

Fantasy
Press



Part I

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Our awareness is all that is alive and maybe sacred in any of us. Everything else about us is dead machinery.

--Kurt Vonnegut, *Breakfast of Champions*

THIS ISSUE OF eI is for and in memory of my good friend and contributor to eI, rich brown (Dr. Gafia). It is also in memory of Lloyd Arthur Eshbach and his many contributions to science fiction, along with Fantasy Press.

In the exclusively science fiction world, it is also in memory of Jim Baen, Ronald Clyne, David Gemmell, Mickey Spillane, and Fern Tucker.

As always, everything in this issue of *eI* beneath my byline is part of my in-progress rough-draft memoirs. As such, I would appreciate any corrections, revisions, extensions, anecdotes, photographs, jpegs, or what have you sent to me at earlkemp@citlink.net and thank you in advance for all your help.

Bill Burns is *jefe* around here. If it wasn't for him, nothing would get done. He inspires activity. He deserves some really great rewards. It is a privilege and a pleasure to have him working with me to make *eI* whatever it is.

Other than Bill Burns, Dave Locke, and Robert Lichtman, these are the people who made this issue of *eI* possible: Robert Bonfils, Bruce Brenner, Graham Charnock, Lloyd Arthur Eshbach, Elaine Kemp Harris, Harvey Hornwood, Patrick Kearney, Earl Terry Kemp, John Nielsen Hall, Jim Linwood, Robert Speray, and Peter Weston.

ARTWORK: This issue of *eI* features recycled artwork by William Rotsler.

Sometimes I think it is a great mistake to have matter that can think and feel. It complains so. By the same token, though, I suppose that boulders and mountains and moons could be accused of being a little too phlegmatic.

--Kurt Vonnegut, *Sirens of Titan*

...Return to sender, address unknown.... 18

The Official *eI* Letters to the Editor Column

Artwork recycled William Rotsler

By Earl Kemp

We get letters. Some parts of some of them are printable. Your letter of comment is most wanted via email to earlkemp@citlink.net or by snail mail to P.O. Box 6642, Kingman, AZ 86402-6642 and thank you.

Also, please note, I observe DNQs and make arbitrary and capricious deletions from these letters in order to remain on topic.

This is the official Letter Column of *eI*, and following are a few quotes from a few of those letters concerning the last issue of *eI*. All this in an effort to get you to write letters of comment to *eI* so you can look for them when they appear here.

Sunday June 4, 2006:

Lots of good stuff as usual, from a quick skim-thru. But it's Lynn & Robert Maguire, not "McGuire".

--Art Scott

Art, thanks very much for making this embarrassing to me correction. --EK

Monday June 5, 2006:

Another issue of *eI* that just blows me away. As always, it immediately followed an issue of *The Drink Tank* and again, I was severely out-classed. Go figure.

You know, someone at Ram Books should be shot. They took a lovely cover for *Red Hot & Ready* and turned it into the crap that showed up on *Lens Lust*. Just a pure crap reinvention. At least the other two are better.

I still love that Victor Banis piece, but seeing it in *eI*, I completely realize that it was the right place for it. Those Rotsler pieces were nice too. I recently came into possession of a number of issues of *KTEIC Magazine* from 1982 that he put out and I seem to recall that sacrificial altarpiece being in one of them. I'm thinking of scanning them, but I'm not sure what to do with them after that.

There was a store around the corner from my house growing up that sold no *Playboys*, only *Hustler* and those Filthy Mags that came from Europe. You'd find one sometimes, laying in a parking lot or somewhere like that, and you'd sneak and peak and they'd always disturb me somehow. Maybe it was those close-ups of things going in and out that bugged. I never much got into *Hustler*. True, it's done some okay journalism, and I must admit that Larry Flynt has done some good things over the years (mixed in with a lot of terrible things) but I just couldn't get into the no-class sexuality they presented. Then again, I read *Playboy* for the fiction these days, so what do I know? I loved *Omni*, and I'll always thank Flynt for giving us that. While I hate to admit it, despite my last name being Garcia, I'm only a fourth or fifth cousin to Jerry (I figured it out once and it's not that close, but I could trace it) while Jerry Falwell is a solid fourth cousin. I remember reading about the Falwell trial when I was a kid and my Grandma saying that he was 'a dark spot on the family'.

Alan White is a good man. Sybil Danning may have been one of the most attractive women of those days I was too young to have experienced. In that photo of Alan and Sybil, Alan has my hair. It's scary how much it looks like my hair right at this very moment. I called in two of the girls from work and they both said that the hair was exactly the same! I must track down a copy of *Slam*. It sounds like it was a hoot.

There are some very good books written about the inside of the pornography business, and a whole lot of bad ones. The same goes for the wrestling business. I've been asked twice to write insider books, but I'm not an insider, even though I know a lot of people who are pretty deep in. Sadly, there are a lot of folks like me in various fields that get asked to write books on the Inside and sadly, a lot of folks don't have my restraint. I must pick up a copy of *The Prisoner of X*.

Sandra Scream. There's a pair of tits I haven't thought of in ages. She was one of the people who really changed the way Cannes views people. Adult stars had shown up before (Ciciolena or however you spell it was the one who really invented the Cannes Porn movement) but I remember hearing folks talking about Sandra for years.

If it's the same Frank that I've heard about, I'm certain that there are a thousand great stories about the former Flynt bagman. There was an article about Larry's assistants in an issue of *Rolling Stone* (I think it was *Rolling Stone*, I did read it while I was in college, so it was either *Rolling Stone* or *The Phoenix*) that told the story of the, as I believe they put it, 'the creeps and the motherfuckers.'



If you've ever seen the movie version of *Dragnet*, Dabney Coleman's performance as the owner of a porn empire (with titles like *Bait* and *Field & Cream*) was based off of a party imitation someone did of wrestler Dusty Rhodes if he had become Larry Flynt. It's a funny performance and I constantly quote it.

rich brown just became my hero. That was a fantastic piece of post-modernist humour/Good Ol' Fun. I loved it!

Pete mentions that it was uncharacteristic of France to sell Louisiana for such a small price. Fact is, Old Nap needed that money, there were wars to pay for and those that still needed paying and he was planning on getting out of the New World business anyhow. It was strange that the US would put so much of their coffers into one big score, but that's the way we roll: big money, no whammies, stop!

I wish I could have gone to the Paperback show. I had it on my calendar, but it was either that or a visit to my friends in Vegas, and knowing what I'd be spending at a paperback show, Vegas was the better part of valor. Looking at the folks pictured, I certainly missed out. I'd have loved to meet Dick Lupoff there, but luckily he wandered into the Fanzine Lounge at BayCon and we had a lovely chat there. Great photos, though.

Thanks much for running Dad's piece. I'm sure he'd be proud to see it in what was his favourite fanzine at the end. I found the copies of *e/I* I had printed for him next to his bed, probably among the last things he ever read. That, and the small pile of conventional porn that was right next to it.

--Chris Garcia

#

Thanks for the heads up. It was another great "issue." Congrats on last "issues" reprinting rich's "Two of a Kind," it is an intense story deserving of wider readership. rich is an amazing guy and has been a great friend for many years. And a good writer, too.

Enjoyed reading Ted's piece about Althea again.

Keep up the good work.

--Dan Steffan

#

I have to tell you this: Of all the humorous/literary/gossipy delights I effortlessly inhale from friends through the Internet--and make mental notes to go back and finish reading them--yours is the only site I do go back to and complete reading. The arrival of your zine doesn't even leave room for the inevitable guilt feelings ("what did you think of the _____?"), trying to bluff my way through their _____... something which I just couldn't endure reading more than a few lines, but really don't want to be impolite because I do like the sender.

I always enjoy your ezine in a special way: I'm basically introverted, and sometimes your zine works like a few hits off a freshly stuffed, newly lit bong. It gives me a sense of what fun it is to play being an extrovert. Like I'm really having fun at the party instead of dutifully biding my time for a quick retreat.

I trust you won't misunderstand if I say "keep it up"!

--Rose Idlet, Black Ace Books

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Just downloaded your latest *eI* and was surprised to see pics of me in it. I saw you at that signing, tried to find you after getting worn out scribbling in books, & failed --& didn't see the Lupoffs, either! AAargh!--that was the main reason I went! Maybe next year...

Anyway, I've been guiltily reading your ezine for years & not writing. It's a great nostalgic trip. Somehow those days ring with a clarity I miss in the present squalor. My god, even Ted White! A bit sobering, that of the *Void* coeditors, 2 are gone & 3 survive... Thanks!

--Gregory Benford

Friday June 9, 2006:

It took me a couple of "sit downs", but I just completed *eI26*. My ignorance of behind the scenes porn is almost as vast as my lack of knowledge on the subject of science fiction.

But, the high level of input that you present regularly makes it worthwhile and easy to learn.

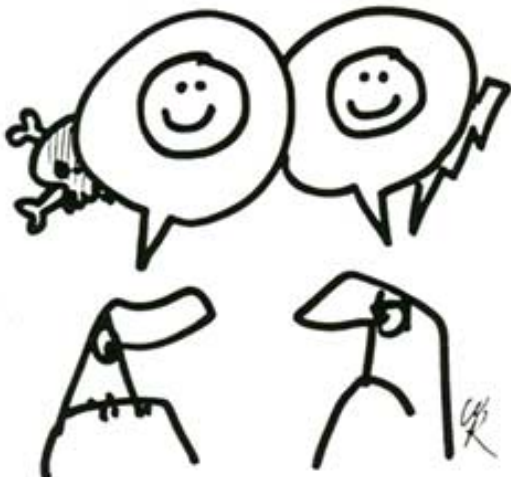
I think that we can all learn from a man like Mr. Garcia since we are all dying without the deadline. Set goals for yourself and remember; It's not that life is so short. It's that death is so long.

--Daniel Andrews

Saturday June 10, 2006:

It's been ages, although I do make it a point to check in regularly at your web-sites to see what in the hell you're up to (although seeing how much you manage to accomplish makes me literally tired as hell – must be age creeping up on me).

I'm delighted to see a short story by Victor Banis, "In Passing" recently posted on your site.



Speaking of "the" Victor, I just finished reading his memoir *SPINE INTACT, SOME CREASES; REMEMBRANCES OF A PAPERBACK WRITER*, and didn't *you* come out the star (not that the designation isn't deserving)! Such an exciting life we all led/lead – although I must admit that there are some of your and Victor's shared experiences that I'm damned happy to have missed.

Must say that I'm sorry that the book in question hasn't yet been picked up by any U.S. publisher, making it so damned hard to come by, it having only been published by that obscure Italian university press in a limited edition (oh, well, only apt to make my first-edition all the more valuable as a collector's item, in time). Where are

Earl Kemp and Greenleaf Classics when you need them?!

Anyway, always glad to hear that you are alive and thriving.

--William Lambert, III

(AKA William J. Lambert III, WJ Lambert, Lambert Wilhelm, Christopher Dane, Karl Klyne, Ernst Mauser, Alex von Mann, Cort Forbes, Adriana deBolt, Willa Lambert, Anna Lambert, Chad Stuart ... et al).

#

Just finished downloading and reading the latest issue. The current *e/* is as provocative as ever.

I was especially taken by Ted White's article on his brief and fruitless encounter with Althea Flynt. (And has anyone observed that Ted is one of the most apt and articulate chroniclers, and always has been?). In the movie, *The People VS Larry Flynt*, Althea was portrayed by Courtney Love. Highly appropriate casting, I'd say, although I wonder if Althea was really that mangy.

In passing, Althea references Matty Simmons, the publisher of *National Lampoon* and producer of *Animal House* and other related comedies.

In the early '60s, I spent a few years working for 'The Diners' Club in New York. Although their showcase offices were situated at the very spiffy New York Coliseum on Columbus Circle, the grunt work was performed at an annex several blocks away on West 57th Street. It was a small overcrowded office space, tucked beside IFF (International Flavors and Fragrances). Day and night, summer and winter, their latest olfactory confections penetrated the building. It was inescapable and after a while, if you were lucky, you learned to ignore it.

Matty Simmons was an executive helping to run the company, and also helming the official Diners' Club magazine (which might have been called *Signature*, that's the only name that leaps to mind). I met him several times. He was always congenial and ambitious but gave the impression of satisfaction in the lofty role he had there. Shortly afterward, he left for the much more lucrative field of film and magazine production, where he enjoyed considerable success.

I also shook hands with Alfred Bloomingdale (of Bloomingdale's Department Store fame), who was an early backer of The Diners; Club. In later years he gained unwelcome notoriety for his associations with major political figures, as well as his personal pursuits.

I swore I'd never wash my hands after the handshaking encounter. And I never did.

--Mike Deckinger

Saturday June 24, 2006:

I really gotta hand it to you, Earl; you know how to pub an interesting zine. Never in my wildest imaginings would I have thought that I would be interested in reading articles written about *Hustler* magazine; a normal male would be much more interested in simply reading -- no, make that "eye-balling" (hahahahaha) -- *Hustler*. A most enjoyable read, so to speak.

I really thank you for pubbing John Paul Garcia's last and only piece of fan-writing and, of course, Chris for forwarding it on to you for publication. It really bums me out that I never met John because I

was very active in fandom when he was, even though his fanac was rather minimal and we were geographically separated (West Coast fan vs. Midwestern fan.) Even so, what a cool link that would have been since Chris is now pubbing one of my favorite zines to read, *Drink Tank*. John's first piece of advice has always been one of my favorite practices when attending a con; many a fine conversation has taken place in the hallway outside the con suite because it is so true that *everybody* will come by at some time over the weekend, some way more times than once.

Y'know, someday if I'm ever out there at the time, I would love to see that Mission Hills Paperback Show and Sale; sounds like a lot of fun to an avowed bibliophile like me. Great photos, by the way.

I think Peter Weston may have something here, but I personally believe that aliens really don't want to have anything to do with us humans because we are such a self-destructive creature. We don't need no stinking alien help in starting wars and messing up our planet. Sheesh! What the heck is Peter thinking -- or smoking? (Can I have some?)

Not much else to say for now, but that in no way reflects the actual enjoyment I derived from reading *eI* #26. As always, an interesting and enjoyable collection of writings; I just have no pithy comments to make on it all except, "Read And Enjoyed." Thank you for your continued fine efforts.

--John Purcell

Friday June 30, 2006:

Propaganda films extend to cartoons. I have a tape at home called *Uncensored Toons*, full of Warner Brothers cartoons from the '30s, '40 and '50s, all, shall we say, very, VERY politically incorrect. Some of the characters dance and sing to raise money for war bonds, and titles like *Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips* set the tone.

