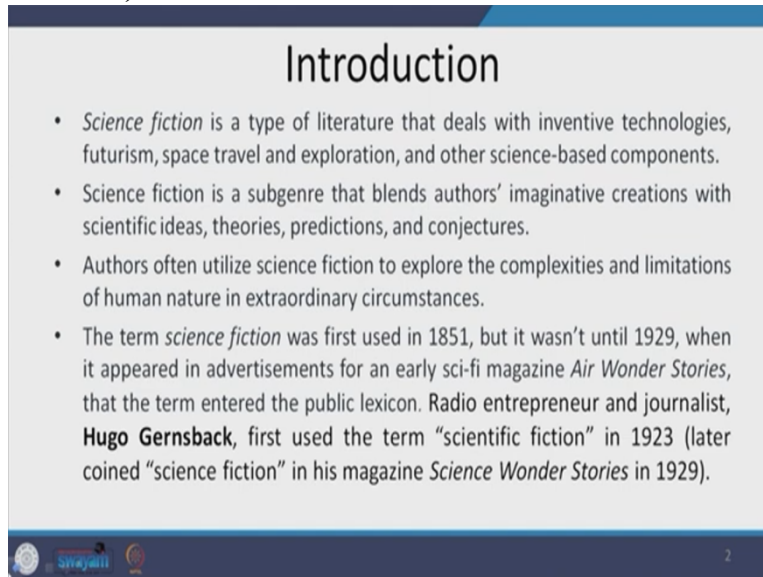**Narrative Mode and Fiction**
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Lecture - 48
Science Fiction - I

Good morning and welcome back to the lecture series on narrative mode and fiction. We are starting to do with a new module, which focuses on the genre of science fiction.

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So we have to understand what science fiction is and also look at its history its origin. Science fiction is a type of literature that deals with inventive technologies with futurism, space travel, and explorations and as well as other science based components. Science fiction is a sub-genre, which blends author's imaginative creations with scientific ideas, theories, predictions, and conjectures or speculations.

Authors often utilize science fiction, in order to explore the complexities and limitations of human nature, human society in extraordinary circumstances. So the term science fiction was first used in 1851. But it was not until 1929 when it appeared in advertisements for an early sci-fi magazine titled Air Wonder Stories, that the term entered the public lexicon. It became part of the common parlance.

Radio entrepreneur and journalist Hugo Gernsback first used this term scientific fiction in 1923. And later, he coined science fiction in his magazine, Science Wonder Stories in 1929.

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Introduction

- Science Fiction as a genre defies adherence with prescriptive constructions and definitions, to the extent that it is impossible to have definitional clarity or historical recovery for SF – in popular understanding it is about futuristic cities or bizarre alien landscapes.
- The term 'Science fiction' refers to an alliance between science and fiction, and yet there is a sense of hostility by the conservative and ethical stance of the fiction towards the progressive nature of science and the index of hegemony that it assumes.
- Patrick Parrinder looks at SF as a desire and ideology of justifying scientific research as intrinsic to the nature and purpose of human existence → so there is **disillusionment and distrust** as well as **championing of science**.
- In *New Maps of Hell* (1961), Kingsley Amis defines SF as a kind of narrative that entails innovation in science and technology, or pseudo-science and pseudo-technology.
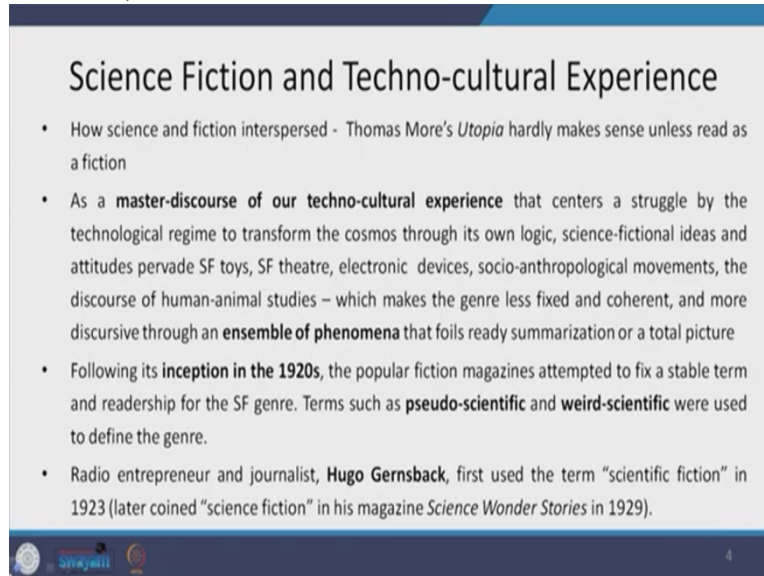
So, science fiction as a genre defies adherence with prescriptive constructions and definitions to the extent that it is possible to have definitional, clarity. Science fiction as a genre defies adherence with prescriptive constructions and definitions, to the extent that it is impossible to have definitional clarity, or even historical recovery for science fiction, when did it actually start? When did this literary trend come in?

