



At the Earth's Core

Edgar Rice Burroughs

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At the Earth's Core Details

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From Reader Review At the Earth's Core for online ebook

T.I.M. James says

Although a good part of my to read pile is there to be reread, there are a run of older books that I have never read before, and some of these are the Pellucidar series by Edgar Rice Burroughs.

Burroughs is, of course better known for his preeminent creation, Tarzan but he had great success with some of his other creations including John Carter of Mars and this series.

Pellucidar is another world, hidden beneath the surface of our own, miles and miles beneath our crust it exists, more primitive than our own, with animals and peoples that are analogues of our own from prehistoric times, with a few newer ones thrown into the mix.

This, the first book in the series 'At The Earth's Core' is a short read, detailing the adventures of two men, David Innes and his older friend Abner Perry who go exploring in a large machine that drills beneath the Earth's surface. Through the inherent dangers and malfunctions in the device they at last arrive at the land of Pellucidar, a vast subterranean world, perpetually lit, and by landmass bigger than the surface world of which it is as oblivious of as we are of it.

On the surface (if you'll excuse the pun) the book is pure hokum, after all modern science tells us a lot more about what is beneath our feet than was even known 50 years ago, let alone when this story was first published 100 years ago.

A lot has changed in that century, and what may be viewed here as casual racism or sexism was the way of life back then. On this front I did not think it was too bad. The odd word usage was archaic and borderline offensive, but not to any serious extent. Perhaps the way the main female character reacted could be considered a step back for feminism, but maybe we can excuse it, not only as the way women were viewed 100 years ago, but perhaps more so for the primitive society in which Dian the Beautiful was raised.

Looking at the story as a work of fantastic creation then it deserves tremendous praise, Burroughs has pulled out all the stops. Pellucidar's location must be considered preposterous, but the thought and energy that has gone into it is not. Not only has Burroughs created creatures that are based on our own prehistoric catalogue, he has given them different names, those used by the indigenous peoples. He has decided not only do the peoples of the Hollow Earth not speak Earth languages, but each tribe, region have their own language.

The creatures that rule, the reptilian Mahar, are both monstrous and intelligent enough as to stand apart as something almost alien, and the way they communicate is one of two things that show that Burroughs has really thought about things, trying to make things unique and different.

The other is the description of time in Pellucidar. It flows differently than on the surface world. The suggestion is that the perception of time has an effect. In a world where the 'sun' always shines time has no real concept and that effects the way it passes for those who are aware of the idea. Perhaps in some ways naive, but only when viewed with modern eyes, and it deserves serious recognition of a prodigious imagination at work.

Dylan McIntosh says

It's amazing how ERB could create such a creative and fascinating world in a time that there was much to canabalize from for his world building. It was a bit outdated from a perspective of the treatment of woman, but overall an good read. Looking forward to the follow on stories.

Dave says

After starting his Barsoom and Tarzan series of adventures, Edgar Rice Burroughs (September 1st, 1875 – March 19, 1950), wrote “At the Earth’s Core” which was published in 1914. This kicked off his Pellucidar series, which is based on the idea that the Earth is hollow and there are creatures from our prehistoric times still alive and active, as well as more than a few horrific creatures, both intelligent and non-intelligent. As with many of Burrough’s ideas, that of a hollow Earth would inspire many other writers to write stories on a similar theme.

There are many similarities between this and Burrough’s Barsoom series, and as such it is fairly predictable, but there are some differences as well. Once again there is an introduction which makes the case that this is a real story. Instead of an unexplained transportation to Mars, the journey to Pellucidar is done via an invention, a “subterranean prospector” which works far better and also far worse than intended. The hero, David Innes and his friend Perry who invented the “subterranean prospector” find themselves in a hostile world; they are captured and captured again finding themselves enslaved by the dominant species of the planet, the Mahars. The hero also finds a beautiful woman who he is destined to be with.

This novel isn’t nearly as good as the start to the Pellucidar series as “A Princess of Mars” was for the Barsoom series. There are some rather racist descriptions, and the language difficulties are overcome too easily, though one has to also give credit for the Mahars as a unique and horrible species, though there again they have an Achilles heel which is rather absurd. Another weakness is the flow of time, which sometimes results in contradictions in the plot. It is never quite clear just how Burrough’s saw this working, so while one can appreciate the attempt, the execution of the idea isn’t very well done.

As one has come to expect from Burrough’s, the adventure is entertaining, the characters are a bit two-dimensional, and the plot is fairly predictable. Thus, if one is looking for an entertaining mindless escape, this may work to fill that goal, but then again one would be better served by reading the Barsoom series which is much better done. There are crossovers between the Barsoom series and this one, as well as between the Tarzan series and this one, which makes it of interest as well.