I have been hearing from several people, all saying that if you think Dubya was bad, don't vote for Bill Frist. I said in my loc that it would be tough to do worse than Bush, and it looks like I might be proved wrong. The Supreme Court's latest ruling that the war trials for Guantanamo Bay detainees is illegal, and Bush acted outside of his authority, is a welcome slap in the fact for this administration. Let the nightmare end now...

Ah, *Twilight Zone Magazine*...a great publication, with so many good memories inside. I have the whole set, except for the last issue, which I loaned out, and never got back, serves me right...

I wonder, Earl, if your friend Hugh has seen any of these issues of *eI*, and if he might be prevailed upon to make a few comments? With Hef hitting 80, I'm sure he's got a few memories

[I suspect he's much too busy doing his own thing. It would be a pleasure to have him aboard though and thanks for the suggestion. -EK]

I have never been able to latch onto a job as a freelance typographer, or copy editor, or any other



editorial position like that. Either my qualifications are sadly lacking, or Canadian employers in the publishing industry are a helluva lot smarter than their American counterparts. I think it's mostly the latter.

I wonder how many fans of *Beauty and The Beast*, and anything else Ron Perlman has done, know that Frank from LFP was his frontman? I can think of a few friends who would be shocked and disappointed.

If someone like Hugo Gernsback hadn't been there to plant the idea of science in the future in our minds, would we have had the idea ourselves later on? Would we have gone to the moon without that initial seed? Did Uncle Hugo change us that much, or did he just accelerate the process of forward-thinking and a desire to peer forward into the future, close or distant?

I had hopes that David Gerrold would have made it up to Toronto for Gaylaxicon. In the various places it's been held, it was in Toronto last month, and Yvonne and I were on the committee. (It's a telling remark on the GLBT SF community when the majority of the committee on a GLBT SF convention are straight.) As the head of the dealers' room, it was up to me to contact David, and see if he wanted dealers' tables in Toronto. I was getting remarks like, "You're in Canada? I'll wait until it's in the United States again." and I was getting discouraged. David ignored my missives, and it fell into the chairman, Lance Sibley, to contact him. He found out David had an on-going feud with one of the guests of honour, Richard Arnold, and would not be coming to Toronto. At all. Period.

I may have asked before, Earl, but are you going to LA for the Worldcon this year? Guess I'd like us to meet, and this continent is just too big, and my paycheck is just too small.

John Garcia need a lot more time. Just as Chris convinced him he had to put his memories down on paper, cancer took him away. At least John did get to do some writing, and we'll be richer for that. I hope to see the Trimbles in Los Angeles, but if that doesn't happen, they are scheduled to be the Fan GoHs at Astronomicon 10 in Rochester in November. John is absolutely right when it comes to finding a seat where the whole con walks past. I've done that three times now, and never felt like I was missing much. The people make a con for me.

--Lloyd Penney

Tuesday July 4, 2006:

I've read every issue of *eI*, found the whole thing brilliant and fascinating from beginning to end, but the problem is I have nothing to add. It's almost all entirely new to me. I mean, you wouldn't want to get an e-mail every two months that said nothing but "brilliant and fascinating."

--John Boston, Wegenheim

"Your planet's immune system is trying to get rid of you."
-- a Kurt Vonnegut bumpersticker

The Fantasy Press Story*

By Lloyd Arthur Eshbach

An unsolicited letter of criticism, a fannish gesture of helpfulness and a joke led to the formation of Fantasy Press.

It began when I ordered a copy of *Skylark of Space* from the Buffalo Book Company of Providence, Rhode Island. After months of waiting during which I wrote several letters of inquiry, I finally received *The Time Stream*, by John Taine. Since sales promotion and advertising were my business, and since I felt Tom Hadley (of Buffalo Book Co.) had not handled this particular transaction to his and my best advantage, I wrote him a lengthy letter of criticism and suggestion.

There was no reply until one day when I received a phone call from Providence. An interchange of calls (from Hadley) and letters (from me) led to my joining Hadley to help him sell his books. Joined him, mind you, only as a fannish gesture, since there was no mention of financial matters—only a sort of vague “if things go over we’ll talk about pay.”

For a number of months I handled correspondence, prepared promotional pieces, kept records, designed a letterhead for Hadley Publishing Company, the new name which Tom adopted, and otherwise made myself useful. ’Twas a lot of fun—until I began receiving complaints from people who for some reason had failed to receive already published books for which they had paid. This and other matters led to my returning all correspondence, records, etc., etc., to Hadley and gently withdrawing from the scene.

Some time later in the office in which I worked (as ad copy writer for the Reading branch of the Glidden Company, a paint manufacturer), I said jokingly to a friend of mine, G.H. MacGregor (who knew about the Hadley deal), “Say, Mac, how’d you like to go into the publishing business?”

“You mean like this guy Hadley?” When I replied in the affirmative, he asked, “How much dough would it take?”

I shrugged. “Maybe a couple thousand.”

“Sure,” MacGregor said. “We could get Donnell here”—the artist who was in the room at the time—“and he could do the illustrating. Maybe add Leman Houck—he’s a bookkeeper—and with each of us putting in five hundred we’d be on our way.”

I had been joking—but that’s exactly how it worked out, and the four of us formed Fantasy Press within the next week. This partnership continued until January of 1950, at which time I bought out my partners’ share of the business. They were fine partners, still are swell men and good friends of mine, but their contribution to a science fiction publishing house had to be limited. None of them even read SF.



Mr. Eshbach (left), and Mr. Willy Ley in front of the Fantasy Press display at the Philcon, 1960.

During our initial conference I had told the others that our success in launching Fantasy Press (a name not even thought of at that time, November 1946) depended upon our getting a book by Dr. Edward E. Smith as our first title. I *knew* Doc would sell, since *Skylark of Space* had sold for Hadley. *Spacehounds of IPC* seemed to be the logical book to start with, since it was an independent novel, not part of Smith's famous *Lensmen* or *Skylark* series. Since *Spacehounds* was our first title, released in February 1947, my efforts to secure it from Doc Smith, obviously, were successful.

To digress briefly, it may be of some interest to you to learn that the name "Fantasy Press" was chosen among the following: Nova Publications, Stellar Publishers, Science-Fantasy Press, and, it seems to me, one other. I think we might have done better—but it's too late now.

With *Spacehounds of IPC* in production, I went after other stories, and got what I wanted. At that time I had no competition worthy of the name, and if I had wanted to do so, I could have sewed up most of all of the really good magazine material in sight. Frankly, I didn't expect competition to come into the picture so quickly, but even if I had known just what the future would bring forth, I don't think my actions would have been altered to any great extent. I knew my own limitations, and I wanted to be fair with the writers.

As must be the case with any one-man publishing house, Fantasy Press reflects the tastes of the publisher. Any material selected, of course, must have at least a fair chance of selling. I like space operas—space operas sell—so I publish space operas. Perhaps I should clarify one point. Fantasy Press does not publish literature. (And in this respect it's just like 99% of the publishers in these United States, regardless of the kind of books they issue.) Not one book I have issued is literature—but then, this is also true of Gnome, Shasta, Prime, Doubleday, etc. I publish what I think is entertaining science fiction.

I have issued a number of books which I knew would not sell well. *The Bridge of Light* by Verril, and *Beyond Infinity* by Carr, for example. But I liked the stories, and I felt they should be published—so they went into the list. In passing, my judgment was vindicated—they haven't sold at all well!

A few of the headaches of those early days may be worth recording. When we announced *Spacehounds of IPC* we gave ourselves three months for production, just to be safe. With publication date a month away, we learned that the mill which was to supply the paper hadn't even scheduled it for manufacture! The printer (who was buying the paper) couldn't locate any other. I asked him if he'd object to my getting paper. "Of course not," he said with a superior smile. I can still see it—within one week the paper was in the print shop. True, it was ivory, not white, and it had a deckle edge (which we had to pay for, cut off and throw away), but it was paper on which to print the book. We missed publication date by twelve days.

When *Of Worlds Beyond—The Science of Science Fiction Writing* was being planned, I had a different sort of headache. I had asked seven top SF writers to write a symposium on SF writing, each to cover an assigned subject, and each to write a minimum of 2,000 words. Note the word minimum. I told the printer to get enough paper for 2,000 copies of a ninety-six-page book. I decided on a column width, and as the articles came in in various lengths, wrote the introduction for each chapter and had the printer set the copy in type. When all copy was in, at long last, and all in type, I made up the pages—and found I had exactly ninety-six pages! It couldn't happen again in a hundred years.

But it did—on the very next book. I had estimated *The Forbidden Garden* by John Taine at 288 pages, bought paper on that basis, and when about half of the book had been set in type, had the printer start running the forms. When the book was ready for the bindery—you guessed it—there were exactly 288

pages!

Statistics may be of interest. Fantasy Press has published 32 books with a total of more than 123,000 copies. This does not include two books issued under Polaris Press imprint (about which more below); nor does it include the newest title, *The Black Star Passes* by John W. Campbell, Jr., which should be available by the time this article is published.

A word concerning Polaris Press. For a long time I've had a desire to issue some of the old "classics" of science fiction and fantasy in a truly handsome format and in a limited edition. In April of 1952 I put out the first of these, the semi-mythical *The Heads of Cerberus* from the pages of *Thrill Book*. I have received more complimentary comments on this book than on any FP release—but the sales are not good. Slightly less than 700 copies have been sold to date. (1,563 copies were printed, 1,490 of which were offered to the public.) Recently I issued the second in the series, *The Abyss of Wonders*, by Perley Poore Sheehan. The future of the series depends upon the sale of these two volumes. I thought I had a good idea in the Polaris Fantasy Library, but apparently not too many fans agree with me.

Since Fantasy Press and Polaris Press are actually Lloyd Arthur Eshbach, some of you may be interested in a few vital statistics. Born June 20, 1910, in Palm, Pennsylvania. Moved to Reading at age of five, attended Reading schools, married; have two sons. Began reading fantasy and science fiction (though the name hadn't then been coined) at the age of nine in the old Munsey magazines: Burroughs, Merritt, Flint, Stevens, etc. Bought the first issue of *Amazing Stories* when it appeared on the newsstands. Started writing SF a year later; sold my fourth attempt to *Amazing Stories* at the age of seventeen. Have written and sold close to a million words of fiction of various kinds—SF under my own name; general fiction under three pen names. Wrote and sold radio plays, verse, filler articles, juveniles, etc.

My first effort (I still have it) was called "Up from the Pit." It didn't sell, but my third story; "A Voice from the Ether," sold to *Amazing*. While all my fantasy has been published under my own name this is not true of the love stories which I hacked out for the love pulps. I used a feminine pseudonym—and the name is a never-to-be-revealed secret. I wrote some straight adventure fiction, most of it against a Brazilian background; one of these appeared as a serial in the *Toronto Star Weekly* almost twenty years ago. On the other hand, I wrote a number of bits for the experimental literary magazines using a pen name reserved only for these "little" mags. Because my own name was not associated with them, when two of my stories were starred in the *O'Brien Year Book of the American Short Story*, the pen name got the credit.

Began collecting SF and fantasy at the age of fourteen. I now have a copy of every SF magazine ever published in America, and most of those issued in England and Australia. Have approximately 2,000 SF and fantasy books, including a lot of really rare stuff. At one time my collection was far larger than it is today—the hardcover portion of it, that is. In those days I kept every book which could be designated as fantasy or science fiction. A completist, in short. But as every collector knows, there are many books in the field which aren't worth even a single reading. These have been sold, and every book now in my fantasy library is at least readable. The scarcest items in my collection are absolutely unique. You see, when I publish a new book, I prepare a special edition of each title, limited to two copies, numbered and bound in full Morocco. The No. 1 copies go to the respective authors. The No. 2 copies go to the authors for their inscription and are then returned to me! Which means that I have the only complete set in existence, since, obviously, each writer has only his own books!

That does it, I suppose. Or maybe I should say a word or two about the future of Fantasy Press.

Scheduled for publication during 1953 in the order listed are the following: *Assignment in Eternity*, by

Robert A. Heinlein (originally announced as "Possible Answers"); *Man of Many Minds*, by E. Everett Evans; *Deep Space*, by Eric Frank Russell; *G.O.G. 666*, by John Taine; *Three Thousand Years*, by Thomas Calvert McClary and *Children of the Lens*, by Edward E. Smith, Ph.D.

For later publication I have the following: *Islands of Space*, by John W. Campbell, Jr.; *The Time Conqueror*, by L. A. Eshbach; *The Metal Man and Others*, by Jack Williamson; *Invaders from the Infinite*, by John W. Campbell, Jr.; *The Vortex Blaster*, by E.E. Smith; *Tomorrow*, by John Taine, and others.

If the Polaris Fantasy Library continues, there will be books by Homer Eon Flint, J.U. Giesy, and possibly by William Wallace Cook, George Allen England, Garrett Smith, Murray Leinster, Victor Rousseau, Stephen Chalmers, Garret P. Serviss, and many others.

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*Reprinted from *Destiny* #8, Spring 1953.

Every passing hour brings the Solar System forty-three thousand miles closer to Globular Cluster M13 in Hercules - and still there are some misfits who insist that there is no such thing as progress.

--Kurt Vonnegut; Ransom K. Fern in *Sirens of Titan*

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Belief is nearly the whole of the Universe, whether based on truth or not.
--Kurt Vonnegut, *Bluebeard*

[INTRODUCTION: Peter Weston told me that he was particularly looking forward to the exciting, praise-filled introduction to this piece. This is the exciting, praise-filled introduction to this piece.

The following article was written in British English. Every effort has been made to retain this language intact and to not translate it into US English. --Earl Kemp]

'A Rocket A Rover'

(Title by Dave Wood)

A Symposium on SF & Fantasy in early British comics, originating from discussions on the 'Wegenheim' e-list, and conducted (in **bold face**) by Peter Weston.

#

This all started when Greg Pickersgill posted a piece on his e-list about the Jeff Hawke Club, which celebrates the famous strip that ran for many years in *The Daily Express*, one of the major British newspapers.

"The Jeff Hawke Club exists. Not only does it exist, but today I received the seventh issue of the *JH Cosmos* magazine, which is Good. Really, it is – a 66-page well-produced and printed magazine and in this issue there are two complete shorter JH reprints, and the second half of a longer story carried over from issue 6. Lots of other interesting little bits and pieces too, especially the many background asides by Sydney Jordan, the brilliant illustrator of the strip.



