary period relies on a characteristic understanding of Nature. Postmodernism takes Nature to be a phenomenological construct, which implies that Nature is a matter of perspective. In its extreme form, namely, true fantasy, the fantastic always problematizes perspective. Thus, Postmodern literature has a theoretical affinity for the fantastic. In Italo Calvino’s fantastic *Cosmicomics*, we see, using the analytic ideas of Northrop Frye, how Postmodernism develops its own myths. In Marge Piercy’s *Woman on the Edge of Time*, we see how Postmodernism calls into question individual perception. And in magical realism, which flows from the work of such writers as Jorge Luis Borges and includes Gabriel García Márquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and Laura Esquivel’s *Like Water for Chocolate*, we see how, as Calvino and Piercy had implied, Postmodernism offers a fantastic new framework for understanding ourselves in society.

Outline

I. Our aesthetic period is often called Postmodern. Postmodernism has a natural affinity for the fantastic.

A. What is Postmodernism?

1. One philosophical definition says that Postmodernism pursues “themes of ‘self-reflexivity,’ or the puzzles induced by allowing language to become the object of its own scrutiny in a kind of dizzying rhetorical regress” (*The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*). We find this in true fantasies, such as those by Lewis Carroll.

2. Another definition (U.S. State Dept.) says that Postmodernism is “characterized by open-endedness and collage. It questions the foundations of cultural and artistic forms through self-referential irony....” We find this in true fantasies, such as those by E. T. A. Hoffmann.


4. The Postmodern period, like other artistic periods, can be characterized by the dominant relation of humanity to Nature. Postmodernism takes Nature—including the physical world, society, and even the self—as a phenomenological construct, that is, as an intensional act of consciousness.

B. Individual sentences can show the convergence of Postmodernism and the fantastic.

1. Self-reflexivity: “This is one sentence I can never say.”

2. Unresolved structural ambiguity: “I walked down the street and turned into a drugstore.”

3. Reversals of the ground rules of the narrative world: “I feel more like I did when I came in here than I do now.”

II. Both Postmodernism and true fantasy problematize the world. Yet while the challenging play of Postmodernism may seem inherently destructive of many certainties, it can also be constructive.

A. We have seen that the fantastic is one key tool in artistic evolution. Northrop Frye (1912–1991) suggests how the evolution of literary forms can produce new myths.

B. Italo Calvino (1923–1985) exemplifies this fantastic myth-making in *Cosmicomics* (1965), a collection of his fantastic Postmodern stories.

III. Both Postmodernism and fantasy problematize individual perception. Many science fictions raise this issue because “science” is about “knowing.”


B. Understanding the splendid *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976) by Marge Piercy (1936–) depends on disentangling one basis for perception from another. For the protagonist, that makes all the difference—literally—in the world.

IV. Both Postmodernism and true fantasy, then, naturally problematize the relations between the world and the individual who perceives it.

A. Gabriel García Márquez (1928–), best known for *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967), is a touchstone author for so-called magical realism. “My most important problem was destroying the lines of demarcation that separate what seems real from what seems fantastic.”

1. García Márquez’s sprawling novel combines individual stories, cultural myths, and national and international politics.

2. *Magical realism* refers narrowly to the work of a group of Latin American writers who treat the magical as fully and calmly expected as part of the real. Key exemplars include Isabel Allende, Alejo Carpentier, and Julio Cortázar.

3. More broadly, magical realism, which includes a Postmodernist assault on previously stable markers of identity, such as race and nation, includes such non-Latinas as Mikhail Bulgakov, Salman Rushdie, and even Günter Grass.
B. Like Water for Chocolate (1989) by Laura Esquivel (1950– ), which has sold more than 3 million copies in 30 languages, is clearly both Postmodern and fantastic.

1. The heroine, Tita, cannot express her love except through her cooking. Magically, people eating her food are affected by her emotions.

2. Other magical moments include two spontaneous fires.

3. The structure of the book, which seems to be a mixture of novel, calendar, and cookbook, assaults our notions of genre propriety.

4. The characters’ actions and setting subtly embed them in Mexican national politics and international politics.

5. At the end, the book is also a family saga that asks us to think deeply about what makes us who we are and how we know who we are.

6. Thus, the fantastic, which once drove such culturally foundational works as the Odyssey, again drives narrative that is broadly powerful, artistically honored, and personally moving. As in this imaginative novel, the fantastic is at the center of our lives.

Essential Reading:
Esquivel, Laura. Like Water for Chocolate.

Supplementary Reading:
Calvino, Italo. Cosmicomics.
García Márquez, Gabriel. One Hundred Years of Solitude.

Questions to Consider:
1. In the context of a Postmodern fantastic work, what do we mean by “truth”?
2. In what ways, if at all, do you notice in your daily life that our era might well be called Postmodernist?
# Table of Contents

**Masterpieces of the Imaginative Mind:**
*Literature’s Most Fantastic Works*

## Part II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lecture</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thirteen</td>
<td>Defining Science Fiction</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourteen</td>
<td>Mary Shelley—Grandmother of Science Fiction</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifteen</td>
<td>Hawthorne, Poe, and the Eden Complex</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixteen</td>
<td>Jules Verne and the Robinsonade</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventeen</td>
<td>Wells—Industrialization of the Fantastic</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eighteen</td>
<td>The History of Utopia</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nineteen</td>
<td>Science Fiction and Religion</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twenty</td>
<td>Pulp Fiction, Bradbury, &amp; the American Myth</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twenty-One</td>
<td>Robert A. Heinlein—He Mapped the Future</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twenty-Two</td>
<td>Asimov and Clarke—Cousins in Utopia</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twenty-Three</td>
<td>Ursula K. Le Guin—Transhuman Anthropologist</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twenty-Four</td>
<td>Cyberpunk, Postmodernism, and Beyond</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Timeline</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glossary</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biographical Notes</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lecture Thirteen
Defining Science Fiction

Scope: George Lucas’s *Star Wars* (1977) begins “A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away.” Is this the “once upon a time” past of fairy tale or the space-faring future of science fiction? Given that “Cinderella” is for children and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is for adults, the answer matters. By some definitions, science fiction includes Plato’s *Republic* and Lucian of Samosata’s *Icaromenippus*. Certainly, works by Cyrano de Bergerac (17th century) and Jonathan Swift (18th century) have elements of science fiction. I define science fiction as the fantastic genre that is most important today, the one that claims plausibility against a background of science. This claim itself entails romantic adventure and intellectual excitement. The difference between most publisher-labeled fantasy and science fiction appears in comparing Dracula and Frankenstein’s monster. Frederic Brown provides a story stem that invites exploration of the true science fiction literary universe.

Outline

I. Science fiction is the branch of fantastic literature that seeks plausibility against a background of science. What do people think of it?
   A. Every week, news stories in medicine, warfare, communications, and business include some variation of the phrase “It’s not just science fiction anymore,” implying that a once silly fiction has finally become a legitimate fact.
   B. Despite this implication of silliness, the vast majority of the highest-grossing movies are fantastic, primarily science fiction. Clearly, this genre attracts us.
      1. George Lucas’s *Star Wars* (1977) begins “A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away.” Is this a fairy tale?
      2. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) by George Orwell is clearly science fiction, forward-looking even when read in the decades after its publication.
      3. *Star Wars* is both a fairy tale and science fiction.
   C. Because of this association with elements of fantastic children’s literature, high-minded readers often disparage science fiction.
      1. Thomas Disch (1940– ) claimed in *The Atlantic Monthly* that science fiction is literarily stunted and “best understood as a branch of children’s literature.” However, Disch’s own acclaimed science fiction and much children’s literature, such as *Alice in Wonderland*, is highly literary.
2. Sven Birkerts asserted in The New York Times that science fiction can never be real literature because it elevates ideas over character, but both his premises are wrong. *Frankenstein* (1818), the very first true science fiction novel, focuses more on character than on ideas, and such Nobel laureates as Sinclair Lewis and William Golding wrote science fiction.

D. Even comic and surreal “literature” is supposedly serious, whereas a boldly innovative idea, if fantastic, is often dismissed as “just science fiction.”

E. Many readers have told me that such works as *The Tempest*, *Gulliver’s Travels*, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court*, and *Brave New World* can’t be science fiction because they’re good. This self-fulfilling judgment has diverted from science fiction the attention it deserves.

II. *Science* comes from the Latin word meaning “knowledge.” Science fiction did not begin with the modern world.

A. Plato (c. 429–347 B.C.E.) often considered how the application of intellect can change the conditions of human life and how those changed conditions will affect people. Thus, he was a proto-science fiction writer.

1. *The Republic* is the first great utopian work, a fantastic exercise in political science. Its descendants include *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

2. *Phaedrus* reports the belief that the new technology of writing should be shunned because it will cripple human memory.

B. The hero of *Icaromenippus* (c. 160) by Lucian of Samosata (c. 120–180 C.E.) flies to the Moon, whence his vantage allows him to settle scientific disputes and offer extravagant social critique. Dramatic displacement—in technology, space, time, or social conditions—characterizes science fiction.

C. Cyrano de Bergerac (1619–1655) in *Other Worlds* (1657) and Voltaire (1694–1778) in *Micromegas* (1752) also used science fictional displacement for satire.

D. “The Voyage to Laputa” in *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726) by Jonathan Swift (1667–1745) is an early, great science fiction satirizing science and scientists.

E. We will discuss Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818), in every way science fiction, in the next lecture.

III. How should we define science fiction?

A. “Science fiction is what you find on the shelves in the library marked science fiction” (George Hay, British “futurologist”).

1. Librarians shelve to reflect and construct expectations. Hence, many works, such as Swift’s, will not be called science fiction, even if they are.

2. Publishers often lump Asimov with Tolkien but never with Golding.

3. By comparing *Frankenstein* with *Dracula*, we can see how science fiction differs from other fantastic literature mistakenly associated with it.

B. Perhaps in frustration, Brian Aldiss said simply, “Science fiction doesn’t exist.”

C. A Wellsian definition suggests that a science fiction makes one fantastic assumption and extrapolates from it. *The Time Machine* (1895) exemplifies this.

1. What does extrapolate mean intellectually and aesthetically?

2. Does Wells really submit to this practice himself?

D. My prototypical definition highlights three focal qualities of science fiction.

1. It offers the fantastic made plausible against a background of science. Roger Zelazny’s “mutie shepherd” exemplifies this.

2. It offers high adventure. The opening of E. E. “Doc” Smith’s *The Skylark of Space* (1928) exemplifies this.

3. It offers intellectual—as opposed to merely emotional—excitement. Frederic Brown’s famous puzzle of a story stem (1953) exemplifies this.

4. These characteristics—the fantastic made plausible against a background of science, high adventure, and intellectual excitement—characterize the best science fiction, the works we will discuss.

Essential Reading:
Rabkin, Eric S. *Science Fiction: A Historical Anthology*.

Supplementary Reading:
Alkon, Paul. *Science Fiction Before 1900*.
Landon, Brooks. *Science Fiction After 1900: From the Steam Man to the Stars*.

Questions to Consider:
1. Should the definition of an artistic genre include a value judgment about the genre, or should any given genre hypothetically have both good and bad examples?
2. In what ways might it matter if we do or do not include a given work (say, Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*) within a genre (say, science fiction)?

Lecture Fourteen

Mary Shelley—Grandmother of Science Fiction

Scope: Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus* (1818) is the first fully achieved science fiction novel. An exemplar of the Romantic movement, it exploits both the legend of the Golem and the tradition of Faust. It reflects the philosophic struggles with valorizing the ego that go back to classical myth and with the destabilizing possibilities of new knowledge that go back to the story of the Fall from Eden. In addition, *Frankenstein* offers a structural innovation within the narrower tradition of Gothicism, the plausibility-seeking preface, that, in a sense, creates modern science fiction. Told as a set of complexly nested narratives, *Frankenstein* constantly explores the relationship between the individual and society. Science is not the subject of the novel but its motive. Its emblem, the monster, does not represent science but the perversion of the natural by the egotistical quest for knowledge.

Outline

I. Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley (1797–1851) was only 19 when she finished writing *Frankenstein* (5/1817; published 3/1818).
   A. Frankenstein’s monster is an icon for science beyond human control. Ironically, the word itself has also escaped control: Mary Shelley called her experimenting protagonist, “the Modern Prometheus,” *Frankenstein*; the monster gets no name.
   B. In scores of films, starting in 1910, Frankenstein’s monster has stalked the world.
      1. After the 1931 classic with Boris Karloff as the monster and Colin Clive as his creator, the popular image is of “Doctor” or “Baron” Frankenstein.
      2. The monster becomes an implacably brutal, murderous creature.
      3. At the film’s climax, man and monster are attacked by vengeful villagers swirling up the mountain to destroy the castle and its inhabitants.
   C. The novel, of course, is quite different.
      1. Victor Frankenstein is an egotistical undergraduate who tells himself he would be Prometheus but shuns the humanity he claims to want to help.
      2. The innately noble monster is the most gifted character in the book.
      3. There are no villagers, yet the mythic power of the story resonates as well with its audience in 1931 as it did in 1818.
II. *Frankenstein*, the essential modern myth, grew out of the thrilling heart of Romanticism.

A. In mid-June 1816, outside Geneva, Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822), Mary Shelley, Lord Byron (1788–1824), Claire Clairmont (1798–1879), and J. W. Polidori (1795–1821) challenged each other one evening to write “ghost stories.”

B. In multiple senses of the term, these people lived Romantic lives.
   1. Percy was living with Mary, but his wife in England was Harriet, who then committed suicide. Byron was living with Claire, but his wife in England was Anne, who then took a lover.
   2. William Godwin, Mary’s father, was a famous advocate of free love. Mary Wollstonecraft, who died soon after Mary’s birth, was a famous feminist. Godwin raised his wife’s illegitimate first child, Fanny Imlay, who also may have been pregnant at the time of her suicide, by Percy.
   3. Byron published his failed vampire tale as “Fragment of a Story” (1819).
   4. Polidori, although unacknowledged in the prefaces to *Frankenstein*, wrote, perhaps using Byron’s discarded materials, the first vampire novel in English, *The Vampyre* (1819), starring Lord Ruthven, a caricature of Byron.
   5. *Frankenstein* was Mary’s response to that June challenge.

