

Me and Maurice

A homage to Maurice Girodias

Edited by Earl Kemp

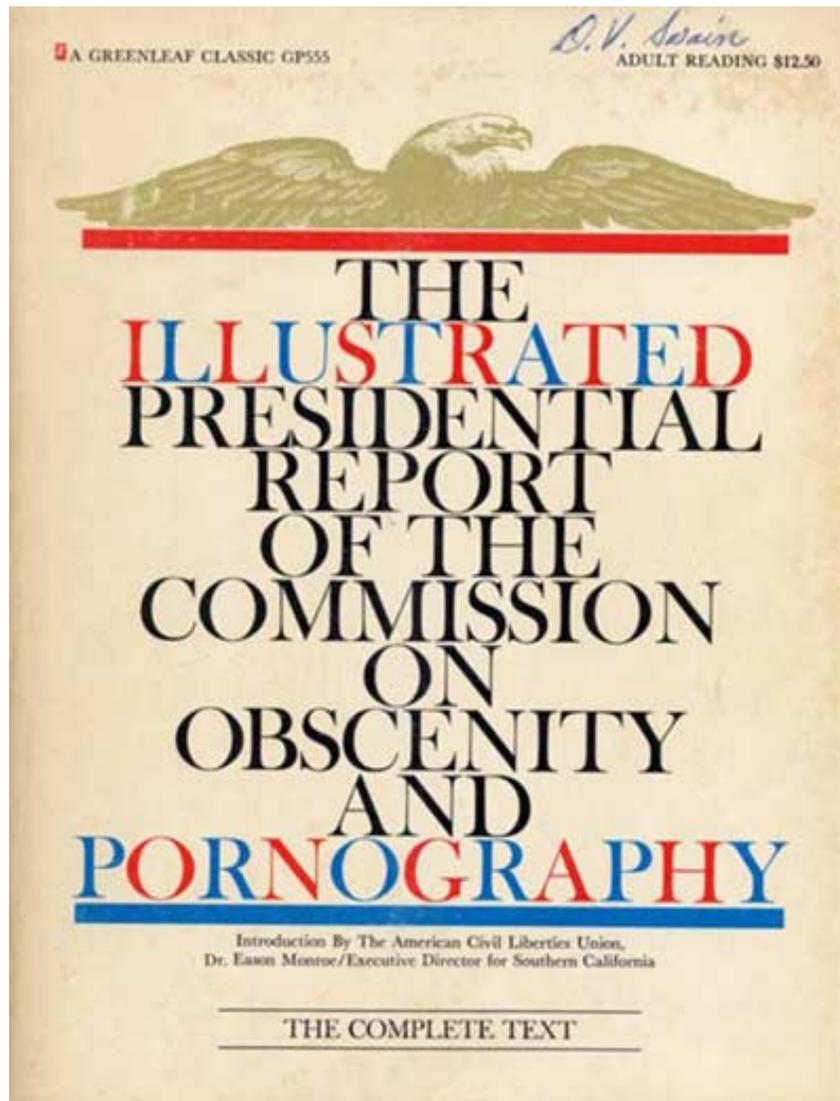
This is an  **eBook**

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This is for the two women who did more
to make of Maurice Girodias much more than
he could ever have made of himself

Muffie Wainhouse (Paris)
Uta West (New York)



I showed Maurice [Girodias] a book I had brought with me. For those who remember, [President Johnson]... had appointed a four-star commission to investigate pornography. Finding it not difficult to find fact to support the obvious, they concluded...that sexually explicit material was at best—like all art—a divine intrusion into human affairs and at worst innocuous clichés and kitsch, solitary masturbation being its predominant effect. Nixon, of course, denounced...[Johnson's] commission. But since, by law, the text of U.S. government printed mater is uncopyrightable, an enterprising soul had made a lavish full-color *Illustrated Presidential Report of the Commission on Obscenity and Pornography* (1970). It was published by Greenleaf Classics, Inc. of San Diego, Maurice's sworn enemy. Photos of sperm squirting on faces? Yes. Sucking? Yes. Fucking? Yes. Hetero and homo? Yes. Groups? Yes. S&M, B&D? Yes. Whips and chains? Yes. Animals? Yes. Children? Yes. Etc.? Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Even underground cartoon strips salaciously ridiculing authority. The mind boggled. All the juice that-is-the-case was there ornamenting a dry summary written by civil servants, academics, clergymen, and judges. Maurice looked through it. Humphed. Humphed again. Finally he had to concede: "It's a brilliant job. Whoever did this is going to jail."

And indeed a voice foretold. A short time later I picked up an American magazine and saw a photo of Earl Kemp, the book's editor, under arrest. He was handcuffed, each arm held by burly federal marshals who were shoving him into the back seat of a car.

--William Levy, "Enter Mr. Maurice,"
American Book Review, April-May, 1993

Me and



Maurice

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The terrifying acceleration of history brought us by technology can be overcome by a revolution of the mind, a poetic revolution. Politics are the enemy; they reduce everything to a false two-dimensional image of our needs and our fate. We need much more than that.

It is on the level of the paramyth, of the philosophical dream, that we will find all the answers that we need. The blinding utopia! And I have no doubt that very soon the first examples of the new literature, of the new esoteric fiction, will appear and that it will immediately change the face of the world, by magic as it were.

--Maurice Girodias

Introduction:

Me and Maurice

Artwork recycled William Rotsler

By Earl Kemp

A long time ago I realized that I'd eventually have to do the Me and Maurice thing.

Eventually finally arrived and this is it, my Me and Maurice thing.



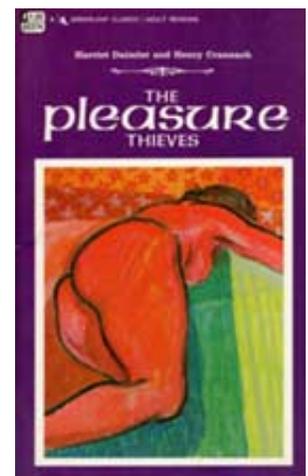
Here I am wearing my George Bush's salute to the world T-shirt in honor of Maurice Girodias. Photo by Alan White, Las Vegas, Nevada, March 2005.

Elsewhere in this book, in "Maurice...the gangster of love...", I go into as much detail as I dare about that obsession. This is about the book that my obsession finally became, this book, my Me and Maurice thing.

When I first started making plans for this venture, I had no idea what form it would take, nor who might be participating in it along with me. Now I know, and so do all the rest of the people out there remotely interested in the topic. I do know that I wanted to involve as many people as I possibly could who had direct contact with Maurice Girodias in some fashion. Just locating those people, in some cases, proved to be completely impossible.

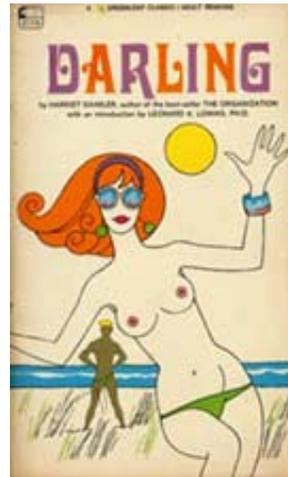
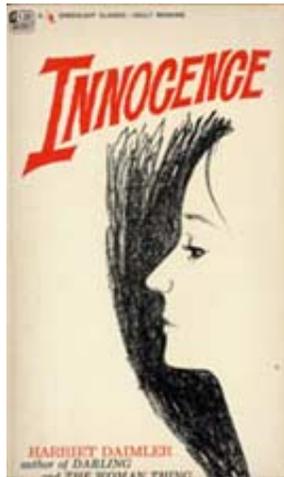
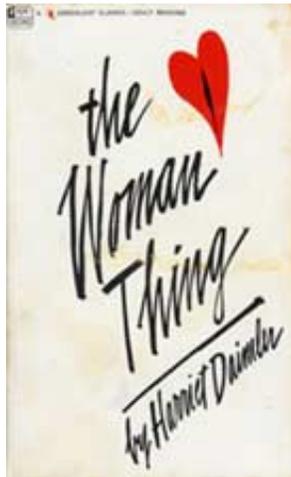
Still, I did my best, and every one that I could locate who knew Girodias, I tried to persuade to join me in the effort with their own memories of the man we all hate to love, the one and only Prince of Pornography, Maurice Girodias, the frog prince himself.

Muffie Wainhouse, who worked for Girodias at Olympia Press Paris, should know all about it. She was in on Traveller's Companion books from before they were born. Writing of that, she said, "One evening Maurice packed Alex Trocchi, Jane Lougee, Dick Seaver, Pat Bowles, Christopher Logue, Austryn and me into his big Citroen and drove us to a restaurant. Here we all had our first escargots, then trout with Sancerre, *boeuf bourguignon* with *Nuits St. Georges*, cheese, *poires belles Helene* and finally cognac. (At that time we were eating for about \$1.50 a day; Christopher Logue for less.) Slightly avuncular, Maurice was a wonderful host and storyteller. A convivial group; a merry evening. We also saw the possibilities of earning money. And Maurice must have seen the possibility of launching the Traveller's Companion Series."



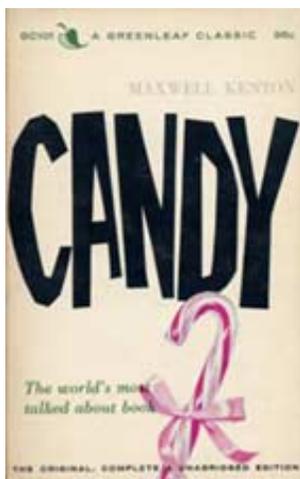
The Pleasure Thieves, by Harriet Daimler and Henry Crannach (Iris Owens and Marilyn Meeske).

After the series of green-covered paperbacks began appearing, the roster of writers grew considerably, finally containing a few of the best writers of the century. Not quite up to that level was a real charmer named Iris Owens, who began writing for Girodias under the pseudonym of Harriet Daimler, and became an instant overnight sensation porn star.



Writing of her 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, penning, under the name Harriet Daimler, *The Woman Thing*, *Innocence*, *Darling*, *The Organization*, and, with Meeske, *The Pleasure Thieves*. As 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.’

“‘We were natural DB writers,’ she told John de St. Jorre. ‘Sexual revolutionaries with a need to shock. There was a streak of anarchism in all of us.’”



In *The Candy Men*, his great tribute to his father—Terry Southern—and Terry’s collaborator Mason Hoffenberg, Nile wrote of the end of Olympia Press Paris. He said, “This was the end of the Olympia Press and its incestuous inspiration, father Jack Kahane’s Obelisk. For Girodias, it was a sad defeat and truly the end of an era in publishing. No doubt the French Ministry of Culture (and the Paris courts) breathed a collective sigh of relief, having endured two generations of continual browbeating, innovation, and challenge.”

And it seemed, to Maurice Girodias, to be that way elsewhere as well, particularly here in the USA where he grew increasingly more unwelcome day

by day.

#

Our edition of *Candy* was GC101, the first book published in the Greenleaf Classics series, in 1965. It was a proud and exciting time when William Hamling and I launched our grand new adventure in San Diego and in the open seas of the public domain. A grand schooner voyage it was, too, for all of us aboard the *Jolly Roger*.



This is the back cover of *The New Olympia Reader*.

The elder statesman, if you will, of the sex paperback industry is William Hamling, a veteran editor of science fiction and adventure pulps of the '30s. Hamling controls Greenleaf Publications and Reed Enterprises, but has retired from the day-to-day operations of the companies, which are located in San Diego and presided over by his stepson. Hamling still makes major decisions from his home in Palm Springs, and drives down to San Diego a few days a week to see what's going on.

Visiting Hamling in Palm Springs is like walking into the fantasy world of every man on his way up. Hamling greets you at the door, dressed in blue—light blue polo shirt; light blue slacks; blue cashmere socks, two-tone blue suede shoes. You walk into a living room which is big enough to easily accommodate the 30-foot couch, and Hamling fiddles with the 20-foot high fi component console, so that The Great Adomono's flamenco guitar can be heard out at the pool. After you've accepted the offer of a Scotch, he ticks off the five or so brands available, pours it, and you go out to sit by the pool.

Sitting there, with the sun tipping out of sight over Mount San Jacinto, sipping your drink, looking at the exquisite grotto at the far end of the pool, complete with a waterfall which salmon wouldn't be ashamed to swim up, with Hamling's dachshund, Hamlet, sleeping in your lap, you find yourself trying to remember if the Calvinist work ethic had any stipulations about what *kind* of commerce one should engage in.

As might be expected, Hamling traces the "sex pulps" (a phrase he has coined) from adventure and detective pulps of the '30s. "The mass market for reading in this country," he says, "always was the pulp market; millions and millions of periodicals. That has become the paperback market. The service performed has been and is to get people reading. You don't achieve this by putting Shakespeare out in ten million copies. Your job, if you're in the industry, and it's your business and let's face it, your source of money, is to get the people to read. You study the reading habits of people and you try to meet them—through detective, adventure, sex and Western stories. Once you have your people reading—even if it's a lowly Western, they are being educated. Once you get them reading, they improve. Of course, there are some people who don't improve; some of them never reach above their level. What they read, however, is not a matter for litigation but for the mind, and the mind is the individual."

--Lawrence Dietz, "Notes on the Smut Renaissance,"

New York World JournalTribune, October 16, 1966.



And then there's Patrick Kearney, a man who knew Girodias well for a number of years under a number of different circumstances...from the top to the bottom as it turned out. He refuses to give Girodias enough bad marks and winds up saying things like this: "There are too many stories about Maurice's unorthodox business practices for it not have been at least partly true. Having said that, as a publisher, he was probably one of the most adventurous and perceptive of the twentieth century. His record of spotting great books is testament to that."

And while I'm touching upon the subject of Patrick Kearney <<http://www.sonic.net/~patk/>>, I must pause long enough

to give him an enormous salute. He was initially a bit reluctant to come aboard this project but when he finally relented and said yes, he did so with a furious intensity. He has maintained that pace for months now continuously offering advice and suggestions, addresses and opening lines...scanning dozens of covers from his fantastic erotica collection, etc. He overwhelmed me with his help and generosity.

Barry Malzberg also gets a standing ovation for help beyond the call of duty with his own Me and Maurice.

There are two artists whose line artwork appears in this book. One of them is the incomparable Harry Bell and the other is the eternal William Rotsler, whose recycled artwork appears throughout this volume as needed.

#

Much has been written about Girodias' misadventures in his native Paris with *The Traveller's Companion* books and the gendarmes. For that reason I have attempted to focus this venture more toward Girodias' tenure in the United States with Olympia Press New York.

#

All the regular features of *eI* have been delayed one issue in order to keep this book restricted to one subject only, Me and Maurice. The regular features will all reappear in the next issue complete with all your wonderful letters of comment about Me and Maurice.

That's earlkemp@citlink.net for the Internet and P.O. Box 6642, Kingman, AZ 86402-6642 for the snail mail inclined. Please don't be reluctant to tell us how you think we're doing out here in cyberspace.

The books I published in the fifties, in particular Henry Miller's, have opened the world to sexual freedom. The consequences of that revolution are immense, endless and continuously developing through more and more advanced stages, reaching more and more deeply into our knowledge of ourselves. The sexual liberation was necessary to restore a true vision of the human person, of the boundless riches of nature, and to permit the exploration of internal reality we hold in ourselves. The sexual liberation has brought back truth and authenticity, freedom and brotherhood. Without it the ecological revolution would not have been possible.

--Maurice Girodias

Who Are You Really...?

The Fabled Olympia Press Writers

By Earl Kemp



Above is Patrick J. Kearney's catalogue of the New York Olympia Press, self-published in 1988. Copies are available from Stormgart Books, Seattle, Washington. Ivan Stormgart specializes in sexology and erotica. His email address is: stormgart@earthlink.net

The list of writers who made up the bulk of the publications of Olympia Press in both Paris and New York contains names that rank among the literary masters of the world. It was a unique time and the circumstances surrounding the appearance of Traveller's Companion books insured that the very best of the best would surface just then and Maurice Girodias was lucky enough to capture a great many of them.

Girodias just happened to be in the right place at the right time. Certainly he fostered some of those writers, and ignored others, and ripped off many of them, nevertheless he, they, and Olympia Press are responsible for their literary existence in the first place.

No attempt has been made to catalogue the writers who wrote under they own bylines, and they are the all-time cream of the very crop of erotica. They include such well-known scribes as Samuel Beckett, William Burroughs, Jean Cocteau, J.P. Donlevy, Lawrence Durrell, Jean Genet, Chester Himes, Nikos Kazantzakis, D.H. Lawrence, Henry Miller, Vladimir Nabokov, Oscar Wilde, and many others.

However, this section is concerned only with the bylines used by the other writers who worked for Olympia Press, the pseudonymous writers. It was one of Maurice Girodias' trademarks to create complex, unusual, and memorable pseudonyms for his writers of lesser reputation. The attempt has been to list here as many of those wild pseudonyms as we felt we could at least try to authenticate.

#

Traveller's Companion/Olympia Press (Paris) Pseudonyms

This list does not include writers using their real names

See also Traveller's Companion/Olympia Press (New York) Pseudonyms

Pierre Angelique—pseudonym of George Bataille
Richard Ashby—pseudonym of Sybah Darrich
Willie Baron—pseudonym of Baird Bryant
Diane Bataille—"XXX"
George Bataille—"Pierre Angelique"
Sinclair Beiles—"Wu Wu Ming"
Baird Bryant—"Willie Baron"
Denny Bryant [Mrs. Baird Bryant]—"Winifred Drake"
John Coleman—"Henry Jones"
Henry Cranach—pseudonym of Marilyn Meeske
Harriet Daimler—pseudonym of Iris Owens
Sybah Darrich—"Richard Ashby"
Akbar del Piombo—pseudonym of Norman Rubington
Anne Desclos—"Pauline Reage"
Hamilton Drake—pseudonym of Mason Hoffenberg
Winifred Drake—pseudonym of Denny [Mrs. Baird] Bryant

John Glassco—"Miles Underwood"
Mason Hoffenberg—"Faustino Perez," "Hamilton Drake," "Maxwell Kenton" with Terry Southern
Henry Jones—pseudonym of John Coleman
Maxwell Kenton—pseudonym of Mason Hoffenberg and Terry Southern
Christopher Logue—"Count Palmiro Vicarion"
Marilyn Meeske—"Henry Cranach"
Wu Wu Ming—pseudonym of Sinclair Beiles
Muffie—pseudonym of Mrs. (Mary) Austryn Wainhouse
Iris Owens—"Harriet Daimler"
Faustino Perez—pseudonym of Mason Hoffenberg
Pauline Reage—pseudonym of Anne Desclos
Norman Rubington—"Akbar del Piombo"
Terry Southern—"Maxwell Kenton" with Mason Hoffenberg
John Stevenson—"Marcus Van Heller"
Miles Underwood—pseudonym of John Glassco
Marcus Van Heller—pseudonym of John Stevenson
Count Palmiro Vicarion—pseudonym of Christopher Logue
Austryn Wainhouse, Mrs.—"Muffie" (Mary)
XXX--pseudonym of Diane Bataille

#

Traveller's Companion/Olympia Press (New York) Pseudonyms

This list does not include writers using their real names

See also Traveller's Companion/Olympia Press (Paris) Pseudonyms

Barbara Abrams—"Odette Newman"
Sam Abrams—"Frank Newman"
Leslie Adirondack—pseudonym of Jerry Weil
Roger Agile—pseudonym of Richard White
William Amidon—"Jesse Taylor"
Richard Amory—pseudonym of Richard Love
Anonymous—pseudonym of Michael Bernet
Angelo d'Arcangelo—pseudonym of Joseph Bush
Scott Arlen—pseudonym of Carl Stone
Richard Ashby—"Sybah Darrich"
Isidore Atlantis—pseudonym of Dexter Kelly
Renee Auden—pseudonym of Uta West
Adam Aymes—pseudonym of Julia K. Harris
Richard Balle—pseudonym of John Cicone
Victor J. Banis—"Victor Jay"
Phillip Barrows—pseudonym of Daniel R. Tuite
Diane Bataille—"Selena Warfield"
Shane V. Baxter—pseudonym of Victor Norwood
Tina Bellini—"Salambo Forest," "Max Hopper"
Albright Benson—pseudonym of Spencer Moore
Arnold Benson—"Keith Kerner"
Michael Bernet—"Anonymous," "Sheila Foster," "J.J. Jadway"
D. Bruce Berry—"Morgan Drake"
William David Boynton—"Mullin Garr"
W.H. Bradley—"Douglas Macayket," "Andrew Laird"
Edwin Scott Brown—"Scott Suneib"
Joseph Bush—"Angelo d'Arcangelo," with Phoebe Wray—"Justine and Juliette Lemercier"
Chris Castberg—"C.S. Vanek"
John Cicone—"Richard Balle"
John Cleve—pseudonym of Andrew Offutt
James Colton—pseudonym of Joseph Hansen
Joseph Como—pseudonym of Joseph Cummings

