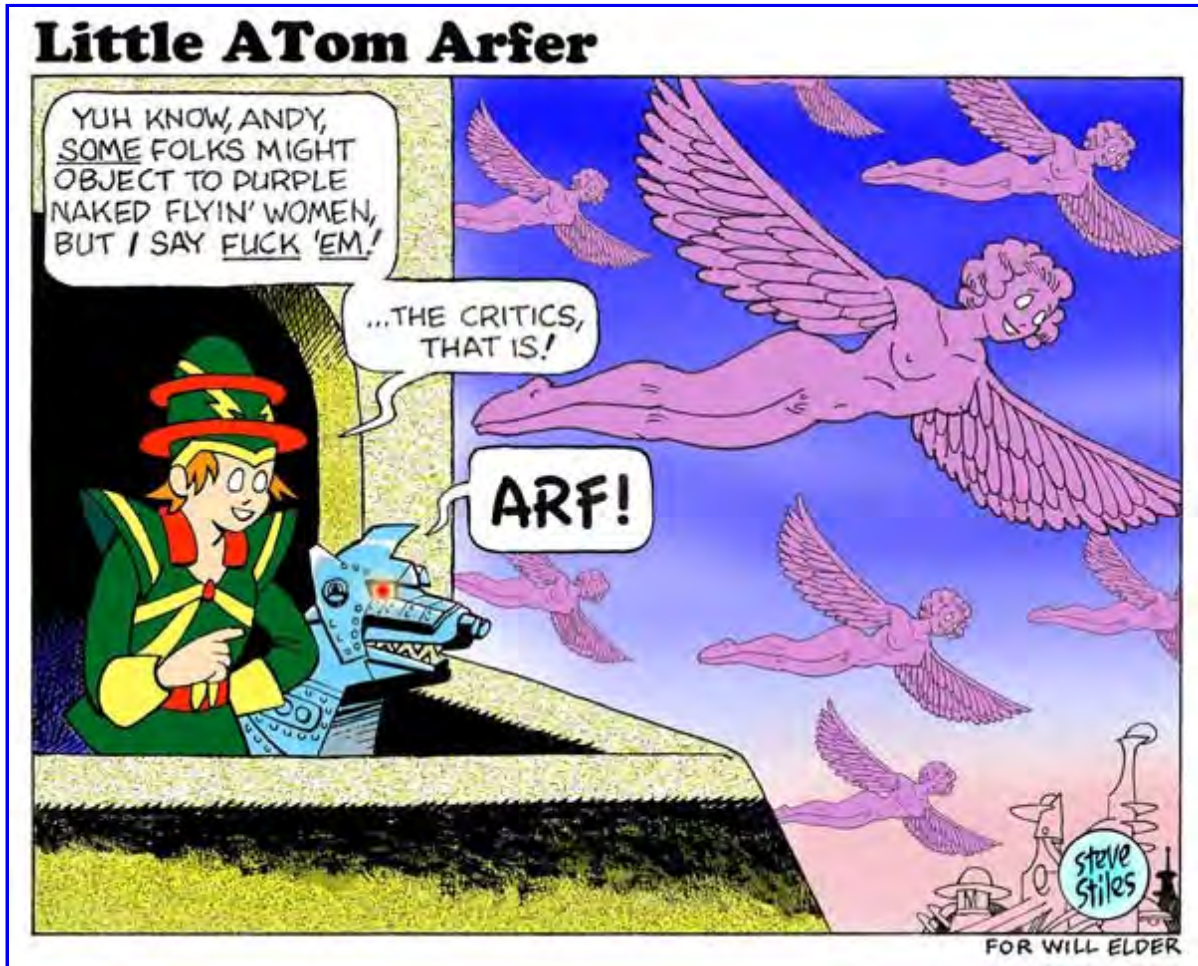




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Little ATom Arfer
by Steve Stiles

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I couldn't survive my own pessimism if I didn't have some kind of sunny little dream.
-- Kurt Vonnegut

THIS ISSUE OF *eI* is for Barney Rosset, Astrid Myers, and *Evergreen Review*. In the world of sleaze and infamy, it is in memory of Iris Owens. In the strictly science fiction world, it is also in memory of Ajay Budrys, Thomas M. Disch, Ann Green, Jack Speer, and Stan Winston.

#

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: Victor J. Banis, Harry Bremner, Bruce Brenner, Jay A. Gertzman, Tony Jacobs, Patrick Kearney, Dick Lupoff, Marilyn Meeske, Charles Nuetzel, and Robert Speray.

ARTWORK: This issue of *eI* features original artwork by Steve Stiles and Ditmar, and recycled artwork by William Rotsler.

We are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful what we pretend to be.

-- Kurt Vonnegut, *Mother Night* .

...Return to sender, address unknown.... 29

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.

We are human only to the extent that our ideas remain humane.

-- Kilgore Trout (Kurt Vonnegut's *Breakfast of Champions*)

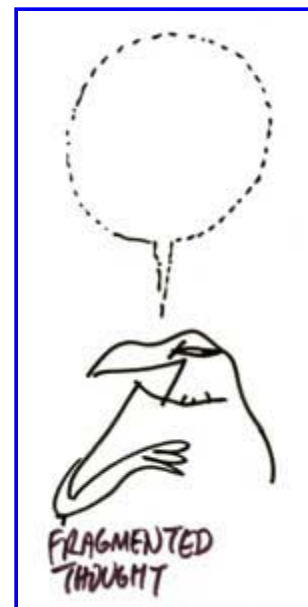
Thursday June 6, 2008:

Steve Stiles: This cover was one of the first pieces done in Photoshop where I really worked with multiple stacked layers, filters, color opacity, wet & dry brushes, et cetera. I made some mistakes, but for the most part I think I got it right. Lots to learn....

This is a relatively new toy for me, so I really want to get good at it (eventually!). My main problem these days is time; my more ambitious fanac has taken a major hit due to schedule crunches, household tasks, and like that, and Photoshop does take more time than pen & ink sketches. It's frustrating and I hope fans will be patient with me.

#

Curt Phillips: Next time I work overnight and have charge of the Surgery Desk (and the free photocopier...) I'll try that program that reformats test files into book layout on *eI38*. Worth keeping for the Panshin article and much else too.



Friday June 6, 2008:

Dick Lupoff: Many thanks for the latest *eI*. As usual, a feast for the eye and the mind. I hope you'll forgive one nitpick in this otherwise remarkable issue. To wit, Alexei Panshin says that Groff Conklin's *Best of Science Fiction* (1946) was the first hardcover science fiction anthology. But what about *Portable Novels of Science* (1945) edited by Donald A. Wollheim?

Conklin's book was unquestionable a splendid volume, and an important one. But it was not the first.

#

Alexei Panshin: Wollheim's book contained four novels—Wells's *The First Men in the Moon*, John Taine's *Before the Dawn*, Lovecraft's *The Shadow Out of Time*, and Stapledon's *Odd John* -- only one of which was originally published as science fiction. Nor was this collection marketed as science fiction but "as novels of science."

Give Wollheim credit for the first anthology to identify itself as science fiction—*The Pocket Book of Science Fiction* in 1943. But Conklin's *The Best of Science Fiction* and Healy and McComas's *Adventures in Time and Space* in 1946 were the pioneer hardcover science fiction anthologies.

At least, that's my story and I'm stickin' to it.

Tuesday June 10, 2008:

Alexei Panshin: So *that* is why Frank Lunney wanted to take photos of me. He didn't explain and I didn't suspect. If he'd told me, I would have donned my Bil the Cat t-shirt and put on a show.

It was cool that you were able to present the relevant magazine and book covers to illustrate "Sympathy for the Devil." I can't say I've ever seen the dust jacket of *The Best of Science Fiction* before -- only naked copies like the one I have.

Tuesday June 10, 2008:

Dave Locke: Very much enjoyed *e*I*38*, particularly Frank M. Robinson's "Skimmed Milk". Definitely will have to catch MILK. Hell, Sean Penn, Josh Brolin, and even Frank M. Robinson... Okay, based on its release date there it is, squeezed into my electronic notebook between the 22nd James Bond movie (the second one with Daniel Craig playing Bond), and the remake of THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL (good news is that Kathy Bates is in it and it's rumored that John Cleese will be, too, and bad news is that it has Keanu Reeves playing Klaatu instead of properly typecasting him and having him portray Gort). No, seriously, I want to see MILK.

I'm definitely a fan of Frank's writings, in particular THE POWER, an old favorite which I've read many times including when it first came out in 1956. And, of course, WAITING, the follow-up to THE POWER. And I enjoyed his most recent novel, THE DONOR, which was a damn fine suspense tale.

Nice to see the LoC from Elinor Busby, as well as the photo of her which you took this year. I spent a great deal of time with her in Apanage, the childrens' fantasy apa. I don't read children's fantasy (as Buck Coulson used to say, I didn't like kids much when I was one and I haven't mellowed much), and why I was in there for so many years is a deep dark secret which isn't worth knowing.

As usual, I enjoyed *e*I**. Keep those pubs coming.



Saturday June 21, 2008:

Barry Malzberg: Alexei Panshin's essay (in #38) on Heinlein's "Solution Unsatisfactory" is extraordinary; one of the two best literary essays I have ever read (the other is Adrienne Rich 30 years ago on Emily Dickinson, a landmark in scholarship). Profound. As I've already written Alexei, he should be proud of himself; *I* am proud of him.

Wednesday July 9, 2008:

Lloyd Penney: Thanks for *eI37* and 38. Not sure how I missed 37... Great to finally meet you in Vegas, but even at a perfect venue like Corflu, there's never enough time to chat and trade ideas. Guess we'll just have to stick with the fanzines. Comments generally ensue...

37... Thought I recognized that cover. Looks great in colour. If only we had SF magazines with circulation of 400,000. China has the sheer numbers to do it. If possible, an anthology of Chinese SF in the future would be an interesting read, to see if Chinese adventure goes outward to space or inward into the mind.

Rob Latham and David Hartwell know best here...I've always thought that SF was unique among the literary genres for interactive feedback, and in some ways, fandom and the conventions they hold help out the marketing of the author's product, which belies the observation that so many of us seem to make up a good portion of society's lunatic fringe. The survey of Canadian publications Latham mentions...was that the list that Taral Wayne and Michael Hall worked on in the 80s? I would also like to see how Richard Lynch is coming with his history of fandom in the 80s, and when it might see print. I get the feeling that when it comes to fanzines, we've been negligent in researching the field, and it may be beyond anyone with sufficient time, interest and money to catch up with any scholarly study.



Shirts? What shirts? Yvonne and Lloyd Penney.
Photo by Earl Kemp, Corflu 08.

Jack Williamson was writing SF from the 1920s right up to the time he passed away, and all of it was great writing and reading. I must find a list of his entire oeuvre, see what I've read, and see where the gaps are. Seeing it's just past, it would be great to read a report of the tribute, and read what was said.

Earl, reading the article about Charles Willeford made a question rise to the surface. I've read that only 10% of all the artwork that made it to the cover of pulp magazines was saved and is in collections. I see so much artwork that made it to the covers of soft-core novels. Has any of that artwork been saved?



38...Vonnegut may have thought that Democrats were sappy...given that Republican presidents seem to be more and more further right of Attila the Hun, I'd say that a change in US politics is what's desperately needed. Even Democrat politics are far to the right of the politics of most other countries. The closer our politics are, the more likely we'll get along with each other. I also agree with him about getting rid of the guns, but unfortunately, the Supreme Court doesn't, and America's gun woes will continue.

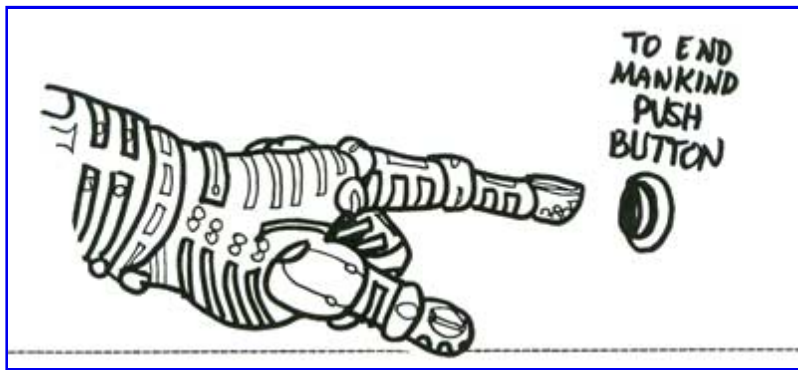
The response I often get from non-SF zine editors and writers is that SF zines are by and for geeks/nerds /dweebs/etc. Even those who are looking for other zines aren't looking for ours. Have we closed ourselves off from others that much, as Chris Garcia implies?

John Purcell, any more progress on the Warner collection? I'd like to visit the Eaton collection, because my own experienced with them were quite positive. I wish there was a well-kept collection of fanzines available in a library around the Toronto area.

I have always felt that while it's record is probably no better than anyone else's, SF can be used as a predictor of coming events, and if nothing else, a cauldron in which to mix ideas and see what comes up as part of the mix. Some authors use that cauldron well, and others don't seem to bother with it. The story part of the process is one thing; the political part is something else, I guess.

The more description of Heinlein's "Solution Unsatisfactory" I read, the more there's parallels to Dubya's abuses of powers, and the constant erosion of personal liberties. Could RAH have foreseen this kind of abuse, or was this a foregone conclusion, that the USA would eventually abuse liberty and freedom the same way the Soviet Bloc used to do? Probably not, based on this essay... I'd like to hear Panshin's opinions on Iraq and Afghanistan, and in comparison's, I wish we could all hear RAH's take on eight long years of Dubya.

Pat Charnock's Corflu report...ah, there we are out at Red Rock. Yvonne wanted to go because she lived down that way years before, but found that the pathway was just too rocky, and rough on her feet. There I am in the picture on page 74, with a camera bouncing off my gut on the far left of the picture. Lots of fun, and as Pat says, that's something that doesn't usually happen at a convention.



The annual ppbk show on Sleazy Sunday...well, good to see 4SJ and Ray Bradbury still with us, even if they are still confined to wheelchairs. I still think the age of the collector is fading, but it is still good to see that even soft-core porn novels have a collector's base, and a fanbase, too.