Sidney Jordan did a fine job on ETs

"I could go on and on and on about why and how the Hawke strip is by FAR the best British comic strip SF ever (and deserves a damned good placing in a list of Best British SF of any kind ever too) but those of you who have even the slightest memory of it in the *Daily Express* back in the 50s and 60s, or who had enough sense to get the two Titan books back in the late 80s will know the quality of which I speak.

Anyone who had the wonderful pleasure of meeting and seeing Sydney Jordan at *Mexicon 3* in 1989 will also know what a pleasant and interesting man he is too. And if you don't know of any of this, then its time to find out. This is unabashed drum-banging – go to www.jeffhawke.com/en/jhenclub.htm ”

This set me off on my own trip down Memory Lane:

“Completely agree, Greg, even though I only saw the occasional Jeff Hawke strip. Reason was that rather than the *Express* my parents took the *Daily Mirror*. The two were neck-&-neck rivals in those days, both considerably more up-market than they are now. As a result I only saw Jeff Hawke by going to the reading room of the local library, which I couldn't do every day.

”Instead, I cut my teeth on the adventures of ‘Garth,’ a strange affair that ran in the *Mirror* for over 40 years and which presented some quite advanced ideas considering its time and place. For instance, one adventure dealt with a parallel world in which the Nazis had won WWII and then gone on to develop biological sciences so that London had been rebuilt by growing organic buildings, rather like in Vance's *Houses of Iszm*. Another had a Galactic civilisation grown completely dependent upon androids to do the work and run the machines, with the people reduced to a state of frustrated idleness – very like Jack Williamson's *The Humanoids*.

”Garth doesn't have a surname and his origins were unclear. As an infant he was washed up on the shores of the Shetland Isles (although there was a spectacular gaffe in an early story in which he was apparently found on the coast of Tibet, which is of course landlocked!). He had a long-drawn-out relationship with Astra, a super-woman from somewhere else (a time-traveller, I think) who had been the model for the Greek goddess Aphrodite. There were lots of other plot-lines, and drawing quality was competent but nowhere up to Sidney Jordan standards, although in 1971 Frank Bellamy took over after the fall of the legendary *Eagle*.”

John Jarrold knew what I was talking about:

“We also had the *Mirror* through the 50s and 60s, so I read ‘Garth’ every day. Yes, very SF and Fantasy – sometimes Garth went forward in time or back in time or into strange worlds not unlike Burroughs' Barsoom. I think there were several annuals of the Garth strips in the 60s and 70s... yes, here is a website:” www.internationalhero.co.uk/g/garth.htm



The early Garth

I took a quick look at the site:

“Thanks, John. Ah, Professor Lumiere, how could I have forgotten you! A sort of Dr Zarkov character, looking like Hercules Poirot (or Julian Headlong, if you prefer), always there with a new invention when one was needed! The later Garth drawing is more commercial, making Garth look like

Schwarzenegger, and I preferred the spindlier representations from the 1950s.”



Artwork by Frank Bellamy, with nipples aplenty

By now we were well away! Here's Greg again:

“I was always a bit nonplussed by ‘Garth’ as a child - it didn't seem to make any SENSE, and the illustrator's style was so peculiar it seemed hard for me to see any of the characters as actually human.... Of course years of experience of SF and fanzine 'artwork' trained me out of that limited view of things. Some quick searching appears to show that while there are some ‘Garth’ books there don't seem to be any systematic reprints. There's also this note from a comics website -

“Four ‘Garth’ books have appeared over the years. The first, a flip book (with Romeo Jones on the reverse) in horizontal-format in the late 1950s or early '60s; then in 1975 *The Daily Mirror Book of Garth* (soft-back annual, Frank Bellamy art with topless girls censored/bikini tops added); another horizontal-format collection in 1976 (Frank Bellamy art uncensored, nipples aplenty); and a Titan collection in the late 1980s.”

But Rog Peyton accidentally changed the subject:

“Somehow I missed out on Jeff Hawke – I've never seen it. I read ‘Dan Dare’ in the *Eagle* during my first childhood from 1950 to 1953 when I was told to stop reading comics as I was eleven years old and going to grammar school. So I never saw Dan & Digby after 1953 until Hawk reprints came out several years ago. Though I did read ‘Captain Condor’ in the *Lion* comic – artwork was dreadful and I can't remember the storylines. Probably equally dreadful.”

I couldn't believe it!

“Rog, how could you have ever given up *The Eagle*! For those too young to remember (and for the poor Americans who missed the excitement) let me say that it changed the face of British publishing. The comic was



The RAF in Space

an overnight sensation from the day it was launched in April 1950; nothing like it had ever been seen before. It was a high-quality job, photogravure-printed at a large-size on semi-gloss paper with full colour on front cover and some interior pages. But the main selling feature was the cover story, 'Dan Dare – Pilot of the Future', created by the masterly Frank Hampson and set in the far-future world of 1995. Remember, this was only five years after the War, we all wanted to fly Spitfires and Hurricanes, and it seemed perfectly reasonable that Britain would go on to rule the spaceways and the RAF would morph into Space Fleet Command. So boys – and their fathers – loved the adventures of Colonel Dare and his batman Digby, the fat fool from Wigan who provided comedy relief, and their fellow officers, complete with pipes, flying jackets and handlebar moustaches!



Pipes, cigarettes, and flying jackets!

“One million copies of the first issue were printed – and they promptly sold out! Looking back, it was an incredible gamble for the publishers, Hulton Press, a relatively small operation with no experience with boys’ comics; the failure of *Eagle* would have wiped them out. As it was, the paper settled down to a long-time weekly circulation of 750,000, still huge numbers even by American standards. For a time ‘Dan Dare’ was the hottest brand around, merchandised to sell soap, toothpaste, bedtime drinks, and over 200 licences for games and toys. Inevitably, the success of *The Eagle* spawned lots of competitors.”

For more on the origins of ‘Dan Dare’ see my ‘Stargazing’ column on the trufen.net website: trufen.net/article.pl?sid=06/03/07/172238

For the *Eagle* & ‘Dan Dare’ website, go to: www.dandare.org/dan/dan.htm

However, John Jarrold kept on about the *Lion*, a competing title:

“I remember a giant amoeba monster in ‘Captain Condor’, Rog. It had bad skin and divided into separate parts at every opportunity, not surprisingly...”



First issue was a sell-out



A poor copy of the *Eagle*

'Huh', I said, recalling the first issue somewhat dismissively ...

“Didn't Captain Condor start by escaping from a prison colony on Titan along with various other rebels against the Evil System? I bought the first issue of *Lion* when it came out but decided it was a poor copy of the *Eagle*, so only saw occasional issues after that.”

Dave Wood quickly put me right!

“Captain Condor does have a following! And later, Keith Watson (who left *Eagle* somewhat precipitously) was not a bad artist. Try these sites:”

www.comicsuk.co.uk/ComicInformationPages/LionPages/LionHomePage.asp?ReturnPage=CIP

members.aol.com/nicholashl/watson/condor/condor.htm

“Oh, all right then,” I said, re-awakening long-suppressed memories:



Keith Watson drew for the later years of *Lion*

“I suppose *Lion* was the first and most successful of the many challengers to *Eagle*. It appeared in February 1952, and the similarities were obvious, particularly with the front-cover strip ‘Outlaw in Space’ which featured a new hero, ‘Captain Condor,’ owing more than a little to the space adventures of ‘Dan Dare.’ But the artwork was crude, greatly inferior to that of Frank Hampson, and the publishers skimped on quality; *Lion* was normal comic size, poorly printed on newsprint with no interior colour. Still, the contents were in some ways more exciting, it was cheaper than *Eagle* and heavily promoted, and it was backed by the resources of one of the largest British publishing groups. So *Lion* thrived, and gradually its standard improved as *Eagle* started to become tired, until in May 1969 the beast finally swallowed the bird, a sad day in comic history.”

Not content with that, Dave came back with the best site so far:

“Here’s one with *Lion*, *Eagle*, and ‘Space’ Kingley as well. It even has a section on Greg’s favourite, ‘Jet Ace’ Logan, flying spaceships for the RAF in 2056.”

www.geocities.com/TelevisionCity/Set/2585/



Jet Ace Logan in action!

Now we were starting to get somewhere! I was enthusiastic:

“That’s an excellent site, Dave! Somehow I missed ‘Jet Ace’ Logan at the time, but all my old favourites are here – Rick Random, good old ‘Space’ Kingley, and who would have believed it – ‘Captain Valiant’, another hero from my youth. This one was an orthodox monthly comic book in strip-cartoon format in which Vic Valiant and his three buddies flew their one-man fighters against various enemies, in particular the invading ‘Insectos’ from the Blue Galaxy. The only thing missing from this site seems to be the *Rocket* comic, another poor copy of the *Eagle*, which ran to about two dozen issues around 1957-58. Remember that one, Dave?”

But before Dave could answer, Steve Green picked-up on my question, and introduced a minor mystery of his own about the *Rocket*:

“Any idea who published that? It’s just that there was an early-1970s comic produced by Polystyle entitled *Countdown*, and I was puzzled even then to note that the copyright info listed it as *Countdown and Rocket*, indicating the former had absorbed the latter (a common occurrence amongst the UK weeklies), only I’d never heard of *Rocket*. There was a small rocket image next to the *Countdown* logo,

but no mention anywhere else as I recall. Maybe it was a way of retaining ownership of the name? I've found a website with a partial guide to British comics and *Rocket* is listed, but no info is given on ownership, publication dates, and so on." www.britishcomics.com/comics.htm

Actually, *Rocket* was on that site and I just hadn't spotted it, but in the meantime Greg waved his magic wand, and behold!

"Here's something on the *Rocket* from the British Library periodicals catalogue, a useful resource at: www.bl.uk/catalogues/newspapers/welcome.asp

Numbers: 1-32; Dates: 21 April - 24 Nov.1956 (Incorporated with *Express Weekly*).



I had high hopes for the *Rocket*

Also this, from an archived eBay sales listing:-
Rocket comic #11, 1956. Last price: £10.02
'With the tremendous success of the *Eagle* comic in the 1950s, News of the World publications brought out the *Rocket* comic, hoping to grab a share of the market; but although published in high-quality format and having the high-profile Douglas Bader as the editor, 'Captain Falcon' was no match for 'Dan Dare' and the comic folded after only 32 issues. It is now very rare.'

"Amazing! And just to think that a few hours ago we'd never heard of it, and now we know all this. Isn't the web a fantastic thing? It'll be a sad day when it is taken away from us."

I was a bit surprised by the dating:

"Thanks for the information, Greg. I'd looked on a few sites but had only gone about as far as Steve – that is, found some listings but no real information. I remember *Rocket* very well, but am surprised about the dating – April 1956 – because I'd mentally worked backwards and thought it was a bit later than that.

"At the time I had high hopes for *Rocket*. It was indeed another *Eagle* imitator, printed at a similar large-size with semi-gloss paper and some full-colour artwork. But while 'Dan Dare' occupied only the first two pages of *Eagle* (the rest being full of boring stuff like 'PC 49' and 'The Adventures of Harris Tweed'), this new paper was devoted to space adventures throughout! It promised a lot, but didn't really deliver. The comic needed a strong front-page lead, an iconic character, and one was duly manufactured to fit the bill. The result was 'Captain Falcon,' which started promisingly enough with an adventure on the Moon, but it quickly became clear – even to a 12-year-old – that something wasn't right! The artwork was lacking in content, and so was the storyline. I remember there were lots of different types of ray-guns, firing paralysing rays and so on, and one particularly ingenious device which created rings of force around the victim. But the creator of the strip was probably greatly relieved when the comic ceased publication before he had to bring it to some sort of a conclusion!

"More interesting was an interior text-serial called 'The Jungle of Space' by Conrad Frost (a feature editor at Kemsley Press in the 50s with several books and comic strip story-lines to his name, including

many of the 'Rick Random' adventures). It began in the 'Mountains of the Moon' in Africa and introduced an alien humanoid race called the 'Teagues' (which name provoked some mirth in Birmingham circles a few years later) before going on to Mars, which had a major problem with asteroid bombardment (accidentally prophetic, that bit). Otherwise, the comic was a hodgepodge of features taken from all over the place, probably mostly from American newspapers (the name 'Brick Bradford' seems to ring a bell). None of them were very good, and despite the supposed editorial presence of Battle-of-Britain hero Douglas Bader, the comic suffered from not having any real 'heart', as opposed to the *Eagle*, where Frank Hampson & co. believed passionately in what they were doing. As a result, *Rocket* failed to win a significant audience and was merged into *Junior Express* after little more than six months. Perhaps the timing was wrong – too late to be a real threat to the well-established *Eagle* and *Lion*, and just too early to cash-in on the interest aroused after Sputnik in 1957 and the Space-Race era. I suppose it is possible that faint echoes of the title might have continued to exist into the early seventies, as Steve Green suggested earlier.”

Ted White picked up on my dim memories:

“'Brick Bradford' was an American newspaper strip (daily black-&-white, Sunday colour) that occasionally appeared in American comic books like *Famous Funnies* which reprinted newspaper strips (mostly the Sunday pages). He was a time-traveller whose vehicle was a "time top" which apparently *spun* its way through time. The art was highly stylized, but (I thought then) rather handsome.”

Jim Linwood did a further trawl which produced some illustrations:

“A couple of links here, with some detailed information on *Rocket*. I see the first issue had a story by British SF writer Bill Temple ('St. Rockets'):

[Gallery Normal - Comics UK](#)

[Gallery Normal - Comics UK](#)

Dave Wood finally answered my earlier question, 'did he remember *Rocket*?'

“No, maybe because I was doing my National Service around that time. However, attached is a little something YOU may remember.”

I took a look at Dave's attachment.