In popular understanding, it is about futuristic cities or bizarre alien landscapes. So the term science fiction refers to an alliance between science and fiction. And yet there is a sense of hostility, a kind of face off that one generally sees by the conservative and ethical stance of the fiction, towards the progressive nature of science, and the index of hegemony that the scientific world assumes.

So science and fiction that combined to form the genre of science fiction, sci-fi, is can be looked at as an oxymoron in a way where, you know, the 2 components the 2 parts of this name, the generic name, science fiction do not really gel very well traditionally speaking with one another. Patrick Parrinder looks at science fiction, as a desire and ideology of justifying scientific research as intrinsic to the nature and purpose of human existence.

So there is a somewhat disillusionment and distrust as well as championing of science. There are both the tendencies going on simultaneously in sci-fi or science fiction. In New Maps of Hell, Kingsley Amis defines science fiction as a kind of narrative which entails innovation in science and technology, or you know, something a kind of narrative that harkens that evokes pseudoscience or pseudo technology.

So, how science and fiction intersperse can be seen, you know, in the case of Thomas More's Utopia, which would hardly make sense unless read through the prism of a fiction. So Utopia is not scientific it's a science fiction. As the master discourse of our techno cultural experience which centres a struggle by the technological regime, in order to transform the cosmos through its own logic, science fictional ideas and attitude, pervade science fictional toys, science fictional theatre, electronic devices, socio-anthropological movements.

The discourse of human animal's studies, all of which make the genre less fixed, and less coherent and more discursive, through an ensemble of phenomena that foils any ready summarization, any ready and permanent definition to what science fiction is? We cannot at once have a total picture of science fiction as such. Following its inception in the 1920s, the popular fiction magazines attempted to fix a stable term and readership for the science fiction genre.

So term such a pseudo-scientific and weird scientific way being used to define the genre so one sees that Hugo Gernsback first uses the term science fiction like you already said in his magazine Science Wonder Stories.

Development of Science Fiction

- **Lisa Yaszek** notes that the SF authors extrapolate from **Enlightenment ideals** and **industrial practices** to imagine how educated people use knowledge of machine and technologies to change the material world → **technoscientific speculation** leads to **socio-politico-cultural speculation** – so SF as a genre is essentially **speculative** and **extrapolative**.
- In **extrapolation**, there is an exploration of a trend and extending it from the past to the future. In **speculation's "What if?"** a new factor is thrown in, whereby a past trend becomes unrecognizable in the future. As **Issac Asimov** would call it, "from taking liberty with the **unlikely** to taking liberty with the **impossible**."
- It is understood that the SF reader is familiar with the larger **SF megatext**, so as to grasp the plausible explanation for implausible phenomena.

Lisa Yaszek notes that the science fiction authors extrapolate from Enlightenment ideals and industrial practices in order to imagine how educated people use knowledge of machine and technologies to change the material world. So techno scientific speculation is at the heart of most science, fiction's if not all, and how techno scientific speculation leads to the question of socio political cultural speculations.