Holmlock says

Pure pulp adventure. An eccentric old inventor, Abner Perry, builds a giant “iron mole” vehicle which takes him and his friend David Innes on an unexpected expedition to the earth’s unexplored core. They end up in an upside down world where time doesn’t exist and the human inhabitants are the slaves and lab rats of a prehistoric race of pterosaurs (yes, you read that right). Humans are mercilessly stalked, captured, and herded by armies of ape-men. Dinosaurs and other prehistoric beasts are around every corner. Land, sea, or air, no place is safe for our heroes. Action drives this story along at a ripcord pace. Will they escape this primeval

hell? Read and find out.

As a lover of the film 'The Planet of the Apes' (I've yet to read the book) I found the similarities in plot (wont spoil anything here) to be pleasantly surprising. Fans of ERB's 'John Carter' or 'Caspak' series will love this book, guaranteed. Really, anyone with a love of adventure should get a kick out this 100+ year old story of survival in an strange and dangerous world.

Leila P says

Olipas sujuva ja vauhdikas seikkailukirja, tämän luki nopeasti. Päähenkilö David oli tosin aika ärsyttävän täydellinen sankari joka jaksaa kehua itseään vähän väliä. Onton maapallon teoria oli myös aika huvittava, sekä se että sankarimme kadottaa ajantajunsa täysin koska Pellucidarissa vallitsee ikuinen keskipäivä. Minusta kyllä ihmisen pitäisi erottaa edes suurinpiirtein onko kulunut pari tuntia vai pari viikkoa...

Joistain asioista huomasi kyllä että tämä on kirjoitettu jo 1920-luvulla, esim. naiskuvasta ja siitä että David ja Perry asettavat ilman tunnontuskia päämäääräkseen ihmisiä orjuuttavien mahar-liskojen tuhoamisen viimeiseen naaraaseen (ne lisääntyvät iljettävästi ilman uroksia)

Owlseyes says

Maybe I've been reading and listening too much from Bob Fletcher; about (secret) underground facilities by the hundreds in the US and in other nations, meant for the wealthy, when catastrophe strikes; one like Nibiru planet (called Planet X?, that's OK)... incoming....maybe this August or a few months later, into 2016, passing by, "close" to our planet.*

Maybe it was the memories of Jules Verne Journey to the center of the Earth that has drawn me to this book of Burroughs. The fact is, that I still found it original (for his time, 1914) conceiving a civilization living underground.

*Right, not totally original. B. Lytton had his book** also on the topic. Yet, you would agree, most science fiction would focus on outer space or other planets; away from earth; few dare looking inside the planet (too claustrophobic?) ,.... underneath their feet; underground.*

Or, on second, ...third,... whatever thoughts, it was due to the movie "Jurassic World".

Or,...this?

*Maybe this****

At the Earth's core is the story of a journey by two human beings, inside the planet.

They (David Innes and Abner Perry) had devised a drilling machine; they call it the "iron mole". Temperature is one of the key figures (as well as depth) they're checking all the time. By 84 miles deep, temperature reached 153° F; yet by 240 miles of depth it is 10 ° F , below zero.

The one most affected by these changes is Perry who oftentimes prays; or sings. It is a 7 miles per hour ride, you may call it. And then by 400 miles deep, temperature is up again, marking 153° F. That's good, "after 2 hours of intense cold".

Until they're stopped, after a moment of lost consciousness, and ushered in a new world. It's been 72 hours they've left the surface of the planet.

"We've been carried back to the childhood of a planet"

It's Pellucidar: a 7,000 miles-diameter, lush-world, "weird and beautiful", with plenty of light, in fact, a permanent noonday "sun"-light; yet with no horizon. The heat is torrid.

Their sun is a "relatively tiny thing at the exact center of the earth".

Strange creatures abound. Wolf-dogs; and man-like creatures, with very dark skin: "they examine me". They have perfect physiques, and they were a "noble appearing race" with "well-formed heads". These speak a language rather analogous to the "pidgin-English of the Chinese coolie". These are the Sagoths. But there are those living in sea-islands: they're the Mezops, red-skinned, with their canoes. The Sagoths fear the Mezops.

"I might believe that we were indeed come to the country beyond the Styx".

Despite all the natural beauty, Perry and David know they're "in chains"; they're prisoners. So is Dian the Beautiful, and others. They're heading towards Phutra city ruled by reptiles, called the Mahars.

The Mahars know a formula for egg fertilization by chemical means; they have no auditory apparatus and yet they have their music; females rule. Humans are slaves.

