

# ORIGIN 15



**MAY 2019**

**Bulletin of the National Fantasy Fan Federation**

**History and Research Bureau**

**ORIGIN is edited by John Thiel, 30 N. 19<sup>th</sup> Street, Lafayette, Indiana 47904, email address [kinethiel@mymetronet.net](mailto:kinethiel@mymetronet.net) , who is also the head of the bureau. The bureau's staff is as follows:**

**JON SWARTZ, history contact, 12115 Missel Thrush Ct., Austin, TX 78750. [Jon\\_swartz@hotmail.com](mailto:Jon_swartz@hotmail.com)**

**JUDY CARROLL, columnist, 975 E. 120 South, Spanish Fork, UT 84660. [AutumnSeas8012@yahoo.com](mailto:AutumnSeas8012@yahoo.com)**

There's plenty of room for others who may wish to join the staff and feel they have something to contribute to the bureau. We'd like others with a good acquaintanceship with fan history and the history of science fiction and fantasy, or even a background in science, to take notice of our group and perhaps decide to contribute something to it. All others send locs, that is, others who may want to be active with this bureau. In a sense, you would be on top of the world being with this bureau. How so, you might ask? Well, you wouldn't be UNDER the world, you'd be on the surface of it, and at the same time you'd be with the bureau. You'd be gaining credits with the N3F, which means you'd be getting a compliment every once in awhile. That sure can feel good. Ask someone who's gotten a few compliments, if you get the chance. You can tell others in the bureau about it, and we would record it in our own bureau history. If there's a story to go along with it, it might be stored as a departmental anecdote. Remember, we're making fannish history now too, and in times to come people might have to do some research to find out about us.

Activity is as activity does, and we're being active in the bureau, so we are experiencing activity, which is much better, when one comes to think of it, than inertia. You develop a sense of time and place being in the bureau, and have a growing feeling of identity. That's worth something in itself. Being a part of what you read is so much more fulfilling than just reading it. Not that I am recommending dressing up in science fiction costumes and making the streets. You might be in trouble if the man catches you doing that. But I suppose they are having fun, and I think we in a serious constructive bureau could do with a little bit of fun too. Science fiction fandom is both a hobby and a way of life.

## EDITORIAL



### **Can We Trust Fandom To Be What We Like?**

Here a little propaganda, if you will, for science fiction fandom, for I am not about to say that you can't trust nobody when you're in something like that. If that, trusting no one, is the modern attitude toward science fiction fandom, and I have seen people putting it about like that, then we should look to improving our attitude, because thinking something like that has not been known to make anyone happy. A better attitude than that is apt to improve our circumstances. I'd say in answer to the question I have posed that fandom is something we can trust to be fandom, but maybe fandom can't trust us. However, we're who can do something about it. Fandom can't change itself any more than matter can do that, though there are people trying to claim that matter takes care of itself pretty well. But we can take care of ourselves better than anything like that can, and it might be well for us to realize what fandom is and is about and try to remain doing what one does in fandom, and then we can trust it pretty well. If you stay with what fandom is supposed to be, you can make out well in it.

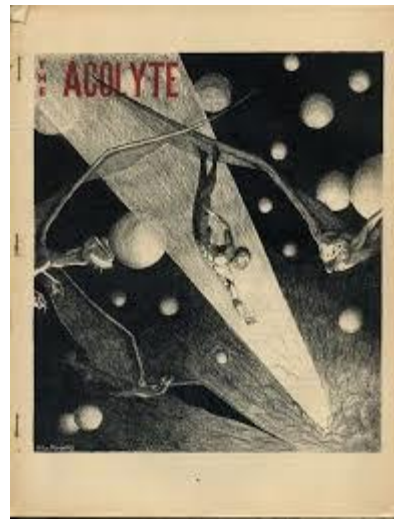
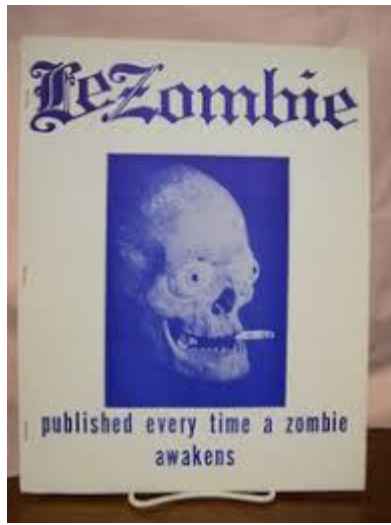
So, since I'm talking, what do I suppose fandom to be? It's true that you might not know what fandom is all about and that will make you shaky, but I think I can provide a basic idea of what fandom is, formulate a flat structure upon which others can make their claims about what they find fandom to be. (You may note that by being active, I have acquired a place from which to say what some of my ideas about things are.) Fandom arose from the science fiction magazines and fantasy magazines, and involved readers of these trying to continue discussions of the contents of these magazines outside the letter columns. Included with that were "little magazines", amateur attempts to produce writing such as they were reading. (Several noted fantasy writers started out writing for these.) Fanzines evolved from these correspondences, and discussions of