C. Although *Frankenstein* is Romantic, it draws on many traditions.
   1. The classic myths of Prometheus and Hyperborea motivate, respectively, Victor and Robert Walton, the explorer who transmits Victor’s story.
   2. Victor is, in many ways, a version of Faust, a legendary and literary character based on a real 16th-century German conjurer.
   3. The monster recalls the 17th-century Jewish legend of the Golem.
   4. *Paradise Lost* (1667) by John Milton (1608–1674) provides the book’s epigraph and a third of the monster’s reading list.
   5. The plot recalls “Beauty and the Beast,” a version of which had been published by Claire’s mother.

III. *Frankenstein* is the first fully formed novel in the new genre of science fiction.

A. Both the self-education of Victor and the “Noble Savage” monster recall the Romanticism of Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), as in *Emile* (1762).

B. Gothicism, a variety of Romanticism, begins with such early works as “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard” (1751) by Thomas Gray (1716–1771) but reaches full form in *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) by Horace Walpole (1717–1797).
   1. Its subtitle, *A Gothic Story*, explicitly refers to the story’s setting.

IV. How can we understand this thematically crucial novel more deeply?

A. The words used for Victor’s nameless creation, repeatedly and sometimes within half a page, are revelatory: wretched, miserable creature, monster, fiend, enemy.

B. The epistolary form of the novel reinforces the insight of Victor’s father that community is crucial for guiding everyone, even discoverers.

C. Community plays out in many ways: filial relations, shipmates, friends, spouses. Victor is defined against others in each of these roles, which becomes dramatically clearer when we view him and his creature as doppelgängers.

D. The novel unfolds as a set of nested narrations with familial betrayal at its center.

E. The novel warns not against science but against science in the hands of an egotist alienated from the restraining wisdom of community. To test the relevance of this admonition, read today’s newspaper.

Essential Reading:
Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein*.

Supplementary Reading:
Marlowe, Christopher. *Doctor Faustus*.

Questions to Consider:
1. To what extent and in what ways is *Frankenstein* relevant to today’s world?
2. In what ways, if any, might *Frankenstein* reflect its composition by a teenage mother rather than, say, a middle-aged, unmarried man?
Scope: In such stories as “Rappaccini’s Daughter” and “Dr. Heidegger’s Experiment,” Nathaniel Hawthorne uses six key elements (of imagery, generic background, ideology, character, narrative structure, and symbolic structure) that together, form what I call the Eden complex. This is a phenomenological complex akin to the Prometheus complex that Gaston Bachelard explicates, with fire simultaneously embodying knowledge and life, as well as overwhelming passion and destruction. In many ways, the Eden complex provides the framework for all modern science fiction. Written within that framework, “The Artist of the Beautiful” suggests the need to renounce egotism in our pursuit of science to avoid tragedy. Edgar Allan Poe’s science fictions, such as “Descent into the Maelstrom,” “The Pit and the Pendulum,” and “The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar,” show the adaptability of the Eden complex and the ultimate powerlessness of the isolated ego.

Outline

I. America’s most famous early writers often produced science fiction.
   A. Elsie Venner (1861) by Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr. (1809–1894), uses a prenatal snakebite to explore scientifically the doctrine of Original Sin.
   B. In A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court (1889), Mark Twain (1835–1910) uses unexplained time travel to explore comically the uses of science.
   C. The great American pioneers, however, were Poe and Hawthorne.

II. Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804–1864) is a key figure in American literature.
   A. Some of his best known novels, including The Scarlet Letter (1850) and The House of Seven Gables (1851), rely on the fantastic and show a strong interest in science.
   B. His most famous short stories are often very much science fiction.
      2. In “Rappaccini’s Daughter” (1844), love of father, daughter, and lover are twisted by love of science in a modern inversion of Rapunzel.
      3. The title character of “Dr. Heidegger’s Experiment” (1837) reveals how too great a love of science can twist a man’s development into old age.

III. The common elements in these stories define a phenomenon I call the Eden complex.
   A. What is a phenomenological complex?
      1. It is not a psychological complex, as in Freud’s Oedipus complex, that dominates the character of a person.
   B. The Eden complex has six constituent elements, all visible in Hawthorne’s stories.
      1. Garden imagery, often from the story of the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:15–3:24), is thematically significant.
      2. Fairy tale aesthetics often apply. We find strong, simple colors; arbitrary ground rules; and indulgence in the illusion of central position.
      3. Natural limits are assumed, as in the phrase, “There are some things man was not meant to know.”
      4. A scientist, or some other intellectual striver, seeks to be god or godlike.
      5. The dramatic structures are Oedipal, although they may resolve themselves either into Oedipal tragedies or Oedipal comedies.
      6. The symbol system relies on clear dichotomies: nature versus science, animate versus mechanical, spirit versus machine, spirit versus flesh, slave versus master, female versus male, heart versus head, and so on. The deployment of these simple dichotomies in novel ways can produce complex effects, as in the fatal conflict between Aylmer’s elixir and his wife’s birthmark (“a fairy sign”).

IV. Edgar Allan Poe wrote stories in a style that was more scientific than Hawthorne’s, yet his works do not seem at first glance to fulfill the Eden complex.
   A. Hawthorne wrote with a Romantic style. Poe often adopted the rhetoric of science, a discourse developed in the late 17th century to avoid having scientists conflict with the church. The rhetoric of science has four key traits.
      1. Facts are reported objectively rather than subjectively.
      2. Verbs forms are often passive rather than active.
      3. Key terms are often Latin or Latinate rather than English or Germanic.
4. Whenever possible, numbers are used.

B. Poe’s “The Descent into the Maelstrom” (1841) overtly concerns fear and the use of science to save oneself.

C. “The Pit and the Pendulum” (1843) overtly concerns the fear and salvation of religion.

D. “The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar” (1845) overtly concerns the conflict between scientific man and (Mother) Nature.

E. If we apply the Eden complex to these stories, their meanings shift and deepen. Each is missing a key female figure to sustain the Oedipal dramatic structure, but each has a covert representation of the female.

1. In “Maelstrom,” the whirlpool itself is symbolically the missing woman. Her attraction had been economic but broke apart a family.

2. In “Pendulum,” the pit is symbolically female. Its terror suggests characteristics of both the narrator and religion.

3. In “Valdemar,” the curtained four-poster is symbolically female, and the outcome of the story suggests the difficulties some have in embracing life.

V. What can we infer from the analyses of these stories in terms of the Eden complex?

A. America, which has a long tradition of seeing itself as an Eden in which one can be re-formed, is culturally suited for science fiction.

B. We can hypothesize that much science fiction employs the Eden complex. Further study supports this hypothesis.

C. Finally, if you can spot the elements of the Eden complex, you can often discover a quick route into a deep understanding of the power of a science fiction story.

Essential Reading:
Hawthorne, Nathaniel. Selected Short Stories of Nathaniel Hawthorne.
Poe, Edgar Allan. The Portable Poe.

Supplementary Reading:
Twain, Mark. A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court.

Questions to Consider:
1. With the works of which writer, Hawthorne or Poe, do you feel more comfortable, and what does this reflect about you as a reader?
2. In what ways does and does not America today still seem like an apt country to produce works that reflect the Eden complex?
3. The “adventure” of the three cartographers is primarily voyeuristic.

E. In 1868, Verne bought a boat, his “floating study,” the St. Michel, which mainly stayed tethered in the Seine.

F. *Around the World in Eighty Days* (1873) became Verne’s most popular novel.

1. Phileas Fogg, with his faithful servant Passepartout, saves a maiden, tames the American West, and wins a bet.

2. Verne bought the St. Michel II in 1873. He became the first science fiction author ever to live—and, indeed, live well—solely by his pen.

3. But in a sense, this book was barely science fiction. In reality, Nellie Bly went around the world in 72 days, 6 hours, 11 minutes (1889–1890).

II. *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* (1870) epitomizes Verne’s true science fiction.

A. The narrator, Professor Aronnax; his faithful servant, Conseil; and a Canadian harpooner, Ned Land, join an international expedition sent in response to mysterious attacks on commercial shipping. Soon, they become passengers on the astonishing submarine *Nautilus* under Captain Nemo, a polymath, misanthrope, and idealist who takes them willy-nilly on a fantastic world tour.

B. Verne’s satire teases scientists and servants. Both Aronnax and Conseil fail to see the earthy wisdom offered by Ned Land.

C. Verne’s—and the book’s—enthusiasm for science more than withstands the satire; because Nemo’s library and ship are wonders, we come to like Aronnax for his love of knowledge, and the plot itself allows us the pleasures of discovery.

D. Yet this book has often been misinterpreted.

1. Modern readers often miss the satire, as when Conseil and Ned discuss taxonomy.

2. The idea that Verne wrote mainly for children comes from a mistaken understanding of Hetzel’s periodical.

3. The misguided praise for Verne as predictive reflects historical ignorance, for example, of the famous Confederate submarine *Hunley*.

III. Verne’s “voyages extraordinaires” fall into a larger category of works called *Robinsonades*.

A. The hero of *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) by Daniel Defoe (1660–1731) is stranded on an island. Beyond survival, he strives to Europeanize his island.

B. His famous encounter with a native leads to him enslaving and forcibly “civilizing” the man by using firearms, language, and religion. As Stanislaw Lem wrote, “...to become a true Robinson...the world, exactly as it is found, must be put to rights.”

IV. Verne always admired America, perhaps because it was “putting to rights” a whole continent and more. Verne made America prominent in his novels.

A. *From the Earth to the Moon* (1865) features both homage to Poe and a Moon shot from what will, in reality, become Cape Canaveral.

B. *Around the World in Eighty Days* features a Native American maiden saved by the Europeans.

C. The ship sent to save the world in *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* is the *Abraham Lincoln* under Commander Farragut, a hero of the U.S. Civil War.

D. In *The Mysterious Island* (1875), Northern prisoners who have escaped by balloon from a Confederate prison to an island are helped by a secretive Captain Nemo.

E. *The Begum’s Millions* (1879) recounts a utopian conflict between two ideal cities, Stahlstadt and Frankville, newly built in the Olympic Mountains.

F. Verne’s work, if not the man, traveled and imposed itself everywhere. After Agatha Christie, he is the most translated author in history. *Around the World in Eighty Days* was the first Western novel translated into Japanese. And the message his work carries is of teasing, stereotypical satire; enthusiasm for science; and, often, the wonder of America.

**Essential Reading:**
Verne, Jules. *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*.

**Supplementary Reading:**
Defoe, Daniel. *Robinson Crusoe*.


**Questions to Consider:**
1. How does it affect your reading of a Verne novel to think of it as aimed at children rather than at adults?

2. What are the costs and benefits of a Verne-like attitude toward the uses of science and technology in the world?
Lecture Seventeen
Wells—Industrialization of the Fantastic

Scope: By virtue of his education, particularly as laboratory assistant to Charles Darwin’s great disciple T. H. Huxley, H. G. Wells may have been the first science fiction writer truly versed in science. Where Verne tended to extol marvelous inventions and draw broad social satire, Wells offered subtle parables of political and philosophical criticism. He understood the role of fundamental change—including invention, chance, and popular ideology—in driving social evolution. *The Time Machine*, based on a radically new science fictional idea, places a far-future utopian adventure within both Victorian and eschatological frames in order to question assumptions about social class and the place of humanity. *The War of the Worlds*, the classic invasion tale, questions assumptions about British imperialism and the place of humanity. By positing what has never existed, then logically extrapolating broad patterns of social consequence, Wells challenged his readers to change themselves.

Outline

I. Jules Verne and H. G. Wells together reflect the dominant attitudes toward science in science fiction.
   A. Donald Wollheim suggested dividing all science fiction into four categories: imaginary voyages, future predictions, remarkable inventions, and social satire.
   B. Verne’s science fiction usually involves imaginary voyages and sometimes inventions. Its satire embraces stereotypes and, in that sense, is less than fully probing.
   C. Wells’s science fiction may involve an imaginary voyage or a prediction, but it always involves a truly remarkable invention and probing social critique.
   D. Verne’s *Dr. Ox’s Experiment* (1872) and Wells’s *The Food of the Gods* (1904) illustrate this contrast. While Verne ultimately embraces science, no matter what its uses, Wells, no matter what the science, ultimately wonders how and by whom it will be embraced.

II. After seven years and as many drafts, Wells’s first novel, *The Time Machine* (1895), made him an instant celebrity.
   A. *The Chronic Argonauts* (1888), despite its radically innovative time machine, had little impact. Its descendant, however, argued elegantly for the social integration of the owning and working classes.

   B. In its current form, *The Time Machine*, like *Frankenstein*, is a nested narrative.
      1. The explanatory first chapter is set in Victorian England.
      2. Most people remember the world of the year 802,701, in which, through long evolution, humanity has split into two distinct races, the Eloi above ground and the Morlocks below.
      3. Many people forget that the Time Traveler visits a beach in the year 30,000,000 where creatures of uncertain ancestry struggle beneath a low, dull, motionless Sun.

   C. The Time Traveler, like all Wells’s scientists, although accomplished, is uncritically mistaken.
      1. He initially misjudges the scene in 802,701. Ultimately, however, by attending to more evidence, he corrects his vision.
      2. Both mistake and correction reflect Darwinian evolutionary theory.

   D. Although the book reads easily, it is a subtle parable that rewards attention.
      1. The statue of the Sphinx suggests mythic backgrounds.
      2. The names of the creatures—Eloi and Morlocks—allude to the Bible.
      3. The occasional scientific details, such as the mention of the Earth’s precession, have symbolic and thematic implications.

   E. The ending, in which the Victorian narrator reflects on the Time Traveler’s tale, forces us to think and, perhaps, to act.
      1. Like all nested narratives, this one is at least in part about the education of the outermost narrator.
      2. We, even further removed, must decide if Wells’s parable will influence how we act in our world.

III. *The War of the Worlds* (1898), another deceptively simple parable, most obviously criticizes British imperialism.
   A. The events are simple: Something huge crashes into the English countryside; irresistible war machines emerge; they march across the landscape swinging their death-dealing heat rays as they advance on London, but ultimately, they collapse, their Martian drivers killed by Earthly germs.

   B. The story is told with Wells’s characteristic style.
      1. Astronomical changes of scale make everything dramatic.
      2. Subtle allusions, in this case often to the Bible, enrich the work.
      3. Sudden attention to a human detail against the backdrop of a fantastic world brings themes home, as with the Curate, the Artilleryman, and the narrator himself. The Martians are a critique not only of British imperialism but of the industrialization that makes it possible.
4. The ending, as with *The Time Machine*, asks us what we will do.

IV. Wells is a pivotal figure in the development of fantastic literature.

A. All Wells’s science fictions employ the constituents of the Eden complex but in differing ways and with differing emphases.