The core role is focused on David who becomes the sort of athletic hero, yeah a sort of Tarzan of the underworld, in the battle against the Mahars and his attempts to save Dian the Beautiful, who despite her many "I hate you"..., at length, discloses on her love for David.

There are other reptiles around, and other interesting species like the Thag (a huge tiger). The central role is ascribed, evidently, to the Mahars and their rituals using human flesh.

By the end of the book the two friends are meant to return to the surface of the planet with Dian the Beautiful. But they got tricked by a character called Hooja: inside that bag was not Dian (wife now), but a reptile, they found inside the “prospector” while on the way back.

Now, it's been sometime David and Perry have “landed” in the Sahara desert. Their hope is to return to that Eden of sorts: Pellucidar.

*I've found it a fantastic tale. You end up reading it, longing for the return.
You don't have to be wealthy. Maybe a wealthy imagination will suffice.*

*<http://www.bobfletcherinvestigations....>

**The Coming Race by Edward Bulwer-Lytton

***<http://www.reptilianagenda.com/resear...>

LOST LAND OF THE LIZARD PEOPLE

by Robert Stanley

Rafael says

Fue un sentimiento absoluto de nostalgia el que me hizo comprar el libro. Cuando vi el título me sorprendí por un momento y luego recordé los días en que mi papá nos llevaba a comer al restaurante “La Opera “en las calles de Serapio Rendón, hace cincuenta años. Atravesando la calle, en una esquina, había una librería; en sus vitrinas se exhibían los libros. Creo recordar haber visto en esos aparadores una edición de las mil y una noches, que mi papá compró y nos leía.

Alguna tarde, después de comer, cruzamos la calle y entramos a la librería. Mi papá nos ofreció comprarnos algún libro, mi hermano escogió: “Tarzán de los monos” y yo “Tarzán en el centro de la tierra”, ambos de Edgar Rice Burroughs. Para esas fechas los dos éramos ya expertos en las aventuras de Tarzán, gracias a las matinées del cine “Cosmos” y a las actuaciones de Johnny Weissmuller, pero ver en las páginas de los libros, la historia del avión en el que vuelan los papás de Tarzán y que se accidenta encima de la selva, era distinto. La imaginación se liberaba de las inevitables restricciones que le impone la “realidad cinematográfica” y los personajes cobraban vida en nuestras mentes.

Hasta antes de leer o releer en éstos días la historia, siempre pensé que ese era el primer libro que yo había leído completo, pero la verdad es que ya lo dudé; no recordaba nada del libro, salvo dos cosas: El título y que en el idioma de los gorilas del centro de la tierra, ¿te rindes? se dice: ¿Ka-goda?.

Yo leía el libro en el día, en los momentos que tenía libres y por las noches mi papá lo leía también. Había en el libro dos señaladores indicando donde íbamos cada uno. En el día yo me apresuraba a tratar de alcanzar la marca del separador paterno y por la noche éste se volvía a alejar del mío. Me acuerdo haber platicado con

mi papá de la lucha de Tarzán con los gorilas subterráneos y de la impresión que me hacía la palabra ¿Ka-Goda?, ¿Te rindes? e imaginar a Tarzán vencido. Ese recuerdo único y el título de libro son los que perduraron casi medio siglo en mi memoria.

La historia que platica el libro, en realidad no es extraordinaria, literariamente hablando, es mas bien un poco inocente. Se inscribe en la tradición de una serie de relatos fantásticos acerca de supuestos mundos en el interior de la tierra. El relato de Burroughs sigue la idea de que hay en el polo norte un orificio que permite penetrar al interior de la tierra y que ahí existe un mundo semejante al nuestro, alumbrado por un sol interior sin movimiento, lo que impide la existencia del día y la noche y por ende un conteo del tiempo basado en días, meses y años.

Pellucidar, el mundo interior que nos describe Burroughs, es un mundo primitivo y salvaje donde conviven, con el hombre, animales de distintas eras geológicas: los grandes reptiles del secundario y los mamíferos enormes del terciario. Hay, en Pellucidar, diferentes tipos de seres humanos, los gorilas con lenguaje, sagoths; los gilaks, que son una especie de hombres de las cavernas, que habitan en el país de Zoram y los korsars, piratas que llegaron del mundo exterior, generaciones atrás. Existen ademas reptiles humanoides, los horibs, capaces de cabalgar en los gorobors, una especie de lagartos velocísimos.

Los horibs dominan cierta región de Pellucidar, la que esta cerca de la llanura de Gyor Cors. Los Korsars dominan otra, la ciudad de Korsar y tiene prisionero a David Innes científico que, llegado del mundo exterior, se convirtió en emperador de Pellucidar. Existen en la geografía de Pellucidar otras regiones como Clovi, Pheli y las cordilleras de los Thipdar.

