Science fiction illustration must be understood as a distinct set of practices at work. Each illustration deploys a complex series of codes that come from a variety of sources. To read the image on the left we might start by recognizing the colonial discourse evoked by the alien bodies, arms akimbo, in conflict with the absolute power of the humans controlling the sharply delineated black-bodied spaceship. Literally contrasting shapes outlined in black and white, this illustration criticizes the colonizer and colonized relationship by displacing the rhetoric of civilized versus primitive and technological versus the savage onto alien bodies. In this kind of science fiction explorers and conquerors fly to alien worlds to impose rule or destroy, reproducing lived colonial narratives that substitute aliens for colonized (usually indigenous) people in an alien context. The primitive nature of the aliens is underscored by the abstract style and absence of differentiated physical characteristics – they are bodies without the civilization of eyes, mouths, or ears. The white-hot jet of flame from the spaceship’s take off blast sets the alien vista, and the aliens themselves, on fire but does not touch the more meticulously drawn spaceship or the figures of the humans within. The humans’ supremacy comes from their control of fire, their hands on the inner workings of the machine, and the ability to view from above. Compositionally the lurid, bold, easily

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printable colors that create hard segmentation of the image, the rough brush strokes, and the representational but not realist style encourage the eye of the viewer to rest on the more realistically rendered humans, to (uneasily) identify with the oppressors. Alien arms akimbo signify pain from the fiery destruction rained down on them from the sky, their legs curling in contorted dance, indicting the conquering humans even as it offers identification with them.

The para-textual markings – the giant yellow SF, the cool katakana lettering spelling out *Magazine (magajin)*, the kanji in smaller font above the title that reads *fantastic science fictional magazine (kusou kagaku kagaku shōsetsu shi)*, the announcement in white on black signaling this is the “space opera special issue”, the list of authors from Edgar Rice Burroughs to C.L. Moore – all of these overlaid ephemera place this image in the space of a printed magazine.

There are rules for reading magazine covers: name recognition, the signaling of the genre of content through tag lines, and the enunciation of specific contents (in this case, fictions by well-known authors) that must already be known to be fully recognizable. Thus the sum of the image, along with the size, weight, and cheap pulp paper of the magazine tell us how this illustration should be read: as science fiction that introduces both content and interrogates tropes of excessive power deployed exploration and alien-encounter narratives.

Each magazine cover illustration signals it is in conversation with a past series of images and of contexts of production because it draws on these to create new images. I call this the discourse of science fiction illustration – it is not established through a single image but through the network of connections, both aesthetic and paratextual, that allow the image to be read. In other words, the image can only be identified as science fiction because we, the viewer, have already encountered other illustrations, other films, other fictions, and other visions of science
fiction that help us understand this one – other black ships, other roving aliens, other red-sky planets, colonial relationships, other space operas – other things that are labeled “SF,” or science fiction. The science fiction magazine reader, as they read the magazine, comes to be conversant with the codes that make up some of that discourse. Learning author’s names, or investigating other words, seeing films with similar labels, reading other magazines that also have similar stories: all of these activities that provide context, and within that context, allow understanding. It is important to note these series of actions are not restricted to science fiction consumers, but include the illustrator, Nakajima Seikan, who created the image, and the editor of the magazine, Fukushima Masami, who collaborated with Nakajima to design each cover. The ability to create a coherent image that is recognizable and recognizably science fiction comes from the illustrator, author, and editor’s ability to engage with and deploy recognizable codes, in the proper space.

These codes are inextricably bound up with the culture in which they are produced. By comparing covers from the Japanese magazine that predominately focus on landscape with covers from American magazines that feature the body in this chapter, I argue science fiction in Japan was concerned far more with space than with body. My theories of science fiction illustration contribute to, but also articulate the differences between, American and Japanese illustration to problematize earlier American theorizations about science fiction art and aesthetics. To do so I first draw on the body of critical work conceiving of a distinct entity that is science fiction art. In particular, I engage with the theorization of science fiction art by George Slusser, who insists science fiction centers on the human amidst technology.
I start with these English language sources first because Japanese literary scholar Christopher Bolton, among others, notes that Japanese were influenced by the masses of American science fiction paperbacks brought by American service people to Japan during the occupation. Additionally, the theorization of science fiction has centered on the production of these works in United States, the place where the term “science fiction” itself was born.

