

The culture of the genre

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The genre

PULP SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINES PUBLISHED ON CHEAP WOOD PULP PAPER. THEIR MAIN MARKET WAS SCHOOLBOYS, TEENAGE BOYS, AND YOUNG MEN. THIS WAS THE GENESIS OF THE MODERN SCIENCE FICTION GENRE DESPITE SOME GOOD, BAD, AND AWFUL WRITING.

THEY HAD TO PUBLISH WORKS THAT PARENTS IN A CONSERVATIVE CULTURE WOULD APPROVE OF, BUT THIS DID NOT PRESENT MUCH OF A PROBLEM FOR THE WRITERS. ADVENTURE STORIES WORK JUST FINE WITH HEROIC PROTAGONISTS WHO DO NOT PERPETRATE DEPRAVITY. SOME OTHER PULP FICTION GENRES WERE MARKETED TO ADULT MEN AND USED A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT STANDARD (NOIR HAD LOTS OF VICE, BUT IT WAS A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT GENRE).

THE PULPS THRIVED AND GREW FROM 1900 UNTIL THE START OF WORLD WAR TWO. NEWSPAPER COMIC STRIPS, COMIC BOOKS, RADIO PLAYS, FILMS, AND ACTUAL SCIENCE WERE ADDED TO THE GENRE AS TIME WENT ON. THE GENRE DECLINED AND CHANGED RAPIDLY ONCE THE WAR STARTED, AND IT VANISHED DURING THE MOON RACE. WARTIME AND POSTWAR STORYLINES WERE DIFFERENT FROM THE EARLIER ONES THIS GAME IS BASED ON.

PULP MAGAZINES OFTEN HAD SHORT STORIES AND SERIALIZED STORIES, HALF A DOZEN PER MONTHLY ISSUE. THE CHEAP PAPER LET THEM PUBLISH WITHOUT FILLING THE ISSUES WITH ADVERTISEMENTS.

THE SHORT-LIVED MAGAZINE TITLES POPPED UP LIKE MUSHROOMS AND DISAPPEARED AS VAPORS. THE CHEAP PULP PAPER DID NOT LAST LONG EITHER. *AMAZING STORIES* AND *ASTOUNDING SCIENCE FICTION* WERE TWO OF THE LONGER-LIVED TITLES.

SURVIVING PROPERTIES INCLUDE FLASH GORDON, BUCK ROGERS, TOM CORBETT, JOHN CARTER OF MARS, AND THE WORKS OF H. P. LOVECRAFT. PULP SCIENCE FICTION INFLUENCE ON CULTURE IS PERVERSIVE THROUGH SECONDARY EFFECTS: SCIENCE FICTION DESCENDED FROM IT IS NOW A MAINSTREAM GENRE THAT AFFECTS CULTURE & TECHNOLOGY.

Disclaimer

THIS IS BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE PULP SCIENCE FICTION GENRE. MANY PEOPLE WROTE MANY THINGS OVER A 70-YEAR PERIOD. FOR EVERY GENERALIZATION HERE THERE WAS AT LEAST ONE EXAMPLE OF THE OPPOSITE.



The golden years for pulp science fiction

PULP SCIENCE FICTION STARTED WITH JULES VERNE IN THE 1890S, BUT DID NOT GET ROLLING UNTIL THE TURN OF THE CENTURY. THE SPACE OPERA PLOTS WERE SIMILAR TO WESTERNS (THINK SHERIFFS IN SPACE WITH RAY GUNS), AND ALSO OCEAN VOYAGE STORIES (CALLED TRAVEL STORIES BACK IN THE DAY). THE TRAVEL STORIES WENT TO EXOTIC LOCATIONS BY SEA AND ADVENTURE HAPPENED. SUBSTITUTE A SPACE SHIP AND YOU HAVE A SCIENCE FICTION STORY.

WORLD WAR II AND THE RED SCARE CHANGED THE PLOTS FOR SCIENCE FICTION STORIES COMPLETELY. THE ADVERSARIES WERE INCREDIBLY DANGEROUS, AND MANY GOOD MEN DIED OPPOSING THEM. THESE ADVERSARIES PUT MUCH EFFORT INTO PLANTING SPIES, RECRUITING TRAITORS, AND DELUDING PEOPLE TO BECOME TURNCOATS. POST-1940 PLOTS OFTEN FEATURED SPIES AND TRAITORS. TRAITOR STORIES DO NOT FIT WELL INTO THIS GAME BECAUSE THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE AUDIENCE IN THE GOLDEN YEARS WAS DIFFERENT; TRAITOR STORIES DID NOT SELL WELL BEFORE HITLER AND STALIN.