B. *The Invisible Man* could have borrowed the cloak of invisibility from the Grimms’ “King of the Golden Mountain.” *The Island of Doctor Moreau* seems filled with talking animals. Each work, like a fairy tale, is set in a single era. Each focuses on an aggressively active, individualized title character.

C. *The Time Machine*, with its obtrusive garden imagery, and *The War of the Worlds*, with its critique of godlike scientists, also ask us to see where we came from and where we might go. The focal individuals here have little impact in their worlds.

D. Wells’s education began as a taker of standardized exams. Then, he served as lab assistant to T. H. Huxley, Darwin’s great disciple. He came to appreciate pattern. In *Experiment in Autobiography* (1934), reflecting on his work as a journalist, essayist, playwright, fiction and nonfiction writer, Wells said that he was, at bottom, a teacher. By writing fictions that ask each and all of us to consider the effects of broad social forces, including science, and by mass producing those fictions, Wells aimed to change us and improve the world.

Essential Reading:
Wells, H. G. *The Time Machine*.
Wells, H. G. *The War of the Worlds*.

Supplementary Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. In Wells’s hands, how effective is the fantastic as a political tool?
2. In Wells’s hands, how effective is the fantastic as a philosophical tool?

---

Lecture Eighteen
The History of Utopia

Scope: If one considers political science as the scientific background against which the fantastic claims plausibility, utopian fiction is the first tributary of the river of science fiction. By examining key works, such as Plato’s *Republic*, Thomas More’s *Utopia*, Francis Bacon’s *New Atlantis*, Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*, Samuel Butler’s *Erewhon*, Edward Bellamy’s *Looking Backward*, and William Morris’s *News from Nowhere*, we can see that utopianism has developed in four large historic movements corresponding to changing conditions of material production and religious belief. In the 20th century, the grim archetypal utopia is Yevgeny Zamyatin’s *We*, a critique not only of the Soviet state but of the relentless mechanization of society. Like all fictional utopias, it is less a practical blueprint than a philosophical challenge. Artistically, that challenge was engaged by such works as Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*, George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and Anthony Burgess’s *A Clockwork Orange*.

Outline

I. Utopian works focus on the creation and maintenance of stable social systems. Usually, they are science fictions claiming plausibility against the background of political science.

A. Thomas More (1478–1535) invented the word *Utopia* for the title and island setting of his philosophical novel (1516). More’s *Utopia* is a Christian communitarian society.

1. Readers who find Utopia admirable cite such details as its personal freedom and general equality. Those who find it satiric cite such details as its uses of gold for shackles and chamber pots and its ironic foreign policy.

2. *Utopia* puns on the Greek *eu-topos*, meaning “good place,” and *ou-topos*, meaning “no place,” which sound alike in English.

B. Today we use *dystopia*, from the Greek for “bad place,” for an undesirable, stable society and *utopia* either to mean “eutopia” or the whole category of good, bad, and ambiguous societies. For clarity, I’ll use *eutopia* for good societies, *dystopia* for bad ones, and *utopia* for the collectivity and for ambiguous ones, which I think is the case for More’s original model.

II. Once More named the genre, its ancient roots were clear. Key historical examples show how utopian works of literature evolved, especially as commentaries on their own societies.
A. In the ancient world, Plato's Republic (c. 380 B.C.E.) is famous for its banishment of poets and rule by "guardians" who are "philosopher-kings" chosen, if need be, by a "necessary lie." Much mundane work is done by slaves.

B. In the Renaissance, the Holy Universal Republic in Friar Tommaso Campanella's The City of the Sun (1602) abolished slavery and esteemed work. Francis Bacon's New Atlantis (1627) is an island ruled by a long line of scientist-kings.

C. In the Industrial Revolution, Edward Bellamy's Looking Backward (1888) used an elaborate market to assign labor fairly and an Industrial Army to compensate for market inadequacies. William Morris's anarchic News from Nowhere (1890) responded to what he viewed as the enslavement of Bellamy's system.

D. In the post-industrial world, as in Karel Capek's R.U.R. (1920), which gave the world the word robot, we ask if technology will be our slave or our master.

III. Some issues are common to most utopian writing.

A. Is the imagined society a dystopia, an eutopia, or a utopia?
   1. Aristophanes's Clouds (c. 423 B.C.E.), satirizing Plato's Academy, was clearly a dystopia.
   2. Valentin Andreae's Christianopolis (1619), modeled on John Calvin's Geneva, was clearly an eutopia in its author's mind.
   3. Thomas Hobbes's Leviathan (1652), asserting the need for absolute monarchy to prevent a life "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" in the absence of "natural rights," clearly a utopia, perhaps replied to More.

B. Is the imagined society authoritarian or anti-authoritarian? Plato gives us an authoritarian eutopia, while Swift, in "The Voyage to Laputa," gives us an authoritarian dystopia.

C. How will the imagined society produce the economic wherewithal to sustain life?
   1. In the ancient world, the economy could rest on slavery.
   2. In the Christian Renaissance, the favored mechanism was the regularization of work.
   3. In the Industrial Revolution, the economy was based either on machines or, if need be, on their rejection. Indeed, from the beginning of the 19th century, every utopian author had to decide if the imagined society would embrace or restrain technology. Either choice may yield a utopia, an eutopia, or a dystopia.
   4. In the post-industrial world, the economy is often based on humans as machines. Naturally, this suggests that utopian fiction has become largely dystopian.

D. Will the imagined society extrapolate a feature of ours (such as government control in Aldous Huxley's Brave New World [1932] and George Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four [1949]) or reverse one (as with the women rulers of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's Herland [1915])?

IV. Perhaps the greatest dystopian work is We (1920) by Yevgeny Zamyatin (1884–1937). The first book officially banned by the Soviet Union, We inspired Orwell and Huxley.

A. The plot of We proceeds on two levels.
   1. The overt political plot focuses on a male engineer and a female rebel who induces him to turn his hand against a controlling state.
   2. The covert psychological plot focuses on the engineer, our narrator, struggling to be a good citizen of this mechanized One State even as his unique impulses grow.

B. The novel brilliantly combines the romantic with the mechanical.
   1. Instead of names, people have numbers that fit them into the social machinery.
   2. Lives are fully regulated, as by a Table of Hours and a Lex Sexualis.
   3. The style (for example, "L = f(D), love is a function of death") balances the romantic and the mechanic in ways that are both tragic and comic.
   4. The insights of the book, for example, about the symbolic value of knives, force us to think about power in general.
   5. The imagery of mouth, teeth, and knives makes the work universal.

C. The tragicomic ending comments on happiness based on science or on religion.

Essential Reading:
Zamyatin, Yevgeny. We.

Supplementary Reading:
More, Thomas. Utopia.

Questions to Consider:
1. What are the relations between science and religion in utopian fiction?
2. What are the social uses of utopian fiction?
Lecture Nineteen
Science Fiction and Religion

Scope: Mary Shelley quoted John Milton's *Paradise Lost* for *Frankenstein*'s epigraph. As we see in the Eden complex, a scientist striving to be godlike always prompts moral issues like those we associate with religion. Shelley in *Frankenstein* and Wells in such works as *The War of the Worlds* and "The Star" used religious allusion to generalize their thematic moral concerns. Olaf Stapledon, an admirer of Wells, genuinely spiritual but in no orthodox way religious, wrote the seminal scripture of science fiction in *Star Maker*. Young Arthur C. Clarke, later author of the classic parable "The Star," was moved by both Wells and Stapledon. Few science fiction works, however, uphold not only the moral but the canonical aspects of religion. The most religiously important of those is C. S. Lewis's Space trilogy, but the most lasting in literary impact is Walter Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz*.

Outline

I. There is a natural resonance between science fiction and religion, as in Zamyatin's *We*.
   A. Science and religion both aim to ameliorate human life, through explanation, instruction, or promise. The epigraph to *Frankenstein*, drawn from *Paradise Lost*, helps us see how such amelioration is often problematic.
   B. The Eden complex naturally echoes this resonance, especially in the constituent elements of natural limits and disobedience. Verne's heroic Nemo is a man without a country.
   C. Both science, with space, and religion, with heaven, rhetorically exploit astronomical contrasts of scale. Psalm 114 is echoed in the stylistic strategy of the very first paragraph of Wells's *The War of the Worlds*.
   D. But science and religion may conflict because they offer different ways of knowing based on different notions of authority, as Arthur C. Clarke (1917– ) dramatizes in "The Nine Billion Names of God" (1953).

II. Science fiction can use religion allusively to indicate the weight of the moral issues of the fiction.
   A. Shelley uses both quotation and subtler allusion to connect her modern story with Milton.
   B. Wells, too, uses both quotation and allusion.
      1. In *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, "The Law" is a key criticism of religion as an instrument of imperialism.

III. Science fiction can use religion to make a fundamentally spiritual argument, although one not necessarily tied to the practice or institutions of any particular religion.
   A. Arthur C. Clarke's "The Star" (1955) does this, in part replying to Wells.
   B. *Star Maker* (1937) by Olaf Stapledon (1886–1950) has been called the "great grey holy book of science fiction" by Brian Aldiss.
      1. The nameless protagonist becomes a "disembodied viewpoint" who journeys over billions and billions of years, expanding as he (they? it?) learns from ever more fantastic life forms.
      2. The seed of the entire journey is subtly and poetically visible in the opening pages, still on Earth, discussing marriage and insight and alluding to *The Divine Comedy* of Dante Alighieri (1265–1321).
      3. Each trip, like that to the Other Earth, helps the narrator grow until he can race off and begin again.
      4. The key mundane fact is the utopian symbiosis of the arachnoids and ichthyoids.
      5. The key spiritual fact is the nature of Star Maker, confronted at "[t]he supreme moment of the cosmos."
      6. The return to Earth focuses this astonishing epic on the theme of "individual in community," both in personal practice and as a way to meet the world's political crises.

IV. Science fiction can use religion to make a fundamentally religious argument, although this is rare.
   A. C. S. Lewis's Space trilogy, although full of mystic beings inspired by the Gnostic *A Voyage to Arcturus* (1920) by David Lindsay (1876–1945), metaphorically embodies doctrinally orthodox Christianity.
      1. Lewis, although an Anglican, clearly sympathized with his friend Tolkien's Roman Catholicism.
      2. *Out of the Silent Planet* (1938), *Perelandra* (1943), and *That Hideous Strength* (1945) tell the story of wounded Dr. Ransom, who is hounded by Professor Weston and dies for us. The whole is too doctrinaire to appeal to most science fiction readers who do not happen to share its ideology.

1. The story, set 600, 1,200, and 1,800 years after a global atomic holocaust, tells of the rebuilding of civilization, including religion and science, until the coming of another “Flame Deluge.”
2. The driving force for historical cyclicism seems to be the biblical “conflict of Martha and Mary.”
3. The book uses liturgical languages to bind each section and link them together.
4. Hidden at the center of the book, we find an Old Testament promise.
5. The book has a triple ending, each branch of which offers a Christian consolation.

**Essential Reading:**
Miller, Walter M. *A Canticle for Leibowitz.*

**Supplementary Reading:**

Stapledon, Olaf. *Star Maker,* in *Last and First Men and Star Maker: Two Science Fiction Novels.*

**Questions to Consider:**
1. Is imagination the same when it functions in the fields of science, science fiction, and religion?
2. What are the consequences of presenting religious questions in the form of adventure stories?

---

**Lecture Twenty**

**Pulp Fiction, Bradbury, & the American Myth**

**Scope:** After World War II, global science fiction came under American hegemony. Besides a handful of literary science fiction writers, America had a long tradition of pulp fiction, ephemeral writing aimed at the broadest market. Such works as *Frank Reade and His Steam Man of the Plains* adopted unquestioningly the myth of the American West and popular social prejudices. More thoughtful pulp writers, such as Edgar Rice Burroughs, remade the Western into anthropological science fiction set on Mars, Venus, and unexplored continents. Hugo Gernsback, an enterprising immigrant, in 1926 founded the first science fiction magazine and named the field. Later editors, such as John W. Campbell, Jr., helped guide the field, but when the conditions of popular fiction production and consumption suddenly changed in the 1950s, most magazines died. Ray Bradbury’s classic composite novel, *The Martian Chronicles,* bridges the demotic, often short-form pulp science fiction and the subtler novels that followed.

**Outline**

1. After World War II, American writing dominated world science fiction because of America’s unique economic strength and natural cultural association with science fiction.

   A. In addition to comparatively high-culture science fiction authors, such as Hawthorne, Poe, and Twain, the United States had a long tradition of science fiction pulp literature.
      1. Pulp literature, named for the cheap paper used, is designed to be ephemeral, a commodity mass-produced and mass-consumed.
      2. It aims intellectually at the lowest common denominator of reader.
      3. Because of these two factors, it naturally indulges in stereotypes.
      4. *Frank Reade and His Steam Man of the Plains* (1878) by “Noname” embraces technology, prejudicial stereotyping, and the American myth.

   B. The American myth is unique among national literatures.
      1. Across a frontier, we associated the East with cities, law, and families; the West, with open space, individual survival skills, and men.
      2. In the American myth, moving across the frontier from East to West allows the possibility of remaking oneself and of moral redemption.
      3. The archetypal drama involves a conflict between an in-group (town, ranch, wagon train) and an out-group (drunken ranchers,
outlaws, Indians). The in-group is a proxy for the East; the out-group, for the West.

4. A lone hero who shares the values of the East and the survival skills of the West settles the conflict in favor of the in-group, usually by violence.

5. For the sake of the in-group, the hero, now the most dangerous character, either hangs up his guns (the Virginian) or rides off (the Lone Ranger).

6. Thus, inevitably, the frontier moves west, bringing civilization but shrinking the opportunity for direct, individual, redemptive action.

C. Edgar Rice Burroughs (1875–1950), known to millions as ERB, created science fictions that were captivating costume Westerns.

1. ERB became the first individual media empire.

2. His science fiction series include Mars (11 books), Tarzan (24), Pellucidar (6), Caspak (3), the Moon (2), and Venus (5), for a total of 51 books.

3. The very first, *A Princess of Mars* (1912, originally in *All-Story*), shows all the best and some of the worst features of pulp science fiction.

II. Science fiction was significantly shaped by a handful of influential editors.


2. He published the first science fiction magazine, *Amazing Stories*, in April 1926, and (almost) gave the field a name: “scientifiction.”

3. His letter columns created modern fandom.

B. John W. Campbell, Jr. (1910–1971), took over *Astounding* in 1937. By 1940, he was publishing many of the new generation of great writers, including Heinlein.

