

It Goes On The Shelf



"Casting Out the Book Wyrms"

It Goes On The Shelf

31

November 2009

**Published at The Sign of the Purple Mouth by Ned Brooks
4817 Dean Lane, Lilburn GA 30047-4720
nedbrooks@sprynet.com
Website - <http://home.sprynet.com/~nedbrooks/home.htm>**

***'And departing, leave behind us
Toothprints in the hands of time.'***

Cover by Brad Foster, fillos by Ian Gunn, Cheshire cats by divers hands

John and Diana Fox kindly sent these two books (and a Christmas card) from Down Under - they arrived just after IGOTS 30 went in the mail.

The Red King by Victor Kelleher, Viking 1989, 166pp

The binding says "Viking Kestrel" - this seems to be a juvenile book-club edition, no price on the dust jacket, which has impressive wrap-around art by Max Hyman. It's the 2nd printing, and pseudo-sticker has been over-printed on the dust jacket dated 1990 and noting that the book was shortlisted by the Children's Book Council of Australia.

This does not seem to be Lewis Carroll's Red King, or if it is, he's having a fascist nightmare - this Red King rules by the power of the fear of the "red fever" disease he can impose on a dissenter. The protagonist is an acrobat in a small travelling show.

Rooms of Paradise edited by Lee Harding, Penguin 1981, wraps, 182pp, \$A4.50

This SF anthology was originally from Quartet Books, 1978, and has a foreword by Roger Zelazny. I see from the Miller/Contento anthology index that it appeared in the US on 1979 from St.Martin's (and in fact I have that book). There are no credits to magazine appearances, and for the Ray Lafferty story *Bequest of Wings* anyway I find no record of it having appeared in a magazine. Brian Aldiss, Michael Bishop, Gene Wolfe, Damien Broderick and eight other authors appear, and a story translated from the Japanese by Judith Merrill.

Facing a state budget crisis in July, California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger fired about 10,000 temporary and part-time workers and ordered the 200,000 permanent employees to be paid only the minimum wage of \$6.55 an hour until the legislature passed a crisis-solving budget. However, a week later the State Controller John Chiang pointed out that state payroll records could not be changed to accommodate the cut because they were written in the antiquated COBOL computer language, and virtually the only state employees who knew the code were some of the part-timers Schwarzenegger had just fired. [Sacramento Bee, 8-5-08]

A Connotary by Jno. Garland Pollard, Crowell 1935 3rd edition, illustrated by Fred O. Seibel, 188pp
 This is subtitled “Definitions not found in dictionaries” - *daffynitions* might be more like it. Pollard was governor of Virginia 1930-1934. He does not claim any originality – these quips are “collected from the sayings of the wise and otherwise”. One of the entries seems slyly political -
New Deal – Dictated but not red
 but most are bland silliness. One seems very silly to me -
Gender – Masculine and feline.

Universo de Locos (2007, 488pp) and **La Granuja Espacial** (2008, 393pp), by Fredric Brown, translated by Jesus Gomez, Gigamesh, Barcelona, wraps.
 Volumes 3 and 4 of the Spanish translation, uniform with the first two well-made trade paperbacks on acid-free paper. The price is not explicit and for U.S. completists would probably depend on the exchange rate anyway. There is a web-site -
<http://www.gigamesh.com>
 Both books note “in agreement with Barry Malzberg”. The original titles do not appear – at a guess, Vol.3 consists of **What Mad Universe** and **Martians Go Home** and something that seems to translate back as “The Defiant Stars”. I will leave Vol.4 to Fredric Brown scholars! These were kindly sent me by the publishers because I sent them a scan of a photo of the author that they use on these books.

In January, a federal judge dismissed the last lawsuit standing in the way of a new Indian casino for California's Amador County, where the federally recognized Me-Wuk tribe of the Buena Vista Rancheria has its 67-acre reservation. The tribe consists of Rhonda Morningstar Pope and her five children, none of whom lives on the tribal land. [Sacramento Bee, 1-17-09]

Pendragon (XXXV No.4, Summer 2008), ed. Chris Lovegrove, 48pp, photos, illustrated divers, wraps, sample £2, £10/4.
 This is the journal of the Pendragon Society, devoted to all things Arthurian – the theme for this issue is “Guineveres”, and Steve Sneyd contributes an article on Arthur Machen’s idea that Guinevere (King Arthur’s queen, who had an affair with Sir Lancelot) was a sorceress who seduced Lancelot by black magic. I can’t say that I much care for the Simon Rouse drawing of Guinevere – looks like Cher trying to outgrin the Cheshire Cat. Everything about Arthur is obscured in the mists of time, so we don’t expect any conclusion on whether his queen was indeed a witch – one writer in this issue suggests that Arthur had three wives, all named Guinevere!

Dead Reckonings (No.4, Fall 2008) edited by S. T. Joshi & Jack M. Haringa, Hippocampus Press 2008, 97pp, wraps, \$7.50
 A digest-size non-fiction zine, all literary criticism “**Plus...Torture, Cannibalism and Necrophilia**” it claims on the cover. A little such stuff goes a long way with me, but I thought I should have it for Arthur Machen’s opinion of Walter de la Mare’s **On the Edge**, reprinted from a 1930 issue of *New Statesman*. Neither of whom went in much for torture, cannibalism or necrophilia in their fiction – Machen did have one story where the protagonist imagines torturing an innocent victim. See:
<http://www.hippocampuspress.com>

Mineshaft (No.23, December 2008) edited by Everett Rand & Gioia Palmieri, Grass Roots Press, 50pp, wraps, \$6.95

Very heavily graphics-oriented – and excellent graphics too. They get art and letters from Robert Crumb. The cover is by Jay Lynch. See:

<http://www.mineshaftmagazine.com>

The Diary of Samuel Sewall mentioned lastish had him standing “ignorantly and unwillingly” for two and a half hours because he was “afraid to look on the glass”. A page at the website for archive.org seems to confirm that Samuel was not only standing, but preaching, and went on so long because he was afraid to look at the hourglass provided to tell preachers when to wind it up. This entry is dated April 1, 1675 – could that dour Puritan be having us on? Linton Herbert and others came up with this solution to the mysterious entry in my abridged copy of the book – other suggestions for the meaning of “glass” in this context were a mirror, a barometer, and a scrying globe.

The Rite of Trebizond and other Tales by Mark Valentine & John Howard, Ex Occidente Press, Bucharest 2008, 107pp, one of 400 copies

I have forgotten what this small hardcover cost. Although all in English, it was printed in and mailed from Bucharest Romania by Dan Ghetu. I had to go 30 miles to a local sorting center to retrieve it from the USPS. The cover art is by Jason Hollander and a striking frontispiece called “Six-Winged Seraph” by Mikhail Vrubel dates to 1904. Plans must have changed in midstream – the back of the binding says that the “jacket” is by Hollander.

Excellent tales something in the Arthur Machen manner – I particularly like the last one, “Sime in Samarkand”, about the lost Sidney Sime drawings for the poems of James Elroy Flecker. I remember only one bit of Flecker that I saw somewhere, from “The Gates of Samarkand”:

**But who are ye in rags and rotten shoes,
You dirty-bearded, blocking up the way?**

**We are the Pilgrims, master; we shall go
Always a little further**

There is an e-mail address in the book – “exoccidente@gmail.com”.

The Croquet Player by H. G. Wells, Viking Press 1937, 98pp, illustrated by Clifton Line

I bought this long ago but had never read it. The artist is well-named – he seems to limit himself to a very plain line, and not many of them either. The dustjacket art is much better, but not credited. I like short novels, so when people online said they had found this story variously socialistic or Lovecraftian, I decided to read it.

There are only three characters, and the story is told by two of them to the viewpoint “croquet player” character, Frobisher. He is a middle-aged bachelor of independent means who doesn’t even read the newspapers and so is insulated from all concerns but his own rounds of croquet, archery, tennis, and bridge. He accidentally meets a Dr. Finchatton, being treated at a sanitarium for what we would now call anxiety – Finchatton believes that a region he calls Cainmarsh, where he has a medical practice, is haunted (in a very Lovecraftian manner) by demons, perhaps the ghost of the Biblical Cain. He tells of

irrational frights, gruesome murders and assaults on animals, secretive surly natives. The area is marshy, apparently based on the region that other British writers also refer to as “the fen country”. He believes that the problem may have been caused by archeologists digging up old bones. But then Finchatton’s psychiatrist, a very large loud person named Norbert, shows up and explains that Cainmarsh, and all the horrors that Finchatton found there, is completely imaginary – Finchatton has (according to Dr. Norbert) made them up as an excuse for his anxiety, which is actually caused by the very real horrors of the real world – which Frobisher has carefully insulated himself from. Norbert believes that there is a wide spread epidemic of this anxiety, what he calls a “plague of the soul”, and that mankind must acquire a “giant mind” (a cosmic mind, such as we SF fans have?) to deal with it, or civilization will collapse. The croquet player is not convinced – nothing he can do about it, he’s off to play croquet with his aunt.

