

***SF/Fan* Origins #73**

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The Journal of the National Fantasy Fan Federation's History and Research Bureau
Edited by Samuel Lubell



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Editorial Note

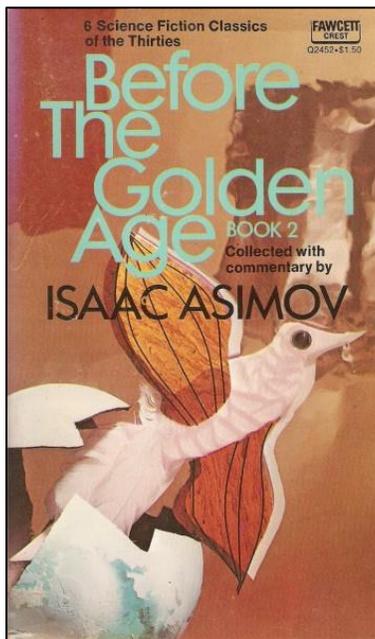
Welcome to my third issue of the revived *Origins*, a National Fantasy Fan Federation (N3F) publication of N3F's Historical and Research Bureau. *Origins* covers the history of science fiction/fantasy, fandom, and related science focusing on pre-21 century content. Note that reviews and summaries may have spoilers.

I urge people to send in articles, letters, reviews of older SF, and anything relevant to SamJLubell@gmail.com. I'd be interested in stories on how people discovered fandom and what they did. I'm also interested in articles about sf and fandom in other countries.

Please support N3F by joining and paying annual dues, which are only \$6 for Electronic Members, \$18 for a Regular Membership that gives you a mailed paper version of The National Fantasy Fan. Paid members can vote for the Neffy Awards and N3F officers. Visit <https://tnfff.org/to-join/>



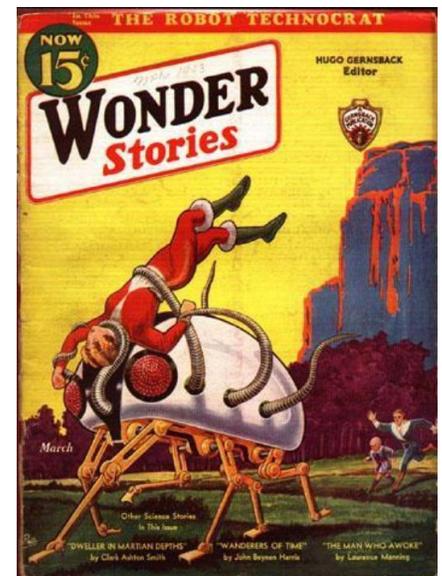
Literary SF: Review of Isaac Asimov's *Before the Golden Age: Book 2* Reviewed by Samuel Lubell



This book continues the paperback reprint of the massive hardcover *Before the Golden Age*, edited with commentary by Isaac Asimov. This one has stories from 1933 and 1934, along with another autobiographical essay by Asimov. Most of these stories prove my point about not always recognizing the failings of things you read as a child, but a couple of these do still hold up today. Note that all the 1934 stories came from *Astounding Stories*.

In his autobiographical essay, Asimov wrote that “In those days, of course, there was no academic interest whatever in science fiction, and to study it in school would have been in the highest degree unthinkable... Nor was it just that people didn't read science fiction. A person might not read detective stories or Westerns and not yet laugh at those who did. Science fiction reading, however, elicited laughter. ‘Do you really read that crazy stuff?’ was the question. Science fiction was escape literature, you see. It was more quintessential escape than any other form of popular reading was, because it escaped you right out of this world. It seemed there was something contemptible about escape.” He went on to show how some of these stories proved otherwise.

“The Man Who Awoke” by Laurence Manning originally appeared in *Wonder Stories*, March 1933. The story starts off as what appears to be a mystery about the disappearance of a banker who “had absolutely no enemies and possessed a great deal of money with which to indulge his dilettante scientific hobbies.” While the beginning of the story covers efforts to find out what really happened, although the story shows him motionless in an underground chamber, the banker's son finds a letter saying he is in an experimental sleep until he wakes in the “glory of the world that is to be when Mankind has risen on the stepping stones of science to its great destiny.” Instead, he wakes in a far future where cities have vanished and mankind lives a mostly rural existence with village living on the land (with very few machines), and a real generation gap since the young can demand the old do not use up the remaining resources. Since Winters came from “the height of the false civilization of Waste,” the Council of Youth is



convinced he is a trick and, when they begin to believe him, blame him for using up oil and coal. He is forced to flee and winds up back in his hideout, ready to return to sleep. There were four more installments in later issues. Asimov's concluding words point out how the concern for the scarcity of resources, decades before the energy crisis of the 1970s, shows that science fiction was far from being "escape literature." The story is little more than an excuse to show the future society, but there is enough here to make the story interesting, with the proper historical perspective.

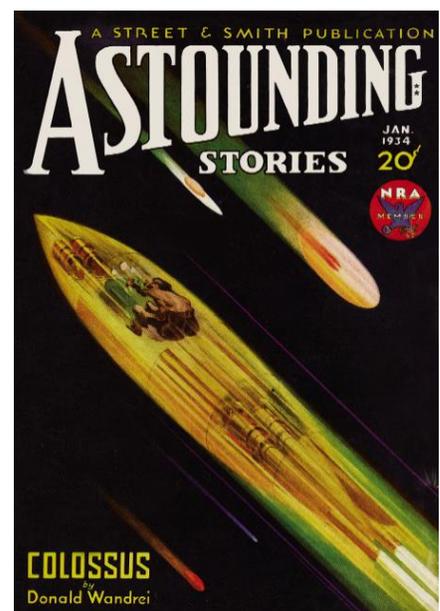
"Tumithak in Shawm" by Charles R. Tanner originally appeared in *Amazing Stories*, June 1933. This is a sequel to "Tumithak of the Corridors," that appeared in book 1. I did not like it as much as I did the first story. The writing remains crude, but has lost much of the mythic qualities of a story pieced together from legends of a long-ago past. Tumithak and 200 warriors raid the Esthetts, a group of humans who lived in the underground corridors, but cooperated somewhat with the alien Shelk who had conquered the surface of Earth. After this massacre, Tumithak and three men ascend to the surface as scouts and have a series of adventures, learning that the Shelk hold Great Hunts of men, aided by traitors who help the Shelk. Tumithak also discovers humans from another pit, including a girl, Tholura the Tain, who is instantly smitten with Tumithak's bravery. Together they fight more Shelk and get chased back to Tholura's pit and win the allegiance of the Tains. After using a Tunnel Machine to make a connection between these Corridors and those of Tumithak's, he unites his two forces, and battles a group of Shelk using captured Shelk weapons. When a Shelk flying machine captures Tholura, Tumithak pursues and captures a Shelk city. Tholura is not the defenseless female since she slayed a Shelk too. In the crude language of the story, "'Tumithak,' she cried. 'Take me. I love you and now I am worthy of you ... and I too am a slayer of Shelks.'" Not even historical perspective can make that language readable for a modern audience.



those that Asimov remembered). By 1934, *Astounding* was the leading SF magazine and continued to be for forty years.

