

TYNDALLITE
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This is intended for the July, 1998 mailing of the *Southern Fandom Press Alliance*. Outside of *SFPA* it is available for trade, a published letter of comment or \$1 US.

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Refinement for Efficiency's Sake reprinted from the Apr 1998 *SunExpert Magazine* -
Jeffrey Copeland & Jeffrey S. Haemer

Jeff Copeland: This is an intriguing account of using *Perl* to tabulate the *SFPA* ballot. Fortunately your work wasn't strangled by *The Python Ouroboros*.

IT GOES ON THE SHELF #18/19 Aug 1997 [sic] - Ned Brooks

That's a nifty and appropriate piece of artwork that Alan Hunter did for your cover with the shelf cat being besieged by dogs.

p. 5 To quote you: "John Holbrook Vance...is the name Jack Vance uses for his mainstream novels." From another perspective "Jack" Vance is the pseudonym that John Holbrook Vance uses for his science-fiction and fantasy fiction.

pp. 8-9 You review Marshall B. Gardner's *A Journey To the Earth's Interior* whose major research sources were probably the earlier Pellucidar novels of Edgar R. Burroughs. (Gardner also wrote the Bantan (or some such spelling) series which apparently is highly-derivative of ERB's Tarzan fiction.

By the way, there are more arguments than mass, weight and density against a hollow earth with polar openings lit by a central sun. Seismic and magnetic data indicates that below the lithosphere is a molten magnetic sphere which may have a super-dense crystalline core (shades of Frank R. Stockton's *The Great Stone of Sardis*). As we've previously discussed in *SFPA* the Burroughs-Gardner model (which has antecedents at least back to Symmes) would mean that all the surface air would be drawn through the polar openings to be annihilated by the central sun. It would be interesting to work out a possible range of surface temperatures for the Earth using Gardner's figures for his central sun and interior hollow space. My intuitive reaction is that such a situation is impossible. I haven't read Gardner's book so I don't know if he repeats ERB's nonsense about the center of gravity being a sphere 250 miles below the surface. The center of gravity would be at the center of the central sun. Anyone trying to walk around on the inner surface would be drawn into the central sun. There could be no inner atmosphere.

AN ISLAND IN THE MOON - William Blake (as edited by Gavin O'Keefe and published by Ned Brooks dba The Purple Mouth Press)

Ned, thanks for putting this curiosity through *SFPA*. We owe you three cheers, Tiger! Tiger! Tiger!

The New Port News #179 May 1998 - Ned Brooks

p. 3 As you probably know your 1954 ASFO Press edition of Sam Moskowitz' *The Immortal Storm* discusses both science-fiction fandom and science-fiction fanzines in some detail, despite Harry Warner, Jr.'s claim that his edition mentions neither and challenging any edition that does.

p. 8 I second your statement about Roy V. Hunt being "...a very nice guy." He was not only a nice person but a very fine fan. I first met him at a Colorado Fantasy Society meeting on the Saturday following 30 Jul 1958 and had dinner with him shortly before he died circa Jan 1985. We shared many a good time during that interval.

You say about the works of Edgar R. Burroughs' that "...the science is always ludicrous." You're probably mostly right. *A Princess Of Mars* made some concessions to weaker gravity and lesser atmospheric density. But *Swords Of Mars* had objects taking off from Mars and landing on the moons while undergoing shrinkage of both size and mass so that everything retained their Martian proportions. The Pellucidar series compounded errors to absurd lengths.

The 1976 DEEP SOUTH CONVENTION PROGRAM [BOOKLET] - Binker Hughes

Thanks for finding these leftovers and putting them through *SFPA*. I particularly enjoyed the material about your two guests of honor - Lyon S. de Camp and Frank K. Freas.

This is Not a Minazine #86 - Richard Lynch

p. 10 You're so right about both Robert A. Heinlein and Isaac Asimov having had off days. Unfortunately they apparently managed to sell almost all of their duds. However, I wish that all published science-fiction authors would surpass both Heinlein and Asimov's average and their best stories so that science-fiction would continue to evolve.

