

# Science Fiction

September 16. *Amazing*.

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# last time

1. Genre: thematic, formal, pragmatic
  - a. lots of themes, but any required (“science”?)
  - b. formal: Suvin’s *novum*
  - c. pragmatic: Gernsback’s educative/prophetic mission
2. Classification and hierarchy: pathways to status
  - a. “validated by cognitive logic” (Suvin)  
prestige of scientific reason
  - b. oppositions: mere fact; mere fantasy
  - c. “social” or “historical” bearing

# status pathways

True, even after one subtracts the more or less supernatural tales...90 percent of SF will have plot structures escaping from history into Westerns, additive sensationalist adventures, or rehashes of mythography. However, as Kant said, a thousand years of any given state of affairs do not make that state necessarily right.

Suvin, *Metamorphoses*, 83

# status pathways

Science fiction is a polemical genre, arguing its case, declaring its position... Its social commitments and technological investments mean that SF inevitably has a far more overt political identity than other genres.

Gelder, *Popular Fiction*, 71

# status pathways

I am, by trade, a science-fiction writer. That is, the fiction I've written so far has arrived at the point of consumption via a marketing mechanism called "science fiction."

William Gibson, "Rocket Radio" (1989)

"strategy of condescension" (Bourdieu)

# medium

Paper is the old internet.

“JustAPerson,” September 14, 2013

# medium



# status

AMAZING STORIES is a new magazine, facing an uphill fight for recognition by the reading public, and there can be no question about your interest in a magazine of this kind, which is the first to come out with scientific fiction. It really deserves your best cooperation to help put this publication on its feet...

Gernsback to H.G.Wells, May 4, 1926  
(unanswered)

After all, it is *your* paper, and we are striving hard to please you.

Most of our correspondents seemed to heave a great sigh of relief in at last finding a literature that appeals to the imagination, rather than carrying a sensational appeal to the emotions.

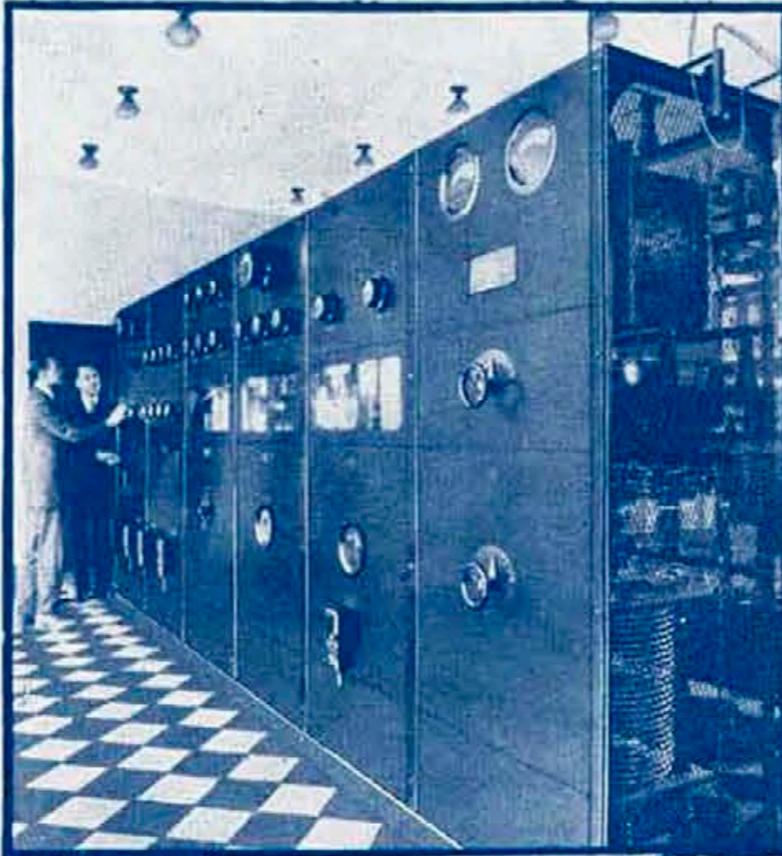
“Thank You!”

