

TYNDALLITE

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Mailing comments page 856

The New Port News #200 Nov 2001 -
Ned Brooks

p. 2 The 2,000-year-old
computer found in a Mediterranean
shipwreck was an analog-mechanical
computer for calculating latitude.

The reason that I call Gilbert K.
Chesterton's *The Ball and the Cross*
science-fiction is because of the
treatment of God, the Devil and the hero.
It is a *tour-de-force* and I imagine that if
you try it again and finish it, that you'll
enjoy it.

It Goes On the Shelf #23 Oct 2001 -
Ned Brooks

pp. 2-3 You comment on some
aspects of Avram Davidson's
personality. You mention that he would
not allow his work to be published in
Germany. You didn't mention that he
refused to ride in German automobiles.
He accepted rides from me in my
American car but turned down offers
from fans driving Volkswagens.

Twygrasil And Treehouse Gazette
#72 Oct 2001 - Richard
Dengrove

p. 16 Yes, Edgar R. Burroughs'
Pellucidar had continuous light (except
in the Land of the Awful Shadow). He
had a central sun. The central sun had a
moon in synchronous orbit so that the
Land of the Awful Shadow had a fixed
location.

Like the other background
postulates in Pellucidar this is nonsense.
Even granting the extreme improbability
of a planetoid forming around the central
sun having it maintain synchronous orbit
is to compound the improbability. The
central sun would melt the outer crust of
the earth. ERB claimed that the center
of gravity of the Earth is a spherical
surface 250 miles beneath the outer
surface. This, also, is nonsense. The
center of gravity would still be in the
center of the sphere. Therefore,
everything not fastened down in
Pellucidar would be drawn into the
central sun. Furthermore, his polar
opening providing continuity between
the seas and atmosphere of Pellucidar
and the outer oceans and atmosphere
meant that all water and air on the
surface would be drawn into the central
sun. Another problem would be the
material comprising the crust would
have to be of incredible mass in order to
compensate for the missing mass of
ERB's hollow earth.

And even granting ERB's
Pellucidar with its prehistoric megafauna
we'd be under continuous attack from
these nasty creatures coming through the
polar opening.

ERB didn't write another book
"...about a solar system beyond the
farthest star, where you could have
interplanetary travel by airplane.". What
you have in mind is ERB's
"Beyond the Farthest Star" and "Tangor

Returns". He'd planned on writing enough stories to make a book but didn't do so. The protagonist astral projects to a planetary system with eleven planets sharing a common orbit and atmosphere. Like unto WWII Earth one of these planets has a horrible war going on. The hero is planning on flying to the other planets.

Although ERB had an astronomer "work things out", I'm skeptical that his astronomer acquaintance revolutionized astronomy by providing a stable eleven-body system sharing the same orbit.

To quote you:

"Yes, that was **John Campbell, Jr.**'s problem. He didn't really understand there were other cultures than his, even in petri dishes. Particularly in petri dishes. If you listen closely enough to them, you can hear the classical music."

Ah, really cultured petri dishes. But dragging JWC, Jr. into your joke doesn't seem proper. Campbell was acutely aware of other cultures and cultural interaction. After all, human-alien interaction provided him with hundreds (or thousands) of stories. Were you trying to put another spin on the myth that Campbell didn't accept stories with aliens in them?

p. 20 Thanks for pointing out another flaw in the John W. Campbell, Jr. is anti-alien myth, his own story "Who Goes There?". Thanks for reminding us about Campbell's own stories featuring aliens. These include *The Mightiest Machine*, *The Incredible Planet*, "Cloak of Aesir", etc.

p. 21 As a matter of fact, the common English versions of Jules Verne's *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* ARE both mistranslated and abridged. Have you read *The Annotated 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*? Verne wasn't trying to write science-fiction in *20,000,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. He was writing a high-tech political thriller combined with a travelogue of the world.

p. 28 You say that the idea that Christian Crusaders are trying to destroy Islam isn't credible, despite current claims that Christian Crusaders is trying to do just that. That's why the coalition has been praising Islam and trying to focus attention on the pseudo-Islamic teachings of Osama bin Laden.

I haven't seen any recent reviews of Gilbert K. Chesterton's *The Flying Inn*. *TFI* takes place in a Britain, which has been fighting the Turks, but whose Prime Minister converts to Islam and tries to legalize the Sharia. He knows that Britons won't easily give up alcohol so he has a law passed saying that alcohol can only be sold at inns displaying inn signs. He next has a law passed banning inn signs. Before he can be served with papers, an innkeeper loads a cart with alcohol, cheese and his inn sign. It's well done.