PULP SCIFI STORIES PREDATED SPACE PROBES AND TOOK CHARACTERS TO ALL THE PLANETS, MOONS, AND ASTEROIDS IN THE SOLAR SYSTEM. MANY OF THEM WERE INHABITABLE, AND SOME OF THOSE HAD NATIVES. THIS GAME TAKES THE ADVENTURE INTERSTELLAR INSTEAD.

PG rated genre

ALMOST ALL PULP SCIENCE FICTION WAS PG RATED. SO KEEP YOUR GAME AND ROLE-PLAYING PG-RATED.

Book Covers

MANY PULP SCIENCE FICTION BOOK COVERS DEPICTED A WOMAN IN TIGHT, SKIMPY, OR TORN CLOTHING TO SELL MORE BOOKS. HALF THE TIME SHE WAS FAINTED, BEING KIDNAPPED, AND/OR BEING RESCUED. ODDLY, THE COVER WAS MUCH, MUCH RACIER THAN THE BOOK, WHERE RACY STORIES WERE NOT TOLERATED.

CHARACTERS CAN HAVE ARTWORK WITH SKIMPY OR TIGHT-FITTING CLOTHING TO SHOW THEIR RIPPED MUSCLES OR FEMININE CURVES. JUST KEEP IT PG RATED.

Self-reliance

AMERICA STILL HAD A FRONTIER CULTURE WHEN PULP SCIENCE FICTION GOT STARTED, SO THESE PEOPLE WERE SELF-RELIANT. WHEN SAN FRANCISCO WAS DESTROYED IN 1906, THE INHABITANTS REBUILT IT THEMSELVES. THE ONLY HELP THEY GOT FROM THE GOVERNMENT WAS A TENT CAMP THAT LASTED A FEW MONTHS.

BRITAIN WAS AN EMPIRE AT THE TIME, AND ENGLISHMEN OUT IN THE EMPIRE WERE EXPECTED TO BE RESOURCEFUL, SELF-RELIANT, AND SHOW LEADERSHIP.

YOUR CHARACTERS ARE THE SAME; THEY TAKE CHARGE, HANDLE THINGS THEMSELVES, AND ONLY CALL FOR HELP WHEN NECESSARY.

A mans word was his bond and his reputation mattered

A MANS WORD AND REPUTATION USED TO MEAN MORE THAN IT DOES NOW. IN FICTION, THE HERO KEPT HIS WORD EVEN IF IT COST HIM. SOME VILLAINS WOULD EVEN DO THIS. HERO AND VILLAIN BOTH CARED ABOUT THEIR REPUTATION.

Men, Emotions & Hugging

MEN did NOT HUG IN WESTERN CULTURE A HUNDRED YEARS AGO. THEY WERE RAISED TO NOT SHOW ANY FORM OF EMOTIONAL VULNERABILITY. PULP SCIENCE FICTION REFLECTED THAT. YOUR MALE CHARACTERS HAVE EMOTIONS, BUT DO NOT GET EMOTIONAL. THEY DO NOT HUG OTHER MEN. THIS IS ONE OF THE DEFECTS IN TRADITIONAL CULTURE.

Strong gender roles

THE PEOPLE 100 YEARS AGO LIVED IN A SOCIETY WITH STRONG GENDER ROLES, AND THEY WROTE THEIR FICTION THE SAME WAY. THE SELF-RELIANT MEN WERE TAUGHT HOW TO FIGHT, SHOOT, AND RIDE HORSES. RUNNING A HOUSEHOLD TOOK A WOMAN ALL DAY AND IT WAS REALLY HARD WORK. SO THEY SPECIALIZED. MEN DID MENS WORK AND WOMEN DID WOMENS WORK.

WOMEN WERE MORE LIBERATED IN THIS GENRE. THEY COULD GO ON ADVENTURES AND WERE NOT EXPECTED TO STAY HOME.

MEN TREAT WOMEN HONORABLY IN THIS GENRE. ALSO, THE SIGHT OF A WOMAN BEING MISTREATED CAUSES GOOD MALE CHARACTERS TO GET INVOLVED IMMEDIATELY. MEN RISK THEIR LIVES TO PROTECT WOMEN, CHILDREN, AND INNOCENTS. THEY SACRIFICE FOR THE COMFORTS OF THOSE PEOPLE.

MANY TEENAGE BOYS WHO READ PULPS GOT WHIPPED WITH A BELT IF THEY HIT A GIRL OR LET A GIRL COME TO HARM. THE GIRLS WOULD BE DISCIPLINED FOR DISRESPECT OR DISOBEDIENCE. THIS ATTITUDE WAS REINFORCED IN THE STORIES THEY READ.

MEN WHO TRY TO COOK OR THINK THEY CAN COOK WERE AN ENDLESS SOURCE OF COMEDY GOLD IN THIS GENRE.

