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Jeffrey Redmond's column will not be appearing in Origin until we get matters straightened out.

Contents

Editorial: Selected Gross Misapprehensions, by John Thiel, page three

Science Fiction in Dime Novels, by Jon Swartz, page six

Carrying On, by Judy Carroll, page eleven

Fans, by John Thiel, page twelve

Somebody and Nobody, by Will Mayo, page thirteen

Editorial



Selected Gross Misapprehensions

Comprehension means to have a full understanding of something, although it does not refer to having a full knowledge of it; it refers to knowing what is before oneself, and is in use when something is being explained. Comprehension means understanding what is being explained or studied and thereby knowing what will be subsequently thought about. It is a very abstruse word. "Do you comprehend that?" means "Do you know what that is about?" The comprehender will have most or all of the details of it. He isn't ready to work with what he knows about, though. He must think about it further. If you comprehend something that is rarely understood, you will be admired for your comprehensiveness. If you begin to comprehend what is known by someone else, you will be getting the idea. He'll have been explaining it to you. It is a transitional word until it is achieved. Full comprehension is a good thing to have—if thinking is what you are doing. We are often thinking about things here, so we want to find our way to a comprehension of something with which we are just becoming familiar, and in science fiction, and in fandom, there is generally dawning comprehension of many new ideas.

Apprehending something is different than comprehending it. When you apprehend something, you know it is there. If it interests you, you catch up to it until you find out about it. Apprehension is also meant to indicate fear—when you are apprehensive, you are worried. This may come when you don't know what something you have apprehended is, and you think it is something that may come to trouble you. The word occurs in Alfred Bester's *THE DEMOLISHED MAN* in the form of a rhyme: "Six, sir, five, sir, four, sir, three, sir, two, sir, ONE. Tensor said the tensor, tensor said the tensor, tension, apprehension and dissention have begun." Astronomers apprehend things when they

are star-gazing. It might turn out to be a new discovery. That's calmer than that verse, which uses apprehension to mean worry. But apprehension might occur in the reading of poetry, and comprehension in the study of philosophy.

What, then, is MISapprehension? It is the perceiving of something which is being said but being erroneous in the understanding of it. Who might be misapprehended? A person who is concerned with the image he casts, who is conscious of people watching him and wants to put himself across in a certain way. That could easily be a science fiction fan, who is building an impression of himself at a distance, by way of distance communications. Misapprehensions are frequent in discussions on the net. There is presently widespread complaint on the net about misapprehensions. "You don't see what I'm talking about." "Study what I've said." "We seem to be speaking two different languages." And here we are on the net, where that's apt to occur. Should we not strive to find out what's really being said, and express not understanding something when we don't understand it? Are we ever going to get something going successfully when we are doing it on the net? The communications are too brief and rapid. It likely makes people feel bad to be unsuccessful at communication. It may be like the song goes: "I am a soul whose intentions are good; oh Lord, please don't let me be misunderstood. I'm just a babe who is lost in the wood; oh Lord, please don't let me be misunderstood."

What are some apparent misapprehensions that are presently occurring in our midst? Well, Jeffrey Redmond speaks of his good intentions, and is being frequently accused of having bad intentions. The people who are being interviewed for Ionisphere have frequently spoken of not being able to get across to editors and publishers, and having their good efforts being sent back to them. Perhaps we're losing some talent there, when they're striving to write in a way an editor seems as if he will like. But an editor is apt in turn to be misapprehended.

I've been getting some misapprehensions, but for some months now I've been trying to explain myself and what my motivations are in doing the publications I've been with. Often I've been getting negative feedback. "You're making a lot of mistakes, go back and try again." "You are one hundred percent WRONG." "You must be new here, don't understand what's going on." "You speak without knowing; you're getting false data." Hm, what's this? I have every reason to believe that much of my research is coming directly from the real Data. (okay, joke.) People shouldn't rap writers and editors that bad. Both the writer and the editor are the ones who are doing it, why do they need information from someone else about what they should write? But then, maybe I am

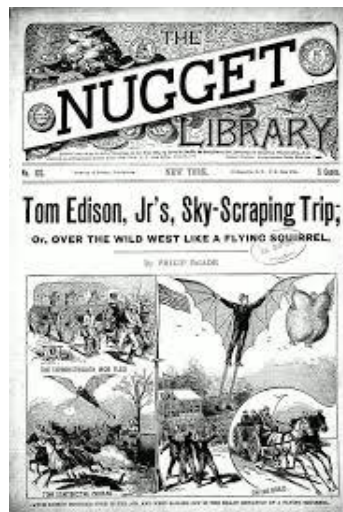
not apprehending these people correctly. They might want to be understood better. The only thing is, maybe they don't want ME understanding them better. Who knows? But I'm not going down under an occasional barrage.