Now that you have looked over the first issue of AMAZING STORIES, the editor would very much like to know how you like the new magazine. In the coming issues we shall probably run a department entitled "Readers' Letters", which will be a forum where our readers can discuss the various problems in connection with these stories. Very often you are puzzled over certain scientific matter contained in stories of this kind and wish to get more information. We shall try hard to keep this new department for the benefit of all, and will try to publish all letters received from readers of AMAZING STORIES.

If, on the other hand, you have comments, criticisms, and suggestions, be good enough to let us have all of these. The editor would also like to know whether you like the present makeup of the magazine; that is, one story in two parts, as, for instance, the one we present this month, "Off on a Comet", with the balance in the next issue—or whether you would rather have the complete story in one issue, without the short stories as printed in the present number.

Rest assured that the editor will be guided by the majority at all times. A word from you will be greatly appreciated.

—EDITOR.



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# 700 YEARS HENCE!

MR. HUGO GERNSBACK, Editor of WONDER STORIES, herewith presents in book form his famous story—RALPH 124C 41+—a romance of the year 2660. This story originally ran in MODERN ELECTRICS, one of Mr. Gernsback's magazines; there are only a limited number of copies of this book available at present.

*Illustrated by Paul*

300 Pages



This book is the forerunner of all modern science fiction stories and contains more novel ideas, more future inventions (some of which have already come true) than any book of its kind that has ever been published. It is *science fiction plus*. A pioneer in the electrical and radio field, Hugo Gernsback has a profound knowledge of the subjects, coupled with a finely trained and highly imaginative mind. This unusual combination has enabled him to foreshadow with almost unbelievable accuracy some of the more recent developments. His earlier predictions, which have appeared from time to time during the past decade in many newspapers and magazines, are now realities. Every prophecy is based on accurate scientific knowledge. His ideas are no more fantastic than the realities and commonplaces of our everyday life would have been to our great grandfathers. So many WONDER STORIES readers have asked us if this story can still be secured in book form, that we had a limited number reprinted, as the book was out of print.



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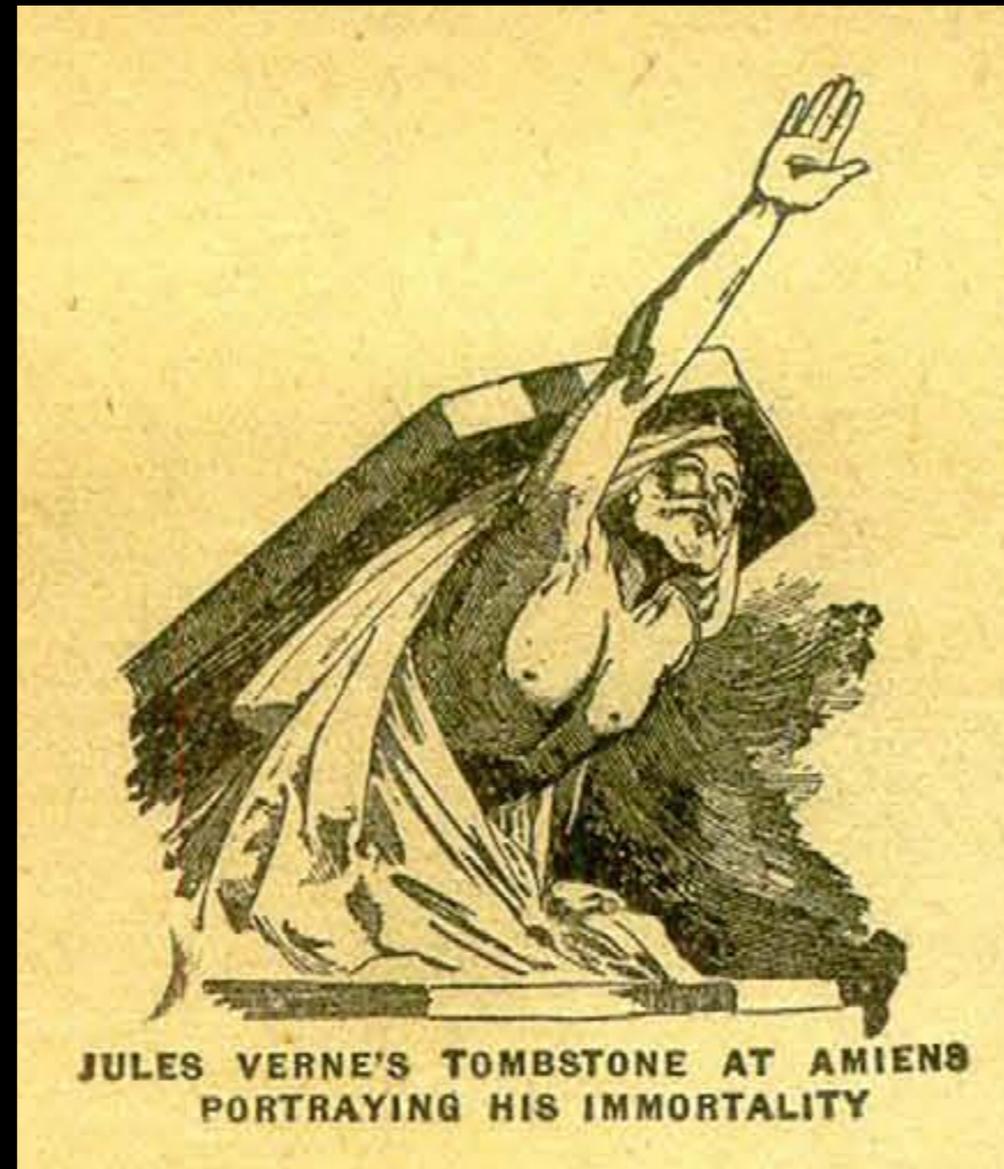
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The book is illustrated throughout by Paul, the well-known artist. There are quite a number of these famous illustrations. The book is large size