III. The shifts in material culture in the 1950s profoundly reshaped all periodical fiction.

A. The American News Company, the only national distributor of periodicals, had risen to prominence during the Civil War. In the 1950s, it was dismantled for the value of its real estate.

1. No comparable distribution channel ever replaced it.

2. There were 38 science fiction magazines in 1949. By 1959, there were 4.

B. At the same time, Ian and Betty Ballantine began publishing original paperbacks.

1. Writers and editors turned to these paperback books, with their longer shelf lives, to augment the diminishing short story market.

2. First came anthologies, then “fix-ups” that wove previously published stories into novels. Campbell’s protégé A. E. van Vogt was expert at this.

3. By 1960, the original novel had replaced the short story as the dominant mode of science fiction production. These novels, unlike their pulp predecessors, were expected to compete with hardbacks, not with newspapers, and thus, were not rushed out or issued primarily in series. Within this more ample and deliberate scope, popular American science fiction steadily increased in literary quality.


A. The book, many chapters of which were previously published in magazines, retells key episodes in the exploration and colonization of Mars by Earthmen.

B. The book is a fairy tale with a deeply lyrical style, as we see in the “Green Morning” chapter.

C. Unlike most technology-driven Earthmen, Martians are empathetic, telepathic, and emotional, as in “The Third Expedition” and “The Martian” chapters.

D. The book’s Romantic philosophy honors individuals, as in the “Night Meeting.”

E. The book is not a thematic anthology or a fix-up but a composite novel, with its last chapter, “The Million-Year Picnic,” the very first published (1946). This novel, a trip by rocket to a redemptive American fairyland, brought pulp science fiction traditions into the American—and world—literary mainstream.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:
Burroughs, Edgar Rice. *A Princess of Mars*.

Cawelti, John G. *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture*.

Questions to Consider:
1. What, if anything, did science fiction gain and lose from amalgamating high and popular culture?

2. What might explain Ray Bradbury being the first popular-culture science fiction writer to be honored by the mainstream literary establishment?
Lecture Twenty-One
Robert A. Heinlein—He Mapped the Future

Scope: Robert A. Heinlein, who began publishing in pulp magazines in 1939, always retained the common touch. Yet his social imagination, hard SF extrapolation, and extraordinary craftsmanship stood for the best of a generation of American science fiction and earned more Hugo Awards for novels than did any other author. From “Life-Line” on, we see the Future History he created for the entire field, as well as social critique and what became science fiction’s dominant ideology of tolerance. From the opening of his first published novel, Beyond This Horizon, we see his craftsmanship. His politically characteristic Starship Troopers was reworked by Joe Haldeman and Orson Scott Card into later award-winning novels. Stranger in a Strange Land became an anthem for the 1960s. And The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress exemplifies not only what Heinlein called “speculative fiction” but his, and science fiction’s, Twain-like affinity for America.

Outline

   A. The Golden Age denotes the period of great science fiction magazine publication, short stories, and serialized novels, beginning certainly with Campbell’s ascendancy (c. 1940) and extending until the full dominance of the paperback original (mid-1950s).
   B. “Life-Line” (1939), Heinlein’s first published story, is already typical of him and of the period.
      1. The underlying values are gently tolerant of individuals of all types.
      2. The story implies a libertarian critique of modern America.
      3. The story presents fully plausible social extrapolation.
      4. It is the first story in what Campbell called the Future History.

II. Heinlein had enormous influence on his contemporaries and later writers.
   A. The Future History, which Heinlein worked out even before he began publishing, was such a plausible map of the inventions, social forces, and events that would unfold in the next six centuries that other writers followed Heinlein by publishing stories exploiting the reader’s acceptance of Heinlein’s coherent Future History.
   B. Heinlein’s simple, rich style is visible from the first page of his first published novel, Beyond This Horizon (1942): “…the door dilated…”
   C. His plots often achieve, like Shelley’s, a mythic power.

III. Heinlein won more Hugos for novels than any other writer. Two of these go well beyond the normal science fiction readership.
   A. Stranger in a Strange Land (1961) became a campus favorite in the 1960s.
      1. Like a fairy tale, it begins, “Once upon a time, there was a Martian named Valentine Michael Smith,” but Smith is soon embroiled in Earth’s politics.
      2. Smith is at first a weak and unwilling Earthman.
      3. He is forced to “grok” that he must take “right action.” Mike’s defense of a nurse reminds us of the title’s allusion to Moses.
      4. Jubal Harshaw, who assists Mike, asserts Heinlein’s libertarian views, letting us know how to behave in the secular world.
      5. Mike eventually becomes a willing messiah, letting us know how to behave in the spiritual world.
      6. Ultimately, like the Lone Ranger, Mike, by “discorporating,” leaves us on our own.
      7. The book’s message accords perfectly with that of its contemporary counterculture works, such as the musical Hair (1967).
   B. The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress (1966) incorporates all of Heinlein’s main traits and goes beyond them.
      1. The protagonist, Emanuel (“Manny”) Garcia O’Kelly Davis, is a computer troubleshooter in Earth’s moon colony. His very name reminds us of Heinlein’s tolerant ideology and homocentric spirituality.

1. Starship Troopers (1959) is a Hugo-winning, two-part coming-of-age story.
2. The Forever War (1974) by Joe Haldeman (1943–) and Ender’s Game (1985) by Orson Scott Card (1951–) each adapt Heinlein’s novel to their own periods and purposes. Each also won a Hugo Award.

D. The Heinlein hero, like Heinlein’s style, has much in common with Ernest Hemingway’s.
   1. In The Puppet Masters (1951), the uncomfortable hero comes finally to adopt the values of his father and learn necessary aggression against aliens who stand in for Communists.
   2. Typically, as in The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress (1966), the role of father is split into one figure who can be ignored and one who can be emulated.
   3. The Heinlein hero, although acknowledging sex, is by predisposition and circumstance a loner.
2. The story, a fine example of social extrapolation, follows the Russified, Australianized colonists beginning and pursuing a version of the American Revolution against an imperial Earth.

3. The telling includes both notable social innovations, such as line marriage, and hard SF, such as the magrail cargo launchers that send the Moon's tribute to Earth. Hard SF denotes those science fictions that suggest that the reader could—and some fans do—check the author's calculations about key points of setting and plot. Although trained as an engineer at Annapolis, Heinlein's most notable extrapolations were social; nonetheless, his extrapolations, social or technological, were always admirably "hard."

4. Most of the characters in this novel are typical of Heinlein, but the sentient computer, Mike, makes this novel stand above the others. Mike's sense of humor; his relationship with "Man, my only friend"; his role in the revolution; and his ultimate ambiguous absence make the book linger.

5. For Manny, however, the ending echoes that of the quintessentially American novel Huckleberry Finn (1884) by Mark Twain. Heinlein's work is not merely superbly crafted imaginative fiction, but it is a classic of American literature.

Essential Reading:
Heinlein, Robert A. The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress.

Supplementary Reading:
Heinlein, Robert A. Stranger in a Strange Land.
Haldeman, Joe. The Forever War.

Questions to Consider:
1. Although one usually thinks of writers as solitary workers, how does the example of Heinlein suggest that writers respond to the world around them, including other authors?
2. What connection, if any, do you see between the methods of science and the ideological tendencies of science fiction?
granted Asimov reciprocal honors.) In 1945, Clarke invented but failed to patent the communication satellite, which he later used in a story, “I Remember Babylon” (1960).

3. Asimov, who tried to write every single day, didn’t invent anything consequential but became one of history’s most prolific authors, writing well over 400 books and editing more than 500 more.

C. All three had notable writing skill, craftsman-like discipline, and scientifically informed imagination. All were active but ultimately put intellectual activity above the physical in their lives and works.

D. Heinlein believed that each person has a never-ending responsibility to improve the world, but Asimov and Clarke sometimes saw the possibility of a settled eutopia.

II. Asimov expressed his belief in eutopia in his very first book.

A. *I, Robot* (1950) is a composite novel interweaving previously published stories.
   1. Each chapter is a puzzle based on the fantastic three Laws of Robotics.
   2. “Robbie” (1940) sets the fairy tale presumptions of this fictional world.
   3. “Reason” (1941) dismisses the need for religion.
   4. The enigmatic conclusion (“The Evitable Conflict,” 1950) finally reveals Asimov’s eutopian faith based on a perfectible technology.

B. Many of Asimov’s most popular science fictions were parts of extended series.
   1. The Robot series, with such novels as *The Caves of Steel* (1954), extends *I, Robot* into delightful crime detection.
   2. In the Foundation trilogy (*Foundation*, 1951; *Foundation and Empire*, 1952; *Second Foundation*, 1953), Harry Seldon, a mathematician, through two monastery-like “foundations,” uses “psychohistory” to reduce an expected 30,000-year Dark Ages to a mere 1,000 years.
   3. Later in life, Asimov extended both these series and another, weaving them all into a single, perfect, coherent fictional future.

C. Yet his story “Nightfall” (1941), the most reprinted science fiction story of all time, shows that human weakness creates the need for science and technology.

III. Clarke’s books, taken together, express more hope in eutopia than they do in humanity.

A. Although all the Big Three had scientific training, Clarke was the acknowledged master of hard SF.

1. *A Fall of Moondust* (1961) gives a fine example in a scene with a tea-drinking English tourist on the Moon.
2. *Rendezvous with Rama* (1973), a hard SF masterpiece, is also astonishing in what it says about the insignificance of humanity.

B. While Clarke often projects an unquestioning homocentrism, as in “The Star” and “The Nine Billion Names of God,” his novels do suggest that humanity must change.
   1. In *Childhood’s End* (1953), we must transcend ourselves.
   2. In *The City and the Stars* (1956), failing that transformation, we must start our racial childhood again.

   1. The Stanley Kubrick version (1968), a landmark in film history, ushered in a change from the cheap, xenophobic science fiction films of the 1950s to the playful (*Star Wars*, 1977), serious (*Alien*, 1979), and radical (*Blade Runner*, 1982) polished science fiction films we have come to expect.
   2. Alien monoliths induce discontinuous, progressive evolution in humans.
   3. During space exploration, we see the differences—and similarities—between people and thinking machines.
   4. Ultimately, the “Star Child,” a fetal, no-longer-human descendant of us, floats peacefully above the Earth: “...he would think of something.”

Essential Reading:
Asimov, Isaac. *I, Robot.*

Supplementary Reading:
Clarke, Arthur C. *Childhood’s End.*

Questions to Consider:
1. In what ways, if any, does the reliability of the science in fantastic works influence how we respond to the works?
2. Do you believe a human eutopia is ever possible? If so, how; if not, why not?
Lecture Twenty-Three
Ursula K. Le Guin—Transhuman Anthropologist

Scope: Ursula K. Le Guin is the child of two prominent anthropologists and the intellectual heir of Lord Dunsany, a pioneering fantasy writer. Her Earthsea novels are honored children’s literature. Her adult science fiction Hainish novels, two of which won both the Hugo and the Nebula Awards, show, as did Heinlein, the potential power of a series setting. Such works as The Dispossessed and The Word for World Is Forest offer “ambiguous utopias.” The Left Hand of Darkness breaks down the supposedly natural differences of gender, frees science fiction from a fundamentally American conception of “Earthman,” and even confronts Western Cartesian thought with an alien philosophy (drawn, as it happens, from Taoism). In form, The Left Hand of Darkness, like Robbe-Grillet’s The Erasers, is an advance on Zola’s notion of experimental fiction and in its treatment of language makes a feminist, Stapledonian challenge to the reader.

Outline

I. Ursula K. Le Guin (1929– ) is one of the great writers of science fiction and fantasy.
A. Her work in many genres has been influential and widely honored.
   1. The Left Hand of Darkness (1969) was the second novel to win both a Hugo from the fans and a Nebula from the writers. (The first was Dune [1965] by Frank Herbert [1920–1986]. The third was Le Guin’s The Dispossessed [1974].)
   2. Her Earthsea cycle (beginning with A Wizard of Earthsea [1968]) earned a Newbery Silver Medal and a National Book Award. The protagonists must learn the truths about the shadows they cast and the power of calling things by their true names. But while her children’s work is superb, it is in her adult science fiction that she blazes trails.
   3. Science fiction, from Shelley’s monster to Heinlein’s conscious computer, has always asked what it means to be human. Le Guin became a key figure in the feminism of the 1960s and 1970s by asking also what it means to be gendered.
B. Le Guin’s work reveals three powerful influences from her childhood.
   1. Le Guin’s father, Alfred L. Kroeber (1876–1960), was one of the founding giants of modern anthropology. In “The Oecumene,” he argued that the diversity of Indo-European culture had all spread from a single source.
   2. Le Guin’s mother, Theodora Kroeber (1897–1979), is most famous for Ishi in Two Worlds: A Biography of the Last Wild Indian in North America (1961). How can anyone sustain an identity without a supporting culture?
   3. Le Guin at age 12 fell under the spell of Lord Dunsany (1878–1957). In short stories (such as those in The Sword of Welleran [1908]), he invented the self-contained fantasy otherworld, a device since used by Tolkien and many others. After World War I, he published some darker novels, including The Charwoman’s Shadow (1926), in which the hero retrieves a crone’s shadow for her from a magician, only to discover that he has found a bride.

II. Many of Le Guin’s science fictions are noteworthy.
A. The Lathe of Heaven (1971) explores the power of dreams and the pitfalls of unintended consequences.
C. The Dispossessed contrasts two different would-be utopias.

III. The Left Hand of Darkness, like The Word for World Is Forest and The Dispossessed, is among the Hainish novels set in Le Guin’s own future universe. Although freestanding novels, there are interesting connections, such as the “ansible” that allows instantaneous communication across space.
A. In both Zola’s and Robbe-Grillet’s senses of the term, The Left Hand of Darkness is an experimental novel.
   1. On frigid Gethen, we find an Earth-like monarchy and a bureaucracy. The unique Gethenian ambisexuality overtly questions our gender stereotypes.
   2. The action concerns Genly Ai, a human envoy from the galactic association called the Ekumen, to enlist Gethen and his relations with Therem Harth rem ir Estraven, initially a high Gethenian official.
   3. The story is told in chapters with one of four different voices.
B. Language has thematic significance in this novel.
   1. Le Guin’s experiment tests the idea that “Truth is a matter of the imagination.”
   2. The imagination is aided by significant neologism, such as the biological terms “somer” and “kemmer” and the social term “shifgrethor.”
   3. The relation between Le Guin’s world and ours arises in part from what I call transformed language: “The glaciers didn’t freeze overnight.”
4. Despite using the pronoun he for Gethenians, Le Guin was applauded by feminists. Later, though, she reevaluated her linguistic choice.

