

TYNDALLITE
Volume 3, Number 103
August 2002

from Norm Metcalf, P.O. Box 1368,
Boulder CO 80306-1368 USA. This is
intended for the September 2002 mailing
of the *Southern Fandom Press Alliance*.
Outside of *SFPA* it is available for trade,
a published letter of comment or \$1 US.

mailing comments page 873

**“YNGVI IS A LOUSE” AND OTHER
GRAFFITOS** #77 Jul 2002 – T. K. F.
Weisskopf Reinhardt

p. 5 You say that someone rich
enough to buy their way to the space
station is “...*like something out of*
Stranger in a Strange Land or a Philip K.
Dick story...”. It reminds me of Delos
D. Harriman in Robert A. Heinlein’s
“The Man Who Sold the Moon” and
particularly “Requiem”.

p. 9 Thanks for recommending
Susan Petrey’s Gift of Blood stories and
Dean Ing’s “Fleas” that you reprinted in
Tomorrow Sucks.

DEROGATORY REFERENCE #99
year 2002 – Arthur D. Hlavaty

Thanks for your excellent
convention reports on Lunacon, the
International Conference On the
Fantastic in the Arts and Minicon.

[p. 6] You comment:

“*The Southern Vampire series.*
(Redneck) would be the wrong word for
several reasons.)...”

Is one of the reasons that these Southern
Vampires fastidiously prey only upon
the Southern Aristocracy?

Twydrasil And Treehouse Gazette
#76 Jul 2002 – Richard
Dengrove

p. 7 Well, by general consensus
Hollow Earth stories are those taking
place inside the Earth with an outer shell
and a central sun so the characters can
see where they’re going. You’re the first
one I can recall wishing to include cave
fiction amongst Hollow Earth stories.

I’m with you that technothrillers
and science-fiction can overlap.
However, this doesn’t mean that all
technothrillers are science-fiction. Jules
Verne’s *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*
is an example of a non-science-fictional
technothriller.

No, Captain Nemo’s batteries
weren’t based on a chemical reaction
with seawater. Nemo extracted sodium
and mercury **from** seawater for his
batteries. Sodium-mercury batteries
were already in existence. They produce
about 2 volts per cell. Since Nemo had
no drought restrictions regarding
seawater he had no problem maintaining
his batteries.

You’re right that Alfred E. van
Vogt “created” some of his novels by
abusing his shorter works. You’re right
about *The Weapon Shops of Isher* having
three components. They were “Seesaw”,
Astounding Science-Fiction Jul 1941,
“The Weapon Shop” *ASF* Dec 1942 and
“The Weapon Shops Of Isher” *Thrilling*
Wonder Stories Feb 1949. “Seesaw” is
excellent in its original form, in the
novel he distributes slices of it

throughout the book. "The Weapon Shop" is an even better story. "The Weapon Shops of Isher" is weak. The new material doesn't do much for the story. According to John Foyster the sequel, "The Weapon Makers" *ASF* Feb-Apr 1943, was drastically rewritten for book publication. One of these days I'll have read them consecutively while taking notes.

F. M. Busby says that van Vogt's rewrite of *Slan* didn't improve the story.

As I recall "The Book of Ptath", *Unknown Worlds* Oct 1943 was okay.

"The World of Null-A", *ASF* Aug-Oct 1945 wowed me when I was a kid. van Vogt said he took Damon F. Knight's criticisms to heart and revised it for book form. When I re-read it a few years ago I was disappointed.

"The Players of Null-A", *ASF* Oct 1948-Jan 1949 disappointed me shortly afterwards and again when I re-read it a few years ago.

Null-A Three was a flop. van Vogt said that it tied up loose ends from the first two. Actually it not only didn't, but also created more. In Dec 1954 he told me that he had a rule of not writing more than one book-length sequel for fear of degrading the series. He violated his own rule and proved himself correct.

Some of his series stories disguised as novels (*The Mixed Men* and *The Wizard of Linn*) aren't too bad.

But you're right about the non-related stories that he cobbled together into "novels" – he should have left them in their original forms where they're far more effective.

p. 8 As for van Vogt's writing techniques, have you read his contribution to Lloyd A. Eshbach's *Of Worlds Beyond?* van Vogt said that he

liked to write 800-word episodes and just keep stringing them together.

You mention Harry S. Keeler's mysteries. He also wrote science-fiction.

You also mention Keeler being "...the current fave bad writer." I recently read an article saying that Keeler's books are fetching high prices and that he's being reprinted.

p. 11 You say that Herbert G. Wells' postulated technology has since been invented. Please list some examples. I'm fairly sure that you don't have time machines and Cavourite in mind.