science fiction were now in fanzine form. This activity being noted, science fantasy organizations were started, and interchange among the organizations followed. These were done by mail, but when the fanzine crowd noted a proximity of other people, there were conclaves and then conventions where they all met in actuality, and news columns and news publications reported these events; the fanzines reviewed one another and there you had fandom. Finally there were articles and books about fandom, and histories were kept. In the midst of all this the N3F was founded, going into eighty years ago, so it has a couple of generations of existence behind it. Its interest is in science fiction, which represents speculation and progress and change and is a step away from mundane existence; true science fiction fans like taking this step. There is a high value placed on what is new and unusual, and this interest helps to define science fiction fandom. So that, as I see it, and I speak from the common knowledge, is a broad description of what science fiction fandom is, with reference to what science fiction is, and I think no one will be displeased with this statement...or if any people are, I will survey what they have to say with interest.

Science fiction invites active interest, and has in its past gotten its readers highly demonstrative. Unfortunately a lot of this high interest turned into conflict, a lot of which is going on at this time, but I think we should look for what is good in science fiction and try to build upon that; the returns from doing that are better than the returns from conflict. As with other people, we like talking about things better than arguing or fighting about them, but being that notorious "mankind" we get drawn into conflict rather easily. Once into conflict, though, we should not forget that there are things other than conflict. Perhaps we should talk over things rather than "howl with rage" over atomic energy, genetics misuses, and illegal scientific activity such as has been described in science fiction stories. This puts us against things, never mind that they are things that it might be virtuous to be against, it is still a preoccupation with conflict and having a negative attitude. Probably everyone has gotten the message that we don't like the things we don't like, but what are we doing that people would like, by way of contrast with what everyone is disputing? What we do has a lot to do with the way things are. IS there anything that's good, or is goodness an illusion, as was suggested by the philosopher Nietzsche. We seem to be proving that there is something wrong with everything by our argumentation. But that attitude is not the real spirit of science fiction fandom.

We'll have to do better than that, it would seem.

**Historical Vignette: 1944 Fanzine Yearbook** by Jon Swartz



The 1944 Fanzine Yearbook was published in 1945 under the auspices of the N3F and **Le Zombie**, the famous fanzine of club member Wilson "Bob" Tucker, who also edited the Yearbook. Described as "a catalog of amateur magazines published by the fantasy fan journalists", it consisted of six printed pages and provided information on 100+ fanzines published during 1944, plus a Miscellanea entry recognizing "miscellaneous postals, open letters and crud published by Walt Dunkleberger, Larry Shaw, F.T. Laney, J.M. Rosenblum, Gerry de la Ree, Ken Krueger, F.J. Ackerman, Walt Daugherty, T.B.Yerke, Al Ashley, Bill Wayson, E.E. Evans, as above; Bob Tucker, as below, and Raym (sic) Washington, Live Oaks, Florida". At the time of this publication several of these fans were N3F members.

From **The Acolyte**, edited/published by F.T. Laney and S.D. Russell of Los Angeles, to **Le Zombie**, Tucker's famous zine, data were provided on 108 different amateur publications from 1944. Information provided for each fanzine consisted of title, name and address of the editor/publisher, the manner of duplication, periodicity of publication, number of issues published in 1944, average number of pages, and single copy price. An "XL" appearing in the fifth position in an entry indicated that there was no price stated for that title, but that the zine could be obtained by exchange of letters to the editor. Finally, an asterisk (\*) for an entry indicated that the title was no longer being published.

Some items of possible historical interest contained in the Yearbook are the following: Geographical origin of fanzines, including foreign fanzines; titles no longer

being published in 1945 because the titles had been discontinued; fanzines related to the N3F; the number of female editors/publishers; and, finally, a note from Tucker regarding FAPA fanzines.