Latest activity...I worked with some students at the International Academy of Design & Technology on creating a radio play version of "The Drop" by John Christopher, from the March 1955 issue of *Galaxy*. Bless their hearts for finding it, and it was great fun. I played two roles in the play, the lead role of Capt. Bob Newman (Newsom in the story itself), and your congenial Host. What we did might have been better likened to the TV version of "The Drop", which was the very last episode of the old anthology series *Tales of Tomorrow*. Can't wait to get my own copy!

Off it goes into the ether, still vibrating...many thanks, and I look forward to the next thrilling chapter. Stay cool! (For the record, it's 84F here.)

The Luros Skin Magazines

By Tony Jacobs

To the fetishist, little things mean a lot.

The little initials “PN” on the cover of certain 1960s magazines mean more than “Parliament News,” the company that distributed them. That “PN” stands for high-quality quirk; created by Milton Luros – an artist, entrepreneur, and student of Eros – perhaps as significant as Marilyn Monroe, Dr. Kinsey, Lennon and McCartney, and the bikini in the flowering of the sexual revolution and blossoming of the second half of the 20th century, a new world largely without censorship.

Luros’ company was the grandly named “American Art,” and his thousands of Parliament News magazines (and Brandon House books) celebrated the human body and explored the commercial art of selling sexual desire. Lovingly produced, Luros’ Parliament magazines remain unique. Thick glossy pages hold crisp, alluring content that delves into quirky fetishes that seem rooted in mid-century pop-culture – Boozy Babes, All Things French, Beatniks, etc., not to mention a prominent focus on “fetish” – but *friendly fetish* as opposed to the darker East Coast BDSM journals – high heels, hosiery, lace, fringe, eyewear, feathers, dolls, you name it – all presented alongside the prevalent body fetishes – breasts, buttocks, legs, and hair. Cleverly, Luros made props and settings as erotically charged as the boobs, plump rumps, and luscious leggy ladies they adorned.

The Luros touch was that of a creative child at play with the biggest box of crayons in the world. Rather than simply creating one magazine and fulfilling a monthly issue, year after year, Luros spawned dozens and dozens of magazine series – new ones popping up every quarter! Titles included these that follow (and many more!):

<i>Affair</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Nylon Jungle</i>
<i>Arcadia</i>	<i>Girl-to-Girl</i>	<i>Pagan</i>
<i>Babe</i>	<i>Harem</i>	<i>Partytime</i>
<i>Bachelor girls</i>	<i>Heels and Hose</i>	<i>Peace & Love</i>
<i>Bachelor Party</i>	<i>High-Time</i>	<i>Private Club</i>
<i>Belles of Paris</i>	<i>His & Hers</i>	<i>Pussycat</i>
<i>Birds of Paradise</i>	<i>Hookers</i>	<i>Quickie</i>
<i>Black Busts</i>	<i>Honey</i>	<i>Rapture</i>
<i>Black and White</i>	<i>Hot Box</i>	<i>Rendezvous</i>
<i>Journal</i>	<i>Hot Spot</i>	<i>Revels</i>
<i>Black Magic</i>	<i>Intimate Hours</i>	<i>Satan's</i>
<i>Black Silk Stockings</i>	<i>Jaguar</i>	<i>Scrapbook</i>



Tony Jacobs. Photo by Earl Kemp, LAPB 2008.

<i>Blockbusters</i>	<i>Jubilee</i>	<i>Score</i>
<i>Body Shop</i>	<i>Kingsize</i>	<i>Secret Hours</i>
<i>Bottom</i>	<i>Lace Undies</i>	<i>Sensation</i>
<i>Broadside</i>	<i>Lark</i>	<i>Showboat</i>
<i>Candlelight</i>	<i>Lasses & Glasses</i>	<i>Showcase</i>
<i>Casbah</i>	<i>Late Date</i>	<i>Show Off</i>
<i>Centerspreads</i>	<i>Late Show</i>	<i>Snap</i>
<i>Champagne</i>	<i>Lovables</i>	<i>Solo</i>
<i>Click</i>	<i>Love Date</i>	<i>Soul Fire</i>
<i>Cloud 9</i>	<i>Love Time</i>	<i>Soul Mates</i>
<i>Cocktail</i>	<i>Love World</i>	<i>Sparkle</i>
<i>Cordial</i>	<i>Line and Form</i>	<i>Sugar</i>
<i>Coquette</i>	<i>Madcap</i>	<i>Thigh High</i>
<i>Electra</i>	<i>Matinee</i>	<i>38-26-34</i>
<i>Eve's Rib</i>	<i>Midnight</i>	<i>Tip Top</i>
<i>Femina</i>	<i>Model's</i>	<i>Tonight</i>
<i>Film & Figure</i>	<i>Scrapbook</i>	<i>Touch</i>
<i>Flame</i>	<i>Mood</i>	<i>Trios</i>
<i>French Follies</i>	<i>Moonglow</i>	<i>Trojan</i>
<i>French Frills</i>	<i>Nightcap</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>Friends & Lovers</i>	<i>Nightline</i>	<i>Yes</i>
	<i>Night People</i>	

The Luros Look

From the earliest times, the Luros magazines were united by their look, which included double-thick glossy cover stock and a glossy heavyweight interior page stock. While the use of these types of heavy stocks might lead one to imagine a cavalcade of richly reproduced color imagery, instead Luros presented predominantly black-and-white nudes, with only four to eight color pages per issue. However, there was something unique in the way Luros prepared his B&W nude images. First, there was the use of color tinting, wherein the entire image was bathed in a particular hue – golden yellow, purple, or something similarly vibrant. This simple creative decision lent the Luros men's magazines continuity with the earliest roots of commercial erotic photography -- the French postcards. Those illicitly sold snapshots were often hand-tinted to enhance the verisimilitude of the image. The tinting was one aspect of an “old-timey” personality that helped lend the Luros magazines an aura of the *Erotic*, as opposed to the All-American *Sex Appeal* of the *Playboy* universe.

Another element of the Luros look was his specific manner of airbrush retouching as a means of enhancing his magazines' nude imagery. The Luros B&W nudes were given another dimension through highly detailed airbrushing which accentuated the roundness of the models – often giving their proportions a distinctive slippery sleekness as well as a “bursting-out” quality. While other magazines used airbrushing to erase blemishes and smooth over imperfections both physical and photographic, Luros wielded the airbrush as a tool to plump up and *voluptuize* his ladies – to create a shimmering sensuality with light and dark. So, rather than the “Playmate of the Month,” Luros conjured a “playmate of the

mind,” an erotic dream that hovered between the realistic and the abstract by use of artful black and white reproduction. Indeed, Luros was stretching to create a new “American Art”



The Luros Sense of Place

In contrast to the *Playboy* shoots, which often captured the “Playmate” in a high-end bachelor’s den or her own girly boudoir, the American Art/Parliament magazine models were shot in more common “real-life” settings (often masculine in nature) such as mechanic’s garages, stock-rooms, printing factories, back offices, apartment bathrooms, kitchens, living rooms, or outside in Everyman’s woods, backyard or beach.

Fetish (What She Wants)



So far, the discussion of the Luros look has described the barely visible aspects of reproduction and printing, tricks learned from Luros’ lifetime as a commercial graphic artist in the world of mid-century magazine publishing. Now, it is time to speak of the obvious Luros distinction of the Parliament magazines – the focus on Fetish. From the earliest publications like *Cocktail*, *Cloud Nine*, or *Lace Undies*, Luros decidedly attached props, wardrobe, and ornament to his naked models. What may have at first appeared to be a strategy to enhance the attractiveness of his sometimes less-than-stunning models,

soon became a signature style -- the use of established elements of the erotic, such as black lace, nylon stockings, high heel, and strings of pearls. The Luros look included a celebration of the physical form adorned in regalia of fetishistic eroticism. No longer did the men's magazine reader have to rely on the relative attractiveness of the models -- now every one of them exuded a definite certified sexuality by virtue of their minimalist garments and props. Through a cycle of "sexual by association," the eroticism spread from black lace to sunglasses -- as in the 1963 inauguration of the Parliament mainstay *Lasses With Glasses*.

After a well-established career as an illustrator and art director, Milton Luros left the East Coast and came out to California in the late 1950s. Once relocated in Los Angeles, Luros cooked up a variety of uniquely quirky, but very well produced men's periodicals -- thick glossy pages with crisp photography of vaguely fetishistic nudes. They were a smash. Leaving Hefner and his competitors to duke it out for newsstand dominance, Luros found distribution exclusively through liquor stores, smoke shops, and other primordially male venues. In those dank dens of manliness, his magazines sold like hotcakes with syrup. Building upon their success, he linked up with nudist magazine veterans Stan Sohler and Ed Lange to form SUN-ERA, which quickly became a leading force in nudist magazines pushing the line between the legal display of nudists to the legal display of housewives, students, and models who liked to be naked as a jaybird



But, in order to properly market his products, he needed to get his nudist magazines onto the same racks as his men's magazines. And thus, he established his own distribution company, Parliament News Distribution -- cutting his overhead and ensuring each of his quirk, fetish, and nudist publications would have a place on the racks of the liquor stores, smoke shops, adult bookstores, and other dank dens of manliness that had become his exclusive sales venues. It is a little considered fact in the periodical business that the one who controls distribution, controls the product; and now Luros could wholly control his products.

Once the distribution pipeline had been built, it was only a question of how to fill it and keep it flowing and here Luros was more than able. Truly relishing the human form for all its aesthetic wonder was only one aspect of Milton Luros' strengths as a publisher. He was committed to producing magazines of superior quality both in form as well as content -- as evidenced by the bright glossy paper stock that preserves his sumptuous, quirky photo

spreads to the present day.

The last chapter of the Parliament magazine empire introduces a new character, Reuben Sturman, the Cleveland-based porn emperor whose distribution domain extended from Detroit to Denmark. For years throughout the 1960s, Sturman had been interested in partnering or simply buying out Luros' magazine production/distribution operations (to conquer the West coast of America), but his advances were consistently rebuffed. When Federal prosecutors were hounding Luros in the early 1970s, Luros finally relented and transferred Parliament News to Sturman, and over the next several years, Parliament magazines and Eros-Goldstripe magazines intermingled titles, text, photographs, and editorial content. Sad to say, the genuine passion for eros as art that burned in Milton Luros (and made his productions unique) was sorely lacking in the post-Luros Parliament magazines and the adult entertainment world became a less interesting place with his departure.

Lovingly produced, Luros' Parliament magazines remain unique. Thick glossy pages hold crisp, alluring content that delves into quirky fetishes that seem rooted in mid-century pop-culture – boozy babes, heels and hose, French frills, leather fringe, feather boas, clunky costume jewelry...even librarian “cat” glasses! Cleverly, Luros made props and settings as erotically charged as the boobs, plump rumps, and luscious lesbians they adorned.

While his magazines carried the cryptic “PN,” his books bore a miniature castle – the colophon of his paperback arm, Brandon House. By the time of the castle logo, Luros had been dubbed by his associates “King of the Magazines” – for he controlled the production and distribution of hundreds of publications over half the country. That was the Parliament/American Art kingdom and Luros benevolently ruled the libidinous mindscapes of his readership from the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific Ocean.

Perhaps it was his only means to compete against the big money bunny, *Playboy* and its copycats *Gent*, *Dude*, etc. who controlled the mainstream market. Parliament titles like *Nylon Jungle*, *Tip-Top*, *Lasses With Glasses*, and *French Frills* were all code words for niche-sexuality's enthusiasts. The King's welcome flags were flying. All aspects of sexual curiosity were warmly invited within the castle walls.

A little Luros history ...

Before he was King, Luros was a prince of sorts. Born in 1911 in New York. From WWII on, he worked as a commercial artist and later art director, engaged by a variety of pulp magazine outfits -- putting out titles like *Dynamic Science Fiction*, *Double-Action Western*, and *Real Men*.

Toiling as a freelancer in the declining years of the pulps must have been a frustrating experience for a creative and ambitious young man. If he harbored dreams of mastering his own destiny in the pulp jungle, they were fast fading – for no longer did the pulps rule the newsstands. By the early '50s, the pulps' own distribution system was now given over to circulating the better-selling paperbacks and girlie magazines – the latter's nearly nude cover models easily quashing any competition from even the most seductive of girly-art pulp covers.

In mid-life at 44 years of age, Luros surely felt himself not unlike the desperate soul fighting off the over-eager vulture that he painted for the July 1955 issue of *Man's Life*. Clearly dying in the desert, Luros' alter-ego was obviously shouting "I'm not dead yet!" A few months later, the same desperate middle-aged character appears on another Luros *Man's Life* cover – this time battling not the anecdotal "wolf-at-the-door," but a grizzly bear-at-the-door – clawing away at his bloody face. There was no question, Luros needed to find a way out.



A little known fact that belies Luros' lofty ambitions even as early as 1955; he had already formed the company by which his empire would later be known and boldly named it: The American Art Agency.

So, in 1958, with the final collapse of the pulp distribution network looming, Luros took his family and his incorporated vision "American Art" to California to establish a beachhead for sex magazines on the West Coast.

Working as a hands-on packager/publisher at first, he set up shop in what would soon be the locus of all adult entertainment production, the San Fernando Valley – first in North Hollywood and then in Studio City under the company names Studio Publications and Tower Publications respectively. Late 1958 saw his first magazines appearing on the racks of liquor stores – with a winning strategy that will soon become apparent. Evident from the start was his novel approach of focusing in on an eroticized theme, physical quirk, or specific sexual fetish and presenting features, fiction and of course, lots of evocative nude photography with that thematic context. *Cocktail*, his first men's magazine promoted an obvious complement to '50s fantasies of naked ladies ... liquor!

Cocktail #1 (and later *Cordial* when it was published under the Parliament News/American Art banner) appeared on high quality stock with a full color insert gimmick -- combining nude women and cocktail recipes. Perhaps Luros expected to sell ad space to liquor advertisers? It never happened. In fact, Parliament never carried any advertisements – except for mail-order photo sets, stag films, and ...other Parliament magazines!

Twenty years in commercial graphics taught Luros plenty of tricks and he was ready to use them all. American Art magazines had a particularly hot sense of design – established by

ideas as simple as interspersing different colored paper stock at intervals which cleverly and inexpensively turned the magazine into something special – a little art piece itself.