Rescatar a David Innes de los Korsars es el motivo de la expedición al centro de la tierra, en la que participa Tarzán, cuya presencia en el grupo no queda muy bien justificada en la obra. Un buen día se planta en medio de la Jungla un Estadounidense, Jason Gridley, para pedirle a Tarzán que lo acompañe al centro de la tierra a rescatar a un explorador – David Innes- que ha sido hecho prisionero por unos piratas que viven en ese submundo.

Tarzán acepta, no se sabe bien por que, construyen en pocos meses un dirigible, el O-220 de 300 metros de longitud por 50 de diámetro, que funciona no por un aire menos denso que la atmósfera alimentado en el interior del globo, sino por hacer el vacío dentro de unos contenedores hechos de un metal “más liviano que el corcho y más resistente que el acero”, descubierto por una tribu lacustre de las montañas de Wirambazi y hecho del conocimiento de Tarzán por su amigo, el científico Erich Von Harben. .

En seis meses el grupo de exploradores consigue construir el O-220 para lo cual monta una mina de Harbernita, nombre que recibe el novedoso material a partir del nombre del científico. El libro no entra en los detalles ni de la explotación de la mina ni de la construcción del dirigible, limitándose a decir que merecerían un volumen por si solos.

Volando en el O-220 los expedicionarios llegan al polo, encuentran la entrada al mundo interior y descienden a Pellucidar.

En su primera salida exploratoria, Tarzán cae en una trampa puesta por los sagoths. Un grupo sale en su rescate y en el intento sus miembros están a punto de morir aplastados por una estampida de enormes animales que huyen de la manada de tigres dientes de sable, que los acorralan.

En su huida el grupo de rescatistas se dispersa y se pierden, pues los instrumentos de navegación terrestres, como la brújula, no funcionan en Pellucidar, además no hay noche y el sol no cambia de posición, con lo cual resulta mas difícil orientarse.

Gridley, que encabezaba el grupo de rescate y que después de la estampida queda separado de él, logra volver al dirigible y reinicia la búsqueda del hombre mono, sobrevolando el paisaje de Pellucidar en un avión que habían llevado en el dirigible. El avión es derribado en pleno vuelo por un monstruo volador y Gridley se salva al lanzarse en paracaídas.

A partir de ahí el libro va narrando en capítulos alternados las dificultades de Tarzán y de Gridley, quienes van enfrentando y solventando una serie de peligros sucesivos. Tarzán escapa de los gorilas y es raptado por un Thipdar, reptil volador, atacado por un oso, hecho prisionero de la tribu de Clovi, luego de los Horibs y de los Korsars.

Por su parte Gridley encuentra a Jana, “La flor roja de Zoram” cuando es atacada por los hombres de la región de Pheli que la persiguen para hacerla su mujer. El norteamericano mediante el uso de las armas de fuego, libera a la mujer de ese ataque y del de las bestias salvajes, Jaloks, que la amenazaban. Durante el camino que juntos realizan, ella para regresar a Zoram y él para buscar a sus compañeros, ella le va enseñando a él, el lenguaje de los Gilak.

En ésta historia de amor que va surgiendo entre un estadounidense sofisticado del siglo xx y una bella salvaje, que come carne cruda con las manos, encuentra Burroughs motivos de reflexión sobre el amor, la sencillez, la sofisticación, el orgullo, la coquetería, la hombría y la feminidad.

Gridley se siente atraído por la hermosa salvaje, pero no se permite el sentimiento que va naciendo en él, por considerarlo indigno de un hombre moderno. Jana al percibirlo se siente humillada y decide separarse de Gridley, quien la persigue a través de una orografía inhóspita en la que Jana se mueve con mucho mayor soltura. Una lluvia, como no existen en la tierra, inunda los cañones por los que avanzan y Gridley pierde el rastro de la mujer que persigue. Ella al creerlo muerto lo llora, pero cuando, capítulos más tarde, lo reencuentra sigue muy ofendida con él, exigiéndole que se aleje de ella.

Tanto en las aventuras de Tarzán, como en las de Gridley van apareciendo otros personajes. Son importantes Tar-Gash, el gorila que ayuda a Tarzán a escapar de los sagoths, Thoar, el hermano de Jana, que es salvado de la muerte por Tarzán y luego reencontrado por Gridley. Ovan, el hijo del jefe de la tribu de los Clovi, que es salvado por Tarzán de morir devorado por un oso y que facilita después la fuga de Tarzán y Jana de la caverna de los Clovi. Lajo, el Korsar, que sobrevive al ataque de los Horibs y que junto con Gridley es hecho prisionero, por estos reptiles humanoides y Muviro, el jefe de los guerreros Waziris, que acompañan a Tarzán en ésta aventura.