C. Le Guin drew Gethenian philosophy, a fundamental alternative to Western Cartesian thought, from the Tao (which Le Guin later translated). The novel's central poem, "Tormer's Lay," recalls, for example, the Tao's verse 11.

D. In the only episode told from multiple viewpoints, Genly and Therem "mindspeak."
1. This episode, recalling Frankenstein and his creation speaking on the glacier and Bradbury's "Night Meeting," contrasts with Wells's telepathic Martians. Genly and Therem transcend biology—and gender—to find common humanity.
2. Therem hears mindspeech in the voice of his lost, beloved brother.

E. There are at least two important ways to view this novel.
1. The overt political story ends in heroism, sacrifice, and an errand of honor by the envoy. The book's initial bridge-building image grounds this.
2. The book is also a covert love story, in which Genly subtly allows us to discern his own foolishness. The manipulation of viewpoint and style grounds this love. The plot recalls the Tao's verse 10.
3. Genly, like Gulliver and Prendick, is deeply transformed by his experience. Like Stapledon, Le Guin induces us to adopt changes of viewpoint, shaping an aesthetic experience that can change our attitudes toward language, gender, human relations, and personal morality.

Essential Reading:
Le Guin, Ursula K. The Left Hand of Darkness.

Supplementary Reading:
Dunsany, Lord. The Sword of Welleran and Other Stories.
Russ, Joanna. The Female Man.

Questions to Consider:
1. Le Guin points out that the governments on Gethen parallel those on Earth, but she does not draw the connection between Gethenian and Earth philosophy. What are the gains and losses of choosing silence?
2. As a feminist document, the use of pronouns in The Left Hand of Darkness reflects its period of composition. In what ways does the novel transcend its historical origins?

Lecture Twenty-Four
Cyberpunk, Postmodernism, and Beyond

Scope: Popular genres change slowly. In the 1960s, key British editors, calling for a New Wave of science fiction, published powerful literary experiments, such as J. G. Ballard's The Crystal World and The Atrocity Exhibition. Americans, including Philip K. Dick (Ubik) and Harlan Ellison ("I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream"), and Europeans, including Stanislaw Lem (The Futurological Congress), experimented, too. When William Gibson's Neuromancer conjoined head-snapping rhetoric with Kafkaesque cynicism about the information age, the New Wave morphed into cyberpunk. But cyberpunk is a science fictional variety of Postmodernism. Now we can see a line from Nobelist William Golding (The Lord of the Flies and The Inheritors) to Nobelist José Saramago (Blindness). Science fiction, the most important of the fantastic genres, is a historical response to the rise and conquest of technology. Hereafter, we will live in a science fiction world.

Outline

I. The New Wave was the first self-conscious aesthetic movement in science fiction.
A. Popular genres tend to change slowly. In the mid-1960s, the editors of New Worlds called for science fiction to take up the formal experimentation that had characterized pioneering high-culture literature for half a century.
B. Some excellent writers answered their fellow Britons' call.
2. J. G. Ballard (1930–) wrote end-of-the-world novels, such as The Crystal World (1966); politically chilling tales, such as The Atrocity Exhibition (1970; first piece, 1966); and psychosexual fables, such as Crash (1973).
C. American authors at the same time tried their own experiments.
1. In Babel-17 (1966), Samuel R. Delany (1942–) makes language itself a weapon, and in The Einstein Intersection (1967), the boundaries between the worlds of myth, reality, and imagination all too disturbingly melt.
2. In Philip K. Dick's The Man in the High Castle (1962), an alternate history upends our reality and questions artistic and moral authenticity.
II. Cyberpunk is an outgrowth of New Wave conditioned by historical and cultural shifts.

A. The term cyberpunk refers to a constellation of features.
   1. The word itself comes from cybernetics, the modern science of communication, command, and control, and punk, from punk music, with all its low-class, iconoclastic associations.
   2. The New Wave projected a dismal worldview characterized by ontological and epistemological problems, and drug realities. Cyberpunk added a fast-paced, jarring style and a radically anti-authoritarian ideology.
   3. Cyberpunk followed a trend visible since the 1860s, the conceptual center of science fiction continuing a westward movement from Europe to America to Japan. The effect made reality itself, to Westerners, fantastic.

   1. The style defines the world from the opening sentence. Our modern uses of matrix and our word cyberspace both originate in this novel.
   2. The protagonist, Case, is an outcast “computer jockey” recruited to pursue an act of industrial espionage that may enslave the human race.
   3. The characters are in varying degrees human: the clanking bartender; Molly, a mirror-eyed assassin; the “construct” who helps Case; the mind-bender who thwarts him; and the artificial intelligence who controls him.
   4. The mood and style show their roots in T. S. Eliot and William Burroughs.
   5. The outcome, ostensibly idyllic, is ultimately, irrevocably tragic.

C. The influence of cyberpunk itself was decisive but short-lived.
   2. But cyberpunk, and New Wave in general, did amalgamate science fiction with the other pioneering efforts we have come to call Postmodernism.

III. Postmodernism treats Nature as a phenomenological construct.


B. Science fiction fills our theaters. The most popular examples, such as *Star Wars*, are traditional, but substantial successes, including *Total Recall* (1990) with Arnold Schwarzenegger and *Vanilla Sky* (2001) with Tom Cruise, are Postmodern. Both protagonists, like *Neuromancer’s* Case, struggle to define reality.

C. At the end of 1998, for the first time, video games earned more than films. The majority of video games are science fiction, but the most popular include the *SimCity* (1989) series, in which players construct an imaginary—or is it?—reality.

D. Science fiction had already sketched visions of a totalizing technosphere.
   1. Ellison’s vision was horrifying.
   4. Those labeled science fiction writers are not alone. Nobelists such as William Golding (1911–1993; *Lord of the Flies*, 1954) write science fiction; García Márquez (*One Hundred Years of Solitude*), Postmodern fiction; and José Saramago (1922–; *Blindness*, 1995), Postmodern science fiction.

E. What had once seemed imaginary now seems real. We expect the online store to tell us what else we might like to buy. People get angry if we become unreachable by turning off our cell phones. And ubiquitous surveillance cameras capture the faces of wandering spouses, as well as terrorists. On balance, is that bad? We might appreciate the online store’s suggestion. Whether we take it as good or bad, the world has become fantastic. The imagination of humanity has utterly reshaped the life of humanity through technology, the instrumentality of science. The guidebooks we need now more than ever are the masterpieces of the imaginative mind because now we live in a science fictional world.

**Essential Reading:**
Gibson, William. *Neuromancer.*

**Supplementary Reading:**
Delany, Samuel R. *The Einstein Intersection.*
**Questions to Consider:**

1. With pioneering science fiction merging with Postmodernism, what will be the role of traditional science fiction?

2. With the development of new communication technologies, what will be the role of traditional printed works of the imaginative mind?

---

**Timeline**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>800–600 B.C.E.</td>
<td><em>The Odyssey</em> by Homer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 380 B.C.E.</td>
<td>Writing of <em>The Republic</em> by Plato (c. 427–c. 347 B.C.E.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 8 C.E.</td>
<td>Completion of <em>The Metamorphoses</em> by Ovid (43 B.C.E.–17 C.E.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 160</td>
<td>Writing of <em>Icaromenippus</em> by Lucian of Samosata (c. 120–180)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1321</td>
<td><em>The Divine Comedy</em> by Dante Alighieri (1265–1321)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 1375</td>
<td>Writing of <em>Sir Gawain and the Green Knight</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1485</td>
<td>Publication of <em>Le Morte d'Arthur</em> by Thomas Malory (1405–1471)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1516</td>
<td>Publication of <em>Utopia</em> by Thomas More (1478–1535)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 1593</td>
<td>First performance of <em>The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus</em> by Christopher Marlowe (1564–1593)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1611</td>
<td>First performance of <em>The Tempest</em> by William Shakespeare (1564–1616)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1627</td>
<td>Publication of <em>The New Atlantis</em> by Francis Bacon (1561–1626)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1657</td>
<td>Publication of <em>Other Worlds</em> by Cyrano de Bergerac (1619–1655)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1697</td>
<td>Publication of <em>Tales and Stories of the Past with Morals, or Tales of Mother Goose</em> by Charles Perrault (1628–1703)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1719</td>
<td>Publication of <em>Robinson Crusoe</em> by Daniel Defoe (c. 1660–1731)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1726</td>
<td>Publication of <em>Gulliver's Travels</em> by Jonathan Swift (1667–1745)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1752</td>
<td>Publication of <em>Micromegas</em> by Voltaire (1694–1778)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1764</td>
<td>Publication of <em>The Castle of Otranto</em> by Horace Walpole (1717–1797)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Publication of *Lyrical Ballads* by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Publication of *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* by the Grimm brothers (Jakob, 1785–1863; Wilhelm, 1786–1859)

Publication of “The Sandman” by E. T. A. Hoffmann (1776–1822)

Publication of *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus* by Mary Shelley (1797–1851)

Publication of *Twice-Told Tales* by Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804–1864)

Publication of *Struwwelpeter* (Straw-Headed Peter) by Heinrich Hoffmann (1809–1894)

Publication of *The House of Seven Gables* by Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804–1864)

Publication of *The Defence of Guinevere* by William Morris (1834–1896)

U.S. Civil War

Confederate Hunley sinks the U.S. *Housatonic* in the world’s first successful submarine attack

Publication of *Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll (1832–1898)

Completion of the world’s first transcontinental railroad, in Utah

Publication of *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* by Jules Verne (1828–1905)

Proclamation of the German Empire after the defeat of France in the Franco-Prussian War (1870–1871)

Publication of *Through the Looking-Glass* by Lewis Carroll

Publication of *Erewhon* by Samuel Butler (1835–1902)

Publication of *Frank Reade and His Steam Man of the Plains* by “Noname”

Publication of *Looking Backward* by Edward Bellamy (1850–1898)

Publication of *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court* by Mark Twain (1835–1910)

Publication of *The Time Machine* by H. G. Wells (1866–1946)

Publication of *Dracula* by Bram Stoker (1847–1912)

Publication of *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* by Beatrix Potter (1866–1943)

Publication of *A Princess of Mars* by Edgar Rice Burroughs (1875–1950)

World War 1

Publication of *The Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka (1883–1924)

Publication of *Herland* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860–1935)

Publication of *Course in General Linguistics* by Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913)

Publication of “The Uncanny” by Sigmund Freud

Composition of *We* by Yevgeny Zamyatin (1884–1937)

Publication of *Amazing Stories*, the first science fiction magazine, by Hugo Gernsback (1884–1967)

Publication of V. Propp’s *Morphology of the Folktale*

Publication of *Orlando* by Virginia Woolf (1882–1941)
1929–1939. The Great Depression
1932. Publication of *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley (1894–1963)
1939–1945. World War II
December 7, 1941. Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor
August 6, 1945. U.S. atomic bombing of Hiroshima
1947. Publication of *Goodnight Moon* by Margaret Wise Brown (1910–1952)
1949. Publication of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by George Orwell (1903–1950)
1950. Publication of *If I Ran the Zoo* by Dr. Seuss (Theodore Geisel, 1904–1991)
Publication of *The Martian Chronicles* by Ray Bradbury (1920–)
Publication of *I, Robot* by Isaac Asimov (1920–1992)
1953. Publication of *The Erasers* by Alain Robbe-Grillet (1922–)
October 4, 1957. Soviet Union launches *Sputnik*
1960. Approval of first oral contraceptive
Broadway debut of the musical *Camelot*
1961. Publication of *The Phantom Tollbooth* by Norton Juster (1929–)
July 23, 1962. First live transatlantic television transmission using Telstar, first communications satellite
November 22, 1963. Murder of U.S. President John F. Kennedy
1965. Publication of *Cosmicomics* by Italo Calvino (1928–1985)
1967. Publication of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel García Márquez (1928–)
1969. Publication of *The Left Hand of Darkness* by Ursula K. Le Guin
July 20, 1969. United States lands first man on the Moon
1977. Release of the first *Star Wars* movie
1984. Publication of *Neuromancer* by William Gibson
1995. Publication of *Blindness* by José Saramago
**Glossary**

**aesthetic fatigue:** The dissipation of our pleasure in a particular form of art through repeated exposure to too many similar works. "Oh, I just can’t stand to read another thriller."

**allegoresis:** The general mental process by which we understand immediately that something in the work we are reading (or hearing or seeing) should call to mind something from another work. For example, a baby floating in a basket in a river should bring to mind the story of Moses. Allegoresis is a subset of allusion.

**allegory:** Allegory refers to works that use allegoresis systematically so that the work being read makes consistent allusions paralleling some other work. For example, Christian, the hero of John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678 and 1684), lives out a life like that of Jesus told in the Gospels.

**allusion:** In general, allusion is a reference in a work to something specific outside that work; for example, "she felt like Cinderella" or "this was the best day since the fall of the Berlin Wall." If the reference is implicit and to another work of art, the allusion is more specifically an example of allegoresis.

**ambiguity:** As a technical term, ambiguity refers to a condition in which the structure of a communication supports more than one meaning; for example, "I walked down the street and turned into a drugstore."

**American myth:** This archetypal story has an in-group (for example, townspeople) threatened by an out-group (for example, outlaws). The in-group typically has social institutions (for example, schools and churches and lawmen) and represents America east of a frontier ever-receding westward. The out-group typically has only men, no law, but very high survival skills, representing America west of the frontier. A lone hero who shares the values of the in-group, but then must himself either convert to the more settled ways of the in-group or ride off over the frontier.

**androgyny:** The amalgamation of both male and female characteristics in a single individual. In psychological terms, this is usually seen as representing a positive completion. It contrasts with hermaphroditism.

**anima:** In Jungian psychology, the idealized Other, a female figure with which the male ego aspires to unite. If the ego is female, the idealized Other is a male figure called the animus.

**compensation:** In psychological terms, compensation is a benefit gained from participating in a story or belief. For example, someone who is a failure in romance may compensate by seeking inordinate business success. Reading about a character who faces an issue the reader shares may help the reader compensate. For example, children fearful of taking on new responsibilities may find "Little Red Riding Hood" allows them compensation.

**composite novel:** This term indicates a set of stories, such as Ray Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicles*, that may each be readable independently but that, together, form a larger narrative that adds extra meaning to each of the stories now viewable as chapters.