Luros' early magazines experimented with all sorts of graphic conventions. 1959's first issue of *Cloud '9'* included a "life-size" fold-out on heavy stock – an intriguing innovation no doubt aimed at one-upping the *Playboy* Playmate centerfold.

Endless are the tales of Luros' personally supervising the photo shoots, poring over the contact sheets, ordering retouches, and demanding specific color saturation balances in the printing process itself. The last element was made easier when, after a few years of success, Luros set up his own printing operation that he elegantly dubbed The London Press. It must be mentioned that the purchase of the printing plant was a costly move, whose financing may have proved more costly than he imagined, as it necessitated his contracting with a NYC-based mafia loanshark for the sum of \$10,000.



Aside from the graphic flair, Parliament magazines had other distinctive "Luros touches." He offered news of international progress toward sexual freedom, analyzed of the sexual themes in established "great works" of art, and frequently presented his nudes in healthy, playful scenarios (... as well as alongside stuffed animals). A few years hence, he would search the far corners of the world to purchase and preserve the hidden heritage of erotica -- the artistic inquiry into human sexuality.

In this light, I would like to propose that contrary to any attempts of the 1960s courts to describe Luros as a pornographer, he was rather...an “erotographer.” The root definition of pornography being “the writing of prostitutes,” I feel that “erotography” or the “writing of lovers,” stands much closer to his sense of purpose.

In his quest to serve his readership with access to quality pop-erotica (paying special attention to quirks and fetishes), Luros had to push at the barriers of what was then legally acceptable in literary and visual terms. With the charismatic First Amendment Rights lawyer, Stanley Fleishman, by his side, Luros skillfully navigated through the obscenity courts and triumphed for his cause.

Make Pubic Public!

Though showing pubic hair was definitely illegal for men’s magazines, the courts had granted legal dispensation to traditional nudist magazines in 1958. Luros with his love of the body, orchestrated an alliance with some of the leading photographers of the traditional nudist movement. With official sanction of the some of the nudist groups, Luros’ founded a new venture known as Sun-Era – which was free to publish pubic.



By 1963, his catalog was enormous. Such was his restless imagination and commercial verve that Luros invented and issued new titles every quarter, some lasting only a couple

issues, some stacking up voluminously over the years.



The Sun-Era titles alone were staggering...*Nude Living, Popular Nudism, Nudist Photo Field Trip, Nudia, Nudistory, Nudist Newsfront, Continental Nudist, Nudist Adventures, Nude Lark, Urban Nudist, and Teenage Nudist(!)*. Within a few years, he would add the *Jaybird* magazines, creating a hybrid nudist journal/skin mag phenomenon with *Jaybird, Jaybird Journal, Campus Jaybird, Metropolitan Jaybird, Urban Jaybird, International Jaybird, and Jaybird Safari* (among many others!), that broke all barriers!



And Luros set his presses to more mainstream projects as well, including the left-leaning political/cultural magazine *Broadside* (which still managed to feature a nude spread in every issue) and for the aesthetically-inclined photo enthusiast, *Line and Form* which presented the more artistic efforts of the Parliament photographers, such as William Graham's psychedelic nude studies.

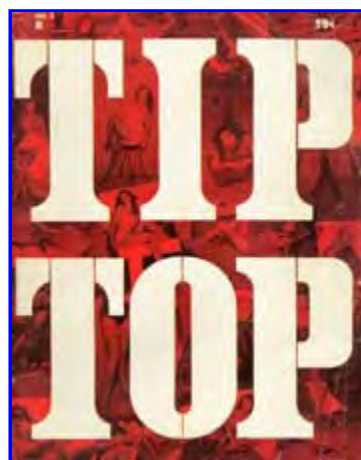
Luros' success and reputation as a honorable businessman attracted creative types from all fields, including illustration artist Bill Edwards and fetish photographer Elmer Batters – who served as “advisory editor” on *Tip-Top* (which devoted itself to the allure of silk stockings and became one of Parliament's longest-running titles). In addition, it was in the Parliament pages that hippie sex icons Michelle Angelo, Uschi Digart, and Roberta Pedon

first posed.

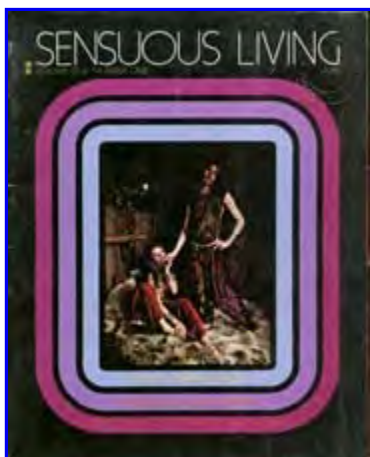


Throughout the '60s, Luros expanded on all fronts -- his corporate development as creative as his magazine design. As American Art's holdings diversified, Luros promoted awareness of classic erotic art, in the process helping to defeat as many social stigmas as he and lawyer Fleishman destroyed legal impediments. Soon, Luros and "American Art" were changing. Showing more skin sold more magazines, but by decade's end, the trend was to show not just skin, but the sex act itself – something Luros was simply not inclined to do. Still, he found design innovations to keep Parliament magazines fascinating.

Love Date 1.1 (December, 1969) is a triple-threat design extravagance and re-thinks the very nature of the late 1960s' sex magazine. In it, Luros revisits his pulp days and presents a pictorial narrative -- with images and text on each page. And *Love Date* is double-sided, like the old Ace-Double paperbacks of the '50s, so readers must flip it over after they finish one story in order to read the next. The third twist was that the text and picture blocks were printed so that the magazine had to be read turned ...horizontally.



Luros didn't lose his flair. Though he was close to selling his empire in 1972, he supervised the launch of one final magazine that stands among his finest creations. Returning to the avowed sensuality of his early nudist magazines, Luros presented *Sensuous Living*. This clever magazine promotes nudism and sensual beauty with almost none of the sneaky feeling of exploitation that could never be ignored in the *Nudist* and *Jaybird* efforts. *Sensuous Living* is thoughtful. It is full of instruction and exploration toward becoming a more sensual person – not just for sexual pleasure – but for the inherent rewards of greater appreciating ourselves and the world around us – a sincere case for loving all the shapes, smells, feelings, and experiences of life itself. Luros aligns his form with the content – printing the mag not on the signature Parliament high gloss stock, but *alternating* the stocks throughout the magazine – rough (but acid-free) paper for pieces on tactile experiences (bananas, watermelon, home-made clothing) and high-gloss for visual explorations – which were actually some earlier color spreads from *Line and Form*.



As mentioned, this was Luros' last hurrah, for within a few months, he would "transfer" his Parliament magazine, book, and distribution empire to the Cleveland-based adult-distribution mogul, Reuben Sturman.

Though the true reason for the sale to Sturman may never be known (Luros died in 1999), it all seems rooted in that \$10,000 mob loan that Luros took out in 1963. As was inevitable, Sturman too had become entangled with the mafia throughout his consolidation of porn power in the '60s. Throughout the decade, he had acquired control of almost all adult book and magazine distribution east of the Rocky Mountains (with the exception of William Hamling's

Greenleaf/Reed Enterprises and Mike Thevis' Peachtree Distribution in some southern states), handling thousands of Parliament magazines and Brandon House book titles in the process. It has been said that Sturman regarded Luros as the best producer in the business and had been badgering him to sell his operation for years.

By the end of the '60s, the mafia had found ways to squeeze and control adult entertainment in every American city. Yet, ensconced in his West Coast kingdom, Luros was a notable holdout. He even went so far as to try to settle with his original loan-sharks/mob suitors in court! Though he won the case, it bought him little more than time – for within a few years, "American Art" was in Sturman's and the mobs' control.



Like Luros, Sturman was a masterful innovator. Throughout the '60s, he went from hawking periodicals in Cleveland to controlling the adult product trade from Detroit to Denmark. He'd packaged several successful book lines, pioneered sex toys and "marital aids" under the "Doc Johnson" brand and designed and produced private viewing machines for 8mm loops. According to legend, Sturman had also devised a business maneuver much like the Xerox corp., whereby he leased the viewing machines to adult bookstore owners and then charged them for the movies to show – which somehow usually resulted in Sturman owning the entire bookstore!

When he took over Parliament/American Art in 1972, Sturman and his brood set to work like modern-day corporate raiders – cutting back on production expenses and

repackaging much of Parliament's vast library of photographic imagery into specials and cover swaps – whereby extra magazine covers were united with odd-run interiors and sold as new issues.

Not to say that Sturman brought nothing to Parliament. Over the years, he had developed his own material, first via the Connoisseur book lines, and later the various Eros-Goldstripe book and magazine series. These imprints were of a distinctively twisted, harder-edged tone, exploring the allure of discipline, bondage, and torture. Eros-Goldstripe's aura of erotic brutality was most often buoyed by the cleverly appealing cover art of Bill Ward and Gene "Eneq" Bilbrew.

Over the next several years, Parliament magazines and Eros-Goldstripe magazines intermingled titles, text, photography, and editorial content. Sturman continued to issue Eros-Goldstripe brand books and magazines, re-packaging older American Art material in creative ways and (much less frequently) producing new material for the old Parliament magazine titles, such as *Tip-Top*, etc. It is emblematic of the transition that Luros' fine *Sensual Living* was swiftly retitled *Nude Living* and produced without the loving attention to detail described above.



For the five or six years that the Luros staff lingered on, the magazines retained their feel of quality, though there was a great deal of content that was both old and familiar and new-ish content that was simply alien. Sturman introduced new Parliament titles, but often nefarious ones, which spoke to his interests like *Teen-Time*, *Torrid Teens*, and *Willing Teens*. Fans of the old Parliament, not hip to the undercurrents of porn management shifts, must have been confused.

Sad to say, the genuine passion for Eros as art that burned in Milton Luros (and made his productions unique) was sorely lacking in the post-Luros Parliament magazines and by early 1980s, when his American Art materials had been re-cycled and repackaged to the limits of market tolerance, the adult entertainment world became a less interesting place.

But, as with any true artist, all you have to do is pick up a copy of his work, in this case a Luros "PN" magazine... ponder it, soak in the details and begin to feel the connection to something great. That tickle you feel inside might just be from *French Frills*.

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All cover scans in this article courtesy Tony Jacobs collection. They were originally Luros' own file copies and Tony Jacobs bought them from a warehouse auction. Special thanks to Stephen J. Gertz, "Everybody Loves Milton," [e117, December 2004](#).

I want to stay as close to the edge as I can without going over. Out on the edge you see all kinds of things you can't see from the center.

-- Kurt Vonnegut

Oh, Gloria!

By Victor J. Banis

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan, a stately pleasure dome decree....

No, wait, that was another dream. Actually, the only thing the experience I am about to share with you had in common with Mr. Coleridge's was, they were both what might be termed recreational exercises. And while he found himself up the River Alph without a paddle—notwithstanding the cutest little dinghy in the navy—I found myself in the company of a very lovely strawberry blonde. Or, as she was once described, “a free-loving, free-wheeling nympho.” Eat your heart out, Joan Collins.

Some of you may remember Gloria. My very first published book, *The Affairs of Gloria*, was her story, pretty much as she revealed it to me. That was back in 1964, and the book was published by Brandon House, which was a Luros imprint, and got us all into trouble. Milt and Bea, of course, and a passel of others along with Gloria, and myself were stuck in Sioux City, Iowa for months while a jury of our peers (it says so in small print somewhere) decided whether or not we should spend a decade or so in the care of Federal overseers.



Victor Banis and Ann Bannon, LAPB 2008.

Now, I liked Gloria a lot. I can't speak for the nympho part of it, I'll have to take her word for that, but she was definitely freewheeling. She was also generous of heart and spirit, admirable qualities in my opinion.

She also nearly got me sent up the river, although admittedly in a nice cabin cruiser rather than a lowly dinghy. Nonetheless, everyone knows that while that boat might have been beautiful in design, the cockpit was not really furnished to my tastes.

But, that was 1964. A lot of water had gone under the bridge since then, and more than a few dinghies, and here and there, happily, an enormous tanker from which one might be generously refueled, which is, as I see it, what those monstrous big things were created for. Speaking water-travel-wise, that is to say. Today, I understand that they can manage refueling in the air by somehow negotiating these long hoses while everyone is in rapid motion, but I think that is perhaps a trifle *avant garde* for my tastes and I shall stick with the familiar.

To be honest, with all the river traffic and the refueling and an occasional landing, I had all but forgotten about Gloria over the years. So, it was indeed a surprise to realize on this particular afternoon that I was not alone in my bed, as I had earlier thought (this was the kind of recreation that sometimes involves nodding off).

I lay for a moment puzzling over who or what was in bed with me, and why? My partner,

Sam, was out, on a shopping trip of some sort. I had not heard the noisy overhead garage door, so he had not come home. It was not he, then, who had just sat down on the edge of my bed. Surely not a burglar; this did not seem burglar-y behavior.

What, then? Had someone sent me a Christmas present ahead of time? It was only June. Who shopped that early? Still, hope springs eternal. I opened one eye just the teensiest bit, and peeked.

If this was my Christmas present, they'd gotten the order mixed up. I spied a bit of red-blond hair. So far, so good. But then, there were those enormous bosoms, and a pair of see-through scanties...Wait. I had seen this picture before, on the cover of a book. My eyes flew open.

"Gloria," I exclaimed, sitting up in the bed.

"In the flesh," she said, smiling. "I'm glad to know you still remember me."

"How could I forget? But..." I shook my head to clear the cobwebs. "But, what are you doing here? And how...?"

"How did I manage it? Exactly the same as I did before. You know, you think about someone and, poof, there they are."

"Only, I wasn't thinking about you, so whose poof are you here on?"

"Well, you were thinking sexual thoughts, weren't you?"

"Cheap guess. The rise and fall of my chest must have indicated that I'm still breathing. Of course I was thinking sexual thoughts."

"And, our partnership was definitely a sexual triumph, if I must say so myself."

"Which you must, because I certainly wouldn't. You call that a triumph? Four months in Sioux City? And ten years in a federal playpen hanging over my head?"

"Oh, fiddlesticks." She got off the bed and put her hands on her generous hips. "You were acquitted, weren't you? Once those lovely Midwesterners read my story...."