So, science fiction as a genre is essentially 2 things we have to remember these 2 key words when we are talking about science fiction. One is that it is speculative, the other is that it is extrapolative. In extrapolation, there is an exploration of a trend or extending of a trend from the past to the future. Whereas in speculation what we have is what if a new factor is throwing such that a past trend becomes unrecognizable in the future.

So in the words of Isaac Asimov, I quote Asimov, from taking liberty, with the unlikely to taking liberty with the impossible, unquote. So extrapolation verges into, or extrapolation is, more on the side, unlikely, speculation verges into the domain of the impossible. So it is understood that the science fiction reader is familiar with the larger science fiction mega text, so as to grasp the plausible explanation for implausible phenomena.

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Development of Science Fiction

- When looking at the genre's emphasis on exotic difference, it traces its roots to **travel narratives** that aspired to **discover fantasmatic elements** on the pathways of global trade routes, such as Marco Polo or Sir John Mandeville's descriptions of a fabulated China in 14C.

- With respect to the genre's concern with alterity, its roots are in **utopian writing**, such as Thomas Moore's *Utopia* (1516) and Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726). With Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), there is an **investigation of the human implications of scientific experiment** → the strategy of an idealized 'no-place' or 'u-topos' is a way of critiquing an existent political situation through its comparison to an **imagined good place**.

- Similar to **Plato's** *Republic* that understands poetry as a disruptive force to order, SF imagines the ideal polity on rational grounds. Its emergence can be connected to the **scientific revolution of 17C.**

So we are looking at the genre's emphasis on exotic difference. One could trace the roots of science fiction, to travel narratives that aspire to discover fantasmatic elements on the pathways of global trade routes, one could think of Marco Polo or Sir John Mandeville's, descriptions of fabulated China in the 14th century. So with respect to the genre's concern with alterity its roots can also be traced to utopian writing.

One thinks of Thomas Moore's Utopia here, written in 1516. And definitely Jonathan Swift's Gulliver's Travels, written in 1726. With Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, which comes much later, in 1818. There is an investigation of the human implications of scientific experiments, scientific conquest, what are the human consequences of these conquests? The strategy often idealized no place or u-topos the etymological root of Utopia is a way of critiquing an existent political situation through its comparison to an imagined good place.

So similar to Plato's Republic, that understands poetry as a disruptive force, to any kind of order any kind of institution or establishment science fiction imagines the ideal polity on rational grounds, its emergence could be connected to the scientific revolution that happened in the 17th century.

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Development of Science Fiction

- *Gulliver's Travels* is based on a satirical reinvention of the allegedly **wise men of the Royal Society**. In that way, it engages with the **new Enlightenment**.
- Critics also read this emphasis on science, technology and history as resulting in a counter-move initiated by Romantic poets like Shelley, who fall back on Biblical and classical mythologies. While Swift trivializes science, Goethe considers it as dangerous.
- **Cosmic voyages to the other world** have often been a mainstay interest for many SF writers – e.g. Bishop Godwin's *The Man in the Moone* (1638), Cyrano de Bergerac's *Voyages to the Moon and Sun* (1656), Marjorie Nicolson's *Voyages to the Moon* (1948). While referring to some science (Copernican theory, speculation about plurality of the world, Johannes Kepler and Galelio Galilei), early voyage stories are closer to satiric fantasies. *Gulliver's Travels* is also a satiric extension of travel literature.
- Influenced by *Gulliver's Travels*, Voltaire writes *Micromegas* (1752).

So, Gulliver's Travels is based on a satirical reinvention of the allegedly wise men of the Royal Society. And in that sense, it engages with the new enlightenment. So, critics also read this you know, over emphasis on science, technology and history as resulting in a counter move. That is initiated by Romantic poets such as Shelley, who have a tendency to fall back on biblical and classical mythologies.

So, moving away from the scientific and the technological, while Jonathan Swift trivializes science, Goethe in fact, considers sciences dangerous. So, cosmic voyages to the other world have often been a mainstay interest for many science fiction readers. We have here examples such as Bishop Godwin's, The Man in the Moone written in 1638, Cyrano de Bergerac's Voyages to the Moon and Sun written in 1656.

