



Science Fiction from Wells to Heinlein

Leon Stover

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As a publisher's category, science fiction began in the American pulp magazine industry in 1926. But its origins lay in the British tradition of the scientific romance, whose mastery by H.G. Wells in his Victorian youth (1895-1901) makes him the "father of modern SF" (Jules Verne is a more distant ancestor). Wells's most self-conscious descendant is Robert Heinlein, whose rapid rise to fame during the magazine era made him "the dean of American SF." He so succeeded in winning literary recognition for the genre that it all but vanished into the mainstream, save for a lingering identity in classified paperbacks and in television programming (Michael Crichton's *Jurassic Park*, for example, was marketed as general fiction and not science fiction).

The present work, by a man who taught the subject at the university level for decades, is a critical examination of the literary trajectory of science fiction from the scientific romances of H.G. Wells to the era of Robert Heinlein. Such luminaries as Isaac Asimov (*I, Robot*), Arthur C. Clarke (*2001*), A.E. van Vogt (*Slan*), L. Sprague de Camp (*Lest Darkness Fall*), Harry Harrison (*Stars and Stripes Forever* trilogy), Kurt Vonnegut (*The Sirens of Titan*), Brian Aldiss (*Greybeard*), Edgar Rice Burroughs (Barsoom series, Pellucidar series), Ray Bradbury (*The Martian Chronicles*), Fritz Leiber (*The Wanderer*), C.S. Lewis (*Perelandra*), and Arthur Conan Doyle (*The Lost World*) are discussed along the way. The roles of various magazines in establishing the genre, an area of the author's special expertise, are fully examined (Hugo Gernsback's *Science and Invention*, *Amazing Stories*, and *Weird Tales*, among others).

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