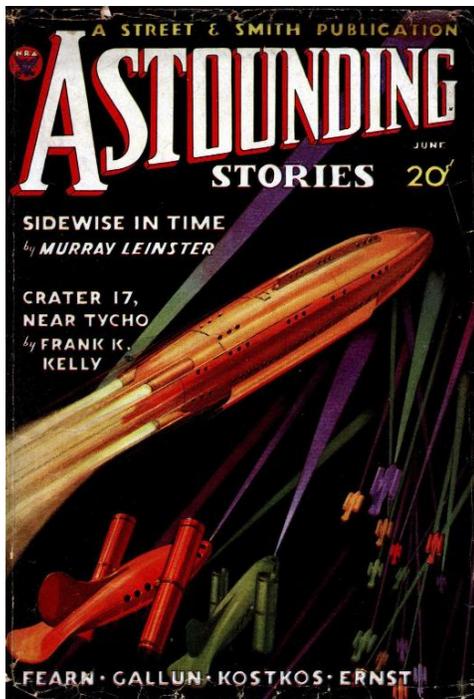
"Colossus" by Donald Wandrei originally appeared in *Astounding Stories*, January 1934. It is a thought story that has ideas dominate. In it, Duane Sharon visits an observatory and is told of a problem that could indicate their entire theory of the universe is wrong, and that the billions of stars in our universe could be just the electrons of some superatom. Duane builds a spaceship (that can travel thousands of light-years per second) to go beyond the thirty-first magnitude and see into the universe beyond. But economic rivalries and competition for African resources lead to war. On the day of his marriage to Anne and the launch of the ship, war is declared and all males told to report to military stations. Duane takes the ship and flees, breaking out of this universe and into a larger one where his ship is on the slide of a microscope. Yet due to their advanced technology, he's able to communicate with the giant Titans. But he cannot return to his own universe. He makes a deal with them to avoid dissection and ends up on a paradise planet with beings his own size. There are some interesting ideas here, but not much

In his essay, Asimov describes the changes in the publishing industry, as the SF pulps went bimonthly and *Wonder Stories* and *Amazing Stories* shrunk to pulp size. But then, Smith and Smith Publications bought *Astounding Stories* and it resumed publication in October 1933. Their new editor F. Orlin Tremaine had bold ideas of what a science fiction magazine should be and soon published nearly all the best stories (at least



happens beyond the presenting of the ideas. Even teenage Isaac Asimov noticed problems with the science.

“Born of the Sun” by Jack Williamson originally appeared in *Astounding Stories*, March 1934. Williamson is a name older fans might know as he lived to be 98 years old and wrote 52 novels, with the last one appearing in 2005. He had a story in book 1. In this story, Foster Ross, who is working on the first space ship to go to the Moon, is visited by his Uncle Barron, who is chased by an assassin. Barron tells Foster to finish the space machine to save the human race since the planet is doomed to destruction. The secret Cult of the Great Egg knows that all the planets are giant eggs that will soon hatch. There’s a race to finish the ship in time that causes Foster to neglect his fiancé, who, in response, begins to live on the ship. Meanwhile, the cult gains new members and sends them to attack the spaceship. While they wreck much of the ship and knock Foster unconscious, he is able to recover and repair enough of the ship to take off with just Baron, thinking his fiancé is dead or captured. At the very end she appears, having hidden in an oil tank. The two will be able to restart the human race and conquer space. While there are some strong similarities to “Colossus,” there is a lot more action. The story can be enjoyed today as long as one’s sense of historical perspective covers the racism (toward Asians) and the lone female being just a love interest.



“Sidewise in Time” by Murray Leinster originally appeared in *Astounding Stories*, June 1934. Leinster is one of the all-time great SF authors and deserves to be read still today. In this story, Professor Minott discovers and is able to predict slippages in time. He assembles a group of students (including the girl he secretly loves) and equips them with supplies to conquer the past. Unfortunately, one of his student recruits encourages a mutiny and ultimately forces the professor to let them return to their own time. The professor and one of his female students stay behind. The story has lots of scenes showing different overlaps in time such as modern person entering the boarder of the Confederacy and a Chinese village placed on the banks of the Potomac River. I easily could see this story getting published today as it still seems fresh and new. This is easily the best story in Book 2.

“Old Faithful” by Raymond Z. Gallun originally appeared in *Astounding Stories*, December 1934. This story has an artificial being, Number 774, with a lifespan allocated by the Rulers of Mars. His job was to interpret signals from Earth and using flashes of light, to communicate with them. Lots of the story covers the problem of interspecies communications. Ultimately, Number 774, right before his scheduled destruction, takes advantage of a comet to actually travel from Mars to Earth. The story jumps from Number 774 on Mars to an observatory on Earth that has been sending the signals to Mars and interpreting the messages back. They are able to interpret the message and communicate with 774 when he arrives, critically injured. Although 774 does not survive, his vessel and diagrams within it could lead to space travel for Earthlings. This was a popular story and one of the first to have friendly (or at least sympathetic) aliens. It can be enjoyed today without needing any historical perspective. It is my second favorite in the book.

Literary SF Fandom: Reading Older SF By Samuel Lubell

Some people claim that older SF is not readable by modern readers (see the LoC this issue putting the date at 1975). There’s an entire website, <https://youngpeoplereadoldsff.com/>, devoted to having young people read and review older stuff. The claim seems nonsensical to me, since people routinely read and enjoy much older fiction. I personally have a fondness for 19th century literature, while many others read literature from the ancient Greeks going back thousands of years, such as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, admittedly in

modern translations. Even in Science Fiction, 19th century works like *Frankenstein*, and the novels of Jules Verne and H.G. Wells are still enjoyed (admittedly frequently adapted into movies).