So, is this SF or horror or fantasy or sociology? It is well-written and easy to read. Basically I think it is a parable, and the three characters just archtypes. Lovecraft always insisted that really seeing the world would drive most of us quite mad – and modern cyber-voodoo assures that we see a lot more of it than English gentlemen did in 1937. But they no doubt could not avoid the looming shadow of what would culminate in WWII – the rear flap of this novel carries a blurb for another book, **Invasion** by Maxence van der Meersch, about French citizens living under the German occupation of WWI.

The Dead Man’s Brother by Roger Zelazny, Hard Case 2009, wraps, 256pp, wraps, \$6.99

A long-posthumous mass-market pb original – Roger Zelazny was only a year older than I am, but died in 1995. The cover shows a man with a large knife and a girl coming out of her clothes hiding behind a tree from two thugs with automatic rifles; and the blurb has to do with missing Vatican millions in the jungles of Brazil. There are two pages of endorsements at the front – including Thomas Burnett Swann (who died in 1976) and Theodore Sturgeon (who died in 1985). But is the story any good.... It may be. I liked the author’s “Dilvish the Damned” tales, but never got into his famous “Amber” novels. This one has a classical “hard-boiled” opening – the hero awakes with a hangover to find a distant acquaintance dead on the floor, killed with his Gurkha dagger that had been hanging on the wall. Contact:

<http://www.HardCaseCrime.com>

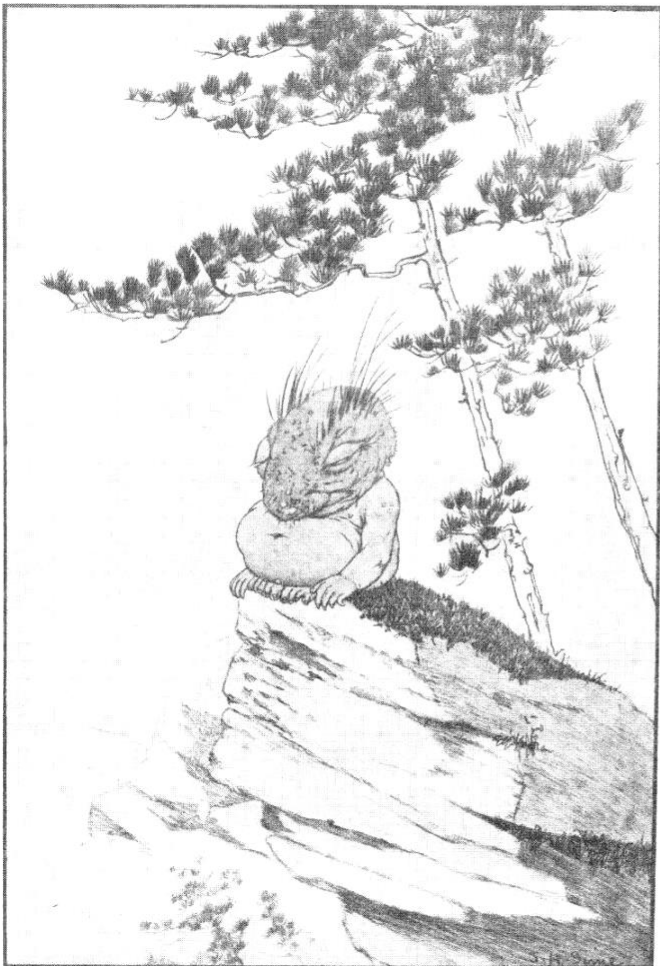
Pearson’s Magazine (Vol.XIV No.83, November 1902), pp.1082-1184, illustrated by Lawson Wood and Byam Shaw (and other artists I never heard of), 10¢ or \$1/year

A dollar went a lot further in 1902.... And this magazine must have had considerable advertising income – there are about as many again unnumbered pages of ads at the front and back as the 102 pages of content. Not a pulp, but all on coated paper that allowed for good art reproduction. The content is both fiction and non-fiction. No SF, but the Cutcliffe Hyne (*More Adventures of Captain Kettle*) and Rider Haggard (*The Pearl Maiden*) serials are adventure thrillers with excellent artwork. The skiffiest thing in the issue is the article on the “Telephone Newspaper” by Leopold Katscher. He attributes the idea to “Bellamy” (I think he means Edward Bellamy) and describes how, at that time, you could subscribe to *Telefon-Hirmondo* in Budapest and have the news read to you over the phone. Music and spoken-word performances were also available on a fixed schedule. The amplifier had yet to be invented, so there were no speakers – the sound came through “ear-tubes”, that is, the earpiece part of a telephone set, and two people could listen at once. The cost was 2¢/day (or about 6 times the cost of this magazine).

As a collector of old typewriters, I looked through the ads for offers of the models of the time. And among the endless patent medicines, a dollar watch and a Daisy air rifle, curious products like Liquid

Granite for floors and a book on the Karezza system of Ideal Marriage, there are a few typewriter ads – the big upstroke Remington and a similar Fox (no prices mentioned) and the smaller American Typewriter is offered at \$40. These are all very small ads. There's a full-page ad for the Ostermoor Elastic Felt mattress, showing the old "hair mattress" in a museum display dated 1910 – \$15 for the largest size, 6'3" by 4'6". Just how felt was made elastic is not revealed.

Sidney Sime and Jaro Hess – I had occasion to look at a large (3x2 foot) framed illustrated color map called "The Land of Make-Believe" that I bought somewhere many years ago, and noticed that it was copyright 1930 by Jaro Hess (1889-1979). It turns out there are Jaro Hess websites, and he did other fantasy artwork. But some of his fantasy creatures looked oddly familiar – they seem to have been copied, or even traced, from earlier illustrations by Sidney Sime (1867-1941), mostly those in the book **Bogey Beasts** that were reprinted from a series that appeared in a British magazine, *The Sketch*, in 1905. The Sime illustration is on the left, the Hess on the right.



Forever Peace to Stop War by Joe Haldeman, Temporary Culture 2008, 12pp, illustrated by Judith Clute, wraps

This poem, beautifully printed on coated paper was sent to me by Henry Wessells, the publisher at Temporary Culture (he has an excellent Avram Davidson website there). The title is a play on Haldeman's book **The Forever War** and this edition was made specifically to send to the politicians. Alas, I have little hope that it will induce any of them to change their vicious ways.

Living with the Dead by Darrell Schweitzer, PS Publishing 2008, 64pp, illustrated by Jason Van Hollander, £10

This is #421 of 500 signed hardcovers in an illustrated binding – there were also 200 in jackets at £25. The cover art is excellent, while the interior art is just very simple chapter headings.

A very curious book! It's subtitled "The Tale of Old Corpsenberg", but there is really more than one "tale". The narrative clear and direct, but becomes progressively more surreal toward the end. The mood reminds me a bit of things like Tim Burton's *The Nightmare before Christmas* – in fact an animated feature film in that style would be a good idea.

Peake Studies (vol.11, no.2, April 2009), edited by G. Peter Winnington, 56pp, illustrated by Mervyn Peake

This issue contains the existing fragment of a very funny play, "Manifold Basket" – this name of one of the characters is said to have been suggested to Peake when he was told that his car needed a new *manifold gasket*! As with *Gormenghast*, the play is set in a locale cut off from civilization – in this case Greyhag College in Wales, cut off from the world by a landslide. Only the headmaster and five professors remain (supplied with food and mail by plane), but they continue to collect government checks on the pretense that there is a student body.

After London or *Wild England* by Richard Jefferies, Duckworth 1929, 311pp

A flea-market find at a large place called "The Kudzu" that I thought had closed – it had just moved. Mostly kitsch and junque – and only one uninteresting typewriter. But I had never seen this collapse-of-civilization novel before. Jefferies does not bother with *why* technology vanishes, but spends pages describing what he thinks England would look like if it did, including details as to which domestic animals would survive in the wild. As of p.21, there are still no human characters nor any sign of a plot – perhaps things will pick up. There do seem to be conversations further on in the text however, and after more than 50 pages of history, geography, and economics, we finally get some characters and the beginning of a plot – Felix Aquila, the son of the impoverished Baron Aquila, cannot marry his lady love and so plans to seek his fortune by sailing a homade canoe across the vast inland sea that now occupies the middle of England.

The Red Gods Call by C. E. Scoggins, Bobbs Merrill 1926 (?), 364pp, dust jacket photo, \$2.00

Pulp fan Kevin Cook talked me into reading this very discursive tale of politics, romance, and mahogany.... The book also lists earlier copyright dates 1922 and 1923, which might indicate it had been serialized in some magazine – but if so it doesn't appear under that title in the *fictionmags* index, though Scoggins did publish in popular magazines in the 1920s. Alas, though Kevin seemed to hint that it eventually had fantasy content, it does not – other than invented names of Central American countries

south of Mexico. There are no Gods, red or otherwise. It might make a good movie!