John Coriolan—pseudonym of William Corington
William Corington—"John Conolan"
Joseph Cummings—"Joseph Como"
Frank Cutter—pseudonym of Donald Volkman
Harriet Daimler—pseudonym of Iris Owens
Sybah Darrich—pseudonym of Richard Ashby
Frederick C. Davis—"Curtis Steele"
Art Derfall—pseudonym of William Kalinich
Francine Dinatali—pseudonym of Barry Malzberg
Morgan Drake—pseudonym of D. Bruce Berry
Orson Durand—pseudonym of Charles Gorham
Bruno Fischer—"Jason F. Storm"
Terence Fitzbancroft—pseudonym of Joseph Renard
Carol Flinders—pseudonym of Milton Saul
Karl Flinders—pseudonym of Milton Saul
Salambo Forest—pseudonym of Tina Bellini
Sheila Foster—pseudonym of Michael Bernet
Melissa Franklin—pseudonym of Mary McChesney
Walter Franklin—"Prince"
Richard Fullmer—"Dirk Vanden"
Michel Gall—"Homer & Associates," "Humphrey Richardson"
Mullin Garr—pseudonym of William David Boynton
Jack Gilbert and Jean McLean—"Tor Kung"
John Glassco—"Miles Underwood"
Charles Gorham—"Orson Durand"
Neils Grant, Jr.—"Gene North"
Benjamin Grimm—pseudonym of Spencer Lambert
Franz T. Hansell—"Joanne Stonebridge," "Joe Stonebridge"
Joseph Hansen—"James Colton"
Julia K. Harris—"Adam Aymes"
Homer & Associates—pseudonym of Michel Gall
Max Hopper—pseudonym of Tina Bellini
Harvey Hornwood—"James Kerstetter," "Carl Ross"
Fred Huber—"Jed Thorne," "Joy Thorne"
J.J. Jadway—pseudonym of Michael Bernet
Victor Jay—pseudonym of Victor J. Banis
Paul Johnston—"Justin Paris"
J. Joth—pseudonym of Jerry Roth
James Jurgens—"Jett Sage"
Ray Kainen—pseudonym of Ray Kainulainen
Ray Kainulainen—"Ray Kainen"
William Kalinich—"Art Derfall"
Pablo Kane—pseudonym of Hugh Zachary
Peter Kanto—pseudonym of Hugh Zachary
Michael Karnow—"Michael Tarr"
Dexter Kelly—"Isidore Atlantis"
Keith Kerner—pseudonym of Arnold Benson
James Kerstetter—pseudonym of Harvey Hornwood
K.K. Klein—pseudonym of Robert Turner
Tor Kung—pseudonym of Jean McLean and Jack Gilbert
Andrew Laird—pseudonym of W.H. Bradley
Spencer Lambert—"Benjamin Grimm"
Colonel Spiro von Lambre, retired—pseudonym of Russell Martin
Justine and Juliette Lemercier—pseudonym of Phoebe Wray and Josef Bush
Frances Lengel—pseudonym of Alexander Trocchi
Richard Love—"Richard Amory"
Marshall Macao—pseudonym of Leonard F. Mears
Douglas Macayket—pseudonym of W.H. Bradley
Barry Malzberg—"Francine Dinatali," "Gerrold Watkins"

Russell Martin—"Colonel Spiro von Lambre retired," "Robert Moore"
Webb Matthews—pseudonym of David Stannard
Mary McChesney—"Melissa Franklin"
Jean McLean and Jack Gilbert—"Tor Kung"
Leonard F. Mears—"Marshall Macao"
Arthur Moore—"Marcus Van Heller"
and others: David Stannard, John Stevenson, Robert Yerger, Hugh Zachary
Robert Moore—pseudonym of Russell Martin
Spencer Moore—"Albright Benson"
Frank Newman—pseudonym of Sam Abrams
Odette Newman—pseudonym of Barbara Abrams
Gene North—pseudonym of Neils Grant, Jr.
Victor Norwood—"Shane V. Baxter"
Andrew Offutt—"John Cleve"
Iris Owens—"Harriet Daimler"
Philip Oxman—"Thomas Peachum"
Justine Paris—pseudonym of Paul Johnston
Thomas Peachum—pseudonym of Philip Oxman
Akbar del Piombo—pseudonym of Norman Rubington
Prince—pseudonym of Walter Franklin
Eliot Randall—pseudonym of Leah Wallach
Alexander Reck—pseudonym of Alex Silberman
Richard Rein—pseudonym of Richard Rein Smith
Joseph Renard—"Terence Fitzbancroft"
Humphrey Richardson—pseudonym of Michel Gall
Carl Ross—pseudonym of Harvey Hornwood
Norman Rubington—"Akbar del Piombo"
Sharon Rudahl—"Mary Sativa"
Jerry Roth—"J. Joth"
Jett Sage—pseudonym of James Jurgens
Mary Sativa—pseudonym of Sharon Rudahl
Milton Saul—"Carol Flinders," "Karl Flinders"
J.J. Savage—pseudonym of James Keenan
Alex Silberman—"Alexander Reck"
Richard Rein Smith—"Richard Rein," "Ann Taylor"
David Stannard—"Webb Matthews"
Carl Stone—"Scott Arlen"
Scott Suneib—pseudonym of Edwin Scott Brown
Bob Stanley—pseudonym of Robert Yerger
David Stannard—"Marcus Van Heller"
and others: Arthur Moore, John Stevenson, Robert Yerger, Hugh Zachary
Curtis Steele—pseudonym of Frederick C. Davis
Clarence A. Stevens—"Gus Stevens"
Gus Stevens—pseudonym of Clarence A. Stevens
John Stevenson—"Marcus Van Heller"
and others: Arthur Moore, David Stannard, Robert Yerger, Hugh Zachary
Joanne Stonebridge—pseudonym of Franz T. Hansell
Joe Stonebridge—pseudonym of Franz T. Hansell
Jason F. Storm—pseudonym of Bruno Fischer
Michael Tarr—pseudonym of Michael Karnow
Ann Taylor—pseudonym of Richard Rein Smith
Jesse Taylor—pseudonym of William Amidon
Jed Thorne—pseudonym of Fred Huber
Joy Thorne—pseudonym of Fred Huber
Larry Townsend—"J. Watson"
Alexander Trocchi—"Frances Lengel"
Daniel R. Tuite—"Phillip Barrows"
F.H. Turner—pseudonym of Florence Turner
Florence Turner—"F.H. Turner"

Robert Turner—"K.K. Klein"
Miles Underwood—pseudonym of John Glassco
Dirk Vanden—pseudonym of Richard Fullmer
C.S. Vanek—pseudonym of Chris Castberg
Marcus Van Heller—pseudonym of various: John Stevenson, Arthur Moore, David Stannard,
Robert Yerger, Hugh Zachary
Fred Vassi—"Marco Vassi"
Marco Vassi—pseudonym of Fred Vassi
Donald Volkman—"Frank Cutter"
Leah Wallach—"Eliot Randall"
Selena Warfield—pseudonym of Diane Bataille
Gerrold Watkins—pseudonym of Barry Malzberg
J. Watson—pseudonym of Larry Townsend
Jerry Weil—"Leslie Adirondack"
Uta West—"Renee Auden"
Richard White—"Roger Agile"
Phoebe Wray and Josef Bush—"Justine and Juliette Lemercier"
Robert Yerger—"Bob Stanley" "Marcus Van Heller,"
Hugh Zachary—"Pablo Kane," "Peter Kanto," "Marcus Van Heller"

- - -

Special thanks to Patrick Kearney for much help in formulating these lists.

Do you know where I can get some hashish? It's for her. She wants some for us to smoke back in the hotel room.

--Maurice Girodias

Maurice Girodias, Fandom, and Me

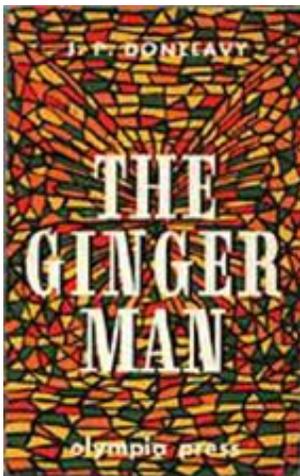
Artwork by Harry Bell

By Patrick J. Kearney

Having been persuaded by the smooth-talking Earl Kemp to write something about “Maurice Girodias and Me,” I decided to expand the topic slightly so that it might more accurately be called “Maurice Girodias, Fandom, and Me” for the very good reason that banned books and my experiences in the science fiction fandom of London in the early 1960s seem, at least in my mind, inextricably linked. But before proceeding, a caveat; to the best of my knowledge and recollection, the anecdotes that follow are, in themselves, accurately remembered, but in relation to each other I can’t be so sure. Time has a way of compressing events, like the view through a telephoto lens, and so the sequencing may be out of synch.

As must be obvious, I first encountered the Olympia Press before I was interested in, or even aware of, its founder Maurice Girodias, and I believe the first Olympia title I actually saw was a “popular” edition of J.P. Donleavy’s *The Ginger Man*, the one with the garish, mosaic cover design.

I was in Paris of course, and it was about 1960 or '61, but it wasn't my first visit. I'd been several times before thanks to my father who worked for Skyways Coach/Air, a small airline that provided cheap flights between small French and English coastal airports on ageing DC3s, with bus transport to the respective capitals. There was also the manager of the Bel-Air, a clean but reasonable hotel near the place du Republique, round the corner from the bus terminal, who was a friend of my father's.



On this occasion, however, I wasn't staying at the Bel-Air. For reasons I cannot now remember, I was at a particularly unpleasant rat-trap of a place on the Boulevard Voltaire called the Hotel des Etranger, and staying there in the company of Don Geldart, an sf fan with a literary turn of mind who, at the time I think, was still in the Army, but on leave for medical reasons. I'd known Don for a while. I first made his acquaintance from a distance, so to speak, at Ella Parker's original penitentiary where, at one of the regular Friday night fan get togethers, a tape was played that had been mailed to Ella by fellow fan George Locke from Aden or Kuwait or some other God-forsaken place. George and Don were both there doing their National Service in the army and had recorded the tape in a tent in the middle of a sandstorm, with results that were not too far removed from *The Goon Show*, a popular and anarchic English radio show with Peter Sellers, Spike Milligan, and Harry Secombe. Some off-colour remarks concerning camels and the alleged weakness of Arabs for young boys were not met with universal enthusiasm, however.

Don wasn't really too much of a science fiction fan I don't think. He didn't publish a fanzine, and so far as I can recall never wrote for any of them either. I think of him as part of the fringe, along with Ken Potter and Ivor Mayne amongst others, who although enjoying science fiction were a little different from the



Ephraim and Rosa Doner and me in the garden of their Carmel home, about 1980.

Ephraim was a close friend of Henry Miller, and Miller included an essay about him in *My Bike & Other Friends* (Santa Barbara: Capra Press, 1978). Meeting somebody whom Miller had described at length was an extraordinary experience, and showed how great a writer he really was; Ephraim felt like an old friend of mine as well.

—Patrick Kearney

mainstream of fandom, but enjoyed its social life. Because of its leanings toward radical politics and subversive literature it was a circle I felt, as a rebellious 18 year old, strongly drawn to and very comfortable in, and it must have been this rebelliousness that led me to an interest in erotic literature. And very tedious I became. Jim Linwood, wearying of my constant harping on the subject, twitted me rather well once at a convention by presenting me with what he described gravely as a banned book by H.G. Wells – a pre-WWI Tauchnitz edition, with “Not for sale in the United Kingdom or its Colonies” or something of the sort printed on the wrapper. Some time later, in 1963, Jim borrowed my copy of *The Naked Lunch* and left it on the London-Salisbury bus. Not anticipating at the time how collectible it was to become, my main concern was that it might end up in the hands of somebody who wouldn’t appreciate it. Fortunately, I was able to obtain another copy.



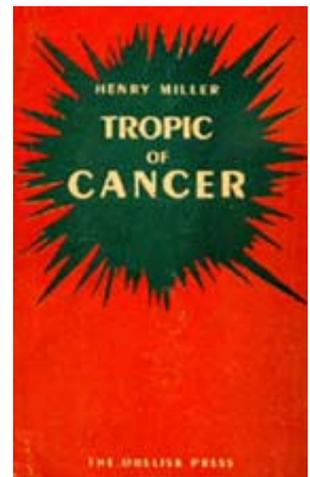
But sometimes my interest in erotica came in useful as when I needed the use of a typewriter to cut some stencils for a fanzine. Bruce Burn had the typewriter and I had a copy of *Tropic of Capricorn*, as yet unpublished in England or the United States, which he was anxious to read. Neither of us was anxious to loan out our treasures, so a compromise was reached. I went over to his rented room and spent a Saturday typing stencils while he lay on the bed reading Henry Miller.

But to return to Paris and *The Ginger Man*, I believe that Don purchased his copy from a *bouquiniste*, one of the booksellers who operate out of those dark green metal stalls along the banks of the Seine in Paris. I’d never heard of the book, and on my asking about it Don told me that it was a very good novel by J. P. Donleavy, a new writer who’d been unable to have it published in England or America because of its obscenity. The Olympia Press had first published it in June 1955 as volume 7 of their Traveller’s Companion Series. It

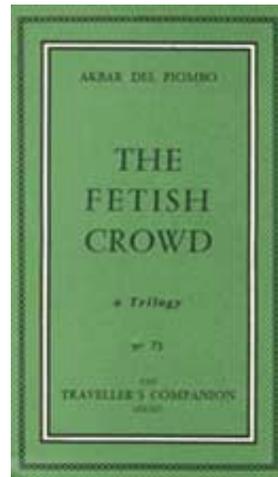
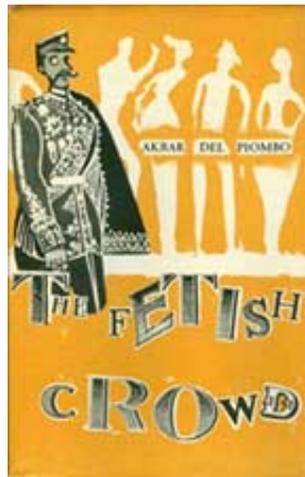
had originally been called *S.D.* – the initials of Sebastian Dangerfield, the central character – and tradition has it that the manuscript, despite its many excellent qualities, was marred by the untidiness and lack of discipline of a first novel and required extensive editorial work by the late Muffie Wainhouse, the wife of Austryn Wainhouse, Olympia’s pre-eminent translator of Sade, Bataille, and others. Dissatisfied with his agreement with Girodias, the author decided to break his contract and enter into a new agreement with Neville Spearman, a London publisher, for an expurgated edition of his work, which was published the following year. It was a course of action that about eleven legally complicated years later would lead to Girodias losing control of his company to Donleavy.

I knew none of this when eyeing Don’s copy of the cheap Olympia edition. It had doubtless been put out in an effort to salvage something from the Spearman debacle, but it was his mention of the word “obscenity” that piqued my curiosity. He allowed me a look, but after much effort I was totally unable to find anything remotely stimulating and wondered what all the fuss was about.

The problem with the books offered for sale by the *bouquinistes* was that the more interesting ones were usually wrapped in a clear, crackly plastic of some sort, with the price written in black crayon along the top edge. Dipping in was not encouraged. So having been disappointed by Mr. Donleavy’s performance, I was obliged to look elsewhere for smut, and found it rather surprisingly at Brentano’s, the American bookshop on the avenue de l’Opéra. I knew the place well from previous visits when I had discovered, in their basement, a treasure trove of both used and new American paperbacks that I would ransack for science fiction titles that were difficult to find in London. I made the trek to Brentano’s on this occasion for the double purpose of checking out the basement as usual and also to pick up a map of Paris. The maps and plans were all displayed on a high, freestanding rack to the right of the door as one entered. Not finding anything to my liking, I looked round the rear of the rack expecting a further selection, but was faced instead with a substantial display of regular

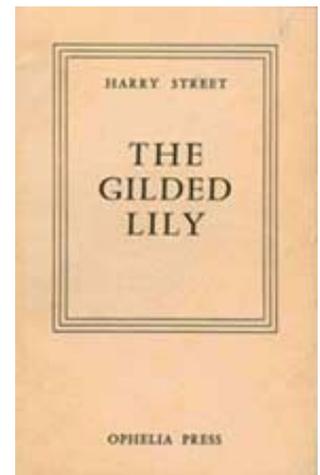


books. I noticed at once the same edition of *The Ginger Man* that Don was reading; it was garish and caught the eye. But I quickly saw that most of the other books there had extremely suggestive titles, and best of all one could leaf through them.



I rapidly discovered that the Olympia Press published all the books. Most of them had the dark green wrappers of the Traveller's Companion Series, a few, like *The Fetish Crowd*, with pictorial dust wrappers. But there were other series as well that on closer inspection seemed less literary and distinctly more masturbatory. Having earlier in the day been icily ignored by a couple of young beauties in a bar who preferred their pinball machine and the dulcet tones of Johnny Halliday on the jukebox to an English *poseur* trying to look sophisticated with his glass of *Ricard* and horrible French cigarettes, I felt the need of something to cheer me up, so I picked out a copy of *The Gilded Lily*, an Ophelia Press title. It was the first dirty book I ever read.

It was doubly ironic that it wasn't an Olympia Press book that got me interested in the company and its founder, but Henry Miller's *Black Spring* that had been published by the Obelisk Press, founded in the 1930's by Jack Kahane, Girodias's father, who died in 1939. Girodias, who adopted his mother's maiden name to avoid the scrutiny of the occupying fascists, took over the company but during the War, for obvious reasons, put it to bed for the duration, publishing instead art books and similar "safe" projects in French under a different imprint, Les Éditions du Chêne; but he revived the Obelisk Press in time to greet the American and British troops visiting Paris after the Liberation with new editions of books his father had published, by Henry Miller, Frank Harris, and others.

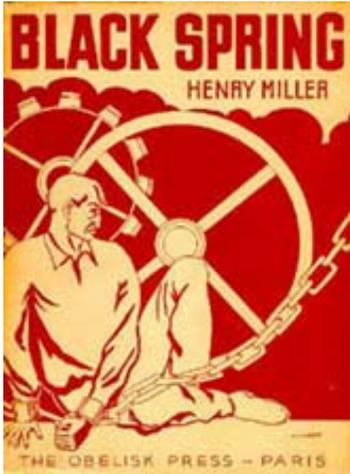


The second part of the irony was the fact that the Obelisk edition of *Black Spring* I read was published in 1958 well after Girodias, in one of his periodic reversals of fortune, had lost control of both Les Éditions du Chêne and the Obelisk Press to Hachette, a major French bookseller and distributor.

Like Jim Linwood, Ken Potter found my interest in smutty books tiresome, and tended to speak his mind when he'd had a few. I have a fond memory of exiting a pub one evening at closing time with Ken and Ivor Mayne. Ken was on a roll, and for no apparent reason started singing "The Recruiting Sergeant," an I.R.A. song from around WWI, at the top of his voice, and getting belligerent with a policeman who wanted him to stop. Fortunately, Ivor and I were able to defuse the situation.

One day, his pipe gripped fiercely between his teeth and being more than usually irritated by my musings on erotica, Ken rapped me smartly on the head with the copy of Miller's book, and then thrust it into my hand.

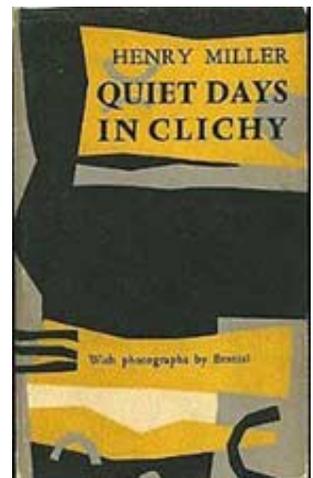
“Here’s a *real* dirty book,” he growled, “ – well written and printed in France.” I looked at it blankly. *Back Spring* wasn’t a promising title. Less prepossessing even than *The Ginger Man*, which was at least colourful, it had plain white wrappers, printed in black and with the added embellishment of crayoned squiggles by Ken’s first-born. I flipped through the pages, detected a few “fucks” and decided it might after all be interesting. My trip home that night was a voyage of discovery. I couldn’t put the damned book down and sailed past my subway stop without realizing it. Henry Miller became an obsession, and I determined to read every word he’d ever published. That didn’t mean the Olympia Press exclusively, but it did have me looking at their books with a new respect. If they published *Sexus*, *Plexus*, *Quiet Days in Clichy*, and *The World of Sex*, their other publications might be just as interesting.



So my trips to Paris became more frequent. For a while I made some extra money smuggling Olympia Press books into England, selling them to Alan Bale, an sf fan who ran Premier Book Centres in Chiswick. Alan’s shop was modeled on the Popular Book Centres, a chain that specialized in giving you half your money back in credit for the second-hand books and magazines you bought there and returned. There always seemed to be something a bit sleazy about these places. One, near the British Museum, had a rack of books outside that invariably featured the Paul Elek paperback reprints of Emile Zola’s novels. Already rendered garishly vulgar by having irrelevant cover illustrations of nudes by old masters, they would be further debased with wide paper bands wrapped around them on which would be handwritten in Magic Marker™ inducements like “Adults Only,” “Hot Stuff!”, “Extra Spicy.” One can only wonder at the cruel disappointment met by those who picked up a copy of *Germinal*.

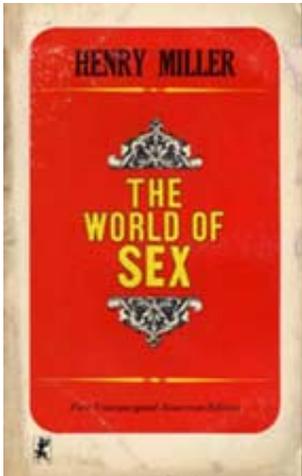
Alan’s shop – he had only one, despite being called Premier Book Centres – was similar, but seemed more respectable. For one thing, he stocked a lot of science fiction and fantasy, much of it imported from America. American sf paperbacks always looked more interesting somehow. Better cover artwork helped, and I rather liked the yellow edges, although I’m not sure what purpose they served. I think he was a little uneasy about fans visiting his shop too frequently, or maybe it was just me. I once found a copy of Poul Anderson’s *Broken Sword* there, and at first he refused to sell it to me, as he knew I wouldn’t return it, even for the credit on another purchase. He eventually relented.

But it wasn’t only science fiction Alan sold. Out of sight under the counter was tucked a couple of battered suitcases containing what the punters called “readers” – dirty books. Mostly these were “Soho Bibles,” short, mimeographed novels reproduced from typewriting and illustrated with blurry black and white photos having no connection whatsoever with the story. I gather these were quite a profitable line for Alan – he’d rent them out at, I think, a couple of quid or more a time. Despite my fascination with the subject, these things never greatly interested me and I suppose some sort of agreement was arrived at whereby I’d smuggle real books in from Paris for him. I can no longer recall the circumstances of exactly how this came about, but it didn’t last long once the available pornography published by Girodias under the Ophelia Press imprint had been exhausted. Many of the books with the famous green wrappers of the Traveller’s Companion series were a bit too literary for “the lads in Chiswick,” and I believe it was something by Jean Genet – or was it Jean Cocteau? – which eventually put the tin hat on the venture. I could have continued on by importing novels by Girodias’ competitors, but I found little to recommend them and was unwilling to risk my neck smuggling them through customs.



