



Hollow Earth: The Long and Curious History of Imagining Strange Lands, Fantastical Creatures, Advanced Civilizations, and Marvelous Machines Below the Earth's Surface

By David Standish

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Hollow Earth: The Long and Curious History of Imagining Strange Lands, Fantastical Creatures, Advanced Civilizations, and Marvelous Machines Below the Earth's Surface By David Standish

Beliefs in mysterious underworlds are as old as humanity. But the idea that the earth has a hollow interior was first proposed as a scientific theory in 1691 by Sir Edmond Halley (of comet fame), who also suggested that there might be life down there as well. *Hollow Earth* traces the many surprising, marvelous, and just plain weird permutations his ideas have taken over the centuries. Both Edgar Allan Poe and (more famously) Jules Verne picked up the torch in the nineteenth century, the latter with his science fiction epic *A Journey to the Center of the Earth*. The notion of a hollow earth even inspired a religion at the turn of the twentieth century-Koreshanity, which held not only that the earth was hollow, but also that we're all living on the *inside*. Utopian novels and adventures abounded at this same time, including L. Frank Baum's hollow earth addition to the Oz series and Edgar Rice Burroughs's *Pellucidar* books chronicling a stone-age hollow earth. In the 1940s an enterprising science-fiction magazine editor convinced people that the true origins of flying saucers lay within the hollow earth, relics of an advanced alien civilization. And there are still devout hollow earthers today, some of whom claim there is a New Age utopia lurking beneath the earth's surface, with at least one entrance near Mt. Shasta in California. *Hollow Earth* travels through centuries and cultures, exploring how each era's relationship to the idea of a hollow earth mirrored its hopes, fears, and values. Illustrated with everything from seventeenth-century maps to 1950s pulp art to movie posters and more, *Hollow Earth* is for anyone interested in the history of strange ideas that just won't go away.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

The idea that another world exists below the surface of the Earth has captivated science fiction and fantasy writers since the days of Edgar Allan Poe's "Ms. Found in a Bottle" and Jules Verne's *Journey to the Center of the Earth*. As Standish reveals, the theory has also been promoted by serious (if sometimes slightly off-kilter) scientists, beginning with the eminent Edmond Halley, who theorized that smaller concentric spheres were nested inside the Earth. Standish's approach relies heavily on plot summaries of novels by the likes of Edgar Rice Burroughs, with frequent sarcastic interjections. "Stop him before he describes more!" he cries after one particularly lush passage. Scientists are dealt with in similarly detailed and skeptical fashion. Beneath all the wisecracks, however, Standish seems to have a genuine affection for his assorted crackpots and dreamers, and he provides an amusing tour of their various underground utopias. Unfortunately, the story fizzles at the end, failing to develop the all too sketchy hints that some people out there are still hollow-earth believers—but it's a fun romp while it lasts. 65 b&w illus. (July)

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From [The New Yorker](#)

Tracing the modern history of the belief that other worlds might exist inside our own, Standish begins with the Enlightenment-era astronomer Edmond Halley—remembered widely for his eponymous comet but less so for his theory that geomagnetism can be accounted for by three concentric spheres that rotate inside the globe and sustain their own ecosystems. Halley's conception of the subterranean realm spawned a recurring theme in science fiction (Jules Verne, Edgar Rice Burroughs, and L. Frank Baum all set novels inside the earth), as well as a small but enduring strain of true believers. Standish, who calls the Hollow Earth theory an "idea that was wrong and changed nothing," laces his research with too much boisterous humor, but he has an engaging affection for his cast of fantasists and misguided visionaries.

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Review

"*Hollow Earth* is tremendous fun." -- *Village Voice*, 7/5/06

"A fascinating history of an idea that just refused to die...A great read." -- *IEEE Spectrum*, August 2006

"A monumental work of screwball scholarship...A highly entertaining romp." -- *Seed Magazine*, September 2006

"Fans of Jules Verne...will get a thoughtful laugh out of *Hollow Earth*...A thoroughly enjoyable and fascinating read." -- *Popular Science*, August 2006

"Lively and intriguing." -- *Boston Sunday Globe*, 9/10/2006

"[A] fascinating account...Standish has done an admirable job...[An] excellent book." -- *Scotland on Sunday*, 9/3/06

"[A] lively and intriguing illustrated cultural history...Highly recommended for both science and literature collections." -- *Library Journal*, starred review, 7/15/06

"[An] entertaining new book...Standish's research is impressive." -- *New York Times Book Review* Editor's Choice, 1/28/07

"[Earth] teems with curious tangents...and rewarding artifacts. [It] takes readers deep into a fascinating eddy of history." -- *Buffalo News*, 9/17/2006

"[The] single strangest and most fascinating book published so far this year...In short, it's a marvel." -- *Palm Beach Post*, 9/17/2006

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From reader reviews:

Michael Stanford:

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information. The article author giving his/her effort that will put every word into joy arrangement in writing Hollow Earth: The Long and Curious History of Imagining Strange Lands, Fantastical Creatures, Advanced Civilizations, and Marvelous Machines Below the Earth's Surface however doesn't forget the main position, giving the reader the hottest and also based confirm resource details that maybe you can be one of it. This great information can easily drawn you into fresh stage of crucial imagining.

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