And yet, there is some truth to this statement, although I'd place the year when the best SF shifted from mostly unreadable by modern readers to mostly readable at 1940 or so (although readers should only read the best from this era). I'm seeing this with my reading of Asimov's *Before the Golden Age* (see review in this and the previous issue), which has a lot of stories that I find hard to force myself through. Yet, I enjoy stories from Golden Age of Science Fiction that started just a few years later. The difference is that science fiction in America emerged from the pulp magazines which originally had relatively low standards. It was enough to have an idea and some action. To make a living at the low rates these magazines paid, authors had to write quickly and rarely edit let alone rewrite. I suspect we'd find the same lack of

quality in the pulps of other genres, even while the "slicks" like Colliers and Scribner's were publishing the likes of Hemingway. As the pulps died out after WWII, editors were able to become pickier about what they published. And editors like John Campbell, for all his faults, had a vision of the quality of stories he wanted to publish and the ability to nurture authors to produce at this level.

And of course, Sturgeon's law still holds. "Ninety percent of everything is crap." A SF story picked at random has a very high chance at being in this 90 percent. Even recommendations do not always help. There's a saying that "The Golden Age of science fiction is 12." Most readers do not develop their adult critical faculties until their mid to late teens. This is why many adult readers are shocked when they go back to books/media they loved as a child/teen and find they have been replaced by the "suck fairy". (Some, however, blinded by nostalgia, may refuse to realize that the work does not live up to their memories.) So, if you get a recommendation from a fellow fan, ask them how old they were when they read it.

Now, how does one find good older SF books? One way is to look at the Hugo and Nebula award winners and finalists. These are not perfect. Sometimes, fads elevate works and things that are popular when published do not hold up later. Awards do miss works whose greatness is only realized later. But they are a good start. For stories, one can look at various Best of the Year anthologies and collections by Hugo winning editors. Also look for works by NESFA Press (although sometimes their academic desires to produce a complete works overpower their more selective impulses).



A good source for identifying high-quality novels is the Library of America. While originally the Library of America saw science fiction is not prestigious enough for its recognition, this has recently changed. Some of their science fiction collections include:

- American Science Fiction: Four Classic Novels 1953-1956 - *The Space Merchants* by Frederik Pohl & C. M. Kornbluth, *More Than Human* by Theodore Sturgeon, *The Long Tomorrow* by Leigh Brackett, and *The Shrinking Man* by Richard Matheson
- American Science Fiction: Five Classic Novels 1956-1958 - *Double Star* by Robert A. Heinlein, *The Stars My Destination* by Alfred Bester, *A Case of Conscience* by James Blish, *Who?* by Algis Budrys, and *The Big Time* by Fritz Leiber
- American Science Fiction: Four Classic Novels 1960-1966- *The High Crusade* by Poul Anderson, *Way Station* by Clifford D. Simak, *Flowers for Algernon* by Daniel Keyes, and . . . *And Call Me Conrad [This Immortal]* by Roger Zelazny

- American Science Fiction: Four Classic Novels 1968–1969–*Past Master* by R. A. Lafferty, *Picnic on Paradise* by Joanna Russ, *Nova* by Samuel R. Delany, and *Emphyrio* by Jack Vance

Those wishing to read the cream of the crop of older SF novels would find these a great starting place and even older readers may find a few that they missed (I see six that I need to read). Bear in mind that the Library of America editions are deluxe hardcovers and most of their contents are available a lot cheaper in used bookstores. They also have single author collections for Octavia Butler, Ursula LeGuin, Kurt Vonnegut, Ray Bradbury, Philip K Dick, and Madeleine L'Engle (as well as Lovecraft, Poe, Shirley Jackson, and others).

Literary SF: Author Spotlight: John Varley By Samuel Lubell

John Varley's recent death (December 10, 2025) prompted me to do this Author Spotlight on him. Born August 9, 1947, Varley became an avid reader of science fiction in junior high school. Although he attended Michigan State University, he decided to follow in the footsteps of Jack Kerouac and ended up a hippie in San Francisco during the Summer of Love where he practiced "your basic sex, drugs, and rock'n' roll. Works for me." But, tiring of panhandling and with no job experience, he decided to make money by writing a novel, which he admitted was terrible. But while trying to sell the novel, he wrote his first story "Picnic on Nearside" which was published in *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, August 1974. This was the first of 20 or so works in his "Eight Worlds" universe in which aliens take over Earth and kick humanity out. Humans settle all the other worlds of our solar system, providing the settings for his stories and novels. His first novel, *The Opiuchi Hotline* (1977), is also in this series.

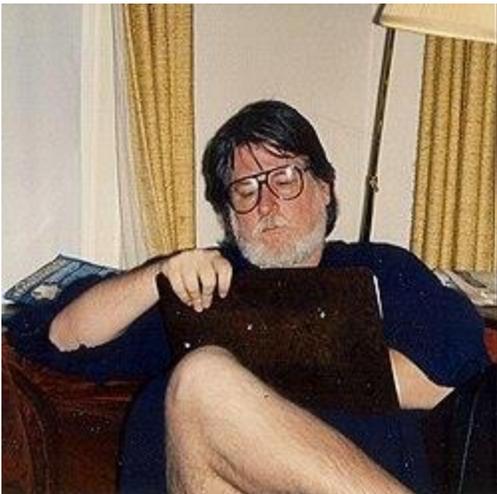


Photo of John Varley in 1992 by Arthur Jene via Wikipedia

His early work was frequently compared to that of Heinlein and often shows Heinlein's influence (as well as that of Arthur Clarke), especially his Young Adult series, *Thunder and Lightning*. His Gaea Trilogy (*Titan*, *Wizard*, and *Demon*) is wonderfully over the top. His Eight Worlds series is very interesting with characters changing sex freely. His 1977 story "Air Raid" about time travelers kidnapping airplane crash victims before the crash, became the 1989 movie *Millennium* which Varley novelized in 1983 based on his version of the screenplay, which a series of directors and scriptwriters heavily modified into what Varley called (in print even) "a rotten movie".

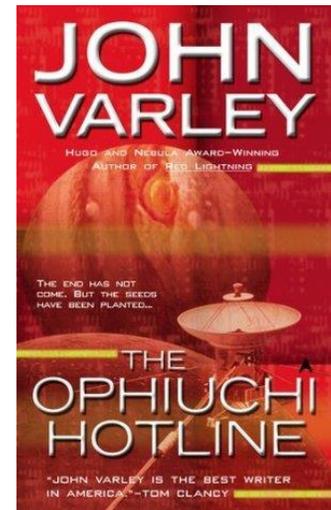
Throughout his career, he continued to write short stories. He has 15 Hugo nominations and nine Nebula Award nominations. He won the Novella Hugo and Nebula in 1979 for "The Persistence of Vision", The Short Story Hugo in 1982 for "The Pusher," and the Novella Hugo and Nebula in 1985 for "Press Enter ■".