The fanzines came from all over the United States, mainly from New York (Claude Held, Larry Shaw, Don Wollheim, Julius Unger) and New Jersey (Gary de la Ree, Joe Kennedy, Sam Moskowitz) in the East and California (Forrest J. Ackerman, Charles Burbee, Walt Daugherty, Harry Honig, F.T. Laney) in the West; two foreign countries were represented (four fanzines published in England and two in Canada); there were 36 zines no longer being published, some because they had been “one-shots” but a few because of World War 2. The N3F was well represented with **Bonfire**, **NFFF President’s Report**, and **What is S-F Fandom?** listed, and many N3F members were cited, as noted above.

Only a few of the editors/publishers listed were female: Helen Bradleigh (**Dixie Phoenix**, **Fantasy Forum**, **Futurian Advance**, **Futurian Femme**, **V...--**) Jodine Fear (**Jody’s Comic Courier**), Mari Beth Wheeler (**Rosebud**), and Lora Crozetti (**Venus**). During the 1940s this was quite common, with only a few women actively involved in fandom—usually the wives, sisters, or girlfriends of male fans. In fact, “Helen Bradleigh” and “Jodine Fear” may not even have existed. Both names were associated with the enigmatic Claude Degler (**Cosmic Circle Commentator**, **C C White Paper**, **Nat’l Futurian Weekly** [sic], and apparently only Degler had ever seen either of them. During his time in fandom Degler used several different names and perpetrated many hoaxes, so these two female names on fanzines may have been part of these activities.

Finally, the note on the last page stated that it was the original aim of this Yearbook to include all fanzines published by the Fantasy Amateur Press Association during 1944. These plans were dropped, however, when Larry Shaw (a FAPA member) published in January 1945 a complete list of all FAPA publications from inception to date.

The 1944 Yearbook is still an item of interest to fans today, nearly seventy-five years after its publication. The same can be said for most of the early NFFF publications.

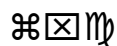


*Neon Limbo* by Will Mayo

In the land of the living  
the dead are often forgotten.  
They linger on,  
peering through the portal,  
looking for the answer.  
The living question one another  
but never bother to talk to the dead.  
Rather, there is always  
the latest household fad,  
a kitchen appliance or two,  
or maybe a movie to watch on the tube.  
While the dead silently wait for their answer,  
As celluloid fashions keep the masses busy about their chores,  
the dead pray for the living to pay some attention.  
Hoping for some greater god to come  
the way of the dying.  
Meanwhile the screens are all awash  
on the 47<sup>th</sup> channel  
as ghosts gather about in communion.  
Waiting for signs of static heaven.

*That Eternal Moment* by Will Mayo

Darkness, and light, Being and unbeing—  
which shall it be? Come with me  
into the time that forgot.





## SITES OF INTEREST: **Fanlore** by John Thiel



Allied to our own interests, there are available on the net places of research and stockpiles of things of historical interest, and it shall be among the purposes of this bureau to make these places accessible to NFFF members and search them out for the members if they have not themselves done so already. When any such place is discovered, we will make knowledge of its existence a thing which can be, and will be, had by the membership when they but read our journal, or find it in the N3F annals if they are new here and want to do a piece of research of their own, namely, research of our NFFF annals, and we will do so by doing a feature on it. Here our "discovery" is a site called Fanlore, which boasts that it will be an enduring site. The following is from their own introduction to the site:

"Fanlore is a multi-authored website that any fan can easily contribute to. We want to record both the history and current state of our fan communities—fan works, fan activities, fan terminology, individual fans and fannish-related events. Because Fanlore is based on Wiki software, you may edit pages to contribute your own experience, knowledge, and perspective on your community's activities, its members and histories, and the material it has produced. [Editor's note: Fanlore disclaims any more direct



connection with Wiki and is not a Wiki subsidiary.—JT]

“We have developed a set of policies based on principles of diversity, multiplicity, and on the value of fannish discourse—fans talking on fandom. It is managed by a committee. These policies are here to help contributors and administrators keep Fanlore accessible and diverse. They are flexible, so that Fanlore can grow organically. We expect Fanlore to live and thrive and take us in directions that best reflect the communities we aim to serve.

“While Fanlore is first and foremost a space both by and for fans, one of our goals is to make its contents accessible and appealing to other parties, the academics, media people, or fans new to online fandom. We hope Fanlore can help these groups learn more about fandom and fan practices. We hope to become a resource and a space where fans are in control of their own representation to more practical sensibilities.”