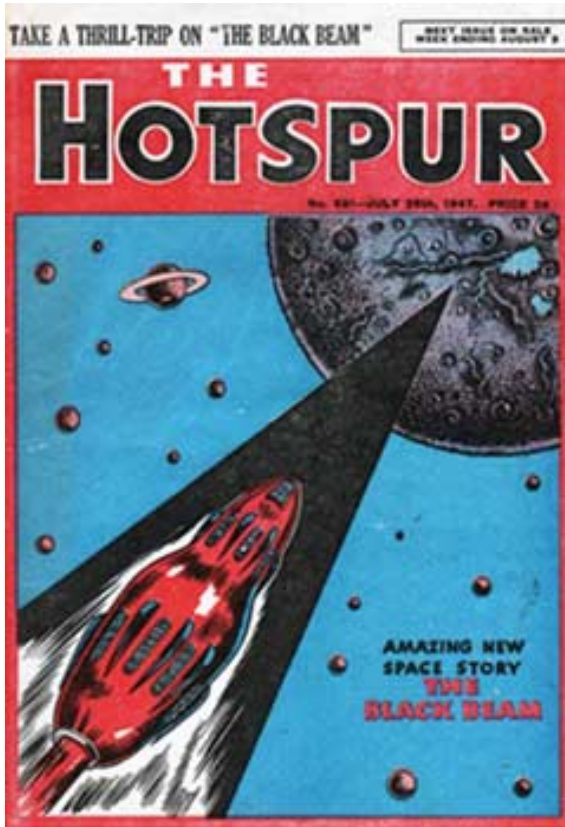
“Ah, good old *Hotspur*! This was one of my favourites among the earlier breed of boys papers which pre-dated *Eagle*. It was regular comic size, 8½” x 12”, and one of the many titles published by the D.C. Thomson Company in Dundee, along with venerable *Dandy & Beano* for younger readers. This is an issue from just before my time (1947) but it shows the sort of 'space' story that made the comics so attractive to me and my friends.”

Rog Peyton vaguely recalls the various other offerings from the same publisher:

“As I remember it, there were four comics in the same stable, coming out on a fortnightly basis (two in one week, the other two in the next) – *Rover*, *Adventure*, *Wizard*, and *Hotspur*. All were text rather than strips. I only took them for a short time around 1950-52. I remember absolutely nothing about the contents. Presumably they all eventually became one, and then died.”

By now Greg's interest was aroused:

“There's something maddening about this but I can't prove it either way. WHEN exactly did *The Wizard*, a comic with pre-war (gosh, I guess we have to specifically say pre-WW2 now) origins actually cease? I was never a *Wizard* reader, only seeing the occasional issue, but I feel sure it either ceased or was incorporated into something else by 1960. Certainly *Rover* (or more correctly *Rover and Adventure*, a slightly unusual British weekly in that it was almost all text-based) was being published in the early 60s and carried on for, well, I forget now even though I spent far too long researching this last night. I still couldn't find a proper bibliography for *The Wizard* – incredibly, it seems not to be held at the British Library, even!



Typical space story in the *Hotspur*

from football clubs, or solemn little illustrations of how to be a spin-bowler and other sporting tips. *Hotspur* had one large picture, I think, ditto *Wizard*, and in my time only *Adventure* had a 2-page comic-strip on front and inside covers. (One story was about finding an unknown civilisation of pygmies deep in the African jungle which had independently advanced as far as being able to build jet planes. Even then I thought this was a bit unlikely).

”*Rover* was noted for ‘I Flew With Braddock’, the exploits of a bomber pilot who flew Wellington and Lancaster bombers over the Ruhr, and Alf Tupper, the ‘Tough of the Track’ who lived under a railway arch, did welding for a living, ate fish-&-chips, yet beat everyone else at the athletics track. *Wizard* had the ‘Amazing Wilson’, who ran in woollen long-johns, went in for memory-training with mental exercises, and who was the first person to run a three-minute mile. He was at least seventy years old and one of his longevity tricks was to achieve ‘total rest’ by relaxing every muscle in his body – though presumably not including his sphincters. *Hotspur* had regulars like ‘Morgan the Mighty’ (a sort of Tarzan-clone), ‘It Takes Guts to be a Goalie’, and the ‘Red Circle’ stories about a boarding school. No illustrations were signed, no authors were credited for any of the stories and it would be fascinating to know who actually wrote them.

“I used to get as many comics as I could as a child – bought almost nothing else for years. It pains me deeply that I followed the usual foolishness of dumping them in the pursuit of giving up childish things. WHY are children allowed to take such idiotic actions? Mind you, I also gave away lots of comics to school friends who seemed less able than I to get them –I still regret (deeply) giving away a long run of *Comet* (with the fabulous ‘Jet-Ace Logan’ strip) to a horrible little oik called Phillip Davies who I am sure never appreciated them. That was forty years ago and I still feel unhappy about it - the momentary joy of sharing and giving is LONG past.”

Well, I couldn't let that go by without contributing, could I?

“Of course, I'm much older than you, Greg, so can remember a bit further back. By 1951 and age eight I was reading all four of the D. C. Thomson 'big boys' comics every week. *Wizard* and *Adventure* came out on Tuesdays, *Rover & Hotspur* on Thursdays. They had respectable pedigrees, *Wizard* going back to 1922 (I had some back-issues from 1943) and the others nearly as far. They were all solid text with a standard-size introductory illustration to each story, and with fairly simple covers. *Rover* tended to have rows of badges

"These comics all contained a lot of reading material – I'm checking a copy of *Rover* here, and in a 10-page issue (20-sides) I estimate there are at least 15,000 words. (Four columns of type per page, each at an incredible 93 lines high, set in about 6-point type, with six words per line, on average. That's about 2200 words per page, times ten, less an allowance for illustrations and covers and the occasional advertisement). Not bad value for threepence!

"And the most important thing for me was that most issues of *Rover* (sometimes *Wizard* and *Hotspur*, too), contained a 'juvenile' science fiction serial; the one I remember best is 'Return from Mars', in which Britain was invaded in 1953 by 'Sarria' (almost an anagram for 'Russia', you'll note). However, a small party managed to hold out long enough to build spaceships, escape to Mars and found a colony. Two hundred years later they have returned, to liberate the old country and experience for themselves that mystical ancient drink, 'tea'. Gripping stuff!



Serial in *Rover*, March 1953

"I also remember a later, slightly less dramatic story which was set in the relatively far future, when the Sun has expanded and scorched the inner planets. Mankind has fled to 'Uto' in the outer Solar System, but unfortunately has omitted to take all the creepy-crawlies upon which life ultimately depends. So an expedition has been mounted to the sun-blasted Earth, to look under rocks for centipedes and similar creatures, and in the process has various adventures among the ruins. It was quite an advanced idea for the times. All this was formative material for a schoolboy who already knew what he liked, but hadn't yet found adult science fiction. Like Greg, I wish I'd kept my collection but it evaporated mysteriously when my back was turned."

Something about all this puzzled Ted White:

"It strikes me as *strange* to describe a publication as a 'comic' and then state it was 'text rather than strips.' Where's the *comics*, then?"

Bill Burns explained:

"A British boys' 'comic' of the 1940s and 50s was not 'the comics', nor was it much like an American

'comic book'.

"According to the Oxford English Dictionary (unabridged), in the singular form 'comic' is short for 'comic paper: A children's paper'. No specific type of content is described, and in contrast to the American 'comic book' the British boys' comics of our childhood, *Wizard*, *Rover*, *Adventure*, etc. were mostly text adventure stories with illustrations, rather like an adult fiction magazine in form, but printed on newsprint. (The OED also distinguishes the plural use, 'comics', as 'the comic strips in a newspaper, etc') A 1910 cite from H.G. Wells gives the ancestry of the boys' comic:

"1910 H. G. Wells Mr. Polly i. 20: One of those inspiring weeklies that dull people used to call 'penny dreadfuls', admirable weeklies crammed with imagination that the cheap boys' 'comics' of today have replaced.'

"The British 'penny-dreadful' of that time, according to *Wikipedia*, is what in the USA was called a 'dime novel': Both of these often involved melodramatic tales of vice and virtue in conflict, often with strong elements of horror and cruelty. Their main audience consisted of young and/or unsophisticated readers, primarily male. With the racy content toned down somewhat for boys in the 1940s and 50s, that still pretty well describes many of the comics with which we grew up. Here's a site Rich Coad found which illustrates this ancestry:"

www-sul.stanford.edu/depts/dp/pennies/home.html

"That's right," agreed Jim Linwood:

"When I had a paper round the newsagent used to call anything aimed at children *comics* and adult's weekly magazines *books*. I think this was universal jargon throughout the trade in England. The comics aimed at boys always seemed to have *sister* magazines. The *Eagle* had *Girl*, but I can't recall the others. The girl's comics all had twee titles like *Bunty*, *Jackie*, *Judy* and *Romeo*. Marion claims they were all sexist crap, preparing girls to be obedient girlfriends and wives – her brothers were too young for the *Eagle* so she cycled to the library for her weekly date with Dan Dare. Frank Richards created an alternate female 'Greyfriars' world with the likes of 'Bessie Bunter' – the stories were much the same though.

"I never took to the text-only magazines, mainly because I was reading proper books from the library as well as the SF pulps and digests. Even in the 50s, their 'Roy of the Rovers'-type stories seemed terribly dated. I think Michael Palin and Terry Jones caught their spirit perfectly in their *Ripping Yarns*. You can refresh your memory here."

www.26pigs.com/comics.html#w

I took a quick look at the 26pigs site and noticed a detail seemed wrong:

"Just a quickie, Jim; I was worried that my memory might be incorrect, since both Rog and the website said that *Rover*, etc. were bi-weekly. However, I've checked the short run of *Rovers* in my possession – from 1953 – and it was definitely weekly at that time, as presumably were the other titles. That would have been about 60,000 words per week, besides all the other things like library books we were getting through – not bad for kids of ten or eleven!"

Jim added:

"I think it was during the war and immediately afterwards that *Rover*, *Hotspur*, *Dandy*, *Beano* etc. were published on alternate weeks because of paper shortages."

Then Sandra Bond came in on Jim's previous comments about the girls' comics:

“Frank Richards only wrote the first half-dozen or so ‘Bessie Bunter’ stories. The editors soon came to the conclusion that a female version of ‘Billy Bunter’ did not appeal to girl readers the way Billy did to the boys – so the stories were farmed out to other hands who toned her down and made her simply a plump and rather dim but well-meaning girl instead of the original rapacious gannet in her brother's image.”

Andy Sawyer, a fellow ex-librarian, replied to Greg's earlier query on *Wizard*, etc:

“Someone's almost certainly posted this but there's a lot of information at this site:
www.britishcomics.20m.com/home.htm

This makes me want to KILL to get my collection back. I mean look at these titles;

THE CLUTCHING TERROR The search for the Tablets of Ziss.

THE VENGEANCE OF JUBAL SMITH Western adventure.

THE VULTURE WITH THREE HEADS Bob Laxton's search for explorer Casper Strang.

THE FIGHTS OF THE FIVE TON GHOST! War adventure with Jum the Giant elephant.

THE BLACK DEATH Plague threatens Earth.

THE FLIPPER MERCHANT DEALS IN DANGER! Story of Todd Hunter frogman.

THE SINISTER SECRET OF THE SILVER SPURS Western adventure.

CAPTAIN STORM 18th Century adventure.

THE LONG, TOUGH FIGHT TO FLY! War story.

BEWARE WHERE THE SKY IS GREEN British athletes in British Honduras.

THE WINGED DAGGER Adventure's S.A.S. action in the Aegean Sea 1942.

MYSTERY MAN OF THE HAUNTED SWAMP Jeff Willard's adventure's in Australia.

“Isn't that poetry in every line? Don't you just love the exclamation marks!

“I'm surprised you can't find locations for these comic collections, but not too surprised as typically they're the sort of things that no institutions think to take. The national Library of Scotland holds *Rover* and *Adventure* and *Rover* and *Wizard* for sure (they were published in Dundee, after all), but I can't find any details so far of whether these are anything like complete runs. I thought the Victoria & Albert comic collection would have them, but I guess they're technically "story papers" rather than comics.

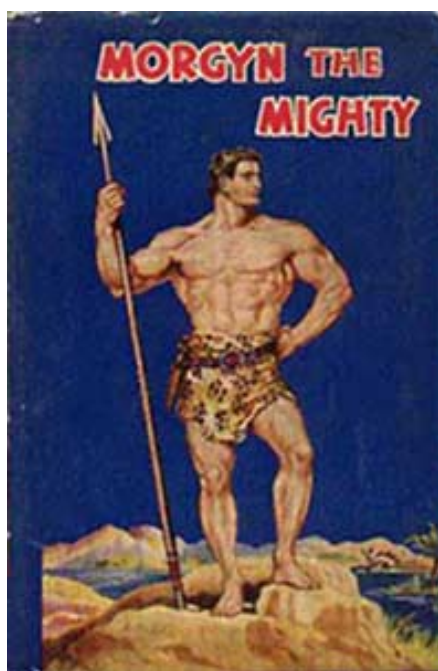
“I suppose my family had more excuse than most in ditching my collection as we moved from country to country every few years. And it was bloody hard to get hold of them sometimes: months would go by before a new consignment would arrive, which meant keeping up with serials was damn hard. But I must have read them regularly up to 1963, and by the time I got into thinking about tracking them down everyone else was doing the same, so I haven't actually seen any of them for years.”

And Dave Wood caught me out on a detail:

“Well, just to put the record straight on one thing (from a boy a bit older than you, Peter). *The Wizard* carried a cartoon strip almost from its very first issue. Every issue a task was set for the characters in the strip. The strip was composed of two small panels followed by one large panel. The two small panels set up the story for the issue and the large panel showed the result. The strip itself would not pass muster in today's clime. Suffice to say it featured two shipwrecked sailors (one fat, one thin) who run the local natives (black curly hair, bones through the nose, etc, etc), and make them build all sorts of weird and wonderful contraptions. *Hotspur* used to feature lots of public school stories (‘Smith of the Lower Third’, etc) and cricket. *Rover* was indeed the football-orientated one, while the contents of *Adventure* were as its title suggested.

“You also said that the illustrations in *Rover* and its stable-mates were unsigned, and the reason for that is because publishers preferred to treat their artists as interchangeable cogs, who could never be permitted to assume greater importance than the characters whose exploits they portrayed, week in week out. However, one exception to the rule was Dudley D. Watkins, the master – inventor of ‘Desperate Dan’ and all the rest of the early *Dandy & Beano* crew. His first signed drawing appeared on the title page of ‘The Broons’ annual published on 17 November 1939, and was signed simply ‘WATTY.’ From 1946 onwards his full name appeared in neatly-lettered block capitals at the foot of thousands of impeccably-drawn pages, in billions of printed impressions. It was a privilege which made him undoubtedly the best known British comic artist of his time, and perhaps of all time; it was also a privilege richly deserved. One of his ‘fantasy’ creations was ‘Morgyn the Mighty,’ and he was also responsible for a very short-lived attempt to produce hard-cover Classics Illustrated for D. C. Thomson. Here’s a link to Watkins:”

www.thatsbraw.co.uk/Biog/DDW-Page.htm



Artwork by Dudley Watkins

Now John Jarrold was all fired-up:

“Other peoples’ remembrances drive my own memories of these comics, of Thursday mornings when I woke up at the age of seven, eight or nine, bursting with anticipation because that was the day when seven comics would be waiting for me when I got home from school. And of reading a hardback book about Matt Braddock, V.C. (*I FLEW WITH BRADDOCK*), allegedly written by his navigator, George Bourne, as were all the stories. I reckon I read that about 1960, having found it in my local children’s library at Crofton Park in South London.”