Moreover, *SF Magazine* was in direct dialogue with the American *Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction (Magazine of F&SF)*, and even bore their imprint on the table of contents for the first eleven months of publication. Finally, the first several years *SF Magazine* predominantly consisted of translations of American science fiction stories pulled directly from the *Magazine of F&SF*. Japanese artists were departing from this American field of illustration. These current theorizations of science fiction illustration depend on recognizing an illustration as science fiction only through the icons deployed (for example: space ships, aliens, etc).

My second section compares the illustrations of *SF Magazine* with its American counterpart, revealing the distinct way in which *SF Magazine*’s illustrations created a landscape separate from, but in conversation with, American illustration. The close of my chapter I argue the more versatile definition of literary science fiction as a discourse proposed by Samuel Delany and Takayuki Tatsumi offers a way to understand science fiction illustration as more than the deployment of icons and the fixing of the human at the center of those icons. I build on their work to develop a definition of a visual discourse of science fiction illustration. The

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2 Larry McCaffrey's forward to *Full Metal Apache* is but one of the sources that acknowledges this in brief history of SF in Japan, where he discusses the relative scarcity of specifically self-identified SF in mass literature of the 30s and 40s, however "[t]his began to change during the late forties and early fifties, when thousands of cheap SF paperbacks left behind by American servicemen began to circulate among Japanese youths via the black markets operating in Tokyo and other major cities." (McCaffery, xix)
power of this discourse is what enabled *SF Magazine* to contribute to and solidify the notion of a science fiction subculture in Japan in the 1960s.

**The History of Theorizing Science Fiction Illustration**

The October 1962 cover featured to the left can be read in two ways. Without the para-textual markings (say if it was hung on a wall in a museum), it is an homage to surrealism’s fascination with mathematical structures, particularly a celebration of the Mobius strip. One Mobius strip dominates the frame, dwarfing the small sea-shell like figures dancing on the horizon line. On that museum wall, the tiny figures are ambiguous – they have legs, and bumpy irregular shapes, but no other distinguishing characteristics. We might consider them imperfect and chance manifestations of the unconscious set against a mathematical musing on infinity – compared to the fantasy of science they are bumpy, irregular, and out of place. However, because of the para-textual markings we are encouraged – possibly even required – to marshal our understanding of science fiction visual vocabulary; to, in effect, read this image as science fictional. Within that context, these figures become aliens, the looming Mobius a monument they dance around. The banner that announces this is the *Time Travel Special Issue!* transforms the Mobius from mathematical play...
into a discussion of one of the oldest paradoxes in time travel fiction, called the “grandfather paradox.” The dominance of the figure that represents the oldest paradox of time also underscores the operations of illustration itself. Illustration makes sense to our minds but, like two-dimensional MC Escher sketches, is simultaneously physically impossible. Yet we can recognize the image. And within that recognition is potential to imagine an existence beyond that which is physically possible in the present moment. Put simply we can imagine time travel even though it is not technologically possible. What we rely on to imagine this alternative reality is excessive – excessive imagination. These readings are overdeterminations of the image. All interpretations operate in excess of the image, and meaning is attributed to the image because of the perceived importance of the collection of shapes within it. But that perceived importance is always in excess of the image itself.