Fanlore’s URL is [https://fanlore.org/wiki/Main\\_Page](https://fanlore.org/wiki/Main_Page) .

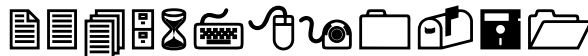
It may be seen that this site is in accord with our own objectives.



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## Runes by Will Mayo

Once upon a turning earth  
and a whirling, twirling sky,  
upon a flagging search for success,  
I had a vision of an aged body,  
bone riveted upon bone,  
torn apart  
by the anchor's tide of time.  
I saw chess players  
aiming for my soul  
and my creaking body's yearnings and desires.  
My time passed in endless runes  
until I saw the sign of my sight above,  
whose calligraphy, curled, read:  
"If all dreams came true  
and all dreamed of death,  
then there would be no dreams,  
and no need  
to dream of death.  
Do what matters and  
what does not matter."  
With slumbering parties waking,  
I saw morning frost  
melting into spring dew  
and passed through checkered blankets  
to meet dusty day.



## **TWENTY INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT SCIENCE FICTION** by Jeffrey Redmond

This is trivia about classic science fiction, and is either boring nonsense or fun knowledge. It all depends on your personal point of view. In this post we'd share some of our favorite facts about science fiction, SF, sci fi, or call it what you will.

The world of science fiction has given our planet some truly visionary writers, but also some funny stories and curious facts. So, if you're ready to boldly go to a literary galaxy far, far away, please read on.

1. Contrary to popular belief, Orson Welles' 1938 radio adaptation of H.G. Wells' *THE WAR OF THE WORLDS* didn't cause a nationwide panic. Though it did cause some serious concern in a few local areas.
2. In 2204, a group of science fiction authors wrote a novel, *ATLANTA NIGHTS*, designed to be unpublishable. But it was accepted for publication right away.
3. In 1939 Stanton A. Coblentz wrote a science fiction novel called *PLANET OF THE KNOB HEADS*.
4. In 1969 Jack Vance published a novel called *SERVANTS OF THE WANKH*. But, because the last word was dangerously similar to a rude British word, later editions altered the name of the alien race to "Wannek".
5. A "feghoot" is an anecdote ending in a terrible pun. It is named after a series of science fiction stories featuring "Ferdinand Feghoot".
6. The term "genetic engineering" was invented by science fiction author Jack Williamson in his 1951 novel *DRAGON'S ISLAND*.
7. The first known use of the word "prequel" was in 1958 in reference to a novel by science fiction author James Blish.
8. The word "spaceship" dates back to 1880.
9. The phrase "science fiction" is first found in print in 1851.

10. The phrase "parallel universe" was first used in H.G. Wells' 1923 novel MEN LIKE GODS.
11. William Gibson popularized the term "cyberspace" in a short story of 1982, though, contrary to a persistent rumor, he didn't coin the word.
12. The word "robot" was invented by the brother of a Czech playwright in 1920.
13. There is a life-sized android version of the SF writer Philip K. Dick, built in 2005 by David Hanson. It has been christened "Robo Dick".
14. There are actually four, not three, Laws of Robotics.
15. Jules Verne's 1863 book PARIS IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, set in Paris in 1960, correctly predicted cars, fax machines, and the internet.
16. In 1974 Arthur C. Clarke predicted the internet of the year 2001.
17. In the first chapter of his 1948 novel SPACE CADET, Robert Heinlein predicted mobile phone technology.
18. John Brunner's 1969 novel STAND ON ZANZIBAR uncannily predicted many features of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century world. These included overpopulation, Viagra, same sex marriage, and even President Obama.
19. Edward Bellamy's 1888 novel LOOKING BACKWARD: 2000-1887 predicted credit cards, garden cities, and electronic broadcasting.
20. Richard Matheson's 1956 novel THE SHRINKING MAN was inspired by a comedy film.

There are, of course, a great many more things to mention. And future issues will do so.



## MONTHLY COLUMN by Judy Carroll



This month we are going to find out if Science Fiction is considered Literature. I decided to first ask, What is Literature? Following are a few of the responses:

Online dictionary

"Literature—written works, especially those considered of superior or lasting artistic merit."

"A great work of literature".

Encyclopedia Britannica

Literature, Written, by Kenneth Rexroth

"Literature, a body of written works. The name has traditionally been applied to those imaginative works of poetry and prose distinguished by the intentions of their authors and the perceived aesthetic excellence of their execution."