The Agnostic by Guido Negri, Ruralist Press 1929, 224pp

Ruralist was an Atlanta area press, and the protagonist, Michael West, is from the leading family of the old satellite city of Roswell – at the time way out in the country to the NE of the city. Michael goes to Georgia Tech (a few years before my father) before WWI and majors in Chemistry, and then serves in the war and loses both his brother and his brother-in-law in the battle at Saint Mihiel. The whole concern of the plot is Michael's lack of religious faith – he refers to himself as an atheist, I don't think the word "agnostic" actually appears in the text. There is much about his distressed mother, his disapproving father, and a kindly Irish chaplain. A short novel (the margins are wide) and easy to read. In the conclusion, Michael decides that everyone will be happier if he pretends to believe!

There is a note that this is the author's first novel – apparently also his last. His son Ed Negri was interviewed in Atlanta in 2007 and mentioned the book.

Rolling Stone by Fred Stone, Whittlesey House 1945, 246pp, photos

The Rolling Stones were a vaudeville act c.1900 – Heinlein and the rock band came to use the name much later. This is an account of their career. Most interesting to me is the chapter on the stage production of "The Wizard of Oz" that they opened in in Chicago in 1902 – Fred played the Scarecrow and Dave Montgomery played the Tin Woodsman. It was a great success and ran for 5 years. The text of this book includes a very silly Tin Woodsman song.

This is a book that was sold new in Boston at "The Personal Book Shop", then spent some time at the "Edmundite Mission House" library in Selma Alabama before making its way back to Gloucester MA where it wound up in a storage unit belonging to my late brother-in-law.

Mr. Gaunt and other uneasy encounters by John Langan, Prime Books 2008, 239pp+Notes, \$24.95

This is one of the 1000 copies made of a collection of five stories recommended to me by Ken Faig. The first three – including the title story - are very good, something in the style of Robert Aickman, while the last two I found quite unreadable – over-long, pointless and confusing.

Claire Lenoir by Villiers De L'Isle Adam, Albert & Charles Boni 1925, 222pp

I had had this book for decades and never read it – I probably bought it because it's unusual to find a book from the 1920s in a good dust jacket. It was originally published in French in 1887, but the translation by Arthur Symon is quite readable. The protagonist is a Doctor Tribulat Bonhomet, and the text consists to a large extent of his cynical opinions on politics and other writers and artists of his time. There is however a plot around the "discreet and scientific woman" Claire Lenoir, which includes the bizarre belief of the time that the scene before an animal's eyes at death could be seen there until the body began to decompose. Now that I have read it, I must say that the protagonist's opinions are more interesting than the long-winded descriptions of the horrors of some sort of revenge from beyond the grave by the betrayed husband of Mrs. Lenoir.

Courage the Cowardly Dog is a TV cartoon that I liked but which appeared very sporadically on cable. So I Googled around and discovered that there is a set of four double-sided DVDs with 53 episodes from 1999-2002. So I ordered it, and after a while got a notice of a package to be signed for at the

Lawrenceville branch of the USPS. This turned out to be an elaborately wrapped package from Bei Jing (which did not seem to have been opened for inspection), with a packing slip in both Chinese and English characters, and a scribbled notation "Gift Accessory" and a declared value of [squiggle]7. The squiggle might be a \$ or a ¥, which I think is the symbol for the yen. The DVDs are in something the size of an old VHS cassette case, in plastic sleeves – and they play just fine.

***** Lino courtesy Ansible *****

'From Ujuk, however, a heavy, misshapen umbrage fell and lay like a prone incubus beside his chair.'

(Clark Ashton Smith, **Zothique**, 1970)

McFarland & Co. publishers sent their Fall 2009 catalog, which offers a number of outré titles that I think I will manage to resist ordering:

Jews and Baseball (Vol.2) - \$45

Features from the Black Lagoon - \$49.95 (sequels, spinoffs, memorabilia!)

Encyclopedia of Weird Westerns - \$39.95 (cross-pollination or miscegenation?)

Grande Dame Guignol Cinema - \$45 (a history of hag horror)

The Making of Salem - \$35 (history, fiction, and tourism!)

Kermit Culture - \$35 (it's not easy being green!)

Melville and the Theme of Boredom - \$45 (a common experience in my generation!)

Only the first two are hardcover, the rest are paperbacks.

The Library of America sent their Fall 2009 "Complete List of Titles" - I think the only one I ever bought new was the Lovecraft **Tales**, which is probably why I am on their mailing list. They have now done a great raft of P K Dick – eh. They have also done a lot of Jack London – but omitted THE STAR ROVER, his best science-fiction. Ever so often I run across one of their tomes in a thrift store.

This Is Me, Jack Vance! by Jack Vance, Subterranean Press 2009, 208pp, photos, \$40

I don't often pay \$40 for a book, but I have quite a lot of Jack Vance's books and have enjoyed them all. He was born in 1916 and has been writing my entire reading life. He's now completely blind, and confirms that **Lurulu** was his last novel. This very informal autobiography was dictated and is in a straightforward conversational style, nothing like his fiction. He seems to have had a long pleasant life, with complex hobbies like boats and ceramics and little tragedy. He describes a lot of long tourist trips with his wife, and later with his son as well. Even on these trips he spent a lot of time writing. There is very little here about the development of his unique style, or where his ideas came from. In a "Final Word" after the last chapter he gives some advice on writing – I'm not sure it would be useful to a would-be writer, but then I'm not one! Altogether a very pleasant book.

Celestial Chess by Thomas Bontly, Harper & Row 1979, 279pp, \$9.95

I think someone online recommended this metatheological thriller. The ideas and characters are interesting. The story jumps back and forth from contemporary to the 12th century. The writing is clear, but the plot (which I would not attempt to explain here) tends to churn a bit – and in the end, the author apparently discovers that he written himself into a corner and just stops with the hero having

some sort of vision that resolves nothing.

The Book of Swords by Hank Reinhardt, Baen Books 2009, 237pp, photos by Suzanne Hughes, line art by Peter Fuller, \$35.00

Listed on Amazon as “The Book of the Sword” the last time I looked – but there was only the one Hank Reinhardt (1934-2007), a friend of mine for 40 years. He and his wife Toni Weisskopf (who edited the book) were both in the Southern Fandom Press Alliance, and the photographer is married to an ex-SFPAn. When I moved here in 1998, Hank had a house about 50 miles further east of Atlanta, so I sometimes saw his remarkable collection of swords and other edged weapons. Hank had been in business as Museum Replicas, traveling all over the world looking at weapons to reproduce.

The book covers the technical, philosophical, and social aspects of swords in various cultures. The sword is an iconic weapon that appears in the Bible, Shakespeare, and many other ancient documents – Hank always seemed to be a little disappointed that he never got to use one in actual combat. He used to tell a tale of having an intruder enter his house while he was polishing a *kinjahl*, and how disappointed he was to miss the chance to use it – he was in his stocking feet and slipped on the hardwood floor, so that the bandit got away.

There are extensive bibliographies at the chapter ends, but no index – I think there must now be software to perform the dog-work of indexing a cyber-text, but I don’t know the details. The editor solicits comments – there is a website:

www.hankreinhardt.com

A Primer of Higher Space - The Fourth Dimension & Man the Square - A Higher Space Parable by Claude Bragdon, Knopf 1923, 81pp.

I found this at a local thrift store, and discovered that I already had the 1913 Manas Press edition, which seems to be almost identical, though the “parable” is not mentioned on the title page. The 1923 book has a sticker from Theosophical Center Books in Hollywood – and a bookplate showing that it once belonged to “The Church of Saint Francis / Liberal Catholic” in Chicago. This was applied over a handwritten inscription “The School of the Sacred Science” – this last also appears at the bottom of the last page, with an additional “#6”.

These are beautifully made books, with the diagrams hand-lettered in an exotic style. The opening sentence is worth quoting: “Adventure with me down a precipice of thought, sustained only by the rope of an analogy, slender but strong.” And if the rope should break, I doubt that even our feelings will be hurt much.... The argument that there could be a “fourth dimension” (either time or another spacial dimension), based on the analogy of the progression through the three dimensions of Cartesian space that we perceive, should be familiar enough to most science-fiction fans. It was not new with Bragdon – it appears in Edgar Allan Poe’s *Eureka*. Bragdon’s diagrams get into rotations and mirror images – but then he gets metaphysical. Plate 12 shows a man (for some reason shown as if fleeing in terror) with the statement “Man, a higher-dimensional entity, is pursued by the necessity of representing himself through his ‘shadow’ or personality in a lower-dimensional world” – I can only wonder if H. P. Lovecraft may not have been influenced by this book. Bragdon then gets into spherical wave-fronts, evolution, and psychic phenomena. Plates 20 and 21 bear the inscription “Philip Henry Wynne, February 1912” – they are in the same style as the other plates, and the book is dedicated to Wynne. These two plates, and Plates 22-29, explain the mind-bending procedure for creating a “Magic Tesseract” as a 4th-dimensional analog to

the familiar “Magic Square” and the less familiar “Magic Cube” – patterns of numbers where all the columns, rows, and diagonals add up to the same number (in these examples, 15 for the 3x3 square and 42 for the 3x3x3 cube). The 3x3x3x3 tesseract is diagrammed and the sum of its columns, rows and diagonals is said to be 123 – I have not tried to verify this, lest I find my head turned inside out.