Overdetermination, Samuel Delany suggests in Silent Interviews: On Language, Race, Sex, Science Fiction, and Some Comics, is fundamental to the act of reading, to the act of encountering signs. Delany uses this term, first used by Freud in The Interpretation of Dreams, to signal an act that makes meaning not through one single effect, but through the recognition of multiple causes at once. Thus science fiction illustration is read as such not just because of its iconography, but because of its para-textual elements, because of its use of color, because of the history of the shapes, because of its styles, because we recognize something from other science fiction we have encountered before. All of these codes are marshalled together at once

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4 One of the earliest proposed paradoxes of time travel, first described by science fiction writer Rene Barjavel in his 1943 book Le Voyageur Impudent. The paradox asks: if a man travels back in time to kill his grandfather before the latter meets his grandmother, and as a result is one of the time traveler’s parents never conceived? Then would the time traveler himself not be born? But if he was not born, he would not be able to travel back in time at all, and the grandfather would be alive, thus the parent, and then traveler/child, would also be conceived. And so the possibility of one seems to imply its own negation.
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in an illustration, and it is this operation – of marshalling codes to be able to recognize and view an image – that is critical to the act of viewing in general. The ability to marshal codes about other forms and cycles of life is specifically science fictional. Too often critical reading of science fiction is set only at the level of iconography, not at the level of operation. Yet it is the operation of overdetermined reading and the interaction of visibility with already established codes that makes room for specific interpretations. And few have clearly defined what these operations of reading an image as science fictional are, even the artists themselves.

There is an underlying assumption that the consumers of these illustrations are already embedded within a discourse, are already science fiction fans who understand all of the codes being deployed. Most of the critical works produced in both Japan and the United States are compilations of images from a particular period or publication, or biographies of a particular artist. In works like Vincent Di Fate’s popular *Infinite Worlds: The Fantastic Visions of Science Fiction Art*, a well-regarded collection of over seven hundred rich and colorful science fiction illustrations, the images are presented without any discussion at all. They create a variety of visual statements but the text of the book primarily consists of image credits to specific artists.

Early *SF Magazine* illustrator Manabe Hiroshi’s *Original Illustrations of Hiroshi Manabe* (*Manabe Hiroshi no sen no gashū*) similarly displays pages of his whimsical line drawings from *SF Magazine* and other Hayakawa publications, but nary a single textual discussion of what constituted science fiction art. *Fantastic science-fiction art, 1926-1954* edited by American author and publisher Lester del Rey, offers forty poster-sized reproductions of science fiction magazine covers, and includes an introduction on the history of science fiction writing, but offers neither a definition or nor a speculation about science fiction illustration at all. These
books wordlessly presume that these images operate on no rhetoric of their own, or that the rhetoric is so identifiable it requires no discussion. Most often artworks are intended only to create desire and demand for the literary words of science fiction, and have only a commercial purpose intended to attract purchase.⁵

The trend of creating desire for written text through illustration is perhaps why so many forget to consider visual rhetoric alone. American science fiction magazine covers are chiefly illustrations of the stories found inside the magazine. This trend – tightly coupling image with words – indelibly associated these illustrations with a particular author’s view of science fiction and deemphasized the illustrator’s point of view. Criticism centered on the ability of the artist to faithfully reproduce the textual fiction. In turns funny, or sad, bizarre or technical, the American covers visually herald the stories that center on the human experience interacting with technology readers would find inside. In most Magazine of F&SF covers bodies are clearly the object and organizing icons, regardless of shifting styles of representation. The figures below,⁶ whether they are abstract paintings (Figure 3), renderings of astronauts on alien worlds, or women and their robot toys (Figure 4), center on human or humanoid figures, creating a

⁵ Often a version of Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart’s threshold test for obscenity is deployed in defining science fiction art: “I know it when I see it!” This appears to be the case for Jane Frank’s Science Fiction and Fantasy Artists of the Twentieth Century: a Biographical Dictionary. The book is a republication and updating of Robert Weinberg’s 1988 work of the same name. The volume also republishes Robert Weinberg’s introductory essay on the material history of science fiction publishing and its relationship to science fiction artwork. While Weinberg offers a history of illustration beginning with French magazine illustrations to the rise of the American and British pulp magazines, he neither tries to define science fiction art nor describe painting in terms of a science fiction tradition. This leads to interesting omissions in artist biographies including H.R. Giger (although his work on the Alien film series alone had a profound impact on science fiction imaginary), and underscores the notion that science fiction art is transparent and easily understood.

narrative that pivots on both the reader as human and an articulation of the relationship between humans and American myths of technology.