OFFLINE READER v1#4 Apr-May 1998 - Irv Koch

pp. 5-6 Thanks for sharing with us your empirical data gathered from actually selling used books as to which science-fiction authors' works are in demand (either in whole or in part). Some I figured are still in demand, others surprise me - but to each his or her own.

Apparently some of the demand comes from searching for scarcer out-of-print titles,

others are to fill in series, some from sheer quality, others from mediocre-bandwagon effects and others make me wonder.

SPIRITUS MUNDI #165 Apr-May 1998 - Guy H. Lillian III

p. [20?] You're right that "Talbot Mundy" has a better posthumous reputation than does "Sax Rohmer". I've yet to finish anything of "Rohmer"'s that I've tried - recommendations, anyone? But a good deal of "Mundy" is excellent, along with some so-so's and a few stinkers such as "The Gray Mahatma"/*Caves of Terror* which keeps getting worse and then fizzles out. Perhaps our woman at Baen, T. K. F. Weisskopf, can remedy the situation by reprinting "Mundy"'s best works, whether science-fiction or not.

Bravo for your well-put comments on the Unabomber:

"To my mind, the actions of the Unabomber's brother represent the communion of citizenship and blood loyalty of the highest possible sort. He served the law, saved lives ... and he saved his brother, too, from the damnation of further crime.."

p. [22?] You suggest that Baen reprint the Hugo-winning stories. An even more interesting project would be to reprint the best stories, whether or not they won Hugos.

Twydrasil And Treehouse Gazette #51 May 1998 - Richard Dengrove

p. 18 I like your comment:

*"So much good **science fiction** came out of the '50s because science fiction still was an outlaw genre and hadn't been choked to death by respectability."*

There's far more than a smidgen of truth in your observation. While the atomic bomb gained science-fiction a certain degree of acceptance, library acceptance became more widespread in the late 1940's and early 1950's. And one of the chief reasons was Robert A. Heinlein with his nominal juveniles for Scribner's which were in many (possibly most) school libraries in the U.S.

Possibly the worst single blow sustained by quality science-fiction was equating *Star Trek* (tm) with good science-fiction. While total sales rose, quality was highly diffused and sloppy thinking and gobbledygook became even more common.

p. 26 You wonder about interplanetary flight by airplane in the pulps. One such non-pulp story that I recall was Lord Dunsany's "Our Distant Cousins" which involved an airplane flying around the solar system, visiting inhabited asteroids. It would have earned Plunkett an 'F' in science. The other example was "Non-Stop To Mars" by "Jack" Williamson who was challenged to write a story about an airplane flight to Mars. He slightly shifted the

implausibility by having the hero fly through a gigantic tube the Martians were using to drain Earth's atmosphere. I don't recall his explanation for the moment arm or how the tube compensated for the constantly-differing distance between the two planets.

pp. 26-27 Bravo for your comments on how predictions (both inside and outside of science-fiction) have gone awry.

p. 29 But Tom Godwin's "The Cold Equations" was not the first such story. Sam Moskowitz wrote an article ("Setting the Record Straight") for my fanzine *The Devil's Work* in which he pointed out that Robert Cromie's 1890 novel *A Plunge Into Space* has the idea of the female being jettisoned so that the spaceship can safely complete its journey.

The Sphere vol. 174 no. 1 - Don Markstein

pp. [1]-3 Good luck on your CD ROM compilation of pirate material. It's possible that Hugo Gernsback's pirate prozine material is all in the public domain and it's so rare that you might have a minuscule market for it.

p. 3 You ask about public-domain stories about dinosaurs. One possible such is Alan Sullivan's good novel *In the Beginning*. It appeared in 1927 and was touted as science-fiction using an abused connection. The only apparent reason for considering it to be science-fiction is that the hero sees dinosaurs grazing in a valley in Patagonia. Otherwise it's a straight adventure story.

p. 4 Your ruminations about Captain Hook being eaten by a crocodile makes me wonder if you've considered publishing a digest version.

p. 5 I think that the Robert A. Heinlein juvenile that you're trying to recall with the mother being a civil engineer was Hazel Stone of *The Rolling Stones*. I haven't read it since it first appeared. Perhaps I should find my Heinlein juveniles and reread them. They're probably better than the current *average*.