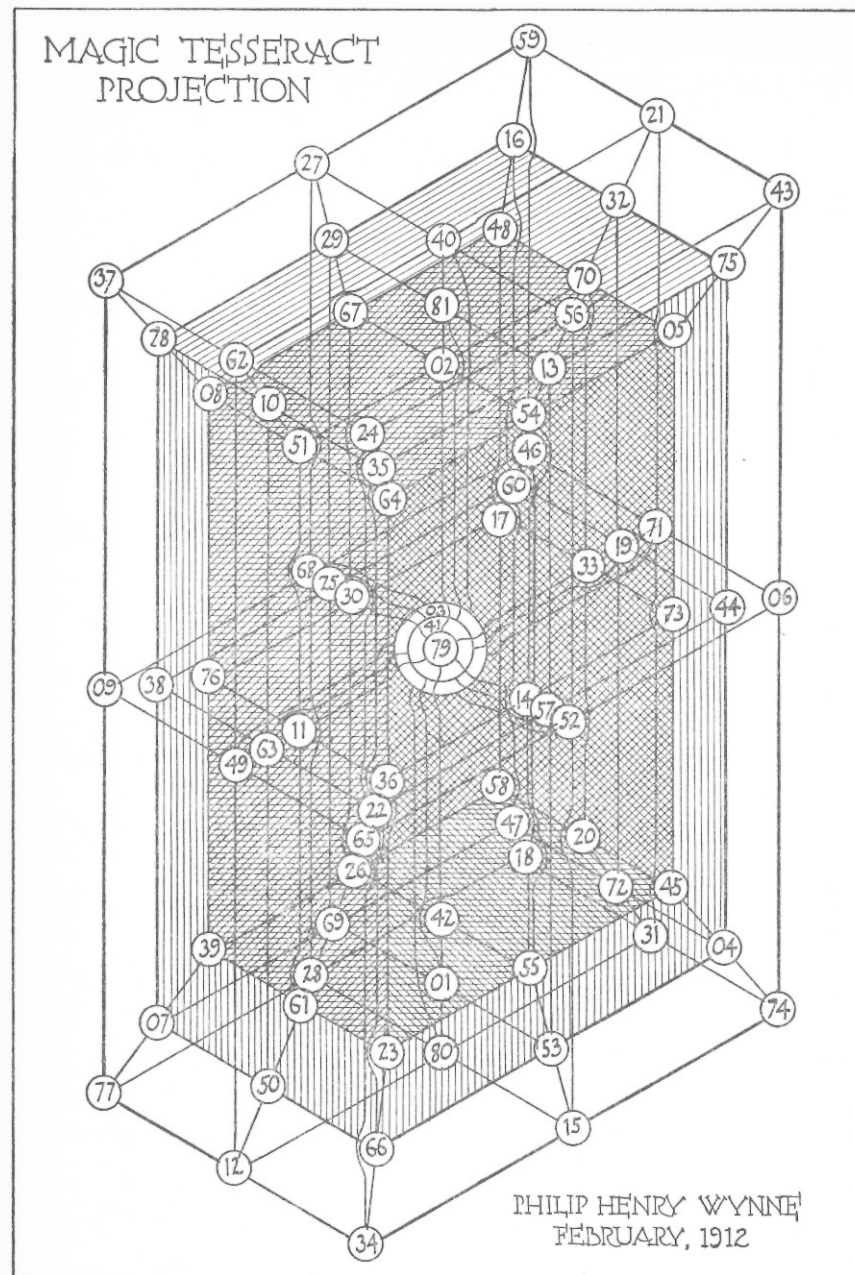


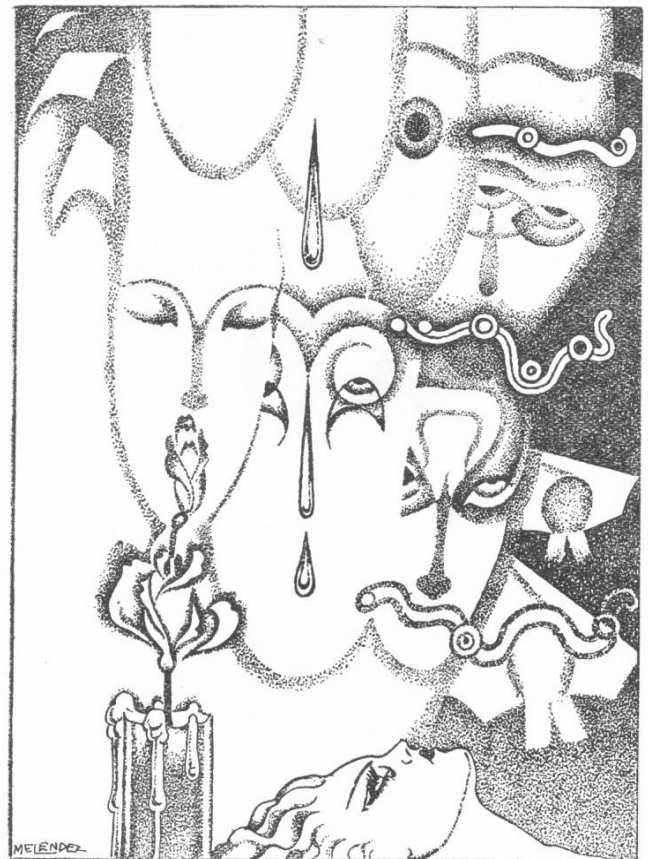
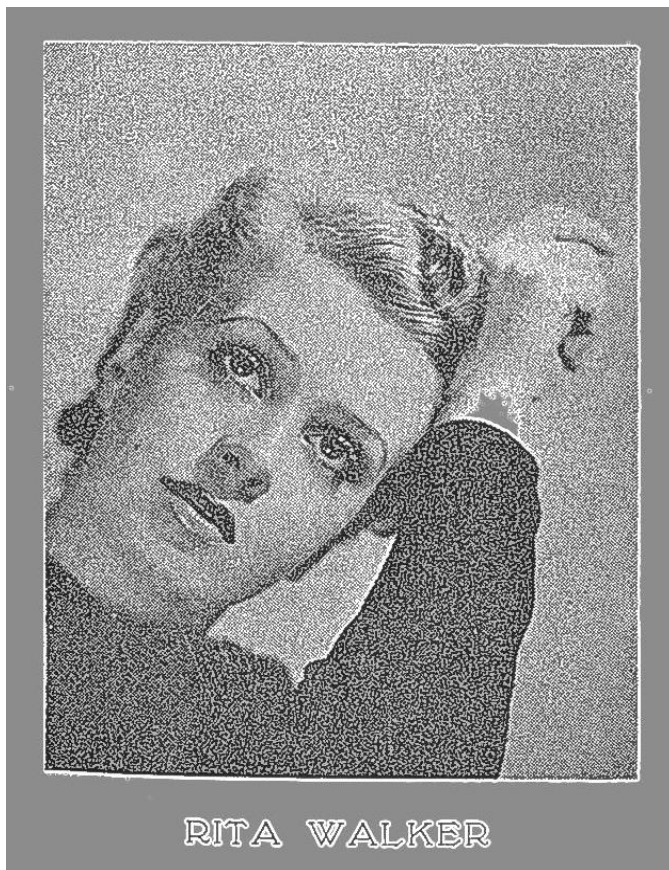
PLATE 21

The second part of the book opens with a quote from Kepler’s *Mysterium Cosmographicum*:

"Artful nature has given to the most perfect animal the same six limits as the cube has, most perfectly marked... Man himself is, as it were, a cube." This gets not only mystical but theological, including a "Sermon on the Plane" and ending with a long quote from Madame Blavatsky and a drawing of a 12x12x12 cube.

Simplemente by Rita Walker, Nascimento 1938, 128pp, illustrated by Meléndez

This was published in Santiago Chile, and though I lived in Concepcion Chile as a child in the 1940s, I don't think that's where this book that I found on the poetry shelves came from. It's nicely bound in gold-stamped red leather with marbled endpapers - but that may not be original. There is an inscription signed by the author - but not addressed to anyone by name: "In spite of all, dear, with my best sympathy and perhaps my love. I hope you will have time to read this, my little effort." (my own translation) There is a bookplate indicating that the book at one time belonged to Suzette Telenga and her husband Enrique Ellinger - and Suzette Telenga is (or was?) an Australian mystery writer. Perhaps I bought it for the bizarre artwork and brought it back from Australia in 1975.



Time Grows Thin by Lilith Lorraine, ed. Steve Sneyd, Hilltop Press 2009, 122pp, photos, ill. divers, wraps, \$15

An excellent biography with portraits and a good selection of her verse (and data on where it first appeared). She is thought to have written as many as 6000 poems published under various pseudonyms, of which Lilith Lorraine is the best known. Her real name was Mary Maud Dunn Wright (1894-1967, the Wright from her marriage), and the FBI spook-hunters of the 50s created a file describing her as an "Aztec witch" - this was discovered in an FOIA request, but no one knows what it means.