Just as science fiction authors struggle to define themselves against or in conversation with more well regarded forms of literature, in an essay titled “The Impact of Astronautics and Science Fiction on My Work,” science fiction painter David Hardy proposes a separation of his own artwork as expressing the scientific in either high or lowbrow art by employing two different styles: “space age painting” and “science fiction painting.” The former takes into account the most current scientific information available to render as “scientifically consistent” as possible spaceships, moonscapes, and other astronomical phenomena. He considers the latter to be entirely comprised of “fantasies” that do not require a consistent application of scientific principle or realistic rendering of perspective, shadow, etc. These works then neatly fall into a high/low divide as well – his “space age paintings” are featured in collections of fine art works, while the “science fiction paintings” are used as magazine and book covers, occasionally even on the wrong book. At the heart of Hardy’s essay is the suggestion that science fiction illustration is dependent on its imaginary aspect, and is in contrast to predictive (and possibly more legitimate, or certainly for Hardy more valuable) “space age painting.” But even he notes this divide does not hold as some of his fine art works have been used as the covers for science fiction magazines. Still, this theorization that science fiction artwork has something to do with painting or illustrating “science” mirrors golden age science fiction writer and theorist Isaac Asimov’s contention science fiction is “[t] hat branch of literature which is
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cconcerned with the impact of scientific advance upon human beings.” Following this school of thought science fiction illustration then becomes the representation of fantasies of humans amidst technological change.

This centrality of human beings is also at the heart of George Slusser’s introduction to the most comprehensive scholarly attempt to date at theorizing science fiction art, Unearthly Visions: Approaches to SF and Fantasy Art. Slusser declares science fiction/fantasy art "bring[s] forth the basic icons of human visual experience from the formal debris of cubism, surrealism, and other schools of art." Thus the science fiction aesthetic purposefully situates the human and human experience at the center of their representation, and it is their purpose "to revision a human face or form in this dark canvas of modern science." Despite his clear disdain for what he calls the "formal debris" of canonical art, when viewing the covers of American science fiction magazines it is quite clear that he is not entirely incorrect to suggest the human is the organizing visual subject of these images.

For example, Ed Emishwiller illustrated a Robert Keyes’ fiction on the April 1960 cover “Crazy Maro” a story of a young boy’s multi-sensory perception, by envisioning a surrealist liberation of the human subject through synesthesia as a montage of abstract shapes and colors overlaid by the outline of the main character’s head and shoulders. The dark reddish brown

7 Asimov, Isaac. “Social Science Fiction” Modern Science Fiction: Its Meaning and Its Future. Ed. Reginald Bretnor. New York, Coward-McCann, 1953. p 158. Assmiov suggested science fiction should be classified as the genre where authors consider the effect of science on humans or the human condition. This places the human and human condition at the center of the discussion – this definition is not limited, but perhaps too broad – could we not argue any work of fiction that addresses the impact of technology on the human condition – under this rubric the works written by Hibakusha, (atomic bomb survivors who went on to write both non-fiction and fictional works based on their experiences during and after the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki) – could these not also be considered science fiction under this rubric? Considering they are very much invested in the effects of science on human and human nature?
8 Ibid, p. 5.
transforms this outline into the organizing shape of the image, hole from which the fantasies of tenuous and lightly drawn stick figures emerge (and merge into). In the fiction “Romance in a Twenty-First Century Used-Car Lot” by Robert F. Young cars have become so closely entwined with personal identity they are like clothes. The oversize head and shoulders of the female figure on the November 1960 cover places women at the center of that narrative, critiquing the advances in postwar technology that reinforced gender roles.