Gender and character backgrounds

THE CHARACTER BACKGROUNDS AND THEIR SKILL SETS REFLECT THE GENRE. MOST OF THE MENS SKILLS RELATE TO FLYING SPACE SHIPS AND BEATING UP BAD GUYS. MOST OF THE WOMENS SKILLS ARE MORE MUNDANE SOUNDING, BUT MUCH MORE USEFUL.

Womens rights

WOMEN HAD LIMITED LEGAL RIGHTS. THEY WERE GRADUALLY GRANTED VOTING AND PROPERTY RIGHTS IN THE WESTERN WORLD DURING THE TIME THE PULPS WERE PRINTED. YET THE PULP SCIENCE FICTION GENRE OFTEN SHOWED WOMEN AS EQUALS IN MOST WAYS. IT WAS QUITE PROGRESSIVE.

EVEN THOUGH WOMEN WERE DEPICTED AS EQUAL, THEY STILL HAD FEMALE GENDER ROLES. THEY WERE DEPICTED AS EQUAL BUT DIFFERENT. YOUR CHARACTERS BELIEVE THAT MEN AND WOMEN ARE DIFFERENT, BUT EQUAL.

THE READERS LIKED SEEING WOMEN TREATED WITH EQUALITY AND RESPECT; ONLY BAD GUYS OPPRESS WOMEN & MINORITIES IN THIS GAME.



Women in pulp science fiction

MOST WOMEN IN THIS GENRE FELL INTO THREE CATEGORIES: WOMEN WHO WERE THERE TO BE RESCUED (LIKE THE NPCs IN THIS GAME), EMPOWERED WOMEN (LIKE THE PLAYER-CHARACTERS IN THIS GAME), AND FEMALE ASSISTANTS WHO WERE EMPOWERED AND SOMETIMES SAVED THE DAY, BUT STILL NEEDED RESCUING SOMETIMES.

THE MALE CHARACTERS WERE THERE TO RESCUE DAMSEL-S-IN-DISTRESS AND THUMP THE BAD GUYS. THE EMPOWERED WOMEN WERE THERE TO FIGURE OUT WHO THE MEN SHOULD THUMP.

WOMEN WERE NOT USUALLY IN CHARGE OF MEN IN PULP SCIFI STORIES, BUT GAME MASTERS ARE FREE TO IGNORE THIS PRECEDENT IF THEY PREFER TO PLAY A MOD GAME.

Skirts & dresses

MOST WOMEN IN THE PAST WORE SKIRTS & DRESSES, WHILE MEN WORE PANTS. IN MANY PARTS OF THE WORLD, THEY STILL DO. AND WHY IS THAT? READY ACCESS TO INDOOR PLUMBING IS A RECENT DEVELOPMENT. MODERN WOMEN FREQUENTLY FIND WHY WOMEN WEAR SKIRTS WHEN THEY GO CAMPING; THERE ARE FEW TOILETS IN THE BUSH, AND THEY HAVE TO PULL THEIR PANTS DOWN SEVERAL TIMES A DAY. SOMETIMES THEY GET SEEN.

SKIRTS GIVE YOU FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT LIKE PANTS, BUT DO NOT PROTECT YOUR LEGS FROM BRUSH. DRESSES PROTECT YOUR LEGS, BUT YOU HAVE TO HIKE THEM UP WITH BOTH HANDS TO RUN. WEARING LEGGINGS UNDER A SKIRT GIVE YOU THE ADVANTAGES OF BOTH. THE PROBLEM IS THAT LEGGINGS CAN EITHER PROTECT YOU OR LOOK GOOD, BUT NOT BOTH.

Racism

RACISM WAS AN UGLY REALITY A HUNDRED YEARS AGO. YET PULP SCIENCE FICTION WAS USUALLY PROGRESSIVE AND HAD LITTLE OVERT RACISM. THERE WAS PLENTY OF SUBTLE RACISM, THOUGH.

BOOKS, COMICS, MOVIES, AND OTHER MEDIA USUALLY DEPICTED MOST CHARACTERS THE SAME RACE AND NATIONALITY AS THE MEDIAS CUSTOMERS.

THERE WERE OFTEN SUBTLE RACIST OVERTONES. A HUNDRED YEARS AGO, CHARACTERS WERE OFTEN NATIONALISTIC, IMPERIALISTIC, AND/OR COLONIAL. EARTHMEN FREQUENTLY ENCOUNTERED BEINGS ON OTHER PLANETS WHO LACKED THE TECHNOLOGY AND VIGOR TO REACH THE STARS OR PERFORM HEROIC ACTS. MANY OF THEM NEEDED EARTHMEN TO SHOW UP AND SOLVE THEIR SERIOUS PROBLEMS.