Which reminded me of my own little wheeze:

“Back in the early fifties I used to ambush the paper-boy (a much older lad of twelve or thirteen) when he made his rounds to deliver the comics on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, after he’d finished school. I knew his route, so would go back a couple of roads to lie in wait, and demand my comics when he came past, thus getting them at least an hour earlier than if I’d waited for the proper delivery! He must have hated me very much.”

Dave yet again....

“There was also *Champion*, which did a lot of Lost World, Boxing and Cycling. Apart from ballast imports from the North American continent and lots of here-today gone-tomorrow cheap and nasty rags, the only strip material for the older child was to be found probably in *Film Fun* and *Radio Fun*. Until *Eagle* ... And don't forget to reread the classic fifties book on the subject: E. S. Turner's **BOYS WILL BE BOYS**.”

Greg was enthusiastic:

“Now that’s a book! A real classic, though I’d recommend anything by E. S. Turner – his *ABC OF NOSTALGIA* (published 1984) is a particular favourite (Oh crikey, what am I saying about myself...). Mind you, **BOYS WILL BE BOYS** was published in 1948, so the material covered rather predates much of what we’re talking about, though could fill in a few details. Worth getting anyway for the section on

Spring-Heeled Jack, which impelled me to get the book *SPRING-HEELLED JACK* by Peter Haining, which is longer but alas, rather less stimulating than Turner's original little essay.

“I don't know whether there are any comics from the 1950s I'd actually pay good money for now unless I had more cash than I knew what to do with. I like *Eagle*, but enough to pay several pounds an issue for? Maybe not. Of course, if I found that fabulous shop with boxes of *Eagle*, *Rover*, *Sun* and so on at 10p each I'd be rushing to the cash-point instantly. Oh I dunno, if I could get all the issues of *Comet* with the Jet-Ace Logan strip in it (1956-59) I'd probably start trying to raise the money, but perhaps fortunately that's a really unlikely option; it was not a particularly popular or well-remembered comic, and I guess very few long runs still exist.”

Still, I've found some of these things do sometimes appear:

“*Rover*, *Wizard* and the others do come up on eBay, and I've bought some copies for around £2.00 each, which I don't think is unreasonable. I've also managed to pick up all three of the 'Space' Kingley books without spending a great deal of money.”

Greg again:

“You know, until we started all this I'd never even heard of Space Kingley.”

Which was my cue for another action re-play:

“Ah, Greg, if *Rocket* was a comic without a strong lead character, then 'Space' Kingley was a lead character without a comic. If only the two could have come together! Bizarrely, though, his only appearance was in three “Annuals” created for the Christmas trade, all undated, but from an inscription in one of those in my possession it appears they came out in 1954, 1955 and 1956.

“My theory is that one of the smaller London publishers (Sampson, Low, Marston) must have noted the success of 'Dan Dare', the weekly *Eagle* and its spin-off compilation volumes, and decided they wanted some of that business. But they realised it was far easier to publish a single 'annual' than to produce a new weekly comic, and they probably figured that the purchasers – moms and dads, aunts and uncles – wouldn't know the difference anyway! We may never know who actually created the character of Robert 'Space' Kingley but I imagine the publishers simply looked for an available writer and a commercial illustrator, and told them to get on with it. And they so nearly got it right! The books are in text form with lavish illustrations, and the artist for all three volumes was R.W. Jobson, whose work is superb, especially in his space scenes which have an almost photographic quality. His 'Comet' class of spaceships look good and have apparently unlimited flight capacity, (although they do have a few design faults – while proof against high vacuum, they fill with water when, in book three, the pilot inadvertently touches-down in the sea!)

“But the writers – different each time – let Jobson down badly. In the first volume we get the story of



The classic book on the subject

our hero's early life and how he joined the 'Interplanetary Rangers.' We meet his sidekick, a useless Digby-clone named 'Shorty' Rowe, and have various unlikely adventures in space and under the ocean. In the second book there is a more consistent enemy in the evil ruler of an alien planet, Lemas, which has plunged into our Solar System, and echoes of 'The Mekon' and his Treens are never far from the surface. The last volume is the most ambitious, where 'Space' commands an expedition to the planetary system of a passing star. All of the stories have occasional flashes of imagination, but sadly, are full of the most elementary errors and absurdities which were obvious even to a twelve-year-old."



The "Comet" class ships look good!



Expedition to another star

Jim Linwood up-dated Greg's earlier remark:

"Thanks for reminding me of E.S. Turner's BOYS WILL BE BOYS. I first came across it as a radio programme in the 50s and got the book out of the library. The 1948 edition ranged from the penny-dreadfuls to 'Dick Barton' while the 1975 edition covers *Eagle*, Spiderman and the Incredible Hulk. I have the 1976 Penguin edition and on the final page Turner wonders 'Will early copies of *Eagle* ever become collectors' items? Will old men gather in the chimney corner to listen to recordings of 'Dick Barton?' [Bookfinder](#) gives £3 as the approximate going price for a copy of the Penguin edition."

'Thanks, Jim,' I said, immediately purchasing a copy....

"...which put me right with an entertaining chapter on the 'Dundee School' - apparently, *Adventure* was the first title from D.C. Thomson in 1921, followed by *Wizard & Rover* in 1922, then something called *Skipper* in 1930 and finally *Hotspur* in 1933. This 'Big Five' proceeded to dominate the world of boys' comics for the next generation - *Wizard* in particular came top in a survey of reading habits of teenage boys, and although *Skipper* was killed-off in 1940 due to paper shortages, the other four continued well into the Sixties."

"Here's another good site", said the indefatigable Dave Wood:

“This one reviews the career of the great British illustrator Denis McLoughlin, who produced hundreds of dust-jackets and paperback covers, as well as a great many British comic books.” en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Denis_McLoughlin

Robert Lichtman agreed:

“Yes, McLoughlin is wonderful. I have some British hardcover and paperback editions of Fredric Brown books (of which I also the American editions) *just for* the McLoughlin covers.

I also have Francis Hertzberg's DENIS McLOUGHLIN – THE MASTER OF LIGHT & SHADE, published in 1995 by Gryphon Books. They offer copies of the trade paperback edition for \$20 at their Website (www.gryphonbooks.com and then search their inventory for "mcloughlin"). It's an excellent reference, although alas there aren't enough *colour* McLoughlin illustrations inside (lots of black-&-white ones, though).”

Steve Green made a good point:

“The weird thing is that the modern *Viz* regularly runs beautifully-drawn pastiches of these comics, yet I dare say 90% of its readership has never seen the original material (like the semi-regular ‘Black Bob’ spoof, ‘Black Bag’, featuring a resourceful bin liner).”



The great Denis McLoughlin

“Gosh,” said Dave, “that’s going back a bit!”

“Black Bob!!! I still have my early fifties ‘Black Bob’ annual!!!
PS: Black Bob was a dog, Ted.”

“Oh yes,” I agreed, “I remember it well!”

“And not just ANY old dog – Black Bob was a magnificent Border collie, who had three times as many brains as the silly old sheep farmer who owned him (Andrew Glenn, see how this stuff sticks in one's mind) who was forever getting into trouble with flooding rivers and so on. But wasn't ‘Bob’ actually a girl dog – or am I thinking of ‘Lassie’?”

Steve wasn’t having any of this nonsense!

“‘Black Bob’ was the name of a fictitious Border Collie from Selkirk in Scotland. Black Bob originally appeared as a text story in *The Dandy* in issue 280, dated 25 November 1944. Following this he appeared as a picture strip in *The Weekly News* in 1946, which continued until 1967. Drawn by [Jack Prout](http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jack_Prout), the popular sheepdog appeared regularly in *The Dandy* from his 1944 debut until issue 2122, dated 24 July 1982. Eight ‘Black Bob’ books were published at infrequent intervals from 1950 to 1965.” en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Bob)

That prompted a technical point from Dave Wood:

“The ‘Black Bob’ strip is typical of something on which nobody has commented, in the way that many British strips had a text passage under the pictures instead of the balloon method. Some even had both.”

To which Steve Green answered gently:

“First there was straight text, with an illustrated heading. Then, we had stories with accompanying illustrations. Next up were illustrations with accompanying text (in the case of the old "Rupert the Bear" strips, this took the form of verses). Finally, we get comics with voice balloons. A gentle evolution.”

Taking absolutely no notice, Dave spread the net a bit wider;

“Some publishers aimed at a higher market than the butcher's boy or the secondary school oik, such as magazines/comics like the ‘Greyfriars’ series (*Magnet*, *Gem* etc), *Chums* and *Captain*. They named the authors of all stories, so you will find many early exponents of British SF in their pages. And, for example, *Captain* carried stories by P. G. Wodehouse. (see attached).”



Which attachment caused much mirth to Michael Lowry:

“I notice the page titled ‘A Magazine for Boys and ‘Old Boys’, and the credit, ‘Edited by The Old Fag’. Ah, two lands divided by a common language indeed!”

One for the old-timers

By now there was no stopping Dave!

“Must stop looking in boxes! Ron Turner – anyone remember those *Practical Mechanics* covers he did in the late fifties and early sixties? And apart from all those ‘Vargo Statten’ covers, he also drew for comics such as *Space Ace*, and for the ‘Rick Random’ adventures.”

Making Rich Coad ask:

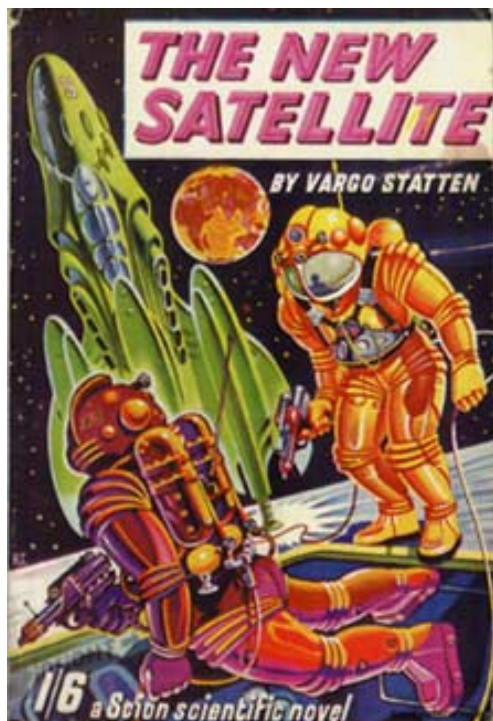
“I wonder how many young boys were inspired by *Practical Mechanics* to immediately start building a rocket-ship and satellite in the backyard out of Meccano, twine, and sticky tape?”

While I followed-up on Dave’s cue:

“Unfortunately, I think Ron Turner’s artwork for ‘Vargo Statten’ and the other Scion covers was awful, too exaggerated and garish, and I’m sure it added to the general distaste with which this stuff was received. However, I’ve recently acquired some issues of ‘Rick Random’ in the ‘Super Detective Library’ series from the 1950s. They’re only small-size picture-books in black & white, but Ron really was good in these.”

Causing him to do yet more exploring:

“To see more of Ron Turner’s work go to: www.bookpalace.com/UKComics/RonTurner/index.htm
And there’s a lot of other material in the gallery”:
www.bookpalace.com/UKComics/UKGeneral/gallerynews.htm



All of which made Rog Peyton stop and ask a question...

“Thanks for that Dave. I had a quick look at the main site and found the covers to all the old ‘Buck Jones’ and ‘Kit Carson’ comics I had when I was young. Looking at the list of artists involved. I saw the name Michael Moorcock! So was Mike an artist? But even more interesting for me was seeing the ‘Super-Detective’ titles. I used to have these and had completely forgotten them. I’m stunned as to the number of these that were science fiction. Did I read more SF in comic form than I realised, before being introduced to H G Wells in 1958? I thought I’d only read ‘Dan Dare’ and ‘Captain Condor’ but these covers....I MUST have read them! Do we know if there were any of ‘our’ guys writing them? Tubb? Bulmer? Bounds?”

To which I had part of an answer:

“Well, Rog, we know at least one SF author was involved, and that was Harry Harrison. He wrote a number of ‘Rick Random’ scripts for the ‘Super Detective Library’ series, a line of small-size (5¼”x 7”) 64-page strip-cartoon booklets which usually featured more orthodox detectives such as ‘The Saint’ and ‘Dick Barton.’ The publisher – Amalgamated Press – issued two titles each month, and almost from the beginning had sneaked-in various ‘space’-themed issues (they even had one titled, ‘The Man Who Owned the Moon’). In mid-1954 with Number 37 they introduced a space-age sleuth, chain-smoking Rick Random, ‘chief trouble-shooter for the Interplanetary Bureau of Investigation’ in the year 2043.

“The first few numbers followed the ‘detective’ brief fairly closely with self-contained stories such as ‘Crime rides the Spaceways’ and ‘Kidnappers from Space, but Rick’s role was a cross between James Bond and Flash Gordon, and the Solar System quickly proved too limited in scope. Very soon he was solving mysteries on an interstellar scale, and the series became almost the only one of these space-adventures to venture into ‘deep space’ with stories such as Harry Harrison’s ‘S.O.S. FROM SPACE.’

“Harry remembered, ‘I was in London in 1957 for the Worldcon. Met Sydney Jordan and wrote ‘Jeff Hawke’ for a while. He introduced me to Andy Vincent, editor at Fleetway, where ‘Rick Random’ was already going well. I started writing it in London, then from Italy, where I went in 1958, and even worked on my last script in New York in early 1959. Then I sold ‘Deathworld’ to *Astounding* and could afford to drop comics. Which I did, even though Andy offered to almost double my rate. I should have said I was quitting earlier!’

“Black-and-white throughout, the series is noted for Ron Turner’s dramatic illustrations of the highly futuristic technology employed in the stories. At least 26 ‘Rick Random’ adventures were published in the six years to 1960, and he reappeared briefly in 1978 in a *2000 AD* ‘sci-fi special,’ which reprinted ‘SOS from Space,’ and a new story ‘The Riddle of the Astral Assassin,’ written by Steve Moore, which appeared in May 1979. At least some of the stories have been reprinted in both Australia and Finland,

and the Finnish fans have compiled an extensive web-site – unfortunately all in Finnish – though there is a useful checklist.”

www.saunalahti.fi/karielk/randlist.htm



A script by Harry Harrison



Interior by Ron Turner

And that was about it – a whistle-stop journey through the best of British comic-books of the fifties and early sixties. However, this little discussion has shown that just about all British fans of a certain age cut their teeth on comic-book adventures before graduating to adult science fiction. And, perhaps, we all remember those days so fondly because we're all still boys at heart (even the girls, eh, Catherine!)