Steve Sneyd collects SF genre - with a broad definition of "SF", and many of her poems have titles that would have fit a tale in the SF pulps of her time - The Titan's Goblet, The Gateway of Vroome, The Flaming Sign, Earthlight on the Moon, Ships of Winged World Rising, Funeral of a Vampire. I reprinted "After the Silence" here a few years ago, with an Alan Hunter cover. Here is another:

Earthlight on the Moon

Yes, we shall see them, men against the stars
A federated planet, proud and free;
When grown weary of their pygmy wars
They hurl their legions through eternity.

Yes, we shall see their silver star-ships daring
Wherever worlds are waiting to be won,
Against the battlements of darkness faring,
Against the flaming fortress of the Sun.

And when at last their gods of greed they leaven,
And glorify the man of simple worth
Then we shall see them pluck the stars from heaven,
And set them in the diadem of Earth.

Yes, poets at last shall sing and lovers croon
Beneath the emerald Earth-light on the Moon.

[Hilltop Press, 4 Nowell Place, Almondbury, Huddersfield HD5 8PB, England]

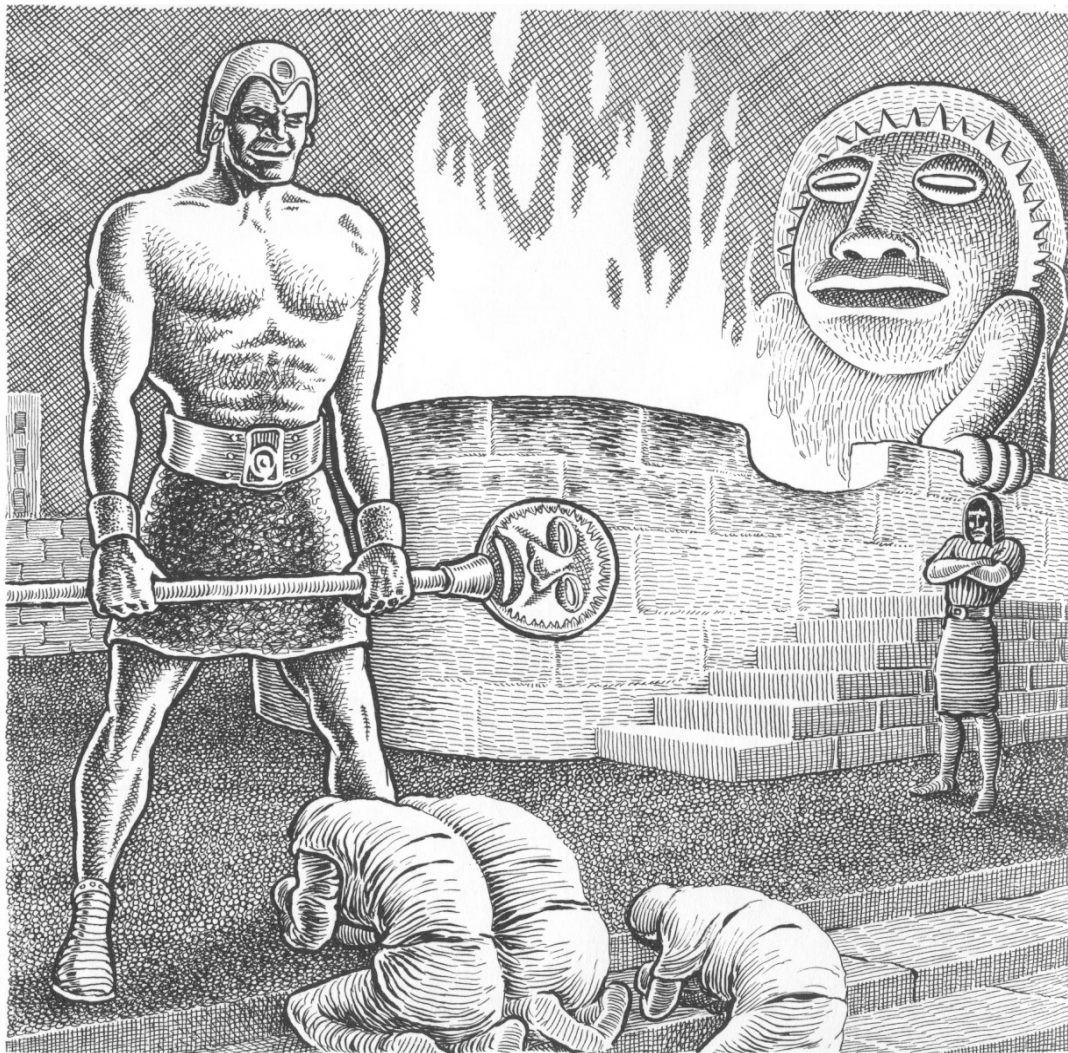
Uncle Shelby's ABZ Book by Shel Silverstein, Fireside/Simon&Schuster, ~70pp, illustrated by the author, wraps, \$13.

I forget where I got this - it looks new. The original date was a 1961 publication in *Playboy*, then

the copyright page says 1985 - but there's a URL on the back cover, so I suspect it's a 30th undated reprinting. A funny book - for "Adults Only" as compared to his usual line of all-ages tomfoolery. The last page notes that the book is not printed on paper but on candy....

The Wolverton Bible by Basil Wolverton (1909-1978, ed. Monte Wolverton), Fantagraphics 2009, 312pp, \$24.99

The artist is probably most noted for his comic-grotesque art in *Mad Magazine* and a comic-book called *Plop*, but he also illustrated Biblical material for the Worldwide Church of God, the one founded by the radio evangelist Herbert W. Armstrong (1892-1986), from 1952 to 1974. This work has been collected here. Some of it had appeared in 1982 in a 6-vol. set called "The Bible Story" (I have vols. I and V), but some were not used there as being too grotesque or violent, and appears here.



Broom Sticks by Walter de la Mare (1873 - 1956), Knopf 1925, 334pp, illustrated by Bold

I have a shelf of the works of this author but had not seen this collection until it appeared in the local Last Chance Thrift Store. Some of the stories had appeared in magazines of the time. I began to accumulate his books because I had enjoyed the novel **Memoirs of a Midget**.

Pocket Dictionary of the English Language by Joseph E Worcester & Louis J. Campbell, Lippincott 1877, 313pp, "profusely illustrated"

Campbell assembled this little (about 3x5x¾ inch) book from the larger dictionary by Worcester. It was given to me by my cousin Phylis Chloe Shuttleworth in the breakup of my grandfather's (George Colquit Brooks, 1880-1970) household goods in Forsyth Georgia. It could have been older than he was, and may have belonged to my grandmother Lily Leola Cannon who was born in 1884 - there is an obituary clipping (not nearly as old as the book) for a John A Cannon preserved between the pages. Just how he was related to my grandmother I don't know.

The entries are necessarily short, but include words no longer much used, such as *fribble*, meaning "to trifle". What we call a scimitar appears here as *scymitar* or *cimeter* (preferred). *Lier* gets an entry as "one who lies down"! There are extensive lists of foreign words and phrases (many no longer in common use) and abbreviations. A table in the back gives cloth measure in "nails" and "ells", and there are conversions for metric. And tables of foreign currency and gold and silver coins - China at the time had a "candareen" and a "mace". A table of the "movable feasts". A table of the weight of a bushel of various goods. A "universal calendar" - for the 19th century. A curious table that reveals the number of days from a given day of a month to the same day in another month. A table of analysis of common foods - in terms no longer used, such as "theine". Coffee is said to be 5% acid and ¾% "theine". The last page has a table of "nutritious properties" based on "oilcake = 1" - it is revealed that it would require 18 lbs of cabbage to equal the nutrition of 1 lb of oilcake. "Peas & beans" however are almost as nutritious as oilcake, while "old potatoes" are only 20% as nutritious as potatoes. The last table gives the incubation period of various birds.

2033 - The Future of Misbehavior, ed. anon., Chronicle Books 2007, 197pp, \$22.95

This anthology was assembled by "the editors of *Nerve*" (apparently an online magazine - there's a "Nerve.com"), "instigated" by *Svedka* - "voted the Number One vodka of 2033" (they say optimistically). There are 18 stories and short author's biographies - I have seen the name Jay McInerney somewhere, and another author is the online personage Wonkette - the rest of the names mean nothing to me.

And are the stories any good? They do have the virtue of being *short* - the margins are wide and the design calls for two blank pages between the title and opening of each story and the text line spacing about double what I use here. I think they probably were instigated by vodka.... I don't see much in them, either as prophecy or wit.

DreamSpace - a trance in four swoons by Jeff Kleinbard, 2009, 72pp

A oneshot fanzine or amateur booklet made up of assorted quotations about dreams and dreaming, and illuminated with well-chosen images. I like such collections, and have a shelf of them. The editor notes that it is available for trade or postage but neglects to include any sort of contact data. *I* know where he is - but should I publish that if he didn't include it...?

