Call for papers:

Discarded Biological Ideas in Scientific Fiction, c. 1825-c. 1925: From Poe to Gernsback

Edited by Edward Guimont (Bristol Community College) and Patrick Prominski (Grand Rapids Community College)

The period of the early nineteenth century to the early twentieth century was one in which the human understanding of life in all its forms—microscopic and macroscopic, terrestrial and oceanic, current and ancient, its origins and possible endings—expanded rapidly. Increased uses of the microscope and telescope, the spread of scientific societies, the theories of Gregor Mendel and Charles Darwin, the identification of Neanderthal and dinosaur remains, the charting of the ocean floor by the *Challenger* expedition, and the discovery—at least by Europeans—of new creatures like the gorilla and okapi are just some of the developments and ideas that emerged in the period of roughly 1825 to 1925.

Among the flowering of ideas into the nature of life that emerged in this time were notions which, while novel and scientific for the period, were later discarded, especially as newer technologies and the professionalization, and in some cases creation of new, fields of scientific inquiry further refined knowledge of life, especially in the fields of evolution, deep time, the origin of life, microscopic life and bacteria, alien life, proto-cryptids, psychic powers, and the afterlife.

This same period of roughly 1825-1925 was the dawn of science fiction, and many authors were inspired by the discoveries of that period. This early period of scientific fiction was intimately connected with the ideas of this time, and the legacy of those works continued to keep those ideas alive. Just as the field of biological sciences became more professionalized in the early twentieth century, so too did science fiction, when Hugo Gernsback founded the first science fiction magazine, *Amazing Stories*, in 1926, with the explicit aim of having his authors follow established and (relatively) plausible science as the basis of 'scientifiction.' Gernsback's approach was mirrored by the authors and editors he helped launch, including John W. Campbell, and the reshaped fandom community via the Science Fiction League.

Discarded Biological Ideas in Scientific Fiction, c. 1825-c. 1925: From Poe to Gernsback brings together scholars from a variety of disciplines and backgrounds to explore how this early era of scientific fiction incorporated these now-discarded ideas into their plots, the impact of these ideas on the genre and public acceptance of them, and the changing role of scientific orthodoxy on a field of fiction meant to explore the boundaries of human knowledge. Potential topics for discarded biological ideas to be considered could include, but are not limited to:

- Biological change: Social Darwinism, eugenics, devolution, Lamarckism
- Site of past human occupation: Atlantis, Lemuria, Mu, Doggerland, geological/oceanic change, continental drift, polygenism
- The relation between scientific societies and literary fandom, and the impact of professionalization of science on both
- How scientific authors approached fiction writing, and how fiction authors incorporated scientific ideas
- Extraterrestrial life: nebular hypothesis, dinosaurs on Venus, canal-builders on Mars
- Microscopic life, including bacteria, viruses, and lineage
- The role of Biblical archaeology including the Hamitic theory, searches for Noah's Ark and the Garden of Eden, and Young Earth Creationism
- Blood transfusions, gland transplants, vivisection, and other forms of life revitalization or cross-species hybridization

- The paranormal, including Spiritualism, ectoplasm, Bridget Cleary, Mercy Brown, and the role of parapsychology in early physics
- Hoaxes such as the Great Moon Hoax, Cardiff Giant, Fox Sisters, Piltdown Man, Cottingley Fairies
- Early cryptozoology, including sea serpent sightings, the Alaskan mammoth search, the Patagonian mylodon search, and the Battle of Ape Canyon

Potential authors of scientific fiction to be covered could include, but are not limited to: Edgar Allan Poe, Jules Verne, Mark Twain, Edward Everett Hale, Ignatius Donnelly, Arthur Conan Doyle, Helena Blavatsky, H. G. Wells, Gustavus Pope, Alexander Bogdanov, William Hope Hodgson, Henry Tukeman, Hesketh Hesketh-Prichard, Mikhail Bulgakov, Vladimir Obruchev, Maurice Renard, H. P. Lovecraft, and Hugo Gernsback.

Please submit a 500-word abstract and brief biography in Word to the editors at discardedbiological@gmail.com by **18 January 2027**. Authors notified will be notified of the decision by **15 February 2027**, with full chapter drafts of 6,000-8,000 words for those accepted due by **13 December 2027**.