**continuum of the fantastic:** All works of art are, to some extent, realistic, because to make sense at all, they must call to mind something of our shared knowledge gained by living in the world. On the other hand, all works of art are, to some extent, fantastic, because even the most realistic offer the fantasy that life can be seen in limited, integrated units (like stories) and that everything we notice in the (narrative) world matters. The continuum of the fantastic refers to the distribution of more and less fantastic works, often from within the same genre (say, fairy tales), from the most realistic to the most fantastic.

**convention:** In linguistics and literary study, this term refers to a widespread agreement that something will have a certain form or function that it need not have intrinsically. For example, there is nothing about the shape of a cross that makes it symbolic of a god or religion; it has those meanings by convention.

**cyberpunk:** This term refers to a combination of style and stance. The style is fast and hard-edged, with the animate and the mechanical clashing; the stance is a cynical distrust of all large institutions. "Case [the protagonist in William Gibson's *Neuromancer*] fell into the prison of his own flesh."

**dark double:** In Jungian psychology, an aggrandized but negative version of oneself. An ordinary man, for example, might find that his dark double is a bully. This contrasts with the double.

**defamiliarization:** Viktor Shklovskii wrote that defamiliarization "makes the stone stony." The unexpected repetition makes us feel the stone in a way the word alone would not. "How are you?" "Compared to what?" The Russian Formalist critics asserted that taking the familiar and defamiliarizing it (as the fantastic necessarily does) is the heart of all art.

**depth psychology:** This term refers to the notion that the human psyche has a visible, conscious upper level and an invisible, unconscious lower level, in which the invisible drives the visible. There are alternative psychologies, such as B. F. Skinner's behaviorism, which sees all behavior as conditioned responses and the consciousness as a specious "epiphenomenon."

**detective fiction:** This general term refers to any fiction in which the protagonist or the viewpoint character (which are sometimes different) is engaged in detection, that is, solving a mystery. Police procedurals, "hard-boiled detective stories," and *Tales of the Great Detective* are all versions of detective fiction.
diachronic: This term refers to phenomena considered as extending through time. When we say that the plot of a narrative is one of journey and return, we are making a diachronic statement. This is opposed to synchronic.

diametric: This word, from diameter, the line across a circle, means “directly opposite.”

doppelgänger: Literally “double goer,” a doppelgänger is one of a set (usually a pair) of characters that together, represent one psychological persona in the narrative. In E. T. A. Hoffmann’s “The Doubles” (“Die Doppelgänger”), we find many pairs of characters. The two main males, both attracted to the same female (one in person, one in dream), represent the civil and artistic side of a man seeking a certain type of woman. A doppelgänger is sometimes called a double, but that term has a different primary meaning.

double: In Jungian psychology, an aggrandized, positive version of oneself. An ordinary man, for example, might find that his double is a champion athlete. This contrasts with the dark double. Sometimes, the term double is used not in this Jungian sense but to refer to the dramatic relationship of one character to another known as a doppelgänger. Sometimes, characters that are doppelgängers are also Jungian doubles.

dystopia: A variety of utopia in which the reader is clearly intended to disparage the social system that is represented.

Eden complex: I use this term for the phenomenological complex that underlies the majority of science fiction. It has six constituent elements. (1) It uses garden, or sometimes more specifically Eden, imagery. (2) The vivid, magical aesthetics of fairy tales apply. (3) The narrative presumes that there are natural limits to human success. (4) A main character is a scientist type who wants to be god or godlike. (5) The plot follows an Oedipal dramatic structure. (6) The symbol system relies on clear, well-known dichotomies, such as light/dark, male/female, and mechanical/animate. As with any other phenomenological complex, when one element of it is present, all are potentially present. For example, in what Gaston Bachelard, in The Psychoanalysis of Fire, calls the Prometheus complex, when fire-as-light-and-knowledge is present, fire-as-destroyer is also implicitly present and may emerge.

ego: In modern psychological parlance, ego is the “self”; in Latin, “I.”

Elektra complex: See Oedipus complex.

epic: An epic is a narrative of sweeping scope, traditionally but not necessarily in verse, that focuses on the great deeds of heroes and gods and, often, on the founding or reconstituting of civilizations.

epistemology: Epistemology is the branch of philosophy that concerns “knowing.” Intuition and deduction, for example, are epistemologically distinct.

epistemology: Epistemology is the branch of philosophy that concerns “knowing.” Intuition and deduction, for example, are epistemologically distinct.
framing: In fiction, framing is the embedding of one narrative within another. Full framing is, say, a story-within-a-story, as with H. G. Wells's *The Time Machine*. Front framing begins with one story and moves into another without ever returning to the first; back framing begins in one story that is then contextualized by another without that other having been previously apparent.

genre: Literally, a genre is a type. In the arts, genre has two main meanings. In the first, we mean any definable type of art. Science fiction is a genre. There can be genres within genres. Science fiction novels are a genre that is a subset of the genre of novel and a superset that contains other genres, such as alien contact stories and mad scientist stories. In the second meaning, genre refers to formulaic, popular works of specific types. The American Western story and the locked-room mystery are often thought of as genres.

Gothic romance: Romantic fiction that typically involves extraordinary powers, massive but perhaps crumbling architecture, and heightened—often sexual—emotions.

hard SF: This term denotes those science fictions that suggest that the reader could—and some fans do—check the author's calculations about key points of setting and plot.

hermaphroditism: In psychological terms, the monstrous conjunction of male and female characteristics in a single individual. This contrasts with androgyny.

hypotaxis: In rhetoric, making explicit the underlying connections among distinct elements of the text or utterance. For example, "I am hungry. I need to obtain food. I can buy food at the store. I will go to the store to buy food to eat." Compare that with "I am hungry. I'll go to the store." In the latter example, one presumes that the store sells food, but one could be wrong. The speaker could have changed topics. Leaving out underlying connections is *parataxis*. Excessive hypotaxis can be boring, but excessive parataxis can leave a reader confused: "I am hungry. Now I'll call Fred." Does the call have to do with the hunger?

illusion of central position: The infantile fantasy that all that happens in one's world is part of a pattern of which one's own ego is the center.

image: A concrete mental representation (whether visual or engaging any other sense) inferred from reading a text or hearing language. An image may or may not be a symbol. "She had the smile of Mona Lisa" may bring that famous painting to mind but with no necessary symbolic content. "She had the breathy voice of Marilyn Monroe singing 'Happy Birthday' to President Kennedy," by its allusive force, can symbolize complex, public, but doomed sexuality.

infantile fantasy: A psychological sense, often unconscious, that arises from one's early, preverbal experience. As infants, we perceive only the world around us and that world responds to our cries. The former fact leads to the fantasy called the *illusion of central position*; the latter, to the fantasy called the

omnipotence of thought. Although most of us as adults know those fantasies as false, we still may feel that the phone ringing in a stranger's office is for us or use bodily movements to try to influence the trajectory of a bowling ball after it has been released.

intensional: In phenomenology, intension is not intention but the opposite of extension; that is, intensional acts are the focusing of attention that define phenomena against the backgrounds of all possible present stimuli.

literary period: A literary period is a historical era with indistinct boundaries within which one may, in a broad sense, characterize some common approaches to the production of art. In the Romantic period, for example, the focus on the individual ego and the taste for heightened emotions is reflected in Percy Bysshe Shelley's "Ozymandias" and his wife, Mary Shelley's, *Frankenstein*.

magical realism: This term refers prototypically to the works of modern Latin American authors, such as Gabriel García Márquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, in which a realistic, often almost matter-of-fact, approach is used in narrating the lives of individuals in which magical events occur just as arbitrarily, unavoidably, and expectably as political upheaval. Works of magical realism attend both to the nuances of characterization and to the power of the political forces shaping the characters' world. Their plots approach the feeling of myth. The term is sometimes used for non-Latin works that share these features, such as Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*.

Modernism: An artistic, including literary, period characterized by formal experimentation and the sense that Nature is alien from humanity.

motif: This term refers to comparatively fixed, comparatively small elements that we find in work after work, for example, the motif of the magical gift. It always confers power and is usually problematic, as with the ring in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and the title objects in the Grimm brothers' "The Table, the Stick, and the Ass." Although the terms *formula* and *motif* overlap, in general, a formula is more fixed and may involve more than one motif.

myth: This term has many meanings, ranging from a false belief to a traditional tale of gods or heroes that explains or justifies a social condition, religious belief, or natural phenomenon. In broad literary use, a myth is a story, often fantastic, that offers a picture that stands for a crucial aspect of the world of the society that takes that story as important. For example, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* are often viewed as mythic.

narrative: A narrative is the communication of the representation of a series of events by a person (narrator) or persons to another person or persons (audience). See also *story* and *plot*. 
54

periphrasis: This rhetoric term, literally “a roundabout speaking,” denotes indirect circumlocutions; for example, “finny tribe” for “fish.”

parataxis: See entry for hypotaxis.

omnipotence of thought: The infantile fantasy that thinking something can make it so.

Oedipus complex: In Freudian psychology, a yearning, often unconscious, to supplant one’s same-sex parent in order to join with one’s opposite-sex parent. Some critics reserve this term for males wishing to supplant or even kill their same-sex parent in order to join with their opposite-sex parent. This can manifest an Elektra complex.

Oedipal comedy: In the Eden complex, a dramatic structure in which the intergenerational conflict is resolved in a way that restores social order, as in Samuel R. Delany.

Oedipal tragedy: In the Eden complex, a dramatic structure in which the intergenerational conflict ultimately disrupts the social order, as in William Shakespeare’s The Tempest.

New Wave: In science fiction, this term refers to the explicit attempt by such writers as J. G. Ballard to bring the form of experimentation of Modernism into genre writing and to other works showing such experimentation, such as those of Samuel R. Delany.

New Novel: This English phrase translates the French nouveau roman, the term first made current by discussions of Alain Robbe-Grillet’s The Erasers. New Novels are characterized by minimal use of ornate rhetorical figures, such as metaphor; by a cinematic attention to surfaces; and by uncertainty in the face of large social institutions or forces.

neologism: A neologism is a newly coined word.

nested narrative: Nested narrative uses framing to put one story inside another. In some cases, such as Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein and Ovid’s Metamorphoses, there may be many levels of nesting, one story within another within another.

New Testament: This English phrase translates the French nouveau roman, the term first made current by discussions of Alain Robbe-Grillet’s The Erasers. New Novels are characterized by minimal use of ornate rhetorical figures, such as metaphor; by a cinematic attention to surfaces; and by uncertainty in the face of large social institutions or forces.

New Wave: In science fiction, this term refers to the explicit attempt by such writers as J. G. Ballard to bring the form of experimentation of Modernism into genre writing and to other works showing such experimentation, such as those of Samuel R. Delany.

neologism: A neologism is a newly coined word.

nested narrative: Nested narrative uses framing to put one story inside another. In some cases, such as Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein and Ovid’s Metamorphoses, there may be many levels of nesting, one story within another within another.

New Testament: This English phrase translates the French nouveau roman, the term first made current by discussions of Alain Robbe-Grillet’s The Erasers. New Novels are characterized by minimal use of ornate rhetorical figures, such as metaphor; by a cinematic attention to surfaces; and by uncertainty in the face of large social institutions or forces.

neologism: A neologism is a newly coined word.

nested narrative: Nested narrative uses framing to put one story inside another. In some cases, such as Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein and Ovid’s Metamorphoses, there may be many levels of nesting, one story within another within another.

New Testament: This English phrase translates the French nouveau roman, the term first made current by discussions of Alain Robbe-Grillet’s The Erasers. New Novels are characterized by minimal use of ornate rhetorical figures, such as metaphor; by a cinematic attention to surfaces; and by uncertainty in the face of large social institutions or forces.

neologism: A neologism is a newly coined word.

nested narrative: Nested narrative uses framing to put one story inside another. In some cases, such as Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein and Ovid’s Metamorphoses, there may be many levels of nesting, one story within another within another.

New Testament: This English phrase translates the French nouveau roman, the term first made current by discussions of Alain Robbe-Grillet’s The Erasers. New Novels are characterized by minimal use of ornate rhetorical figures, such as metaphor; by a cinematic attention to surfaces; and by uncertainty in the face of large social institutions or forces.

neologism: A neologism is a newly coined word.

nested narrative: Nested narrative uses framing to put one story inside another. In some cases, such as Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein and Ovid’s Metamorphoses, there may be many levels of nesting, one story within another within another.

New Testament: This English phrase translates the French nouveau roman, the term first made current by discussions of Alain Robbe-Grillet’s The Erasers. New Novels are characterized by minimal use of ornate rhetorical figures, such as metaphor; by a cinematic attention to surfaces; and by uncertainty in the face of large social institutions or forces.

neologism: A neologism is a newly coined word.

nested narrative: Nested narrative uses framing to put one story inside another. In some cases, such as Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein and Ovid’s Metamorphoses, there may be many levels of nesting, one story within another within another.

New Testament: This English phrase translates the French nouveau roman, the term first made current by discussions of Alain Robbe-Grillet’s The Erasers. New Novels are characterized by minimal use of ornate rhetorical figures, such as metaphor; by a cinematic attention to surfaces; and by uncertainty in the face of large social institutions or forces.

neologism: A neologism is a newly coined word.

nested narrative: Nested narrative uses framing to put one story inside another. In some cases, such as Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein and Ovid’s Metamorphoses, there may be many levels of nesting, one story within another within another.

New Testament: This English phrase translates the French nouveau roman, the term first made current by discussions of Alain Robbe-Grillet’s The Erasers. New Novels are characterized by minimal use of ornate rhetorical figures, such as metaphor; by a cinematic attention to surfaces; and by uncertainty in the face of large social institutions or forces.

neologism: A neologism is a newly coined word.

nested narrative: Nested narrative uses framing to put one story inside another. In some cases, such as Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein and Ovid’s Metamorphoses, there may be many levels of nesting, one story within another within another.

New Testament: This English phrase translates the French nouveau roman, the term first made current by discussions of Alain Robbe-Grillet’s The Erasers. New Novels are characterized by minimal use of ornate rhetorical figures, such as metaphor; by a cinematic attention to surfaces; and by uncertainty in the face of large social institutions or forces.

neologism: A neologism is a newly coined word.

nested narrative: Nested narrative uses framing to put one story inside another. In some cases, such as Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein and Ovid’s Metamorphoses, there may be many levels of nesting, one story within another within another.