Marjorie Nicholson's Voyages to the Moon written in as late as 1948. So while referring to some science, in many cases, the Copernican theory, speculation about plurality of the world or the universe, Johannes Kepler, and, you know, reference to Galileo Galilei, early voyage stories apart from referring to these common, you know, scientific postulations or first, you know, pioneers, pioneer figures of science and scientific discoveries, inventions, apart from referring to them. Early voyage stories are closer to satiric fantasies.

So satiric fantasies, like one sees in Gulliver's Travels, which is also a satiric extension of travel literature. Now, one sees for example, that influenced by Gulliver's Travels, Voltaire writes his work Micromegas in 1752.

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Development of Science Fiction

- **Voyage to the underground world** has also interested SF authors – e.g. Baron Holberg's *Journey of Neils Klim to the World Underground* (1741), Robert Patlock's *Peter Wilkins* (1750), Jules Vernes' *Journey to the Centre of the Earth.*
- While SF and fantasy are not pure forms and can have interchangeable elements, contrary to sci-fi, fantasy does not pay any lip-service to fact, but instead emphasizes the supernatural and the obviously impossible.
- SF is not possible without a shift in the worldview from supernatural explanation of phenomena to rational or scientific explanation, which could fit into known or hypothesized laws of the universe.

So, voyage to the underground world has also interested science fiction authors. Many of them have written you know, journeys to the underworld. One has in mind, a writer like Baron Holberg's writes Journey of Neils Klim to the world underground in 1741. We have Robert Patlock's, Peter Wilkins in 1750, Jules Verne's Journey to the Centre of the Earth and so on. So, while science fiction and fantasy are not pure forms.

And can have certain interchangeable elements, between themselves so science fiction and fantasy come quite close as 2 different genres they have certain overlaps, one cannot deny that. On other hand contrary to science fiction, fantasy does not pay any lip service to facts to factual, you know, elements. It rather emphasizes the supernatural and obviously impossible. So it is not dealing with extrapolation.

Or speculation it is rather dealing with confabulation with a complete, you know, move away from anything that is immediately identifiable. Science fiction is not possible without a shift in the worldview, from supernatural explanation of phenomena to rational and scientific explanation, which could fit into known or hypothesized laws of the universe. So science fiction is playing with the implausible, but its reference point is still the relatable laws of the universe and not a complete departure from them.

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Development of Science Fiction

- The socio-cultural matrix that makes SF possible includes extension of literacy among the lower echelons in England and America, including the working classes; lower-middle class being appointed as **scientific officers**, **engineers** and **teachers** leading to a general increase in awareness.
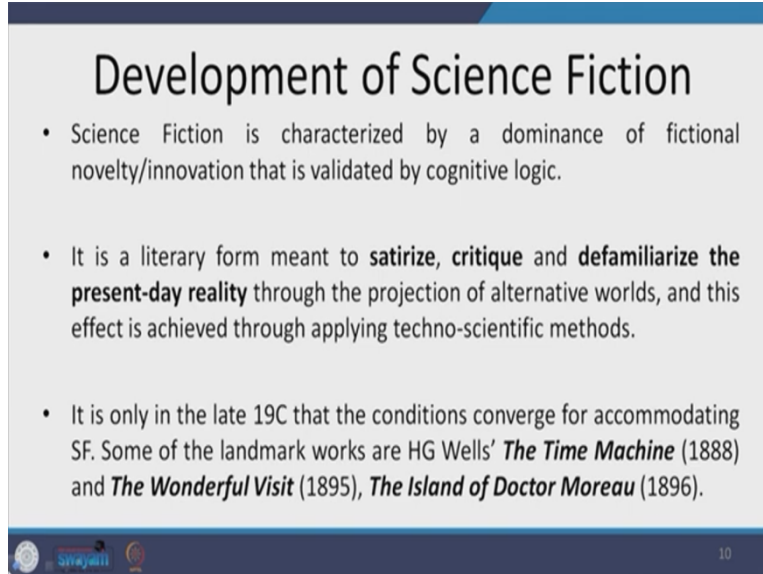- Mass literature referring to detective or spy fiction and SF replaced the market for 'Dime novels' (melodramas of popular adventures). Consequently, with techno-scientific innovations, the context of culture in a given Euro-American society is visibly transformed.
- **Darko Suvin**, in *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* (1979), defines SF as "a literary genre whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of **estrangement** and **cognition**."