Yet an analysis of these covers as constantly centering the human because these figures dominate the space continues to operate only at the level of icon. Even in the case of the Magazine of F&SF there are covers that do not fit this mold – if we proceed with this definition those covers must be thrown out of the discussion as no longer science fictional. Furthermore, a brief examination of the Japanese SF Magazine’s covers immediately suggests we must
expand on Slusser’s assertion. Additionally the covers of *SF Magazine* were never based on a particular fiction featured in the issue, though often they reflected the themes of a special issue. Freed from the constraints of focusing on one particular author’s narrative, these images then speak to, and are spoken of, as pieces of the larger narrative – the discourse of science fiction. And this discourse is no longer based around a specific iconography, but is rather intent on building a dialectic discourse.

Indeed, their organizing principle is not instantly recognizable as human or human endeavors. The existence of these covers requires us reconsider Slusser’s definition of a *science fiction aesthetic* to address why science fiction illustrators draw not only on formal composition techniques, but also high and pop art styles, to express the inexpressible in a way that is recognizable as science fiction. Japanese science fiction artists deployed this aesthetic to open up a space that not only invited but encouraged new members to enter and establish a sense of community. These artists illustrated a place that was outside of mainstream culture and so could express fears and anxieties about the contemporary moment in a way mainstream magazine illustrators could not and did not. To understand how and why these works can be considered science fictional, we have to return to definitions of science fiction that incorporates more than either Slusser’s or Asimov’s theorizations.

**Comparing Japanese and American Science Fiction Illustration**

Despite the fantastic (or science-fantastic) subject matter, the representation of science fiction prior to the covers of *SF Magazine* not only foregrounded the human, but also framed those humans with other objects that are realistically rendered. The rocket, space ship, alien,
and robot in many ways only exist in the imagination, but in American science fiction covers they are rendered in a mimetic manner, including the shading, pose, perspective and the like. In a discussion of the early iconography of science fiction, science fiction scholar Gary Westfahl argues the proliferation of the rocket as a symbol goes hand in hand with the definition of science fiction as "evolving into a literature about space travel."\(^9\)

The inaugural issue of *Nebula (Seiun)*\(^10\) (Figure 5, below) drew directly on this iconography with its sleek rocket ship rendered in bright colors powering into a black sky. The implication here is that the fiction inside the cover of *Nebula* would be entirely in line with American aesthetics, and indeed, most of the stories were translations of American works.

This iconography, however fantastic, also evokes the real. This magazine only published one issue, and while *Nebula* is now the name for one of the most prestigious awards for Japanese science fiction writing, part of the reason why the magazine did not succeed was because it did not attempt to differentiate itself from American science fiction, which could be found in a variety of other media. These same strategies appear in American science fiction illustration. While there

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is both a cyborg and a robot in the January 1960

*Magazine of F&SF* cover,¹¹ trimming Christmas tree as a traditional family, they are engaged in recognizably realist (and nostalgic) tasks (Figure 6, right). This simultaneous evocation of nostalgia and advanced technology is a utopic move to domesticate technological advances reflecting American technological fears and desires. The August 1960 cover¹² of *Magazine of F&SF* by Ed Emshwiller (Figure 7, below) is of two robots, one clutching a pen and scissors and the other attempting to plug into a socket as a woman walks between them. While composed of robotic fantastic elements, they are also posed in a recognizably realistic space that has red carpet, bookcases, and electricity. The image establishes Cartesian perspective with the scale of the robot in the foreground relative to the smaller robot in the background, but also mimics realistic shadows for all the objects, even the woman’s leg. Additionally the


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robots are clutching at the quotidien: in the foreground scissors and a pencil, and in the back attempting to plug a wire into a socket. Although the size of the woman indicates the perspective of the viewer is being equated with the robot not the human, it is still her leg and the bottom of her dress that anchors the image and centers understanding – we know these robots are tiny relative not just to the objects they carry, but to her, the human. Even this "fantastic" element does not explicitly challenge or confuse the viewer. Instead these techniques combine the fantastic and the realistic to establish a sense of "ironic imagination" that still centers on the human understanding of experience.