I wonder if anyone is going to reprint "Talbot Mundy"'s *King, of the Khyber Rifles*? It's fairly topical, with Afghans in the Khinjan caves preparing a jihad against India. It's not science-fiction, but it is a good (but not great) novel of adventure. Donald M. Grant did a facsimile edition from *Everybody's Magazine* with the hundreds of illustrations by Joseph Clement Coll.

(One fan tried to convince me that the story is science-fiction because it has Afghan warriors hiding in caves. I pointed out that Afghan warriors DO hide in caves and that the Khinjan caves are real.)

CHALLENGER #14 SFPA EDITION
Spr 2001 - Guy H. Lillian III

pp. 6-10 Gregory Benford's "Getting It Right": A Reflection on Titans and Technologies" is an interesting essay on American and Soviet space art in general coupled with a personal interview with Chesley Bonestell and Greg' personal knowledge of the international scientific community.

Comments #13 23 Nov 2001 - S. Hughes

p. [7?] Regarding Jules Verne's *Nautilus*, you claim that the following exceeded then-current technology:

- 1) batteries
- 2) sufficiently-powerful electric motors
- 3) underwater navigation systems
- 4) air-cleaning systems
- 5) metal castings for something that big based on the notion that since gun castings back then were a problem, so would be the *Nautilus*.

1&2) Since adequate batteries and electric motors were already powering electric locomotives, why not the *Nautilus*?

3) As I recall Nemo occasionally surfaced to check his position with a sextant. Also, he'd been busily mapping the oceans. Even so, he got into trouble in the Torres Strait. Nemo's navigation technique was the same as Roald Amundsen's forty-some years later.

Amundsen was able to navigate his way nonstop from the Madeira Islands to the Bay of Whales in Antarctica. Of course, Amundsen had an advantage in being on the surface all of the time. Nemo had to run underwater part of the time to avoid detection from the world coalition hunting for him.

4) Verne did describe the air-cleaning system

5) The *Nautilus* wasn't cast. It was built using structural members. Captain Nemo had the various pieces built in various places around the world, whereupon he transported them to a desert island and he and his men assembled the *Nautilus*. His construction methods had already been used decades earlier to build the *Vulcan* and the *S. S. Great Britain* (1843) and other vessels. (The *Great Britain* still exists; it's on display.) The construction date of the *Nautilus* differs depending upon which Verne book you read: *In Search of the Castaways/The Children of Captain Grant, 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* or *The Mysterious Island*. But these all put it in the 1860's. Verne had been a passenger on the *Great Eastern* (formerly *Leviathan*) built in 1855 and about which he wrote a novel. So, Verne had first-hand knowledge of iron ships prior to writing *20,000,000 Leagues Under the Sea*.

p. [12?] You use the Confederate submarine *Hundley* as an argument against the feasibility of the *Nautilus*. One prototype failure doesn't mean the failure of another one. The fact that the *Hundley* was human powered doesn't argue against the *Nautilus* being electrically-powered. The CSA could have powered the *Hundley* electrically, the technology was available. When Simon Lake was

inspired to build his *Nautilus* in the 1890's, there was nothing new since 1870 except improvements.

Avatar Press v2#18 29 Nov 2001 -
Randy B. Cleary

Randy, thanks for this report on the 59th "World" "Science Fiction" Convention. I like your concentrating on the artistic aspects of the convention.

Frequent Flyer 21 Nov 2001 - Tom
Feller

In a previous issue, you commented about Jules Verne's *From the Earth to Moon*. You suggested that the acceleration would have killed the lunar travelers. As I recalled Verne recognized that there would be a problem, so the Baltimore Gun Club had a hydraulic shock-absorbing system. I suspect that it would have been inadequate. But you have to give Verne credit for recognizing the problem. He must have been lacking empirical data to know just how much acceleration would either incapacitate or kill humans.

Home with the Armadillo #50 Nov
2001 - Liz Copeland

p. 14 Thanks for recommending Lois M. Bujold's *The Curse of Chalion*. You say that it's more fantasy than science-fiction but "The characters are solid and interesting, the setting is somewhat vague but the everyday life details are vivid, and the plot is interesting." It would nice if all stories deserved such praise.

AaaaYiii Thanksgiving
2001 - Guy H. Lillian III

p. [3] But of course, the movie *Forbidden Planet* isn't science-fiction; it's a movie. It's supposedly derived from a science-fiction book, Raymond F. Jones' *This Island Earth* and it has often been suggested that it owes even more to William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. So, while it is derived from science-fiction, it's not science-fiction.

**"YNGVI IS A LOUSE/WIMP" AND
OTHER GRAFFITOS** #74 Nov 2001
- T. K. F. Weisskopf

p. 5 Charlotte Proctor: You review the movie *K-Pax* about a man in an asylum who believes himself to be a space alien. It would be interesting to see both the movie and read William F. Jenkins' "The Strange Case of John Kingman", *Astounding Science-Fiction*, May 1948 (bylined "Murray Leinster").