YOUR CHARACTERS ARE NOT RACIST, AND IN THIS GAME EARTH IS NEITHER NATIONALISTIC, IMPERIAL, NOR COLONIAL. IT DOES NOT NEED TO BE. EARTH DOES HAVE AN ACCIDENTAL EMPIRE, ALL THE WORLDS WHO DEPEND ON IT FOR PROTECTION. SOMETIMES THE ALIENS DO NEED EARTHMEN TO SHOW UP AND SOLVE THEIR SERIOUS PROBLEMS, BECAUSE THAT IS WHAT HEROES DO.

READERS LIKED EQUALITY IN THIS GENRE; ONLY BAD GUYS ARE OVERT RACISTS OR OPPRESSORS IN THIS GAME.

Heroism

EARTHMEN ARE HEROIC AND VIGOROUS. MOST ALIENS JUST KEEP TO THEIR OWN PLANET. WHEN THE PLANETS IN EARTH SPACE NEED SOMETHING AMAZING DONE, THEY LOOK TO EARTHMEN TO BE HEROES. YOUR CHARACTERS ARE HEROES AND SHOULD ACT LIKE HEROES, EVEN IF THEY ARE ACCIDENTAL HEROES.

The fainting stereotype

WOMEN WORE CORSETS UP UNTIL 1920. CORSETS WERE LACED TIGHT TO GIVE HER A BETTER FIGURE. THIS DISPLACED SOME OF HER ORGANS AND RESTRICTED HER DIAPHRAGM. SO WOMEN SOMETIMES FAINTED UNDER ADVERSE CONDITIONS. ANYTHING THAT COULD CAUSE A SUDDEN INCREASE IN RESPIRATION COULD CAUSE FAINTING. THIS INCLUDED SUDDEN PHYSICAL OR EMOTIONAL SHOCK.

THE FAINTING STEREOTYPE PERSISTED IN FICTION FOR A GENERATION AFTER THE CORSETS CAME OFF. SO FEMALE CHARACTERS SOMETIMES FAINT WHEN SOMETHING BIG UNEXPECTEDLY HAPPENS. THIS IS NOT USUALLY A PROBLEM IN THE GAME.

WOMEN DID NOT WEAR CORSETS AFTER THE 1920S, WHEN PULP SCIENCE FICTION FILMS STARTED SHOWING UP. MANY FILMS HAD THE WOMEN SCREAM INSTEAD OF FAINT (IT WAS MORE DRAMATIC IN SCREEN). THIS GAME DOES NOT HAVE SCREAMING RULES BECAUSE IT IS LESS DRAMATIC IN A GAME AND DOES NOT GIVE THE CHARACTERS A BONUS FOR ANYTHING.

Respect & obedience

PEOPLE A HUNDRED YEARS AGO WERE MUCH MORE RESPECTFUL OF PARENTS AND AUTHORITY THAN TODAY. WOMEN WERE EVEN MORE RESPECTFUL AND OBEDIENT; THEY WERE RAISED TO DO WHAT THEY WERE TOLD.

THERE WERE DISRESPECTFUL, DISOBEDIENT PEOPLE A HUNDRED YEARS AGO THAT ACTED LIKE PEOPLE TODAY. NOBODY TRUSTED OR RESPECTED THEM.

YOUR CHARACTERS ARE RESPECTFUL AND OBEDIENT TO THEIR SUPERVISOR AND OTHER AUTHORITY FIGURES, AND THIS GOES DOUBLE FOR FEMALE CHARACTERS.



Authority within marriage

MOST FAMILIES IN THE WORLD HAVE A CHAIN OF COMMAND. THE CHILDREN HAVE TO RESPECT AND OBEY THE PARENTS. IF HE AND SHE DISAGREE, DAD HAS THE TIEBREAKER. IT WAS LIKE THIS HERE A HUNDRED YEARS AGO, AND IT IS LIKE THAT IN THE PULP SCIENCE FICTION GENRE.

NOWADAYS IT IS DIFFERENT IN WESTERN CULTURE. MANY KIDS DO NOT RESPECT THEIR PARENTS, AND DO NOT ALWAYS OBEY. MOM AND DAD FIGHT A LOT, BECAUSE WITHOUT AN ESTABLISHED CHAIN OF COMMAND, EVERY DECISION IS A POWER STRUGGLE. WHO WILL DO THE DISHES? (*LETS FIGHT ABOUT IT*) WHO GETS THE REMOTE? (*LET THE CONTEST OF WILLS BEGIN*). THIS IS ONE OF THE REASONS FOR OUR 80% DIVORCE RATE.

THE HUSBAND IS A DICTATOR IN MANY PLACES IN THE WORLD. IT WAS NOT SO OUT-OF-BALANCE IN LAST-CENTURY ENGLAND & AMERICA, AND DEFINITELY IS NOT SO IN PULP SCIENCE FICTION, WHERE WOMEN ARE USUALLY DEPICTED AS EQUAL.