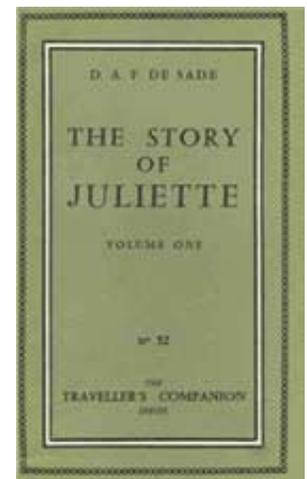
I still ran Olympia Press books from Paris through to London, but now it was for my own collecting habits. I’d grown to love them, and to admire the man who’d created the company. There was something about the way they looked – especially the Traveller’s Companion series – an elegance and simplicity of design, texts

that were invariably interesting, and at times even great. Smuggling became a way of life for a time. Sometimes I would take my acquisitions to the Globe, a pub in Hatton Garden, where London sf fans would gather on the first Thursday of the month, and show them off. A few of the fans were actually interested. Walking home from the underground one evening after such a visit to the Globe, I became aware of a bell ringing annoyingly somewhere. It was very foggy and the sound was muffled, and I couldn't quite place from which direction the sound was coming.

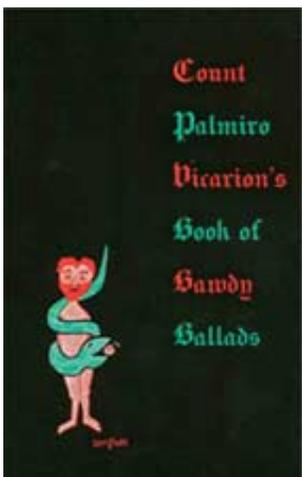


Abruptly, a brace of Gerald Road's finest emerged from the shadows and asked me to hand over my attaché case. Afterward I reasoned that the bell had been a burglar alarm, and the interest expressed by the cops in my case probably had something to do with a robbery. At the time, though, I grew panicky and must have acted suspiciously for they grew increasingly insistent and demanding. Eventually I opened the case and they peered inside, moving the books around as if trying to find something hidden amongst them. They pulled out the compendium volume of three Samuel Beckett novels, flipped the pages and tossed it back. Satisfied, one of the cops told me to "bugger off home." I didn't need to be told twice.

On one of my smuggling trips I even enlisted the assistance of my long-suffering parents. They'd gone to Spain for a couple of weeks, and as they planned to return to London via Paris I thought I'd take one of my periodic book-buying sprees and meet them there. My purchases were a little more extensive than usual, and after stuffing my own pockets with books I found that I still had all seven volumes of Sade's *Juliette* left over with nowhere to put them. Much to my surprise, my father volunteered to put them in his attaché case, a gesture that did not find favour with my mother.



Waiting in line in the customs shed at Lympe airport on the English coast, I watched in curious fascination as a man was taken to one side and under the disapproving gaze of a woman I took to be his wife was obliged to empty the contents of his suitcase, revealing far more than the government quota of duty-free Scotch and cigarettes, and several evidently pornographic paperbacks, but not from the Olympia Press catalogue. It was soon our turn in the barrel. I noticed from the corner of my eye mother nervously shredding a lace hanky with her teeth, but my father strode purposely forward and was soon talking familiarly with the inspector who, I discovered shortly afterward, knew my father well through his job with the airline company. We were soon waved through.



On another occasion, I asked Ramsey Campbell to do a bit of smuggling for me, and pick me up a copy of Akbar del Piombo's (Norman Rubington's) *Book of Bawdy Ballads* during a trip he was making to Paris accompanied by his mother. I agreed to meet him on his return at Victoria station, London. As I've recounted elsewhere, the trip home across the English Channel hadn't agreed with him at all and he looked far from well – a sensation with which I was well familiar myself from a similarly rough crossing I'd made some years earlier. Yet, true bibliophile that he was, he triumphantly held aloft my precious book, carefully wrapped in plastic.

I'd made the acquaintance of Ramsey Campbell when he was still John Ramsey Campbell and writing his stories in school exercise books in a careful, copperplate hand. I was much impressed by his H.P. Lovecraft pastiches, and urged him to submit his stories to August Derleth of Arkham House. He followed my suggestion, and the rest is history. But Ramsey's immersion in

fantasy and horror fiction was matched by an equally strong interest in erotic literature, and we exchanged many letters in which we discussed, in particular, the works of the marquis de Sade, whose translations under the Olympia Press imprint we had both acquired. One day I was greatly surprised and not a little embarrassed to receive a letter from his mother, who had apparently had her modesty shocked by one of my own letters. She accused me of trying to corrupt her son, but her tone was not angry, more one of gentle sadness, and she asked me if my own mother knew the sort of books I was reading and whether I had abandoned my faith. As it happened, my mother was perfectly aware I had a mind like a sewer; and from my name I imagine Ramsey's mother supposed me to have been a Catholic. I had to answer her, but I didn't feel that it would be prudent to repeat those facts. At the time I was without a typewriter for some reason, and I toiled very late into the night at the travel agency where I worked creating a carefully worded and conciliatory reply, which seemed to have eased the situation, for my correspondence with Ramsey continued for a while afterward without any further trouble.

I eventually reached a point where I felt the need to meet Girodias. I'm at a loss to know why, but I suppose it was not entirely unconnected with the desire experienced by others to meet their favourite film actor or sports figure. In my case it was a publisher. The only problem was how to do it.

The solution presented itself when Ivor Mayne, hearing that I was to make a run to Paris, asked me if I'd pick up a manuscript for him that had been submitted for publication in *Olympia*, Girodias's short-lived literary magazine, but rejected. Although the magazine was openly on sale in the more progressive bookshops in England and, probably, the United States, it ran into trouble with the authorities in France, and only four numbers were published. Ivor's manuscript was a short story called "Domes of Silence," and I got the impression from him that Girodias had become nervous of entrusting anything thicker than a letter to the mails, and where possible preferred authors to collect their own rejects.



Whenever Ivor Mayne passed a religious bookshop he made a point of going in and enquiring if they stocked *The Rosy Crucifixion*. When they asked if they could order a copy for him, he explained that it was published by a devout order in Paris called Olympia who would be more than welcome to supply several volumes. I often wonder if the Vice Squad raided any shops that tried to oblige Ivor. I think Ivor stopped doing this when Girodias rejected his story.

--Jim Linwood

On this particular Paris trip, Sue Lionnel, my girl friend, accompanied me. It was the first time she'd been abroad, and while she looked forward to visiting Paris, she didn't share my interest in meeting Girodias and on the day I decided to go to the Olympia offices on the rue St. Séverin she chose to wait in the street outside and do some window-shopping.

I climbed up a flight of dark stairs and entered a small, cluttered office. Behind a desk sat a man of mixed black and white parentage who was definitely not Girodias. Years later I was to discover it was Gerry Williams, the anonymous translator of *A Bedside Odyssey*, Michel Gall's erotic re-telling of Homer, written in French but first published in English by Olympia. I explained the reason for my visit.

"Are you the author?"

I denied it, an admission I immediately felt to have been unwise.

“Do you have an authorization from the author to collect his manuscript?”

I produced it. “Could I discuss with M. Girodias the reasons for its rejection? Mr. Mayne is a little unclear...”

“I’m sorry. M. Girodias could only do that with the author himself. I’m sure the covering letter with the manuscript will clear up any problems. Also he is out.”

He disappeared briefly into an adjoining office and returned quickly with a quarto-sized envelope addressed to Ivor. I took it and stared at him, trying to think of some other ruse by which I could meet the great man at a later time, but my mind was as blank as my stare.

“Was there something else?” He clasped his hands, and for some reason I was reminded of the way barbers in England would, after cutting one’s hair, ask the same question, on the off-chance you wanted to buy contraceptives. I settled for buying some books and left, frustrated. The whole thing couldn’t have lasted more than fifteen minutes, and I was not amused at the time to discover that as I’d entered the office, Maurice had exited by another door, noticed Sue looking in a shop window, and spent almost the whole time I was gone talking to her.

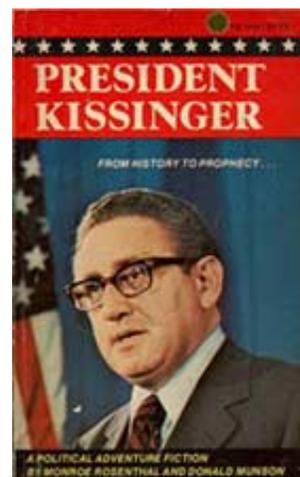
I first made direct contact with Maurice about twelve years later, by mail, thanks to a bookseller friend in New York who gave me his address. Maurice was still in the United States, and living in Boston. Although he’d stopped publishing by the time I got to know him, two of his last books had provoked dark forces to move against him.

President Kissinger (New York: Freeway Press, 1974) and *Inside Scientology* (New York: Olympia Press, 1972) outraged two groups. The former started life as a piece of political fiction dreamed up by Maurice in which a constitutional amendment made it possible for foreign-born individuals to become President of the United States. Much of the writing was done by Monroe Rosenthal and Donald Munson whose names appeared as the authors, but additional material was added by Girodias himself, Susan Wasserman, the wife of Maurice’s attorney, and Marco Vassi, one of the more interesting writers discovered by the Olympia Press in New York. Vassi’s contributions consisted of some outrageous incidents that allegedly took place just after WWII when Kissinger apparently acted as an interpreter for the American occupation forces in Germany. According to Vassi, Maurice expressed reservations about including the passages, but agreed to their use after Vassi asked him what had happened to the famous champion of literary freedom.



Sue Lionnel, the girl I took to Paris and who got to speak to Maurice Girodias whilst I was in the office retrieving Ivor's manuscript is on the extreme left. I took the photo c. 1962 on the set of *It Happened Here*, the political fantasy directed by Kevin Brownlow and Andrew Mollo which attempted quite well to show what might have happened if the Germans had occupied England in WWII. Several fans aside from myself took part in the film, including Jim Linwood -- who disgraced himself by whistling 'The Red Flag' whilst in Nazi uniform -- and Bruce Burn. The cameraman taking a light reading is Peter Suschitsky, who was later to become David Cronenberg's favourite cameraman and therefore, to add to the Olympia Press connection, was the Director of Photography on *Naked Lunch*.

—Patrick Kearney



A few days after publication, an anonymous note signed “A Patriot” was received by the US State Department, complaining of the book. Almost immediately, the entire stock disappeared from the distributor’s warehouse, although a few copies managed to slip into circulation. Who the author of the anonymous note might have been is not known, but one theory is that it was a female employee of Maurice’s who’d been planted by the Scientologists following the publication of Robert Kaufman’s exposé, *Inside Scientology*. The Church of Scientology had attempted unsuccessfully to prevent the book’s publication, first by direct representation and later through the courts. About two years before the anonymous letter had been sent to the State Department – around the time Kaufman’s book appeared – a fabricated bankruptcy notice on stolen Olympia letterhead was widely circulated in England, which effectively ended the company’s operation there.

Attempts were made to deport Maurice from the United States. His residency papers were said to be out of date, and it was suggested, quite untruthfully, that his marriage to Lilla Lyon was undertaken as a convenience for the purpose of staying in the country. The final straw came when Maurice and his wife were driving to a friend’s for dinner. On the way, State and Federal law enforcement officers stopped them and in a highly improbable scenario claimed to have discovered several bags of cocaine in his pockets. Given the choice of ten years in prison or immediate deportation, Maurice wisely chose the latter.

During all these *ennuis*, Maurice and I remained in contact by mail. I knew nothing of his troubles with the law, and he never made reference to them. Our letters dealt strictly with the Olympia Press, its history and bibliography. He seemed amused at my interest in the subject, but was very helpful and patient with my questions. At times he appeared vague on specifics – he once wrote that I was mistaken to ascribe publication of *I’m for Hire* to him, saying that it had been one of the books his father, Jack Kahane, had published. I pointed out, gently, that he was probably thinking of *To Beg I am Ashamed* his father had published, a different book on the same subject. I found him to be very loyal to his writers, even though he may not have paid them as diligently as they might have liked, and in two instances asked me not to reveal the true names of two pseudonymous authors who had written for him in New York, a Russian journalist living in Italy and a deceased woman whose family were unaware of her erotic writings. He also tended to acrimony, and spoke harshly of people he felt had betrayed him.

Perversely, I didn’t actually meet Maurice in person until I had moved to California in 1982, and Maurice was back in Paris. Visits home to London invariably included side trips to Paris, and it was on one of these that we first met, briefly, at his apartment, on the top floor of a tower block overlooking Père Lachaise cemetery.

I commented on the view, and he laughed, explaining that he’d chosen the high altitude “to be closer to God.” He walked over to the window, spread his arms and said he enjoyed looking out over the cemetery where so many of his friends were buried. His accommodations were Spartan to say the least, barely a stick of furniture in the place, and I wondered if he might have just taken possession of the place and hadn’t yet moved his belongings in.

Our second meeting was longer and more convivial. By chance Lilla Lyon was visiting Maurice. The nature of their relationship at the time was a little unclear, and since she was living in New York and Maurice in Paris, I didn’t feel inclined to make inquiries. But they appeared very fond of each other. My own wife was with me, and the four of us went for lunch. It was late on a Sunday afternoon, and had trouble finding a restaurant that was open. When we eventually did, it was little better than a greasy spoon and Maurice was evidently not happy with the venue. He looked askance at the menu and gave an exasperated groan when he picked up the wine list, but our order was taken and we settled down to talking. I forget exactly what we discussed, but I was struck by the fact that the cuffs of Maurice’s jacket were wrapped in Scotch tape, presumably to prevent fraying, and it suddenly occurred to me that he must be as poor as a church mouse. When the meal was over, I pulled out my wallet to pick up the tab, but he insisted on paying himself in a tone that suggested argument was pointless.

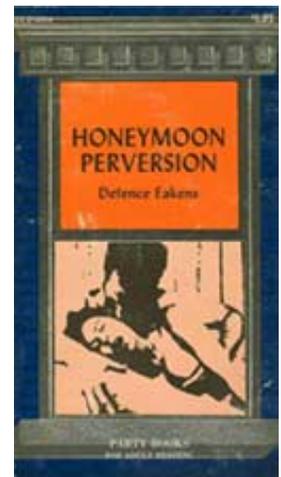
The next time we went out to eat, I remembered this. On this occasion, it was for dinner, and Maurice

steered my wife and I to a small and evidently expensive restaurant not far from the old Olympia Press offices on rue St.-Séverin. He remarked with curious emphasis I thought that a pair of homosexuals ran the restaurant, and that the staff was similarly inclined. He wasn't kidding either, but the food was excellent, and in comparison to the wine list at the greasy spoon the one we had to negotiate that night was more like a family bible. At the end of the meal, while drinking coffee, I made my excuses and headed for the gents. On the way I asked for the bill and settled up, since I didn't want Maurice to pay for us a second time. When he found out, he was absolutely furious and nothing my wife or I could say seemed to lessen his anger, which seemed to get worse the more he thought about the situation. It was as if I'd broken some tribal taboo.

Eventually I said, "Look here, Maurice, how about if we finish the evening by going to a bar. You can buy Linda and me a drink. A fine cognac or something like that." He immediately perked up, and we walked a couple of blocks to a really fancy place, full of ferns and cut glass and more like a club than a bar. I forget what Linda and Maurice drank, but I had a particularly good glass of Calvados. The balance of the universe having been restored, Maurice sat back in his chair beaming.

One rendezvous started badly, for me at any rate, but finished quite spectacularly. Linda was off somewhere with a woman friend, and I'd arranged with Maurice to meet him at a bar in the shadow of the Pompidou Centre at noon. It was early July, very warm and muggy, and by the time we met I had a serious thirst. I asked for a beer, but somehow botched the order. I wanted a large draft, so I ordered a "grande pression." Maurice looked at me in surprise. "Are you sure?" He asked in something akin to wonder. I nodded, but was shocked when it arrived. The glass looked a bit like a brandy snifter, but was big enough to contain at least as much beer as one gets in a pizza parlor pitcher.

Starting in on the beer, I asked Maurice about a series called "Party Books" he'd published in New York that I was interested in. It was a short-lived series, and their curiosity for me was their miserable quality. Ill-written texts printed on the worst paper money could buy, they were uncharacteristically poor publications, stroke-books of the worst kind. Maurice at first denied all knowledge of them and seemed a little embarrassed that I had raised the subject. I persevered and he continued in his denials. On reflection, it was unkind of me to do so, but I eventually pulled out a New York Olympia Press catalogue and showed him a list of Party Books titles it included. He shrugged. "Self censorship," he sighed. I wanted to know why he'd stooped so low as to publish dross of this quality, but I never asked the question; a combination of the growing effect of the beer and an unwillingness to embarrass him further prevented me.



I managed to get it all down but it was a struggle and by the time Linda and Noisette, her friend, arrived I was in a state that *Private Eye* would describe as "tired and emotional." I don't remember very much of what followed, but evidently an arrangement was made for the four of us to meet up later that evening, at a restaurant. Maurice was late and I still felt fragile, but immediately rallied when he did show up and presented me with a small package containing copies of *l'Affaire Lolita*, a scarce Olympia Press pamphlet, and *President Kissinger*. I must have mentioned earlier that I was looking for copies, and had contrived to find them somewhere.

That night was the last time I saw Maurice. Noisette offered to drive him home, so we piled into her aging Mercedes and headed up the Champs Élysées. It was July 13th and the final touches were being put to the Bastille Day decorations. There were a lot of police and military in evidence. Approaching the Arc de Triomphe, our lane of traffic was stopped by the police to allow special lines to be painted along the street by a small, apparently remote controlled machine on caterpillar tracks. As it passed alongside us, Maurice looked through the car window at it. "A French tank," he murmured.

Early in July 1990 I was awakened at about three in the morning by a 'phone call from Michael Neal, a bookseller friend who lives just outside Paris. "Did I wake you? Sorry. I called to say our friend Maurice has died. He was being interviewed by French radio, and had a heart attack."

Much has been written about Maurice Girodias, usually about his faults, the shabby way he is supposed to have treated those who wrote for him, his lack of business sense and disdain for money. With so much negativity it is difficult not to accept there is some truth to it all. To me, though, he was a good friend, generous, amusing and always happy to help with my many questions. Despite his declining fortunes in his last years, he maintained an almost courtly elegance, especially around women whom he charmed easily. But his greatest legacy was his ability to know a great book when he saw it. In Paris, he had a fairly short career as a publisher; aside from the period during the war when he wasn't able to be adventurous, it lasted less than 30 years, and yet his track record at publishing great books – real literature – is extraordinary. It is doubtful that we will ever see another publisher quite like him.

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Those literary orgies, those torrents of systematic bad taste were certainly instrumental in clearing the air and cleaning out a few mental cobwebs. The imbecile belief that sex is sin, that physical pleasure is unclean, that erotic thoughts are immoral—all those sick Judeo-Christian ideas were exposed for what they are.

--Maurice Girodias

Our Lady of the Flowers

(Related correspondence between Maurice Girodias and Barney Rosset on the lawsuit.)

By Maurice Girodias and Barney Rosset

If Maurice was a pornographer, it was a very special kind....People like Terry Southern, Norman Rubington, and Marilyn Meeske...were closest to Maurice's kind of taste. I could always spot a Girodias book—it would have an intellectualized sexual content and polished style.

--Barney Rosset

September 4, 1959

Dear Barney,

Following your last letter and in accordance with criticisms formulated by several people, I have reworded the second half of the Lawrence Durrell's "Open Letter to the French Government." I am sending enclosed twenty copies of the draft which I hope you will find more satisfactory than the first.

Our lawsuit for "Our Lady of the Flowers" comes up on the 16th of September. It is absolutely essential for us to have this letter published by the American/French papers before the day (although the Courts' verdict will not be made public on the 16th but one or two weeks later; at any rate this decision will have been made on the 16th).

The matter is therefore terribly urgent and I would be extremely grateful if you could help us as much as you possibly can!!!

Can you send me immediately a list of the people you can get in touch with, directly or indirectly, so that I can work out a list of people I still have to contact? Of course, you are in a much better position to approach the American writers and critics than we are at this end.

Much depends on this new campaign. If it helps us to obtain the legal victory I am looking forward to, you will be certain to be left in peace by the French authorities forever.

So please do your very best to help us!

Yours,

Maurice

#



Barney Rosset and Maurice Girodias in East Hampton in 1960. Courtesy Barney Rosset/*Evergreen Review* Collection.

September 9, 1959

Dear Maurice:

Enclosed is a copy of the letter Barney will send along with your Open Letter to the French Government. It will go to the people you mentioned, plus Dalton Trumbo, Howard Fast, Norman Mailer, Tennessee Williams, Jack Kerouac and Elliott B. Macrae (president of Dutton). If we think of any others, we'll let you know. (Also James Farrell, Irwin Shaw, and Erskine Caldwell.)

I had never met Barney Rosset. I had admired him for years. I had spent some of those years ripping him off and taking a hell of a lot of money directly out of his hands, only I wasn't doing any of that deliberately and it was nothing personal and he was still the single person within the entire erotica industry, world-wide, for whom I held a heavy load of genuine, worshipful respect....

We lived and worked in different worlds, Barney and I, because he was in the uptown, classy book industry, producing volumes that anyone would be proud not only to own but especially to have produced. I, on the other hand, was in the degenerating downtown, dirty book industry, better known as the periodicals trade, and I was producing volumes that people read only once then discarded after the pages got too sticky for comfort. Barney's books were forever and my books were, by definition, destined for a lifetime of only 30 days. Imagine my surprise, many decades later, to discover that people were paying hundreds of dollars, even thousands, for single copies of some of those 50- to 75-cent beat off books.

Rosset was doing things exactly the way I wanted to do them but wasn't allowed to do. He made me feel quite proud just to think I was a sort of bastard relative.