Hacia los capítulos finales del libro, los relatos se van volviendo convergentes y los grupos dispersos de exploradores van a reencontrarse. Queda por resolver al final, la relación de Jana con Gridley, para lo cual resulta muy conveniente el que Von Horst, uno de los miembros de la expedición que salió al rescate de Tarzán, no aparezca. Ésto obliga a Gridley a permanecer en Pellucidar para buscarlo y a Jana la convence de acompañar a Gridley en su búsqueda y no regresar a Zoram.

El libro es una novela de aventuras en un mundo fantástico, donde poco importa la verosimilitud de los hechos, lo que cuenta es que el autor mantiene el interés de los lectores con la descripción de paisajes y hechos extraordinarios y con las reflexiones que se permite hacer al comparar la vida salvaje de Pellucidar con nuestra civilización en la superficie de la tierra.

Una lectura agradable y sin pretensiones para los jóvenes y para uno que otro adulto nostálgico, que quiera recordar, por lo menos, cómo se dice: ¿te rindes? En el idioma de los sagoths.

John says

A supremely enjoyable adventure novel marred by a few major flaws, *AT THE EARTH'S CORE* rehashes all the usual Edgar Rice Burroughs clichés but does so in superior fashion. For one thing, the mythology of Pellucidar is more clever and interesting than what we got from his *BARSOOM* or *CASPAK* novels. The "hollow world" plot device is, of course, patently absurd, but Burroughs does a surprisingly good job of selling it by providing enough pseudoscience to enable readers to suspend their disbelief to a degree I wouldn't have thought possible. I also liked that the main character, David Innes, has a few personal flaws and, unlike John Carter or Tarzan, isn't the next-closest thing to human perfection. Innes may be handsome and possess an incredible physique, but he isn't the sharpest tool in the shed, nor is he much of a runner--a skill that is of tremendous benefit in a land populated by dinosaurs.

And now for the problems with this book. Firstly, Burroughs has never shied away from relying on sheer coincidence as a plot-furthering device, and *AT THE EARTH'S CORE* is no exception. Hardly a chapter goes by in which David Innes doesn't completely luck out in some outrageous fashion.

Secondly, the concept of language is always an issue. In order to maintain the pacing of his stories, Burroughs acts as though mastering a new language is something that takes about three or four days. And there are no baby steps...David Innes and his companion go from zero to Shakespearean without having to waste time on intermediate stages.

Thirdly, Burroughs' racism pops up momentarily, when he once again implies that black people are further down on the evolutionary scale compared to other races. In *Pellucidar*, they even have tails and are presumably still in the process of coming down from the trees. Yuck.

And lastly, Burroughs tries to suggest that time has no meaning in a place where it cannot be precisely measured. His idea is this: If the sun remains fixed in the sky, and you have no clocks to look at, you will have trouble distinguishing the passage of a month from the passage of an hour. Personally, I find that ridiculous. Even when visiting a Las Vegas casino (which go out of their way to make you lose track of time), I'm still able to gauge the difference between five hours and five minutes.

It's this sort of silliness that leads many people to consider *AT THE EARTH'S CORE* a kid's book, though I would argue that one or two horrific scenes disqualify it as such. Only read it to your children before bed if you want to give them nightmares.

Patrick Gibson says

Catching up on a book I should have read when I was a teen. Damn entertaining -- you know it is so.

J.Aleksandr Wootton says

Sensationalized mashup of early sci-fi progressivism, "Noble Savage" theory, humanism, florid prose, and era-typical prejudices and pop-paleontology in a Jules Verne setting. Simply destined to become a movie that Mystery Science Theater would (and did) lampoon; nothing special.

Burrough's setting does introduce two somewhat-interesting ideas:

- (1) Gravity is an attraction towards planetary crust, not planetary core, such that a hollow world could support life on its inner surface as well as its outer surface.
- (2) In the absence of regularly recurring celestial phenomena, human perception of time becomes a subjective function of effort expended and localized experience.

Dfordoom says

At the Earth's Core, published in 1922, was the first of Edgar Rice Burroughs' *Pellucidar* novels. I've always found his books to be highly entertaining and ingenious in their imagining of strange worlds and that's certainly the case with this one.

The book opens with a framing story, as the narrator encounters a solitary and rather disheveled European somewhere in the wastes of the Sahara Desert. The man is named David Innes and he has a strange story to tell.

Professor Perry has invented a machine called the Prospector, although he sometimes refers to it as the Iron Mole. It's an enormous manned digging machine a hundred feet long designed to burrow deep below the

surface of the Earth. David had been an ex-student of his and was a wealthy young man and he'd agreed to finance the professor's project.