–Peter Weston

And I asked myself about the present. How wide it was, how deep it was, how much was mine to keep.

-- Kurt Vonnegut

[The following article was written in British English. Every effort has been made to retain this language intact and to not translate it into US English. —Earl Kemp]

Ring Ring Goes the Bell

By John Nielsen Hall

We lived on the most southeastern fringe of Greater London. When the family first moved down from the Midlands in 1957, it was still Kent. But Bexley and neighbouring Sidcup were dormitories. Every morning the Southern Region electric trains arrived one after the other to take the men (mostly) away to Charing Cross, Waterloo, London Bridge and Cannon Street. Cannon Street is where my Dad went. He worked for the Central Electricity Generating Board, the public authority that ran the power stations. He worked in the huge black tower block that used to stand right by St Paul's Cathedral, going up and coming down on the same trains, with same neighbours most days. Mum stayed at home, and kept the house. Somewhere in the middle of the period I am recalling here she was pregnant with my youngest brother. Me and my “middle” brother went to different schools. This was a different Britain than the one we live in today. But then, everything was different from today.



The family home in Bexley, South East London circa 1964. From a dodgy scan of a transparency.

Teenagers need Pop Music like ducks need water. All we had originally was the BBC Light Programme, and, at night, Radio Luxembourg fading in and out through the heterodyne whistles of the East German jamming stations. Even harder to hear were AFN in Cologne, or Manx Radio on the Isle of Man, the only legal opposition to the BBC's radio monopoly. I think I first heard Linda by Jan and Dean on Manx. It's lodged in my brain. Only after that did I hear the Four Seasons and then the Beach Boys. To me, they were all Californian (despite the New York/New Jersey origins of the Seasons which I didn't know about at the time). Somehow, I conceived of the idea that Los Angeles must be the greatest place on Earth. I didn't think of it as a place like home, only warmer, where kids Dads commuted by car instead of electric train, and their Moms did the same things, said the same things to their kids. I thought of big cars, big busted long haired girls on the beach and the radio playing rock and roll harmonies all day long. Then one day in about 1963, I was playing with my Dad's big tuner in his hi-fi set up, and I heard the sound of a ships bell “Ding Ding”. It kept on doing that for a few minutes, then a voice “This is Radio Caroline on 199 metres medium wave, broadcasting from the North Sea,” followed by the Fourmost record “Caroline”. I thought that indeed, there must be a God.



The author aged about 14. Even then, too vain to wear his glasses.

Real pirate radio was going on from ships and off-shore forts. It wasn't long before me and my mates were reckless enough to try it from back gardens and isolated woods. We had a number of different stations, all on the old Medium Wave (like everywhere else, we now call it AM) using valve Transmitters built after hours in the school physics lab, with the encouragement of the teacher in charge, he being blissfully unaware of the purposes we had in mind. He went home at night, lit his pipe and listened to The Third Programme.

Schedules for our programmes were nonexistent, though we tried to keep to them. The reason for that was that we kept moving the transmitters around, and they didn't like it. Any transmission was usually preceded by a period of repairs and testing. These must have been the only stations where the audience had to listen to a given frequency for an hour before they heard anything but static. As far as possible the preferred method of programming was to warm the transmitter up, then set the tape going and then leave it.

That way, it was reasoned, if the big bad men from the Post Office turned up, they would only find the gear not us. The Post Office, in those days, was the regulator of the airwaves. It issued licences to broadcasters (except it didn't) public bodies and Radio Hams, dictated what frequencies could be used, and which could not (most of them) and policed the whole thing, with authority to prosecute offenders in Magistrates courts.

We did rather live in fear of the Post Office, whose powers loomed large when we considered what naughty boys we were.



JDT in his pomp. This photo was reunited with its subject by Greg Pickersgill.

But our egos wouldn't let us not do live gigs, and these were usually on a Saturday night and became the focus of a party. I was called JDT (which originally stood for John De Troit—geddit?) and my rival and co-presenter called himself Alexander The Great. My tastes had now broadened to include American acts that had appeared on my radar like The Byrds and The Mamas and Papas but I also specialised in obscure Surf records (I had everything Jan and Dean ever made, was the only person I knew who had even heard of Ronnie and The Daytonas, or The Trashmen), sometimes stuff like Sky Saxon and the Seeds Mitch Ryder and The Detroit Wheels or The Kingsmen—all American white boy rock. I cultivated a faux-American accent, reminiscent of famous wrestling commentator, Kent Walton, who had once been a DJ. Alex played Motown, Soul and early Ska. Radio Pacific was one hot radio station—if you could ever hear it—and our Saturday night live shows played record after record, interspersed with shouted claims of excellence for on the one hand The Beach Boys, and on the other, The Miracles, “Bust Out” by The Busters, followed by “Phoenix City” by Roland Alphonse.

One Sunday morning after one of these nights, I encountered my Dad in the back garden who fixed me with a grim eye, and said something like “Was that you I heard on the radio last night?”

He would have made a good lawyer, my Dad. He liked asking questions he already knew the answer to. I mumbled something like “Might have been.”

All he said was “I don't want any police at the door.” But later he told my Mum that he thought it was

pretty good. Sundays were an interval of spontaneousness in the regular uniformity of the week. The family ate Sunday lunch, Roast Lamb or Roast Beef with boiled vegetables (very boiled after my Mum had been at them) and roast potatoes, the Light programme on the radio, Two Way Family Favourites (a record request show the BBC mounted with the Forces Broadcasting Network, where families and servicemen chiefly in Germany, but also in farther flung places wrote in with sentimental messages of hope for a rapid homecoming. Records could be anything from classical pieces, thru big band and swing, to rock and roll), followed by classic British comedy on the wireless: Round The Horne or The Navy Lark.

But Monday would come and then it was back to the routine. Dad standing on the platform waiting for the 8.11 to Cannon Street, me on my bike, labouring over the hill to school in Sidcup. School had been a bit of a nightmare for me before this, largely because although it was a state secondary-modern school (Failed your 11+? Bad Boy, go to the bottom of the heap) the headmaster had delusions of it being Harrow, and there were prefects and houses and fol-de-rol of all kinds, and the end result was the only rules that counted were the rules of the cane, slipper or fist.

And it was all boys, too. It was not an ideal environment for a weedy short sighted loud mouth—which is what I was. Bullying was a way of life. But I was, at least, “aware”—I knew that I was stuck with the place and I had to make the best of it. So very early on, I started fighting back. After the first few incidents, I decided who it was I was going to whack, and I just walked right up to him in a very non-threatening way and belted him in the mouth, without warning or preamble. Its not that I was very strong or possessed any unknown skill (this was before we knew about Martial Arts), so I certainly came off worst in the immediate aftermath. But after that, I would be very impassive if my books were nicked and then passed around from person to person, or my knickers disappeared from the P.E. changing room, only to reappear at Maths later—and then I would lash out at one or other of those I deemed responsible without warning. This sheer unpredictability of my behaviour gained me a respect that I had previously lacked, so after a while, I began to be accepted and/or tolerated.

Of course, the UK received wisdom in the present enlightened times is that schools do not tolerate fighting or bullying. If the headlines as I write this are any guide, then all that's happened is that the problem has moved outside the school gates. Back then it was not just other kids you had to worry about, the teachers could be almost as bad. They could prosecute a vendetta against you, if you got on their wrong side.

There was a teacher called Mr Downe who rode a little French motorcycle around—we called these things mopeds. However to ride it in the uncertainties of the British climate, he used to wear an enormous heavy rubberised mac that came down to his shoes, the whole topped off with goggles and a helmet not totally unlike an inverted flowerpot. Since the top speed of a moped might be thirty miles an hour on a good day downhill with a following wind, we boys thought this sartorial requirement a bit ludicrous. On one of the pre-recorded shows JDT made some crack about “Mr Downe leaving the school gates” accompanied by a dub of the Thunderbirds theme. This was quite possibly the funniest thing I ever essayed. Most of the school heard it, and every time the bloke appeared on his moped or off it, pupils would unaccountably start whistling that famous march, and bursting into barely repressed giggle fits.

Somehow he came to learn I was at the bottom of it, and then he began a campaign of victimisation. For example, he would ask me to read Juliet when we did Romeo and Juliet in class, when normally he would not ask me to read since I was ahead of the class (maybe even the school) when it came to Shakespeare, solely so that he could pull faces and make cheap witticisms at my passion for Romeo, and thereby attempt to put a question mark over my sexuality. “Queers” were not allowed at my school. They were not allowed in the first place because at that time they were still illegal, but also because the rest of the school, supposedly straight uncomplicated heterosexuals throughout knew what

was decent, and queers were not decent. Fortunately, he didn't last long in the job. He left and began teaching at the school my brother was at. He then carried on in the same way with my brother, as he was dogged by the Thunderbirds theme at that school, as well.

I could practice my sarcasm on someone like Mr Downe, and if I was moved to it, defy or ignore any teacher, but later a posse of prefects would round me up and I would be delivered to the headmaster for a whack with a cane on the hand. There was a system called “the complaints book” where a teacher could order you out of class, tell you to fetch the “complaints book” from the school secretary. You brought it back, and he would usually offer you the option of bending over in front of the whole class and getting some whacks from a “slipper” (gym shoe—plimsoll) on the bum, or him writing in it and you taking it back. He offered you that, because the next day at Assembly, boys names appearing in the complaints book would be read out and they would have to line up outside the Headmasters office for the aforesaid caning. In these circumstances I did my level best to appear to be completely insouciant about the whole process, and told the teacher “it's up to you, Sir” in as sarky and defiant a manner as I could muster. This sent most of them into paroxysms of red faced fury.

But later, I developed a characteristically idiosyncratic way of avoiding teachers whom I had irritated. There was a stream running through the school grounds, and if I had not done the homework, or knew the teacher was going to have a beef about something I had done, I just calmly chucked myself full length in it. Soaking wet through, I would claim to have fallen in, and ask to be sent home. Usually, I asked the school nurse, which poor woman was never in the job more than a few weeks, didn't know me from Adam, and said “yes of course”. Mind you my Mum had some views on it—she had to wash my clothes. That was a minor matter. I was rumbled on one occasion, (by Mr Downe's successor, an Irishman called Mahoney) and made to sit, in cold spring weather on a chair in the sun until I dried out. I did not dry out, I nearly froze to death, but I lived, and I wasn't in class either.

Being an all boys school, sex was a subject of much concern. It was a commonplace to hear some kid, even otherwise quite sensible ones, claim they had had sex with some girl or other. A series of playing fields and a golf course separated our school from the equivalent institution for girls. If a boy made a claim like this, he was expected to embellish it as much as possible with all the details—what did she like, did he suck her tits, did she let him put his dick in her mouth, what was her fanny like? The most remarkable tales then issued forth, and it would have appeared to an interested observer that Sidcup had the most anatomically curious teenagers in Britain. Plus, it went as an unquestioned holy truth that all boys in our school were so well endowed, they were desperately sought after by the girls in very school in South East London. One of us was, in fact, pretty well endowed, and used to hold viewing sessions in the changing rooms. When this was going on, there would be a huge crowd around the P.E. Block door, and a hushed silence for a few minutes, before someone would exclaim in disgust “Oh, roll it back up, for christ's sake”, so diminished was he by the sight of the elephant's trunk hanging halfway to his knee that this particular kid possessed.

I tried to steer a middle course in all this—I had actually had sex, of a sort, with a woman, but the truth was that the woman in question was a friend of my mother's, and hence of a similar age to my Mum, who had in circumstances having to do with me being soaked through again (albeit the weather was responsible, rather than my own perversity), undressed me and slyly teased me and allowed me to climax in about half a second over the enormous bosom she had exposed to my fevered gaze. (Nowadays, she would be branded a criminal and get sent down for umpty years, but I'm happy to report our secret is still intact and my Mum still gets a card from her every Xmas.) At that particular time therefore, I was not very interested in girls of my own age. I did change my mind, of course, but for the time being that experience, which occupied my sleeping and waking dreams, and which I longed to repeat, only increased my anxiety about what we would now call homophobia raging around the school.

This reached such a pitch that raiding parties toured the loos in the lunch periods. Cubicle doors were banged on, and if there was no reply, someone would jump up and peer over the top. Those found to be there for a call of nature only received a thumbs up and a quick apology. Those wanking were laughed at—set upon on their exit if, according to the observer, they had any Dirty Books on them, so that everyone could have a look. Anyone not on their own in there would be waited for by a large crowd until they had to come out, and then savagely beaten up. So as not to come under any suspicion myself, I am ashamed to report that I often led these sorties, entertaining the mob with patter as I jumped up to peer over the locked cubicle doors. In retrospect, I doubt that I knew what a “Queer”—a homosexual—actually was, or that on the mercifully rare occasions that we actually did discover two boys in a cubicle that they were doing what they were doing because they were actually gay by inclination, or out of sheer bloody desperation. But no punishment visited on any boy by the teachers or prefects was as severe as the going over any two boys got, if caught by me and the baying mob at my back. Plus, they never heard the end of it.

But all these things passed, as did school itself. I started my first job, as an apprentice electrician, and with money in my pocket got up to more Radio Fun. Another pioneering mate of mine built a big transmitter (output a whole 100 watts!) in an old Triumph Atlas camper van, powered by a Honda generator. He and I built into the van a couple of Garrard decks (with auto-changers, because we couldn't get any others), a tape machine and, a super piece of American technology, a Radio Shack Eight Track recorder. All the station's jingles and idents were recorded onto this by the simple expedient of putting a mike up against the speaker of the tape deck, but it proved impossible to know what was cued up when you pressed the button. You could go “Okay the time now is...” and press the eight track's button hoping that you would get the nifty little sound we had for the clock ticking, and instead get a plug for a surf caravan in Cornwall.