Cambridge Dictionary

Literature

US—"writing that has lasting value as art".

UK—"written artistic works, especially those with a high and lasting artistic value".

The three above answers are pretty straight and to the point.

Now, let's see what response we get with the following question:

Is Science Fiction considered Literature?

The Royal Society    The Repository

Can science fiction be literature?

17 November 2011

Guest post by Jasmine Fox-Skelly, digital volunteer

This is part of a series of posts inspired by the Royal Society's festival of literature and the arts.

Ms. Fox-Skelly attended a talk given by Professor Ian Stewart FRS—writer of science fiction and fact books, and a mathematician. He is the author of DOES GOD PLAY DICE? He has collaborated with Terry Pratchett on his Discworld series.

The topic—Can science fiction really be considered proper literature, or should the genre really be the sole jurisdiction of teenage boys?

Following is some of what she gleaned from the talk:

"If literature can be thought to include well written works that illuminate the human condition, that provide characterization and have emotional content, then good science fiction does all of these things."

Paraphrasing Gregory Benford, science fiction writer and physicist, she writes, "In mainstream literature often what matters is human life and our existence on this planet, whilst science fiction often focuses on the Universe as being more important."

Quoting Robert J. Sawyer, Hugo Award-winning science fiction writer, "Good literature illuminates the human condition; good science fiction illuminates the human condition by examining it in circumstances that could not occur in our day-to-day lives, therefore providing unique and provocative insights."

Debate.org

The Question...Should Science Fiction be considered serious literature?

Of those responding 63% said Yes and 38% said No.

(Yes, I am aware the numbers add up to 102. I checked the website three times.)

From the little bit of information I have been able to gather it appears that the people who read science fiction feel it should be considered literature. And those who do not read science fiction feel it has no place in the world of "true" literature.

I think if a story is well written, thought out, and holds the reader's attention it doesn't matter whether or not it is considered literature. As long as there are good to excellent science fiction stories being written and available to the reading public—I will be happy.





## Letters of Comment

**ROBERT LICHTMAN:** Interesting issue of ORIGIN, some comments. First, it's totally inappropriate to refer to Claude Degler as one of "the great leaders of fandom's past." He was mentally unbalanced, as well-documented in a number of sources. One of them is Jack Speer's "Investigation in Newcastle": <http://www.efanzines.com/IIN/index.htm> .

But a more primary source would be the long article on Degler in FANCYCLOPEDIA: <http://fancyclopedia.org/claude-degler> .

And also this, on his "Cosmic Circle": <http://fancyclopedia.com/cosmic-circle> .

As you can see, once you read these articles, to place him on an even basis with Moskowitz and Taurasi is totally inappropriate.

In excerpting the column by Renfrew Pemberton from the March 1957 **Cry of the Nameless**, I wonder if you're aware that Pemberton is a pseudonym of fan and author F.M. Busby.

I enjoyed Jon's article on Keller, and how cool it is that he has Wollheim's copy of THE SIGN OF THE BURNING HART. For such a rare book, it's surprising that quite a few copies are available in a Bookfinder search, ranging in price from around \$40 to \$125. There's even a copy of the original French publication for a mere \$1,001. All the sellers make a point of noting that their copy is signed, which lends credence to Jon's having heard that Keller signed all 250.

*I don't know how total inappropriateness can be, as it is a rather whimsical perception and generally a matter of taste. "Mentally unbalanced" is hearsay, and tends to be slanderous without fully documented proof that seems it would not be obtainable legally. The documentation you mention could scarcely be respected when it appears in something where it is deemed a printable allegation. A great leader need not be good; Hitler was great in terms of leadership as evidenced by the number of people he was*

*able to lead, and Degler had followers. Other writers about Degler have shown considerable approval of him. As the Fancyclopedia is a form of encyclopedia, I'd ask of it whether it should not be written more objectively; people worth writing about are not generally given a razzmatazz in a serious work of information. I like to think well of people myself.*

*I've certainly been aware that Renfrew Pemberton was a pseudonym, but have heard only obscurely that he was F.M. Busby.*

*I suppose that French publication would not be ordered by mail. The postal service is not reliable enough to have a book costing that much money shipped that way. A person who ordered it and didn't receive it would feel the same way a man would feel whose new car had gotten a sizeable dent in it.*



Origin

Ye ende