When they take the Prospector for a test run things go horribly wrong. The machine gets out of control and takes them much much deeper into the Earth's crust than they anticipated. As the temperatures rises alarmingly and their air supply nears exhaustion they prepare themselves for death but then the temperature plummets, rises again, and then plummets again. The machine then breaks through the Earth's crust. They assume that they emerged somewhere on the surface, but in fact they are now in the strange inside-out world of Pellucidar.

The Earth is hollow, and the world of Pellucidar occupies the inside surface of the planetary crust. Obviously there are major problems making such a world sound even vaguely plausible. Where would they get their sunlight from? Or indeed any light at all? How would gravity work in such a world? Burroughs comes up with some pretty nifty ideas for solving these problems. They're all ridiculous of course, but they're clever and once you accept the idea of an inside-out world they do have a certain crazy logic, and even certain elegance.

There are people in Pellucidar, but they're not the dominant race. The rulers of Pellucidar are the Mahars. They're winged dinosaurs, *rhamphorynchus* in fact, although much bigger than the actual *rhamphorynchus* that once inhabited our outer world. They have no ears but are able to communicate with each other by some means that never becomes entirely clear to our intrepid inner-world explorers. They are intelligent and literate. They are served by the subject race of the Sagoths, a kind of apemen, less intelligent but useful as the Mahars' foot-soldiers. Menial work is done by human slaves.

Professor Perry and David are soon captured by the Sagoths, to be pressed into service as slave labourers. Among the other captives of the Sagoths David meets Dian the Beautiful. She is a princess of one of the human tribes, proud and beautiful. David's attempts to befriend her come to grief when he accidentally offends her, princesses being fairly easy to offend.

David eventually escapes but he will have to return to the Mahar city to rescue Professor Perry. He is also determined to find Dian again, and he is starting to form plans to liberate Pellucidar from the Mahars. There will be many hazards, Pellucidar being full of gigantic and extremely fierce animals, many of them long extinct on the upper world, and many much larger in size than the animals of our world. Combined it the menace of the Mahars and the Sagoths he is setting himself quite a task.

It's all outrageously entertaining and Pellucidar is a strange and fascinating world brought vividly to life (as is the case with Burroughs' other imaginary worlds). It has beautiful princesses, savage monsters and a brave and noble hero. These are features that might be sneered at today but there's a lot to be said for them. They work for me anyway.

Burroughs died in 1950. His work remained popular for many years and experienced a revival in the 70s when the sword & sorcery genre was at the peak of its popularity. Sadly he's been rather forgotten since then but the good news is that so many of his books are now once again available, mostly in print-on-demand form.

He's an under-appreciated writer whose influence on the science fiction and fantasy genres is seriously underrated.

Definitely recommended

Dave says

“At The Earth’s Core,” first published in 1914, is one of Edgar Rice Burrough’s most imaginative works. It is the first of seven books in the Pellucidar series and imagines a world inside the earth (five hundred miles beneath the surface) where the most advanced species is reptilian and the humans are still living in the stone age. As ludicrous as it sounds now, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there were many who believed in the possibility of a hollow earth world with entrances at the poles. Scientists proposed the idea of an inner world to explain anomalous compass readings and such things as the aurora borealis. Such inner worlds were theorized to have atmospheres and be possibly inhabited. Although Burroughs was not the first to contemplate such an inner world, there are none who have perhaps created it so magnificently. In “At the Earth’s Core,” David Innes and Perry Abner travel in a mighty metal prospector into the earth’s crust and break through into a world they never imagined with an eternal noon-day sun hanging in the heavens.

Alongside the dinosaurs and cave people, one of the most interesting ideas explored by Burroughs in these books is the idea that time is man’s creation and, without the sun rising and setting, one loses track of time. Thus, one could go off and have incredible adventures and think weeks or even months have gone by while another who sits reading a book could think not much time has elapsed. It is an incredible idea because, without our guideposts of the sunrise and sunset and without clocks and technology, how do we really know how much time has gone by. On the surface, some might compare the world of Pellucidar to Burroughs’ worlds of Barsoom and Venus (although he wrote the Venus series decades later). After all, Innes, like John Carter, is nearly alone (except for Perry) in a savage world where he first offends, then romances a savage princess. And, like Carter, who overthrows the existing order in “The Gods of Mars,” Innes takes on the dreaded Mahars. However, here, the concepts are quite different. The reptiles are the smarter, more advanced species and they are not a human-like reptile species. Moreover, this is a more dangerous, savage world, peopled by primitive tribes and filled with dinosaurs and all manner of strange beasts that have developed quite differently from the evolution of the outer world. Burroughs’ writing in this novel is absolutely terrific and his descriptions of the prospector and the journey into the center of the earth, absolutely fascinating. This was written over one hundred yearsago and is still one of the greatest adventure stories ever written.