If anyone was listening, I don't think they ever noticed. To fool the PO, we used to park the camper about three hundred yards from the foot of a TV mast in a thickly wooded area some miles away, the received wisdom being that they could not triangulate on a signal coming from a point that close to a big wattage output close by. I think that was more in the nature of a tale to comfort ourselves with than any kind of technical camouflage. We set up by parking the van, unfolding a big T dipole antenna and chucking it up the branches of an adjacent tree or two, taking the Honda generator out and away from the van, hooking it up, starting up the gen, press the big On switch in the lovingly crafted aluminium chassis of the Tx, wait five minutes to check all the valves were alight and giving off heat, then start the tape with our theme—the instrumental version of “I Feel Love Coming On” on the B side of the hit by Felice Taylor. The opening chords of “Nut Rocker” by B Bumble and The Stingers, being my theme, followed which in turn was followed by me yelling something like:

“Hipster Flipsters Bring Ya Sisters—Are We Gonna Party Tonight!” at the top of my voice, overloading the mike and then crashing in “Wipe Out” by the Surfaris or something like it.

Miraculously, I was never nicked for it. But some of my old school friends were, though we had left school by then. The last broadcast of Radio Pacific from a back garden in Sidcup High Street was interrupted by a bloke in flat cap with a badge from the Post Office. He took everybody's names and addresses, disconnected and confiscated all the gear and that was that. One of my mates, the engineer and transmitter builder, made an appearance before the beak, got fined £10 and had to pay the prosecutions costs—or his parents did.

He is now a senior official in Barclay's Bank, awaiting his early retirement. Richard, the engineer on Pacific, works in radio communications for London Underground. (One of the jingles went “Spinning Around—Deep Underground”). He makes enough that he can commute via the Eurostar from his home in Belgium. I often think of him looking at Kent speeding by on his journey into work and wondering if he remembers all those days. I went to Los Angeles eventually, and it quickly lost its aura of

magnificence. My Dad died in 2003. It's his Rover and his roses you can see in the picture of our home in Bexley. My Mum is still with us, in her late seventies, but as a family we are all scattered about the UK now.

The Labour Government of Harold Wilson notoriously passed the Marine Offences Act in 1967 and made it an offence to service or board the Pirate Ships from UK waters. Similar legislation in Holland eventually finished them all off. Commercial Broadcasting was not allowed in this country until 1972, but now we have so many radio stations (the BBC alone has six, and that's only the national ones) we can't find anything to listen to, most of the time. In the house in the picture, my room was the one on the top. I could look out over Bexley and on a clear day see the Thames and I knew the Thames went out to sea and out there were the ships, and they played the music, to which I fantasised, about my Mum's friend's breasts (I did see them again, after a long while—but a similar thing happened as with Los Angeles), and my own dreams of being—who? Brian Wilson? Or John Nielsen Hall.



John Nielsen Hall

—
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Mere opinions, in fact, were as likely to govern people's actions as hard evidence, and were subject to sudden reversals as hard evidence could never be.
—Kurt Vonnegut, *Galapagos*

[The following article was written in British English. Every effort has been made to retain this language intact and to not translate it into US English. —Earl Kemp]

Charles Platt Made Me Cum

By Graham Charnock

I was 21 when I had my first orgasm and it was all Charles Platt's fault.

Well, we'll come to that later (sorry, pun intended). I've already written for Earl about my gay sex life ["My Gay Life," *eI23*, December 2005] but now I want to explore that even more forbidden realm of sex substitutes.

Let's not beat about the bush (sorry). We're talking Rockets. Huge tubular things standing erect.

I was obsessed with them from an early age, possibly even before I discovered science fiction.

I must admit I never could really get enough of rockets. I didn't realize it at the time, but when I was seeking out second-hand magazines by cycling along the old Harrow Road to a Plus Books store near Ladbrooke Grove, it was probably the issues of *Galaxy* and *Analog* and yeah, even *Nebula*, with big rockets on the cover that worked their strange attraction into impelling me to buy them. Does that make sense? Probably not. But it won't get any better.

When I went to the national anal retentive book depository also known as the local public library, it was rockets I looked out for there also. There was little science fiction to be found amongst those volumes, curiously rebound in a kind of speckled blue-grey material I have never encountered since. But there was fortunately sufficient stuff on German rocketry, with black and white plates of V2s at Peenemunde.

I was excited by these but still not enough to have an orgasm. But then I was only sixteen at the time. I also discovered Tsiolkovsky but he was Russian and didn't know shit all about designing phallic shapes. All his rockets were made of sticks tied together with string, it seemed to me.

Prior to 1968 there was a speculative market in 'real science magazines' predicting how the future colonization of the moon would happen, and I bought these up like chocolate, because the rockets they depicted were always sleek and steely dannish.

Little did we realize that such aerodynamics were not necessary and when the actual event happened in 1968 it would involve a craft that looked like two stick insects coupling.

Still the early Redstones were kind of cute, with their little tail fins, although, again, none of them ever got me off.

So obsessed with rocketry was I, that I even formed my own rocket club, which consisted just of me, drawing plans for rocket engines, which I eventually tried to make on the father's huge metal turning lathe which he kept in the back shed. I succeeded in making a combustion chamber and a venturi nozzle, but then gave up when I realized there was no way I was going to get hold of a reasonable supply of liquid hydrogen.



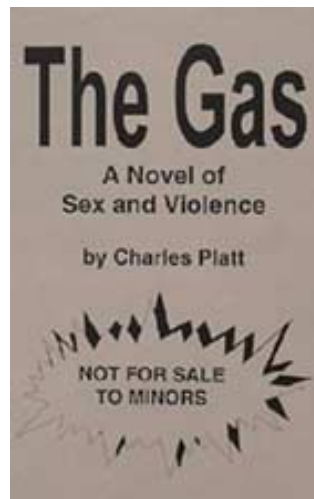
Willy Ley either designed or drew rockets or made films about them, I can't remember now. I just know that at the time I wasn't getting my rockets off. I tried a more direct route to fake rocketry by constructing a six-foot-tall rocket in my garden consisting of tin cans soldered together. There is actually a photo of this, which I may or may not be able to find. I also bought Revell and Airfix plastic kits of rockets and stupidly constructed them rather than keep them untouched in their original boxes, when now they would have been worth a fortune. I also photographed myself with these but fortunately absolutely none of these photos survive.

And still I couldn't come. What was I doing wrong? Well obviously I was eroticizing objects rather than women.

I saw the error of my ways and went for women in a big way. Let me rephrase that. What I did was cut out pictures of women in girdles, bras and other ancillary underwear, from innocent magazines and

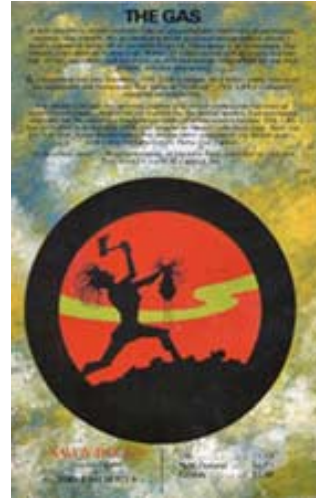
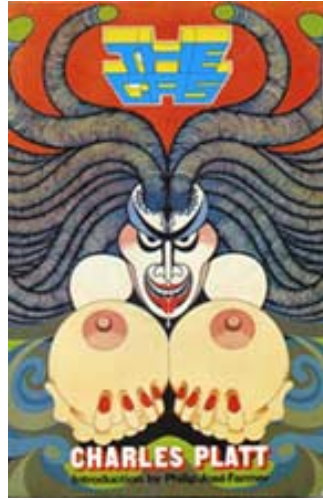
newspapers such as *Titbits* and *News of the World*, and stuck them in a scrapbook. One day my mother walked into my bedroom while I was doing this. She smiled and said something like 'oh, pretty ladies', but how could I possibly come over them after that?

When I was 21 all this changed. Essex House published a dirty Philip Jose Farmer novel where the characters actually fucked each other and yelled and screamed as they did so. This was something I had not come across before (sorry) in the works of Heinlein and Asimov. Reading it gave me a hard on, but that was all. Maybe it was the yelling and screaming that put me off, or the veiled references to Forest J. Ackerman.



Then I got hold of a copy of 'The Gas' by Charles Platt, with more endless fucking and sucking and this time I was obviously ready for it. One night, in bed, I put aside my copy of 'Shoot at the Moon' by William F. Temple which I had just finished reading, and reached out for Charles' novel. After a few pages I noticed that not only my pyjamas but my bed was tented. Then I sensed a moistness on my pyjamas in the groinal area.

Yes it was my first spontaneous orgasm. Charles Platt had made me cum.



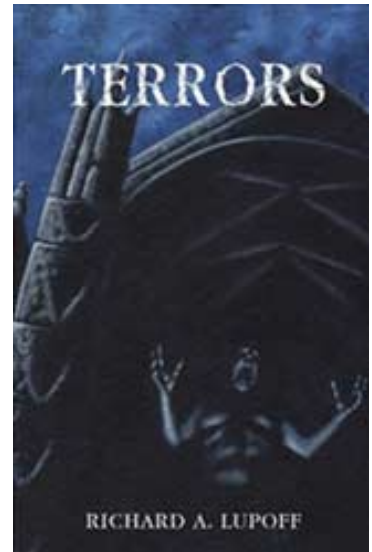
I think that one of the things parents have to do is to teach children hypocrisy, because that's how you survive—by being nice to people who are contemptible. So the kid coming into the world sees hypocrisy and wants to point it out. You're nice to this awful person? What you're doing is a crime, isn't it, Dad?
—Kurt Vonnegut, 10/99 *Salon* interview

Richard Lupoff's *Terrors*

By Earl Kemp

I have always been a sucker for a good spook story. This goes way back to when I was a small child, playing outside late on hot summers evenings. In spite of the heat, there were times when we would build enormous bonfires on vacant lots and sit around them, trying to gross each other out with more repulsive ghost stories than anyone else could come up with. A year or so later the same thing happened around Cub Scout campout bonfires.

Richard Lupoff and I share a number of things in common, having acquired certain of our tastes from the same sources...comic books and radio plays and second-hand magazines...weird stuff...spooks and vampires and voodoos abounding throughout the pages of gloriously exciting pulp magazines like *Weird Tales*, *Thrilling Wonder Stories*, and *Famous Fantastic Mysteries*, H.P. Lovecraft, H. Rider Haggard, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Robert E. Howard, Robert Bloch, Arkham House, and horrors still completely unknown.



For me, reading Richard Lupoff's *Terrors* was a good bit more like taking a joyride with a good friend through some of his most often fondled territories...the favorite nightmare journeys of his youth. Also, by the way, my own favorite nightmare journeys from the dim, distant past.



Richard Lupoff and his *Terrors* (in the foreground) in Mission Hills, CA, March 26, 2006.

This collection of 16 of Lupoff's short stories found origins in such well-remembered places as *Strange Tales*, *Fantastic Stories*, *Amazing Stories*, and *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, and from elsewhere.

Terrors is complete with a fascinating Introduction by Fred Chappell and an Afterword by Lupoff sharing more of the secrets of his terrors.

The first three stories in the volume, "The Crimson Wizard," "The Crimson Wizard and the Jewels of Lemuria," and "The Golden Saint Meets the Scorpion Queen" form a trilogy directly out of Lupoff's past as a young boy who became a devoutly obsessed pulp magazine and comic book fanatic. *There's a lot of us out here and all around...*

There are also parodies and satires of many all-time favorite mythical characters like Sherlock Holmes and H.P. Lovecraft... perhaps the most mythical of all. In other directions, Lupoff goes into outer space with terrors yet to come from the future.

Clearly Lupoff has reached the status of master craftsman; his stories carry the reader along with a casualness and certainty that is rare in today's fiction. He deserves closer scrutiny and many more delicious-to-read tales yet to be told.

This has been my first encounter with an Elder Signs Press book and I was surprised at the quality of

the production values and the readability of the physical book itself.

With any luck, Lupoff and Elder Signs will have a follow-up volume of more superb Richard Lupoff nightmares in the near future.

Writers get to treat their mental illnesses every day.

--Kurt Vonnegut

Maurice and Me*

by Harvey Hornwood

My first meeting with Maurice Girodias took place in 1968, shortly after he had emigrated to New York from Paris, where legal entanglements, a government even more repressive than those with which he had done constant battle for almost thirty years, and his own cavalier approach to the concepts of sound business practice had resulted in the bankruptcy of his famous company, the Olympia Press. Ever hopeful even in the face of disaster—a quality which some saw as blindness and others as vision—Girodias was then struggling to reestablish Olympia in New York City, and looking around for writers who would turn out the kind of “d.b.’s” (dirty books) which had always been Olympia’s staple product—writers with an abundant sexual imagination and an acute shortage of money. I qualified on both counts, having written sex books for one or two of the fly-by-night smut companies that emerged from underground in the sixties, but having been far too lazy and unambitious to actually make a living at it.



Harvey Hornwood

I have been asked by the editor of this zine to specifically exclude Greenleaf from my statement that “most sex book publishers of that period” were habitually slow, if not delinquent, in paying their writers, since he claims that his company was a notable exception to this rule. In my limited experience with Greenleaf I did find this to be the case, so I am happy to make that concession.

—Harvey Hornwood, email, February 20, 2006

A friend who had written for Girodias in Paris had given him my name, and after he contacted me by letter I went to see him at what was then his combination apartment and office on Gramercy Park. My first impression on meeting him was of his surprisingly youthful appearance. He would then have been close to fifty, but seemed to me like a man in his mid-thirties—though his manner exuded what one of the writers quoted in *Venus Bound*, John de St Torre’s book about Olympia, called a “weary charm” his romantic-sounding French accent somehow enhancing both the charm and the weariness. Having seen some of my writing, he agreed that I should do a book for Olympia, and on the spot, with an access of whimsy that was to become familiar to me, came up with one of his more fanciful pseudonyms—Dieter von Laundromat—a suggestion to which I politely demurred. He also asked me to “spice up” a manuscript by another writer by expanding or making up a few sex scenes, a common Girodias maneuver which sometimes surprised, not always happily, the original author when he perused the published version of his work.

I provided the sex scenes, and eventually the book (though the above-mentioned tendency to laziness and prevarication made the process longer than Girodias would have liked. “Where’s that book of yours?” he wrote me at one point. “Deadline already dead.”) was published. I was busy (more or less) on a second one when Maurice, out of the blue, suddenly offered me an editorial job—without having the least notion as to whether I knew anything at all about editing, which is quite a different skill from writing.

Although I had, as it happened, previously worked as an editor, I initially turned down Maurice's offer, determined at that time finally to buckle down and make my living as a freelance writer. -I soon realized, however, that this was a futile fantasy, and a few weeks later I called him back to ask whether the job was still open. Girodias said yes, expressed his happiness at my availability, and suggested that I start the following Monday.

