

TYNDALLITE

Volume 3, Number 98
October, 2001

From Norm Metcalf, P.O. Box 1368,
Boulder CO 80306-1368 USA. This is
intended for the November 2001 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 848
A. Langley Searles 854

THE NEW PORT NEWS #199
September 2001 – Ned Brooks

p. 2 A relict culture with
'cloaking devices' to hide their presence
from spy satellites isn't a classic 'relict-
culture' story. It's science-fiction. If
they're hiding in the shadows with the
power to cloud men's (and satellites')
minds, then it's mysticism. "Before we
sail away from Rome for the western
lands be sure to pack all of our cloaking
technology. 2,000 years from now spy
satellites will be in orbit and we wish to
make sure that our descendants remain
invisible."

As for Harry B./P. Warner, Jr.'s
middle names, for years he said that his
middle name is Becker. However,
several years ago he said that his middle
name might be Packer.

Thanks for citing Steve Sneyd's
notice of Ernest Jones' 1851 *The New
World* with what could be construed as
veiled references to radio. Another 19-
th Century verse along those lines is the
one by Alfred, Lord Tennyson. This
reminds me of Richard Armour's remark
about Joan of Arc hearing voices out of

the air, which was considered unusual
prior to the invention of radio.

You doubt that battery
technology was advanced enough to
propel Jules Verne's *Nautilus*. Since
battery technology was sufficiently
advanced to propel locomotives why are
you skeptical?

Twygdrasil And Treehouse Gazette

#72 Sep 2001 – Richard
Dengrove

p. 13 Thanks for explicating that
computers don't have to use digital
electronics. As far as I know prior to
WWII, all computers were analog
mechanical computers. As Jeff
Copeland and I have pointed out the first
electronic computers were built during
WWII. The circa 2,000-year-old
astronomical computer found in that
Mediterranean shipwreck is another
example of an analog mechanical
computer.

pp. 13-14 Herbert G. Wells' *The
First Men In the Moon* used Cavourite to
reach the Moon. Cavourite was
supposed to be a mineral that was not
only impervious to gravity, but repelled
other minerals. Cavour mined it. If he
built a roof over the mine what kept the
roof from taking off from Earth? During
past geologic events what prevented all
of the Cavourite from dispersing into
interstellar space? From what elements
of the periodic table was it created?
How were its atoms without mass?
(Since Wells wrote the story prior to
Niels Bohr's theorization of atomic
structure, we can't fairly analyze the
story on the basis of sub-atomic
physics.)

p. 14 You're right that ongoing research is usually going to modify many statements on many subjects. Until God starts writing and publishing books and articles, the rest of us can only hope to do our best.

You wonder if I'm going to refute your claim that "Verne proposed that the *Nautilus* be piloted by atomic power. One that cannot be contradicted – Walt Disney." Certainly Disney would have had it powered by Plutonium. Seriously though, I wonder if the 1954 Walt Disney movie is the source of the often statement that the *Nautilus* is science-fiction because it was powered by nuclear engines. However, Verne specified that the *Nautilus* was battery-powered. He even has a chapter ("All By Electricity") in which Captain Nemo details the operation of the *Nautilus* to Professor Aronnax.

Variations on a Theme #8 Sep 2001 - Rich Lynch

pp. 5-6 Your reiteration of winning Hugos being more a matter of the authors' visibility at conventions rather than the intrinsic merit of their material is additional support for the theory. [If the theory were correct, Herbert G. Wells' wouldn't have had a chance for *The Invisible Man*.] You cite Robert Silverberg as saying that his winning 'Best Fan Writer' for his 1950 fanac was unjustified. I concur. Sam Moskowitz, Dean W. "Redd" Boggs, Thyril Ladd and James Blish all come to mind as possibly eligible candidates. I'm certain that there were other worthy candidates. In 1950 Silverberg and Saul Diskins' *Spaceship* was a typical teenage production, giving no harbinger of Silverberg's future. Silverberg's second

year of *Fantasy Amateur Press Association* hadn't stimulated him to the apex of fannishness. (I can't find my 1950 *FAPA* mailings to refresh my memory.)

I think that your comments underscore the need for both informed, running nominations and a broader electorate. Earl Kemp tried to secure a broader electorate for the 1962 WorldCon by having ballots in the prozines. One of the committee members (Ed Wood) told me that they didn't get much response. But he wouldn't give me any figures. It wasn't until the 1964 WorldCon that those of us on the committee unanimously decided to publicize the nominating and final-ballot figures in an effort to rouse the consciences of WorldCon members. There have also been concerns that a broader electorate would lead to voting fraud. There have been several attempts over the years. In one case, the committee ignored something like 160 ballots from neighbors of one inept author. In another case most of those attempting to stuff the balloting weren't members, so their ballots were ignored. In another case I've only heard second-hand versions of what happened.

p. 7 Regarding what I said to Guy H. Lillian III concerning Fred Chappell's "...demolition of Sam Moskowitz' research and style..." I'll repeat for you. Read both and judge for yourself. Sam's research isn't perfect but it's far better than some people will give him credit for. His style isn't the point of reading him. It's not the greatest, but it's functional. As I told Sam he had a tendency for run-on sentences, dangling modifiers with either ambiguous or no antecedents and his

verbs and nouns didn't always agree in case and number. In the material of his that I published, I edited him on the fly. When he read my proofs he said that he appreciated the improvements I'd made in his articles.