Barney and I were constantly in competition for the same exact book titles at the time, and the only real saving grace was that we existed in those different worlds. I don't mean that he was in New York City and I was at the far opposite corner of the States in San Diego. I mean he was the respected boss of Grove Press who flooded bookstores with some of the very best of Maurice Girodias' shoddy, unprotected output...starting with My Man Henry Miller.

I, on the other hand, was the notorious smut peddler from Greenleaf Classics who flooded newsstands, bus stations, gun shops, liquor stores, and sleazy area adult bookstores with almost the exact same product...Maurice Girodias' shoddy, unprotected output...starting with My Man

The enclosed letter to Henry Miller is self-explanatory. A copy has also gone to M. Filipacchi.

Barney just read THE WORLD OF SEX for the first time and was very favorably impressed. What are the chances of our getting the rights to this book, as opposed to the TROPICS?

If you think of any other writers to whom you would like us to send the Open Letter, it might be best if you cabled. Sorry for the delay, but yesterday was a holiday and the material only arrived this morning.

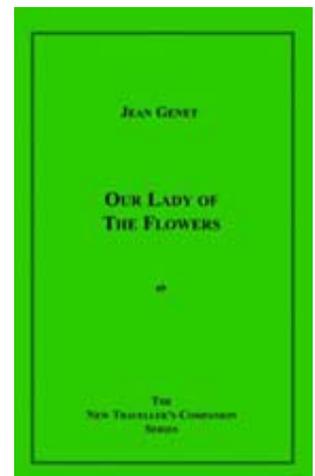
Best wishes,
Judith Schmidt
[Secretary to Barney Rosset]

#

September 9, 1959
73 Perry Street
New York 14, New
York

Dear Mr. Mailer:

Maurice Girodias and The Olympia Press have had may of their books banned in France. The list of banned books includes such famous ones as LOLITA by Vladimir nabokov and OUR LADY OF THE FLOWERS by Jean Genet. In earlier trials, Mr. Girodias won the case of LOLITA in the lower courts. The cases are now coming up again and, on behalf of the Olympia Press, Lawrence Durrell has written the enclosed "Open Letter to the French Government." Among those writers who have



Henry Miller. At times it was touch and go to see who would hit the marketplace first, me or Barney. I called him Barney and thought of him that way...even though I respected him beyond reason, I felt especially akin to him. We walked the same streets in the same manner for the same reasons. What's not to like about him?

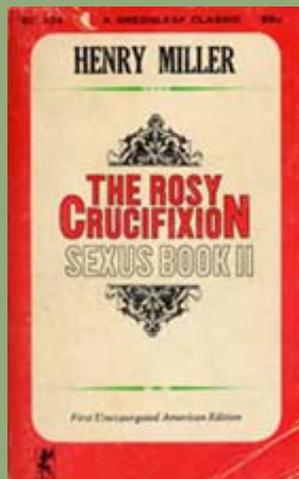
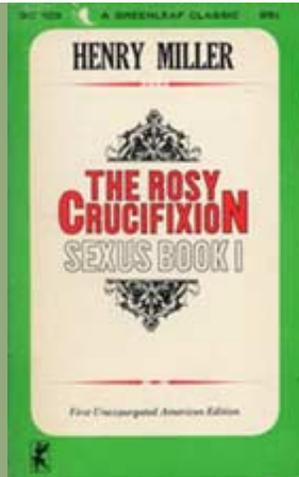
I had even gone to the extreme, on two different occasions, of living inside our then typesetter's shop and literally hand setting two of the Miller books [*The Rosy Crucifixion*], working straight through without even stopping to sleep or eat, in order to beat Barney's on-sale dates for those titles. Fortunately I had the help of my first assistant who got as good at hand setting as I had become by then... that's Peter V. Cooper.

Prior to that, neither of us had ever touched a piece of type, much less sat those pieces into any kind of coherent order. It was quite a learning experience for both of us and needless to say, we beat Barney on sale with both of those books by a wide margin.

--Earl Kemp, "Wet Dreams in Paradiso," *e115*, August 2004

#

New-Cal Publications in Gardena, California, was engaged in a publishing race worthy of something on the order of *The Front Page*. The presses had been running, eight in the morning until midnight, for a week. In the binding and trimming room, the high-pitched *when-when-when* screech of the \$85,000 hot-glue binding machine made conversation impossible, and the paper dust from the trimming machines covered the workers heads like fine, dry snow. In the 10,000-foot-square shipping room, perhaps 50 skids, piled high with cartons of books, were clustered near the scales. The shipping foreman, Henry Martinez, a short swarthy man with a cold cigar stub clenched in his teeth, was feverishly gluing labels onto cartons, his clerk was weighing the skids and moving them to the loading dock. Western Trucking would be by at five; it was imperative that the books get out.



agreed to sign the letter thus far are Stephen Spender, Richard Wright, Philip Toynbee and Henry Miller.

I feel that Mr. Durrell, Mr. Girodias, and the others who will sign the letter, are in the right and, if you are in agreement, we would very much appreciate it if you would sign the enclosed copy of the letter and send it back to us as soon as possible. One of the cases will be decided next week, and a fast response from you might influence the decision.

Sincerely yours,

Barney Rosset
BR:js

[THIS LETTER HAS ALSO BEEN SENT TO:
John Steinbeck on September 10, 1959
Robert Frost on September 11, 1959]

#

September 10, 1959

M. Maurice Girodias
The Olympia Press

Dear Maurice:

In addition to the names I listed to you the other day, we've sent letters to W. H. Auden and John Steinbeck. Since Auden, Steinbeck, and Irwin Shaw are all in Europe, we asked them to reply directly to you, if they should decide to sign the letter.

I do hope that some replies come through in time.

Best,

Judith

P.S. Would you please send us two copies of Alex



New-Cal had the print order of 500,000 copies of an “unauthorized” version of Henry Miller’s trilogy, *The Rosy Crucifixion*. At any time, Grove Press (the publisher of the “authorized” edition) might obtain an injunction forcing Greenleaf Publishing Company of Evanston, Illinois, and New-Cal, to suspend production pending court rulings on copyright validity, thus allowing Grove to get its paperback edition in circulation first.

New-Cal—and Greenleaf—won the race unhampered by injunction. What made it remarkable was the fact that Greenleaf had opted to break each of the three books into two volumes; thus New-Cal had to crank out one million books in two weeks.

--Lawrence Dietz, “Notes on the Smut Renaissance,” *New York World JournalTribune*, October 16, 1966.

#

I got my books from the bus station.... It was in bus stations, of course, that I discovered D.H. Lawrence and Henry Miller....

...what do you suppose the dirtiest book in [this library] is?... You would say it was sex. Lots of people have thought that to write a sexy book is an easy way to make a lot of money but it hasn't worked out that way. Henry Miller has written probably the sexiest book in [here], *The Rosy Crucifixion*. You can't write a sexier book than that but it doesn't sell well. So there is something more to it than sex.

--Kurt Vonnegut, "Teaching the Writer to Write," *Kallikanzaros 4*, March-April 1968

Trocchi's YOUNG ADAM, in separate packages, via first class sea mail? Many thanks.

- - -

Special thanks to Astrid Myers of *Evergreen Review* for much help with this piece.

Barney Rosset I met in Paris.... He was definitely an intriguing person, impressively nervous, self-centered, alternating between moments of catatonic near-slumber and bouts of frantic speech and activity. Bizarre. The convulsive, grating laughter, coming as it did at unexpected moments, broke any possible continuity in the conversation. This man was as ambiguous as they come; there was a ferocious insanely possessive and ruthless child hidden somewhere inside; and on the outside a reasonably friendly person, well-meaning, clever, daring, sometimes witty, and apparently devoted to all the liberal causes of the time.... The second phase started shortly after we met. Barney discovered a whole new area in which to redirect his publishing activities: to fight for freedom of expression was as good a cause as any. And it might make money as well.

--Maurice Girodias, “Commentary,” *The New Olympia Reader*

Repentance, Desire and Natalie Wood*

By Barry N. Malzberg

Check it out; here is the afterword to a chapter from *Oracle of the Thousand Hands*, which appears in...*The New Olympia Reader*:

Barry Malzberg lives with his wife and daughter in Manhattan and is worried about having recently reached the ominous age of thirty....Mr. Malzberg's first hardcover novels, *Oracle of the Thousand Hands* and *Screen* are seriously-intentioned works which, according to the author, were neither fun to write nor fun in retrospect. Major influences on his work in no particular order are Norman Mailer, J.D. Salinger, Saul Bellow, James Agee, Vladimir Nabokov, Fyodor Dostoyevsky and Nikolai Gogol.

Not quite. The *major* major influences upon the author's "seriously-intentioned" hardcover novels, as well as eight paperbacks done for the Olympia Press America between 1968 and 1973 were really: Jayne Mansfield, Natalie Wood, Hope Lange, repentance, desire, lust, resentment, ambition and the collected opi of the Four Coins, Four Preps, Four Seasons and the Belmonts. (Dion, too.) Heady stuff for the kid, though, writing for Nabokov's publisher, citing Gogol and Dostoyevsky as influences; I recommend this experience to everyone having real or even slight pretensions to artistry.



Barry Malzberg at Millennium Philcon. Photo by Michael Resnick, September 2001.

Barry Malzberg's Olympia Press (NY) Bibliography

LP/2 *Screen*, by Barry Malzberg, 1968 boards
LP/3 *Oracle of the Thousand Hands*, by Barry Malzberg, 1968 boards
444 *The Circle*, by Francine Di Natale, May 16, 1969
460 *Southern Comfort*, by Gerrold Watkins, 1969
474 *A Bed of Money*, by Gerrold Watkins, 1969
476 *A Satyr's Romance*, by Gerrold Watkins, 1970
479 *Giving It Away*, by Gerrold Watkins, 1970
483 *The Art of the Fugue*, by Gerrold Watkins, 1970
OPS/8 *Screen*, by Barry Malzberg, 1970 paperback
OPS/17 *In My Parents' Bedroom*, by Barry Malzberg, 1971
OPS/29 *The Confessions of Westchester County*, by Barry Malzberg, 1971

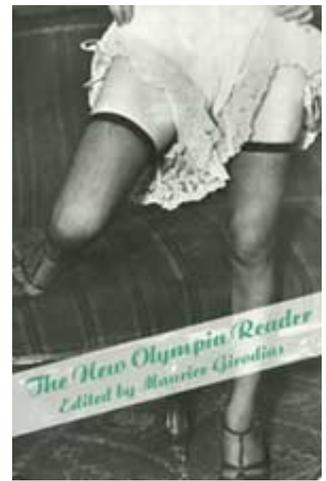
And editor: *The New Olympia Reader*, 1970, 1993

Girodias *films* left Paris in a flurry of debt, lawsuit and governmental revulsion in 1967, decamped to New York, found financial backing (but not too much) from obscure sources, set up active shop here as the reincarnation of that insouciant and eclectic Left Bank spirit which in the 1950s had given bewildered culture lovers the works of Akhbar del Piombo, Henry Miller, Terry Southern and even Vladimir Nabokov whose *Lolita* had come to Paris in 1955 at the behest of an author whose agent had been unable to place the novel anywhere.

Maurice Girodias, 49 when he came to New York, 36 then, had been unable to sell many copies of *Lolita*; he hadn't done too well with Miller either (Akhbar on the other hand had been a staple) but he had ideas, he would reconstitute the age of enlightenment within the borders of a city located on the far eastern seaboard of a country which was demonstrably going mad.

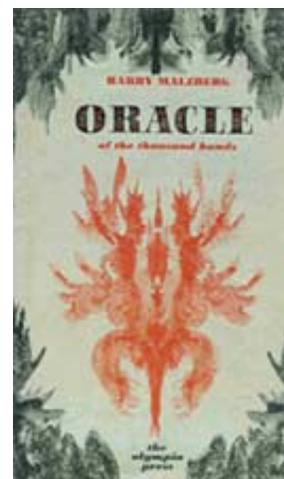
Clearly, it was going mad, it was his kind of country. First the assassination, then Vietnam, then some other, discreditable assassinations, then the Summer of Love, then Olympia Press America. Then Martin, Robert, Nixon, *Apollo*, Cambodia, Kent State and Wallace. But by the time of Wallace, Olympia Press was already speeding into Chapter 11 and Girodias, a year after that was, *sans* his new wife, *sans* everything sailing for Paris. “Sunk without trace” is not exactly the phrase for Olympia America, nothing is sunk without trace in this country, McGovern is on the lecture circuit and Jefferson Airplane/Starship are heading toward the third incarnation, but it is close. Fairly close. “Sunk almost without trace” probably can be risked.

The New Olympia Reader, 300,000 words of excerpts by about 50 writers, compiled by your faithful undersigned for a freelancer’s pittance (but *not* the author of the authorial biographies or the cited blurb) sold about 500 copies in hardcover, sold no copies in paperback since there was no paperback edition and hasn’t been off my shelf in 15 years. Shortly, speedily, it will go back on my shelf.



That anthology was reviewed in a defunct literary journal by a novelist of minor reputation and high recrimination who mentioned none of the selections, spent 4,000 words talking (in the abstract) about the prevalence of voyeurism in early twentieth-century culture as capitalized upon by senior and junior Girodiaoux and sickeningly exhibited here. Not a review but a poisonous meditation.

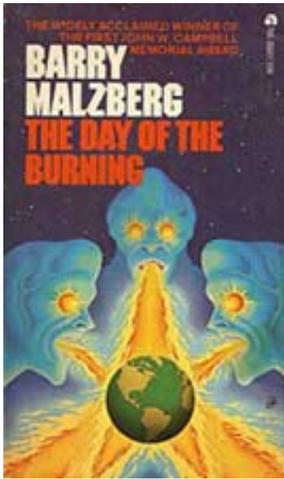
“Don’t worry about it,” the publisher said, “don’t think about this twice, because of all the American literary crowd, the litterateurs in the fifties, sucking around the Rue de Whatever, he was the grubbiest, the silliest, the most desperate and the only one whose work I would not buy, I found him effete and senseless. He’s been waiting to get back at me for 18 years and oh that wife of his!” This gave me little comfort, not much *did* give me comfort in those difficult post-prandial years when I came to understand that being Olympia’s Best Writer, talisman of a disastrous hardcover program, was in effect to be Girodias’ Worst Writer.



“Why am I so self-destructive?” the publisher said to me in a somewhat different context months later when British lawsuits had resulted in his first lot of hardcovers being confiscated at the warehouse and burned at the instigation of a member of the House of Lords whose name had been appropriated for spite as the title of a Traveller’s Companion, “why do I do this to myself over and over again?”

“Well, Maurice,” I could have said but did not, having even less wit than comprehension in that aftermath of the Summer of Love, “maybe it’s because you turned 50 on April 12, 1969 and men like you, men who have

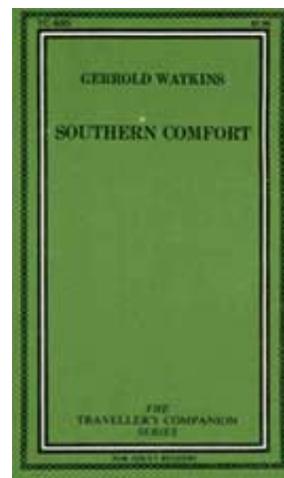
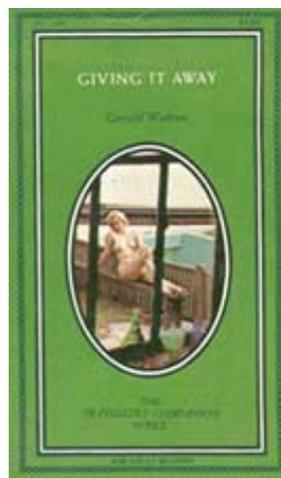
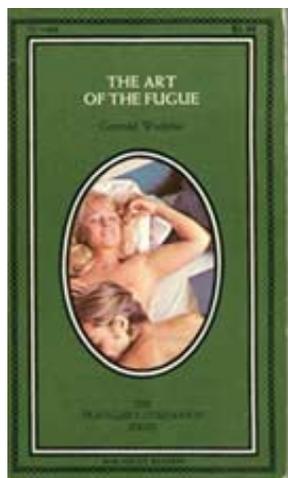
always formed themselves in terms of the debonair, the practical, the outrageous have a *lot* of trouble at 50 and feel at least that they are going to destruction on their own terms.” I could have said that, I could have added that Maurice was exactly 15 years younger than my mother and equally capable of finding guilt in those he implicated, but I did not. One has to get fairly close or closer yet to 50 oneself to be offered such perceptions by which time, usually, it is too late to do much about them.



My mother, speaking of her, was not terribly pleased with her son, so recently the Schubert Foundation Playwriting Fellow but now a hounded and increasingly desperate novelist *manqué* in search of a real market becoming Girodias’ Best Writer. The fact that I was also writing science fiction and selling some of it to strange-looking magazines with androids on the cover was—for her at least—no particular compensation. She was however somewhat mollified to note in the Christopher Lehmann-Haupt April 7, 1969 review of the two novels that they were defined as “a kind of anti-pornography”; this enable her to seize the day with her friends.

“The problem with your pornography,” an editor at Olympia named Uta West said to me in relation to the problem, “The only real trouble is that you write about sex the way that 95% of us experience it 95% of the time but it’s hard to get us to pay to *read* about it, you know?”

Still, like the Common Man in *Marat/Sade*, I had plans. If my sex scenes were dreamy, my intentions and style were, I trusted, not: I wrote the opening chapters of *Oracle of the Thousand Hands* in a dead fever of February 1968, trying to figure out what might impress Nabokov’s publisher’s first reader and came up with a crazed pastiche of *Pale Fire* and *Despair*, the memoirs of a compulsive masturbator narrated in the alternating first- and third-person with quarts of semen spewed over electric fences, cattle mooing nostalgically in the background at the instant of self-defloration and ultimately a powerful shock from that electrified fence at the moment of final consummation. Girodias or someone there noticed what was going on, he summoned me to Gramercy Park (the Press and four employees worked out of his apartment, skirting the mattress on the floor as they sidled from room to room) and offered me a \$2,000 contract.

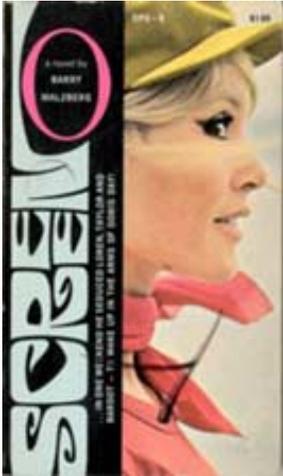


“Well,” he muttered six weeks later when on an impossible June afternoon I came to hear the verdict on the completed novel mailed oh-so-recently, “it’s not your number one best seller but it’s amusing and interesting isn’t it?” *Amusing* and *interesting* were his favorite attitudes and everyone in the ideal Traveller’s Companion or Ophelia Press book would climax with a smile and a sigh. “I have to accept this, I guess, but now you do something for me. I have a novel I want you to do as a special project for me.”

That novel I soon discovered had been offered to and declined as an idea by every writer who had come

trooping around or past the mattress: a young man with an empty life and much seminal backup is obsessed with film, watches five films a day, falls vividly in love with actresses, has an imagination so passionate that he can place himself on the screen with and make passionate love to Elizabeth Taylor, Doris Day, Brigitte Bardot, Sophia and the ever-popular “others.” “Use their real names,” he said, “I want *scandale*; without scandal this cannot work.”

“What becomes of the boy?”



“I don’t know. Who the hell cares? Maybe he becomes Joe E. Levine, what’s the difference. I’ll give you a clause protecting you against lawsuits. I *love* lawsuits,” he reminded me.

I delivered *Screen* in two weeks, taking Martin Miller, a Department of Welfare investigator in Brooklyn (as I had been) through a series of Bijoux and into and out of the genitalia of some actresses, also to Aqueduct race track in the borough of Queens and also through more desultory (if unrequested) collision with a fellow social worker whom he did not love (*roman a clef* here) but who intimated his obsession and pointed out that Martin had better get wise, “because I’m for real. I’m also your last chance.” (No, she wasn’t.) I hold no great brief for the novel but doubt if any better has been written faster, *pace* A.J. Liebling, and it contains for whatever it is worth probably the best sentence I ever wrote and maybe the best sentence published in a novel of lust in 1969; the last sentence of that novel as Martin Miller having walked away from the suddenly desperate

colleague, pounds it into a star (and pounds it an pounds it and pounds it, “her body a map, her hands a road to carry me home”):

It is strange and complex, complex and strange and my orgasm is like a giant bird torn wing to wing by rifle fire, falling, falling, in the hot drenched sun of that damned Southwestern city.

That sentence written (as were many of the sentences of that and *Oracle*) with two-year-old Stephanie Jill burbling and cooing and muttering and bounding and volubly discussing matters of climate at her father’s knee didn’t have in draft the word “damned,” something seemed to be lacking and in the only revision in either of those two novels, the word was put in for rhythm and emphasis and all of it placed on or next to the Girodias mattress shortly after Independence Day.

“You son of a bitch,” he pointed out, “you made me crazy, do you know that? I ask you this time for pornography, a simple work of pornography, give you a plot and everything and ask you to keep it simple and low-class, I publish one book for *you* and ask you to this for *me* and what do you do? You give me 40 pages which are beautiful, just beautiful, you even know the color of that one’s *bush* how you tell that? And *then* what do you give me? You give me horse-racing, you give me existentialism, you give me despair! You give me terrible anxiety and depression! You give me pain and thwarted desire! This book will sell 400 copies, I have to publish it hardcover too because in paperback everyone will throw it away; I have to publish it because it is a masterpiece, but you *destroy* me, do you understand?”

It sold 350 copies in hardcover, actually, making it the leader of the second “new hardcore line” (*Oracle* sold half that and a novel by Alex Austin, *Eleanore*, sold according to statement 52 copies) but none of this was my fault, was it? I mean it was indeed (Lehmann-Haupt backed me up on this) anti-pornography for the coming age of Nixon and under the circumstances, the time could have been right.