IF YOUR FEMALE CHARACTER IS MARRIED, SHE RESPECTS AND OBEYS HER HUSBAND. IF YOUR MALE CHARACTER IS MARRIED, HE RESPECTS THE DESIRES AND OPINIONS OF HIS WIFE, TRIES TO PLEASE HER, AND SOMETIMES OVERRULES HER FOR THE GOOD OF THE FAMILY. MOST PULP SCIENCE FICTION WRITERS DEPICTED THE MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP SOMETHING LIKE THIS. IT PLEASED BOTH THE MALE AND FEMALE AUDIENCE. THIS TYPE OF RELATIONSHIP ALSO FOSTERS HEALTHY REAL MARRIAGES.

Polite speech

SOME MEN CURSED A HUNDRED YEARS AGO, BUT FEW WOMEN DID. THERE WAS NO CURSING WHATSOEVER IN MOST OF THE PULP SCIENCE FICTION GENRE, NOT EVEN WITH SURROGATE SWEAR WORDS. THE CLOSEST THEY GOT WAS WHEN BUCK ROGERS EXCLAIMED *ROARING ROCKETS! LOOK AT THAT!*

YOUR CHARACTERS DO NOT SWEAR AT ALL, NOT EVEN WITH SURROGATE SWEAR WORDS. PLAYERS SHOULD SPEAK POLITELY AS WELL.

SOME ROLE-PLAYING GAMES HAVE A STATISTIC CALLED LUCK. THIS GAME DOES NOT. WHEN THE GAME MASTER LOOKS FOR THE VICTIM SOMETHING BAD HAPPENS TO, HE WILL PICK THE PLAYER WITH THE DIRTIEST OR LEAST RESPECTFUL MOUTH. WHEN HE LOOKS TO BESTOW SOMETHING GOOD ON SOMEONE, HE WILL PICK THE MOST POLITE PLAYER.

BLASPHEMY WAS SOCIALLY UNACCEPTABLE 100 YEARS AGO. THERE IS A -1 EXPERIENCE PENALTY IF YOU OR YOUR CHARACTER BLASPHEME.



Morals, the Bible, and your character

MOST PEOPLE WENT TO SUNDAY SCHOOL GROWING UP A HUNDRED YEARS AGO. MOST PEOPLE WENT TO CHURCH, AND MOST PEOPLE KNEW THE BIBLE WELL. THEY QUOTED SCRIPTURE IN SCHOOLS, IN GOVERNMENT, AND ON THE JOB. THEY USED THE BIBLE AS A MORAL COMPASS AND TOOK IT SERIOUSLY. IF THE BIBLE SAID TO DO SOMETHING, MOST PEOPLE WOULD. IF THE BIBLE SAID NOT TO DO SOMETHING, MOST PEOPLE WOULD NOT.

THE PULP SCIENCE FICTION GENRE DID NOT QUOTE THE BIBLE MUCH, BUT THE HEROES LIVED WHAT IT SAID. THEY ALSO PRAYED TO GOD WHEN NECESSARY. THE HEROES EXEMPLIFIED WHAT THE READERS PERCEIVED AS GOOD.

THERE WERE CRIMINALS AND SCOUNDRELS A HUNDRED YEARS AGO, BUT WE HAVE A LOT MORE. WE HAVE TEN TIMES THE CRIME RATE THEY DID, AND MOST OF OUR PEOPLE USE POLITICAL CORRECTNESS INSTEAD OF THE BIBLE AS THEIR MORAL COMPASS.

SO YOUR SUNDAY SCHOOL EDUCATED CHARACTER MAY KNOW THE BIBLE BETTER THAN YOU DO, AND ALSO LIVE IT. THIS CAN MAKE GOOD ROLE-PLAYING A CHALLENGE. FOR A QUICK PRIMER ON WHAT YOUR CHARACTER BELIEVES AND LIVES, READ THE TEN COMMANDMENTS AND THE BOOK OF MATTHEW IN THE BIBLE.

OUR FOREFATHERS GOT INTO TROUBLE WHEN THEIR ESTABLISHED CULTURE CONTRADICTED THE BIBLE AND THEY WENT WITH CULTURE. FOR EXAMPLE, SOME OF THEM TREATED IMMIGRANTS AND OTHER RACES POORLY.