Varley rarely concerned himself with continuity. When writing *Steel Beach*, set in his Eight Worlds universe, he decided not to limit himself to what he had established in the previous stories. In his

introduction to the book he wrote: "This story appears to be part of a future history of mine, often called the Eight Worlds. It does share background, characters, and technology with earlier stories of mine... What it doesn't share is a chronology. The reason for this is simple: the thought of going back, rereading all those old stories, and putting them in coherent order filled me with ennui... *Steel Beach* is *not* really part of the Eight Worlds future history. Or the Eight Worlds is not really a future history, since that implies an orderly progression of events. Take your pick." Despite this statement, most people classify *Steel Beach*, *The Golden Globe*, and *Irontown Blues* as part of the Eight Worlds series.

Critics say that Varley was an excellent writer whose later work somehow failed to live up to the potential of his earlier writings. The critic John Clute wrote in the *SF Encyclopedia* “Varley's output of the 1980s was, nevertheless, less strikingly innovative than had been hoped – and, perhaps unfairly, expected – of him.”

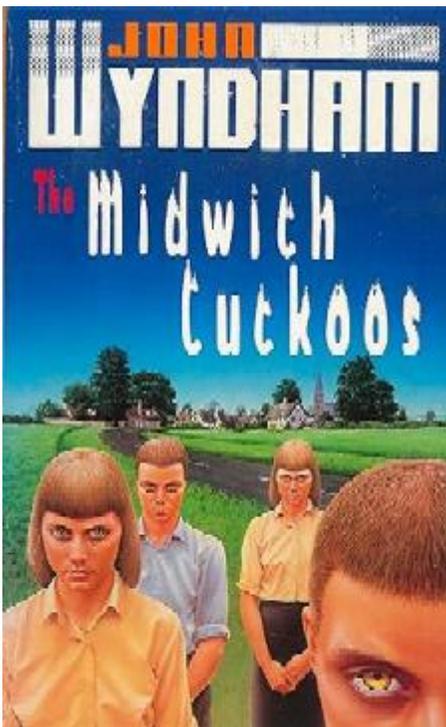
Readers new to John Varley may want to start with 2004 collection, *The John Varley Reader: Thirty Years of Short Fiction*, which not only contains his best stories, but also has wonderful autobiographical notes about how he came to write each one. I would also recommending reading *The Ophiuchi Hotline* and, if you like it, continuing with the other Eight Worlds novels. His Gaea Trilogy is also worth reading.



Literary SF: Review of *The Midwich Cuckoos* (1957) by John Wyndham. (1957)

Reviewed by Mark Nelson

“We wish to suggest a structure for the salt of deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA). We believe that this structure has novel features which are of considerable biological interest.” J.D. Watson & F.H.C Crick. (April 25th 1953). “Molecular structure of nucleic acids: A structure for deoxyribose nucleic acid”. *Nature*, 171 (4356), 737-738.



In John Wyndham’s *The Midwich Cuckoos*, it’s the aliens that can’t keep it in their trousers. Actually, they probably did keep it in their trousers; they used different methods to impregnate clusters of human females across the Earth. But why have their travelled so far to do this?

What do we *really* know about the evolution of *Homo Sapiens*? Why did the other species of the genus *Homo* go extinct? Where did they come from? Have evolutionary forces receive a helping hand on multiple occasions from aliens who are using the Earth as a genetic laboratory to breed a superior species? Are they investigating which modifications are successful and which ones fall to the wayside in the ultimate battle of the fittest? Did humans receive a genetic boost which enabled them to outperform the Neanderthals? Is the Earth ultimately nothing more than a giant petri dish?

The main features of the alien “cuckoos” (31 boys and 30 girls) are threefold. Firstly, they possess telepathic abilities and can control the actions of humans. Secondly, they have two distinct group minds; one for the boys and another for the girls. Finally, at the age of 9 they physically appear to be sixteen years old.

The Russians eventually realise the threat that the cuckoos pose to their way of life. Once the cuckoos decide that they are now the superior life form on the planet, what will prevent them from taking over? What is to prevent the last species of the genus *Homo* from rapidly going extinct? The Russians decide to take action whilst their cuckoos are still based in their ‘home’ town: it is shelled using atomic cannon from distance of 50-60 miles. There is a loss of civilian lives, but what is there compared to protecting the Russian way of life? (The destruction of this town for the Greater Good reminded me of the actions of Prime Minister Mollari in *Babylon 5*. In order to remove all trace of shadow influence on Centauri Prime he detonated three fusion bombs planted on the island of Selini. In another *Babylon 5* reference the Vorlons seeded the latent ability to generate telepathic powers amongst the younger races, breeding a stronger ally for a future war against the Shadows.)

It transpires that in addition to the English and Russian colonies, there were three additional colonies: “an Inuit settlement in the Canadian Arctic, a small township in Australia’s Northern Territory and a Mongolian village”. The cuckoos in these colonies have not survived. One of the cuckoos in Midwich expresses matters starkly.

“It is a biological obligation. You cannot afford not to kill us, for if you don’t, you are finished. . .” (Page 197)

How far is the British government willing to go to protect the future of humanity?

Two random things that I liked.

“In the post office Miss Ogle was knitting beside her switchboard, and finding, as usual, that real life conversation was more interesting than the wireless.”

I remember my parents telling me that when they had their first phone calls had to go through a switchboard. When did manual switchboards become old technology (in the UK)? Surprising recently according to ChatGPT. Most manual switchboards were replaced by automatic telephone exchanges in the 1960s and the 1970s. However, the remaining ones were not replaced until the 1980s. The last manual switchboard was located in Andover, Hampshire. This was not replaced until 1986. (It had been in service since 1911).

I learnt a new word: “Unless it could be a rick”. A *rick* is an agricultural word meaning: “a stack of straw, hay, or other crops that have been piled up in a particular way for storage or drying. It is often used in rural settings to describe a large, neatly stacked heap of crops”.

It surely isn’t a spoiler to say that by the end of the novel all five colonies of alien cuckoos have been destroyed. Or should that be, the five known colonies have been destroyed. . .