![Image](image_url)

When we compare the *Nebula* rocket ship with the January 1962 *SF Magazine* cover rocket ships (Figure 8, left), the difference between aesthetic approaches is even clearer. While the *Nebula* rocket has a blast trail that shoots behind, indicating movement without obscuring the image of the rocket, *SF Magazine*’s rocket is obscured by a multi-colored cloud of smoke. While the lines of the *Nebula* rocket are straight, with realist shading to indicate mass, the Nakajima rocket is barely recognizable. The brightest colors on the *Nebula* cover are the rocket itself, creating an energetic image of space exploration. The lively colors in the Nakajima cover come from the entirely abstract sky that

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dominate both foreground and background. Both certainly evoke elements of the fantastic, but Nakajima’s cover moves further away from the real. He inverts the presumptions of American science fiction art by making the most active element the space surrounding the object. The realistic style of the American artist in many ways reflects Tatsumi Takayuki’s reading of Delany – the proposal that the science fiction sentence reflects a literalization of the physical. It is only by considering Nakajima’s cover in conjunction with American covers that we see a move away from the physical and into what Tatsumi calls the allegorical.

Defining Science Fiction: Tatsumi and Delany

In *The Rhetorics of Contemporary Science Fiction* Tatsumi argues those engaged with that thing called “science fiction” are very much aware that it is a form of meta-fiction, and his argument throughout the book is a series of case studies of science fictional works that he reads as meta-fiction reflecting the emotional, social, and political issues of the authors’ lives. Tatsumi suggests contemporary readers employ a mode of reading that is already science fictional mirrors N. Katherine Hayle’s argument about the site of origin for thinking about the posthuman (a being whose basic capacities are so transformed by technology that they can no longer be considered purely human) in her book *How We Became Posthuman*. Hayles locates the origins of the posthuman in the transformation of discourse around the body. In specific, she contends that it was at the Macy Conferences on Cybernetics held from 1943 to 1954 when the discourse transformed..."[h]enceforth, humans were to be seen primarily as information-processing entities who are essentially similar to intelligent machines." (Hayles, 7) It is through language, and how language frames the subject (be it scientific language or literary) that the
posthuman is born – when the human mind is conceived of as a technological device. Hayles, comparing the use of language to the mode of reading (which, of course, is always itself achieved through language), contends the contemporary subject is already posthuman and a science fictional reader.

While I do not disagree with either Tatsumi or Hayles’ arguments, one of the issues I find with them both is the question of penetration: when are either of these ideas disseminated widely enough to escape from the boundaries of genre? Hayles contends the language of computers has penetrated so extensively into contemporary parlance – after all, we refer to thought “processes” – that we are all already posthuman. Tatsumi’s contention is not that one has to be a reader of science fiction in order to read science fictionally – that the process of reading science fictionally is instead part of the contemporary moment. When we examine the history of science fiction in Japan, particularly considering the constant debates on the merits and definitions of science fiction that SF Magazine featured in its pages in the first ten years of publication, it becomes clear this approach is what Fukushima intended with the content of the publication. Yet, while Fukushima’s introduction in the first issue of SF Magazine acknowledges the multiple histories and writing/reading modes of science fiction, can we assume the first readers of the magazine were entirely conversant with these as well? When Abe Kobo writes in 1966 in Science Fiction, the Unnamable, “seeing how frequently the readers’ page of SF Magazine features heated debates on such questions as ‘What is science fiction?,’ one may conclude that the true nature of the beast is still largely unknown...” it becomes clear the naturalization of the posthuman and the science fictional reader have not yet even spread within the community that considers themselves science fiction fans. To put it plainly, through
the 1960s, the penetration of the rhetoric, of the discourse, of science fiction was part of a process. Even today the classification of literature, film, and illustration as science fiction, distinct from other fictional forms, is hotly debated. If what both scholars suggest is entirely true than the form of science fiction would no longer be separated but instead integrated into every literary and visual production. And there would be no need for a science fiction aesthetic as all contemporary works would have elements of the science fictional.