Your idea of a CD-ROM anthology of obsolete-but-still-good science-fiction is an excellent idea. I accept your offer of collaborating on public-domain stories. Almost certainly everything published in this country before 1922 and anything first published in Britain by authors who died before 1923 should be in the public domain. Some stories published later but whose copyrights weren't renewed would also be in the public domain. As I get my collection sorted out I should be able to help you.

The Marsh Creek Gazette V1#3 May 1998 - Steve & Suzanne Hughes

p. [4] You mention large companies needing human resources departments. I wonder about Star Fleet. They'd need not only a human resources department but an alien resources

department.

Comments 25 May 1998 - Steve Hughes

pp. [6-7] Bravo for your comments about not letting trivial differences interfere with friendship. Of course, various people have differing ideas on what's trivial. Some people find lying offensive, others feel that telling the truth is despicable. Others feel that anyone not a near clone of themselves is to be attacked.

p. [11] You say that you like Lafayette R. Hubbard's *Slaves Of Sleep* and wish there were more stories like it. If you have a complete set of *Unknown (Worlds)*, which is where *SoS* first appeared, you *can* read some similar stories, some of them by Hubbard. And there are probably some more current examples of similar light-hearted fantasy.

You may have a point about rather than being sexist that Robert A. Heinlein was "...writing in the mode of the time.". However, some of his sexist ideas bothered me upon their first appearance. And as a science-fiction writer I think that Heinlein had a license to overcome his upbringing, surrounding culture or however else you may wish to categorize it.

Soufpaw #7 - Richard Brandt

p. 8 I like your line about Robert L. Fanthorpe:

"He's in amazingly good spirits for someone who's continually being confronted with copies of his early work."

So Fanthorpe is still being badgered.

Thanks for letting us know that science-fiction was often on and/or dominating *Time* magazine's best-seller lists during the early-to-mid 1980's.

STOMP YOUR HAT LIKE UNCLE NED #1 - George H. Wells

p. [1] You say that at Media Westcon you attended all five *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* panels. How much trouble did you have in staking them out?

TYNDALLITE May 1998 - me

p. 735 F. M. Busby: Thanks again for another great letter.

Thanks for your thoughts on solving the three-body problem and your skepticism about Edgar R. Burroughs' astronomer friend having solved the eleven-body problem.

And thanks for your comments about Robert A. Heinlein outgrowing his youthful imprinting with regard to sexism. One of these days I hope to re-read Heinlein's works while keeping in mind the ongoing criticisms (both just and unjust).

JAG did an excellent *X-Files* spoof in which Lt. Commander Harmon Rabb, Jr. investigates a flying saucer in the Mojave Desert.

Thanks for confirming Tuckerisms in *Babylon-5*.

GUILTY PLEASURES [no#, nd] - Eve Ackerman

pp. [3-4] Thanks for both more and interesting book reviews.

You recommend Bernard Cornwell, Lois M. Bujold, Kate Elliott and Sharon Shinn.

...*YOU'RE NOT PRESSING HARD ENOUGH ON THE PILLOW*... [no#, nd] - [mike weber]

[p. 3] As for who issued the fraudulent royalty reports at Ace Books it was probably an accountant. [That would have been appropriate for Alfred J. Olsen, Jr.'s or some of "Murray Leinster"'s stories.] According to Donald A. Wollheim in personal conversation with me the order to do so came from Aaron A. Wyn. To lend further credence to DAW's claims I have a letter from him in which he said that he couldn't send out review copies without Wyn's permission. Under Wyn DAW's position was a hybrid between an editor, a butcher and an executioner.

You say that James H. Schmitz' original version of "The Witches Of Karres" "...has to be right Up There for me in the list of Best Short SF." I gather that this is another case of using second thoughts to expand a story and losing quality in the process. I really enjoyed the original but I've never read the expansion, so thanks for the caution.