But times were never right for the doomed Girodias. They had been laying for him in the American press for years and years, he said, because he had embarrassed them by putting into print consistently masterpieces that the American publishing establishment had been too cowardly or stupid to undertake: *Tropic of Cancer* and *Tropic of Capricorn* and the *Nexus* trilogy and *Candy* and *Lolita* and virtually everything else that Barney Rosset or Walter Minton had taken on after he had broken ground. (And because the books

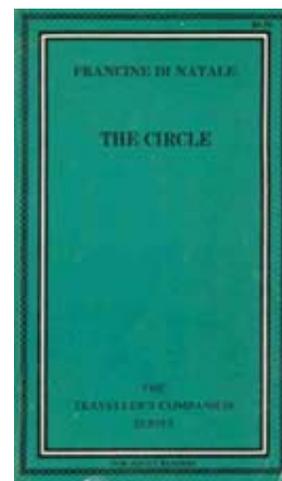
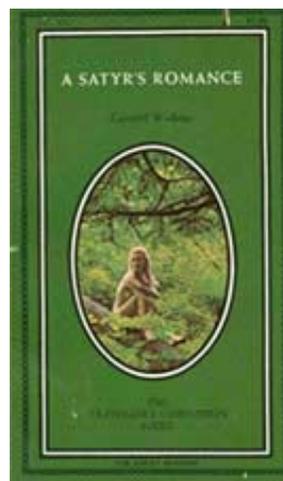
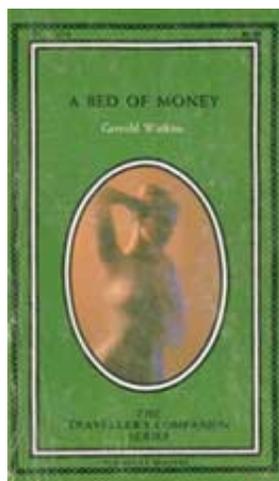
were published in English outside the borders of the United States, they were by old copyright law in public domain in this country.) Perhaps he was right; it is not difficult—I can see this as clearly at 27 as I would be unable to admit it at 50—to do justly, to do mercy, to walk humbly and *to be buried anyway*.

Besides, Maurice had said, “written pornography, it is finished. Finished! Visuals are coming, visuals are where it will be, that and high-toned classy books which hairdressers can hand their clientele. Softcore for the ladies, yes, but nothing for the gentlemen. Our basic audience would rather stare than read which they can hardly manage anyway. The ladies on the other hand will call it romance. It will be finished by 1972, just two years from now.”

Like Fitzgerald, like Raymond Chandler, like Thomas Wolfe, my publisher could coolly observe his disaster as if from a distance and by seeming detachment from cataclysm feign control. The boat sailed anyway. *The Frog Prince*, the first volume of his proposed series of memoirs, takes him only up to the age of 19 (and is classically uninteresting as would, say, be the biography of the extra-instrumental life of Heifetz or Nixon), was published in France many years ago, perished in a Crown edition here at the start of this decade and bulletins are distant and infrequent. Which is a way of saying “There is no news.”



I am, then, or am not near the end of this memoir but would not want to finish without discussing the issue of courage. He had a crazy, a manifest, a *royal* physical courage which I much admired as did almost anyone who had witnessed its display, he had a true general's detachment, and indifference to consequence founded upon metaphysic. In a dangerous, a perilous Times Square bar at 2:00 a.m. once where we had repaired, me shuddering he debonair, after a “debate” with an ex-congressman and a Citizens for Decency League leader on the Farber show, a debacle which had left me exhausted and trembling (“I don't have to read your filth to know what kind of filth it is,” O.K. Armstrong, the congressman, only two months ago reluctantly but administratively passed on at 92 had snapped to me), we were drinking beer for which Girodias had paid when a truly menacing, a truly dangerous fellow approached, an even less ingenuous companion lurking in the background, pointed a menacing finger at Girodias' sleeve, a knife seeming to glint from a shrouded place and said, “Nice threads, man. *Really* nice threads.”



“Oh,” said Maurice, “oh yes, of course, thank you.” He began to remove the jacket, rose from the stool, finished the job, extended it, “Would you like?” he said, “it's all yours, my pleasure.” The menace went away and Maurice went away and the brave, haunted, doomed Olympia America went away to (in metaphor at least, I am still in that bar, however) and they are to be saluted. Torn wing to wing by rifle fire.

--New Jersey, 1989

Footnote to an unpublished memoir: Maurice did write and publish a sequel to *The Frog Prince*, was interviewed on French radio in consequence of its publication in the summer of 1990, died suddenly after the interview. One would like to think of this as further evidence of the poised irony with which this difficult man attempted to conduct his life; the jaunty bow, the tilt of the eyebrow, exercise in self-publicity and then, *aha!* at the apex and astride his history, that graceful tumble to the pit, the Wallenda of autobiography. But death is too magisterial to command easy, balletic grace from most of us; I cannot imagine (I was not there) how it afflicted Maurice but if anyone *could*, like Don Giovanni, salute the abyss it was the son of Jack Kahane. And two months later, Leonard Bernstein. Larger and larger pieces of time—

--New Jersey, 31 December 1990

Afterword to an Afterword to an Essay

I am pleased—“pleased” isn’t quite right but will have to do—with this new edition of the anthology, for all intents and purposes this new edition is the only edition for the book published in 1970 was trapped by the exigencies of distribution and Olympia’s imminent failure, it was ignored by the review media and sunk beneath sight and never had a chance. Now it has a chance. Within these pages resides—suspires, one might say, pulsates however feebly—the sixties themselves, emblematic of the decade in ways barely comprehensible at the time this may be a book whose importance can only be perceived in retrospect, after the set has been struck, the guests and their anima laid to rest. We did think—some of us, anyway—that the decade represented a small but real chance to revise this country and ourselves, and that blessed, near-extinguished hope resides at the center of what was called at the time (probably now too) pornography. *Lolita* and *Tropic of Cancer*, *Sons and Lovers* and *Ulysses* bore that sobriquet too, of course, and turned out to have done pretty well with it.

And Maurice Girodias too lives. He is perhaps the most important publisher of the second half of the twentieth-century; the culture would look entirely different without him, his contribution so much a part of the landscape that it is only seen as the landscape. A remarkable man. Wallenda of death too, a man whose self-awareness and ironic distance suit him no more for tragedy than for undervaluation. In his light our darkness, in his darkness, this small and perfect, this witnessing and entire corridor of light: the light that falls forever.

--Barry N. Malzberg

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You son of a bitch [to Barry Malzberg], you made me crazy, do you know that? I ask you this time for pornography, a simple work of pornography, give you a plot and everything and ask you to keep it simple and low-class, I publish one book for *you* and ask you to this for *me* and what do you do? You give me 40 pages which are beautiful, just beautiful, you even know the color of that one’s *bush* how you tell that? And *then* what do you give me? You give me horse-racing, you give me existentialism, you give me despair! You give me terrible anxiety and depression! You give me pain and thwarted desire! This book will sell 400 copies, I have to publish it hardcover too because in paperback everyone will throw it away; I have to publish it because it is a masterpiece, but you *destroy* me, do you understand?

--Maurice Girodias

Dialogue

[A flurry of email—Friday June 3, 2005]

By Earl Kemp and Barry Malzberg

Earl Kemp: Barry, this is all academic or at worst gossip, however....

At your recommendation (also Pat Kearney's and Iris Owens'), I bought and read a copy of Nile Southern's *The Candy Men*.

You were very correct in sending me to it because it contains lots of good data that Southern dug up from numerous places. Totally aside from the *Candy* story, that I wasn't particularly interested in having lived through, all the incidental stuff about and surrounding Maurice Girodias was very helpful indeed.

Also, between *The Candy Men* and Patrick Kearney's *NY Olympia Bibliography*, I have all the details about Girodias being ordered out of the USA, Scientology, and *President Kissinger*.

#

Now, the gossip part please.

This goes back to one of my previous questions about the sales figures Olympia Press reported on your hardbound titles. Were you around Olympia NY enough to notice what happened to hardcover remainders? What happened to returned paperbacks?

And two, when MG was ordered out of the USA, did he make any effort to close down the office, finish off business, etc. or did he just leave with everything hanging in the air?

And three...an unfortunate heavy chain of data is evolving concerning no royalty statements, no royalty payments, etc. to a large number of the writers. This was particularly a major subtext of Southern's book.... Did you feel that you were treated correctly, according to contracts, etc. as far as your payments were concerned?

#

I am receiving a surprising amount of help, input, and articles for this special Maurice feature from all around the globe. I really think the issue will be a major work of sleazebook history.

Thank you again for all your help in this regard.

Barry Malzberg: I'm glad that you agree on the value of the Nile Southern book. It is - as I wrote the author - truthful, it lives in the truth, it gives the truth, the _ only _ such history of the period which does so or, I believe, even attempts to do so.

Earl Kemp: If my Me and Maurice special feature comes off the way I'm obsessively thinking it will...all by itself it will be a valuable reference of the time, the man, and his products. I'm trying anyway.

Barry Malzberg: No. 1: I had no relationship with Maurice Girodias after, say, 1972 – Maurice ran through writers the way some men go through women, this week's great and only love, next week's piece of ass, the week after's ignorant, devouring bitch. Maurice was energized by failure, he mainlined...and since the failure was consistent and obsessive his writers could only become successive personification of that failure and he would renounce them in favor of a new slut because his lust for failure was necessarily unconscious, at least most of the time. (He had rare and terrible moments of self-awareness, a couple of

them in my presence.) No. 3: I was treated about as well by Girodias as any writer involved with him here or overseas...it was early in the USA Olympia run, he was trying to act like a real publisher at least at the outset; the income from the foreign rights sales he was making to subsidiaries was being passed along, at least some of the time. The German edition of *Screen* sold for \$500 in 1969 and on 9/16/70, my younger daughter's date of birth, I received an amazing-to-me \$2,436 in royalties from that edition, by far the largest check I had received to date.

Earl Kemp: This is really great data, Barry. I'm going to hold on to it for a bit if you don't mind. It exactly portrays the man as I see him and unlike anything you did within the Introduction to *The New Olympia Reader* of course, but that's understandable; that was then and this is now.

Do I understand correctly then, Barry, in that you don't know what happened to all the leftover remainder and returned copies of the OP books. [This is usually a major source of secondary type income through certain bookstore routes, selling "dumped" or "stripped" copies. Really Big Bucks!] That's too bad. I had hoped to discover that MG was running a backdoor operation all along. One of the things I wanted to try to find out from Uta West...who is still not locatable, by the way.

Anyway, Barry, thanks very much for sharing this bit of direct perception into the man we hate to love.

Barry Malzberg: "The man we hate to love" is good. Reminds me of what I said on a panel at Philadelphia Worldcon in 2001 (on "great editors other than JWC") about Donald A. Wollheim. "I loved this man," I said, "But I did not like him."

Earl Kemp: Yes, it is from that con that Michael Resnick photographed you and furnished the "author" photo to run with your piece in this issue of my ezine.

Barry Malzberg: I don't think Maurice had any more of a backdoor operation than, say, Harry Shorten or Louis Silberkleit. Probably much less so. Girodias, a tragic compound of thrall'd idealism and utter cynicism, was too scattered to be a methodical and organized crook. He sure could attract them though for associates and distributors, and he was far more theft's victim than perpetrator. What a guy. No one else like him, ever.

Earl Kemp: I'm sure of that.

...and getting back to this damned obsession. I wish I could deftly sidestep it also. I just can't seem to stop thinking about Me and Maurice. And, each message from you only makes me think more and harder and not be able to get away from it at all.

Your last Maurice points, about his penchant for ineffectiveness and missing the obvious....

I think the greatest mistake he ever made was to think he could somehow take on the US paperback houses on their own turf. You correctly noted that in almost every case while he was here he "partnered" with people and organizations that were somewhat low on the scale of evolution. With people with known problems concerning their honesty, etc. [Birds of a feather...?]

And it is very clear that he had not even the remotest idea possible about what the periodicals business was like in the USA and how very much it differed from the book business. He was literally a lamb rushing toward his own slaughter. Certainly more to be pitied than envied.

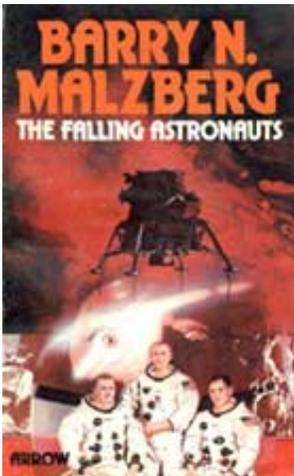
I recall clearly how, during those 1960s years while he was trying to make it here, he rarely came to mind. And even when he did it was because of some statement he had just publicly made condemning Greenleaf--me--for some perceived sin. He wasn't thought of as competition. He wasn't thought of as a threat in any arena. He wasn't thought of. He was pointedly ignored because he was insignificant and clearly ineffectual.

What brief contacts we could have had with Maurice were shuttled without acknowledgment on our part directly to Stanley Fleishman in Los Angeles (if they involved First Amendment or legal problems), or to our copyright attorney, Greer Marechal, in NYC. Fortunately Marechal and Girodias were both in New York and could fight it out among themselves which apparently they did because I found places where Maurice referred to Greer and Fleishman in bitchy tones. Greer was quite a guy, big and bombast and totally in command (almost like Stanley Fleishman in that respect) and as gay as they come. The ultimate last word in copyright law at the time. Had a great two-floor flat on Christopher Street in The Village with around six hunky live-in "apprentices" and threw some spectacular parties. Maurice wasn't invited.

Maurice and Olympia Press NY were at best a minnow floundering and adrift in a rolling sea of high-production, high-activity, month-after-month production sharks.

He learned the hard way.

Barry Malzberg: Here's the issue, Earl: Girodias felt that the USA publishers, critics, reviewers, newspapers, literary engines owed him...they had after all pirated him for years, appropriated authors and works which would have been unknown if he hadn't published them, been a great and irrepressible force for cultural change throughout the world...here he was coming to NYC, the prodigal son, the conscience of the Revolution to at last place himself in the heart of the artichoke...how could they _ not _ embrace him? *Lolita* for instance had in a 1965 poll (critics and reviewers) conducted by the NYTBR for best novel of the century, finished second. (*Invisible Man* for the record was first.) *Lolita* would never have been published had it not been for Girodias, it was a bedraggled orphan which terrified the few publishers who would even consider it. How could they not gather him unto their collective bosom, show their appreciation for all he had done?



Well, we know the answer. We know what happened. Maurice did not, as they say, understand the situation. He was doomed. He was buried. He took down more than a few writers and he would have taken down me if I had not had the wit to somehow understand intuitively what was happening and I plugged away at the science fiction. The money was rotten and *The Falling Astronauts* was never going to be reviewed in the *NY Times* but it was possible to produce a body of work, find some kind of market position. I figured in 1970 that Olympia might have two more years and I was off by one. There is a powerful, even a summary book to be written of his life and adventures. *The Candy Men* is fragmentary but as far as it goes, which isn't very far, it is illuminating. Another 500 pages, picking up on Olympia USA from Valerie Solonas to Henry Kissinger and everything between with that kind of thoroughness would get it done. Not me, though.

Earl Kemp: Barry, you wrote:

"There is a powerful, even a summary book to be written of his life and adventures. *The Candy Men* is fragmentary but as far as it goes which isn't very far, it is illuminating. Another 500 pages, picking up on Olympia USA from Valerie Solonas to Henry Kissinger and everything between with that kind of thoroughness would get it done. Not me, though."

As I keep working away on Me and Maurice [and I'm one full issue out of sequence; I should be concentrating on the issue Before M&M...but no...!] and keep getting more and more pieces of the puzzle and watching them fall into a new kind of sequence with a new kind of meaning than I had anticipated...I think you're right. I know you're right. I also think I know I'm not the one to do it.

Perhaps Patrick Kearney. Do you know Pat?

Barry Malzberg: Don't know Patrick Kearney. Maybe he is the person to do this. Iris Owens is too old and almost certainly too bitter, I'm too conflicted and turned my attention elsewhere when it mattered more. All those who wrote for him are too old and that is a fact. He was out of business 33 years ago.

I agree; there is a significant story here. But I don't think - just an intimation - that the story will be written. I felt when John W. Campbell died on 7/11/71 that a true biography of the man would have great significance and cultural import but it never happened and it is never going to happen. Same thing here.

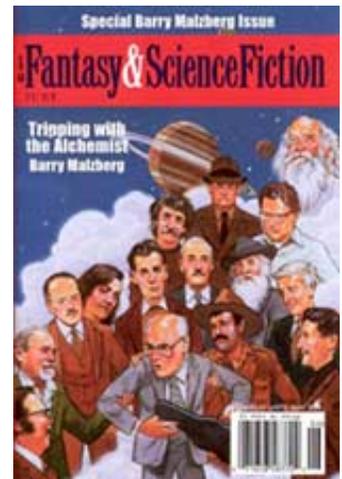
Earl Kemp: You jog my memory, Barry. Once upon a time when I wanted to be some kind of sf big shot, I had a good local friend named Ed Wood (not the moviemaker) who was a John Campbell nut. Campbell was God and none other need apply.

Anyway, somewhere along the line Ed and I, for grins alone, began collaborating on a novel based on John and *Astounding*. We worked up a potential outline and began writing alternate chapters and passing them to the other to read. We got through around six chapters--all total crap--before we abandoned the project.

Much as you say happened to the real book of Campbell's life that never existed.

Barry Malzberg: I knew Ed Wood - the non filmmaking Ed Wood, the Advent Press founding Ed Wood - distantly a long time ago...he used to get to the New York Lunacon. Spoke too loudly, socially awkward, absolutely brilliant, everything he said on science fiction profoundly important and worth hearing...but, geez, he spoke so loudly. Died too young. Advent's contribution was enormous; *In Search of Wonder* and *Issue At Hand* taught me what I needed to know at a crucial point. *A Requiem For Astounding* was a guilty pleasure.

Campbell like so many figures shrinks in memory; diminished immediately in death. Read my essay "Tripping With the Alchemist" on Scott Meredith; that's another huge figure who suddenly was empty and dwindled and gone... 10,000 words. Writing, selling, publishing this essay were in trinity the most satisfying event of my life as a writer. Utterly cathartic.



Earl Kemp: Barry, you wrote:

"I knew Ed Wood - the non filmmaking Ed Wood, the Advent Press founding Ed Wood - distantly a long time ago...he used to get to the New York Lunacon. Spoke too loudly, socially awkward, absolutely brilliant, everything he said on science fiction profoundly important and worth hearing...but, geez, he spoke so loudly. Died too young."

Yes, the very same. It was Ed who adopted me as an empty neo and turned me into a screaming, politically motivated sf fan. He literally mentored my way into fandom at a high level. Then he was called back into the Army for Korea and I was floating on my own for a year before he returned. He and I and a few others made Advent, you know. Yes also to that died too young part.

In order to cover up their actions, some publishers have been busy discrediting me professionally—and I have not always had the opportunity of replying....My firm has decided to bring a series of lawsuits against every publisher in the United States, "respectable" or not, who has [used] what I have every legal and moral right to consider as Olympia's property.

--Maurice Girodias

“Maurice...the gangster of love....”*

or,

The Prick of Pornography

By Earl Kemp

with Maurice's favorite Greenleaf words **highlighted in flushable Girodias brown**

I never met Maurice Girodias, yet I grew to love/hate him with a fierceness that astounded and confused me over the years. For well over a decade spanning 1960-70, I felt as if Girodias and I were somehow inseparably joined at the genitals by mystical supernatural impulses of some sort outside either of our control, and way beyond plain old weird.

He hovered over me, in my mind, like a faintly perceived specter of some evil monster, arms outspread and grabbing at me. He was hanging around my neck like a long-dead and thoroughly pungent albatross I had been accused of killing and could never escape. The stench of him alone was almost overwhelming all by itself.

And he was always there, every place I went--and he was always watching everything I ever did, wondering why it seemed to work for me and not for him. We danced magnificently unchoreographed jazz/ballet steps around each other all over Europe for years. We were together at the same times in Paris, Amsterdam, London, and Copenhagen. Frankfurt, New York, and some top-secret places between, and escaped a face-to-face encounter totally. It had to have been a miracle.

Though it is important, I suspect, that I never for a moment wanted to meet him. I never made any effort even to view him from a distance at some embassy party or publisher's grand salon. There was no reason I should have; there was nothing he could have done for me and nothing I really wanted of him until it was much too late for both of us. Then the questions came heavy and frequently...why? *Why? Why?* And there were no longer any answers to be had....

The first time I took a gold star away from Maurice Girodias was when he began using his mother's name (Girodias) instead of his father's (Kahane), and all in an effort to hide, to escape reality, to avoid Hitler, the Nazis, and the Jew showerers. His siblings weren't similarly inclined. One could think of it as being a noble thing, of course, only what it really did was to foretell much of his future. Ducking, hiding, running for cover, escaping...always only a brief distance from the rapidly approaching legal authority out to Get! Maurice! once again.

And, while Maurice would be the first to ignore the facts and cry “First Amendment persecution,”—I've been accused of that one—to any listener within earshot, the bulk of those rapidly approaching legal authorities—year after year—weren't so much interested in what it was Girodias was publishing as it was what he wasn't paying his bills with.

And he *is* the world-class recognized champion of liberated literature. It doesn't matter how many biographers take the time to point out all of Girodias' failings, or the injured and dying people he has left in his wake, because every one of them somehow winds up saying that Maurice was one hell of a lot better in death than he ever was while alive.

Not knowing the man, I built an image to suit myself within my imagination, never knowing how close to the truth I had gotten.

I saw him as living a life of pretence at a level he had never become accustomed to off the top of his own cash receivables. His “needs” always came first; the vendor invoices could always wait until a good bit later.

I saw him always ready, at the drop of a hat, to run out the back door just as the gendarmes enter through the front. I saw him jumping from country to country just as easily and for many of the same reasons. A man always on the run from something of his own creation that was threatening to overtake and devour him at any second.

I see him as a prissy dandy, if that description isn't too far from political correctness, wearing clothing a good bit too unreal and much too expensive. Girodias himself said, "I learned to present the image of a thoughtful, well-organized young man, equal parts idealist and realist, and wise beyond his years.