It Comes In The Mail from:

Jan Alvarez, who sent me a reading onto CD of *Beowulf* in the original language by Michael Drout, and asks if I have the old "Come to Middle Earth" poster by Barbara Remington. This odd piece of art (the artist is said not to have read **Lord of the Rings** when she did it) was split into thirds for use as the covers of the first Ballantine edition. If you have one you want to sell, let me know.

Jan also sent a Christmas card with a note that "it may seem rather odd".... The card is not all that odd, but accompanied a DVD of *King Kong* - the 2006 restored/remastered version of the 1933 film.

Doug Anderson, who sent a VHS cassette of the old SF film *The Twonky*. This is based on the story by Lewis Padgett that appeared in the September 1942 issue of *Astounding*.

Mike Ashley, who discovered that you can't keep everything forever and sold me some bound volumes of an antique art magazine, the silver-tongued devil. I enjoyed looking at them - and have now misplaced them and don't remember the title. *Colour*, that was it - volumes from 1923 and 1930.

Dee Beetem, who sends a Christmas card - she's a rare hereditary fan, her mother was also in Slanapa!

Ruth Berman, who sends her *Dunkiton Press* #17, centered on the era of L. Frank Baum and his illustrator W. W. Denslow, c.1900.

Sheryl Birkhead, who sends a Christmas card and a letter of non-comment.... and later, a long letter of comment!

Dainis Bisenieks, who notes, with regard to the isolation of Gormenghast, that Irma Prunesquallor's hot water bottle is of "the very best rubber" - certainly imported!

Bill Burns, who says he doesn't remember signing the George Wells copy of Asimov's **The Sensuous Dirty Old Man** - maybe it happened in an alternate universe. Bill also says that he typed the semi-pro zine *Alien Worlds* (1966) twice on a Varityper to get justified text - that's

dedication. I always wanted justified text, and I knew it could be done with a Varityper, but I never had the patience and had to wait for the computer typesetter to be invented.

Christopher Carson, who spotted my name and address in *Banana Wings* and sent me the first issues of his newsletter *Luna!*, which is an official publication of the Luna Project. The aim of the Luna Project is put a permanent human colony on the Moon. Obviously there are a lot of technical (not to mention financial and political) problems involved, but a lot of people smarter than I am seem to be working on it. See:

<http://www.lunarcc.org>

Melissa Conway, the guru at the massive Bruce Pelz fanzine collection now inventoried online by the University of California at Riverside, sends a New Year card, which rather croggles the mind – do they send cards to everyone who accesses the website or sends a fanzine? – they want current fanzines as they are published. Address “Special Collections, UCR Libraries, PO Box 5900, Riverside CA 92517.

Kevin Cook, who asks if the Walter Wentz mentioned lastish as having just published the Nicola Cuti bibliography is the same fan as published the A.Merritt bibliography in the 1960s - yes, indeed.

Roger Dobson, who needles me with the Oscar Wilde quotation about the US – “The only country to have passed from barbarism to decadence without experiencing civilization in between” – maybe King George Dubya was trying to drag us back to barbarism so we could try again....

Ken Faig, who sends his *EOD Letter* #8 with all the details of a hunt through genealogies for an unnamed "Swedish boy" mentioned in a letter from H. P. Lovecraft to Alfred Galpin in 1918. Ken pretty much pins it down to an Arthur Fredlund - but couldn't discover what happened to him after he crossed paths with HPL. Maybe the Night Gaunts got him....

And then his *EOD Letter* #9, with, among other things, three pages on the complex question of whether Sonia was H. P. Lovecraft's widow – it seems that she remarried even though the divorce was never final because HPL never signed the divorce papers.

And a reprint of the Cornish legend about the fall of the city of Trevillan from a novel by the Rev. Sabine Baring-Gould – reminds me somehow of the legend of Dis.

Nick Farey, who sent his *This Here* #10.

Jan Howard “Wombat” Finder, who sends his annual newsletter, *Il Vombato* – I never can remember whether I save these under I or V.

Al Fitzpatrick, a British fan I met in Australia in 1975 who now works in New Jersey, sent a Christmas card, and I hear from him often by e-mail. He encloses a photo of himself, wife, and daughter on a trip to Alaska – since I last saw him, he has come to look much like the late lamented George Carlin.

Brad Foster, who kindly sent another "library cover" for this issue. I was sure I had his "Conan the Librarian" hanging in the hall, but it's vanished – I'll have to frame another print.

Alexis & Lee Gilliland, who sent a Christmas letter with Alexis' own cartoons.

Dale Goble, who has been in Slanapa as long as I have – would you believe almost 40 years? – and sends a card with a pun on the similarity of *frankincense* and *Frankenstein* with an enclosed notice that "these cards were made in Canada, not in the USA". This must refer to the smaller notice card itself, as the greeting card (by American Greetings) is clearly marked "made in USA", a rare claim these days – would they lie?

Jose Manuel Lopez Gomez, whose copy of IGOTS 30 bounced all the way back from Argentina as having "insufficient address" – without the stamps having been canceled, even though the rubber stamp on the envelope makes it clear that it did reach the post office at Mar del Plata.

Mary Gray (and Terry), apparently the only people in Newport News who remember me after the ten years since I left there.... *Sic transit*, etc.

Thomas Hall, who recommends a film called *The Astro Zombies*, which he says stars Tura Satana, an ex-stripper who taught martial arts to Elvis Presley. I see that this also stars Wendell Corey (probably as a tree) and John Carradine (probably as a mad doctor), and may be had on DVD from Amazon for \$9.99 (if I can retrieve my password – I think they forget it just to bug me).

Richard Harland, of **Vicar of Morbing Vyle** fame, emailed in early April that his new novel **Worldshaker** has been accepted for publication in the US – even before an Australian edition – and he is very happy with the deal. Looking at his website:

<http://www.richardharland.net/worldshaker/WS.index.htm>

I see that it's to be published here by Simon and Schuster – with some revisions of the Australian text, which was released in May. I hope the US publisher retains the excellent cover art!

John Hertz, who just had to say that I had "the corner on the Pythagorean tetrahedra"....

Binker Hughes, who sends a Christmas card, and later a long e-mail.

Steve & Suzanne Hughes, who sent a curious Christmas card with a photo of a china angel with sequined lace wings from their hideout in Ellijay.

Ben Indick, who sends me a strange mini-comic by Clark Dissmeyer called "Voyage to the Outer Darkness". The author's name does not appear on it, but there is a PO box in Riverton NE.

Ben also sends an e-mail notice of the death of *A Langley Searles* on May 8. I never met Langley Searles, but we had traded fanzines for years – he had published *Fantasy Commentator* since the 1940s, though with a 25-year gap after 1953.

Now Ben is gone as well, alas.

Dr. Ruth M Jackson at the University of California, Riverside sends a letter thanking me for my contribution of a copy of *It Goes on the Shelf* 30 to the Eaton Science Fiction Collection – this is probably the largest inventoried fanzine collection in the known universe, as they have the collection of the late Bruce Pelz. And they will scan things for anyone. Dr. Melissa Conway, with whom I have traded e-mails, is listed as well, and Francoise Van Horn. But if they generate a form letter and sign and mail it for every current fanzine issue they get, they may not be getting many! An e-mail acknowledgement would have been fine. The address, if you want to send your fanzine, is:

Eaton Science Fiction Collection
P.O.Box 5900
Riverside CA 92517-5900

Earl Kemp, who sent some Forever Stamps.

Chad Kolean, who sent a package of old fanzines – I sort these to inventory in my own archive or add to the list of duplicates on my website.

Elaine Koogler, who sent a card and Christmas letter – she my first cousin and the only other member of the family I know of who is fannish at all. She's in the Society for Creative Anachronism, and there's a photo of her and her husband in full Byzantine regalia.

Colin Langeveld, who sent a Christmas card and two of the 1-shilling "Sargasso Sea Company" postage stamps, with a picture of William Hope Hodgson, a large tentacle, and a sailing ship – I have put it in my copy of **The Ghost Pirates** (Stanley Paul, 1909).

Guy Lillian, a Louisiana lawyer who sent a Christmas card just so his name would appear in IGOTS.... But seriously – Guy is a longtime member of SFPA and publishes *Challenger* almost

as often as I get this zine out.

Dave Locke, who notes that Daniel Pinkwater's **The Neddiad** was serialized in the *New York Times* in 2007. Odd that they don't mention that in the hardcover Houghton Mifflin edition that appeared the same year. Just as well I am not a mad completist and don't have to try to chase it down! Dave also says that there is to be a sequel called "The Yggyssey" – and in fact quite a lot of chapters of that are online now (Dec.1'08) and I have read and enjoyed them.

Sean MacLachlan, who sent a picture postcard of a 1994 Avebury crop circle, 300 feet across – the circle, not the postcard. He says he's at Oxford doing research on 14th and 15th century firearms while his wife does astronomy.

Joseph Major, who in connection with the comment about Branch Cabell revising his books for the matched set, says that Michael Moorcock revised all the *Eternal Champion* series so that each of the heroes got a cameo battle scene in every novel! I never read any of those other than the early Elric stories. My favorite Moorcock books were **The Golden Barge** and **The Warhound and the World's Pain**.