"Stop." I got up too and sat in the big overstuffed chair by the bed, where I felt less likely to doze off in the middle of our conversation. "You know none of them so much as scanned a page. Well, maybe that one prissy-preacher-sort, in the privacy of his boudoir, but he didn't share the experience with the other jurors, I am quite sure."

"Makes no dif. You were acquitted. And may I mention, I made you famous."

"Did not."

"Did so. I helped to make you famous, at least. If it hadn't been for me, and that trial, who'd ever have cared about the books that followed. Do you think for a minute Earl Kemp would ever have looked at that insipid Jackie Holmes if he didn't already know of your Sioux City adventures? Which means me, bunny. You owe me, if you want to look at it like that."

Hmm. I suppose if you gave her a very generous benefit of a doubt, she might have a point. But, even so..."Well, let's say that might be true," I conceded, in a mellow mood from my earlier recreation. "What exactly is it that you think I owe you? Let's face it, sugar, this is a dream. You are but a figment of my imagination."

She giggled. "Well, as ever was. But, not a very up-to-date figment, if you'll pardon my pointing that out."

"Up to date? You were state of the art for 1964. That's what got us in trouble, it seems to me."

"That was forty years ago. Forty five. Let's face it, by today's standards, I am positively frumpy."

I had to laugh out loud. "Now, honey, you could never be frumpy. You? I'll bet that prissy-preacher-sort is still polishing the woodwork thinking of you. The lovely Gloria, whose affairs caused a positive scandal."



"And today wouldn't even raise an eyebrow. Look at this." From somewhere she produced a copy of the book. A mint copy, I noted. I wondered how she had done that. I'll bet Lynn Munroe would cough up serious bucks for a copy this pristine. I flipped through the pages, wondering if I'd get to hang on to it when I woke up.

"What's wrong with it?" I asked.

"What's wrong? Where are my lovely titties?"

"They're right here, on the cover, for the whole world to see."

"On the cover, yes, and what about inside, on the written page. I got globes, melons. Even in the ladies' romances today they get breasts. In the better ones, titties. Do you think I want to be remembered forever for my melons."

"We couldn't say tits back then. You know that."

"That's exactly what I'm talking about. I'd like to have my tits back, if you don't mind. And what about those men I kept getting paired with."

"Listen, I fixed you up with some real hunks. There was hardly a chapter went by when someone wasn't poking something in you."

"Yes, and poking with what? Not a real dick among them. Lance? Brett? The Count? All I ever got from any of them was a member. *A member?* That sounds like something you'd pick up from a Boy Scout troop. Just once I want to sit down and settle back on a real, man-hard cock. Is that so difficult to understand?"

"No. I can understand it quite easily. But, honey, that story," I waved the book back at her,

“Has been told. You can’t go home again. I mean, honestly, look at the plot. It just wouldn’t work today. An innocent young girl from the boonies? Even those boy scouts aren’t that innocent today.”

She thought about that for a moment. “Okay, then we’ll update it.”

I shook my head. “Even today we couldn’t write about the boy scouts. And don’t even think about the brownies.”

“That wasn’t what I had in mind. What I was thinking was, we’ll give me a whole new story. And a whole new look.”

“Such as?”

Such as...how about Miss Lovely in Leather?” I blinked, and suddenly the scanties were gone, and there she was, all in black: a leather bustier: leather skirt cut low enough on top to reveal her belly button, and high enough at bottom to reveal a patch of gold (could you get away with that kind of exposure where she’d come from, I wondered? It would certainly be cause for alarm in West-by-God-Virginia); sleek leather boots reached almost to the golden fleece, their heels sky-high stilettos. She even had a matching riding crop in one hand. She grinned and flicked it playfully at the tip of my nose.

I sniffed. “You look like a refuge from the Folsom Street Fair,” I said. “Anyway, you know perfectly well I don’t do leather.”

“Hmm.” Another moment’s consideration. Her face brightened. “I know. How about a girl of the golden west?” Just like that, the bustier had become a buckskin vest, open to show those melons—uh, titties. The skirt was brown leather and fringed and still skimpy enough to qualify for show and tell; and the boots had become cowboy boots.

“I’ll be Calamity Jane Gloria. Plus, if we made it cowboys and Indians,” she said, “I could be kidnapped by a horny Apache, and end up with my very own red rider. Think of the symbolism—teepees and arrows and priceless pelts. Not to mention Red could have his own little beaver to sport around with. It’s better than anything Zane Grey cooked up. He was always such a stick.”

She fell back on the bed and kicked booted feet in the air to prove her point. “Hee Haw!”

Little beaver indeed.

I shook my head. “Wouldn’t work. Ever since Brokeback, the boys all ride one another and the squaws scrape their unmentionables on the rocks by the river.”

She contemplated that scene, her legs poised in the air. “There’s a thought. I have no problem with some lesbian action. Remember the Countess. Maybe we could do Calamity Jane meets Belle Starr. You know, that wonderful leather outfit Jane Russell wore in that Bob Hope movie. I know several lesbians who positively pant at the memory. To be honest, I get a little damp myself when I think of it.” She wagged her legs in demonstration.

“Oh, do put your legs down, darling, it’s distracting me.”

“If you were half a man....”

“I am. It’s just the other half.”

She sighed and got up again, pacing back and forth for a moment. Her eyes lighted up.

“I’ve got it. A French maid.” She snapped her fingers, and there she was, in one of those tiny frilly aprons, a pair of mules, and nothing else. Those globes—titties—juttied out proudly on either side of the bib, and there was the golden fleece on display once more. Really, no wonder the censors had gotten so annoyed in the past. Gloria’s bush was definitely not bush-league.

“I’ll be a spy,” she said, taking to the idea, “working under the covers, ferreting secrets from some besotted government agent.” She draped herself across the arms of the chair, legs dangling, kicking her feet up and down rhythmically, pelvis bumping. “Oh, Mister Sloan,” she crooned, head thrown back. “Oh, Mister Sloan.”

“Government agent? Maybe a member of Congress? I thought you were done with members.” Caught up in the excitement of imaging herself in new roles, Gloria had failed to hear the rumble of the garage door rolling on its tracks at the other end of the house, or the car pulling in. The door from the garage into the kitchen opened and closed. Sam was home.

She stopped bumping and glowered at me. “You’re not taking this very seriously.”

“How could I? We both know this is just a dream.” Which was going to end soon, but I didn’t point that out to her. She was having too much fun, and I have to admit the spirit was catching. But the thing about these dreams is, they are solo trips. Late arrivals tend to mess things up.

“Of course I’m a dream, don’t be silly. You dreamed me up from the beginning. That’s not to say you can’t re-dream me.”

“Different bed for me these days.”

“It didn’t stop me from popping into your head again, did it?”

“Honey, all kinds of things pop into my head, especially at times like these. You don’t want to take them too seriously.”

“Nevertheless....”

“Hey, got company?” Sam called from the kitchen.

“Wait till you see,” I called back, and turned to Gloria, but her face had lost all its enthusiasm. She knew the rules as well as I did. Solo, you get fantasies that can seem realer than real. Twosomes, you mostly got conversation. Maybe leading to some boom-boom, but everyone had his own head trips while that was going on. I couldn’t see Sam and I sharing a fantasy about Gloria.

She wagged a finger at me. “I’m not done with you yet,” she said—and with that, she

disappeared, not even a wisp of smoke left behind to show where she had been.

“Now if that doesn’t beat everything,” I said, and sank back into my chair. Talk about strange dreams. The last person I’d have expected to show up in mine, after all these years. I closed my eyes. That cowboy costume really had looked plenty snazzy, though. I thought about that for a moment, seeing a scene or two played out on the screen behind my eyelids.

“Where’d she go?” Sam asked from the bedroom doorway.

I opened my eyes again. “Who?” I asked cagily.

“I heard voices,” he said. “You were talking with someone. A woman.”

I stared at him. Voices? A woman? I had been dreaming, hadn’t I?

“Or maybe I’m dreaming now,” I said aloud.

He looked skeptically back at me, and around the room. “Or maybe you’re smoking too much of that,” he said, indicating the stash on the nightstand. He gave his head a disapproving shake, and started to turn away.

I was still seeing one of those scenes I had imagined however. Out on the far prairie. A crowd of Indian braves, faces painted colorfully, dance around a crackling fire, their war clubs making their loincloths bounce energetically. And in a nearby teepee, Gloria sprawls on her back on a bearskin rug, naked but for those cowboy boots—make them stilettos, too, you don’t need to be altogether realistic in a fantasy, after all—her melons—okay, her cowgirl titties—heaving with excitement. A naked savage jerks aside the tent flap and enters, pausing to enjoy the view of the sage brush. He drops his loincloth and taking an enormous cudgel in his hand, kneels over her...my own chest was heaving now with excitement. There is something about naked savages....

“Honey,” I said, deep in thought, “if you think of the term, red rider, what exactly comes to mind?”

Just because some of us can read and write and do a little math, that doesn’t mean we deserve to conquer the Universe.

-- Kurt Vonnegut, last line of *Hocus Pocus*

I, Curmudgeon

By Dick Lupoff

Okay, so I sound like an old curmudgeon grumbling about these kids nowadays and how they have no respect for their elders and the world is going to hell in a handbasket. So do me something.

My pal Jack Rems who owns the brilliant Dark Carnival bookstore near my home handed me a copy of *The Ten-Cent Plague* by David Hajdu (pronounced Hay-Dew) with the comment that it would interest me. It did indeed look intriguing. Great jacket art by Charles Burns. Shows a kid in pajamas reading a copy of *Weird Mysteries* with other comic books strewn on his bed.



Pat and Dick Lupoff. Photo by Earl Kemp, LAPB 2006.

There's a picture of President Dwight David Eisenhower on the wall, along with a close-up of a beagle and a family portrait. The kid, the room, and the wall pix are all in black and white but the comic books are in great, lurid color. *The Perfect Crime, Fear, Zombie Romance, Crime Terror.*

Definitely interesting. But I didn't quite feel like ponying up twenty-six bucks so reluctantly handed the book back to my pal. And when I got home, as Fate would have it, there was a package on my doorstep and when I opened it, out popped a review copy of *The Ten-Cent Plague*. Clearly, I was meant to read this book.

If there had been any doubt in my mind, it was removed when I wandered in front of the TV and turned on my favorite porn channel. Just kidding. I turned on C-SPAN, looking for something really exciting, and there was David Hajdu sitting onstage in front of an auditorium full of people, being interviewed about *The Ten-Cent Plague*.

So okay, I'll read it, I'll read it.

And I did.

There's a subtitle, "The Great Comic-Book Scare and How it Changed America." The blurb writer at Farrar, Straus and Giroux starts the book's flap copy on a different note, talking about a "lost world of the imagination – the world of comic books." But then the blurb goes on to point to the censorious reaction to the comics that led to their downfall as a major publishing medium.

And if you've looked lately, you'll notice that comic books, at least in their great, traditional form, are little more than a minor cultural fossil nowadays. They were indeed

kicked around a lot in the 1950s, the chief villains being the infamous Dr. Fredric Wertham and that ol' coonskin-cap wearing Democratic Senator from Tennessee, Estes Kefauver.

The book itself – enough about the dust jacket, right? – starts on a familiar note. Professor Hajdu (he's on the faculty of the Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University) tells the story of the origin of comics-as-we-know-them. He gets this right, and I commend him for it. It's common cant that the comics originated in single-panel newspaper cartoons which eventually evolved into multi-panel narratives; hence, the familiar newspaper comic strip.



So-called “albums,” compilations of newspaper comics, appeared early in the Twentieth Century. By the 1930s kids could buy comic books in the classic format, and the supplanting of reprinted comic strips by original material is a familiar story. In fact, this story has been told a good many times. A really good version is the book *Men of Tomorrow*, by Gerard Jones.

All of which leaves one wondering why Hajdu bothered to write his book and why anyone else, at least anyone else who knows the story, should read it.

One thing that Hajdu gets brilliantly right is the fact that comic books had two parents, not one. They took their *form* from the newspaper strip but their content came primarily from pulp magazines. Almost every familiar comic book trope has a direct antecedent in the pulps. Gangsters, science fiction, westerns, horror, romance, aviation, jungle adventures, fantasy, war, sports stories, pirates... am I leaving anything out?

I don't know of any funny animals pulps, that's true. Maybe some maven will jump up at this point and wave a copy of *Fuzzy Barnyard Buddies Quarterly* from 1931, and I will stand corrected.

Hajdu makes the case that comic books were popular with young readers because they were created by youthful writers and artists. He's certainly right about those youthful creators. Most early comic books – I'm talking about the late 1930s and the 1940s now – were indeed written and drawn by young men (and a few young women) in their teens and twenties. But I don't think this was the nature of their appeal to the kids of the era.

This is where Old Curmudgeon rises from his rocker and shakes his walking stick at the whipper-snapper David Hajdu. I was one of those kids. I started reading comic books *circa* 1940, when I was five years old, and positively doted on the things for the next dozen years or so. Weaned myself of them just about the time I started college. And in those years, especially the earlier years, I didn't know and didn't care who wrote or drew the comic books I loved.

The last years of my comic-book addiction coincided with the grand flowering of the EC line – *Weird Science*, *Tales from the Crypt*, *Frontline Combat*, and the original, outrageous *Mad*. Older kids, teenagers who got off on the EC's, did know about the writers and editors and artists. Bill Gaines, Al Feldstein, Jack Davis, Frank Frazetta, Roy Krenkel,

Al Williamson, Reed Crandall, Will Elder, Jack Kamen. A decade and a half later when I was editing for Canaveral Press in New York I got to work with Frazetta, Krenkel, Williamson, and Crandall.

Ah, them was the days, sonny, them was the good old days.

Why did I so love comics? Because they were colorful, they were exciting, they offered me wild, violent power fantasies. Most kids feel powerless and rebellious as they come into their true identities. What a great fantasy to imagine yourself Billy Batson or Freddie Freeman or Mary Batson. Just by uttering a magic word you could be transformed into a superhero who could fly, you could perform incredible feats of strength, artillery shells would bounce harmlessly off your chest. Wow!

You could be the Human Torch and hurl balls of fire at your enemies. You could be Prince Namor, the Sub-Mariner, and rule an exotic kingdom beneath the sea. You could be Green Lantern, charge up your power ring, recite a mighty oath, and perform all sorts of astonishing feats. You could be Prince Ibis the Invincible and vanquish your foes with the aid of your magical Ibistick. And there was sexy Princess Taia at your side all the while!