 However, Tatsumi’s strategy of recognizing science not as an objective fact but rather as a narrative strategy as a lens for analysis of science fictional works is worth considering, particularly as he takes his inspiration from Samuel Delany’s theorization of the operations of written science fiction: “[W]e must think of literature and science fiction not as two different sets of labeled texts, but as two different sets of values, two different ways of response, two different ways of making texts make sense, two different ways of reading—or what one academic tradition would call two different discourses.”14 Influenced by Saussure, Delany proposes science fiction is not a genre, but rather has a "distinct level of subjunctivity" from other forms of fiction and is instead a distinct kind of discourse.15 Thus the distinction between science fiction and what he terms mundane fiction (or psychological fiction, or naturalistic fiction, or mainstream fiction in his other writings), is not the content or the style of writing, but rather the operations required by the reader to understand a single sentence are different in a science fictional text than in other texts.

Delany suggests that science fiction changes the level of subjunctivity by arguing "[t]hese objects [ray guns, space ships, etc], these convocations of objects into situations and events, are blankety defined by: have not happened." (Delany, 11) The reader of science fiction thus has the opportunity to interpret a sentence like "Her world exploded" (one of Delany's most famous examples) in a manner that is not available to a reader of mainstream fiction. The focus of the sentence, for Delany, is no longer on the psychological subject, but on the object. Thus the science fiction reader understands “her” world literally exploded into grains of dust; alternatively the mainstream reader has access to only the metaphorical meaning. Inherent then, at a sentence level, is a challenge to the formal relationship between subject and object that dominates mainstream literature.

There is in this illustration style, rather, a dual subjunctivity: the science fiction viewer (reader) must understand the image (sentence) in the context of their knowledge of the discourse of science fiction, of course, but they also must hold contingent the meaning. There are two potential meanings to Delany’s sentence: one, the psychological, the other, the material. It is only through reading further that the reader discovers whether the woman in the story felt emotionally bereft, or lost her planet, and in a science fiction story the meaning could be either. Meaning is determined not just at the level of the sentence, but remains contingent until the reader engages with the next sentence as well. The effect of this dual subjunctivity not only allows for the possibility of two meanings, it also suggests the writer of science fiction, in the very act of writing these kinds of sentences, is not only aware of this possibility, but can operate in a space of play where the psychological reading is invoked as often as the material.

The spaces created by SF Magazine’s covers have not happened – and may never happen. The
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viewer has the opportunity to see them as both metaphoric, relating to an abstract rendering of present day, and as literal, reading an imagined ‘new’ or ‘alternative’ world. That sense of play within the covers is achieved by using the formal artistic styles to represent space in a distinctive way.

By proposing a science fiction aesthetic, I assert the operations outlined by both Delany and Tatsumi are engaged in by the illustrator and required by the viewer to understand science fiction illustration as well. The conscious choices made by the illustrators are always engaging with the discourse of science, and those challenges are always an act of defining science fiction. Of course, this process occurs within a specific cultural context, particularly a history of images and words of all the works that came before. Of all the works that might be considered science fiction in Japan, and of the individuals who read them.

**The Space of Japanese Science Fiction**

Nakajima and other artists challenge the firmly established science fiction iconography that places the human at the center of technological change/space exploration. Nakajima creates an aesthetic of pace that envisions future or other worlds made provocative and haunting, not explicitly terrifying. He chose to depict a variety of objects abstract and surrealist enough that they explicitly complicate that relationship of man and technology. They have no clear relationship to a past or future history. For example, Nakajima's first and tenth covers for *SF Magazine* (Figure 9 and 10, below) could either be building or rebuilding, reconstruction or deconstruction. They are not located in recognizable metropolis. The structures in the