Mental powers

THE PEOPLE WHO READ PULP SCIENCE FICTION A HUNDRED YEARS AGO STRONGLY BELIEVED THAT THERE WERE TWO SOURCES OF PARANORMAL POWER: GOD AND HIS FALLEN SERVANT. ANYTHING NOT OF GOD IS A TRICK. THEREFORE, THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS WHITE MAGIC OR MENTAL POWERS, ONLY MISGUIDED PEOPLE CREATING TROUBLE BY DRAWING FROM THE WRONG SOURCE. YOUR CHARACTERS AND THE GOOD PEOPLE IN THIS GENRE BELIEVE THE SAME. THIS VIEWPOINT COMES STRAIGHT FROM THE BIBLE.

SOME OF OUR FOREFATHERS VISITED SPIRITUALISTS AND MEDIUMS TO TALK TO THE DEAD AND BE DEFRAUDED OF THEIR MONEY, BUT MOST VIEWED THIS AS SOMETHING PERPETRATED UPON FOOLS BY SHYSTERS. MOST OF THEIR PULP SCIENCE FICTION DEPICTED PARANORMAL POWER AS EVIL AND/OR EXTREMELY DANGEROUS. THIS VIEWPOINT STARTED SOFTENING IN THE 1950S AND REVERSED IN THE 70S WITH THE ADVENT OF THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT AND STAR WARS.



Families stuck together

FAMILY WAS MORE IMPORTANT THAN YOU CAN IMAGINE A HUNDRED YEARS AGO. EVERYONE LIVED CLOSE TO EACH OTHER. MULTIPLE GENERATIONS OFTEN LIVED IN THE SAME HOUSE. GETTING A BABYSITTER WAS NEVER HARD BECAUSE THE GRANDPARENTS WERE CLOSE.

THERE WERE EXCEPTIONS. SOME FAMILIES HAD A BLACK SHEEP WHO DID NOT GET ALONG AND MOVED FAR AWAY.

THE GRANDPARENTS LIVED CLOSE TO THEIR CHILDREN, LIVED WITH ONE OF THEM, AND WERE TAKEN CARE OF.

PARENTING IS HARD. GRANDPARENTS USED TO TEACH THEIR CHILDREN HOW TO PARENT. NOWADAYS THE GRANDPARENTS ARE DISTANT AND THE NEW PARENTS ARE WINGING IT. MORE OFTEN THAN NOT THE KIDS ARE RAISED BY MINIMUM WAGE DAYCARE WORKERS. OUR FOREFATHERS PARENTED BETTER THAN WE DO BY THIS MEASURE.

IN PULP SCIENCE FICTION THE PROTAGONISTS GOT ALONG GREAT WITH THEIR PARENTS. THEY PLAN TO GET MARRIED ONE DAY, MOVE CLOSE TO FAMILY, AND RAISE KIDS. OR IF THEY FIND A REALLY GOOD PLANET, THEY WILL BRING THE WHOLE FAMILY THERE TO SETTLE. SOME PULP SCIENCE FICTION WRITERS MADE PROTAGONISTS WHO WERE BLACK SHEEP, BUT THEY WERE UNCOMMON OUTSIDE OF ACTION/ADVENTURE.

Marriage and divorce

DIVORCE IS ONE OF THE WORST THINGS THAT CAN HAPPEN TO YOU AND YOUR CHILDREN. THE DIVORCE RATE WAS 10% UNTIL THE 1920S, WHEN IT SHOT UP TO 15% IN THE FEMINIST BACKLASH FROM SUPPRESSING WOMENS RIGHTS SO LONG.

OUR OFFICIAL DIVORCE RATE IS 50%, BUT OUR MARRIAGE RATE IS ALSO 50%. HALF OF OUR COUPLES ARE LIVING TOGETHER LIKE MARRIED PEOPLE AND DOING THE THINGS MARRIED PEOPLE DO, SO THEY ARE VIRTUALLY MARRIED. UNFORTUNATELY, THE FAILURE RATE OF THESE RELATIONSHIPS APPROACHES 100%. THIS GIVES US A REAL DIVORCE RATE OF 80%. OUR FOREFATHERS WERE DOING SOMETHING RIGHT, THEY HAD STABLE FAMILIES.

DIVORCE, COHABITATION, AND COUPLES FIGHTING ARE UNTHINKABLE IN PULP SCIENCE FICTION. YOUR CHARACTERS COME FROM A WORLD OF STABLE FAMILIES.

The fatherless rate

THE FATHERLESS RATE WAS 3% UNTIL 1960. YET MORE THAN HALF THE CRIMINALS, SUICIDES, ADDICTS, PROSTITUTES, AND GANG MEMBERS CAME FROM THAT 3%. THEY HAVE 20 TIMES THE FAILURE RATE. TODAY THE FATHERLESS RATE IS 30% AND ALL OF THESE PROBLEMS ARE 10 TIMES AS BIG.

OUR FOREFATHERS KNEW THIS WELL. THERE WAS AN OFT-REPEATED SAYING: *AS GOES THE FAMILY, SO GOES THE COUNTRY.* THEY WERE INTOLERANT OF FICTION ROLE MODELS WITH FAMILIES THEY SAW AS DYSFUNCTIONAL.