Hajdu doesn't write very much about superheroes, by the way. I think he's missing a bet here, unless he has another book up his sleeve, for I think that the superhero is the heart and soul of the comic book. He does, however, go into the Superman myth at some length. He buys into the notion – he did not originate it – that the Superman story is a metaphor for the story of immigrants to America, particularly the story of Eastern European Jews. And it's true that many of the key creative persons in the comic book world were immigrants or the sons of immigrants, most of them Eastern European Jews.

These greenhorns would arrive in America wearing their funny old world costumes, following their funny old world customs and speaking funny old world languages. As soon as possible either they or their children would learn English, adopt American ways, don American clothing, and in many cases take new American names.

And here's little Kal-el, sent by his parents Jor-el and Lara from Krypton, a planet about to be destroyed. The infant arrives in a literal new world, is adopted to Americans, and receives a new American name. *Clark Kent!* How WASP can you get?

As he grows up he adopts a secret identity so no one will know he's really a strange visitor from another planet. He devotes his life to righting wrongs and protecting the downtrodden. All the while he blends into the society that surrounds him. Blue suit, day job, horn-rim spectacles.

Yeah.

The trouble with this theory is that it's a lot of bunkum. The Superman Myth is at least as old as the Book of Exodus. The baby Kal-el, raised by the Kents of Smallville, is really the young Moses, found floating in the bulrushes by Pharaoh's daughter and raised as a prince of Egypt. He and his brother Aaron do some funny tricks in Pharaoh's court. That was a nifty stunt, turning a stick into a snake! It takes a few nasty plagues to get the Children of Israel out of bondage. Then there was the whole business of the sun standing still, the Red Sea parting for Moses and the Jews and rushing back to destroy Pharaoh's army.

Great pulp!

If you want a more recent antecedent, try that glorious old pulp magazine *Blue Book* and the works of that great old pulpster Philip Wylie (1902-1971). Along with his sometime editor and sometime collaborator Edwin Balmer, Wylie wrote *When Worlds Collide* (1933) and *After Worlds Collide* (1934). The story of Krypton and the escape of an infant to Earth is right there, with two differences. In Wylie's books it's Earth that's being destroyed and Bronson Alpha to which survivors head. And of course there's a sort of giant Space Ark full of people and animals making the trip rather than just one baby.

Okay, okay, maybe a familiar theme, maybe Wylie and Balmer and Siegel and Shuster both cribbed from the Bible. But wait, there's more. In 1930 Wylie wrote a novel called *Gladiator* that has some bearing here, as well. His title character is the protégé of a super-scientist who sets out to create a super-man. And does. It's a terrific book, by the way.

Transplant Wylie's Superman – er, super-man – into the Worlds Collide scenario and – *voilà!* – there we are. With no need for sociobabble about Hebrews hiding under the bedclothes.

Oh, by the way, Wylie wrote a book called *The Savage Gentleman* (1932) that is credited with being the inspiration of the pulp character Doc Savage. And Wylie wrote *The Murderer Invisible* (1931) that may or may not have had something to do with the creation of The Shadow.

As for Kal-el's adoptive name, Clark Kent – Doc Savage's full name was Clark Savage, Jr., and the Shadow's *real* secret identity wasn't Lamont Cranston at all, it was Kent Allard. You could look it up.

Okay, I've beaten this thing to death. We old codgers get garrulous. Hand me back my cane, it flew across the room there, sonny, when I started waving my arms around a little while ago.

Hrmph!

Back to that young upstart David Hajdu. The real substance of his book has to do with the efforts to blame comic books for everything from juvenile delinquency to illiteracy, poor eyesight, and childhood obesity. Most critics have dated the anti-comics movement to the early 1950s but Hajdu, a very admirable researcher, finds and documents earlier efforts. Pompous fuddy-duddies were condemning comic books as early as 1942 and newspaper comics practically from the creation of the form.

Hajdu is a great researcher, conducting interviews with survivors of the comics industry going back to the 1940s and '50s, and locating recorded interviews with others more recently deceased. He does a fine job in this regard.

And the picture he paints is even uglier than I remember it, having lived through the Wertham-Kefauver pogrom as a dedicated comic book fanatic. Hajdu documents mass comic book burnings in Middle America undistinguishable from book bonfires in Nazi Germany. Children were dragooned into taking anti-comics pledges in ceremonies reminiscent of Hitler Youth rallies. Dozens if not hundreds of artists, writers, editors, and

publishers lost their careers. Some lost their lives. It was a scene straight out of the infamous House Committee on Un-American Activities and its anti-Communist blacklists of the same era.

By the time Wertham and his co-witch-hunters were finished, the comic book industry was virtually destroyed. That was the great meltdown of the early 1950s and the end of comic books' Golden Age. Of course there came a revival a decade later and the blossoming of the so-called Silver Age. And then comic books died a natural death.

Or did they?

In fact they did not. The archetypes and classic tropes merely migrated to other media. As the pulps had contributed their themes and the newspaper comic strips had given their format to the creation of the comic book, so the comic book has passed those themes and tropes and icons on to motion pictures, to television, and to video games. The comics are booming as never before. You just have to know where to look for them, and that is not your corner newsstand.



Most intriguingly, comic book superheroes have begun to provide thematic fodder for an increasing number of serious novelists. Hardly a week goes by, as I scan incoming review books, without a novel about superheroes landing on my desk. Some of them are pretty feeble attempts but others have real literary merit. I'll take credit for anticipating this trend, if not for kick-starting it, with my own 1976 novel, *The Triune Man* (with a real stand-out cover by Steve Stiles). And, hey, there's a new edition of that book with an introduction by my son Ken that I hope you will rush out and buy.

If your local bookstore doesn't carry the thing, threaten the proprietor with great bodily harm. Or simply order it from the publisher at www.ramblehouse.com.

In the only love story he [Kilgore Trout] ever attempted, "Kiss Me Again," he had written, "There is no way a beautiful woman can live up to what she looks like for any appreciable length of time." The moral at the end of that story is this: Men are jerks. Women are psychotic.

--- Kurt Vonnegut, *Timequake*

Sleaziest Pig in the World AND First Amendment Martyr: An American Success Tragedy

By Jay A. Gertzman

Sam Roth first masturbated at the age of 8. He had been fetching water at a spring in his birthplace, a tiny Shtetl at the foothills of the Carpathians, in what is now western Ukraine. His first crush, Feige, was there, dozing. He reached out to touch her foot, and suddenly the universe changed. As if the sun had been eclipsed, a strange half-light suffused the spring, and one of those Noonday Demons that the Talmud suggests haunts poor Jews as they approach bodies of water made a grab for Sam. “An animal face: a red, fleshy face overgrown with hair that cleared over two clean, bright, widely parted lips.” Sam’s rabbi recognized that this Demon had discerned in Sam a child with a strong sexual desire, and was marking him out for future torment. An exorcism was performed, and the boy was one again enfolded in the warmth of the small community.



Roth testifying before
Kefauver Comm., 1955

Yet deep in Mishillim’s heart a resentment lingered, soon to make itself known to his parents and rabbi. Integral with restoration to health and community was a need to keep intense, unshakeable desires to himself. He began masturbating, sneaking visits to Feige. Fifteen years later, having opened a bookshop on the Lower East Side, he met Aleister Crowley and learned about his book *White Stains*. It gave him the phrase he needed to serve as the title for his story of his own sexual awakening: the “white streams” flowing sweet and languorous from his own body. In *White Streams*, Roth was transmuting into autobiographical fiction both the communal love and the repression that had made him the conflicted adult he became: part iconoclast, part pariah; part artist, part businessman.

Roth’s family emigrated from poverty-stricken Galicia in 1902. He was brilliant and ambitious, with that powerful allegiance to divine destiny Jews call *taklis*. He had no financial, social or intellectual status, so—at great personal cost—he tried fervently to invent it. Thanks to a close friendship with anarchist and Wobbly-style social activist Frank Tannenbaum, he met most of the left-wing activists in the Village, including Emma Goldman and Ben Reitman. Because of Tannenbaum’s influence, he went to Columbia University on a scholarship in 1916, where he edited a little magazine, *The Lyric*, which printed some of the finest contemporary American poets.

A fine poet in his youth, Roth was praised by Edwin Arlington Robinson, Louis Untermeyer, Maurice Samuel, and Ezra Pound, among others. His best poems were on religious themes. After World War I he founded a bookshop, and traveled to London in 1921 to interview European writers, hoping to sell his essays to magazines. Roth’s poetry appeared in several respected magazines, such as *The Maccabean* and *The Hebrew Standard*, and in anthologies.

It was a false start. Roth grew up to become the most-incarcerated erotica publisher in

American history. He served a total of nine years, most of it in the federal pen at Lewisburg, PA. For his own writings, and the books and magazines he published, he became an outcast to James Joyce, the international literary community, the Jewish community, the Republican Party, the Post Office, J. Edgar Hoover, Walter Winchell, and New York D.A. Frank Hogan. They all wanted a piece of him, and got it. His last prison term, however, led to *Roth v. United States* (1957), which is a key Supreme Court ruling on freedom of sexual expression. The minority opinion, regarding redeeming social value as a criterion in obscenity prosecutions, became a template for the liberalizing First Amendment decisions of the 1960s. As a borderline mail order erotica dealer, he really backed into his status as First Amendment hero. But it is people like Sam Roth who have the nerve, or moxie, to recognize the vitality of taboo subjects, and to present these Demons to the rest of us. Later examples are Ralph Ginzburg, Al Goldstein, Lyle Stuart, William Hamling, Earl Kemp, Milton Luross, and Larry Flynt. They are ridiculed as being “sleazy,” “anarchistic,” “degenerate,” and as greedy criminals who want to force others to join them in isolation from the decent community, so their own exorcism from it is less shattering. For his part in the history of sleaze—and defense of the First Amendment--Ginzburg crowned Roth “the Prometheus of the unprintable.”

This essay is not a review of Roth’s career, except incidentally. It spotlights some of the most iconoclastic books for which Roth was responsible. They are works at once sleazy and, occasionally, powerful statements about sex, social justice, human destiny, and the American experience. “If not I, who,” was one of Roth’s self-aggrandizing mantras. He actually believed, even on the cusp of his final jail sentence, that he was destined by God to be a great man in his generation (many gifted Jewish men who had to cope with the conflicts between the American Dream and Jewish moral codes clung to this myth). He certainly wasn’t. But he was responsible for books no member of the literary establishment would dare to issue. Therefore, he was a living embodiment of the shallowness of the distinction between elite culture and imaginative creativity, on the one hand, and “escapist trash” for the masses on the other.

Gertrude Beasley, *My First Thirty Years* (1926)

In April 1926, Roth launched a subscription publication, *Casanova Jr’s Tales*. He changed the rather puerile title to *Secret Memoirs of Gallant Men and Fair Women* for Volume Two. Each issue of Volume One contained lengthy segments of Gertrude Beasley’s memoir of her west Texas upbringing, *My First Thirty Years*. It was published in Paris in 1925; H.L. Mencken admired it, and remarked that it could never be published in America. That partly explains its appearance in a Roth magazine, as does its original 1925 appearance in a limited edition in France by Robert McAlmon’s Contact Editions (in plain binding to fool Customs). There is no evidence that Roth informed McAlmon of his serial reprinting. The work can only be compared to Dorothy Allison’s autobiographical novel *Bastard Out of Carolina*. In 1989, novelist Larry McMurtry became interested in Beasley’s brooding, detailed descriptions of the violence, child abuse, bestiality, and incest in her large family, and in the vivid delineations of the dialect, landscape, architecture, and character types in towns called Clyde, Wheat, Paint Rock, Eldorado, and Abeline. Many copies of the French edition were seized by British and American Customs as obscene. Roth decided—with the irrepressible risk-taking that either made or broke similar entrepreneurs—that the work could be presented nearly intact for his subscription readership. In the second installment the outhouse graffiti “Fuck me you whoar” appears. Perhaps this is an early example of

Roth's careless copy editing, for he does use ellipsis for "penis." One can only guess how sophisticated readers of other contributors such as John Herrmann, Paul Eldridge, Aubrey Beardsley, Joseph T. Shipley, and Catulle Mendez might have responded to the detailed description of Beasley's hysterical mother's horse-whipping of one of the girl's brothers for having intercourse with a cow ("I was just scared nearly to death before that old cow's calf come . . . God, I just didn't know"). But Roth always knew his customers and how to sell books.

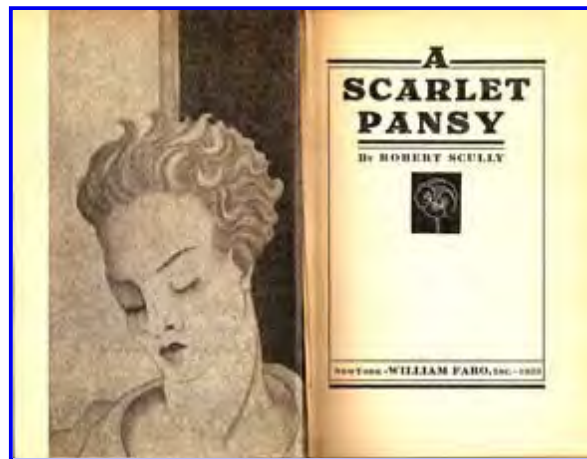
At this point in his life, Roth had decided that he needed to become financially secure. *Casanova Junior's Tales* was one of four magazines he founded in 1925 and 1926. There were two others for newsstand publication, in one of which he published excerpts of Joyce's *Ulysses*. Although Roth claimed to have had permission from Roth's unofficial agent, Ezra Pound, he was (as usual) rash, and arrogantly disinterested in consequences. The result was an International Protest against his piracy, signed by 167 writers and other notables, including even Albert Einstein. The Paris-based *transition* magazine decided to epitomize Roth's business tactics by titling an article about him "King of the Jews." In addition to going broke, Roth became a literary pariah. Ironically, although Joyce and his highly indignant supporters called him a "mutilator" for expurgating some of Joyce's scatology and four-letter words, Roth expurgated *less* than did *The Little Review*, the avant-garde periodical in which Pound had originally placed selections from *Ulysses*. But Joyce's supporters, and the media that publicized their "plight," never mentioned that any other publication ever expurgated a word of the author. Roth, the shady businessman from the New York ghetto, could make no traction against the elite Modernist literary establishment of Paris and London.