Leothefox says

How about this: hollow Earth, evil ape-men, hypnotic reptile overlords, cave-people, time madness, monsters, and a stolen scientific secret? You get all that and more in “At the Earth’s Core”!

David Innes, a muscular mine-owner backs his professor friend’s drilling machine and wind up accidentally burrowing into the big hollow world in the center of the Earth: Pellucidar. This is first-wave Burroughs, so we get all the goodies: princesses, jungle survival, escape plots, traitors, the works!

“At the Earth’s Core” even has the classic framing device, much like “A Princess of Mars” and “Pirates of Venus”, with a narrator on safari discovering our hero in the Sahara, eager to tell his fantastic story. The imaginative setting is inside planet Earth and has human beings, but they’re primitive and they’re slaves to other races. The result is basically more of the “sword and planet” genre, which is always great in my book.

One of the interesting inventions of the book is the idea that since the internal world has a sun in the center of it (the actually burning core of the planet) that it’s always noon and never dark, rendering time meaningless in a very actual sense. At one point David Innes is parted from the professor and gone off to an island for what might be days or more, but to the professor he returns within the space of five minutes. It’s

similar to something that was touched on briefly in "The Moon Maid" but never fully explored there.

Like the other Burroughs adventures, "At the Earth's Core" has a romantic element, with cave princess "Dian the Beautiful" taking the role of lady-love. If that name sounds a tad cheesy, this was 1914 and the cave people's are supposed to be backward anyway. Other cave people get names like "The Hairy One" or "The Sly One". Much like in "A Princess of Mars", David's romance with Dian is complicated by a social faux pas and a kidnapping. This device keeps the damsel not merely in distress, but actually absent for most of the story.

Since this is the story of two 20th century men arriving in a primitive world, our heroes also get the job of advancing Pellucidar's human race in order to beat the more evolved Mahars. One can see elements here that might have inspired Lovecraft and Howard, with the Mahars and their minions, the Sagoths. The Mahars are deaf and communicate by thought transmission, they are also all female, having discovered means of artificially fertilizing their eggs. Burroughs even has a chilling scene in a Mahar temple where the queen makes a zombie of a woman she is eating!

"At the Earth's Core" was a good ride and it was unique enough not to be a throwaway (yes, it has 4 sequels, but so do a lot of books that should have been throwaways). The structure is strangely unlike other Burroughs works in some ways, and the addition of the professor actually changes things substantially.

I'm all delighted and this has me excited for the four sequels (one of which is a Tarzan crossover).

Rex Libris says

This is the first volume in Edgar Rice Burrough's Pellucidar series. Pellucidar is a "hollow earth" realm, existing on an inner portion of the earth. The earth is hollow, with a miniature sun at the core, and the concave surface of the inner globe is Pellucidar. Thus one can look up and see the other side of the world. in this aspect, it is a precursor to Ringworld and Rama.

In this establishing story the protagonist and an inventor friend have created an automatic mining machine. It malfunctions and takes them to the inner world. There are stone age humans, dinosaurs, and other species of intelligent animals who have enslaved the humans. Using their modern knowledge, the protagonist and friend free the humans and plan to set up an empire. This is where the first story ends, and is taken up again in #2, Pellucidar.

Marts (Thinker) says

I enjoyed this Burroughs title.

At the Earth's Core is all about an inventor Abner Perry and a young wealthy gentleman David Innis. Perry invents a vehicle referred to as the 'iron mole' which has drilling properties so powerful it can drill into the earth's core. Innis goes with Perry on a test run and ends up reaching earth's core which amazingly, is hollow. At the hollow core is a world called Pellucidar with strange beings like Mahars and Sagoths. They make acquaintances with Ghak, Hooja and Dian, residents in this core world. By the way Innis falls in love with Dian. Well after various adventures, Innis returns to the surface, meets the narrator and via correspondence

informs him that he intends to return to the core.

The story is a rather exciting one, adventure lovers should read it!

Marvin says

Edgar Rice Burroughs could be called The God-father of cheesy fantasy adventure. He can boast of influencing many later fantasy writers from Robert E. Howard to even John Norman, but that is not exactly something you would want on your resume. I had a brief obsession with Tarzan when I was nine but, asides from that series, I've found Burroughs' pulp adventures to be trite and silly. *At The Earth's Core* is no exception. Except for a rather exciting beginning, in which our intrepid but boring heroes are plunged into the depths of the earth by a giant drill, there is little to be interested in. Burroughs could use some lessons from Verne in describing alien surroundings. Burrough's main rule in making something exotic is simply give it a weird name you can't pronounce. The writings of Burroughs are meant for entertain pre-pubescent boys until they can handle real men like James Bond, Sam Spade and those studs who gets the girls in the *Heavy Metal* magazines. Burroughs made a good living running these books off like candy and the quality is what you except from assembly line writing. Can't grudge him that but please don't call this a classic.