Mysterious Destinations - mike weber

pp. 3-5 Thanks for reviewing Harry Turtledove's *The Great War: Breakthroughs*. You say that the book is constructed by changing viewpoints and characters. Apparently, he feels that this adds realism as compared to a single protagonist who Sees and Knows All.

p. 19 To quote you: "Verne wasn't talking batteries to make his *Nautilus* go -- he was talking magic to make electricity out of sea water, as i recall. Of course, the last Verne i read was in 1966, so..."

While Verne wasn't using lead-acid batteries, he was using sodium and something else I don't now recall. He derived the sodium from seawater. It's not magic; it's a legitimate alternative electrode-electrolyte duo. Considering Captain Nemo's preference for relying

upon Nature and the oceans it makes sense.

pp. 20-21 Thanks for citing more stories published by John W. Campbell, Jr. involving aliens. I wonder who originated "Campbell's Famous Rule About No Aliens In Science Fiction". If it was a joke, it's gotten out of hand. If it is serious, it displays ignorance.

p. 23 Thanks for pointing out successful examples of multiple viewpoint/hero stories: 'Dave Duncan's "Man of His Word" series and its follow-on, the "Handful of Men" books...'. I'll make sure that I have them all before I read them.

Fantasy Press published many of its titles by using first-edition copies with a special slick page. This page usually had biographical material, a photograph of the author and the author's signature (with such obvious exceptions as the books of Stanley G. Weinbaum, Gertrude Bennett, Perley P. Sheehan, etc.) and if I recall correctly these usually were numbered up to around 500. Most of these were subscribed to. As I previously pointed out, *The History of Civilization* consisted of Edward E. Smith's six Lensman books bound in brown leather with gold stamping and most of them inscribed to the purchasers.

Your tentative definition of science fiction as stories that

"...haven't taken place, could never take place as Things Are Now, but could plausibly take place given certain defined scientifically-plausible-sounding changes."

pretty much covers most cases. But I think that it should be expanded to cover such stories as *Aliens Among Us*. These don't require any changes in *Us* other than accepting that we don't Know All There Is To Know.

You cite John W. Campbell, Jr. "wanting stories that could just as easily be published in the *Saturday Evening Post* - 500 years from now.". I recall the remark but I don't recall where it was published.

GUILTY PLEASURES #21 Nov
2001 - Eve Ackerman

p. 2 I hope that your idea of changing your novel's title from "Captain Sinister" to "Pirate's Song" enables it to sell, both as a book and as a Broadway musical.

pp. 2-3 Thanks for reviewing Susan Matthews' *Angel of Destruction* and Suzann Ledbetter's *North of Clever*.

CHALLENGER #15 Fal 2001 -
Guy H. Lillian III

p. 7 You've penned a fine tribute to Poul W. Anderson. As you say, he was a fine man as well as a superb author.

pp. 8-12 Thanks for reprinting your tribute to Poul from an unspecified issue of *Nolazine* circa 1971.

pp. 20-21 Thanks for publishing Gregory Benford's "Remembering Fred Hoyle". Fortunately, Greg has personal recollections from both listening to and talking with Hoyle.

Greg's statement "...Fred Hoyle published *The Black Cloud* in 1957, apparently not noticing that he had linked science fiction and real, hard science in a way no one had before." is questionable. While I haven't read the story since it was first published, as I recall the science in it was only speculative at the time, and is now outdated. The same could be said for many earlier science-fiction works. Presumably Greg has in mind ruling out technology-based science-fiction; thus eliminating some of what John W. Campbell, Jr. published.

pp. 26-27 Thanks for publishing Ben Indick's piece on Edward Daniel ("Edd") Cartier.

pp. 64-70 Thanks for reprinting Gregory Benford's "Varley and Verne". It's an interesting comparative essay between John Varley's *Steel Beach* and Jules Verne's *From the Earth To the Moon*.

Greg does a great job explaining why Verne chose the eastern coast of Florida for his Moon launch.

p. 65 Greg makes a dubious statement: "He [Verne] invented the expansive sense in fantastic literature, but he did it by dreaming exactly." The Arabian Nights and any other pre-Verne expansive fantastic stories negate this.

p. 70 I'd like to read the reasoning behind this statement. "Verne died only a few months before the Wright brothers' first flight at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina..."

The first flight at Kitty Hawk took place 17 Dec 1903. Verne died 24 Mar 1905.

pp. 71-78 Mike Resnick's "Millenium Philcon Diary" shows that Mike enjoyed himself in a fine science-fictional way.