The socio cultural matrix that makes science fiction possible includes extension of literacy among the lower echelons, both in England and in America, which include the working classes, the lower middle class, who are appointed widely as scientific officers, engineers, and teachers. And this leads to a general increase in scientific awareness, mass literature, referring to detective or spy fiction.

And science fiction tends to replace the market for dime novels. Dime novels, which would deal with melodramas or you know, melodramas of popular adventures. So dime novels are being replaced from the market by these fresh genres science fiction and deductive or spy fiction, there is a huge readership for you know, huge audience or reader formed for these new genres.

So consequently, through the social phenomena, one notice is that with techno scientific innovations, the context of culture in a given Euro-American society is visibly transformed what it means to, you know, what culture means to a given society, the entire meaning of cultural changes, with awareness, with knowledge, with access to, you know, scientific understandings through engagement with jobs that entail, you know, sudden expertise and scientific training.

The meaning of culture changes both in Europe and in America. So Darko Suvin in Metamorphosis of Science Fiction, written in 1979 define science fiction as I quote Suvin, a literary genre whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement, and cognition, unquote.
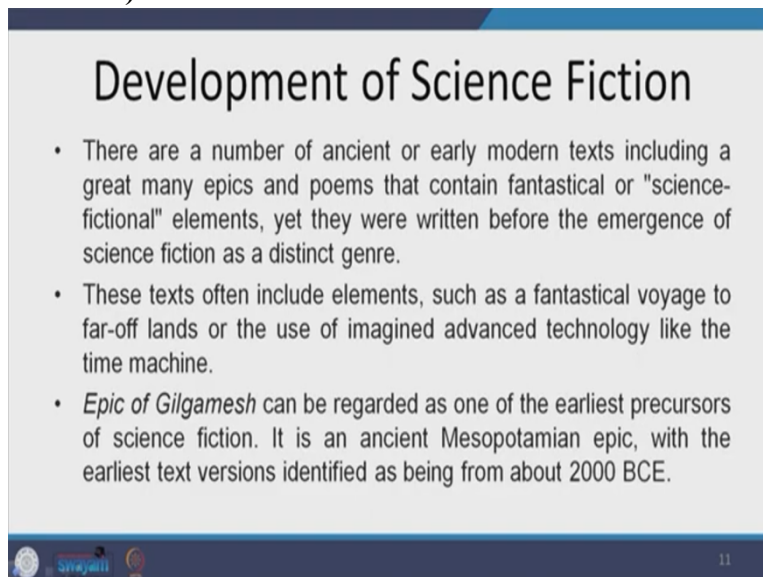
Science fiction is characterized by a dominance of fictional novelty or innovation that is validated by cognitive logic. So it is a literary form that is meant to critique, de familiarize the present day reality, even satirize such a reality through the projection of alternative worlds. And this effect is achieved through applying techno scientific methods that one can identify with.

So it is only in the late 19th century that the conditions converge for accumulating science fiction. Some of the landmark works like we know are by HG Wells, one thinks of The Time Machine written in 1888, and The Wonderful Visit written in 1895, The Island of Doctor Moreau, written in 1896.

There are a number of ancient or early modern texts, including a great many epics and poems which contain fantastical or science fictional elements, and yet, they were written even before the emergence of science fiction as a distinct genre. These texts often include elements such as a fantastical voyage to for-off lands or the use of imagined advanced technology, such as the time machine, Epic of Gilgamesh could be regarded as one of the earliest precursors of science fiction.

It is an ancient Mesopotamian epic, with the earliest text versions identified, as you know, available from around 2000 BCE.

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So, American science fiction author Lester del Rey argue that Gilgamesh is the earliest example of science fiction. Science fiction is precisely as old as the first recorded fiction. French science fiction writer Pierre Versins also argued that Gilgamesh was the first science fiction work due to his treatment of human reason and for immortality that he persuades Gilgamesh also features of flood scene, which resembles a scene from dystopian science fiction narrative.