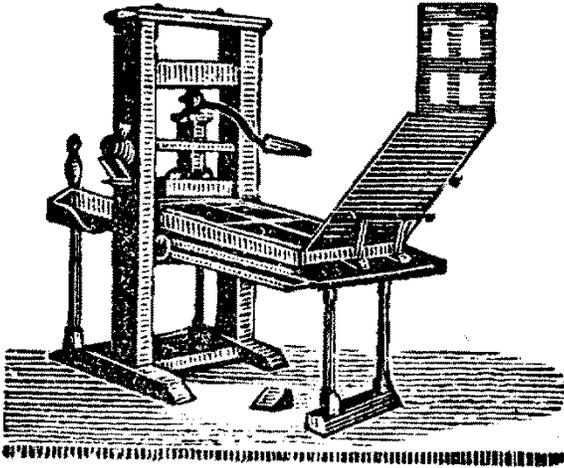
The uses of DNA have far exceeded anything that Watson and Crick dreamed of in 1953. We know that DNA from Neanderthals was transferred to modern humans about 47,000–65,000 years ago. Neanderthal DNA appears to exist in all human populations, though the amount varies between regions. According to Wikipedia “Neanderthal-derived DNA is highest in East Asians, intermediate in Europeans, and lower in Southeast Asians”. There is no scientific consensus on the reasons for these regional differences.



Fandom: First Fanzines **By Samuel Lubell**

A fanzine is a nonprofessional fan magazine, published by and for fans. There are different types of fanzine including a perzine (personal zine), a fanzine by one person, usually about themselves and their lives; a clubzine, which is by the members of a club for other members of the club and frequently including minutes of club meetings; a newszine, which naturally is focused on news; and literary zines, which publish fiction.

There is some debate as to what constitutes the first fanzine. In the 19th century, some writers would have their own publications. For instance, in the 1850s, Charles Dickens edited *Household Words* where he serialized his own fiction and included articles written by himself and others. However, some issues sold 40,000 copies, making it more of a professional magazine.



The two leading contenders for first SF fanzine are *The Comet* and *The Planet*. *The Comet* was the clubzine of the Science Correspondence Club, later known as the International Scientific Association (and formerly the International Cosmos Science Club). This was more of a science club than a science fiction club and mostly functioned via the mail (although there was an in-person group in Chicago and later in New York). The first issue was published in May 1930 and edited by Ray Palmer (who later became editor of *Amazing Stories*). It only lasted 17 issues (through 1933) and was called *Science Correspondence Club Organ* and then, starting with the fourth issue, *Cosmology*.

Some fan historians do not credit *The Comet* as the first SF fanzine, saying it was more science than SF (although later issues did have more SF content). They credit *The Planet* as the first SF fanzine. This was the clubzine of The Scienceers, a New York City club often considered the first-ever SF club. It had six issues (June-December, 1930) edited by Allen Glasser (with associate editor Mortimer Weisinger). Issues were short, around 3-5 pages (based on the first six issues available at fanac.org). While many articles were about science, it did publish lists of the best “scientific-fantasy” stories and serials of the year.

Other contenders include *Cosmic Stories* by future Superman creator Jerry Siegel at age 14 in 1929. This was fiction written by Siegel, so not really a fanzine. And no one has seen a copy. Forrest J Ackerman has mentioned publishing two issues of a fanzine, *The Meteor*, perhaps for the Boys’ Science Club, at some date prior to April 1931. But, the exact details and date are uncertain (and again, no one has seen a copy or has a firmer memory of seeing it). Another early maybe-fanzine is *The Recluse*, a one-shot by W. Paul Cook in 1927 which included an essay by H.P. Lovecraft as well as fiction, poems, and essays by other authors. This was more of a semi-professional literary/scholarly journal than a fanzine as the people involved had no connection to fandom.

Comics Fandom: Early Legion of Super Heroes (Part 3) By Samuel Lubell

The Legion of Super-Heroes (LSH) is a superhero team appearing in various comics published by DC Comics since 1958. Science Fiction fans tend to be interested in the LSH because their stories are set in the future (the 30th century) and many members are from different planets. Stories frequently involve SF ideas like spaceships and time travel and anti-gravity belts.

This article covers their 21st to 25th appearances. It is worth noting that by *Adventure Comics* #309, the LSH story had become the comic’s lead with 16 pages (called a two-parter) while Superboy was reduced to being the backup in what was until then his own comic. He still had the covers for a few more issues, but soon lost these too. Many of these stories featured new applicants for membership and fans gleefully sent in ideas for new characters and powers. As *Origins* 72 summarized, in *Adventure* #304, a major LSH member, Lightning Lad, died (to the shock of readers of what was then seen as a lighthearted kid comic). Surprisingly, this was not immediately reversed, nor forgotten. Instead, well, read on...



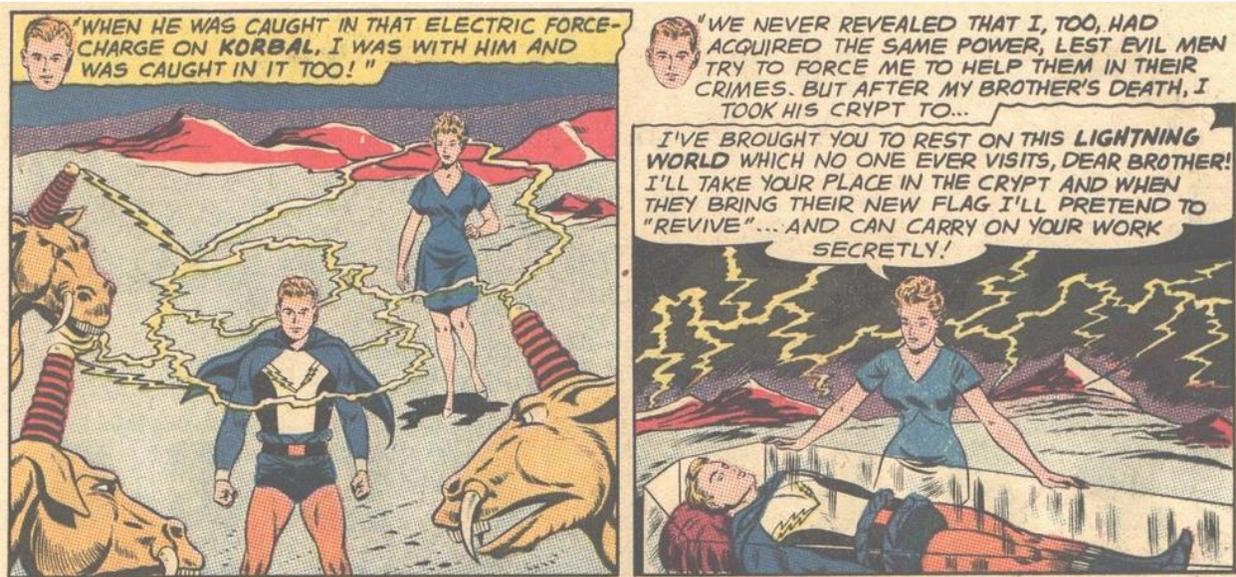
21-Adventure Comics #305 (Feb 1963) - In a Superboy story (the lead in the issue), Chameleon Boy substitutes for Superboy when Superboy's new civilian identity is at a party. In the LSH backup story, Lightning Lad is still dead and members visit his tomb. New potential members try out for his spot on the team including Marvel Lad who turns out to be <do I need a spoiler alert for a 62-year old story?> Mon-El (a hero with the Kryptonian-like powers) in disguise since Brainiac 5 has perfected a serum that prevents lead from killing him (which is why he previously had to live in the Phantom Zone). The story retells his origin. Mon-El regrets that Lightning Lad is not here to see him and vows to restore him to life. This story provides a way for the LSH to have a Superboy-type character who can stay in the 30th century.