What he didn't appreciate was the stunt pulled by Francis T. Laney. Laney rewrote one of Sam's articles to the extent that it contradicted what Sam had said. Laney then denounced Sam on the basis of Laney's revisions. Sam objected and published what he'd sent Laney together with Laney's revisions. Laney's retort was that he'd improved Sam's article 500%. In retaliation Laney awarded Sam a "Fugghead Of the Year" award for exposing Laney. Laney should have awarded it to himself.

Laney also instituted the *FAPA* Egoboo Poll with the laudable motive of gaining recognition for people who hadn't been properly recognized in *FAPA*. Hopefully he didn't foresee that the polls would be seen by some as a means of denigrating others.

pp. 9-10 John W. Campbell's "... famous rule about no aliens..." is a myth. I wonder who started it. The number of stories with aliens that Campbell published must run into the hundreds (at least). This is on a par with Campbell being anti-female, anti-black, anti-humor, etc. None of these accusations are true. Apparently Eric L. Davin and I have a lifetime avocation of rebutting such nonsense.

SPIRITUS MUNDI #185 Sep 2001 -
Guy H. Lillian III

p. [5?] Certainly, Herbert G. Wells' *Invisible Man* was beyond the pale. It saved him from buying suntan lotion and developing melanoma.

✓ You're right about Sam Moskowitz being intellectually honest. When he made mistakes they were inadvertent. He wasn't trying to deceive anyone.

p. [6?] You say that you're going to re-read John R. R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*. Again, this proves that his books are Hobbit-forming.

PETER, PAN & MERRY #39 -
David Schlosser

p. [1] I'm with you on voting for "bests". Vote for what you enjoy rather than what someone else says that you should enjoy. I recall John M. Baxter saying that he was enjoying stories that didn't meet his critical standards. My response was that he should modify his standards.

No, the evidence is that the Austronesians didn't reach Madagascar from Borneo via India and Sri Lanka. Apparently, they used the monsoon to sail directly from the Sunda Strait. For years archaeologists and anthropologists have been hampered by the idea that pre-Columbian men couldn't have sailed the deep seas. Contrary evidence has been rejected. Evidence of Africans in South America many thousands of years ago, the red-ochre culture in the British Isles and North America which radio-carbon dates to about 6,000 years ago, the megalithic monuments on Malta which have been traced to their mainland quarries, the Austronesians reaching far-flung oceanic islands (rationalized as having been reached by walking on a sunken continent), the Bering Land Bridge rationalizations, etc. are all examples of twisting the facts to fit theories.

Apparently you're using science-fiction as a trope for any expression of the imagination, even if it's not scientific and it's not fiction.

As for a story evolving from science-fiction to non-science-fiction if it accurately predicts the future, yes. But I'd rather base it on the author's intent when writing the story and classify such stories as either "obsolescent" or "obsolete" science-fiction. Thusly, Robert A. Heinlein's "The Man Who Sold the Moon" and "Requiem" didn't QUITE happen. But Dennis Tito buying himself a trip into space partially fulfilled Heinlein's "prediction". But as RAH mentioned he didn't believe that any of his stories would ever happen. He was simply having fun extrapolating possibilities.

p. 2 You're right that Edgar R. Burroughs never wrote any stories with Tarzan on Mars. The only common character between the two series (besides ERB) was Jason Gridley. Gridley used his Gridley transceivers to communicate with Barsoom. Gridley also ventured into Pellucidar with Tarzan in a dirigible with ERB's phone number on it.

You say that "...A&E's Hornblower series is certainly proving popular enough." I guess no one is going to take the wind out of his sails.

p. 3 The article claiming that science-fiction fandom lacked women is nonsense. You rebut it from your experience. They've been around since the beginning of science-fiction. See Eric L. Davin's and my article in the forthcoming *Fantasy Commentator*.

REVENANT #8 Sep 2001 – Sheila J. Strickland

pp. [1-2] You wonder how to improve the administration of the Hugos. I think that running nominations would go a long ways to improve the quality. If as many people as feasible were alerted to what other fans feel to be superior stories so that they could have an opportunity to read them before nominating them we'd have a better final ballot. With a broader base of voters, we'd have a better chance of getting better stories for both the final ballot and the Hugos. And more voters would mean a better chance of negating any attempts at ballot stuffing.

p. 2 Stories in which magic is bound by rules can be more fun *than* stories in which anything can happen. Logical fantasies were one of the main attractions of John W. Campbell, Jr.'s *Unknown (Worlds)*. Having science-fiction authors turn their minds to fantasy made for some great stories.

