

TYNDALLITE

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From Norm Metcalf, P.O. Box 1368,
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intended for the September 2001 mailing
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Mailing comments page 840

Tyndallite Jun 2001 – me

p. 835, 1st full paragraph: To
quote myself: “I’ve been publishing
corrections to Sam’s statement since
197.” Neither of us was around then.
That should have been 1957.

p. 835, 3rd full paragraph: To
quote myself: “For example his article
“How Science Fiction Got Its Name”
F&SF Feb197...” should read Feb 1957.

p. 835, 2nd column, 1st full
paragraph: I’ve now published
corrections to Robert C. Peterson’s off-
the-cuff history of Denver fandom. If
anyone wishes to have a copy let me
know.

p. 836 Regarding early
computers I forgot to mention the circa-
2,000-year-old computer found in a
Mediterranean shipwreck.

Twygdrasil And Treehouse Gazette

#71 Jul 2001 – Richard
Dengrove

p. 3 No, Edgar R. Burroughs
never wrote any novels (or other length
stories) during which Tarzan visits Mars.
Stuart J. Byrne wrote *Tarzan On Mars*.

(The letter was returned as
undeliverable.) Raymond A. Palmer
unsuccessfully tried to get permission
from ERB’s estate to publish it. Roy V.
Hunt did a dustjacket and interior
illustrations for Vern Coriell’s proposed
edition. Someone made photocopies of
the novel so some fans do have it. I
haven’t read it but I’ve been told that it
is terrible. As I recall the main link
between ERB’s Tarzan and Barsoom
series is that Jason Gridley is involved
with both.

p. 4 The 1888 science-fiction
fanzines that Sam Moskowitz mentioned
in *Fantasy Commentator* devoted
themselves to discussing the then-current
science-fiction bestsellers, such as
Edward Bellamy’s *Looking Backwards*.

pp. 4-5 As for animosity
between the Futurians and New Fandom
read Sam Moskowitz’ article in *The CFS
Review* that was in *SFPA* some years
back. After WWII the Futurians
reformed and reconciled with New
Fandom. Also, in *The Way the Future
Was* Frederik Pohl comments on the
obnoxious behavior of himself and his
fellow Futurians.

p. 5 You suggest that Cyril M.
Kornbluth’s collaborations with Frederik
Pohl were on a par with solo Kornbluth.
I sort of agree with you. At the time I
thought that solo Kornbluth was better
than solo Pohl. On the other hand, some
of their collaborations were terrible.
While I haven’t read recent Pohl works
I’ve been told that he’s vastly improved.
I can only wonder what we’ve lost due
to Kornbluth’s death.

OFFLINE READER V1#23 Jun-Jul
2001 – Irv Koch

p. [1] As for Julius Schwartz and the first science-fiction fanzine here goes. I can't find the issue of *Fantasy Commentator* wherein Sam Moskowitz discussed the 1880's fanzines.

Graham B. Stone published a facsimile edition of a circa-1900 Tasmanian fanzine that discussed the fiction of Herbert G. Wells.

W. Paul Cook published fanzines in the 1920's; one of which had a version of Howard P. Lovecraft's "Supernatural Horror In Literature". Despite the title, Lovecraft did discuss science-fiction.

Onwards to fanzines derived from Hugo Gernsback's forums. Using Sam Moskowitz' *The Immortal Storm*, The Atlanta Science Fiction Organization Press, 1954 Sam discusses these:

p. 5 Jerome Siegel and Joseph Shuster produced *Cosmic Stories* and *Cosmic Stories Quarterly* of which Sam says:
"...these are the earliest – and the rarest – fan-published "magazines". He doesn't give a date (except to imply that they were before Apr 1929) and I can't find my copy of Robert K. Pavlat's checklist of fanzines. Siegel and Shuster later gained fame with Superman.

p. 8 The Science Correspondence Club began publishing *The Comet* (later *Cosmology*), the first issue was May 1930 and which was edited by Raymond A. Palmer. Sam says that the early emphasis on the science in science-fiction gradually shifted. "Articles based upon science fiction stories appeared occasionally." It lasted for seventeen issues.

pp. 10-11 Sam discusses *The Planet*, which was edited by Allen Glasser, its first issue was Jul 1930. Sam says: "In content it presaged the balanced generality that was to characterize the later *The Time Traveller* – reviews of current professionally-published fantastic fiction in both magazines and books, reviews of fantasy films, and miscellaneous chatter and news about the fans themselves."

p. 11 Sometime after 5 Aug 1930 Carlton Abernathy, Wallace Dort and Stanley Dort published *The Planetoid*.

p. 12 Sam mentions that the Oct 1930 *The Planet* mentions an issue of *The Asteroid*.

p. 13ff Sam mentions Julius Schwartz and Mort Weisinger's *The Time Traveller*. He gives no dates for the nine issues (and I can't find my copies but I think that the issues were during 1931 and 1932). On page 15 Sam says "And so was terminated the first true fan magazine as we recognize such today." It's too late to ask Sam how he was distinguishing this from *The Planet*. And at the time of writing these words he probably didn't have copies of the 1880's fanzines nor the Tasmanian fanzine, and may have forgotten about W. Paul Cook's fanzines.

