

INTRODUCTION

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It's safe to say that without *Star Wars* and *Star Trek*, I might have never become a science fiction fan. When I was a kid, it was those movies and television shows that first interested me in the genre. And when I tested the waters of science fiction reading, some of the first books I bought with my own money were *Star Trek* and *Star Wars* novels. In a sense, these properties and their tie-in novels acted as a kind of gateway drug to the wider genre of science fiction for me. Since reading those first books, I have expanded my tastes and interests, but my fondness for the *Trek*-type of narrative has remained, and so to me, the idea of doing an anthology that builds on those same tropes and traditions held great appeal. That, more than anything, is the reason this book exists.

But of course it is not just *Star Trek* and *Star Wars* that explore the vastness of interstellar, galaxy-spanning societies—of governments, not of countries, but of *worlds*, or *entire groups of worlds*. SF literature has a great many examples of it as well. There are classics like Isaac Asimov's *Foundation*, Ursula K. Le Guin's Hainish cycle, and Frank Herbert's *Dune* series; in fact, the tradition in print SF goes back long before *Star Trek* and *Star Wars*, all the way back to the days of the pulps, when writers like E. E. "Doc" Smith was writing his *Lensman* novels.

These classic federations have revealed and shaped much of American life. But with this anthology, we look to see what comes next. What will the interstellar federations of the future look like now that our society accepts (for the most part) racial and gender equality? President Barack Obama himself was a *Trek* fan as a child. Now, he is the first African-American president, something that even optimists like Gene Roddenberry might have had a hard time imagining. There will always be federations on the horizon, in our future, describing who we wish we were, or might become.

Over the decades, writers have continued to develop new and exciting takes on this theme—indeed, contemporary writers like Alastair Reynolds and Lois McMaster Bujold have crafted some of the finest examples of interstellar science fiction of all time, work that will likely be considered classic in the future. Writers like them, and the others in this book, are keeping the tradition alive, building on what the generations before have laid out, innovating to keep the sub-genre fresh and vital.

In the pages that follow, you will find a mix of all-new, original fiction, alongside selected reprints from authors whose work exemplifies what interstellar science fiction is capable of.