Tim Marion, who sent a box of very nice old fanzines for the fanzine archive. Tim finds that he printed too many of issues 17 and 18 of his very fancy fanzine *So It Goes* and would like to sell the surplus zines - \$10 in the US and \$16 elsewhere. The #17 has a 3-D cover (with bi-chrome glasses) and the #18 has a Steve Fabian artfolio. This was in September - e-mail him to arrange details - timothy.marion@rocketmail.com.

Eric Mayer, who thought that the "hovering typewriter" in the Brad Foster cover lastish was "demonic" - I thought it was meant to represent divine inspiration on the problem of spilled ink!

Murray Moore, who passed the spare copy of *The Goon Goes West* on to Lorna Toolis for her archive.

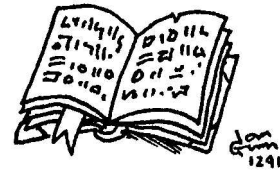
Harry Morris, who sent a note with a memorial of his wife Christine Ruth Morris, who passed away last October 24.

Joe Moudry, who kindly sent me DVDs of *The Twonky* and *The Lost Missile*.

Chris O'Brien – the youngest old fan I know – who sent a Christmas card, and umpteen questions by e-mail. And a Thank-you card for an old con program!

Krin Pender-Gunn, who sent "Silly Illos again", a CD-

rom of the late Ian Gunn's cartoons, specifically meant for use in fanzines. Will this WYSIWYG typesetter let me put one in here?



Lloyd Penney, who says he never expected to see math in such a “literary” zine – I’m just an engineer with a book collection, not really very literary!

Andy Robson, who sent a copy of the 45th issue of his zine *Krax*, which is all poetry, but has excellent artwork and an enclosed fanzine review pamphlet.

Andy Sawyer, who says that if the “glass” that Samuel Sewall was was “afraid to look on” was a looking-glass, there might be a Lovecraftian story in it.... And that he had been in Kansas last summer because the exchange rate was so much better there than in Dublin! Must have been a *lot* better to compensate for the extra cost of getting to Kansas from the U.K.!

Langley Searles (August 8, 1920 - May 7, 2009), of *Fantasy Commentator* fame, who sends a Christmas card and encloses a copy of the December 6 *New York Times* obituary on Forry Ackerman.

Steve Sneyd, who sent a nice copy of the Colin Langeveld 1-shilling postage stamp in honor of William Hope Hodgson. And has published an article on whether Arthur Machen’s idea that Guinevere (King Arthur’s queen) was an enchantress was pure invention or based on Welsh legend – and kindly sent me a copy of the *Pendragon* (XXXV No.4, Sum’08) that it appears in.

Mark Sonnenfeld, who sends unclassifiable paper objects, one of which says he is a poet – I would not argue the point – but how did he get my address? Dale Speirs “PaperNet” perhaps.

Milt Stevens, who thought the Brad Foster cover lastish was not typical of his work – I did notice after I had published it that it was dated 1985! But it was perfect for me, as I collect typewriters and have several that look more or less like that generic image, which is very like a 1920s Royal.

Mark Valentine, who was one of several readers to suggest that the “glass” Samuel Sewall was afraid “look on” was an hourglass. Mark says he has seen such attached to old pulpits, one that ran over an hour, and another calibrated to what the local squire was prepared to tolerate!

Juan Carlos Verrecchia, who sent a Christmas card, and got Robert Silverberg a translation for his collection.

Toni Weisskopf (ex-SFPAn), who sent a Christmas card.

"Knarley" Welch, who says the Pythagorean Fibonacci lastish shorted out the math circuits in his brain.

George Wells, who sent some weird Zazzle stamps. And a DVD of a film called *The Room*, starring Tommy Wiseau. If this were SF it might be in the running against *Plan 9 From Outer Space* but Wiseau, who also directs, is only the Ed Wood of bad soap opera. George also sent me two Mexican wrestler DVDs starring "Santo" – these are SF, as Santo has skiffy gizmos, and in the second one, the Martians invade. And! - Sgt Kabukiman NYPD, which is the sort of "chosen one stops the transdimensional monster from ruling the universe when the stars are right" plot that HPL might have written - if he had been Japanese and had too much saki.

Walter Wentz, a fan from the Age of Phisterus who sends a card.

Fred Woodworth, who says he is working on another issue of *The Match* but took time to solve an old mystery for me – I would occasionally run across the anthology *Shanadu* and remember being told that the exotic font the Prologue is set in is called "Diacritical". But that was long ago, and there seemed to be no WWW reference to this font, which has nothing to do with the usual sense of the word, the extra marks that may appear above letters in some alphabets. Then I got a 1952 Lynn Hickman fanzine called *The Little Corpuscle*, which uses the font in both proportional and fixed-pitch – but Lynn alas has left us. So I asked Fred about it – and he knew that "Diacritical" was just Varityper's odd choice of a name for their version of an old letterpress font called "Campanile", now available as a free download.

Martin Morse Wooster, who sent a copy of one of the magazines from the estate of the late lamented Darrell C. Richardson – see above.

* * *

Former Brigham Young University physics professor Dr. Steven E. Jones and some 700 scientific professionals in the fields of architecture, engineering, and physics have now concluded that the official explanation for the collapse of the World Trade Center (WTC) buildings is implausible according to laws of physics. Especially troubling is the collapse of WTC 7, a forty-seven-story building that was not hit by planes, yet dropped in its own "footprint" in 6.6 seconds in the same manner as a controlled demolition. To support this theory, Jones and eight other scientists conducted chemical research on the dust from the World Trade centers. Their research results were published in a peer-reviewed scientific journal *Open Chemical Physics Journal*, Volume 2, 2009. The authors write, "We have discovered distinctive red/gray chips in all the samples. The properties of these chips were analyzed using optical microscopy, scanning electron microscopy (SEM), X-ray energy dispersive spectroscopy (XEDS), and differential scanning calorimetry (DSC). The red portion of these chips is found to be an unreacted thermitic material and highly energetic." Thermite is a pyrotechnic composition of a metal powder and a metal

oxide, which produces an aluminothermic reaction known as a thermite reaction and is used in controlled demolitions of buildings.

* * *

“It seems to me that every good Government ought to stir up, as much as possible, wars, epidemics, fears, hopes, events of all kinds (good or bad, that doesn't matter), things, finally, capable of enlivening the light little innocent and digestive conversations of every citizen.

After twenty, thirty, forty years of a perpetual *qui-vive!* the Kings have diverted our attention : they have reigned peacefully, amusing themselves and everyone has been contented. This, according to me, is one of the chief definitions of the high diplomacy: to occupy their citizen's minds, at whatever cost, in order to divert attention from one-self, when one has had the honour of receiving the mission of governing men from the hands of God. Machiavelli—my best loved author—never found a clearer formula than that. One may imagine then my indifference for the events, the political crisis and the complications of the European Cabinets : I leave the interest of the controversies which they arouse to men exhausted by their inborn thirst of losing their time.”

Doctor Tribulat Bonhomet in -

Claire Lenoir (1887) by Villiers De L'Isle Adam (trans. Arthur Symons, Albert & Charles Boni 1925)

Dangerrrr: cats could alter your personality

Jonathan Leake, Science Editor

THEY may look like lovable pets but Britain's estimated 9m domestic cats are being blamed by scientists for infecting up to half the population with a parasite that can alter people's personalities.

The startling figures emerge from studies into *Toxoplasma gondii*, a parasite carried by almost all the country's feline population. They show that half of Britain's human population carry the parasite in their brains, and that infected people may undergo slow but crucial changes in their behaviour.

Infected men, suggests one new study, tend to become more aggressive, scruffy, antisocial and are less attractive. Women, on the other hand, appear to exhibit the “sex kitten” effect, becoming less trustworthy, more desirable, fun-loving and possibly more promiscuous.

Interestingly, for those who draw glib conclusions about national stereotypes, the number of people infected in France is much higher than in the UK.

The findings will not please cat lovers. The research conducted at universities in Britain, the Czech Republic and America was sponsored by the Stanley Research Medical Institute of Maryland, a leading centre for the study of mental illness. The institute has already published research showing that people infected with the *Toxoplasma* parasite are at greater risk of developing schizophrenia and manic depression.

The study into more subtle changes in human personality is being carried out by Professor Jaroslav Flegr of Charles University in Prague. In one study he subjected more than 300 volunteers to personality profiling while also testing them for *Toxoplasma*.

He found the women infected with *Toxoplasma* spent more money on clothes and were consistently rated as more attractive. “We found they were more easy-going, more warm-hearted, had more friends and cared more about how they looked,” he said. “However, they were also less trustworthy and had more relationships with men.”

By contrast, the infected men appeared to suffer from the “alley cat” effect: becoming less well groomed undesirable loners who were more willing to fight. They were more likely to be suspicious and jealous. “They tended to dislike following rules,” Flegr said.

He also discovered that people infected with toxoplasma had delayed reaction times and are at greater risk of being involved in car accidents. “Toxoplasma infection, could represent a serious and highly underestimated economic and public health problem,” he said.”