PETER(,) PAN AND/& MERRY #44
David Schlosser

p. [1] Sure, there are mystery movies and mystery fiction. They are not identical, but two different approaches. You say, "SF is the message, not the medium.". Why disregard the English language?

Captain Nemo's batteries were neither based on seawater nor theoretical. His batteries were sodium-mercury batteries. They'd already been invented. Rather than obtain sodium and mercury from the land, Nemo extracted the sodium and the mercury from seawater. See pages 76-77 in Walter J. Miller's edition. Nemo's explanation has been edited out of most English-language editions, probably including whatever one you read.

Okay, you're right that my saying on page 867 "*Science-fiction is a literary means of expressing imaginative ideas.*" is insufficiently precise. I'll

modify that by preceding imaginative with "extrapolated". That would eliminate exercises in imagination that don't transcend the here and now.

Frequent Flyer 16 Jul 2002 – Tom Feller

pp. 3-5 Thanks for your report on Wiscon.

All The Mailing Comments That Fit In Print 24 Jul 2002 – Jeffrey Copeland

p. 3 Thanks for your review of Orson S. Card's *Shadow of the Hegemon*.

And thanks for reviewing four of five Hugo-nominated short stories: Stephen Baxter's "The Ghost Pit", Michael Burstein's "Spaceships", Mike Resnick's "Old MacDonald Had a Farm" and Michael Swanwick's "The Dog Said Bow-Wow". You decry the first two and find the last two to be worthy nominees.

pp. 5-6 Thanks for reviewing five Hugo "novelette" nominees: Ted Chiang's "Hell Is the Absence of God"; Allen Steele's "The Days Between", which you say wastes 11,513 words; James Patrick Kelly's yawner "Undone"; Charles Stross' "Lobsters", which you say gets "wierd" [sic] and Shane Tourtellotte's "The Return of Spring", which you admire.

GUILTY PLEASURES #24 Jul 2002 – Eve Ackerman

pp. 3-6 Thanks for the interesting reviews.

p. 9 I hope you bring your novel "Smuggler's Gold" to a successful finish culminating in a sale.

Comments #15 23 Jul 2002 – Steve Hughes

p. [3?] Thanks for stating that "... *Forbidden Planet* was based upon a treatment called "Fatal Planet" by Allen Adler and Irving Block. They admitted in an interview that the idea was based on Shakespeare's *The Tempest*." The idea that it was based upon *The Tempest* has been denounced over the years.

As for Captain Nemo's batteries they were sodium-mercury batteries. He constantly replenished the sodium by extracting it from seawater. See pages 76-77 of Miller's edition. They are part of Part I: Chapter XII, "All By Electricity", if you have ready access to your French edition.

By the way, these same pages answer your criticism as to how Nemo replenished his air supply.

Professor Aronnax says:

"*But not the air you breathe?*"

"*Oh! I could manufacture the air necessary for my consumption, but it is useless, because I go up to the surface of the water when I please.*"

In Part 2: Chapter XVI "Want of Air" the *Nautilus* is trapped under the ice in the Maud Subglacial Basin. On page 301 Nemo says that their air supply will only last for eighty-four hours. Nemo makes no mention of manufacturing more air, but instead concentrates on escaping their icy tomb. On page 304 Aronnax discusses using caustic potash to remove the carbon dioxide but finds that there is none on board.

Send Out the Pace Zamboni – [mike weber]

pp. [6-7] I like your comment:
“...*(it was Day shift, unfortunately, not third, which is my preference a lot of the time, anyway, as I basically live on VST (Vampire Standard Time))...*”

An Unanticipated Denouement –
Jul 2002 – mike weber

p. [2] Your review of David Drake's *Redliner* makes it seem like an excellent story about military veterans readjusting to civilian life.

pp. [10-11] Checking your figures for the Baltimore Gun Club's moon cannon against Jules Verne's *From the Earth to the Moon* shows you to have been more cautious than was Verne. You calculated for 10G's, his figures give 28,000G's, enough to pulp his moon travelers. (See pp. [164]-165 of Walter J. Miller's translation.)

As for shock absorbency the Baltimore Gun Club fired a test projectile into Hillsborough Bay, which had padded springs, a cat and a squirrel. The cat survived quite well while dining on the squirrel. (See pp. 127-128) However, on page 131 Barbicane decided that humans needed better protection and devised hydraulic shock-absorbers for the lunar projectile. Of course, the fallacy in this is that their floor and the water would also be subjected to 28,000 G's upon ignition, so they'd still be squashed. Furthermore, the water would weigh 1.5 times as much as the projectile and the rest of its contents, thus increasing the required amount of guncotton.