"My hats, of ultralight nutria, made to order, of course, came from Gelot's; my shirts were custom made at Charvet's....As for shoes, I ordered them, for a small fortune, from M. Ghazarian, a conscientious bootmaker....Naturally, all this vestimentary luxury was in perfect taste. Nothing ostentations. On that point, my father had exercised the best possible influence on my sartorial education. One thing he once said to me was, 'It's better not to be too well dressed.'"

Greenleaf Classics, Inc. was a pirate firm to Maurice Girodias, and I was the secret commander of the three-master if not the damnedest swashbuckling skull-and-crossbones brandisher sailing the endless seas looking for loot, love, and large economy sized ejaculations of endless delights and bone-shaking intensities.

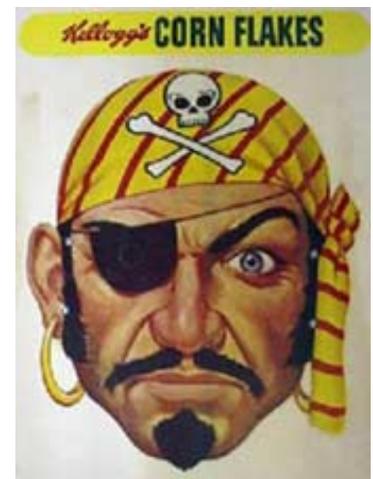
He constantly accused us of stealing from him things that resided solidly within the public domain and had nothing good to say for us at all. Everything he did say seemed to be calculated to try to make Greenleaf appear small and insignificant while in reality we were the giant that devoured the green-covered paperbacks he had ignored as if they were succulent appetizers. How very little he knew of what he ranted.

One of my favorite rants of Maurice's goes this way: "The only material so for for all these so-called **dirty book publishers in this country is provided by me. If it wasn't for me they wouldn't be in business. All these little fly-by-night operations—Brandon House, Greenleaf...**—all of them are existing only by printing my Olympia books, done in Paris years ago. What authors have *they* discovered? I haven't gotten a penny out of them for all my books. I'm just not protected by the American corporate system. These **small-time operators are just regular gangsters, and they'd steal their grandmother's teeth if they could.**"

Another one says: "But the fact is that the **small-time, gangster operators** in this country—publishing everything they can lay their hands on like a pack of mad dogs regardless of its quality—could bring down the wrath of the public, first in Southern California, then all over the country."

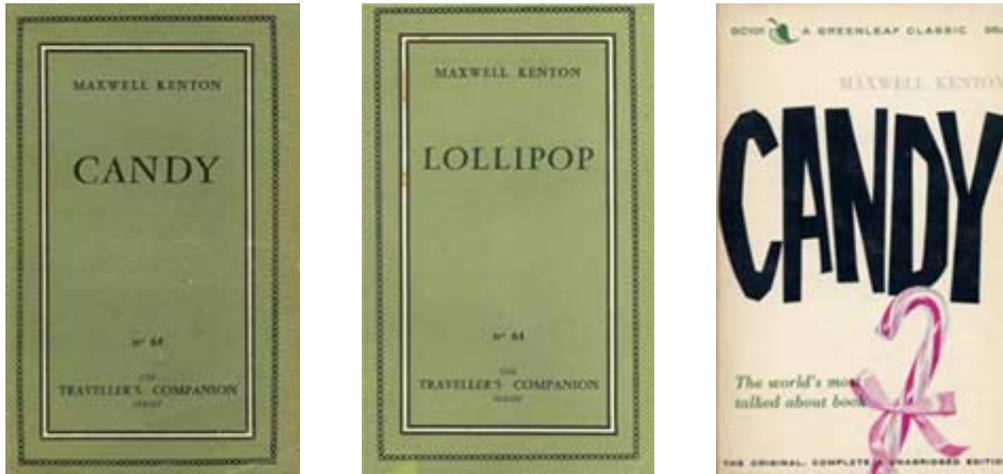
And this: "And since this is America, where the taste for **plagiarism, piracy and imitation** is so deeply ingrained, the commercial fortune of those few noble books rescued from the clutches of the censors opened the appetite of dozens of **improvised publishers**, and the country was invaded overnight by a formidable wave of the most repulsive kind of sex fiction. **Ex-convicts became novelists, ex-bootleggers became publishers, and a billion-dollar industry was artificially created in lightning time: non-books by non-writers, produced by non-publishers for non-readers. All this being based simply on the fascination of the forbidden, bolstered equally by the gutter press and the decency leagues, the courts and the churches....**"

And: "The taste for **piracy** is really deeply ingrained in the American business mind! Each time I was bringing out a new edition of one of my old books, I was sure to find three or four pirated ones on the market the same day. The situation was further complicated by the fact that my distributor also distributed the pirates' productions...."



We must never forget that we are up against a seasoned, unscrupulous COCKSHIT....G is Habitually crooked (I mean you can depend upon it 100%); that contract is a masterpiece of attention to each little crooked detail.

--Mason Hoffenberg
[Hamilton Drake, Faustino Perez, and Maxwell Kenton (with Terry Southern)]



Candy is seen in its original edition, the subterfuge edition designed to detour the gendarmes, and as the first title published under the Greenleaf Classics imprint. It was produced during our transition and move from Evanston, Illinois to San Diego, California.

All of that sort of prefacing what Girodias must have thought was the biggest pirate heist of all, the delicious, lickable, *Candy*. Girodias' reaction was much as to be expected. He said: "But the worst aspect of that sleazy micro-tragedy is that it had turned the notion of literary piracy into a big thing. The story of *Candy* was bound to give ideas to all the denizens of the American underworld, the perennial sharks, the two-bit gangsters. They had always thrived by adapting their natural gifts and appetites, from season to season, to the peddling of moonshine booze, the pushing of dope, together with pimping and usury; and now they would call themselves publishers, and spread a little bit of profitable culture around them! The fact that they could hardly read did not disturb them at all.

"Barney Rosset's and Walter Minton's example had made others sick with envy: Zacharius, Irwin Stein and Hamlying [sic], the owner of Greenleaf, had decided that, why not, after all, why shouldn't they get their slice of the Olympia pie? Their lawyers, Stanley Fleishman in Los Angeles and Greer Marechal in New York, had explained to them that, thanks to the incredible intricacies of the American copyright system, they could just go ahead and copy all the books published in Paris in the 'fifties, and no one would stop them. The copyright statute contained a special disposition, *the manufacturing clause*, which had been meant by some lobbyists of genius to protect American printers against foreign competition, and the clause was it."

Then Girodias said: "The next day Lancer's edition [of *Candy*] was out, and I learned that, simultaneously, a West Coast firm called alternatively Greenleaf or Reed Enterprises, had put out its own million of 75-cent pirated copies on its side of the U.S. market, by arrangement with Lancer. It was hardly a consolation for me to imagine Walter Minton's [of Putnam] rage, to see his own best-selling \$6 edition blown up in thin air like a kid's balloon. He was reported to have sold close to 150,000 copies in three months, and could still

have sold twice as many, and after that negotiated the paperback rights for a sale of many millions of copies...I was the inventor-promoter of *Candy*, and here I was, looking like a real fool.”

I regarded him as a bully and this to me was unforgivable, this thing of attacking the weak—when he thought you were weak—and retreating from the strong...I always regarded him with a certain degree of contempt for this reason. He treated his authors as kind of serfs and he forgot that a man who signs his name to his own work is somebody who believes in this work. They were not people to be trifled with.

--Christopher Logue [Count Palmiro Vicarion]

Then: “The works of Henry Miller, for instance, were technically in the public domain, and they were indeed saved from total appropriation by the **pirates** only because they were released by Grove at a time when the significance of the manufacturing clause had not been fully understood by most. And yet **Greenleaf had already tested its virtues, in the early 'sixties, by pirating their own unauthorized edition of *Tropic of Cancer*.** No one had tried to prevent them, since litigation would be pointless in any event. And they had been steadily building up a complete library of Olympia Press books. A day would come when all that wonderful material would become permissible in America, and they wanted to be *ready!* Oh boy.”

And: “...all of a sudden, all hell broke loose, and for once that’s not a figure of speech. Lancer did not go any **further into the piracy business, but Greenleaf did: all the old Paris Olympia Press books** that they had been collecting over the years now represented an incredible pirate’s treasure. Smaller people in turn joined the rat race, one Milton Luros, founder of an establishment named Brandon House....”

Sure...[Girodias is] getting screwed on his books, but don’t forget that he made a living screwing people for several years—his own writers and everybody else. Also, he came in here [Milton Luros, Parliament News, Brandon House, Essex House, Etc.] when he first got to this country, asking us if we’d like to go 50-50 on his books, in a partnership operation. We refused, of course. Why pay for something that’s free?

--Brian Kirby

And finally: “ **Greenleaf!...they are the most cold-blooded, malevolent trio I have ever met.** If Lancer deserves some punishment, **the Greenleaf people must take a beating such that they will at least stop stealing my property.**”

The Goon Goes West

Being literally run out of France, Maurice Girodias headed to what he thought was surely the Happy Hunting Ground of all time...the USA. It took him a while to get organized, to make arrangements with various partners to go into business here with Olympia Press New York. Naturally, being a novice at America and the real way business was done here, and knowing absolutely nothing about the periodicals business to begin with, it was only fate that Maurice aligned himself with the people least likely to be involved with his success in the real world, David Zentner and Bee-Line Books.

On the West Coast, we had a hearty laugh about that and figured that Girodias could hold out for as long as

five years if he was really lucky.

At the time, we were publishing 32 paperback novels a month, and a number of specialty, nude-photo-filled magazines. It was Girodias' dream and best expectation to produce eight titles a month. By the time he reached that goal, Greenleaf was publishing 50 titles a month and more than one *Naked* magazine a day. And it should be noted that the first 19 titles Olympia Press published from New York were all reprints of old titles from Olympia Press Paris that had already seen many editions from several publishers on the US newsstands. Not exactly eagerly awaited, heavily oversold material.

Up above somewhere Girodias asked, "What authors have *they* discovered?" and we were printing 50 new novels every month. What better field of proven worth to harvest? And the writers who were fortunate enough to be discovered and nurtured by Girodias, that hardy band of expatriate US literary interns, were treated like dirt. Whenever cornered and forced to acknowledge that a writer was in need of food and hash, Girodias would generously advance them from \$10 to \$30 against his constantly delayed royalty statement.

Girodias of Olympia Press here, gives me fifteen thousand francs [\$30] a week on which to live, and in return I promised him a book....Contract with Girodias is for one year, and so I am sure that by the end of that year, if I keep working like I am, he...will be kept by my faith.

--Gregory Corso

While accusing Greenleaf Classics of piracy, Maurice Girodias set upon a deliberate path to "steal" the Greenleaf writers. The New York literary agent Jay Garon told of Girodias' asking him to help raid the Greenleaf stables. Only Maurice didn't stop there. He stole ideas from Greenleaf—from *me*—as well.

Someone called his attention to the broad success we were having with a line of all gay books for the male market and Maurice couldn't wait to emulate us as far as possible. He started his own line of gay novels and did it by grabbing off some of our best gay writers: Victor J. Banis, James Colton, Larry Townsend, and Richard Love.

He also raided the Greenleaf stable of straight-book writers like D. Bruce Berry, Harvey Hornwood, and Andrew J. Offutt.

Running true to form, a number of the Olympia Press New York writers were surprised to discover that Girodias never even applied for copyright for several of their books they had written for Maurice. Once again, from the very beginning, creating questionable, problematic, and public domain material where none needed to exist at all.

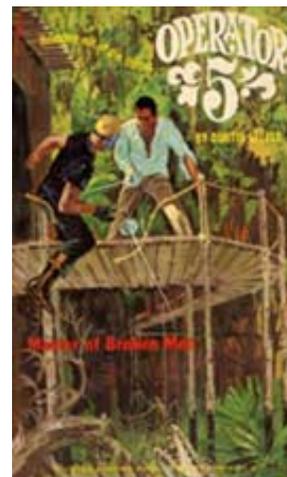
Maurice ran through writers the way some men go through women, this week's great and only love, next week's piece of ass, the week after's ignorant, devouring bitch. Maurice was energized by failure, he mainlined...and since the failure was consistent and obsessive his writers could only become successive personification of that failure and he would renounce them in favor of a new slut because his lust for failure was necessarily unconscious, at least most of the time. (He had rare and terrible moments of self-awareness, a couple of them in my presence.)

--Barry Malzberg

[I hasten to admit that I would have been willing to pay Girodias personally to take D. Bruce Berry and Richard Love off my hands. There was *no* love—pun intended—lost there.]

Then, after ripping Greenleaf's gay line off and copying it, Maurice went after Corinth Regency. Figuring that we must know what we were doing by reissuing the Operator #5 series of old pulp novels written by Frederick C. Davis as "Curtis Steele," Maurice followed suit. We published eight titles in the series and Maurice Girodias published three. Apparently he learned earlier than we did that they were pretty much dead in the marketplace.

Walking the Plank



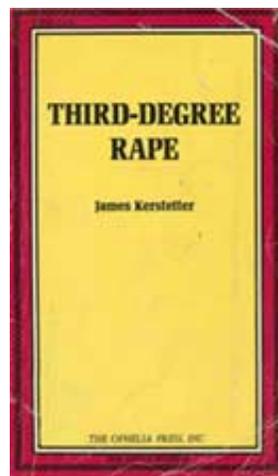
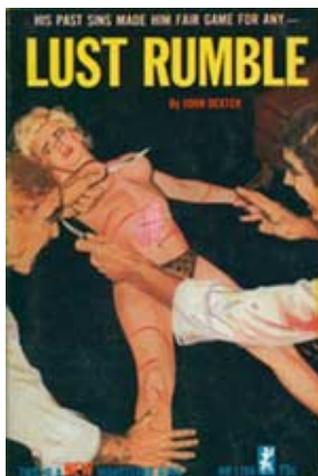
The pirated editions [of *Candy*] probably averaged print runs of 50,000 each. However, in an FBI interview, an anonymous West Coast pirate admitted to printing a million and a half copies. Girodias called the pirates "**porno-gangsters**" and claimed that "more than 15 million copies were sold in some 30 to 50 unauthorized editions, of which not one cent was paid to either myself or the authors."

--Nile Southern, *The Candy Men*

One of Maurice Girodias' greatest obsession had to do with pirates and piracy. He seemed to see them everywhere he looked, and everywhere he looked, he saw me and he saw Greenleaf Classics.

At one point Alex [Trocchi] and I found our books being pirated because they were appearing under the Ophelia imprint. We took them along to Girodias and said, "God, Maurice, look what's happening!" "**Oh, the bastards, He said, "these pirates!"** But it was his own imprint. He had simply reprinted our stuff under the Ophelia name and didn't want to give us the money.

--John Stevenson [Marcus van Heller]



The sad truth is, Maurice Girodias was just as big a pirate as any of the lesser publishers cruising the USA

waters for loot during his Olympia Press New York reincarnation. Nothing was sacred to Girodias. He pirated books that he had no rights to from his own father. He pirated books from himself. And worst of all, he pirated directly from Greenleaf Classics. In 1966, Nightstand books published *Lust Rumble* (NB1769) by John Dexter (Harvey Hornwood) and in 1971, Maurice Girodias published *Third-Degree Rape* (OP235), by James Kerstetter (Harvey Hornwood), an outright theft of a legally owned and in copyright property.

Harvey Hornwood was for a couple of years an editor at Olympia NYC (1969-1971). Probably his idea to pirate his own novels, sell them to himself as "new," score a few more dollars on Maurice (for whom all his employees had utter contempt). Don't blame Maurice for that one.

--Barry Malzberg

Who is the pirate now?

The success that Maurice Girodias expected to achieve in the USA never materialized for him. Instead he was set up by many unexpected and inescapable roadblocks, some even originating with his stateside business partners. The money wasn't coming in the way Girodias expected either, much slower and in much smaller numbers. And he was hit upon from all sides by legal matters that demanded large amounts of his time and money as they dragged through court proceedings.

At this point in time, Girodias wrote ("Commentary," *The New Olympic Reader*) , " And my publishing career, at that point, had nothing much to do any longer with publishing books. Nothing at all. It had to do with desperately trying to hold together the last shreds of the business, to fight tedious lawsuits, to literally invent money where none could be found, to supplement reality with alibis, syllogistic exercises, absurd dreams and bad checks."

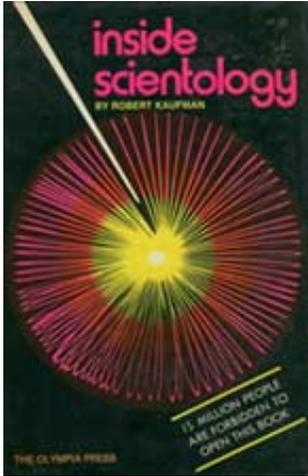
Maurice Girodias himself writing about how dejected, depressed, and nearly defeated he was as he supplemented "reality with alibis, syllogistic exercises, absurd dreams and bad checks." Almost as good as the checks he presented to his writers not on contractual schedules but only whenever forced to do so.

And things continued on their downward spiral. Nothing seemed to go right for Girodias. Approaching the bitterest of ends, Girodias wrote, "Stalking up and down Manhattan with a parched mouth and dusty shoes. Thirty years of inventive publishing behind me, and destitute of the twenty cents for the subway token. Ahem. Miles and miles of more and more aimless walking. A distinct touch of alienation attacking my purpose, my identity, my rhythm of life. This pure, sordid city, floating like a piece of greasy paper in a frozen December. Whirlwind, angel and beast, that you could see either as a solar ship made of a thousand cathedrals, or as the world's sewer disgorging infamy, depending on your mood and your angle of vision. The silent winter mornings spent in the contemplation of the perfect geometry lesson, the window framing the methodical deployment of rectangles of snow reposing against the intergalactic blue of the sky. The little vivid people in the streets, the makeshift chromosome compounds, the gaiety and the frank insanity, and on every face the obvious knowledge that the word normal means just nothing at all. The tenderness, the pretensions, the self-derisions, the self-delusions, the beautiful openness and the clear simplicity of manner of the damned."

With Maurice down, dragging ass, and almost out, I felt a very strong compulsion to find him and, face-to-face, tell him I didn't think he was very much and to go fuck himself. I expected doing so would produce a heady flood of released and repressed frustrations for me.

It Came From Outer Space

In the last feeble, dying years of Olympia Press New York, Maurice Girodias made two major mistakes. Either one could have set into motion irrevocable retaliation that could cost him everything he thought he owned, including his life, and both of them were solidly science fiction based.



In 1972, following some prolonged litigation attempting to block publication of the book, Girodias published *Inside Scientology. How I Joined Scientology and Became Superhuman*, by Robert Kaufman

In 1974, with everything he thought he was in control of rapidly disintegrating before his very eyes, and every federal authority he had never encountered dogging his every footstep and telephone conversation, he published Monroe Rosenthal and Donald Munson's *President Kissinger*, and moved himself onto the fast-track conveyor belt to oblivion.

Once Upon A Time science fiction was *Astounding*, and some of it was written by quarter-a-cent-a-word pulp fiction hack writers who, occasionally, turned out readable text. When he was between engagements, flaunting a soiled opera cape and ignoring a need for personal sanitation, L. Ron Hubbard would tell John W. Campbell, Jr. stories about Grand Schemes that all hinged on a little

bit of luck and an unbelievable parcel of gullible people.

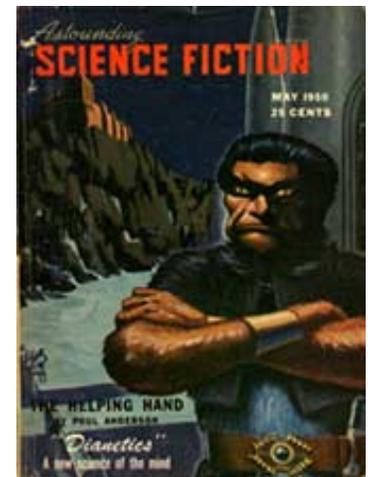
Most of the time, Hubbard knew what he was talking about. After all, he did get most of his science from science fiction.

From there it was an easy step for Hubbard to create the science of Dianetics for Campbell and *Astounding Science Fiction*. From there, receiving a completely unexpected response to his venture, Hubbard took a highly rewarding financial sidestep into the Church of Scientology.

After the big bucks came rolling in along with all the indictments, fraud charges, legal suits, etc., Hubbard just took off, becoming a permanent vagabond...and a convicted international criminal fugitive from justice.

So much for the science of Dianetics and Scientology.

When they discovered that Girodias was going to publish a book exposing them as a fraud, the Scientologists zeroed in on Maurice with intent to kill. They had him in their sights even as *President Kissinger* was working its way through the Olympia pornmill.



After *Inside Scientology* appeared, Maurice was besieged by numerous petty and significant plagues, mostly legal. Finally, believing he was going to discuss some escape routes from his predicament with a charming, available young lady, Maurice took off with her in a taxi to New Jersey. Along the way, the New Jersey police stopped them, searched the vehicle, and discovered marijuana that Girodias insisted she had planted on him. She was a Scientologist following orders and the first act of the last scene of the whole damn shebang had appeared right on cue.

On another occasion 5,000 copies of a counterfeit letter to booksellers on Olympia Press letterhead announcing that the company was out of business was thought to be a second Scientologist sabotage effort. They were also linked to a number of letters to various US federal agencies all condemning Girodias and his stateside lifestyle and publishing efforts.

After Girodias published *President Kissinger*, the trouble really began for him. The feds didn't need any more ammunition. It was a "political science fiction" story of the future when a non-USA-born person—and radical sexer—became president of a noticeably decadent USA of tomorrow.

In Nile Southern's fantastic book *The Candy Men*, he describes some of the action this way:

Girodias spent 1972 creating *President Kissinger*, a mélange of current events, science fiction, and pornography. It was, as Girodias put it, "very original in form." Girodias marketed the book as "political science fiction," probably in an attempt to protect himself from libel or worse. Nonetheless, his distributor Kable News found it scandalous and refused to release it. Girodias, his staff, and friends began personally distributing the book to eclectic bookstores and *President Kissinger* developed a small cult following. Girodias later wrote, "The book was hardly printed when I was invited by the U.S. Immigration Department to leave the country within 48 hours—on orders from the State Department."