SPIRITUS MUNDI #184 5 Jul 2001
- Guy H. Lillian III

Guy, you and your bride, Rose-Marie Donovan, have my best wishes.

p. [5?] No, Marcellus was not the first name of Hugo Gernsback. Marcellus Harvey Gernsback was Hugo's late son.

I'm with you that Alva C. Rogers, Jr.'s artwork of decades ago was better than that of William Rotsler's of the same period. Alva is another example of an artist who should have been able to make a living with his artistic talent. He did a fine piece of artwork in a few minutes for some friends of mine's wedding reception. They were delighted with the quality. Some of his artwork appeared in "prozines" but from what he said he was never paid for it.

p. [6?] You say that you and Rosie talk about science-fiction all the time. How about writing about science-fiction for *Spiritus Mundi* and *Challenger*?

You say that you were confused by my comments about science-fiction. I'll be glad to elucidate whatever is puzzling you.

pp. [6?-7?] You say that you're interested in religious symbolism in science-fiction. You might well enjoy Gilbert K. Chesterton's science-fiction novel, *The Ball And the Cross*, with God and Satan battling at St. Paul's Cathedral. Hokey as my description might make it seem it's actually a good novel.

p. [7?] I agree with you that Herbert G. Wells' *The Invisible Man* is a good story, although it's not science-fiction.

Trivial Pursuits #96 – Janice Gelb

p. 2 Thanks for your report on the Hugo nominees.

Oblio #135 Jun-Jul 2001 – Gary Brown

p. 17 You say that there are elements of science-fiction in Jules Verne's *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. What do you have in mind? Everything involved in building the *Nautilus* was not only pre-existent but also specified by Verne in his text. Even the name of the *Nautilus* is a tribute to Robert Fulton's submarine of 1800-01 when it was successfully tested. In 1805 tests the *Nautilus* was able to sink brigs.

GUILTY PLEASURES #19 – Eve Ackerman

p. 10 Congratulations on your novel *Pirate's Price* not only surviving the collapse of Dreams Unlimited but in also receiving your royalties from DU.

p. 12 Here's hoping that you bring your novel, *Captain Sinister*, to a proper conclusion.

By the way, with your interest in women and science-fiction you might wish to read Eric Leif Davin and my article on women in science-fiction between 1927 and 1949 in the next issue of *Fantasy Commentator*. It's over sixty pages long (including bibliography) wherein we detail the actual reception accorded women science-fiction authors in the science-fiction magazines (warmly supportive, despite the mythology). You can obtain a subscription by sending \$10 to A. Langley Searles, 48 Highland Circle, Bronxville NY 10708-5909.

Comments #12 24 Jul 2001 – S. Hughes

p. [2?] You say regarding John W. Campbell, Jr.'s rejection comments:

“Unfortunately, at the age of 14, I didn’t know how to apply the suggestions nor did I see them as a show of interest in the story.”

Too bad, but it’s not too late. You too can be Professional Guest Of Honor at a Convention.

I like your comment about the Dean Drive making a good paint shaker and probably being patented as such. I wonder if there was any connection with Sherwin-Williams and their slogan about covering the globe. Perhaps they bought the Dean Drive in anticipation of covering Mars.

I think that you’re right that Campbell occasionally believed his own spiels. He apparently believed in Dianetics until he realized that it was bogus and publicly rejected it. A number of people have argued that he should never have publicly espoused it because he caused some naïve people to waste their time, money and minds on Dianetics.

Unfortunately, there are some gullible people out there. Hugo Gernsback editorialized in *Amazing Stories* that unless otherwise specified his contents were fiction. He said that people were writing in who believed that all of the fiction was actually true. Raymond A. Palmer was notorious for trying to exploit the gullible.

p. [8?] You say that you’re working on a science-fiction novel. I hope that it is a success.

THE SPHERE Vol. 193 no. 1 – Don Markstein

Don, with your comments about the smaller the government the more trouble they cause for invaders (tell it to the Danes) I think that you might enjoy (if you haven’t already) Eric F. Russell’s “... And Then There Were None”, *Astounding Science-Fiction* Jun 1951. Russell’s story is highly enjoyable as the invading army deserts man-by-man. Gilbert K. Chesterton’s *The Napoleon Of Notting Hill* has a basis that you would look upon with partial favor, the smaller the government the better. Chesterton has England being divided into neighborhood sovereignties.

