

An analysis of Science Fiction Sub-genres

Science Fiction has been around for centuries in one form or another, whether it was Edgar Allan Poe in the late 1800s or Isaac Asimov in the 1950s. Some writers depicted great tales of starships traveling between the stars. Others told of wars with great alien powers. All of these styles and stories have the great name of Science Fiction behind them.

One of the most popular sub-genres of Science Fiction, and the one I'd like to start this analysis with, is that time travel. Series such as Doctor Who have captivated audiences for years with time travel. Recently, triple A films like *Looper* have offered new insights into this area of Sci-Fi. Though all of these movies and TV series are top notch, they all suffer the same fatal flaw, endless speculation. The audiences of time travel have, since its rise, always questioned the methods and results. Talks are always filled with paradoxes and the Butterfly Effect. It is these controversies, however, that make time travel such an interesting topic to watch and read.

I mentioned earlier Edgar Allan Poe as a Sci-Fi writer. Many would question that statement. "Poe is a fantasy and horror writer!" they would say. I agree that he is a fantasy writer, and thus falls under the broad sweep of Sci-Fi. Stories like "Tell Tale Heart" and "The Raven" ignore scientific law to explore the realm of fantasy. Through the years there have been a vast number of fantasy tales. In the early 1900s there was *The Lord of the Rings* by J. R. R. Tolkien. In the 1970s Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson created the most complex fantasy role playing system to date, *Dungeons and Dragons*. Today we have not only all that has come before, but a whole slew of new works. While not my personal favorite, fantasy is one of the largest sub-genres of Sci-Fi going as far as to be a genre of its own.

Diving back into what is considered traditional Sci-Fi, we come upon Alien Incursion. I use "incursion" very loosely not to describe an alien invasion on earth, but to illustrate any contact or tale dealing with extraterrestrial life. This sub-genre has spawned many great works like Ridley Scott's *Alien* due to the sheer depth of the sub-genre. Here on Earth we have many millions of different species of life, but not a single sentient species to share our home with. Humans crave relations, it is built into our genome. The prospect of an intelligent extraterrestrial race coming to visit Earth has tantalized us for years. We have even created protocols to enact once we have confirmed contact with an alien civilization. Books have covered many different scenarios of contact with aliens. I have even written stories about contact. Some tell of peaceful contact in which an alien civilization wishes to assist mankind in its ascent to the stars and further. Others spin stories of violence and destruction from a militaristic society of beings. This sub-genre has so captivated us because we long to share our discoveries and intellect with some else. Because we crave intelligence we will always be waiting for the day someone comes knocking from the stars.

Space is not only the domain of alien life in Science Fiction. Humanity has already claimed Luna and countless other worlds with satellites. In Space Operas we have gone even farther. My personal favorite, Space Operas are tales from beyond Earth. Some take place in our home system while others span the entire Milky Way Galaxy. They all share the separation of Earth in common. While we will always, hopefully, inhabit our big blue marble the next home of humanity is the stars. Countless books, TV series, and movies tell of humanity's escapades into space. Video Games like *Halo* and the *Freespace* series venture out past our home system into many others. In these universes faster than light travel has become available and economical. Hyper drives, warp drives, shock-point drives and super-space drives have all

delivered humanity to distant stars and continue to do so. In some stories these methods are not available. Regardless, humanity has claimed the bodies of our own system. These tales often deal with conflict that would arise between Earth and Mars or Earth and the Asteroid Belt. Varying living conditions and the constant political plight of human society plague the worlds that stretch across the system. Wealth and power collect to a single body leaving those less fortunate to the far reaches. Thankfully this is not only the case. Some stories have humanity distributed equally across Sol. These tales thrive on the curiosity of humans, as do many other sub-genres. We crave to know and explore, and the stars help to satisfy us.

Science Fiction is filled with thousands of worlds and stories. I could not even hope to outline every sub-genre that exists in Sci-Fi in one biography. There are many more than the four I described here and they are equally, if not greater, in magnitude. They all help to make Science Fiction the definitive genre, the be all, end all of creativity. Endless possibilities exist beyond the bounds of current understanding. Writers and creators will continue to push the bounds of science in Science Fiction for years to come. We as readers will continue to be enlightened and excited by Science Fiction until we hit the pinnacle of science and understanding, and as that will not be for many years, Sci-Fi will thrive.