A further irony is that Joyce had put in the mouth of his hero the phrase that fits brilliantly Roth's own situation: "History is a nightmare from which I am trying to awaken." In establishing himself as a publisher, Sam Roth was using the American Dream to escape the burdensome situation of his family in Galicia. He never escaped his nightmares and insecurities, if it is possible for anyone to do so. But he was infinitely sensitive to the secret memoirs of other outcasts, one of the most fascinating of which was Gertrude Beasley's. He published it to make money, just as he did with *Ulysses*. But he also brought to his readers' attention a work which would lead them, as it might have him, to contemplate their nightmares. Only the best literary publishers do that—and have the guts to do it, subversive as it is to "public order," "decency," and "community trust."

"Robert Scully", *A Scarlet Pansy* (1933)

"What *The Well of Loneliness* did for the man-woman, this most unusual tale does for the woman-man—only that the latter is a so much more wayward and more fascinating creature." Roth once admitted that his only real talent was in writing advertisement copy. I've just quoted an early example. The novel was recently excerpted in *The Columbia Anthology of Gay Literature*. The editor described it as the first American novel where a man in drag is presented in a positive and empowering way. "Fay Etrange" enjoys his lifestyle and is able to entrance all sorts and classes of men. His adventures mirror those of the female protagonists of the "sex pulp" novels that could be purchased for a dollar or rented from specialty and drug stores in the '30s. Fay, born in a small Pennsylvania town, goes to glamorous American and European capitals, and finds partners in both the seedy urban vice zones and the clubs and apartments of professional men, soldiers, bankers, and ministers. She dies in the arms of a lover on a battlefield in France. Roth published this

novel just before he went bankrupt, possibly as a chance to reverse his fortunes. It would have had just as good a sale in Times Square, with its gay community, as by mail order, where it could be purchased without one's small town neighbors seeing it (Post Office inspectors were a different story). No doubt the Fourth Avenue Book Row stores would carry it, at least in the back room. Sam knew all the outlets. When Roth's own stock was appropriated by rival disreputable booksellers after his bankruptcy, they reprinted four of his titles. *A Scarlet Pansy* was honored by being one of them, along side of the expurgated *Lady Chatterley* and *Diary of a Chambermaid*. Roth's fury knew no bounds. And his pride would be equally Herculean or Golem-like if he could have known his Alma Mater had enshrined a book he had midwived as a transgressive classic. In 1916, he had been thrown out of an undergraduate club at Columbia for bringing an African American coed to lunch. If that Demon of the spring that his Rabbi tried to exorcize back in Galicia lingered to stimulate him, it was not a bad thing, although his adulterous pursuit of Broadway showgirls was.



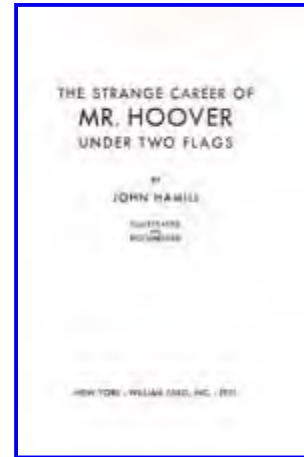
Always a businessman, after World War II Roth issued a thoroughly expurgated edition of *A Scarlet Pansy*. He was working exclusively now through mail order, and knew how closely the postal inspectors monitored his books and catalogues. In fact he never used the Beasley or Scully books as evidence of the service he had done to repressed minorities. Actually more Ayn Rand in his politics than Emma Goldman or John Reed (both of whom he had known in his youth), his ideological allegiances were conservative, as was his dress (walking stick, three piece suits). He was proud of the literature he published that was acknowledged as classic or high art: Lawrence, Joyce, Genet, Eliot, Pound, Zukovsky. That he did not pay the authors for their work did not shrink his dignity one little bit.

John Hamill, *The Strange Career of Mr Hoover Under Two Flags* (1931)

For the ultimate in Rothian transgression, let's back up a few years. *The Strange Career of Mr. Hoover Under Two Flags* (1931) is one of the books for which Samuel Roth was best known as publisher. During the presidential primary campaign, various candidates recommended it, and *The New Republic* and *The Nation* gave it serious attention. Roth sold over 11,000 copies in four months. At that time, sales were projected at 40,000. Scribner's, Macy's, Marshall Field in Chicago, and Gimbel Brothers in Philadelphia wanted copies. Roth bank accounts did not show large profits, although he might have been trying to hide them by having some of the monies realized for the book deposited in two other

accounts. If that was sleazy, so was the response of the Democratic National Committee and the Hoover administration. The Dems would not sanction publication, because if it got out that they had done so, the book could have been discounted as a paid hatchet job.

As for the Republicans' own sleaziness, Hoover's personal secretary dispatched three operatives to investigate Roth. One Hoover supporter, a collector for the Internal Revenue Service, was a colleague of a Justice who had been assigned to adjudicate a suit filed in the New York Supreme Court against the publisher of *Strange Career*. The IRS man obtained the Judge's consent to allow sealed papers relevant to the suit to be copied. Posing as a "deputy tax collector," a post office inspector was able to gain information from the printer of *Strange Career*. He also gained access to Roth's bank account. Another of the President's men, working independently of the President's secretary, pumped Roth for information and suggested that he might give the publisher financial help. Eventually, just a month after the publication of *Strange Career*, another Republican operative



suborned its author by signing him to a contract for another book, about Hoover's yeoman relief with Belgian Relief after WWI. In addition to all these machinations, it has been suggested that Hoover himself requested the officer in charge of Naval Intelligence in the New York area to break into Roth's office.

As for the book itself, it is nothing if not provocative, Hoover is shown to share his corporate colleagues' imperialist attitudes: the Chinese mine owners, he wrote, were dishonest, stupid, and suffered from "racial slowness"; the workers were "mulish" and "thieving." To be sure, both Hoover and the British firm with which he was associated exploited indigenous peoples of China and South Africa. But John Hamill, the author, does not systematically criticize British or American racism and paternalism; he is too interested in making a personal attack. For example, Hoover did sell food to Belgians, and at a profit, but the fullest documentation available indicated that the sales were to those Belgians who could afford to pay, and that Hoover charged them only to defer costs of the project. If the book were not a personal attack, it would be ineffective as a political influence, and more important, it would not be sensational. Now here is another kind of sleaze, if that term can be used to refer to the acquisition of power and money through ignoring some parameters of trust that people need to work together within a social order.

Roth knew the potential for disaster if a small publisher with little prestige were to challenge entrenched wealth and power with such explosive material. There was something about that challenge, despite the additional disadvantage of his prison record, that was irresistible to him. "There must, under the circumstances, be someone courageous enough to publish such things. If not I, who?" Fair enough. But what of some of the other titles Roth had published under the same imprint that he used for the Hoover expose: the expurgated "Samuel Roth Edition" of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, parodies such as *Lady Chatterley's Friends* and *Lady Chatterley's Husbands*, *The Great Lindbergh Hullabaloo*, *Loose Shoulder Straps*, *The Intimate Journal of Rudolph Valentino*, and *Self Amusement*. On the other hand, *A Scarlet Pansy* was a real contribution to gay literature, as Clement Woods' books on the death of Lord Kitchener, "Pope Joan," and President Harding were good history, despite the sensationalism. Sleaze and Freedom to explore

subjects “legitimate” society suppresses go hand in hand (but, as Don Adams once said, not on the campus). Roth rejected the politics and career paths his friend Frank Tannenbaum and Frank’s friends Emma Goldman and Ben Reitman chose. But in his own way, however venal he was, he retained an irresistible knack for exposing, and thus making himself a target for, the anger, fear, and vindictiveness of aristocrats in the practice of the pornography of power.

Milton Hindus, *The Crippled Giant* (1950)

There’s no sleaze here. Milton Hindus was a young scholar fascinated by the brilliance of Louis-Ferdinand Celine’s novels. He loved their stylistic innovations (broken rhythms, strangely contrasting images), the honesty of his stories of outcasts and drifters through hard-boiled areas of industrial cities, their probing of human impulses, and their autobiographical aspects. Hindus traveled to Europe in 1948, the first summer where the toils of the Cold War ensnared the land, to visit Celine, now an exile living in Denmark. What most intrigued Hindus was the artist’s anti-Semitism, which would not have been so stunning if he had not been such a great writer that comparisons with Proust and Joyce were fair. Hindus wrote *The Crippled Giant* in the form of a diary, so that his own subjective responses to what Celine said were foregrounded. He returned to teach his



fall courses at Brandeis with a nervous tic and the feeling (reflected in the epigraph to his book) that no one has the right to “shout fire in a crowded theater.” That refers to Celine’s pronouncements against the Jews, on the eve of Hitler’s triumphs, as alien middlemen predatory on the host populations of the European countries in which they settled. Celine was friendly to Hindus, but while he felt Jews were more “interesting” and self-aware than Aryans, he also felt they could not be part of a cooperative organic whole. They therefore were “pessimistic” about the future, and responsible to their own immediate family to the exclusion of others with whom they were brought into contact. If Celine was to become a martyr to fascism, he professed to be content. His view was in harmony with “the earthiness of the people,” who would eventually wrest power from the alienated intellectuals, and recognize the virtues of nation-state authority.

Celine’s anti-Semitism was of particular interest to Roth. He had actually implied something similar himself in his 1934 self-published diatribe *Jews Must Live: The Persecution of the World by Jewry on All the Frontiers of Civilization*. Roth’s simmering motivation was revenge on the publisher, printer, and lawyer who had taken advantage of his bankruptcy to appropriate some of his best-selling titles (including *A Scarlet Pansy*). With his unique combination of indignation, petulance, and self-importance, he wrote a disgusting assemblage of age-old myths (“do Jews emit a peculiar odor?”) about his people in business, the theater, real estate, and banking. He wasn’t being sarcastic. One of Roth’s enemies described his “supreme self-contentedness.” It’s true, but that apparent vanity hid something infinitely more interested as a reason for writing the book. Since his childhood, when his father recognized his intellectual gifts and wanted to make him a rabbi, Roth had a messianic fervor about his future. He believed he was destined to be a Just Man in His Generation, and cherished the dream, equally with the desire to fulfill the American Dream, to the core of his conflicted soul. He had to believe in both goals, after his

humiliation at being made an outcast for his piracy (if it was that) of *Ulysses*. Then came his publicity, courtesy of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, as a pornographer, a man who was guilty of poisoning the minds of youth with books like *A Scarlet Pansy*, *A Chambermaid's Diary*, and *Lady Chatterley's Friends*. Messianism is of course a constant theme in Jewish thought. During his last prison sentence, Roth wrote his last book, in which he imagined himself present at the time of Jesus' ministry, and received from Yeshua (the Hebrew name for Jesus) the task of reconciling the two faiths, which Roth hoped his book would do.

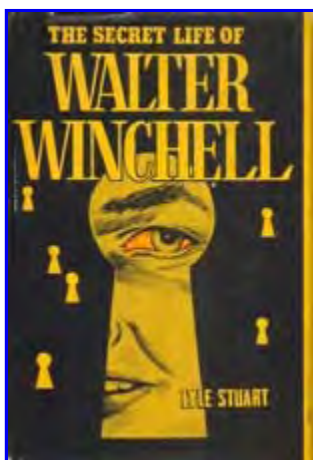
That Hindus chose to have his Celine book published by Roth shows something about his own need to understand the cultural upheaval accompanying the shift from a rural, passive Eastern European faith-centered culture to a secular Industrial Age American one, and how that upheaval affects Jewish artists and intellectuals themselves. Even more potent was Hindus' struggle to understand where Jew-hatred comes from. He read *Jews Must Live*, and it scared him less than Celine did, for he saw it as a kind of dangerous tease Roth was perpetrating. He understood that a fellow Jew could not be as serious about Jew-hatred as a non-Jew. He was above all curious (for which even Celine admired him). He also, obviously, was drawn to iconoclastic people. Nietzsche was one of his favorite writers. The idea of self-creation, of going beyond limits of rational restraint in order to change what seemed to be one's emotional and moral nature, interested both Roth and Hindus. Hindus had noticed Roth's allusions to Nietzsche in his poems, and in *Jews Must Live*. Opening oneself to the contempt of the world was certainly one of Roth's abilities. Hindus saw Roth, therefore, as he liked to see himself, an outcast bohemian, a risk-addicted dissenter. He also thought, and this was confirmed from his own experience, that Roth might have been slow in paying authors, and did not pay them well, but was honest with them.

He picked the right man. The dust jacket of *The Crippled Giant* featured a long prose advertisement that wrapped around the front to the back flap and to the back of the jacket. There were blurbs by Henry Miller, Alfred Karin, and William Carlos Williams. Much more important was what Roth said to Hindus when the latter quailed in the face of Celine's anxiety. Hindus had heard from Celine that if the book was published, he would sue for libel, and might even kill himself. "Obviously," Roth wrote, "Despite the ocean of rage which separates you from him racially, you love Celine. . . . But he fails to recognize that your championing of his work is the only defense line behind which his own art can survive in a world of resentments of which he was one of the architects. . . . Celine reverts to the behavior of the least heroic of his cowardly soldiers, and you, who can save him, go chicken hearted. You should be ashamed, both of you."

Lyle Stuart, *The Secret Life of Walter Winchell* (1953)

This book might be characterized as The Sleaze-Merchant Sleazified. The intrepid Lyle Stuart was an independent journalist, and beginning in 1959, a book publisher some of whose methods were similar to Roth's. He published, and fought in court against the censorship of, illustrated erotica. In 1951 he founded *Exposé*, a tabloid-format political newsletter that bridged a gap between similar papers by Gilbert Seldes and I.F. Stone. Stuart was determined that *Exposé* would feature stories major newspapers would not touch due to fear of advertisers' cancellations or pressure groups' influence on subscribers or newsstand purchasers. The success of Stuart's newsletter was assured by his muckraking stories about Walter Winchell, who was so powerful because of his red-baiting

innuendos that politicians and show business celebrities either crossed to the other side of the street when they spotted him, or fawned at his heels for positive mention in his column. Winchell was a close friend and confidant of J. Edgar Hoover, and of New York's strong man District Attorney, Frank Hogan. But Stuart, who defied the State Department to become the first journalist to visit Castro in 1960, was pleased to take on all comers. *The Secret Life of Walter Winchell* was a reworking of his columns with added information about Winchell's rise of popularity as King of the Gossip Columnists.