22-Adventure Comics #306 (March 1963) - The cover has a box saying Extra! The Legion of Substitute Heroes. Introducing Polar Lad, Night Gil, Stone Boy, & the Chlorophyll Kid. This story opens with Polar Lad applying to join the LSH, only to be rejected by the LSH who fear his power could freeze them (as if other LSH members didn't have dangerous powers). He joins with other rejected members and says even if they cannot join the LSH, they can still use their abilities to help people as the Legion of Substitute Legions. They build their own clubhouse while fighting self-doubts from their rejections. But every time they go on a mission, the real LSH is already there and solves the problem without them. Finally Chlorophyll Kid discovers a bunch of strange seeds are really alien invaders, so the new team stops the invasion and realizes they can still be useful behind the scenes. The Subs, as they came to be known, were not a one-time gag but become an important part of the LSH universe. This story was written by an uncredited Edmond Hamilton, a major science fiction writer (see Origins #72). This is a fun, interesting story with just the right amount of emotion as characters overcome rejection and self-doubt.

23-Adventure Comics #307 (April 63)—When a planet is attacked by raiders, the LSH, needing more members, reviews applicants (again?!? Why not use the Subs from last issue?) One applicant says his power is secret and will only reveal it to LSH's telepath, Saturn Girl. So he enters as Mystery Lad (didn't they just use this gimmick two issues ago?). He seems to have powers of invulnerability, super strength, heat vision etc. But each time, Saturn Girl says that is not his real power. It turns out the raiders are searching for Mystery Lad, after destroying all others of his race, to use his power of transforming elements. He seemingly sacrifices himself to defeat the raiders, but is saved by Invisible Kid who names him Element Lad. This is an interesting mystery story that plays fair with the reader and explains how he used his power in ways that resembled other abilities.

24-Adventure Comics 308 (May 63)—The cover has a banner saying Extra: "The Strange Return of Lightning Lad." When the Legion puts a new flag over Lightning Lad's coffin, he twitches and Sun Boy

concludes that the electric bolts above his coffin somehow revived him. But he has lost his memory and, Sun Boy fears, his powers as well (so SB covers for him throughout the story, using his powers to fake LL's abilities). There's a flashback to Lightning Lad's origin (and a continuity error when he thinks his new powers could get him entrance into the LSH, when later stories show him to be one of the founders of the LSH). While fighting alien pirates, Chameleon Boy adopts Protey, a shape-changing pet. The LSH disguise themselves as criminals to infiltrate Thieves' Planet, but are soon discovered (maybe they shouldn't have worn their costumes) and jailed. Lightning Lad saves them, showing that he does have powers, shocking Sun Boy since he knew this was not the real Lightning Lad, but a girl. It turns out this is Lightning Lad's sister who has the same powers. She joins the LSH as Lightning Lass, but her brother is still dead (in a reversal of the common trope of motivating a male character by killing off (or fridging) a female character). This is a strong story that surprised me even though I knew about Lightning Lass.



25-Adventure Comics #309 (June 63)— This issue has a two-part LSH lead story with yet another membership drive that rejects Jungle King, a new character with powers to control animals. After being rejected he threatens revenge and takes control of a bunch of alien animals to become the Monster Master with his own Legion of Super Monsters. Ultimately, the LSH draws cards to see who will chase the Master to his lair and Bouncing Boy draws the marked card. The other members try to discourage him, but Bouncing Boy does go after him and defeats the Earthquake Beast. Ironically, the Monster Master is defeated by a monster he rejected for his LSM. The backup Superboy story has brief appearance by Brainiac 5.

Literary SF: From Wizard to Scientist: Changing Views toward the Scientist From Hawthorne to Twain (Part 3) **By Samuel Lubell**

I printed this excerpt from my 1989 undergraduate History and Literature thesis in my personal zine, Samizdat, in Ish 22. So if you read it there, I apologize for the duplication. But it fits here as it has to do with what I was careful not to tell Harvard was 19th century science fiction.

This is the end of the Hawthorne section:



Sorcery, in “Rappaccini’s Daughter” intrudes on science when the scientist attempts to turn the natural world to his ends. This blurred line between scientist and sorcerer continues in *The Scarlet Letter*, where the physician Chillingworth, through his use of science, transforms himself into a sorcerer and a servant of the devil. Early in the book he is called a “man of science,” [156] and a “practiced alchemist” [158]; he even builds a laboratory complete with needed equipment. Like Aylmer, Chillingworth is a former scholar and “book-worm,” demonstrating an unbridled intellect. He has studied in Europe, and gave his “best years to feed the hungry dream of knowledge.”[127] The Puritans, too, praise his scientific abilities and his medical knowledge, as “a man of skill in all Christian modes of physical science, and likewise familiar with whatever the savage people could teach.”[125] Chillingworth always considers himself a scientist and his motives scientific.

He launches his quest for Hester’s lover in this scientific spirit:

Believe me, Hester, there are few things- whether in the outward world, or, to a certain depth, in the invisible sphere of thought, - few things hidden from a man who devotes himself earnestly and unreservedly to the solution of a mystery... I shall seek this man, as I have sought truth in books; as I have sought gold in alchemy. [128]

This almost arrogantly declares the scientists’ creed- that nature cannot hide secrets from a properly trained mind. A scientist is limited only by his will; nothing is unknowable. Clearly Chillingworth belongs in the company of Aylmer and Rappaccini in their shared search for knowledge.