What I did not know, however, and what Maurice, in his typically lackadaisical fashion, had evidently completely forgotten, was that he had meanwhile promised the job to someone else—a lively, slender, brown-haired English girl named Frances Green, who had been doing some free-lance work for him while employed as an editorial assistant at the magazine *Library Journal*. Happy to exchange this staid environment for the presumably more salubrious surroundings of Olympia, Frances had given her notice at the magazine and was all prepared to make the move, when she learned that the proffered position had been appropriated by another. I went to work completely unaware of all this, and wondering why this attractive and outgoing free-lancer, on her occasional visits to the office, seemed to be particularly cool toward me alone.

By the time I joined Olympia, Girodias had moved the office out of his apartment and into two floors of a building on nearby Irving Place. At that time the editorial department consisted of two women, highly disparate in style: Uta West, a neat, self-confident, efficient blonde in her thirties who later wrote a couple of books for Girodias under the pseudonym of Renee Auden; and Beverly Shelton, a fortyish aging-hippie type with a fondness for hallucinogenic drugs and a forthrightly fuck-you-don't-bother-me attitude toward her job. (I once came across a very long but fascinating manuscript by a writer living in Europe, which I thought had a lot of potential. I passed it on for another opinion to Bev, who took one look at its hefty size and promptly deposited it in her bottom drawer, where it stayed for several months, despite my sporadic efforts to wrench it loose. I suppose it eventually got back into the system, but it never did get published.)

The rest of the office staff was made up of a secretary, two or three clerical types, and a “publicist” who soon left because there was no budget for publicity. Which brings us to David Young, a prosperous businessman who Girodias had somehow persuaded to become his business partner. In *Venus Bound*, de St Jorre calls Young “an enormously fat man who was a member of the right-wing John Birch Society.” In fact, while Dave was undeniably corpulent, he was hardly enormous, and if he had any political convictions whatsoever I never heard of them; his most deeply held principle seemed to involve never parting with money in any but the most exigent of circumstances.

In this characteristic, many of Girodias' disgruntled authors would have claimed, he and Maurice were a matched pair. Girodias (in common, it must be said, with most of the other sex-book publishers of that period) was certainly notorious for his habitual avoidance of the disagreeable task of actually paying his writers what he owed them. “Paying his authors,” as de St Jorre points out, “... was not Girodias' strong suit. Girodias found contracts boring, paperwork a burdensome chore, and the notion of regular accounting and payments an illusive ideal.” The writers, understandably, were often resentful. Mason Hoffenberg, co-author of *Candy*, called Girodias “a cheap crook,” and claimed that his business dictum was “Don't pay the writers”; while another long-time nemesis, Vladimir Nabokov, fulminated at having to deal with “the elusiveness, the evasiveness, the procrastination, the dodges, the duplicity, and the utter irresponsibility of the man.”

But there was an important distinction between Girodias' brand of stinginess and that of Dave Young. Along with his undeniable carelessness and irresponsibility, Maurice's parsimony was usually the consequence also of a genuine lack of funds, the necessity to make his slender means cover a host of expenses and creditors' demands; on occasion, when he did have money, he could be surprisingly generous. With Dave Young, however, stinginess was a religion. He was not above asking his employees to submit fictitious expense accounts in lieu of a raise, thus saving him tax money. Checks

were occasionally sent out “accidentally” unsigned, so they would have to be returned, delaying the depletion of funds. In his bibliography of Olympia, Patrick Kearney points out that whereas the books published by the company in Paris had featured high-quality materials and workmanship, the paper, covers, and binding of the New York products were comparatively shoddy—“almost indistinguishable from the rest of the American porno paperback offerings.”

As I gradually became immersed in the operations of the company, this fiscal constipation began to disturb me, particularly in regard to publicity and promotion. For just as it had in Paris, the Olympia Press in New York occasionally—and sometimes in spite of itself—published a book whose contents were of interest beyond the prurient. While there may have been no masterpieces on the order of *Lolita*, *Naked Lunch*, or *The Ginger Man*, there were books of genuine literary quality scattered, however sparsely, among the unending line of “d.b.’s.” The trouble was that no one knew about them, and given the dearth of money spent on advertising or publicity, there was no way anyone could find out. Dave Young clung grimly to the notion that spending money on anything was a bad idea, and Maurice, for all his undoubted courage and ambition, “made little effort,” as de St Jorre says, “to cultivate the literary scene, and did not understand how the American publishing world worked.”



Soon after the New York office opened, Girodias published two highly original and visionary novels, *Screen* and *Oracle of the Thousand Hands*, by Barry Malzberg, an intense, fiercely intelligent writer who would soon become well known and respected in the science fiction field, and who also turned out a series of pseudonymous sex books, more conventional but not without a certain special quality of their own. Barry was an amazingly prolific author who seemed to be able to write as fast as he could think, with no sacrifice of quality. I once asked him enviously how he was able to turn the stuff out as quickly as he did. His offhand reply: “I bought an electric typewriter.”

Diane DiPrima, the somber, red-haired goddess of Beat poetry, was persuaded by Maurice to write her “memoirs,” which I edited. According to DiPrima, each time she submitted a portion of the manuscript, Girodias would send it back demanding “More sex!” so that the *Memoirs of a Beatnik* were more erotic than literary, climaxing with a hilarious, though probably imaginary, five-way orgy with DiPrima, Alan Ginsberg, and Jack Kerouac among the participants.

While DiPrima, serious and reserved in person, seemed an incongruous choice for the role of lively pornographer, one who didn't was Steve Cannon, now something of an elder statesman of the African-American literary community, but then a highly ebullient young hipster with an infectious grin and all the uninhibited enthusiasm of the raunchy fourteen-year-old heroine of his rambunctious novel *Groove, Bang and Jive Around*. The Olympia office was also occasionally brightened by the vibrant presence of Ferdinand William Vasquez-d'Acugno, whose first novel (writing as “Marco Vassi”) *Mind Blower*, had indeed blown my mind when I first read it in manuscript. Polymorphous, profound, and unabashedly sensuous in both his fiction and his life, Marco went on to write several even better novels for Olympia before moving on. Marco died of AIDS in 1989, depriving the world of a talent that should have been better known.

But because Girodias and his Olympia Press were still considered as mere pornography mills, and because the books were distributed for the most part only to the limited market that specialized in such wares, and because, again, there was no publicity, these books made no stir. To my mind the biggest lost opportunity—financially if not aesthetically—came when Girodias secured the manuscript of a book called *Speed*, by William Burroughs III—a more or less autobiographical chronicle of amphetamine addiction by the son of the same William Burroughs whose notorious heroin-spiced

novel *Naked Lunch* Maurice had originally published in Paris. Here, I thought, was a natural best seller, on the name alone. Just one notice in *Publishers Weekly*...one ad in the *New York Times Book Review*....

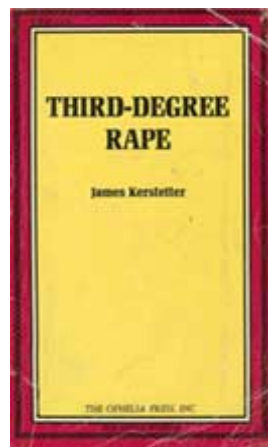
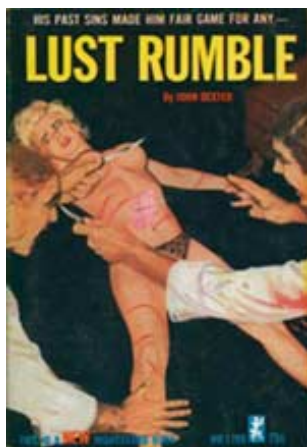
But no. I explained, I argued, I wrote memos, but to no avail. Maurice shrugged. Dave was affable but stubborn. And nothing happened. *Speed* came out—printed, for some reason, on particularly cheap newsprint paper—and disappeared into limbo with the “d.b.’s.”

Along with the talented and the more or less well-known who drifted in and out of the Olympia offices, there were of course the run-of-the-mill writers, many of them impoverished hacks to whom churning out sex books and then trying to wrest some money for them out of Girodias was simply another scam in their day-to-day struggle for existence. Some were charming, some obnoxious; many were high most of the time, for this was the late sixties, when pot, hash, and LSD were not only ubiquitous but also relatively cheap. Most were young, but there was one scruffy, bearded middle-aged fellow known only as P.J., who had submitted a manuscript about a young lady who had a romance with a stallion. The book was accepted, spiced up with extra sex scenes, and retitled *The Horse Mistress*; and payment was even authorized—but herein lay a problem, as the writer refused to divulge his full name, insisting that he was P.J., period. But no bank would honor a check made out to a pair of initials, so P.J. insisted that he be paid in cash. Our accountant refused, and an impasse ensued, until some circuitous and probably illegal scheme was contrived to get around the problem.

Paul Johnston wrote as P.J. and “Justine Paris.”

—Patrick J. Kearney,

A Bibliography of the Publications of the New York Olympia Press

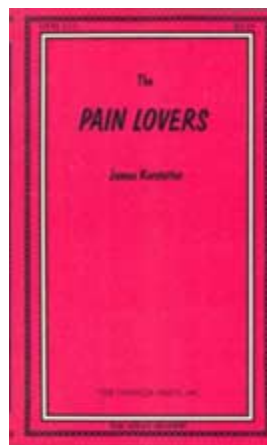
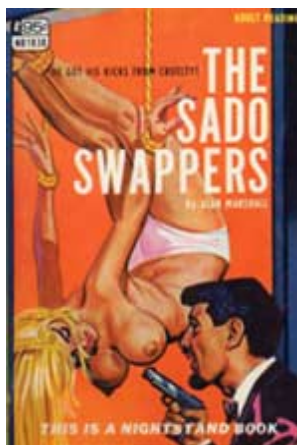


About six months after I started at Olympia, Uta West resigned to pursue a writing career. This opened up an editorial spot, and Frances Green, whose promised job I had earlier unwittingly usurped, was finally brought on board. Though she may still have harbored some understandable resentment toward me, we got along quite smoothly, and when eventually I learned what had happened, and explained my innocent role in the affair, all was more or less forgiven. Over the months we became quite friendly, though there was no actual romance between us—until one day, on a sudden crazy impulse worthy of my employer himself, I asked her to marry me! Quite wisely, she refused; but to my surprise and delight, suggested that we try living together and see what happened. Which we did, and what happened was that we stayed together for thirty-six years (so far), and actually did get married

somewhere along the way. So I have Maurice Girodias to thank for bringing Frances into my life, though it is somehow typical that in doing so he nearly destroyed the relationship before it ever got started.

When Olympia was preparing to publish a rare non-fiction book called *Inside Scientology*, an exposé by a former member of that “church,” the scientologists, as is their wont, tried every means, legal and otherwise, to have it stopped. One official took an editor to lunch and tried to bribe her, actually laying an envelope full of cash on the table between them, which—more in amusement than indignation—she refused. The scientologists may have gotten their revenge, however. De St Jorre and others have speculated that they may have been at least partly responsible for bringing about the mysterious events which finally led to Girodias' deportation a few years later.

In spite of some arguments and many differences of opinion, I had always gotten along well with Maurice, who was generally even-tempered in person, however vitriolic he might get in some of his writings. This began to change when one day a longhaired, ethereal-seeming young wraith of a girl named Sharon Rudahl dropped off a manuscript she had written under the name of “Mary Sativa.” To my surprise her picaresque tale of youth, sex, drugs, and love turned out to be a perceptive, tender, and moving novel which illuminated the “hippie” generation somewhat in the same way that Kerouac's *On the Road* had done for the Beats a decade earlier. The other editors shared my enthusiasm, and we spent some time and effort on coming up with a suitably sensitive and evocative title for the book—which I must admit I don't remember. Whatever it was, however, it was not fanciful enough to suit Maurice, who in consultation with Marilyn Meeske, an old friend and associate from the Paris days newly arrived in New York, came up with his own title—*Acid Temple Ball*.

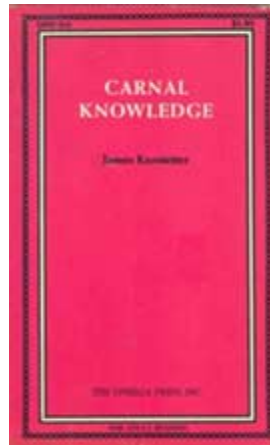


This appellation struck me as appallingly crass, meaningless, and inappropriate, and I immediately wrote Girodias a memo expressing, at length and in no uncertain terms, my dismay both at the new title itself and at his casual disregard of his editors' opinions. It was the only time I ever saw Maurice actually lose his temper. He came into the editorial office with his face twisted in anger, plunked the memo down on my desk, and informed me emphatically that that was all very well, but *he* was the publisher, and it was *his* company, it was *his* title, and that was the way it was going to be. And that's the way it was.

All three of my Greenleaf books were republished by Olympia (*Lust Rumble* [NB1769] as *Third-Degree Rape* [OPH235], *The Sado Swappers* [NB1838] as *The Pain Lovers* [OPH222], and *Passion's Pupil* [PR198] as *Carnal Knowledge* [OPH215]), and all three under the byline of

James Kerstetter. This was strictly my doing, in my capacity as an editor at the New York Olympia office. It was an underhanded ploy, but it was all mine.

—Harvey Hornwood, email, November 2, 2005



Although there was no further hostility between Maurice and me, I had the definite feeling that I had written one memo too many. And as it happened, Girodias was soon looking to open up an editorial slot for his friend Marilyn Meeske. I suspect also that things were not helped by the fact that in passing by the office one day he happened to glimpse Frances sitting cozily on my lap. (It has been suggested that there was a hidden puritanical streak somewhere inside Girodias the freewheeling pornographer, though many of his customers would have been disappointed to learn that this innocent cuddle was probably the closest thing to an orgy that ever took place inside the Olympia offices.)

Shortly after that Maurice called me in and explained to me that he desired to resume our former author-publisher relationship. And so after a little over a year at Olympia I was out. My subsequent dealings with Girodias were friendly, however, and Frances stayed on with the company until its inevitable demise a couple of years later.

Impractical, unworldly, irresponsible, and devious Girodias certainly was, but I am glad to have known him; he was also charming, witty, visionary and, above all, courageous. He battled censorship, prudery, and stuffiness wherever he found it. He struggled incessantly—and joyously—for literary and sexual freedom in the face of governmental repression, legal tribulations, and constant financial hardship. He never lost his taste for attacking and outraging what he called the “Universal Establishment.” He was a flawed and not always admirable human being, but he fought the good fight.

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We have to continually be jumping off cliffs and developing our wings on the way down.

—Kurt Vonnegut