In Britain, concern over toxoplasma is growing among health experts especially as the number of pet cats has grown to about 9m. Roland Salmon, an epidemiologist with the National Public Health Service for Wales, said: “The evidence is that cats are the main cause of infection.”

Toxoplasma moves in a natural cycle between rats and cats. Rats acquire it from contact with cat faeces and cats reacquire it from hunting infected rats. It has long been known that humans can become infected with the parasite through close contact with cats.

Pregnant women are advised to keep clear of the animals because the parasite can damage unborn babies. People with damaged immune systems, such as Aids victims, are also vulnerable.

Until now, however, the parasite has always been thought harmless to healthy people because their immune systems could suppress the infection. But this view seems certain to change, especially in the light of research at Oxford University.

Scientists there have found that when the parasite invades rats it somehow reprograms their brains, reversing their natural fear of cats. It is this same ability to destroy natural inhibitions that is thought to be at work in humans.

Doctors Manuel Berdoy and Joanne Webster at Oxford University are studying how toxoplasma alters rat behaviour and the chemical weapons it uses to subvert the brain.

Berdoy said: “The fact that a single-celled parasite can have such an effect on the mammalian or even human brain is amazing.”

One startling fact to emerge from research is the great differences in levels of infection. In France and Germany, for example, about 80%-90% of people are infected nearly twice that in Britain or America.

“I am French and I have even wondered if there is an effect on national character,” Berdoy said.

Dr Dominique Soldati, a researcher at Imperial College in London, is studying ways of blocking toxoplasma from getting into cells. “Once you are infected you cannot get rid of this parasite and the numbers of them slowly grow over the years,” she said. “It’s not a nice thought.”



The Sunday Times - 9/21/03

And so closes another issue, in the first Obama year. I hope that all of you had a Happy Halloween, and will have

***A Merry Christmas
& A Happy New Year!***

Late-breaking News!

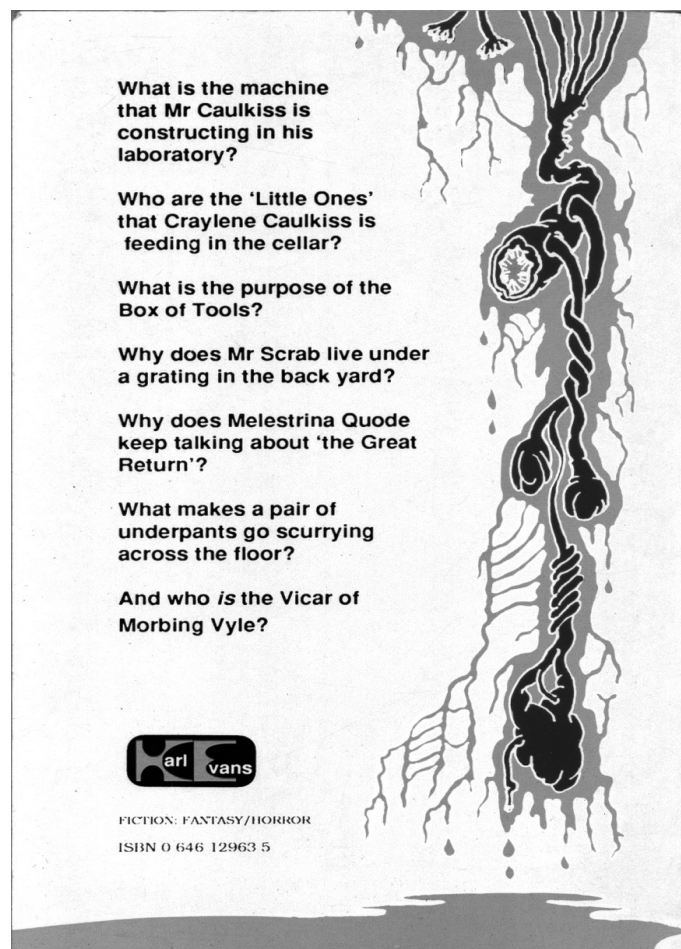
After I had taken the master for the paper copy to the printer, *Richard Harland* e-mailed me that he has put his famous novel

The Vicar of Morbing Vyle

online as a free PDF download. I enjoyed this book a lot, and Richard says it has been hard to get since it went out of print. and says -

If you want to read this famous/notorious cult book (if you're old enough, brave enough, insane enough), it's there on the homepage of my author website:

www.richardharland.net

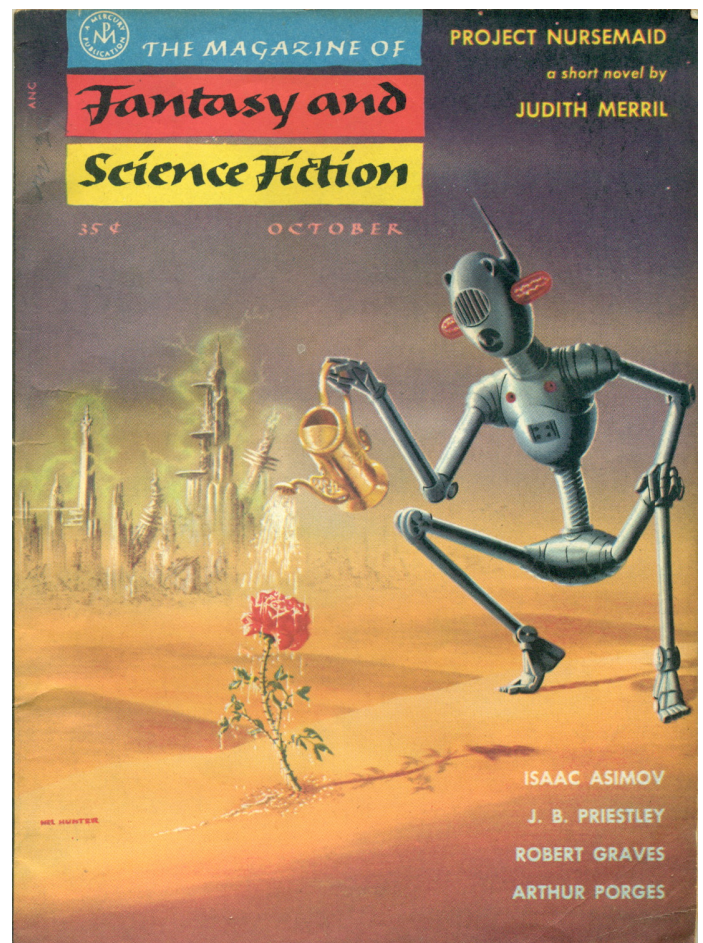
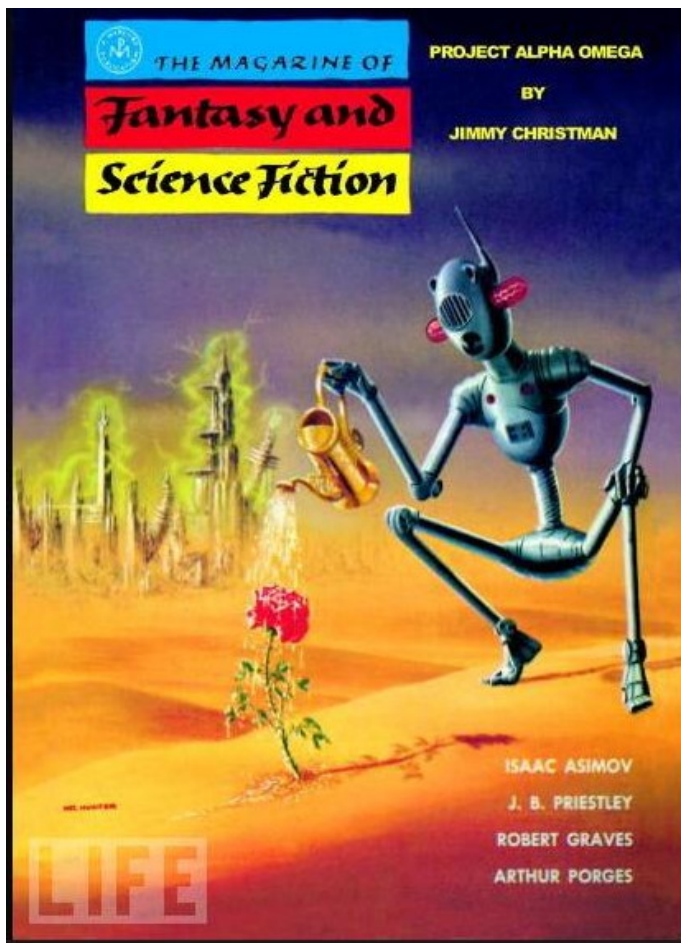


Online-only Addenda Page

It was recently noted that at the *Life* web-page there is a display of skiffy pulp covers -



This includes a cover by Mel Hunter for the October 1955 issue of *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*. But this cover image (on the left) has been curiously modified from the actual magazine cover (on the right):



Not only are the colors changed and the price and month removed - the story announced at upper right has been changed from Judith Merrill's *Project Nursemaid* to another title and author. As far as I can tell, the Christman story was never published anywhere!