Although a researcher and a student of science, Chillingworth’s investigation transforms him from a scientific scholar to a sorcerer, from a scientist to a devil. The Puritan townspeople chart this transition. After originally viewing him as Dimmesdale’s savior, believing that God had miraculously transported a skilled doctor from Europe to save Dimmesdale’s life [155], when he begins his hunt they notice a change in his face reflecting his new evil. They begin to whisper about his activities while with the Indians, believing that he had practiced devil worship to gain magical powers.[159] The Puritans interpret the fires in doctor’s laboratory as coming from the “infernal regions” and the man himself as an agent of Satan given Divine permission to test Dimmesdale’s sanctity. [159] By the end of the book some people even believe that the “potent necromancer” [237] had conjured up the “A” on Dimmesdale’s breast through magic and poisonous drugs in an effort to discredit the minister.

While Hawthorne places these opinions at a remove from his main narrative by crediting them to the townspeople, the idea of Chillingworth as a torturer for Dimmesdale depicts his role in the novel. He exacts revenge for the violation of his wife by constantly observing Dimmesdale, digging into the minister’s heart to expose the secret guilt. Through this constant examination and prolongation of Dimmesdale’s suffering, Chillingworth transforms himself into a devil, a magical creature living off the pain of others. When the doctor secretly examines the minister’s bosom, always covered by his hand, the narrator compares him to Satan: “Had a man seen old Roger Chillingworth, at that moment of his ecstasy, he would have had no need to ask how Satan comports himself when a precious human soul is lost to heaven, and won into his kingdom.”[166] Hester also notices the change in her former husband, and wonders whether the sun will still shine on him and whether the grass will wither at his feet.[188] Chillingworth then is the prime example of the scientist exercising secret control, a control similar to magic. While probing and manipulating



Dimmesdale's conscience, he always remains hidden from his victim, never taking overt and visible action.¹ In this, Chillingworth is like Rappaccini, who also has a background role in the events he manipulates. Although Chillingworth's methods are scientific, what today would be considered psychology, his goal is the magical control of another person's soul. He directs his torture of Dimmesdale's heart, deliberately leading him away from repentance and thereby damning his soul. Here he is similar to the mesmerists in Hawthorne's other novels, whose power over the soul leads them into wizardry.²

...

Like the alchemists of the Middle Ages who studied only to learn how to turn lead into gold, Hawthorne's scientists gain knowledge to learn the secrets of controlling man and nature. In this desire to dominate they go beyond the proper role of scientist and doctor, and venture into the mysterious world of the supernatural. Through their science, Hawthorne's characters rival God, battling nature to wrench it into their plans. Nature's power, in Hawthorne's fiction, derives from its position outside of man's domain. In *The Scarlet Letter*, Nature is the forest; its location outside the community provides the freedom to choose good or evil. On the one hand the forest is the land of the heathen Indians who taught Chillingworth magic, the lair of witches, and the location of Mistress Hibbins' dealings with the black man, the devil. But at the same time, the forest allows Dimmesdale and Hester the liberty to reveal safely their true selves, to take off their respective scarlet letters, and to confess their love. Like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, the original forest, they are free from sin, since they are outside the community that defines sin. Therefore, when Hawthorne's scientists try to control this great power that is nature, they are reaching for a force beyond their capacity to restrain. Nature is so unpredictable, so much beyond man's understanding, that the consequences of forcing it can never be the expected results.



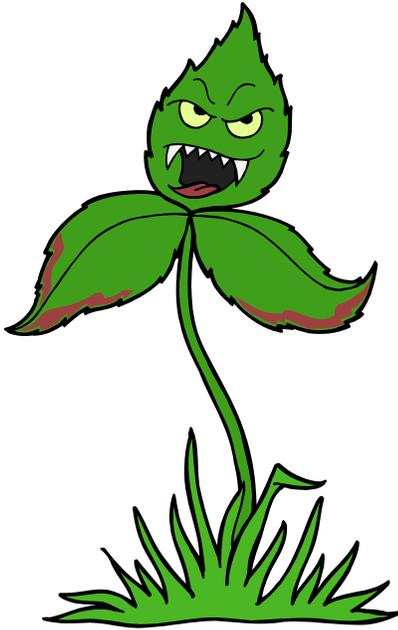
Graphic from hotpot.ai

Nature, mysterious, dark, and secret, always resists man's authority. Aylmer tries to perfect Nature, only to destroy it. Rappaccini attempts to control Nature, confining it to a garden and creating new plants, but he can produce are poisonous hybrids. In trying to bend Nature to their wishes, the scientists delude themselves in their belief that they understand it. Their incomplete knowledge of Nature leads them to the misuse of its powers, into magic. Magic is the result of over ambition into areas that man can never know, and when Hawthorne's scientists enter these areas, they become sorcerers.

Therefore Hawthorne's scientists are not scholars engaged in learning but magicians using their knowledge and powers for their own ends. Hawthorne sees their science as innocent so long as the scientists remain content to stay and learn in their libraries and laboratories, but dangerous when they venture into the larger world to make active use of that learning. In these circumstances, the scientist perverts his learning through

¹ "Seen purely from without, it would be possible to regard him as completely blameless... Masquerading as a physician, he becomes to Dimmesdale a kind of attendant fiend, racking the minister's soul with constant anguish. Yet outwardly he has done him nothing but good." Richard Fogle, "Realms of Being and Dramatic Irony." in *The Scarlet Letter: Norton Critical Edition*. Bradley, Beatty et. al. ed. p. 328

² Holgrave, the social reformer and early photography pioneer in *House of the Seven Gables* has strange mesmerizing powers inherited from his wizard ancestor. Another mesmerist, Westervelt of *The Blithedale Romance*, is linked in a story narrated by one of the characters to a Magician, and in fact he claims supernatural powers during his stage shows.



using it to control others, and turns himself into a sorcerer. This control is most obvious in *The Scarlet Letter*; but evident in the other stories as well. Through his hints in "The Birthmark" that the birthmark resides in Georgiana's heart, Hawthorne implies that Aylmer is really trying to control her very soul. Although Rappaccini appears to be interested only in science, he too desires control. The people he transforms are his daughter and his daughter's lover:

As he drew near, the pale man of science seemed to gaze with a triumphant expression at the beautiful youth and maiden, as might an artist who should spend his life in achieving a picture or group of statuary and finally be satisfied with his success. He paused; his bent form grew erect with conscious power... {1064}

Seizing control, Rappaccini becomes a perverted Creator/God, producing a poisoned Adam and Eve.