The Notorious Jumping Zine of Calaveras County 28 Jul 2001 – Jeffrey Copeland

p. 6 To quote you: “I read the Hugo short fiction at Westercon and in Alaska, and this year’s ballot features the sorriest set of novella nominees I’ve ever seen.”

Was there nothing better or is this another failure of the nominating process?

“YNGVI IS a LOUSE!” AND OTHER GRAFFITOS #72 Jul 2001 – T. K. F. Weisskopf

pp. 11-17 Toni, thanks for this essay “Speculation to Fiction: Developing the SF Story Idea”.

p. 11 To quote you: “Science fiction is probably the only genre that you can still have endless discussions about defining 100 plus years [sic] after its inception.”

As you've noticed, we're still discussing definitions right here in *SFPA*. However your "100 plus years after its inception" is over 2,000 years short.

p. 11 I applaud your statement:

"This is, incidentally, why so much media SF (and I include games in this broad definition), fails at being true SF. They have mistaken the tropes SF has developed – the space ship, the robot, the artificial intelligence, the biological nightmare – for the soul and essence of the genre. Not so."

You cite Robert A. Heinlein as saying that science-fiction must not violate established scientific fact. You say that "...and sometimes SF can indeed violate scientific fact, if it's necessary for the story and a sufficiently good rationale can be made for assuming our science fact could be wrong."

Bravo. Some of these discussions ignore distinctions between basic scientific facts, theories with the preponderance of evidence, theories, which are probably true and outre nonsense. Thus, Herbert G. Wells' *Invisible Man* is nonsense. Faster-than-light travel is highly improbable because of the energy requirements in exceeding the speed of light. However, warping space to achieve the end result, while highly improbable, can't be ruled out. Edgar R. Burroughs' hollow earth is ridiculous and his embellishments such as the polar opening and the central sun made his stories even more nonsensical. Recent measurements from billions of years ago have indicated that various "constants" may not be constant. If these observations can be "verified" (insofar as such measurements can be

verified) this gives string theory a stronger probability of being true. All this can be worked into fiction by some of those rare individuals who both understand science and are capable fiction writers.

Your citation of John W. Campbell, Jr.'s remarks about science-fiction being the only non-escapist literature isn't phrased the way I recall it, but doubtless he voiced the same basic idea in numerous variations. The one I recall is along the line of yours, that science-fiction is facing tomorrow's problems today but without the 'git them before they git you..

pp. 11-12 While your idea that "In order to enjoy SF you must have some hope for the future, for the notion of progress." is basically sound there are a number of dystopian science-fiction novels. Of course, some of these were written not in the hope that they would come true, but in the fervent desire that they wouldn't.

p. 12 Bravo for speaking out in favor of stories, rather than vignettes or mood pieces.

Thanks for quoting Wilkie Collins' introduction to his 1861 novel *The Woman In White* about the assured success of novelists who tell stories dependent upon human interest.

However, some science-fiction authors have transcended that with sympathetic aliens. (Catherine L. Moore's "Shambleau", S. Fowler Wright's *The World Below*, Stanley G. Weinbaum's "A Martian Odyssey", Eric F. Russell's Jay Score series, Poul W. Anderson's "Call Me Joe" all come to mind.

[May Poul rest in peace.]

p. 13 You advise potential science-fiction writers to stay away from *Scientific American*. I recall Gregory Benford telling me how he traded in his collection of *Astounding Science-Fiction* for a collection of *Scientific American* because he'd decided to become a scientist. And now he's become not only a scientist but also an outstanding science-fiction writer.

I also like your advice to potential authors about going to the sources for your ideas upon which to build science-fiction stories. If science-fiction is to be beyond the frontiers of science then science-fiction writers need to know where the frontiers are.

pp. 13-14 You cite Algis J. Budrys' rules for constructing stories. A. J. says that in part II of his schema that the central character isn't changed "...but parts inherent in the character you established are revealed." I recall authors saying that Campbell had rejected stories because the central character had learned nothing during the course of the story. Heinlein had some comments about stories in which the main character learns something. (Of course, there are some "science-fiction" stories in which the characters have regressed during the course of the "story".)

p. 14 You ask me regarding *Unknown* that if you're correct that Campbell had a rule of "...only one outrageous assumption per story." Possibly he did, though I don't recall that he did. One requirement that I do recall is that your fantastic postulate(s) must be developed logically. He also had some comments regarding *Weird Tales* where the characters didn't resolve

problems but instead they were confronted with new terrors. He also said that unlike *Weird Tales* fantasy could be fun (and he proved it).