Trivial Pursuits #97 – Janice Gelb

p. 5 Thanks for the "Reviews".

I appreciate your praise for Connie Willis' *Passages* and Susan Cooper's *King of Shadows*.

p. 10 You say that your aunt lives on Dean Drive in Ventura CA. So – it actually got someone somewhere.

Frequent Flyer 22 Sep 2001 – Tom Feller

p. 7 You mention some "sci-fi" television show in which all of the

planets are connected by vines. Does Tarzan make guest appearances? That's one galaxy that's really networked.

pp. 9-10 You mention a panel comparing the space operas of Edward E. Smith and John W. Campbell, Jr. You report that Smith treated species equally while Campbell favored humans, both in his own stories and the stories that he selected. Do I need to point out that Campbell published Smith's "Galactic Patrol" (though it had been selected by Frederick O. Tremaine), "Grey Lensman", "Second Stage Lensman" and "Children Of the Lens"? Some other examples of species equality include Russell's Jay Score series, Alfred E. van Vogt's "Co-operate or Else!", etc. Campbell also published a number of stories in which humans are inferior to aliens. These include Eric F. Russell's "Hobbyist", "Sinister Barrier", Robert A. Heinlein's "Goldfish Bowl", Isaac Asimov's "Homo Sol", etc.

p. 10 I agree with the panel on alternate histories that the author's intent has to be taken into account. Stories in which the author takes liberties with history without either making a point of how their story differs from actuality or telling a story which couldn't have happened in our world-as-we-know-it don't qualify as alternate history.

The Poul W. Anderson Memorial must have been quite an experience. He was a super-nice guy as well as an outstanding author.

To quote you: "... I attended three panels. The first was on Robert Heinlein, in which one of the panelists said that in recent years Heinlein literary criticism has taken the radical step of

actually reading what he wrote."
THREE CHEERS!!!!

You say that a panel on libertarian science-fiction that supposedly focussed on "Ayn Rand" and Robert A. Heinlein didn't say much about either. You say that one point made was that early Heinlein had "... competent, benevolent bureaucrats and that he really did not become libertarian until *The Moon Is A Harsh Mistress*." Without re-reading Heinlein's works that seems fairly plausible. "Coventry" could be construed as anti-libertarian, showing what happens with libertarians in conflict with both the state and themselves.

p. 15 Thanks for the thumbnail summaries of Nevil S. Norway's *In the Wet* as alternative history, *What Happened to the Corbetts* as predicting WWII (minus the fall of France), *No Highway* as a non-science-fictional thriller on an airliner and *Trustee From the Toolroom* as about model-building fandom. I've been told that *An Old Captivity* is fantasy.

You mention that the g-forces would have killed Jules Verne's "astronauts" in *From the Earth to the Moon*. It's been over fifty years since I read the book but as I recall he realized that there was a problem and had a shock-absorbing system for his lunar travelers. Verne also condemned Herbert G. Wells' *Cavourite* as unscientific in contrast to his novel in which *almost* everything was carefully calculated. The asteroid/second moon that altered the capsule's orbit provided the pivotal incident.

WEREWOLF WITH FLEAS Sep 2001

- George Wells

George, you've brought up an interesting point. Do werewolves have werfleas? When werewolves transform themselves into whatever, do the fleas likewise transform? Or do werewolves transform in order to leave behind the fleas that conceivably can't function as parasites on another species? All we need are some blood testing done before and after plus a thorough examination for fleas before and after. From what I gather, we have experts in our midst capable of doing the necessary lab work. Who will volunteer to get the before and after samples and do the flea check?

Avatar Press v2#17 27 Sep 2001 -
Randy B. Cleary

pp. [2]-4 Thanks for publishing Leana Grice's report on DragonCon. Apparently, it caters to numerous fandoms, including science-fiction fandom.

p. 8 If relict cultures are hiding in the oceans or have mastered invisibility then again such stories would be science-fiction, not classic "lost race" stories. Since the U.S. Navy and the National Imagery and Mapping Agency are mapping the ocean floors they should be able to find any underwater cultures. Assuming the improbability that they're invisible in the visible spectrum they should still be detectable at other wavelengths or by magnetometers and thus would show up in satellite scans.