IF YOUR CHARACTER WANTS TO BE A SPACE CADET, SPACE RANGER, OR ANYTHING SIMILAR, THEY MUST COME FROM A HEALTHY FAMILY WITH A FATHER AND MOTHER WHO DO NOT FIGHT. DAD CAME HOME EVERY NIGHT, MOM WAS ALWAYS THERE WHEN THE CHARACTER CAME HOME FROM SCHOOL, AND EVERYBODY ATE DINNER TOGETHER.



Dating

EVEN THOUGH MEN AND WOMEN TAKE LONG VOYAGES IN SMALL SPACECRAFT, YOUR CHARACTERS WOULD NEVER EVEN CONTEMPLATE AN ILLICIT RELATIONSHIP. ROMANTIC TENSION CAN HAPPEN, THOUGH.

PULP SCIENCE FICTION MOSTLY STICKS TO THE MORAL IDEAL OF THE DAY: THE ONLY REASONS TO DATE ARE TO HAVE FUN WITH A MIXED GROUP OF FRIENDS OR TO FIND A SPOUSE. THE FARTHEST A RELATIONSHIP CAN EVER GET IS A KISS, AND ONCE THAT HAPPENS YOU KNOW THE CHARACTERS ARE GOING TO GET MARRIED.

OUR FOREFATHERS UNDERSTOOD THAT PREMARITAL SEX CAUSES YOU TO FALL IN LOVE WITH SOMEONE YOU PICKED FOR THE WRONG REASON (A MAJOR CAUSE OF OUR HIGH DIVORCE RATE). THEY ALSO UNDERSTOOD THAT WAITING UNTIL MARRIAGE AND DUMPING EVERYONE YOU DECIDE YOU WOULD NOT MARRY USUALLY LEADS TO SOLID MARRIAGES (HENCE THEIR LOW DIVORCE RATE). OUR FOREFATHERS HAD HORMONES AND EMOTIONS, SO NOT EVERYONE DID IT THIS WAY, BUT THEY STILL HAD AN 80-90% MARRIAGE SUCCESS RATE.

IN PULP SCIENCE FICTION, NOBODY GOES BEYOND KISSING. THE GOAL OF DATING IS TO FIND A SPOUSE. WHEN CHARACTERS GET MARRIED, THEY STAY MARRIED AND LIVE HAPPILY EVER AFTER WITHOUT FIGHTING. THAT IS THE WAY THE PULP-BUYING CUSTOMERS WANTED IT, SO THAT IS THE WAY THE WRITERS WROTE IT. ALSO, WOMEN BUYERS LIKED HAPPILY-EVER-AFTER AND MEN LIKED TO SEE THE HERO GET THE PRETTY GIRL.

ANY CHARACTER THAT DIVORCES OR HAS SEX OUTSIDE OF MARRIAGE BECOMES PROPERTY OF THE GAME MASTER. IMMEDIATELY, NO EXCEPTIONS. FORTUNATELY, THE CAPTAIN OF A SPACE SHIP CAN PERFORM MARRIAGES.

Credit & loans

MOST PEOPLE DID NOT TAKE LOANS UNLESS THEY HAD TO A HUNDRED YEARS AGO. NOT ONLY WAS IT CULTURAL, THEY UNDERSTOOD WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF A FAMILY HAD A FINANCIAL REVERSAL WHEN THEY ALREADY OWED MONEY.

THERE ARE TOO MANY PEOPLE TODAY WHO ARE ON A TREADMILL OF DEBT. THEY PAY INTEREST EVERY MONTH AND HAVE NO ASSETS. AND SOME PEOPLE THINK THIS IS NORMAL.

THE PEOPLE A HUNDRED YEARS AGO WOULD NEVER PUT UP WITH A FICTION ROLE MODEL WHO WAS IN DEBT. YOUR CHARACTER IS NOT IN DEBT, DOES NOT BORROW MONEY IF THERE IS A WAY TO AVOID IT, AND SEES MAKING PAYMENTS AS BEING IN DEBT.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO HOME LOANS WERE FOR 7 YEARS AND IT WAS NOT SEEN AS SHAMEFUL BECAUSE IT WAS A SECURED LOAN: THE LOAN WAS AGAINST A HOUSE THAT WAS WORTH MORE THAN THE LOAN. LAYAWAY PLANS WERE ALSO ACCEPTABLE.

Small government

THE PEOPLE A HUNDRED YEARS AGO HAD A SAYING: *THE GOVERNMENT THAT GOVERNS LEAST GOVERNS BEST*. THEY LIKED THEIR GOVERNMENT SMALL AND DID NOT WANT IT TO INTERFERE IN THEIR BUSINESS. MOST PULP WRITERS DEPICTED SUCH GOVERNMENTS.