“Get suited up right, you whippersnapper, or you can't watch any of the takeoff!”

Science Fiction in Dime Novels

By Jon D. Swartz, N3F Historian



A study of the precursors of popular fantasy publications and their early problems

The dime novel, which first made its appearance in 1860, was a short novel cheaply made and priced at five or ten cents. These early precursors of the pulp magazines and paperback books usually featured western, detective, romance, or family themes—the latter mostly fictionalized diatribes against vice in all its forms. The novels varied in size, but most were in two main formats: a news weekly-sized version (approximately seven by ten inches), and a digest-sized version (roughly 6.5 by 4.25 inches). The majority contained about 100 pages. The earliest titles were published in paper wrappers without illustrations, but colored cover illustrations soon were added. The most successful years of the dime novel were the 1880s-1890s. “Dime novel” is actually somewhat of a misnomer since most of these weekly adventures actually sold for five cents.

Science Fiction Themes

Science fiction themes were represented early in such dime novels as *THE STEAM MAN OF THE PRAIRIES* (1868) by Edward S. Ellis. This story featured a steam-driven robot and is thought to have directly stimulated publication of the best-selling Frank Reade, Jr. stories—as well as other SF-oriented series featuring characters such as Tom Edison, Jr., Lad Electric, and Jack Wright. These young inventors appeared in weekly publications such as the **Beadle Half Dime Library**, the **Five Cent Wide Awake Library**, and the **Frank Reade Library**.

“Frank Reade, Jr.” was the best-selling weekly series and the most SF-oriented one. It first appeared in 1876 in a boy’s paper, **Boys of New York**, and reprints of the teen-aged Reade’s scientific adventures appeared regularly from 1883 until the mid-1890s. Most of the stories were written by Luis P. Senarens, usually under a pseudonym (one of which was “Noname”), for a total of 191 issues. Senarens had sold stories from age twelve and wrote many of his dime novels while still a teenager. He is credited with writing 1,500+ dime novels, using 27 pseudonyms, and earned the nickname of “The American Jules Verne” for his many SF stories (see Note at end of article). Beginning in 1902, the **Frank Reade Weekly** ran for a total of 96 issues, using reprints from the original series. European equivalents of the dime novel were the English Penny Dreadfuls and Shilling Shockers. A German equivalent, **Der Luftpirat und Sein Lenkbares Luftschiff**, featured a Captain Mors in a space opera series.

Most of the popular SF series featured boy inventors who outdid their elders with inventions such as steam-driven horses and various air, land, and marine machines

powered by steam, gas, or electricity. Many of them had plots that were very similar to ones in SF stories in early paperbacks and pulp magazines.

Erastus Beadle

Beadle (1821-1894), the first and most famous publisher of dime novels, began his career by publishing 10c song books and game manuals. MALESKA, THE INDIAN WIFE OF THE WHITE HUNTER (1860) by Ann A. Stephens was the first of his series advertised as "a dollar book for a dime" and sold 300,000+ copies during its first year. It was followed by hundreds of similar works dealing with the adventures of frontiersmen and other western adventurers. Much of the material for the dime novels came from the early "story papers". Story papers were weekly eight-page, newspaper-like publications, varying in size from tabloid to full-fledged newspaper format and usually costing five or six cents. The story papers started in the mid-1850s and were immensely popular, some titles running on a weekly schedule for over 50 years.

All dime novel publishers re-published their material in different forms. Street & Smith, for example, developed the practice of publishing four consecutive, related tales in one of their weekly magazines, then combining the stories into one edition of a related thick book series (*e.g.*, their New Magnet Library). What is somewhat confusing today is that these thick books were still in print as late as the 1930s but carried the original copyright dates of the stories they reprinted. This practice has led some collectors to believe they own original dime novels when, in reality, the books they have are only distantly related.