**"YNGVI IS A LOUSE" AND OTHER
GRAFFITOS** #73 Sep 2001 -
T. K. F. Weisskopf

pp. 7-9 Thanks for publishing Charlotte Proctor's insightful review of Connie Willis' *Passages*.

pp. 11-15 Thanks for publishing all these Randy B. Cleary cartoons spoofing the coveting of Hugos.

p. 25 Toni, open Hugo nominations were tried by the 1962 ChiCon. Earl Kemp managed to get ballots in the prozines. Committee member Ed Wood told me that it didn't work very well, though he refused to give me any figures. (We blew that wide open when we published the voting for the 1964 WorldCon, the first ones to do so. By so doing, we annoyed several people who wished to keep the Hugo-voting farce a secret from fandom.)

By the way, would you be interested in a novel entitled *Creatures of Habit* about monsters periodically convening in convents?

Another Rude Supergirl Cartoon -
mike weber

p. [16?] To quote you: "I don't consider that Wells necessarily made any 'basic error' in **The Invisible Man** - he just didn't put in any handwaving to deal with a problem that really wasn't germane to the story that he was telling."

Mike, I haven't read the novel since November 1978 and I can't find my copy of it but as I recall Wells spent several pages at the beginning detailing the chemical experiments that his protagonist made to render himself invisible and how the last barrier was his

eyes. If I recall correctly the later parts of the novel deal with the chemical losing its effect rendering him visible at inopportune moments. But Wells never did deal with the wholly germane point that granting Wells' premise his protagonist couldn't see what he was doing and therefore the novel couldn't have taken place as described.

You're looking at it differently than I when it comes to rationalizing faster-than-light travel. If the author tries to rationalize it – fine. But his “explanation” must be rational. Sure, on the basis of our present knowledge faster-than-light travel is *almost certainly* impossible. But recent observations (if they're accurate) have shown that Einstein's theories may have overlooked something. And if an author is able to invent feasible faster-than-light travel, he isn't going to describe it in a science-fiction story. No, he's either going to patent it or else exploit it in secret.

pp. [17?]-6 One of the flaws with these people who think that they're challenging Jules Verne's facts and figures is that they focus on translation errors rather than what Verne said.

As for your assertion that Verne wasn't using off-the-shelf technology to “build” the *Nautilus*, do you actually think that he made up his citations? No, he was describing then-currently-available technology. Try reading what Verne had to say and then check it against technology reference books.

Words Fail Me 29 Sep 2001 – Jeffrey Copeland

p. 7 Thanks for recommending Charles Stroll's “Antibodies” and “A Colder War” both as excellent and as better than what was nominated for the Hugos.

This is the sort of informed running informal nomination that could make the Hugos something to be proud of.

p. 14 Your citation of Arthur C. Clarke suggesting that junk faxes be forwarded to Harlan Ellison is amusing on the one hand. On the other....

A letter from A. Langley Searles, 48 Highland Circle, Bronxville NY 10708-5909

Dear Norm,

Anent identifying the very first science-fiction fanzine, that's not the easiest task, for first one would have to define what constitutes such a thing. For example, I don't consider an isolated issue of a clearly non-genre zine that was devoted to science-fiction an entry in the contest. I'd further say that a fanzine put out by science-fiction fans isn't automatically one, either. I do feel, however, that the deciding factor is whether the *content* is science-fiction.

Thus, my candidate for the first genre fanzine is *The Planet* (July 1930), whose content was tied to science-fiction throughout. *The Comet/Cosmology*, though produced by science-fiction fans, was almost wholly devoted to science – not its extrapolations in fiction. Chronologically, it was only a couple of

months earlier to appear than *The Planet*.

Now, I admit I never owned either of these fanzines, but Sam Moskowitz had some/most of them, and once when visiting him I took the opportunity of asking to see them, because I was interested to know just how science-fictional they were. I also admit that this was a number of years ago, and I can't recall all of the details, but I do recall clearly that their contents were as I've described them in the previous paragraph.

I've just now got out my copy of *The Immortal Storm*, and I see that Sam has described them pretty much as I have. I see also that by naming a later chapter in the book "The Emergence of the True Fan Magazine", he has opened a can of worms that I suspect he never intended to – i.e., the title implies that *The Time Traveller/Science Fiction Digest/Fantasy Magazine* might be the first science-fiction fanzine. (I don't think he realized that he was doing so; if pressed on the point, I believe he would probably name *The Planet*, as I have, for science-fiction zine #1.) But it is a matter of definitions.

Thus, I hear that Julie Schwartz is claiming that *The Time Traveller* is *numero uno*, and he could point to the title of that chapter in *The Immortal Storm* in defense, and even claim that it shows Sam agreed with him.

Anyway, that's my position on the dispute, if it is a dispute. I see that *The Science Fiction Encyclopedia* follows Schwartz' view, but I cannot agree, since the conclusion is based on the erroneous statement that the content

of *The Planet* is largely science, not science-fiction. I am not familiar with Peter Roberts, who wrote this entry, but I have grave doubts if he ever actually looked at those early zines himself.

Sincerely,
Langley
A. Langley Searles