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inaugural cover are crisscrossed with lines that evoke a cubist effect, but also broken and cracked stonework. In combination with the color of the sky and ground, the lines create a recognizable division between land and sky, yet the dark color of the buildings and the black cloud-like shape in the upper right suggest apocalyptic reflection and inversion of the light. The structures in the foreground of the tenth cover could be missiles or rocket ships, yet even the harsh read color folds them into the jagged lines of the mountains contradicting the notion this is an ironic juxtaposition of technology versus nature.
Even the covers that do contain bodies suggest we must question what desires are at work. Take for example, the first cover that features bodies, the seventh issue\(^{17}\) of *SF Magazine* (Figure 11, left)? These are not realistic bodies; they are shadows that seem to flicker into the distance. Although they are black they seem to become insubstantial in the background of the image, the cursory gestures towards humanoid shape reduced to the briefest of lines. They do not rest on a continuous plane. A component of the aesthetic of space developed by Nakajima is at work in this image. Bodies at first seem substantial but in fact fade away into abstraction. Even though the image centers on these bodies, their very insubstantial nature suggests they are not the subjects of the story and can disappear from the space of Japanese science fiction.

As I have noted above, the sci fi artists are instead attempting to productively carve out a subcultural space that allows room for play and alternative narratives, rather than confirm a dominant ideology of the Japanese state, or even reflect the ideology of the literary establishment. These artists worked in conversation with, but also in resistance to those influences. While Nakajima asserts a power over bodies by rendering them invisible, he also

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asserts a power over space by rendering it available for entry. The readers of SF Magazine can be lured by the very absence.

In the early years there are two other covers when the body is made safe, almost rendered part of the background of the image instead of foreground. (Figures 12 and 13, below) They grapple with the mass culture discourse without succumbing to it. The January 1962 cover strongly evokes expressionist aesthetics – not only bodies, but the other features of the world are indistinct, gestured towards rather than painstakingly mimetically reproduced. The couple in the foreground is so indistinct that upon first glance it is unclear where one body ends and the other begins, and this effect is repeated with the couple on the road. Again here the a sense of space dominates the image because of the orange sun against a pink sky, the sinuous road, the abrupt brown of the clif, the jagged stones. The June 1963 cover (Figure 13, below) where body and building are both painted in a cubist style, the body floating above the building, whole and untouched from one perspective, but cut up by the boxes and lines used not only to create the body shape but fill in the insides. This is a not a re-situation of the body to the central concerns, but a rendering of the body as part of the scenery, floating above the landscape.

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Nakajima's guiding aesthetic principle? It certainly was not to reproduce the practices of American science fiction like *Nebula*'s cover.

According his memoirs, *SF Magazine* editor Fukushima Masami considered science fiction in the 1960s, and more particularly the driving force behind the work he did editing *SF Magazine*, as the depicting of the *era of origins* (*mitō no jidai*).\(^{19}\)

While there is no perfect translation of "mitō", it can be used to evoke not simply origin, but unexplored, the unknown, untrodden, untouched, or untrampled. Unsurprisingly there is the evocation of space in this phrase – a space one can visit, and more particularly walk through, but also that the space itself has not yet been occupied or corrupted. Although not every *SF Magazine* cover expresses this notion, it is dramatically presented in the third and eighth issues (Figure 14 and 15, below). The grey mountains are not marked by man-made structures, and serve only to frame the phenomena appearing in the sky. Dynamic red rings that begin to spiral out from the two spiral galaxies centered in the frame not only draw attention to the astrological sight depicted here, but also create a sense of immensity that cannot be touched by human hands. Echoing the spiral pattern from the third issue, the cover of the eighth draws links between the spiny plant in the

foreground and the spires in the background. Although these might be read as destroyed or decaying structures, the fauna is alien, suggesting a fantastic location. Even the shadows in this image do not properly construct themselves – the plant's shadow is spread along the ground as if the sun was behind the viewer. This creates a sense of dislocation in a barren alien landscape. It is an aesthetics of untrodden space. In depicting this *unexplored era*, Nakajima has created a different type of space to engage with trauma of the postwar not only explicitly marked itself as separate from the emphasis on the human of American science fiction illustration, but also separated itself from the representational strategies of the postwar.
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