However, the lack of explicit science or technology in the work also makes it an example of fantastic literature.

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Now, ancient in epics like Ramayana, which was you know, one could trace it to fifth or fourth century BCE includes, you know, instances or descriptions of Vimana or flying machines which are able to travel into space, or even underwater and destroy entire cities using advanced weapons. Similarly, the Mahabharata, written in eighth and ninth centuries BCE includes the story of King Kakudmi who travels to heaven to meet Brahma.

And is shocked to learn that many ages have passed when he returns to Earth, anticipating the concept of Trent, a concept of time travel. Another frequently cited text is the Syrian Greek writer Lucian of Samosata's second century's satire True History, which uses a voyage to outer space and conversations with alien life forms in order to comment on the use of exaggeration within travel literature.

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So the early Japanese tale of Urashima Taro involves traveling forward in time to a distant future. It was first described in the new Hongi which is considered as one of the oldest official histories of Japan and Urashima Taro is about a young fisherman named Urashima Taro, who visits an undersea palace and stays there for 3 days. Upon returning home to his village, he finds himself 300 years old in the future.

He finds himself you know, 300 years into the future, where he is long forgotten, his house is in ruins and his family is long dead. Now the 10th century Japanese narrative The Tail of the Bamboo Cutter may also be considered as proto science fiction. The protagonist of the story, Kaguya-Hime is a princess from the moon, who is sent to Earth for safety during a celestial war, and is found and raised by a bamboo cutter in Japan.

She was later taken back to the moon by her real extra-terrestrial family. The manuscript illustration depicts around a flying machine that is very similar to flying saucer.
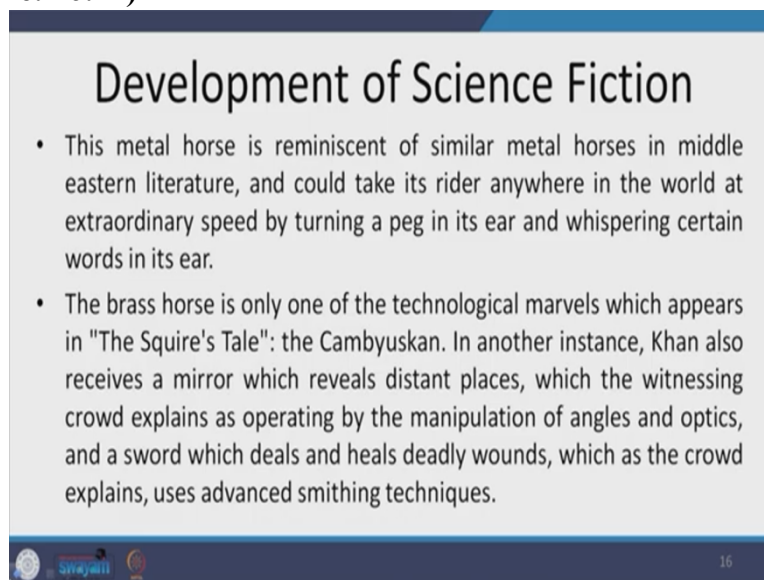
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During the European Middle Ages, science fiction themes appeared within many chivalric romance and legends. Robots and automata featured in romances that started, you know, robots and automata featured in romances starting in the 12th century. Some of the first works are Le Pelerinage de Charlemagne and Eneas. Another you have 12th century work, The Roman de Troie features the famous Chambre de Beautes, which contain 4 automata.

One holding a magic mirror another performing somersaults, and yet others playing musical instruments and showing people what the most needed. So automata in these works were

often ambivalently associated with necromancy, and frequently, guarded entrances are provided warning of intruders. Automata in this works often ambivalently associated automata in these works were often ambivalently associated with necromancy and frequently guarded, entrance, or provided warning of intruders.