Note: in *A Bibliography of the Publications of the New York Olympia Press*, by Patrick J. Kearney, he quotes Marco Vassi (one of the committee writers who wrote *President Kissinger*) as saying, "The book was printed and sent to the warehouse, but when I called Maurice to ask for copies he said that the entire shipment had disappeared the day after it arrived and the distributor would give him no information about what had happened. Two days later, when Maurice and his wife were driving to a friend's house for dinner, some eight or ten local, state and federal police cars pulled him over and when he was yanked out of the car and searched they 'found' several large bags of cocaine in his pocket. He was told that he faced ten years but was free to leave the country if he could manage to be gone by the next day. He returned to France (from which, ironically, he'd fled many years earlier because the authorities there wanted him gone)...."

[Marco Vassi said that Girodias told him "that the entire shipment had disappeared the day after it arrived." Nile Southern said, "Girodias, his staff, and friends began personally distributing the book to eclectic bookstores." Just another example of Girodias' honesty at work and his treatment of his writers, trying to have things that he didn't have, to reach an ultimate goal. And, it is worth taking note of that both the Scientologists and US federal agents used the same illegal *modus operandi* of planting drugs where they could do the most good for their fraudulently fabricated cause.]

Maurice Girodias was blasted out of the erotic cosmos while attempting to hoist himself by his own petard, to steal a cliché. Two science fiction armadas, attacking him simultaneously and converging on the target blew him completely away. He would never recover. The frog prince was effectively dead.

Rest In Peace, Asshole.

- - -

*Special thanks to Nile Southern for the extensive research he did for *The Candy Men*. Special thanks to Patrick Kearney and Barry Malzberg for much help with this article.

I am paying a heavy karma for all I did to the race of writers....I have lost most everything I had brought here with me; not just the authors, but faith in myself, the belief in the game itself, and the ability to cope with so much atrocious vulgarity. If I make a comeback, it must be an educated one, as I cannot afford another failure.

--Maurice Girodias

Pirates of Pornography*

By Peter Collier

For years Maurice Girodias exported from Paris what he affably calls “dirty books,” via the tourist underground. He made a good living at it, becoming the Prince of Pornographers, honored and reviled throughout the English-speaking world. But in the late 1950s, things began to go badly. Business started to decline, and the French government was keeping his Olympia Press tied up in endless lawsuits. It was time to find another market.

When Girodias finally decided to leave his small shop on the Rue de Nesles, it was only natural that he should come to the United States. The U.S. had always been a prime smugglers’ market, but by the mid-’60s, it had become the dirty book capital of the world, much friendlier to the publishers of soft-cover hard-core than France had ever been—and far more lucrative. Eros had been both domesticated and democratized; for the first time in history pornography was no longer the prerogative of an elite but was being mass-produced.

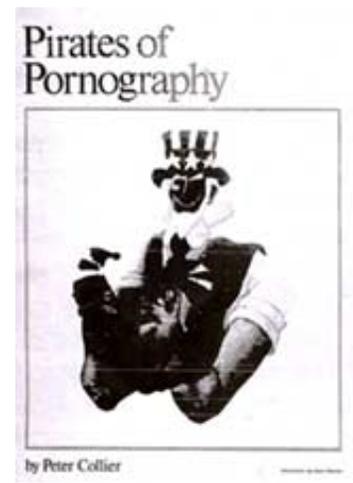
In fact, when he set up shop in America..., Maurice Girodias met serious competition for the first time in his career. In Southern California alone, paperback pornographers are bringing out over two million copies of between 70 and 80 new titles every month. Formerly small-time, marginal publishing operations have suddenly become big business. Even so, the sex rush is just beginning.

The market is active to the point of frenzy. Every major U.S. city has its street of pulp sin: Main in Los Angeles, Market in San Francisco, and the nonpareil 42 nd Street in New York. Reflected in the shop windows are magazines catering to every sexual whim—from fetishism to pubic hair watching, from homo to bi; neighboring theatres feature lavishly advertised adaptations of these themes; and the hard-core pornographer that once provided a good living for bookrunners is now available over the counter in cheap editions.

One of the upshots of this erotic renaissance is that sellers of soft-core—Hollywood moviemakers, ad agencies and middle-brow book publishers—no longer have exclusive cultural rights to the sex market. It belongs to anybody who can scrape together the capital and the imagination to retail it. The new breed of pornographer isn’t at all hung up with the paradox of trying to titillate and still stay respectable. Why should someone who only wants a little vicarious pleasure have to suffer through page after turgid page of a Harold Robbins epic, say, or a book like Bernard Geis’ *The Exhibitionist*, just to get at a sex scene or two that is ultimately about as exciting as a filthy sock?—especially when there is a whole treasure-house of erotica that has the real thing on every page. The answer is that he doesn’t have to any more.

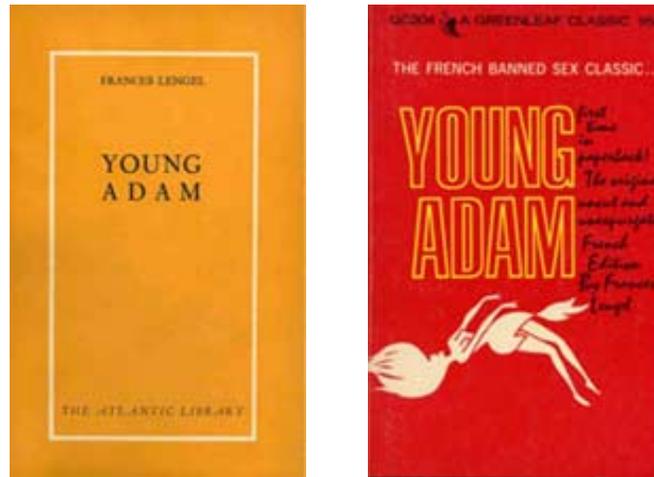
Girodias inherited his role as publisher laureate of erotic literature from his father, Jack Kahane, who was also an important figure in the international publishing underground. After migrating to France from England in the early ‘30s, Kahane founded Olympia’s ancestor, Obelisk Press. He discovered Henry Miller, publishing the first version of *Tropic of Cancer* in 1934, and also printed Lawrence Durrell’s first published work, *The BlackBook*, four years later on Miller’s recommendation.

While Girodias was growing up, his father was publishing a variety of erotic literature as well as the early works of Anais Nin and Cyril Connolly, a fragment of Joyce’s *Work InProgress* (later *Finnagin’s Wake*) and Frank Harris’ *My Life and Loves*. Obelisk was an historical if not a financial success by the time Kahane died on the eve of the Second World War—“stricken,” Girodias says, savoring the melodrama, “by the horror of it all.”



Having taken his mother's maiden name to conceal his Jewishness during the Nazi occupation, Girodias tried to follow in his father's footsteps immediately after the war, and failed. "I would never have launched into the next phase of my publishing career," he says rather grandly of his reasons for beginning Olympia in 1953, "had I not acquired over the years the urge to attack the Universal Establishment with all the means at my disposal. To fight one head of the beast rather than another had no real importance; to fight French intolerance or Anglo-American moral conventions really came to the same thing."

Girodias has a taste for the ironic. Because his books were designed to appeal to sexually repressed English and American tourists, he titled Olympia's major line "The Traveller's Companion Series." He began by bringing up-to-date the books his father had printed and cultivating friendships with some of the writers with whom Obelisk had had relationships. He also printed a few erotic standards like *Fanny Hill* and the works of the Marquis de Sade.

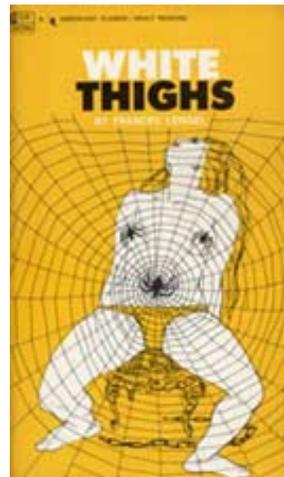


But Girodias' real stroke of genius was the establishment of a coterie of writers and translators all his own, a group which eventually built Olympia into a major pornographic house. He cultivated primarily the group centered around *Merlin*, a small literary quarterly edited by Alexander Trocchi (who has been characterized as one of *the* members of the international cultural underground), Trocchi, who did a "straight" novel for Grove called *Cain's Book*, wrote a whole series of pornographic tales for Olympia under his feminine pseudonym, Frances Lengel: hard-core best sellers like *Helen and Desire*, *The Carnal Days of Helen Seferis*, *White Thighs* and *Young Adam*. He was one of the most talented writers who haunted the offices Girodias shared with Jean-Jacques Pauvert. Another was Iris Owens, who turned out several novels for Girodias under the name Harriet Daimler. She is one of the few modern pornographers able to recreate the mood of Sade's blood-and-semen-flecked fantasies. There were several other regular writers, using the fanciful pseudonyms Girodias claims to have created: Akbar del Piombo, Count Palmiro Vicarion, Marcus van Heller, as well as several other Olympia trade names. Girodias bought exclusive rights to their books for between \$200 and \$400, making no provisions for royalties.

But pornography, however classic, doesn't fully account for Girodias' niche in contemporary literature, although printing it did alienate him from the "responsible" publishing world. And being beyond the pale of literary responsibility is what eventually enabled Olympia to put out avant-garde novels that no other company would touch. This, as well as basic good taste and keen business instincts, led Girodias to print a series of novels that were later grudgingly given their due: *Lolita*, *The Ginger Man*, *Candy*, *Naked Lunch*, *Pinktoes*, and early works of Genet and Beckett.

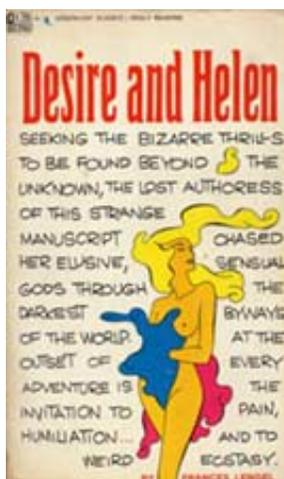
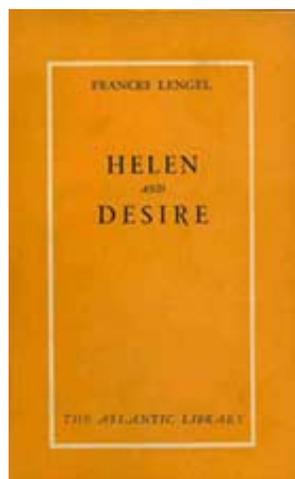
Generally, the authors of these works were paid the same flat fee as the pornographers, and Girodias didn't bother to protect them financially any more than he did his own hard-core books. The ironic result is that much of this literature became part of the public domain and was later picked up by the "respectable"

companies that had originally rejected it. When Putnam finally decided to print *Candy*, for instance, it didn't have to pay anyone fees or royalties. Girodias says that Terry Southern earned from his coauthoring of *Candy* only the \$500 that Olympia paid him.



At first Girodias underestimated his American competition. After settling permanently in America in 1965, he began a couple of quick ventures, but they failed. In search of partners, he approached dozens of publishers—many of them now his competitors—but was turned down because his demands were too high. Thus he decided to go it alone in a major do-or-die effort to get in on the action others had had to themselves for over a year and a half while he was trying to get started. This accounts for the atmosphere of urgency in his new offices and explains his attempts to hastily publish “authoritative” editions of his Paris books—all of them pirated several times over by his competition—and to commission a new line of Traveller's Companion books at the rate of eight new titles a month.

Finding potential pornographers and teaching them the tricks of the trade has always been Girodias' major talent. In Paris his source was the small colony of expatriates mainly clustered around Trocchi and *Merlin*. He hasn't yet found such a centralized source in America, although he is now beginning to tap the legion of marginal writers in this country who always seem to have trouble getting into print. This is the talent he hopes to bring into Olympia's American renaissance....



Girodias is busy rescuing several [potential new writers]...from the full-time obscurity of occupations like ghostwriting and trying to mold them into a new stable of pornographers. The over-abundance of everything in America provides him with no lack of talent, and if he had time to coax business along slowly

and naturally, as he would like to do, the [new writers]...would probably pay good dividends. But Girodias is already far behind his Yankee competitors. This influences his business decisions and also makes him very angry. "The only material so far for all these so-called dirty book publishers in this country is provided by me," he says with true patrician scorn. "If it wasn't for me they wouldn't be in business. All these little fly-by-night operations—Brandon House, Greenleaf, that Marvin Miller character—all of them are existing only by printing my Olympia books, done in Paris years ago. What authors have *they* discovered? I haven't gotten a penny out of them for all my books. I'm just not protected by the American corporate system. These small-time operators are just regular gangsters, and they'd steal their grandmother's teeth if they could."

"Sure he's getting screwed on his books," says Brian Kirby, an editor at Brandon House, one of Olympia's hardest imitators, "but don't forget that he made a living screwing people for several years—his own writers and everybody else. Also, he came in here when he first got to this country, asking us if we'd like to go 50-50 on his books, in a partnership operation. We refused, of course. Why pay for something that's free?"

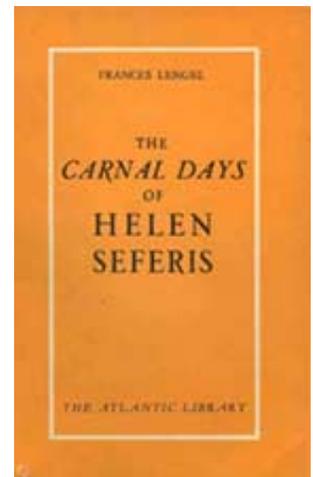
"America is a good place for publishing right now," Girodias says, reclining behind his desk and searching the ceiling, "but there is always the possibility of reaction, although if it comes, one would hope that it wouldn't take publishing back beyond what was established in the case of *Lady Chatterly's Lover* and Miller's *Tropic* books. But the fact is that the small-time, gangster operators in this country—publishing everything they can lay their hands on like a pack of mad dogs regardless of its quality—could bring down the wrath of the public, first in Southern California, then all over the country."

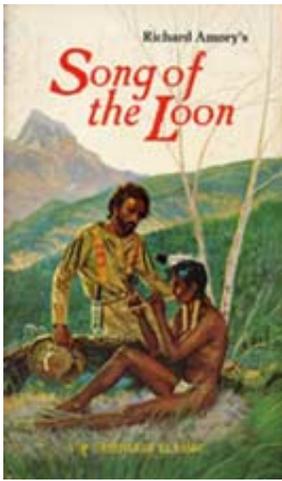
Although his own career is not marked by a great deal of restraint, Maurice Girodias always enjoys an opportunity to attack his American enemies, who are making all that money from his own earlier efforts. But there is also some truth in what he says. Olympia's American competitors are publishing just about everything, although they realize that their position is precarious and are generally as skittish about insipient crackdowns and busts as a group of Shriners smoking marijuana for the first time. The watchword of the pornographic community may indeed be: "Anything can be published here now." But if so, it is spoken in hushed tones, as if the speakers are a little afraid they will be overheard.

Yet, like all good entrepreneurs, these pirates are by and large quite sensitive to the kind of traffic the market will bear. They are professionals in every sense of the word: each spends a good deal of time kibitzing over the others' shoulders, noting new ideas, editions and sales techniques. They are not unlike a business fraternity, and borrow from each other as generously as they all have from Olympia Press. Each of the pirate companies is, in the great American tradition, diversified, putting out something else on the side, like girlie or gay magazines or mail order nudes, and thus functioning as a sort of erotic complex. Each hard-core publisher has a lawyer or two on retainer, and they watch recent court decisions and trends in local law enforcement as closely as if they were the latest stock market quotations.

Greenleaf Classics is probably the most prosperous of the Southern California pornography houses. It radiates security, occupying a handsome suite of offices in a large, modern building just outside central San Diego—a building which could just as easily house medical offices.

Peter Cooper, managing editor at Greenleaf, is a mild, genial bearded man who formerly taught journalism and English literature at a La Jolla high school. He still maintains his interest in newspapers, keeping a hand in by editing his church's weekly newsletter in spare moments. He liked teaching and came to Greenleaf in answer to a want ad in a San Diego newspaper only after interminable hours of grading student essays became too tiresome. "I've been here about three years now," he says, "although the company has been in business a lot longer than that. And I enjoy the work. I won't say that my prurient interests get excited or that anybody else's do. On the contrary, I've noticed that they've tended to get a bit dull and jaded."





Cooper...is a mechanic who services the needs of a clientele. He confesses to not being much of a scholar of erotica. "We put out 32 books a month here, and after awhile it all starts looking pretty much the same. It takes something pretty good to make an impression on you. Really. Mainly we're interested in the 'classic,' the 'long-suppressed item,' the book with the intense, building pressure cooker feeling that the best of Girodias' stuff at Olympia had. It's pretty hard to come by, so we've relied a good deal on his books."

Cooper picks up a book with a cover that pictures a lean, youthful man in buckskin framed by a mountain setting. The figure is staring intently at an Indian boy sitting in the grass beside him, playing a flute. "Now this is one of our originals," Cooper says, "and it seems to me—although like I say, I don't know this stuff all that well—that American pornography began, insofar as there is any kind of native tradition at all, with the superstud stuff and since then has slowly but surely developed in other directions, the main one being homosexual. We

have a line of the superstud—mostly of the sexy James Bond variety—but this book here, *Song of the Loon*, is better in every way. It's part of a trilogy about the American frontier—don't ask me why that setting. It has done extremely well for us, going through several printings already. I think that the writing is comparatively good, as far as this stuff goes, but obviously what sustains the book is what you might call 'flagrant homosexuality.'"

"Classical" pornography of the kind that Girodias created in Paris in the '50s involves characters who either are or learn to be *bi*, or better yet, *omnisexual*. The literature is based on a power ethic (perhaps on the assumption that the guilty need a power figure who is beyond good and evil to identify with), and the protagonists are obsessed with the power of their sexuality, with the power of pain, the power of huge imagination-splitting erections and unending orgasms. Usually the ruses used to explore and relieve the itch are unimportant, although the farther out the better: people, with all their orifices; groups, with a multiplicity of orifices as well as fun and games through pain; animals; even inanimate objects.

Within this scheme of no-particular-preference, the homosexual novel is, as Cooper suggests, our contribution to the genre. But there will probably be other American variations. Girodias, in fact, has already observed another tendency. "There is, of course, what the French term *la vise Anglaise*—the taste for flagellation and punishment," he says urbanely. "There were even special rooms in the French brothels to accommodate their British clients' strange taste for beatings and the like, although the French themselves wouldn't dream of such a thing. I was rather surprised to notice how well the literary part of all this has caught on here—the painful dirty books—although I suppose it is part of your well-known fixation on violence." Possibly with this in mind, Girodias' Traveller's Companion Series has just brought out a novel called *Crazy Wild*. It is a rather well-written fantasy filled with descriptions, like the following of a gang fight, which do justice even to the American Grand Guignol:

"The air was rent with screams. One of the boys drove a knife into Ivory Baby's shoulder and twisted it viciously. Blood spurted from the wound and ran down his chest. Chilli God stabbed the boy in the ear with a stiletto. The point went through the canal and rolled his eyeballs white. Chilli God was then cut across the face from behind with a switchblade so that his mouth was open from ear to ear....Odin grabbed the boy and pulled him around, shoving a gravity knife into his right testicle. The blade ran under the penis and into the scrotum. He twisted and dragged the knife so that the nuts popped out...The boy followed him with a bayonet raised high but a ducktail...brained him with a sawed-off baseball bat...Then suddenly a bullet struck the ducktail in the rectum and laid him flat."

Greenleaf admires Girodias' ingenuity in coaxing *Crazy Wild* out of whomever the pen name Jett Sage represents, but it tries to stay away from the theme. Cooper says, "Basically, there's nothing Greenleaf wouldn't consider as publishable as far as sex itself goes. But you've got to watch out for the brutality and bondage stuff. You know, the far-out sado-maso material with the blood and gore and the weird sex

murders and all. We keep an eye on it.” He adds, as an afterthought, “In fact, a lot of times, depending on the particular circumstances, of course, we’ll decide to farm a book out to some M.D. or Ph.D.—we have a few that do work for us—to write an introduction. It’s important that he have two things: one is the credentials, of course, but the other is the basic intelligence to back up the book in court, if it ever comes to that. But with books like this one, *Song of the Loon*, we don’t have to bother.”

Like the company’s other books, *Song of the Loon* has what Greenleaf’s Editorial Director Earl Kemp calls “good packaging”—a handsomely designed cover, clever and provocative cover lines, and careful internal editing, if not for content at least for coherence. And the story of *Song of the Loon* is, as the literary standards of the genre go, also fairly good. Basically, it is a pastoral idyll about a young man, Ephriam, who migrates to the opening frontier to escape the bad, destructive homosexuals in his eastern past, and finds in the west a paradise of good, redemptive homosexuals among the trappers and the Indians. The frontier is, as in the non-homosexual myth of the West, a Garden of Eden; but it is just enough of a womanless *Peyton Place* to be interesting—and to be profitable for the publisher.

Like pornography in general, this book is a wish-fulfilling fantasy that is self-contained and strong enough to resist any claims that reality might have on the subject. There is nothing in this frontier that is even remotely female. The forest primeval abounds in penes, however; they are everywhere, popping up (as it were) in the most improbable places and at the strangest times. Each penis has a careful, caressing description lavished upon it; each of them, to use one of the novel’s pastoral similes, is as huge as an oak tree.