Sam Roth knew a potential blockbuster when he saw it, and after what he had been through, nothing frightened him either. Winchell's innuendos could kill reputations, and his personal truculence was deeply resented. In October 1951, he became embroiled in a nasty contretemps with dancer Josephine Baker about her claim that she, as a Black woman, had received poor service in The Stork Club. Winchell was mentioned in her complaint to the NAACP; she accused him of blatantly snubbing her. Winchell could have avoided the "pub-lousity" (his own pun) that followed by apologizing or downplaying the NAACP criticism, but that was not his manner. He wrote many self-justifying columns, ruining his reputation as a supporter of African-American causes. He therefore was vulnerable to Stuart's and Roth's muckraking.

At this point, Winchell's reputation gave his attackers another chance to cover him with "publousity." Three Gotham "torpedoes," figuring to get on Winchell's good side with a timely ass-kicking, attacked Lyle Stuart one morning while he was climbing into his car to go to work. Roth compiled headlines ("Brutal 3-Man attack on Editor") to use on the back of the dust jacket, and supplied a brief "Epilogue in Advance" in which he stated "the beating was similar to two beatings given a New York radio commentator who had been consistently critical of Walter Winchell." Roth also wrote a blurb that read: "Winchell the home wrecker . . . the man who has crashed the secrets of 10,000 bedrooms is himself finally and completely exposed."

Someone would pay for all this indignity. It was Sam Roth who paid. The next year, Winchell smeared Roth and his family as communists. A raid on Roth's home and office, engineered by Hogan, followed by less than a day a broadcast during which Winchell stated that Roth should be brought to book for circulating pornography; the columnist's influence in arranging it is probable. At his Lafayette Street office, desks were rifled and overturned, papers confiscated, and the floor littered with address labels. When office workers showed up the next day, the police on guard told them "Your boss is out of business." At Roth's W 81st Street apartment, police conducted a thorough, rough-handed search of the apartment in front of his family. When Roth tried to leave the apartment to call his lawyer, he was restrained, and pushed a policeman, who arrested him for assault. Not long after, the obvious violation of Roth's civil rights forced Hogan to withdraw all charges in return for Roth's agreement not to prosecute New York's finest official ass-kickers. But charges were instituted once again, after Roth's appearance before Kefauver in 1955, during which he stated that anyone who thought the books he sold were not good literature was insufficiently educated to know the difference between art and smut.

Friedrich Nietzsche [?], *My Sister and I* (1951)



Finally, some divine sleaze. On his trip to England in 1921, Roth met a man who was taking his wife to visit her parents. He was afraid they would not let her return to her husband. Therefore, Roth's story went, he commissioned young Sam to help him with a scheme whereby the woman would tell her parents she was going for a walk, meet the husband, and therefore leave England with him. Roth was to be some sort of lookout. In return, the husband had a manuscript sent to Roth. It had been given (so Roth says) to him by a relative who had been an attendant at the Austrian insane asylum at which Friedrich Nietzsche spent the last years of his life. Roth set it aside, and planned to publish it in his *Two Worlds Quarterly* in 1927. There is an advertisement for it in one of the issues. It never appeared, because he was embroiled in the *Ulysses* controversy and could not afford to have his credibility further questioned. After a raid on his offices, subsequent jail terms, and economic misfortune, he was surprised to find a dog-eared carbon copy one day in the early 1950s. The original, he conjectured, was confiscated after the 1929 raid on the offices of his Golden Hind Press and destroyed.

Roth's advertising copy—and his title, of course--were typically misleading and salacious. A boy growing up in a “house of manless women” may have resulted in mail order sales (and Roth knew just how to get that done), but was sure to make it easy to see the book as a fraud. One promotional flyer told readers “you will live with [the book] as if the terrible events related to it had happened in your own family!” Another asserted that Nietzsche's confession is offered “as one might offer to insert an open window into a blind wall in your house.” Did Roth realize that one area in which sex is not publicized in America is abuse within the family? The book went through ten printings in two years.

Added to the come-ons were other problems. The translator's daughter denied her father had anything to do with the project. There were some obvious anachronisms in the text. Nietzsche would never have wanted the passages about his relations with his sister, his mother, the writer and scholar Lou Salome, and Cosima Wagner (second wife of the composer) published, if he was at all capable of writing them. Questions remain about how lucid the philosopher was at the time the manuscript was supposed to be written. The major attack came from Princeton professor Walter Kauffman, who had recently published a book on Nietzsche. Kauffman took personal offense that such a book as *My*

Sister and I, not only non-scholarly but packaged to arouse curiosity through sensationalism, should be available to the public at the same time as his own. His response is at least slightly similar to, but with less justification than, Joyce's to Roth's version of *Ulysses*, D.A. Frank Hogan's draconian raid on Roth's office and home after the Winchell exposé, or the Republican investigation of the publisher of *The Strange Career of Mr. Hoover*. "How dare you?" "If not me, who?" In all these cases, there is the feeling that legitimacy belongs to people with reputations and/or positions acknowledged by authorities in their fields. It is an inevitable state of affairs and a barrier against lowering of standards. But it often excludes works deserving of serious attention, despite the hype with which they, especially Roth's, were advertised. That's why it exists.

Kauffman's criticisms are an example. Prof. Walter Stewart has shown that Roth had at least equal credibility as had Kauffman, since the latter's judgments were in part based on faulty information. Roth was an acute reader of Nietzsche. Further, Kauffman assumed that *My Sister and I* was ghostwritten for Roth by one of his editors, whom he said had confessed to him in his Princeton offices. Yet he hides this statement, which would have been decisive if it could be proven, in a footnote. He also assumed that the ghostwriter based his text on Kauffman's own book on Nietzsche, which of course was the last authoritative word on the subject. But Kauffman, because of his stature, was not challenged as Roth was sure to be. Roth actually defended himself quite well not only against articles by Kauffman but by the daughter of the supposed translator, who wrote that her father could not possibly have done the work without her having typed it for him. To that, though, Roth replied with typical sophism. He said that she was out of touch with the book's imaginative power, adding that her father made Roth promise not to reveal his involvement because of the sensational nature of the intimacies.

The power of the text has won the book many admirers. One of the earliest of these was novelist Whit Burnett, who wrote Roth that he wanted to include twenty pages in a paperback anthology of "great confessions." Another was psychoanalyst and radical sex therapist Wilhelm Reich, who stated that in *My Sister and I* Nietzsche was at his most honest and compelling. It is fascinating to consider that Reich and Roth would have shared the same cell block at Lewisburg, where Reich had been sent in 1957 because the Post Office had him convicted of mail fraud for his orgone therapy promotions, had not Reich died there the month before Roth, another public enemy of the Post office, arrived. A third admirer was psychologist A. Bronson Feldman, who may not have believed Nietzsche wrote the book but thought that for Roth to have ascribed it to him was a noble act. No one has asserted that Roth was the author, but Prof. Stewart summarizes the mystery *My Sister and I* represents. He says that if the book is read in accordance with Roth's assertions, explanations, and defenses, it emerges as a valuable comment on the extent which self-revelation in literature can reach, and must disguise itself as apparent madness.

#

I do not really know how to explain Samuel Roth. The young writer who won the praise of a great American poet, Edwin Arlington Robinson. And yet, the writer of *Bumrap*, a novel he advertised as describing "a male virgin's" first night of love. The relevant chapter ends with the closing of the bedroom door. The next begins the next morning. And yet, the man who, in the last years of his life, wrote a powerful set of 151 poems modeled on the *Psalms of David*, in which he spoke directly and colloquially with God.

A writer who could show, in a short story called "Body," how the repression of desire into prurient entertainment results in the debauching of both entertainer and patron. And yet, also the man who sold not only salacious books and pictures but also, by mail order, three rubber inflatable dolls (a brunette, a blonde, and a nude): "a honey for your bedside."

A man who could challenge the demagoguery of Winchell, Kefauver, and J. Edgar Hoover. And a man who could use his jail sentences to write voluminous manuscripts about the debauched Roman emperor Heliogabulus; the Jewess Berenice, mistress of the emperor Titus and incestuous with her brother; and about hard-boiled racketeers he had met in prison. Upon Marilyn Monroe's death *Violations of the Child Marilyn Monroe, by Her Psychiatrist Friend* appeared. Probably ghost-written by one of Roth's editors from his instructions, it suggested Marilyn was a preteen victim of abuse by her father. More tabooed sex, and more about tragic outcomes when sexual desire is wrongly channeled within the family. That Noontime Demon again.

A man who became a heroic defender of the First Amendment when he published *Venus and Tannenhauser* with the Beardsley illustrations and was convicted because the government lawyer assured the jury that if he were not, "I can assure you the sewers will open."

A man who wrote what should have been his own epitaph 24 years before he died when he introduced a lecture before the James Joyce Society by stating "I feel like a lion in a den of Daniels."

Finally, a man who despite all his struggles or maybe because of them, could not escape history's nightmare. If not him, who?

- - -

Jay A. Gertzman is writing a biography of Samuel Roth. He is working with an archive of Roth's writings, letters, and publications recently donated to the Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library by Roth's grandchildren.

The big show is inside my head.

--- Kurt Vonnegut, *Breakfast of Champions*

Hot for Harriet or The Woman Thing

By Earl Kemp

Iris Kline was born in New York City in 1933...and all of that is speculation. I could not locate one single person or one piece of viable data to confirm any of this. Much that follows is also speculation, based on the most meager available facts. Should anyone reading this have any information, missing data, or corrections, please email them to me at earlkemp@citlink.net and thanks for your time and assistance.

We must assume that Iris lived a rather normal life as an American youngster in the middle of America's biggest, questionably best, metropolitan area. Iris rushed quickly and thoughtlessly into a hasty marriage with John Owens around 1952; she was 19 at the time. I was 23 and getting ready to attend my first ever World Science Fiction Convention. I was also married with children, but I didn't seem to know much about that at the time.

The USA was rolling along nicely in those between-war years of the early 1950s. Only nothing seemed to be working out for the Owens'. No plans fulfilled, no contentment, no peace. Finally they decided that the best thing for both of them would be to end it all right there, right then, and start over separately.

And they did.

Living alone and lonely, Iris became frustrated and depressed, confused about everything that had any meaning to her, confused about whomever that was insider of her, confused about tomorrow. So Iris did the only thing any reasonably intelligent young lady would do under the same circumstances...she ran away to Paris.

#

In late 1954, perhaps into 1955, as Martin Luther King lead massive riots throughout the USA, Iris Owens found herself (at 22) comfortably situated in the ultimate expatriate dream world of Paris, The City of Light! And, somewhere along Boulevard St. Germaine, she lucked out and wandered into the secret world of broke, down-and-out, bottom-level-living, incredibly handsome and witty, anything-for-a-buck, literary whores.

They adopted her instantly, and began checking out her exotic good looks and promised sexuality. None were disappointed. By that time Iris had begun accentuating her natural good looks, turning herself into a virtual vamp, in the term of those days. She had long, lustrous black hair, and dark, penetrating eyes—touched up with kohl—over sensuously inviting lips. She had a deliciously lickable beauty mark on her right cheek and a body to



Earl Kemp. Photo by Charles Nuetzel, LAPB 08.

dream on. All that, dressed in the black clothing she favored heavily at the time, made Iris Owens a spectacularly seductive sex object. She was known to frequently change bed partners.

She was living with Alexander Trocchi at the time, already a much older man and a Beatnik icon. Trocchi had been writing pornography (as Francis Lengel) for Maurice Girodias and his Traveller's Companion line of green-covered paperbacks for some time...all in English and all quite noticeably erotic if not downright pornographic. Iris said that Trocchi looked "like something off Mount Rushmore. He was very exotic -- he saw himself as being one of a long line of literary expatriates like Joyce and Hemingway." And, at that time, Trocchi was acting as a talent scout for Girodias. Among other people, he had brought John Stevenson, the great Marcus Van Heller, to Girodias.



This is the only photo I've ever seen of Iris Owens, and is taken from John de St. Jorre's book *Venus Bound* (NY: Random House, 1994). The photo is credited to Terry Stevenson, who may or may not be related to "Marcus Van Heller" [John Stevenson].

—Patrick Kearney

Because of some of Iris' tendencies and talents, and her literary pretensions, Trocchi felt that she would be a natural to also write pornography for Girodias. He quickly began making plans for that to happen. Plus...collect his pittance finder's fee from Girodias.

About the same time, another expatriate American, Marilyn Meeske, stumbled upon the same local pornography mill.

As quickly as Trocchi had arranged to have Iris Owens write for Girodias, Iris began in turn grooming Marilyn to do the same.

You could buy quite a lot with very little, living on the low level, in Paris in those long-ago days. The \$200 that Girodias paid his writers for each manuscript could keep them, frugally and hungry, with only the absolute minimum of personal drugs, for lean months. Some of the problem with Girodias was always his payment policy that seemed to change from situation to situation but mostly had Girodias making payments on the manuscripts of around \$10 a week...rent, drugs, occasional food...provided the writer caught him at the right time of day and in the right mood.

Needless to say, Iris' first book for Traveller's Companion was *Darling*, published in 1956. In the USA, the sensational, sizzling sex novel of the decade was Grace Metalious' *Peyton Place*, among other things about a dominating mother and the bizarre and shameful things she did with her hunky teenage son. In Chicago, a bunch of like-minded science fiction fans, and me, formed Advent Publishers and produced our first book, Damon Knight's *In Search of Wonder*.

Writing of Harriet Daimler in his superb book *The Candy Men*, Nile Southern said, "Iris Owens, whom Terry called 'Gid's great love,' was one of the most prolific Olympia women authors...." Terry wrote of Owens, "Aside from her Junoesque beauty, she had rapier wit and devastating logic. She was a pre-Sontag Sontag, and [Girodias] was determined to get

the best of her.”

And he did, sampling her best time and again.

Barry Malzberg disagreed, saying, “They were all Gid’s great love, every one he saw, the moment he saw them, and they remained his great love for a day or two until the next great love came into view.”