Hawthorne deliberately blends science and magic to tell a cautionary tale. He warns his readers of the dangers of science when unfettered by human conscience. His scientists misuse their science by applying it without regard to consequences. By leaving out concrete descriptions of science, Hawthorne stresses the similarities to magic. Wizards in disguise, his "scientists" wear only thin laboratory coats to establish them as scientists. They corrupt their learning through using it to violate people's souls; a control which Hawthorne believes is magic. To Hawthorne, this control is the true evil, the "unpardonable sin." His fear of this aspect of science can be taken back to his letter to Sophia Peabody, when he feared mesmerism's power to make one person's soul subject to another's bidding. He fears science in "The Birthmark," "Rappaccini's Daughter," and *The Scarlet Letter*, because it has the same possibilities for subjugating people that magic does. In yielding to this temptation, Hawthorne's scientists transform themselves into wizards, sorcerers, and devil figures.

Fans: Letters to Origins

Dear Sam,

In my loc of your previous issue I put my hand up to say that I am a member of the Melbourne Science Fiction Club. This issue I put my hand up to inform your readership that I took my first degree and my PhD at the University of Leeds. I was a member of the University Science Fiction Club for a number of years, being particularly active for the last two years of my undergraduate degree.

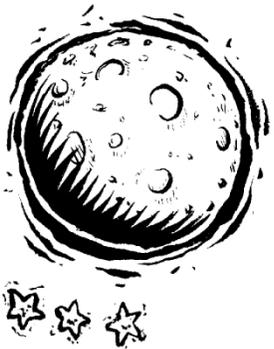
I enjoyed your review of *Before the Golden Age: Book 1*. I'm glad that you've read it on our behalf so that we don't need to read it. Recently it was put forward in ANZAPA, slightly tongue-in-cheek, that, with the exception of a small number of well-known classic SF, any SF more than fifty years old is not worth reading. Consequently, most SF that was published before 1975 (!) is not worth reading. The stories you reviewed were published almost 95 years ago! I wonder if SF is a special case? Is the more general statement that most of everything that was published more than fifty years ago is not worth reading equally 'correct'?

<This is an interesting question. I'm addressing it at greater length in my article "Reading Older SF">

As you predicted, the only author in the anthology that I recognised is Clifford D. Simak. However, I only recognised the name because I recently decided to read winners of the Hugo Award for Best Novel from the 1960s, and Simak's "Her Gather The Stars" was the winner in 1964.

I briefly looked at the Wikipedia entry for Jack Williamson from which I discovered that he coined the word "terraforming", in a SF story published in Astounding Science Fiction in 1942. Further, he was the first SF writer to "incorporate the concept of the ion thruster into a published story". Wikipedia also states that "The word 'psionics' first appeared in print in Williamson's novella *The Greatest Invention*, published in *astounding* magazine in 1951." Finally, he is credited as being one of the first uses of the term "genetic engineering".

It would be interesting to read a history of SF which identifies what the genre owes to particular writers in terms of words and plot elements. For example, there was an episode of *Blake's 7* featuring a person who predicted what humans would look like far in the future and change his appearance accordingly. I recalled this when I read your account of Edmond Hamilton's "The Man Who Evolved". Is Hamilton the originator of this plot? (However, after a brief internet search I can't find a *Blake's 7* episode which has this plot element. Perhaps I am misremembering.)



<I don't know if Hamilton was the first to have a character evolve themselves, but if he wasn't the first, he would have been close to it.>

However, there was an episode which uses genetic engineering as a plot device (*The Web*, episode 5 of Season 1). There's also an episode which is inspired by Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (*Rescue*, the first episode of Season 4) which shows that SF is not always a self-referential art form. ChatGPT tells me that the main character in *Rescue* is even called Dorian.

I'm going to combine the facts that I am English and you are American with my mentioning Oscar Wilde in the previous paragraph to remind you of a famous quote that is widely attributed to Wilde: "The Americans and the English are two nations divided by a common language".

When I was an undergraduate we, i.e. members of the LUSFS, were told that we should be proud of studying in Leeds because it was the location of the first ever SF convention (January 3rd, 1937). What were we told about the so-called Philcon of October 22nd 1936? We were told that at best it was a house convention and at worst it was just a group of friends who went for a drive to hang out with some other of their friends. None of the US fans involved called their day trip a SF convention until after they'd read about the event in Leeds. They couldn't take the fact that British fans had run the first SF convention and retrospectively decided to call their get together in a buddy's house a convention.

It's not so far off forty years since I was told that Leeds was the location of the first ever SF convention. Along the way I've learnt that you can't always believe what you're told, particularly what you're told as a member of a university club or society. Nearly ninety years after the "first" convention I'm sure that we'll never know what the first SF convention was. I like the way that this issue is resolved in F3 (*Which Was the First SF Convention*) "Perhaps it would be fairest to say that the first thing that can reasonably be called a convention was held in Philadelphia in 1936, while the first thing that must be called a convention was held in Leeds in 1937."

I'm not sure that the first World Science Fiction Convention had the first feud. F3 mentions a feud from 1930 that broke up "The Scienceers", one of the first SF clubs.

<Interestingly, the two feuds involved some of the same people. I hope to review Frederick Pohl's autobiography next issue.>

I was surprised to learn from your history of Star Trek Fandom that the first Star Trek convention was in the 1970s. According to startrek.com the first Star Trek convention was held January 21-23, 1972, in New York City, titled Star Trek Lives. The Guest of Honour was Gene Roddenberry and the other guests were Majel Barret, D.C. Fontana, and Isaac Asimov.

Cheers,

Mark.

--

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Sam Lubell's Response:

I strongly disagree with the claim that any SF that's older than 50 years is not worth reading. See my article earlier in the issue. I plan on doing a 1940s anthology *Adventures in Time & Space*, which at one point was in every fan's library, when I finish Asimov's *Before the Golden Age*. At nearly 1000 pages, I'll have to do this one in parts.

Hmm, an article on the originator of words would be interesting. I don't think I have access to the OED though. Perhaps someone could send me an article?

Note:

Origins is edited by Samuel Lubell for the National Fantasy Fan Federation. Articles without a named author are by the editor. Opinions in articles are those of its author. Nothing here should be taken as the views of any current or former employer, client, or organization. Please send me letters, articles, reviews and other sf/fan content (remembering our focus on pre-21st century history) to samuelljubell@gmail.com



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