You wonder where the water went. Verne had it conveyed by pipes to the “top” and then ejected from the projectile. This, also, wouldn't work. The pipes would have to be of an enormous aggregate cross-section and the water jetting in their direction of travel would decelerate them.

p. [21] Yes, the science-fiction author Arthur Train and the Arthur Train who wrote the Mr. Tutt stories are one and the same.

p. [22] Jules Verne has been denounced for computational errors that he didn't make. His ostensible translators have made most of the errors. Miller's notes refute such articles as Theodore L. Thomas' “The Watery Wonders of Captain Nemo”, *Galaxy Magazine* Dec 1961. Everett F. Bleiler has publicly apologized for reprinting Edward Roth's pseudo-translations, which added material. The pseudo-translations by Lewis P. Mercier both deleted material and altered what he ostensibly left in. For example, on pages 81-82 of Miller's edition Mercier renders Nemo's

“*Ces deux coques sont fabrique'es en to'le d'acier dont la densite' rapport a' l'eau est de sept-huit dixie'mes...*” as

“*These two hulls are composed of steel plates, whose density is from 0.7 to 0.8 that of water.*” whereas a more accurate translation would be

“*The two hulls are made of steel plates whose density is 7.8 that of water.*”

pp. [22-23] I agree with you that battery-electric locomotives have only limited practicality. But the point is that they preceded *20,000 Leagues*

Under the Sea, Verne realized the limitations of batteries and dealt with the limitations by having Captain Nemo constantly replenishing the sodium in his batteries by using coal to extract sodium from seawater.

Trivial Pursuits #102 – Janice Gelb

pp. 2-3 Thanks for the reviews.

SPIRITUS MUNDI #190 Jun-Jul 2002

- Guy H. Lillian III

p. [9?] No, I'm not sufficiently fluent in French to read even such a straightforward author as Jules Verne. What I did was to go to the library where they have an early 1870's edition of *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* (it's not a first, but hopefully it isn't textually defective) and skim translate each page while checking it against Walter J. Miller's translation (which claims to be accurate). As far as I could tell from the words I do know and guessing at the ones I don't, Miller is telling the truth. Miller says that the usually-encountered English editions are missing twenty-three percent of Verne's text (mostly scientific, political and social commentary) and a lot of what's left is erroneous.

No, abridged and butchered translations of Verne are far from being better than nothing. Look at all the trouble these defective translations have caused. Verne's reputation has suffered because most English-reading people don't know what he had to say.

Also, from reading Walter J. Miller's edition of *From the Earth to the Moon* I see that Verne didn't launch from the east coast of Florida, near Cape

Canaveral, but rather from what is now the city of North Port, Florida, over 100 miles away. His launch site of Stony Hill, 1800 feet above sea level, is certainly a tall tale.¶

Thanks for your offer to publish an article by me on why *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* isn't science-fiction. A friend is edging me in the same direction by loaning me his copy of Miller's edition and also *From the Earth to the Moon*. This would give me the chance to write an in-depth review.

Debunking Verne's Florida cannon might run into the same problems as these "debunkings" of the *Nautilus*. What's going to be debunked, the translation or Jules Verne?

Passages #14 – Janet Larson

p. [2] Thanks for reviewing Anne McCaffrey's horse-training novel *Ring of Fire* and her future-fiction novel *Freedom's Ransom*.

TENNESSEE TRASH #47 Jun-Jul

2002 – Gary R. Robe

pp. 9-13 Thanks for your in-depth reviews of the Hugo-nominated novels.

You do excellent jobs on Connie Willis' *Passages*, Neil Gaiman's *American Gods*, Robert C. Wilson's *The Chronoliths* (which may yet turn out to be a monumental success), China Mieville's *Perdido Street Station* (mostly a review reprinted from amazon.com by Cynthia Ward, with which you agree) and Ken MacLeod's *Cosmonaut Keep*.

p. 16 I'm with you that
WorldCon committees hopefully won't
have to make eligibility judgments.
During the 1964 WorldCon I moved all
of the misnominated stories into the
proper categories (novels nominated as
short stories, etc.). It didn't make a
difference. Our novel winner was
serialized at novelette length in *Galaxy
Magazine* but appeared as a hardcover
novel, so we let it slide. There was a
ballot-stuffing attempt with one story.
By not counting the non-members' votes
for it, it didn't make the final ballot.