New Testament: This English phrase translates the French nouveau roman, the term first made current by discussions of Alain Robbe-Grillet’s The Erasers. New Novels are characterized by minimal use of ornate rhetorical figures, such as metaphor; by a cinematic attention to surfaces; and by uncertainty in the face of large social institutions or forces.

neologism: A neologism is a newly coined word.

nested narrative: Nested narrative uses framing to put one story inside another. In some cases, such as Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein and Ovid’s Metamorphoses, there may be many levels of nesting, one story within another within another.

New Testament: This English phrase translates the French nouveau roman, the term first made current by discussions of Alain Robbe-Grillet’s The Erasers. New Novels are characterized by minimal use of ornate rhetorical figures, such as metaphor; by a cinematic attention to surfaces; and by uncertainty in the face of large social institutions or forces.

neologism: A neologism is a newly coined word.

nested narrative: Nested narrative uses framing to put one story inside another. In some cases, such as Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein and Ovid’s Metamorphoses, there may be many levels of nesting, one story within another within another.
inhabited. A Robinsonade is a tale in which the protagonist deals with the alien by trying to make it like the world the protagonist comes from.

**romantic:** The term *romantic* has six meanings relevant to the study of literature: (1) languages, such as French and Italian, that derive from Latin, the language of Rome; (2) emotionally heightened content, erotic or otherwise; (3) attitudes and themes that stress the importance of the ego and strong emotion; (4) the period in art valourizing (2) and (3); (5) a set of 19th-century English poets, including Wordsworth and Percy Bysshe Shelley; and (6) a diachronic structure in which the ideals implicit at the beginning of the narrative necessarily work themselves out.

**science fiction:** Science fiction is a fantastic genre that claims plausibility for its narrative world against a background of science.

**self-reflexivity:** In criticism, self-reflexivity refers to the effect of elements of a work of art that call attention to the fact that the audience is indeed dealing with a work of art. In a novel, for example, if one character says to another, “What a coincidence! If this were a novel, no one would believe it had happened!” the novel is being self-reflexive. Self-reflexivity can also be implicit. For example, Franz Kafka’s story called “An Old Manuscript” never mentions an old manuscript; thus, the alert reader realizes that the story itself must be the old manuscript, but because it is clearly a modern story, this titling calls our attention to the story being a created—not found—work of art.

**symbol:** A symbol is an image that carries general meaning beyond itself. This can be distinguished from an allusion that carries specific reference. Symbolic meaning can arise from three sources: (1) Conventional symbols function through stipulation and subsequent social agreement; for example, a cross symbolizes Christianity. (2) Natural symbols arise through shared human experience in the world; for example, thunderclouds symbolize impending danger. (3) Forged symbols acquire meaning in the course of the works that employ them; for example, Frankenstein’s monster comes to symbolize science that has gone beyond the control of the community.

**structuralism:** The term *structuralism* denotes study in many fields using approaches that highlight various structures of the objects of inquiry. Every work of literature, for example, can be seen as having a diachronic structure (how the work unfolds over time) and a synchronic structure (the shape of the work considered as a whole). One could extract other structures as well, for example, the structure of the social relations among the characters. A structural approach always extracts some subset of information about the object of inquiry in order to highlight the workings of the extracted elements in the whole. These approaches are grounded in the linguistic analyses of Ferdinand de Saussure.

**story:** Story is the chronological sequence of events we understand to be represented in a narrative, regardless of the reading order of the plot in which they are narrated.

**transformed language:** I use this term to denote locutions that simultaneously indicate that the narrative world is not ours and the relation between that world and ours. For example, in Ursula K. Le Guin’s *The Left Hand of Darkness*, there is a common expression in the harsh world of Gethen: “The glaciers didn’t freeze overnight.” For Le Guin’s contemporary readers, this is obviously a transformation of “Rome wasn’t built in a day.” That it is a transformation lets us know that we are in a different world from ours. This particular Gethenian transformation suggests that the dominant force in that world is not human empire but implacable Nature.

**utopia:** The term *utopia* has two meanings. In its larger meaning, utopia refers to the whole class of works that focus on the creation and maintenance of stable social systems. Usually, these works are science fictions claiming plausibility against the background of political science. These works fall into three subsets. The subset of utopian works in which the social system is clearly intended to be admired by the reader is called *eupotian*; the subset of utopian works in which the social system is clearly intended to be disparaged by the reader is called *dystopian*; and the subset of utopian works in which the social system is clearly intended to motivate the reader’s thoughtful ambivalence is itself called simply *utopian*. In other words, *utopia* in the general sense contains *eupotia, dystopia,* and in a more specific sense, *utopia*.

**synchronic:** This term refers to phenomena considered as existing all at one time. When we say that a plot is a circle, we are making a synchronic statement. This is opposed to diachronic.

**Tale of the Great Detective:** This term refers to a highly formulaic variety of detective fiction in which we have a great detective (for example, Sherlock Holmes), a sidekick who does not know all that the detective does (Watson), and a criminal (Moriarty). The plot, too, although often ingenious, is formulaic, beginning with the report of a crime or its likelihood, an exposition of why ordinary people are baffled in the face of this mystery, the solution by the detective “matching minds” with the criminal (as Poe wrote), and the explanation of the solution.
Biographical Notes

Isaac Asimov (1920–1992). Born in Russia and brought to Brooklyn, New York, at age 3, Asimov began writing at 11. Although his father, who owned a candy store (which carried popular magazines), discouraged “junk” reading, Asimov was allowed to read Science Wonder Stories because of its title. He earned three chemistry degrees from Columbia University, although his doctoral studies were interrupted by four years of wartime service as a chemist for the government. Asimov was a tenured professor of biochemistry at Boston University when he committed himself to full-time writing in 1955. He ultimately became one of the world’s most prolific authors, publishing more than 400 books of science fiction, detection, criticism, popular science, and more. His Foundation series won a special Hugo Award as the best science fiction series of all time. He was survived by his second wife and two children.

Raymond (Douglas) Bradbury (1920– ). Born in Waukegan, Illinois, Bradbury consumed pulp fiction starting at age 8 and wrote consistently from 12 onward. After he moved with his family to Los Angeles in 1934, he ended his formal education with high school graduation but always took his writing seriously, even attending a class given by Robert Heinlein. Yet Bradbury typically rejected technology, for example, never learning to drive. The Martian Chronicles (1950), his great composite novel, asks us to restrain technology so we can catch up morally to our practical power. His much honored, lyrical science fiction opened the way to screenwriting (for instance, on Moby Dick) and consulting on the development of the original Disneyland. He later turned toward clearly unscientific, highly romantic fantasies, such as the juvenile favorite Something Wicked This Way Comes (1962). His long marriage produced four daughters.

Edgar Rice Burroughs (1875–1950). Born in Chicago, Burroughs attended and instructed at the Michigan Military Academy before his Arizona service with the U.S. Cavalry (1896–1897), a career ended by a heart murmur. His many jobs, including office work and mining, never supported his wife and children. Always a pulp fiction reader, he sold his first story, “Under the Moons of Mars” (1912) for $400; his next, for $700; and in 1914, earned $20,000, a fortune then. He published adventure series set on Mars, on Venus, and most famously in Tarzan’s Africa. Burroughs, always dismissed by his contemporary critics, founded the first personal media empire, licensing his characters for radio, film, toys, television, and so on. His ranch near Los Angeles became the town of Tarzana. His own fantasy? “If there is a hereafter, I want to travel through space to visit other planets.” He died of a heart attack.

Lewis Carroll (1832–1898). Carroll, pseudonym for Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, was the eldest of 11 children of a rural English rector. He made games and puppets to amuse his siblings, mostly girls, and enjoyed younger children more than his rough peers at Rugby. He attended Christ Church, Oxford, with the aim of becoming a rector himself, but his stutter inhibited that ambition. Instead, he became a don in mathematics at Oxford, taking orders but rarely preaching, living the usual bachelor life of such scholars. Unusually, Carroll developed many interests, becoming one of the most important photographers of his century, a writer of mathematical entertainments, and the creator of the most famous and influential children’s books of all time, Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland (1865) and Through the Looking-Glass (1872).

Arthur C. Clarke (1917– ). Born in Minehead, England, and inspired by Olaf Stapledon’s sweeping science fiction, Clarke, too poor to attend university, became a government auditor, worked on the pioneering radar crucial to the Battle of Britain, and finally attended King’s College, London, on scholarship, earning first-class honors in mathematics and physics. His 1945 paper proposing communication satellites ultimately won the Franklin Institute Gold Medal. After editing at Science Abstracts (1949–1950), Clarke became a full-time fiction and nonfiction writer. Married and later divorced without children, he moved to Sri Lanka where, in addition to writing, he co-founded a company pursuing underwater filming and safaris and has served since 1979 as chancellor of the University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka’s premier technical school. The film of his 2001: A Space Odyssey is an artistic milestone. His Rendezvous with Rama is the most award-winning science fiction novel of all time.

Sigmund Freud (1856–1939). Freud, a Viennese Jew, the eldest and most favored of the eight children of his father’s third wife, was early recognized as a genius. The modest resources of the family flowed to his disciplined, fastidious youngster, who read Latin, Greek, English, and French. Although unobservant, his religious heritage greatly influenced his sense of alienation and of the importance of interpretation. Initially attracted to zoology, he practiced medicine out of financial necessity. His detailed observations, both of his patients’ pathologies and of works of art, uncovered hidden patterns. Such revelations, coupled with his theories about the unconscious, its drives, operations, and deformation by trauma, led to his creation of modern psychoanalysis, the so-called “talking cure” for mental disorders. In 1938, Freud fled the Nazis for London, where a year later this addicted cigar smoker ironically died of cancer of the mouth, leaving a wife and six adult children.

Hugo Gernsback (1884–1967). A Luxembourg-born engineer, Gernsback emigrated to the United States hoping to patent his new battery. He tried several unsatisfactory technical jobs and co-founded a battery company that his partner stole into bankruptcy. Although very inventive (the walkie-talkie, 1909; radar, 1912), his major, almost accidental, achievements were in publishing. He founded Modern Electrics (1908) to publish popular science articles. Soon, he added fiction and, responding to his readers’ comments, in April 1926, launched Amazing Stories, the first science fiction (which he called “scientifiction”) magazine. He not only crystallized a market but launched readers’ columns that initiated modern fandom. Gernsback created prolifically but usually failed with his creations. He lost one magazine after another, never made money on his
Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864). Hawthorne’s Puritan forebears included a judge at the Salem witchcraft trials (1692) and his own sea-captain father, who died in Surinam (1808). Young Nathaniel turned early to writing. As a student at Bowdoin College, he formed lifelong friendships with the poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and with Franklin Pierce who, as president of the United States, ultimately gave him the lucrative post of U.S. consul in Liverpool. Hawthorne had already endured years of hack writing and editing to support himself, his wife, and three children. He even tried the supposedly more economical life in a utopian community, Brook Farm, in 1841. However, he eventually made a comfortable living from his well-received short stories (for example, *Mosses from an Old Manse*, 1846) and novels (for example, *The Scarlet Letter*, 1850), many of which explore the relations of religion and science, the past and the present.

Robert A(anson) Heinlein (1907-1988). Heinlein, a Missouri lad, studied at the University of Missouri and the U.S. Naval Academy (B.S., 1929). After tuberculosis ended his military career (1939), he studied physics and mathematics at UCLA, tried mining, selling real estate, and even running for California state office. But from his first story sale (1939), he was able to support himself by his stylistically refined science fiction, creating also a Future History that provided the setting for many other writers. Often ill, he worked as an aviation engineer for the Navy from 1942-1945 but returned to full-time writing. His consistent admiration for unprejudiced meritocracy (his idealization of the military) and libertarian enthusiasm for individual responsibility helped set the prevailing ideology of science fiction. He won more Hugo Awards for Best Novel than any other writer. His first marriage ended in divorce; his second wife outlived him.

E. T. A. Hoffmann (1776-1822). Hoffmann, a Prussian from a broken home, was raised by his uncle to the law. Although he supported himself and his wife (their daughter died at 2) early as a law officer and, later, as a government councillor, Hoffmann was also a very successful composer (legally changing his name, Ernst Theodor Wilhelm, to Ernst Theodor Amadeus to honor Mozart), an accomplished painter, and a writer of vastly influential fantasies. His use of depth psychology and emotionally resonant dream and supernatural symbols helped create literary fantasy. His opera *Undine* (1816) is a classic German fairy tale. His stories formed the basis for the opera *The Tales of Hoffmann* by Offenbach (1880), the ballet *Coppelia* by Delibes (1870), and Tchaikovsky’s ballet *The Nutcracker* (1892). His story “The Sandman” is the prime object of analysis in Freud’s most important discussion of the fantastic, “The Uncanny” (1919).

Franz Kafka (1883-1924). Much alienated as a German-speaking Jew in the Czech capital of Prague, Kafka lived most of his life with his mother, from elite society, and his domineering father, a self-made merchant. Fluent with others, he stuttered before his father. Franz earned a J.D. (1906), practiced the requisite year, and then took a civil service job investigating workers’ insurance claims. Each of his several engagements was broken off. Through indecision and self-doubt, he published little in his lifetime, notably *The Metamorphosis* (1915). Tuberculosis caused his resignation (1922) and, ultimately, death. Max Brod, his friend and literary executor, defied his wishes to have his manuscripts destroyed, instead editing and publishing them, including many stories and such archetypal novels as *The Trial* (1925), *The Castle* (1926), and *Amerika* (1927).

Ursula K(roeber) Le Guin (1929- ). Le Guin was born in Berkeley, California, and educated at Radcliffe College and Columbia University; her parents were major influences on her writing. Her father, Alfred L. Kroeber, a towering figure of American anthropology, is perhaps best known for his arguments that all of Western culture arose from a single source. Her mother, Theodora Kroeber, a writer and anthropologist, is best known for her biography of Ishi, “the last of the wild Indians.” Le Guin acknowledges also the influence of Lord Dunsany, often called the inventor of the modern fantasy short story; of Leo Tolstoi and Anton Chekov, great Russian social realists; and Virginia Woolf, a feminist founder of Modernism. Le Guin, married to historian Charles Le Guin, whom she met while on a Fulbright in France, has three children.

Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849). Born to traveling actors who died before he was 3, Poe, sheltered but never adopted, was always poor and unhappy. He was expelled from the University of Virginia for gambling debts and from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point for drunkenness. After winning a short-story contest (1833), he began a series of editorial jobs, most notably on *The Southern Literary Messenger*. His devoted marriage to his first cousin, Virginia, whom he married when she was 13, ended 12 years later after her long struggle with tuberculosis. He was both praised and mocked for the relentless, stunning musicality of his poetry. His pioneering commitment to unitary aesthetic effects...
led to his achievement of prototypical works of horror fiction, detective fiction, and science fiction. After the death of his wife, Poe's chronic depression deepened. He died four days after being found delirious outside a Baltimore saloon.