In his 1934 introduction to his *Seven Famous Novels* [sic] Herbert G. Wells said that a science-fiction author should only have one fantastic postulate. (The volume had six novels and one novelette.)

Campbell's rule against aliens is myth. I don't know who originated it. Isaac Asimov said that he sold no stories with aliens to Campbell because Campbell wanted Earthmen to win. However, this is another Asimovian error (along with his statements about the lack of women in 1930's and 40's science-fiction magazines). Asimov, himself, sold "Homo Sol" to Campbell for the Sep 1940 *Astounding Science-Fiction*.

Campbell published a plenitude of stories with aliens and in several of them the aliens win. In others, Earthmen and alien are friendly. In others, Earthmen go to war against aliens. Examples are Poul W. Anderson's "Call Me Joe"; Albert B. Chandler's "Giant Killer"; Arthur C. Clarke's "Rescue Party"; Harry C. Stubbs' "Needle" and "Mission of Gravity"; Lyon S. de Camp's "Divide and Rule", "The Hand of Zei", "The Queen of Zamba"; Edward E. Smith's Lensman series, Alfred E. van Vogt's "Co-operate - Or Else!" etc., etc.

Your remark about it being "...very hard to tell a good story with more than one hero, one narrative focus." There's where some of Edgar R. Burroughs' stories went bad; he kept switching heroes while juggling events.

Henry R. Haggard's *Queen Sheba's Ring* is good, but not great. It has four heroes who collectively achieve more than would be believable from one hero and thus maintain credibility.

pp. 14-15 I applaud your remarks about how authors should edit their own stories. Just think what would have happened if Edward Bulwer-Lytton had gotten carried away as have some of our favorite bad examples.

"It was a dark (illumination was less than 0.1 lumen) and stormy (the winds were blowing greater than 12 on Beaufort's Scale) night (since the sun had gone below the horizon one hour, fifteen minutes and thirty-six seconds previously)."

p. 15 Using Heinlein's *Have Space Suit – Will Travel* as a prime example is an excellent choice. Your analysis of the story's construction and adherence to narrative drive is right to the point.

p. 28 You ask what I think of Frederik Pohl and Cyril M. Kornbluth's *Presidential Year*. I thought that it was weak and not worth re-reading. As for some of their other collaborations I thought that "Gravy Planet"/*The Space Merchants* depended too much on the idea of "Hey, ad agencies have taken over!", *Gladiator-At-Law*, *Search the Sky* and *Slave Ship* I thought were all bad. I don't think I've read any of their other novel collaborations. Indeed, just how collaborative have been the others? I suspect that they're 99.999% Pohl.

As for Kornbluth's solo novels, I thought that *Takeoff* was so-so but that *The Syndic* and *Not This August* were fairly good.

A number of fans have commented that Pohl solo is far superior to Kornbluth solo. That's almost certainly true these days but Pohl has had over forty years since Kornbluth's death to perfect his fiction. In their first two decades, I think that Kornbluth outdid Pohl.

Both Pohl and Kornbluth catered to Horace L. Gold's preference for ridiculous extrapolations and irrational stories.

Another factor in my evaluations is that I read these stories as they appeared so my judgment is affected by decades of recollection and not reading them one after the other.

The False Knight on the Road Jul 2001 -
mike weber

p. 7 Thanks for recounting Robert Silverberg's introduction to *The Shrouded Planet* wherein he tells how he and Gordon R. Garrett tailored the story to Campbell's prejudices and then had Campbell ask them to turn it inside out in a rewrite.

You ask me if I know whether Garrett was Anglican, Catholic or both. I don't. The subject never came up in our conversations and I don't recall him mentioning it in print (though he may well have).

Yes, there were less than 500 sets of Edward E. Smith's *The History of Civilization*. There were only seventy-five sets of the Lensman books bound in leather with *The History of Civilization* on the bindings. Another set has turned up with one unsigned volume but I

imagine that everyone else requested Smith's inscriptions.

Your anecdote about "Anthony Boucher" rejecting a story involving a nun, a private eye and a werewolf with a note saying "You pushed all my buttons, but in the wrong order." is, as you say, amusing and plausible. It may well be true.

p. 10 Defining science-fiction as fiction about events that haven't taken place, yet could take place, is actually a definition of fiction, not science fiction.

p. 16 No, I don't believe that there can be no originality in movies. My point was that movies, by their very nature, aren't science-fiction. They're not prose. They can use the same ideas as does science-fiction (and potentially do them better, as can graphic novels/comic books).