Why does scientifiction need a past?

# “The Man from the Atom”

*I*N “Alice in the Looking Glass” the beautiful play of fancy which gave immortal fame to a logician and mathematician we read of the mysterious change in size of the heroine, the charming little Alice. It tells how she grew large and small according to what she ate. But here we have increase in size and pushed to its utmost limit. Here we have treated the growth of a man to cosmic dimensions. And we are told of his strange sensation and are led up to a sudden startling and impressive conclusion, and are taken through the picture of his emotions and despair.

we might term it spirit. Take, now, a step beyond the luminiferous ether—conceive a matter as much more rare than the ether, as this ether is more rare than the metal, and we arrive at once (in spite of all the school dogmas) at a unique mass—an unparticled matter. For although we may admit infinite littleness in the atoms themselves, the infinitude of littleness in the spaces between them is an absurdity. There will be a point—there will be a degree of rarity, at which, if the atoms are sufficiently numerous, the interspaces must vanish, and the mass absolutely coalesce. But the consideration of the atomic constitution being now taken away, the nature of the mass inevitably glides into what we conceive as spirit. It is clear, however, that it is as fully matter as before. The truth is, it is impossible to conceive spirit, since it is impossible to imagine what is not. When we flatter ourselves that we have formed its conception, we have merely deceived our understanding by the consideration of infinitely rarefied matter.

“Mesmeric Revelation” (*Amazing* 1, no. 2: 126)

Dr. Umberto Pomilio, one of Italy's foremost chemists and authority on hydro-electric developments, in a lecture this afternoon on "coalless industry" told his audience that the realization of the chemist's dream of releasing atomic energy was imminent. Civilization contemplated either catastrophic destruction or unlimited riches through the work of chemists in relation to the energy of the atom.

NYT 8/18/26

Nowadays we think that an atom is built up from a very small central particle, the nucleus, around which electrons, the smallest material bodies that carry electricity, are circling at various distances. So small is this central body and so far away are the revolving electrons that the whole structure may well be compared with our planetary system; the nucleus is the sun and the electrons represent the planets.

Although the whole atom is no more than a billionth of an inch in size, it is still so large compared with the actual sizes of the nucleus and the electrons that Sir Oliver Lodge aptly described the whole structure by comparing it to "flies in a cathedral." To

W.J. Luyten, "Atomic Theory Clears Some Cosmic Problems,  
NYT 8/18/26

# Next time

“The Call of Cthulhu” (in Lovecraft volume)  
Browse some of *Weird Tales* (for context)