I second your motion about John D. MacDonald's *The Girl, The Gold Watch, and Everything*... being a fine, humorous story.

p [6] Thanks for detailing how Dave Duncan used mythology and reinvented magic in the *Man Of His Word* and *Handful Of Men* series.

p. [14 - in my copy] Thanks for ranking your favorite Dick Francis novels as *Rat Race*, *Flying Finish*, *Odds Against*, *Bonebreak* and *For Kicks* as "Just Plain Incredible" and your least favorites as *Trial Run*, *Twice Shy*, *Slay Ride* and the one about railroads. I gather that in the latter one he got off-track.

Chester D. Cuthbert
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May 25, 1998

Dear Norm,

The envelope containing TYNDALLITE V. 2 #76 for March was postmarked April 27 but it and another large envelope with a magazine were delayed in reaching me. Thanks very much for so kindly sending me your fanzines: there is always information given which enlightens me.

I read in so many areas of literature that I am ignorant about fantasy and science fiction by comparison with most of your correspondents and especially yourself.

I have been offered the opportunity to dispose of all my collection to a university, but on a donation basis with income tax credits rather than cash. Naturally, I am reluctant to let my favorite books go, but at age 85 I must consider my family rather than my own desires.

My wife Muriel wants everything to go before summer ends. I know that she has no interest in anything but the books I buy especially for her, and even those she does not collect, but passes on to others of our large family.

Like you, I find access to many items difficult because of storage problems. I often wish that I were like Kevin Cook and had purchased only items I had time to read.

Yet when I am considering a subject, I like to have several points of view available, so having extra books on hand is nice. It is difficult to draw a line on collecting.

All good wishes,

Chester

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May 31, 1998

Dear Norm,

I thought it would be appropriate to add a few comments to your own in SULPH, pp. 373-374 and RESIN, p. 3232 on E. E. Smith's mystery novel. You made the point there that the chief reason he couldn't sell it was that the very first page gave the whole mystery away, so that, presumably, there'd be no further suspense and nothing to hold readers' interest. I disagree that such a method necessarily wrecks a mystery or a detective story, and furnish evidence below supporting that view.

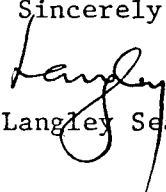
Revealing the murderer and/or describing the crime at the outset of a work is a well known method, and it has been used successfully many times since its invention by R. Austin Freeman (1862-1943) in the second decade of this century. It has even been given a name: "the inverted detective story." Freeman reasoned that even after readers knew the victim, the murderer, or even perused a description of the crime being committed, they would continue to be attracted by a recounting of all the details leading up to what had theretofore always been written as a climax. He was right, and subsequently wrote a number of novels and short stories using the "inverted" method that were commercially successful. So have other mystery writers. An extremely popular novel that comes to mind is MALICE AFORETHOUGHT (1931), whose very first sentence reads "It was not until several weeks after he had decided to murder his wife that Dr. Bickleigh took any active steps in the matter." (This novel was written by Anthony Berkeley Cox, 1893-1970, under the pseudonym of Francis Iles.) Many others could be named.

The modus operandi is sufficiently well known that I think it likely that Smith had heard of or encountered it. That his novel using it was rejected suggests only that his attempt was unsuccessful. Since he did not write any other detective stories, this does not seem surprising—any more than it would for an habitual, practiced writer of detective stories to fail in his first attempt at space opera!

Yes, there probably is a similarity between revealing the final goal in Smith's "Lensman" stories or treating this in "conventional" mystery fashion and the "inverted" detective story. Quite possibly either method could lead to a successful series. I'm inclined to side with Campbell here, however. There's a certain sameness about each novel which I'd find bothersome if I knew the ultimate plan—which may simply be another way of saying that, much as I like most of them, I don't think they're well enough written to support telling too much too soon.

Finally, a word or two about Smith's revisions of THE SKYLARK OF SPACE. I think here I'd prefer the original AMAZING STORIES version, pathetic or ludicrous as the Garby parts seem today. For the time of writing they weren't really that far out of line; Harold Bell Wright and his contemporaries wrote much the same stuff. The Pyramid revision involves, when you reflect, an old man's criticism of what a young man thought—and you often lose a lot in such revisions. (I think here of John Collier touching up some of his early tales, much to their detriment; for example, see his dreadful revision of the last sentence of "Thus I Refute Beelzy.")

Sincerely,


A. Langley Searles

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