Later in 1956, *The Pleasure Thieves* was published by Girodias, bylined Harriet Daimler and Henry Crannach, the only collaboration Iris Owens and her good friend Marilyn Meeske ever did together.

In 1957, two Harriet Daimler novels were published, *The Organization* and *Innocence*. In Chicago, I was working as a paste-up artist in a graphics shop, learning how to make fanzines and other necessary things at the wholesale level. Learning at the same time magazine layout and makeup, the same for books, what kind of presses were needed for each type of product, and much, much more....

In 1958 the last Harriet Daimler porno novel for Traveller’s Companion was published, *The Woman Thing*.

She had reached a very elevated status...instant name recognition...as Harriet Daimler...and was running head-on into a recurring problem that had plagued her before...the dreaded writer’s block. Harriet Daimler was empty again. Paris itself no longer had that old-time thrill. The lights were dimmer somehow. *What’s a girl to do...? Can I really go home again...?*

Iris Owens gathered up all her strength, reestablished control, and banished Harriet Daimler to living inside the writer’s block. With Fidel Castro taking firm control of Cuba and the US Administration caught in an embarrassing spy scandal with Francis Gary Power’s capture and detention, Iris Owens quietly slipped back into her home country...four years later. Four years and four (five counting the collaboration with Marilyn Meeske) monumental novels.... At \$200 per, that’s \$900 for four years of work, plus the added stress of giving herself to Girodias for his unseemly and fumbling sexual encounters between coke whores.



No more prostituting either herself or her talents. Iris Owens was firmly in control, revirginized, and back home to stay.

I was working my ass off science fiction politicking, backed up by most of the members of the University of Chicago SF Club, and campaigning like crazy to bring the World Science Fiction Convention to Chicago in 1962.

More importantly, and outside my knowledge, I had been handpicked to become the next editor hired by Blake Pharmaceutical, William Hamling’s secret front for The Porno Factory....

#

Resituated in Greenwich Village in 1961 (at 28) Iris Owens was surprised to find everything very much the same as it had been only four years earlier before she had been reborn anew in Paris. The US Administration attacked the Bay of Pigs in Cuba, the Berlin Wall was erected, and I was awarded a Hugo for *Who Killed Science Fiction?* and given the Chair for the World Science Fiction Convention in Chicago in 1962. Just another boring year....

Life at The Porno Factory proceeded apace, with an ever-growing demand for more and more, especially that kind of more....

In 1962 I did indeed Chair ChiCon III the World Science Fiction Convention. There was a time when I stood behind that podium and looked out at all the hundreds of happy faces looking back at me with envy and vividly recalled my reactions to my first WorldCon. Smiling at the crowd, I thought, *Top of the world, Ma...! I did it, ten years to the day. Goddamned God feeling good...*



In Evanston, hidden in the second-floor back suite of offices, we lucked into the treasure trove of public domain material available very early in the game, enough to give us a little head start on our competition. So we began building an extensive collection of Traveller's Companion books, at the time thoroughly illegal to import into the US, so that's what we did.

At the same time, business was jumping by leaps and bounds. There was no way we could keep up with the public demand for our products, so a decision was made to correct our flaws.

We were moving into the Big Time. In 1965, with a seamless switchover, the Evanston, Illinois office was closed and the San Diego, California office was opened. Four times bigger with four times the employees and support staff and facilities outfitted with the best top-of-the line technology available. Running on automatic, full speed ahead....

I was boss at the time, so I naturally assigned myself the choicest duties. My specialty became traveling around to major world cities visiting librarians, antiquarians, and private collectors of old erotica. And buying copies of everything I could. What a chore that was, especially as I was able to schedule my trips and my stops to coincide with a few major world events that I could sample along the way, what with that very generous expense account and a developing taste for the very best....

That's where I first encountered Harriet Daimler. She was just a byline then, but I quickly grew to recognize what a valuable byline she was, and what an incredible talent. I began looking for her on the streets of Paris, along Boulevard St. Germaine, knowing that she was there somewhere, just waiting for me. In my mind I could picture our meeting, and the greeting...and the conversation that followed the good parts. It never crossed my mind that Harriet Daimler (I had no knowledge of Iris Owens at the time) would not still be residing in Paris, still writing and living the carefree high-life that I so desperately wanted to be a part of....

All this time Iris Owens was living quietly in Manhattan, making no waves, causing no trouble. No one noticed.

In 1967, Hugo Gernsback, the father of science fiction, died. I made a prolonged and at times exciting trip to Vietnam during the height of the “Police Action,” and I assigned myself the extreme pleasure of editing Harriet Daimler’s novels for republication. We edited all the Traveller’s Companion books that we published from Olympia Press’ extensive public domain library. It was part of our policy of making everything as easy as possible for our ultimate client, the book purchaser. All Britishisms were translated into commonplace US idioms. Weights and measures, kilograms and kilometers, turned into miles and pounds. No more lifts, tyres, kerbs, extraneous Us, etc.... Plus, it was a secret way of obtaining a brand new copyright from the Library of Congress based on “extensive editorial revisions throughout....”

So there I am, seated in my big, embarrassingly opulently furnished corner office with views in two directions, contemplating the Harriet Daimler that I had already met, in her novels, for personal enjoyment. This time I was going into her intensely for all the down and dirty.

It’s a writer/editor thing. It’s difficult to understand. It took me a long time to understand it. Even longer to acknowledge that it was a reality and that it had happened to me. I had read and edited so much wordage by Henry Miller that an identity transfer happened and I began to understand Henry very well indeed, almost as if I was situated somewhere comfortably inside his thoughts. It happened to me again, with Robert Silverberg, and I slowly began to recognize that it was happening to me all over again with Harriet Daimler.

It was a banner year for Greenleaf Classics and Harriet Daimler, that 1967...and for me too considering how much time I spent saturated with her, surrounded by her, absorbed totally within her. I was in lust—perhaps even love—with Harriet Daimler. She was everything I had ever imagined I wanted in a female partner...at about the same level.... I wanted her desperately.

The first of her novels, *The Organization*, turned me on like fireworks. I sat there at my big black executive desk working on Harriet’s book now manuscript with a big nagging erection nudging the bottom of my desktop. I was turned on by mere words. Me of all people! They were words designed to turn me on, and others, and they were masterfully done, grabbing me by the genitals almost from the first paragraph and not letting go until I was screaming for *mercy for God’s sake what do you think I’m made of anyway...? I can’t keep doing this forever....*

In rapid order I lusted my way through *Darling*, *The Woman Thing*, and *Innocence*...all four of Harriet Daimler’s iconic novels, and we published all four of them that year. They were beautifully dressed up in covers by Harry Bremner, Greenleaf’s master Design Director. By the time I had finished editing them, I knew Harriet Daimler better than any other person ever had. The identity transfer was complete and I was totally inside her mind. An old friend, we had known each other forever it seemed; there were no secrets between the two of us.

Then, to finish off the set of Harriet’s books, in 1968 we produced *The Pleasure Thieves*,

the one and only book that Iris Owens and Marilyn Meeske wrote together (Harriet Daimler and Henry Crannach).



And all this time I thought Harriet Daimler was still back there in Paris waiting for me. And, I confess, I had another thought as well...and it went something like this:

I was editing these books in 1967 and they were written ten years before which meant that Harriet Daimler was ten years older than me. I wasn't sure I could handle that big a difference and it could seriously screw up our relationship if we could ever get it off the bed and into realtime.... In reality I was 38 and she was 34. *Looking better...! I can handle that....* Only thing is, I didn't have those thoughts until I began writing this Harriet Daimler memory piece, but I should have.

#

In the early 1970s, with the help of a few Feds, I spent a three-month-one-day vacation, all expenses paid, at one of their better bad boy country clubs, Terminal Island. After those obligatory days passed, I slipped into a different world where nobody knew my name. I moved to Mexico and reinvented myself as something very different...a manufacturer/exporter.... Harriet fell to the wayside, along with everything else that had happened before....

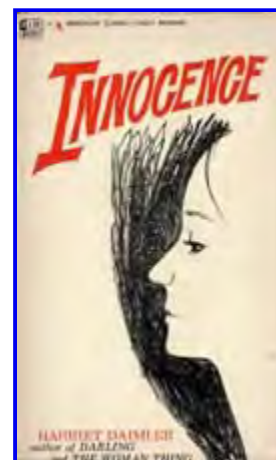
In 1973, *After Claude*, by Iris Owens, a vaguely autobiographical novel, was published. Slowly creeping out from inside the writer's block.

In 1984 (The Year of the Orwell), *Hope Diamond Refuses*, by Iris Owens, was published. Taking longer and longer to fight off writer's block.

#

Somewhere down the timeline I burned out on living in Mexico and decided to give the US another chance, eventually settling in northwest Arizona in the middle of the Mohave Desert. From here I fell back into science fiction fandom with a minor splash and, a few years into that, began writing my memoirs and posting them in my personalzine, *eI*, at efanzines.com.

In 2004 I began work on a decades-long major obsession that I couldn't shake...my memory of Maurice Girodias. Toward that end I tried my best to locate every person who had ever related with Girodias to any extent who was still alive and communicative. Of course, Iris Owens' name was on the top of that list. I hoped that she would turn up wherever she was hiding in Paris because she would be the cherry atop the whole bundle. Only I couldn't locate her at all.



#

On April 10, 2005 I had a terrible thrill.

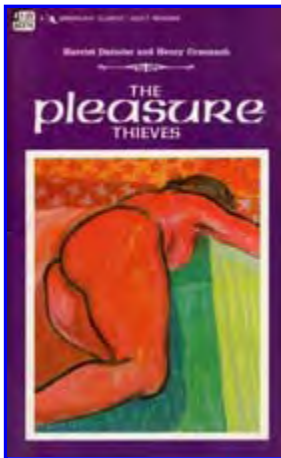
I received a cliché cryptic email reading simply, “For a good time, call Iris...” and followed by a phone number. All night I thought about that message, instead of sleeping. I kept wondering who was trying to pull what kind of trick on me. I really didn’t dare think that it was really she, the succubus of my wet dreams and copious orgasmic releases from the long, long ago. Yet I couldn’t help but hope.

#

Waiting for a respectable East Coast morning hour, I dialed the phone number fully expecting to be screamed at, insulted, and demeaned; all of these have happened before in similar circumstances, only not this time.

And yes, it really was the real Iris, Iris Owens, the first and original reigning queen of pornography, she who led me step by step through some of my very best sexual fantasies ever.

During the 1950s and ’60s, Iris Owens, as an expatriate living in Paris, lived the life I always wanted to live, and she paid her way through all of it by writing dirty books for Maurice Girodias. I have long contended that females make by far the best pornographers, though I did notice that Owens made reference to her “dirty books” instead.



Much to my surprise I found her to be sharp, witty, warm, and glib. Almost immediately as we got into the conversation and I explained briefly whom I was and why I was calling her (“You’ve called because you want to send me money,” she said.) about Olympia Press and things that happened more than half a century ago, it turned into old friends gossiping. While she didn’t know me by name, she knew exactly where I fit into the overall scheme of her career as one of my favorite literary rebels. It was like old times all over again that had never been.

All my inner secret knowledge from our identity transfer served me well. I knew almost everything she was thinking, and what motivated her to think that way.

I found myself calling her “dear” and saying things like “I love you, Harriet” that, under other circumstances would be totally off the scale of reality.

We left off by laughing together and promising to chat more in the immediate future.

For a number of months we continued with correspondence and I would telephone Iris every couple of weeks, renewing my message: “Please write something about your past for my ezine.”

#

”It was never me,” Iris said. “She did all those awful things....”

Yes, awful good...and I love her. I must have Harriet or die...

“Yes, Iris,” I said, “I know it was Harriet. She *needs* me....”

God, does she ever. It's starting to hurt, can she see it...?

“Harriet! Harriet! It's always about Harriet.”

Uh, Harriet...remember the part at the beginning of your novel...the blowjob? We could start there and see how it works out for us.

“It works for me,” I said.

Let Harriet come out and play, for God's sake....

“You're just like all the rest,” Iris said, “only thinking of yourself, your pleasure....”

<groan—pain> It'll explode if it gets much bigger....

“Honest, I'm thinking about your pleasure too.

Can I lick it or something...the woman thing...

“It was terrible being inside, forced to watch all those disgusting, evil things. Worse, being forced to feel them too.”

Feel this, Harriet. Go ahead, touch it....

“Poor baby....”

Oh, God, yes, baby! How I've dreamed of this moment.

“Don't know how I lived through it all.”

Just like that...don't stop...oh, yeah...more tongue.

“That was all in the past. You're here now with me....”

Oh, yeah! Yeah! Yeah! Eyiiiiioooow...! Fuck...!

“You make me feel so good...I needed that....”

You make me feel so good...I needed that....

“Why did we wait so long....?”

No reason to rush things. After we smoke this Indica joint, I'll show you a little something special I learned to do with the man thing....

#

Two major problems communicating with Iris Owens immediately surfaced with a

resounding poot! One, there was no way possible for her to move into the technological age. Two, she had a permanent writer's block. The more I tried to work with her on either, the worse they became.

Among other things, I gave her Creative Writing 101 lectures on "Overcoming Writer's Block," and actually offered to cowrite a from-scratch novel with her just to get her back into the groove.

No way! Iris insisted upon her typewriter and professed no need for a PC or a word processor, when either would greatly improve many things in her life. Even her correspondence was written in longhand on antique, featherweight airmail stationery. She lived in some distant past....

I moved on with *Me and Maurice*, finishing it off without any input from Iris Owens, the love of my life. It was published as [eI22, October 2005](#).

On May 20, 2008, Iris Owens died. She was 75 years old; no partner, no husband, no children.

I could not find one single obituary for her, anywhere. This is my attempt to correct that situation. She deserved much better.

Good-bye for now, my love. Keep watching for me; I'll be along soon, then we can pick up again right where we never stopped before.

- - -

Special thanks to Patrick Kearney and Marilyn Meeske for help with this memory. Cover scans courtesy Bruce Brenner collection www.vintagepbks.com.

My soul knows my meat is doing bad things, and is embarrassed. But my meat just keeps right on doing bad, dumb things.

--Kurt Vonnegut, *Bluebeard*



Weinbaum/Lotus Eaters
by Ditmar