Other Dime Novel Authors

Some other dime novel authors were Edward Zane Carroll Judson (*aka* Ned Buntline), Roy Rockwood (a house name of the Stratemeyer Syndicate), Colonel Prentiss Ingraham (who helped create the legend of Buffalo Bill with his more than 1,000 different stories about William F. Cody), Horatio Alger (at one time acclaimed as the world's best-selling author and America's most important social critic), Edward L. Wheeler (creator of Deadwood Dick and Dick and Broadway Billy), and Frederick van Rensselaer Day (who wrote more than 1,000 adventures of Nick Carter, totaling some 20,000,000 words).

Conclusions

The dime novels were published from 1860 to about 1910. In their heyday they were very popular and also very big business. E.F. Bleiler, editor of the ground-breaking *genre* reference work, THE CHECKLIST OF FANTASTIC LITERATURE, has written the following about the dime novel: "For the enthusiast and the collector...it remains a solidification of rare nostalgia, capturing as nothing else can the flavor of a dead era. It assembles thrills with minimal fuss, uses forceful language not overladen with subtlety, and depicts actions heightened beyond the size of life."

What caused the demise of this type of popular literature? There were multiple causes, of course, but at least one of the contributing factors was the U.S. Postal Service. As mentioned earlier, the dime novel was big business. Competing book publishers, periodical publishers, and moralists lobbied with the government, and the dime novel lost its second-class periodical mailing rate. Apparently, it could not survive this financial blow.

Journalist-historian Quentin Reynolds has stated that the dime novels did not themselves become obsolete; instead, it was the dime that virtually ceased to be a coin of much value. Reynolds went on to write that the stories presented in the dime novels survived in other formats. In terms of SF stories, the dime novels led directly to the juvenile book series of Tom Swift and his cohorts, to the pulp magazines, and to the early paperbacks in which SF themes predominated.

While reprints of dime novels are quite reasonably priced, first editions of these rare publications now sell in the \$150.00 to \$250.00 range.

Note: Senarens once received a fan letter from Jules Verne in which Verne praised his stories. Senarens was afraid to answer, however, fearing that Verne would recognize his letter as one written by an adolescent rather than by a grown man.

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Note: This article was written for the magazine, **Paperback Parade**, several years ago. It has been revised somewhat for reprinting here.

Recap. The postal situation's effect upon dime novels described in the article on dime novels above, as well as the description of what was behind that postal situation, might well compare with what is happening to science fiction now via the postal system, where paper fanzines are being wiped out by exorbitant postal costs making distribution too expensive. Also the devaluation of the dime in those times, which were nearing the depression, is happening now, almost to the point where the worth of anything but paper money is devaluated, so there is an economic obsolescence of anything cheap. Fanzines are not supposed to be expensive, and science fiction magazines were supposed to be in the cheap range too. As it was before, so it seems to be now.

I am wondering if that notation about young Senarens' fear of exposing his age to a mature person is gossip, and also if it is understandable to anyone. That doesn't seem like a common situation at all. It seems to result from social pressures and traditions which we don't understand. -JT



Art by Morris Scott Dollens

Carrying On by Judy Carroll



ORIGIN is the Official Organ of the National Fantasy Fan Federation History and Research Bureau. Since this is our fifty-first issue, I would like to ask our readers what they think of Origin. Are we giving you what you expect to find in a fanzine dealing with the history of the N3F and science fiction and fantasy? Is there some aspect of science fiction and/or fantasy that we have not addressed which you'd like to see in Origin?

I would like to see the readers of Origin multiply and engage with one another and the staff, discussing the wonders of science fiction and fantasy. The possible and the impossible. I would like to see the love and caring of past and present staff members carried on by those who will follow us into the near future and beyond.

An English proverb says, "Good things come to those who wait".*

It may take time for the Origin staff members and readers to blend together in harmony, but it's worth waiting for.

*Taken from the website "Poem Analysis".

FANS



This link, to Joe Siclari's fanac project, might give a view of fanzines existing from the beginning to the present, with access to the fanzines, in chronological order:

https://fanac.org/fanzines/chronological_listing_of_fanzines.html .



"I must have left my Zap Gun at home."

SOMEBODY AND NOBODY by Will Mayo



Once, long ago, I longed to be somebody.
I tried art, literature, journalism.
Anything to leave my mark.
Then seeing that in a world of somebodies
there's something to be said for a nobody,
I disappeared.
I retreated into the world within myself.
Stars became me as did
the dust motes turning in a light beam
in my very own room.
I became my own man.
It's been years since then.
I watch and wait and
see a planet turned
into disarray.
And I find myself content
within my own shadow.