Mary (Wollstonecraft Godwin) Shelley (1797–1851). Mary's birth killed her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, a famous British feminist. Her father, William Godwin, a free-thinking political theorist, married the divorced Mrs. Clairmont (a publisher of "Beauty and the Beast"). Mrs. Clairmont's daughter, Claire, Lord Byron's lover, was at the Villa Diodati in Switzerland the night in June 1816 when the assemblage set themselves a horror-story writing competition. Percy Shelley, Mary's lover and, after his wife's suicide, her husband, left his entry incomplete. Byron's work, later published, quickly provided J. W. Polidori, present as Byron's physician, material toward The Vampyre (1819), the first such novel in English. Mary created Frankenstein (1818) with her infant son William at her side. After Percy's drowning (1822), she promoted her husband's work devotedly and published much herself, for example, The Last Man (1826), another first in English. Of her children, only Percy survived infancy. She died of brain cancer.

J(ohn) R(onald) R(euel) Tolkien (1892–1973). After the death of his bank-manager father (1896) and mother (1904), a convert to Catholicism, Tolkien was raised near Birmingham, England, by a Roman Catholic priest. Except for service in World War I, Tolkien spent his life as a celebrated medievalist. His marriage to his childhood sweetheart produced four children. His passion for philology, myth, and storytelling led to participation in a self-help group of religious writers, The Inklings, that included C. S. Lewis, and to creation of a fanciful universe (pieces later published as The Silmarillion, 1977), the setting for The Hobbit (1937), written in part for his children. Asked by the publisher for a sequel, he finally issued The Lord of the Rings trilogy (originally one book) in 1954–1955, a work meant for all ages. Often voted the best book of the 20th century, it opened the door for modern fantasy publishing.

Jules Verne (1828–1905). Raised on an island in the port city of Nantes, Verne always fantasized about travel. Sent by his father to Paris, he studied law indifferently while writing some adequate dramas and librettos and mainly inadequate narratives. He married (1857), had a son and two stepdaughters, and wrote while barely surviving as a law tutor, theater administrator, and stockbroker. Pierre-Jules-Hetzel, publisher of a family magazine, suggested revising the manuscript of Five Weeks in a Balloon to add humor, truncate the science, and provide a happy ending. The book's immediate popularity (1863) launched Verne on a prolific, lucrative career, largely with Hetzel. The first science fiction writer to live by his pen, Verne's books became ever more subtle yet usually lighthearted satires of society and appreciations of science. His most popular, Around the World in Eighty Days (1873), was the first Western novel translated into Japanese.

H(erbert) G(eorge) Wells (1866–1946). A lower-middle-class Englishman, Wells attended on scholarship what is now the Imperial College of Science and Technology, for two years assisting T. H. Huxley, Charles Darwin's great disciple. The idea of pattern influenced all Wells's major work, including his early "scientific romances" (such as The Time Machine, 1895, and The War of the Worlds, 1898), which shaped science fiction. A journalist and essayist throughout his career, his Outline of History (1920) attempted to sketch world history in terms of peoples and social forces rather than battles and rulers. As a prominent member of the socialist Fabian Society, Wells argued for a world state, spelling reform, public education, and—against Henry James—the importance of social over psychological truth in fiction. Ever active, he divorced his first wife and had two children by his second, who died, and one each by two of his many lovers.

Virginia Woolf (1882–1941). Woolf, daughter of Sir Leslie Stephen, a prolific writer and editor of Britain's Dictionary of National Biography, was part of the famous Bloomsbury group of London-based intellectuals, which included her sister, Vanessa Stephen Bell (artist); Clive Bell (critic); John Maynard Keynes (economist); E. M. Forster (novelist and critic); Roger Fry (critic who assembled the First Postimpressionist Exhibition, 1910); and Lytton Strachey (biographer of The Eminent Victorians, 1918). With her husband, Leonard Woolf, Virginia established the Hogarth Press, which issued The Standard Edition of the Works of Sigmund Freud, edited by James Strachey, and brought modern psychoanalytic theory to the English-speaking world, including its avant-garde artist and writers. She was a pioneer of feminism (with a devoted but apparently sexless marriage) and literary Modernism, but each book's completion left her ferociously depressed. After at least two unsuccessful attempts, she died a suicide.

Yevgeny Zamyatin (1884–1937). Zamyatin, the son of a Russian Orthodox priest, became a naval architect and lecturer at the St. Petersburg Polytechnic. A lapsed Bolshevik, he supervised the construction of Russian ice-breakers for 18 months (1916–1917) in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, a sojourn that led to stories bitingly attacking English life and a fluency that resulted in editing collections in Russian of H. G. Wells, George Bernard Shaw, Jack London, and O. Henry while continuing to write his own fiction and essays on the social conditions in Russia. His novel We (1920), the first book officially suppressed by the young Soviet Union, was published abroad and inspired many modern dystopias. Unable to publish at home, Zamyatin wrote Stalin (1931) for permission to emigrate. Once permission was granted, Zamyatin went to Paris, where he died. In 1988, during the thaw before the fall of the Soviet Union, We headed the list of the first volumes rehabilitated.
Essential Reading:


Carroll, Lewis. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass.* New York: Signet, 2000. Taken together, these works (originally published in 1865 and 1872, respectively) form a composite novel that is the acknowledged progenitor of much of the world's best children's fiction. The copious annotations by Martin Gardner highlight Carroll's skill and erudition, which adult readers continue to admire.

Clarke, Arthur C. 2001: *A Space Odyssey.* New York: Penguin, 2000. Clarke worked on this novel and the screenplay of Stanley Kubrick's movie of the same name with Kubrick as a sounding board. The result were two 1968 works, a film that changed the meaning of science fiction cinema and a novel that continues to offer humanity ineffable hope.


Grimm, Jakob, and Wilhelm Grimm. *Household Stories of the Brothers Grimm.* New York: Dover Books, 1963. This edition, drawn from volumes the Grimm brothers published in 1812, 1814, and 1822, includes the translations of Lucy Crane and the illustrations of her husband, Walter Crane, the first person to explore the psychology of book illustration. The tales themselves form a cornerstone of all fantastic literature since they appeared.

Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *Selected Short Stories of Nathaniel Hawthorne.* New York: Fawcett, 1983. Published in the middle of the 19th century, the short stories of this classic author include fables, fantasies, and science fictions, yet they always offer human truth.


Hoffmann, E. T. A. *The Tales of E. T. A. Hoffmann.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972. Hoffmann's stories, published in the beginning of the 19th century, set the tone for the literary fantastic; popularized a depth psychology that would emerge as the West's dominant self-conception; and presented images, such as "The Sandman," that have multiplied in other works and media.


Le Guin, Ursula K. *The Left Hand of Darkness.* New York: Ace, 2000. This 1969 novel, only the second to win science fiction's top two major awards, is a true experimental novel, a milestone of modern feminism, and a probing inquiry into the construction of identity.


Rabkin, Eric S. *Science Fiction: A Historical Anthology.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1983. This thoroughly annotated anthology offers milestones in the development of the genre from the mid-17th to the 20th centuries.

Robbe-Grillet, Alain. *The Erasers.* New York: Grove Press, 1970. When this novel appeared in 1953, it generated the term *New Novel,* a mind-bending subgenre for which this work has remained the crucial prototype, a cinematic, fantastic detective story where myth and realism intersect.

Seuss, Dr. *If I Ran the Zoo.* New York: Random House, 1950. This book, by one of America's most beloved creators of children's nonsense verse and images, comically explores a childhood fantasy of outdoing one's father and conquering the natural and social worlds.
Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1982. Since its appearance in 1818, this surprisingly erudite work has come to be seen as the first and quintessential science fiction novel, providing perhaps the single most powerful modern myth, that of the escape of untamed science from human control.


———. *The Tolkien Reader*. New York: Ballantine, 1986. In the works collected here, including “Leaf by Niggle” (1964) and “Farmer Giles of Ham” (1949), we see Tolkien work his magic on one thread at a time, such as the importance of religion or of democracy.

Verne, Jules. *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. New York: Tor, 1995. Since its 1870 publication, this hugely popular novel has exemplified Verne’s satire, enthusiasm for science and exploration, and ability to ground the fantastic in present reality.

Wells, H. G. “The Invisible Man,” in *Best Science Fiction Stories of H. G. Wells*. New York: Dover Books, 1966. This classic novella, first published in 1897, demonstrates the power of the fantastic to make visible even such invisible human problems as alienation and the need for power.

———. *The Island of Dr. Moreau*. New York: Signet Classics, 1977. This unforgettable fantastic parable, first published in 1896, overtly criticizes imperialism and the misuses of religion while it covertly explores the human traits that drive us to seek power.

———. *The Time Machine*. New York: Tor Classics, 1992. From its appearance in 1895, when it became an instant classic, this parabolic critique of the economics of Victorian England has been an exemplar of the whole field of science fiction.

———. *The War of the Worlds*. New York: Tor Classics, 2005. This 1898 novel has so captured the inherent problems of one group imposing itself on another that it has recurred in countless successful—and notorious—versions in prose, film, and radio.

Woolf, Virginia. *Orlando*. New York: Harcourt, 1993. This 1928 novel, a comic masterpiece by a towering founder of literary Modernism, is both a subtle and fantastic exploration of gender, language, and love in 15 years of a life lived over two sexes and more than three centuries.

Zamyatin, Yevgeny. *We*. New York: Penguin, 1993. Written in 1920, this novel, the first banned by the Soviet Union, is the prototypical modern dystopian fantasy, exploring brilliantly how some of us use modern techniques to enslave the rest at the deepest levels of their being.

Supplementary Reading:


Bellamy, Edward. *News from Nowhere*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003. This 1888 book is the most politically influential utopia in American history, spawning more than 400 Bellamy Clubs and a significant run at the presidency of the United States.


Carroll, Lewis. *Mathematical Recreations of Lewis Carroll: Pillow Problems and a Tangled Tale*. New York: Dover Books, 1958. In these nonfiction works, published in 1895 and 1885, respectively, we see Carroll the mathematician at play in his professional field.

Cawelti, John G. *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977. This analysis of the common features and diverse pleasures of “formulaic” genres, such as the Western, help explain the power of genres, including science fiction, that build on them.


Defoe, Daniel. _Robinson Crusoe_. New York: Modern Library, 2001. This 1719 classic tale of a lone man’s survival is the archetype for the fantasy of taming the world.


Dunsany, Lord. _The Sword of Wellerman and Other Stories_. New York: Dover Books, 2005. First published in 1908, the short stories in this collection support the claim that Dunsany invented the modern fantasy short story.

Freud, Sigmund. _Totem and Taboo_. New York: Norton, 1962. This slender 1913 volume includes a seminal exposition of the Oedipus complex and argues that the ground rules of our cultural world, and their violation, grow from psychological needs.

________. _The Uncanny_. New York: Penguin Classics, 2003. In this 1919 essay, the heart of which is an analysis of E. T. A. Hoffmann’s “The Sandman,” Freud lays the foundation for a major psychoanalytic understanding of the fantastic.


Gorey, Edward. _Anchigore_. New York: Putnam, 1980. Gorey both wrote and illustrated the playfully sinister books first collected here in 1972, each a macabre adult version of what should be children’s literature.


Heaney, Seamus. _Beowulf: A New Verse Translation_. New York: W.W. Norton, 2001. This is the foundational epic of English culture, the battles of a hero against a monster and the monster’s mother, rendered here in vigorous, modern verse.


Jung, Carl Gustav. _Man and His Symbols_. New York: Dell, 1968. First published in 1964, three years after Jung’s death, the essays collected here give the most accessible overview of Jung’s views of psychology and culture. It is the most prominent depth psychological alternative to Freud.

Kafka, Franz. _Amerika_. New York: Schocken Books, 1996. This novel, published posthumously in 1927, is Kafka’s fictional study of America as a possible location for overcoming the alienation of modern culture.


Landon, Brooks. _Science Fiction After 1900: From the Steam Man to the Stars_. New York: Routledge, 2002. This is a fine, compact, readable overview of its title subject.


Lord, Albert. _The Singer of Tales_. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000. First published in 1960, this is the most influential work exploring the relationship between oral and written composition, focusing on fantastic founding epics, such as _The Odyssey_ and _Beowulf_.

Lütghi, Max. _Once Upon a Time: On the Nature of Fairy Tales_. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1976. This 1964 study of fairy tales attempts to understand the full range of its subject’s psychological, cultural, and aesthetic importance.

Marlowe, Christopher. _Doctor Faustus_. New York: Signet, 2001. First performed in 1594, this play captures the famous image of the man of great learning overreaching and bringing doom.

More, Thomas. _Utopia_. New York: Penguin, 2003. When this work was published in 1516, its title instantly became the name of a genre of fantastic social imagination that stretches from Plato to the present.

Orwell, George. _Animal Farm_. New York: Signet, 2004. This famous 1945 fable uses the warrant of children’s literature to create a simplistic yet biting political satire intended for adults.

Ovid. _Metamorphoses_. New York: Oxford World Classics, 1998. This classic masterpiece (c. 8 C.E.) recounts Greek, Roman, and Near Eastern traditional tales of fantastic changes often effected by gods.

Perrault, Charles. _Perrault’s Fairy Tales_. New York: Dover Books, 1969. This edition of the 1697 courtly retelling of such classics as “Cinderella” and “Puss in Boots” also has Gustave Doré’s famous illustrations.


Stapledon, Olaf. Star Maker, in Last and First Men and Star Maker: Two Science Fiction Novels. New York: Dover Books, 1968. The deeply poetic 1937 Star Maker, which has been called the “one great grey holy book of science fiction,” was a bestseller in its time and is now best known as the source for the seeds of hundreds of other novels.


Twain, Mark. A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court. New York: Bantam, 1983. The premise of this delightful time-travel novel (1889) is fantastic, but the action in the past is science fictional, while the satire and romance combine with it all to produce an under-read masterpiece.


Internet Resources:
Eric S. Rabkin. Eric Rabkin’s Home Page. http://www.umich.edu/~esrabkin. This site contains links to fantasy and science fiction courses, each of which has further links to supplementary materials in those subjects.

The Internet Speculative Fiction Database. http://www.isfdb.org. This site offers a compendious, although unannotated, listing of modern science fiction writing.