OUR MODERN CONCEPT OF LARGE GOVERNMENT CAME ABOUT THROUGH 80 YEARS OF FEAR AND TROUBLE. THE GREAT DEPRESSION DEVASTATED THE WORLD ECONOMY AND MADE MANY HOMELESS IN THE THIRTIES. WORLD WAR TWO AND THE POST-WAR DEPRESSION TOOK UP THE FORTIES. THE COLD WAR THREATENED NUCLEAR ANNIHILATION UNTIL 1990. AFTER 2000 ECONOMIC PROBLEMS BEGAN. PEOPLE LOOKED TO A BIGGER AND BIGGER GOVERNMENT TO SOLVE THESE PROBLEMS AGAIN AND AGAIN.

IT WOULD BE UNTHINKABLE TO SOMEONE A HUNDRED YEARS AGO FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO HAVE THIS MUCH CONTROL OVER OUR LIVES. THE GOVERNMENTS IN PULP SCIENCE FICTION WERE MOSTLY PROJECTIONS OF WHAT THE WRITERS KNEW.

THE EARTH GOVERNMENT IN THIS GAME IS A HANDS-OFF GOVERNMENT THAT PROVIDES MILITARY & POLICE SERVICES, REGULATES WHEN NECESSARY SO THE BIG CORPORATIONS DO NOT GET OUT OF HAND, AND TRIES TO KEEP COMMERCE HAPPENING. YOUR CHARACTERS SEE THEIR DUTY TO UPHOLD THE EARTH GOVERNMENT EVEN IF THEY DO NOT WORK FOR IT.

Colonies

THERE ARE LOTS OF RESOURCE-RICH PLANETS WITHOUT INTELLIGENT NATIVES. EARTH HAS COLONIES ON SOME OF THEM. COLONIES CLOSE TO EARTH WILL HAVE INHABITANTS WHO WERE THERE FOR GENERATIONS. COLONIES ON THE FRONTIER WILL BE SMALL AND HAVE FEW SERVICES.

EARTH DOES NOT COLONIZE INHABITED PLANETS. THEY DO NOT HAVE TO. THE NATIVES USUALLY NEED EARTH TO PROVIDE SECURITY (TO KEEP THE PIRATES AND EVIL EMPIRES AWAY), AND SOLVE THEIR HARD PROBLEMS. IN RETURN THEY PAY TRIBUTE (WHATEVER IS CHEAP FOR THEM AND EXPENSIVE FOR EARTH). THEY MUST ALLOW THEIR CITIZENS TO VOLUNTEER FOR EARTH'S ALIEN LEGION. THEY MAY ALSO HOST A BASE.

EARTH PERMITS ALIEN LABORERS ON THEIR COLONIES, BUT DOES NOT PERMIT ALIENS TO BE A MAJORITY. ALIENS HAVE NO VOTING RIGHTS IN EARTH COLONIES, SO THE LAW PROTECTS THEM FROM OPPRESSION.

FEW PLANETS IN EARTH'S SPHERE OF INFLUENCE HAVE ALIEN COLONIES. MOST ALIENS ARE NOT INTERSTELLAR, AND MOST OF THE ONES WHO ARE STICK TO THEIR OWN PLANET.

EARTH HAS AN EXPLORER/PIONEER CULTURE AND IS A BENEVOLENT DE-FACTO ACCIDENTAL EMPIRE. IT IS NOT AN OPPRESSIVE COLONIAL OVERLORD, NOR IS IT BENT ON CONQUEST. MOST OF ITS CORPORATIONS ARE CAPTAINED BY MEN WHO WANT TO DO GOOD AND MAKE A PROFIT DOING IT. THERE ARE EVIL MEN WHO SEE THINGS DIFFERENTLY, AND IT IS THE CHARACTER'S JOB TO ARREST THEM FOR THEIR MALFEASANCE.



Source material

- FIRST AND FOREMOST, UNCOUNTABLE SHORT STORIES USING THE SPACE RANGER / LAWMAN IN SPACE SUBGENRE BETWEEN 1890 AND 1960.
- Buck Rogers in the 25th Century
- Flash Gordon
- Tom Corbett, Space Cadet
- Rod Hathaway, Space Detective (and Teena!)
- Buzz Corry and the Space Patrol
- Captain Hawkins of the Perimeter Patrol
- Dave Kenton of the Star Patrol
- Captain Quick and the Space Scouts
- Gale Allen and the Girl Squadron
- Rocky Jones, Space Ranger
- Meteor Martin by Basil Wolverton
- Spacehawk by Basil Wolverton (the pre-war stories)
- Space Patrol by Basil Wolverton