Such association with necromancy often leads to the appearance of automata guarding tombs as they do in Eneas, Floris and Blancheflour. And Le Roman d'Alexandre, while in Lancelot, they appear in an underground palace. So automata did not always have to be human. A brass horse is among the marvelous gifts that are given to the Cambyuskan in Geoffery Chaucer's The Squire's Tales.
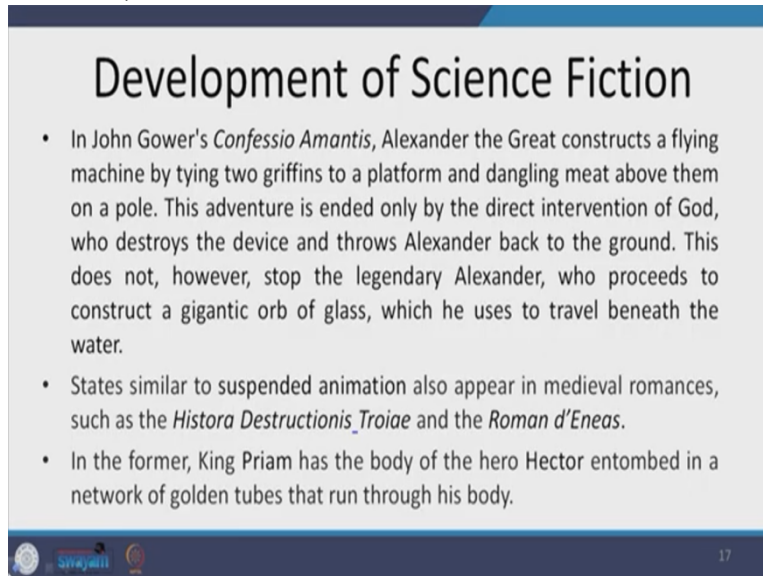
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In Chaucer's The Squire's Tales, the metal horse is reminiscent of similar metal horses, you know, appearing in Middle Eastern literature, and this horse could take its rider anywhere in the world at extraordinary speed by turning a peg in its ear and whispering certain words in its ear. The brass horse is only one of the technological marvels that appears in The Squire's Tales, there are others too.

In other instance, the brass horse is only one of the technological marvels that appears in The Squire's Tales. In other instances, one sees you know, a mirror, for example, that reveals distant places, and the witnessing crowd explains it as operating by the manipulation of angles and optics. So this mirror that is revealing distant places through operating by manipulation of angles and optics.

And there is also mention of a sword which deals and heals deadly wounds the crowd explains it, as using advanced smithing techniques.

In John Gower's Confessio Amantis, Alexander the Great constructs of flying machine through tying 2 griffins to a platform and dangling meat above them on a pole. This adventure is indeed only by the direct intervention of God, who destroys the device and throws Alexander back to the ground. However, this does not stop the legendary Alexander because he then proceeds to construct a gigantic orb of glass, which he then uses for traveling beneath the water.

So, suspended animation also appears in medieval romances, such as the Histora Destructionis Troiae and Roman d Eneas. In the former in historic destruction is, King Priam has a body of the hero Hector entombed in a network of golden tubes that run through his body.

Development of Science Fiction

- Through these tubes ran the semi-legendary fluid called balsam. It was then believed to have the power to preserve life. This fluid kept the corpse of Hector preserved as if he was still alive, maintaining him in a persistent vegetative state during which autonomic processes such as the growth of facial hair continued.
- The boundaries between medieval fiction with scientific elements and medieval science can be fuzzy at the best.
- In works such as Chaucer's *The House of Fame*, it is proposed that the titular House of Fame is the natural home of sound, described as a ripping in the air, towards which all sounds are eventually attracted.

Through these tubes, ran the semi legendary fluid called balsam. It was then believed to have the power to preserve life. This fluid kept the corpse of Hector preserved as though he were still alive, maintaining him in a persistent vegetative state, during which autonomic processes such as the growth of facial hair would continue. So the boundaries between medieval fiction with scientific elements and medieval science can be very thin and almost fuzzy, fuzzy at the best.

So in works such as Chaucer's The House of Fame, it is proposed that the titular House of Fame is the natural home of sound described as ripping in the air, sound that is ripping in the air towards which all sounds are even truly attracted. We would like to continue with this topic in our next lecture. I would stop right here at this point today. Let us meet for another round of discussion again. Thank you.