And by the way, I didn't like the book.

Yibbie says

Now that was fun, mind-bending, but fun. I had no expectations of anything beyond a kill-'m caveman, giant purple monster story, but I was pleasantly surprised. Not in the characters, they were highly predictable, but the world was wonderfully imaginative. I really can't wrap my mind around it yet, but it was fun trying. Maybe that was aggravated by the way he messed with time. I don't want to give anything away so I really can't say any more than, it gets more mind-bending the farther you read. Warning, it's a cliff-hanger in the most dramatic pulp fashion possible. You will want to go get the sequel immediately.

Stephen says

2.5 stars. Solidly between 2 stars (it's okay) and 3 stars (I like it), this classic pulp science fiction adventure is the first of the Pellucidar series about a hidden world (complete with a sun and a moon) located in the center of the Earth. I am a fan of Pulp SF and liked the idea behind the series and the general pace of the adventure. The only reason I didn't rate this higher was that I was not as fond of the main character as I have been of other pulp heroes (e.g., Eric John Stark by Leigh Brackett and Conan by Robert Howard). Bottom-line, better than okay but not quite good.

Williwaw says

A swashbuckling breeze of a book! Imagine a hollow earth, inhabited by strange beasts and stone-age

humanoids. The hollow space is lit by a perpetual sun which floats at its center. A small moon rotates synchronously with the earth, so that it casts a permanent shadow over one region of the land called Pellucidar.

Into this strange world crashes David Innes, with the help of Professor Perry and his mole-like vessel, the "Prospector." With their superior know-how, Innes and Perry are destined to rule this newly discovered world. But not until they break free of their bondage by the Mahars, a hideous lizard-like species which exercises dominion over Pellucidar.

I first read this book when I was a teenager. I remember being particularly struck by the intensity of the romance between Innes and Dian the Beautiful, a princess of Pellucidar.

Now that I have reached the half-century mark, Innes's and Dian's romance strikes me as so much less powerful: indeed, almost a let-down. It must be that my teenage incarnation was so thirsty for a romance of its own, that it focused inordinately on Burroughs's occasional love scenes. If anything, these scenes now strike me as somewhat sparse and understated.

What I notice now are the techniques that Burroughs uses over and over. For example, how frequently he plants our heroes into an impossible predicament. They are about to be cornered by some horrible beast. There seems to be no way out. Then in a sort of deus ex machina way, the beast is shot by a third party or devoured by another beast, which gives our heroes a second chance! This pattern is repeated again and again, and there is always some interceding providence to keep the story going.

But first, ERB must convince you that the situation is terminal: "There seemed nothing to do but stand supinely and await my end. **** And with these thoughts came a realization of how unimportant to the life and happiness of the world is the existence of any one of us. We may be snuffed out without an instant's warning, and for a brief day our friends speak of us with subdued voices. The following morning, while the first worm is busily engaged in testing the construction of our coffin, they are teeing up for the first hole to suffer more acute sorrow over a sliced ball than they did over our, to us, untimely demise." (Our existential hero's thoughts as he stands naked, with no place of refuge in sight, before a stalking labyrinthodon.)

Or how about the endless parade of weird, menacing species? ERB can easily use up a page or so describing each one in loving detail. In this book, the Mahars get most of the attention. They are four-legged lizards with wings and massive jaws full of sharp teeth. They have hypnotic powers, which they use to enslave humans. And they like to feast upon fair maidens, one limb at a time. Apparently, men don't taste nearly as good, so they serve instead as subjects for brutal experiments that usually involve vivisection.

Yes, ERB is good clean fun! And a prolific writer, indeed: author of the Tarzan series, the Barsoom series, the Carson of Venus series, and innumerable stand-alone books and stories. Most of his work is available for free online these days. Check out this site for access to the stories and lots of fabulous illustrations: tarzan.com

Chris says

A dreamy yet sometimes nightmarish excursion into the world beneath our world: Pelucidar! With ugly cavemen, beautiful cavewomen, armies of ape-men, a wide variety of dinosaurs, man eating reptile birds that rule the underworld, and giant mechanical mole machines, Burroughs packs a lot of oomph and pizzazz into

this science romance. I'm looking forward to reading the rest of the series which also includes a Tarzan story!