Song of the Loon is also typical in that it wastes no time in developing characters or conflicts. Pornography, like science fiction or the western, has its own built-in set of expectations and limitations. One of them, obviously, is that each episode has to be good, but the book as a whole must get better and better, going further and further out to keep the reader’s attention and satisfy his special reading needs. Girodias’ Olympia books are quite good at sustaining this snowballing effect. In Trocchi’s *The Carnal Days of HelenSefaris*, for instance, one of the much-praised Paris books, the heroine’s sexual explorations become more and more sophisticated, more and more extreme, as the book progresses (although they remain fairly modest in comparison with much of the hard-core). But the best is saved for last; toward the end of the book, Helen recapitulates what happened to her while she was held captive by a sadistic band of Bedouins....

Pornography, like science fiction or the western, has its own built-in set of expectations and limitations.

Earl Kemp notes with satisfaction that Greenleaf has done extremely well with *Song of the Loon* and the other two books that make up the trilogy. Indeed, the company has done well enough to print its own parody of the trilogy, *Fruit of the Loon*, no doubt relishing a pun on the men’s underwear manufacturers. “We consider a book a success if it sells between 50,000 and 100,000 copies,” Kemp says. “Loon, of course, has done much better than that, and we wish that we could get a few more books like it.”

Greenleaf feels that it is the aristocrat of the hard-core world. “Our biggest competition,” says Kemp, ignoring the Traveller’s Companion Series, “is bound sooner or later to come from the big New York houses. They know what the potential is here, and they are getting more and more active. *Myra Breckenridge* by Gore Vidal and Updike’s *Couples* are just the beginning.”

Like Girodias, however, Kemp is a bit apprehensive about the way the *other* pornographers are handling themselves. He picks out a special target, as do almost all the other Southern California pirates, the publisher of Collector’s Publications. “Mr. Marvin Miller has done things that bewilder me—and gotten away with them,” Kemp notes. “Not only does that man pirate books with perfectly valid copyrights, but he deals in all kinds of other strange stuff—dildos and the like—in his mail order business. I’ve been trying to

get our attorneys to tell me how he gets away with it.”

It is but a short step from Greenleaf and its “flagrant homosexual” novels to the respectable eastern publishers and their crypto-sexy, middlebrow fiction which always hovers close to the best sellers lists; from Marvin Miller’s *Intercourse* to *Playboy*’s monthly female fold-out device. What binds hard- and soft-core together is a common goal of making money from porno-voyeurism, which is both cultivated and taken advantage of, and the fact that none of the publications really have much to do with sex, at least not in the way that Sade did, say, or the anonymous Victorian gentleman who wrote *My Secret Life*.

Trafficking in the erotic is as American as cherry pie. But a prime cultural injunction is appearances must be preserved, and thus the Marvin Millers are constantly beset by censors and potential book burners, while the world of the soft-core goes about its business serenely. While Collector’s Publications is harassed by a series of federal indictments, nobody becomes seriously agitated over the fact that *Playboy*’s success is based on connecting its version of sexuality and sexual prowess with the materialistic paradise advertised in its back pages; nobody questions television commercials showing, for instance, a luscious woman lying on a leopard skin rug, her lips moist and hair in a sensual waterfall over her bare shoulders, whispering with throaty insistence that a certain gasoline is better than all others.

Maurice Girodias has stepped into America’s confusion of Eros with Mammon with urbane grace. His finely featured face quite composed, he picks his way through the litter and confusion of his recently opened offices in a pleasant part of Manhattan’s East Side, often pausing to say a few words to the secretaries and anonymous writers who wander in and out of the rooms. He has the confidence of an old hand, an expert. “What we do,” he says, the words filtered through a thin French accent, “is give dirty book readers a sort of erotic kit, then they go ahead and do with it whatever they can. That’s up to them. We do our part and give them what they want: the means of getting a hard-on.” Looking languidly for a moment out the window at a small park across the street, he adds, raising the discussion to a higher level, “But in the future, of course, I’d like to see a new kind of romanticism created around sexuality, something that might rehabilitate the erotic as a viable form of mental—as well as physical—activity.”

There is no doubt that Girodias likes to think of himself as a gentleman revolutionary whose lifework has helped to punish the constrictive world of bourgeois morality. His status as the man who introduced authors like Nabakov and William Burroughs is his strong suit and he knows it. He tends to minimize his role as purveyor of the pornography which was his staple commodity at Olympia and often implies dirty books were simply *jeux d’esprit*, his way of harassing the system. “Those literary orgies,” he calls them, “those torrents of systematic bad taste were certainly instrumental in clearing the air and cleaning out a few mental cobwebs. The imbecile belief that sex is sin, that physical pleasure is unclean, that erotic thoughts are immoral—all those sick Judeo-Christian ideas were exposed for what they are.”

True enough, but like all other pornographers, Girodias has a stake in the vitality of the Judeo-Christian tradition as it is manifested through official censorship and informal book burning; he has a reciprocal relationship with it, in fact. “You may eat of my fruit but this,” the Judeo-Christian censor says. And it is part of Girodias’ genius that he has always known his response in the litany: “Yes, that’s quite true. Here, have a bite.”

The pilgrimage of Maurice Girodias, that celebrated of pornographers, to his true spiritual home in America seems to be a momentous event in our erotic history. It has always been assumed that it was Olympia Press that took a saying by the French writer, Mirabeau, and patented a way of making a good living off it. *Eh bien, lis, devore, et branle-toi*, Mirabeau wrote in an aside to the reader in one of his pornographic novels —“And now, read, devour and masturbate.” But Girodias may well learn more in the United States than he teaches. His new competitors are backed by a culture which has known all about selling masturbation for some time.

There are many things that could be said about America’s hard-core contest. But it is well to remember that it is not a battle of Titans. There is perspective in a remark by Jean Genet: “Insofar as my books are

pornographic, I do not reject them. I simply say that they lacked grace.”

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*Excerpted from “Pirates of Pornography,” *Ramparts*, August 1968, and used with the permission of Peter Collier. Copyright 1968, 2005 by Peter Collier. All rights reserved. Special thanks to Jay A. Gertzman for much help with this piece.

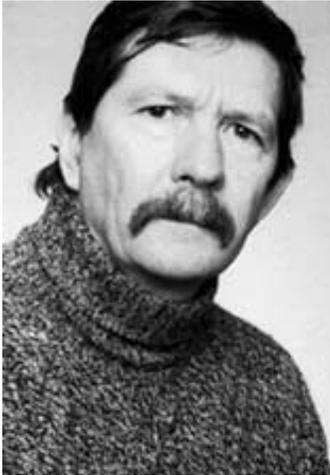
What we do, is give dirty book readers a sort of erotic kit, then they go ahead and do with it whatever they can. That’s up to them. We do our part and give them what they want: the means of getting a hard-on.

--Maurice Girodias

Me and Maurice

By Jim Haynes

Earl, you are doing what I have been talking about doing for the past 25 years or more. I edited a Homage to Henry Miller book shortly after his death. And then planned to do the same for Maurice Girodias. But never did it. So you have scooped me!



Jim Haynes

Maurice, as far as I am concerned, is one of the great editor/publishers of the 20th century. Alas few acknowledge this or recognize his achievement. When he died in Paris, I was one of the few to attend his cremation. Almost no one from the French publishing world attended. Only John Calder, from London, paid his respects by attending. John Calder was a friend and associate. He collaborated with Girodias by publishing many of Olympia Press titles in Britain. They often dined together in London and Paris.

I think I first met Girodias through John. I certainly sold Olympia Press titles in my book, *The Paperback*, in Edinburgh as early as 1959.

Later when John Calder, Sonia Orwell, and I co-organized The Writers' Conference as a part of the Edinburgh International Festival in 1962, I got to know Maurice and to appreciate his humor, his warmth and his gentleness.

Girodias let the attack on censorship. His publishing activities opened the doors to what writers can write about and to readers to what we can read about. Much of what we take for granted in the English-speaking world is a direct result of Maurice Girodias and his publishing activities.

Long live Maurice!

...in Paris fifteen years ago. Our primary object then was to dismantle censorship; today, with the sexual revolution well on its way, our aim is to normalize the situation, and help integrate the erotic side of life in creative writing, as being one of its most natural and essential components. The idea of "pornography-for-profit" is only kept alive today in and through the imagination of the censors. What matters now is to move ahead, to take the next step, and let writers write *normally* about sex, about desire, about the erotic dream which permeates and molds our lives—no longer as if it were a shameful and secret aspect of our psyches, but on the contrary, as the richest, warmest and happiest realm of the human reality.

--Maurice Girodias, "Commentary," *The New Olympic Reader*

Me and Maurice

By Gil Lamont

This is what I remember of my Olympia Press experience, such as it was. I may not have some of the 1972 facts quite in order.

First, a little background. In 1969 I sold my first novel, published as *Roach*, to Brian Kirby for Milt Luros's Essex House. After a bunch of problems with production on that one -- mostly a matter of cutting all of my "typewriter tricks" -- I gave Brian an easy one with my second novel,

Pecker's Bad Boy, in 1970. An easy write, an easy sell. When I went to see Brian with the first chapter and outline of my third novel, *The Great Mildew Creek Harlot Massacree*, Brian sadly informed me that Essex House was dead. This must have been 1970. Shortly thereafter Brian quit Luros's Parliament News outfit, and somewhat after that, the great Larry Shaw, who took over the remaining inventory, bounced *Pecker's Bad Boy* as being "a heavy-handed satire." I later made some cuts and resold it to some other publisher distributed by Parliament News.

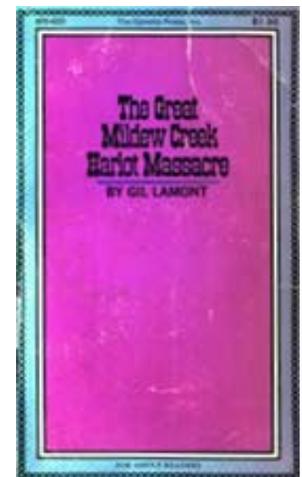
Still, what was I to do about *Massacree*? Somewhere along the way I had acquired an agent, Herb Vernon, a smooth-talking New Yorker who promised great things for me. I'd never had an agent before, and was impressed enough when he sold *Massacree* to Olympia Press for \$1,200. Great. I was 24 or 25 and had just moved to Phoenix with new girlfriend and her daughter.

The contract for *Massacree* was for four payments of \$300 each. I got my \$180 of the first payment, Herb Vernon having taken his commission off the top.

This was 1972. I struggled through the manuscript, sweating in the glories of Arizona summer and swamp cooling, and we were starving. I may have gotten another \$300, I think. Still starving. Desperate communications with Herb Vernon led nowhere. Finally I called Olympia Press, who told me they had paid the third installment some time before. I called Herb Vernon about the missing money. "I have other clients, you know," he said. Which meant my \$300 went to his other clients. So I fired him. I finally got the contract balance, I think, in two installments of \$150 each directly from Olympia Press. Total for me: \$780. Total for Herb Vernon: \$420. Gotta love the guy.

Massacree ended up being published by Ophelia Press, apparently the second-rate line for second-rate books. Let's face it, *Massacree* started out promisingly but went nowhere. I had no plot, and no inspiration came forth to supply one. There were other problems with the Ophelia Press edition. First, my title was modified to *The Great Mildew Creek Massacre*, a tiny change but to me significant, since I was thinking more along the lines of Arlo Guthrie's Alice's Restaurant Massacree; changing it to *Massacre* foreboded something far more sinister than what I had in mind. Much worse was that some second-rate copy editor had gone through and added unnecessary punctuation to "punch it up"; I remember most vividly the original offhand and understated prose of the prologue, which had been the best thing about the manuscript (and probably what sold it in the first place), and undoubtedly the rest of the book was similarly "improved."

I don't recall what my rights were via the contract. I no longer have my copy of the contract, nor for that matter my carbon of the manuscript or even a copy of the published book.



I discovered, quite some time later, that Olympia Press had never even applied for a copyright to the book when it was originally published.

Sometime in the mid-1970s I found *Massacre* remaindered at the local L.A. book wholesaler at \$0.25 a copy wholesale. I thought that vaguely amusing but didn't bother to buy up the skid of books and destroy every copy. And in the mid-1980s, when I moved to Denver, Ed Bryant would tease me unmercifully about my "great" novel until I finally begged him to stop.

Naturally I was surprised quite recently to discover *The Great Mildew Creek Massacre* on Olympia Press's website as an e-Book, where I have also been declared a house pseudonym. One of these days I'll contact the proprietor to find out if any fool has bought the book and if I have any hope of royalties.

Contact with Maurice Girodias: None. And on the whole, not a happy experience.

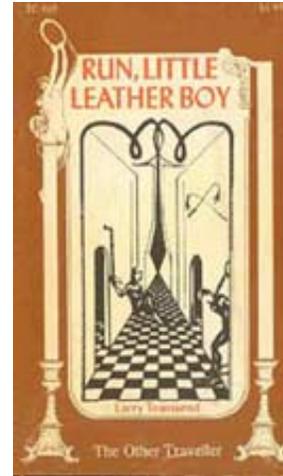
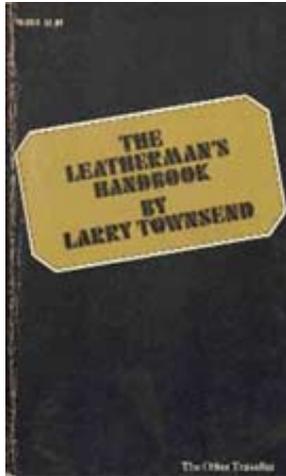
I would never have launched into the next phase of my publishing career, had I not acquired over the years the urge to attack the Universal Establishment with all the means at my disposal. To fight one head of the beast rather than another had no real importance; to fight French intolerance or Anglo-American moral conventions really came to the same thing.

--Maurice Girodias

Me and Maurice

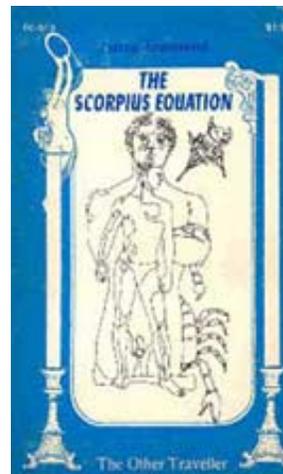
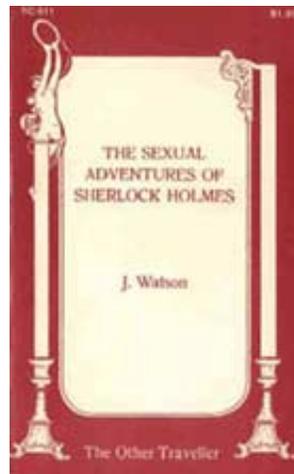
By Larry Townsend

You want my take on Olympia Press NY and Maurice Girodias; there isn't much I can say. I never met him, and as best I can remember I only spoke to him once on the phone. My contact was Frances Green. I was not "pirated" by them. I contacted them at Dirk Vanden's suggestion, this because after writing over a million words for Greenleaf Classics, I was getting so much trouble from Ginger Sisson, my Greenleaf editor, I thought it was time to move on.



I wrote four books that were published by Olympia Press NY: *Run, Little Leather Boy*, *The Leatherman's Handbook* (two printings), *The Scorpius Equation*, and *The Sexual Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* [as J. Watson]. They had actually bought *Run No More*, the sequel to *Run, Little Leather Boy*, but went belly-up before it could be printed.

Frances sent me the typeset, which I used in one of my first self-publishing efforts. This was so successful from the very beginning I never looked for a publisher again except for reprints of the *Handbook*, and the sequel (*Leatherman's Handbook II*), which was originally published by Carlyle (George Mavety) in 1982.



I also had two books published by Alyson (now *The advocate*): *Masters' Counterpoints* and *One For the*

Master; Two for the Fool. These were done as trade paperbacks, and were so successful I wrote and published a string of novels under my own L.T. Publications imprint. (*The Case of the Severed Head; Stalked; A Contagious Evil, etc,* and my hardcover novel on Ivan, the Terrible: *CZAR!*) I also published several anthologies, and have done monthly columns for *Honcho* and *Bound & Gagged* (the latter now frightened out of business by Gonzales, et al).

I closed down my publishing and mail-order businesses a year and a half ago, because it was too much work; I have a new science fiction novel pending with a New York publisher. So, that's my story.

I don't know much more about Maurice Girodias. I know he was a bad businessman, but I can't say anything more about him, good or bad. He always treated me honestly and professionally, which was not always the case with others I dealt with. I really suggest you contact Frances Green. She knows where the bodies are buried, and may be willing to tell you.

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Cover scans courtesy Larry Townsend Collection.

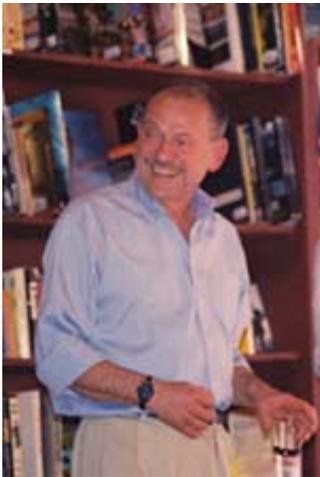
The connecting link is clear enough: anything that shocks because it comes before its time, anything that is liable to be banned by the censors because they cannot accept its honesty.

--Maurice Girodias [TCM]

A Virgin Anew

By Victor J. Banis

By the year 1970, my virginity was a moldy relic of the past; and I had sadly learned that the world neither little wants nor long remembers moldy virginity. I had more than a hundred books under my belt by this time; yes, it is true, most of them well below my belt. I had been in and out of more beds than Fanny Hill. I had been down in the valley and over the hump. I had sported boots and heels high and low, and some of them round. I had wrestled with issues large and slippery, inched my way into places dark and perilous, sometimes groping my way blindly. With my hand in Old McDonald's, I had trotted with turkeys, wallowed with swine, and milked the cows, so to speak. I had lolloped with lesbians, strummed with studs, and fiddled with fags. I'd had my nose, at least, in everything but Jack Horner's pie, and if the little bugger had stayed in the corner where he belonged, I'd have tales to tell you about those plums too. I was the Czar of the bizarre, the Queen of the Kama Sutra. Orifice Rex.



Victor Banis. Courtesy
Fabio Cleto Collection.

Then, *un bel di* (I always try to slip a little foreign tongue in where I can) I looked across the vast wasteland of my mattress—ignoring the scorch marks here and there—and asked myself the age old question: Is that all there is?

"Face it, sweetie," my Muse replied (This was Snotto, the Muse of Sleaze; they sometimes leave her out of the artier books), "at the banquet of life, you're down to licking the plates."

I took a moment to consider that. It was true; plus, my tongue was tired. The time had come, it seemed, to get out of bed.

I swapped my scarlet swaddlings for a nightgown of white purity, scrubbed the rouge from my face, poked a judicious hairpin here and there, and gazed into the mirror. Jan Alexander, Mistress of the Frightened Virgins, smiled back at me. Hmm. If I kept the lights low enough, no one would suspect it was me.

Ring went the phone. Ring, ring, ring, ring—I was sitting in pitch darkness, as you recall. I groped my way to it, and found my agent, Jay Garon, at hand.

"Maurice Girodias wants you," Jay announced, and added "Do you know the name?"

Maurice Girodias? In our war for freedom of speech, he was the Commander in Chief on the French battlefield. Olympia Press. The Traveller's Companion. The elite of erotica: Miller, Nin, Nabokov. Like visions of sugarplums, they danced in my hair-pinned head. *Of course I knew that name.*

What was truly surprising, be still my heart, was that he knew *my* name. He had read, in fact, some of what I had written for Greenleaf Classics—in particular, the CAMP series. Now, he was about to launch a new American line of paperback erotica, The Other Traveller, and, oh, joy, he specifically wanted me to write a book for this new imprint.

Jay really flattered me when he said, "Girodias said he thinks of you as being a star of the Greenleaf stable. He asked which other Greenleaf writers I represent and if I could get them to write for him."

"He really said that?" I asked.

At last, a man who wanted me as I was. I was a virgin again. Off came that nightie—white makes me look sallow anyway—out came the hairpins, and on went the lipstick. I flung myself upon the bed—carefully covering the scorch marks as best I could with splayed limbs—and crooned those titillating words into the phone: "How much is the gentleman going to pay for my services?"

"Fifteen hundred dollars," Jay crooned back.

Fifteen hundred? I pulled the sheet up to my chin. "But, Jay, darling," I said, "I am an ardent believer in tit for tat, and I am getting a great deal more tat than that from my frightened virgins."

"Think of the prestige," Jay countered.

I carefully opened a package of prestige, poured some into a Tupperware bowl, and considered it long and carefully. Well, I suppose I could eat that if it came down to it. God knows I had eaten almost everything else, though sometimes under duress.

"And, he's offering a generous royalty," he added.

I said yes, but with a teensy bit less enthusiasm than before. I couldn't help thinking my virginity was being taken a trifle lightly. I should perhaps have remembered what a wise old man once told me (actually, it was Lady Agatha, but there wasn't much that girl didn't know about men): "If the handwriting on the wall starts out, 'for a good time, call...' hold off on ordering the bridal bouquet."

Well, still, this was Maurice Girodias; the big hollyhock in our garden and I a lowly pansy. And where the bee sucks, there suck I. Besides, it says in the Bible—or it might be one of Martha Stewart's books, I get them confused—if you are going to say yes to a consummation, you might as well throw your body and soul into it. Let's be frank: after some of the places I had tossed my body, this was kid's stuff to me. In less than a month, and with a brief kiss blown in Thorne Smith's direction, I had completed *The Gay Haunt* and sent it off to Jay. I prettied myself up and waited for the wedding night. I don't care how many times you do it in the back seat of a car, it doesn't count until you've checked into a motel. I was still a virgin.

An eager virgin, I might say. By then, I had gotten the contract for the book, and Jay was right, the royalties were generous: twelve percent for the first 50,000 copies, which was the first print run; fourteen percent for the next 50,000; and sixteen percent for anything over that. The fifteen hundred dollar in advance wasn't much, it was true, but if the book sold even most of its first, fifty thousand printing—and most of my gay novels had easily topped those numbers—I could look forward to a big fat check by springtime. A pleasure delayed is sometimes all the more thrilling when it finally comes off.

In the meantime, though, there was the matter of that fifteen hundred dollars in advance; which was no longer technically "in advance," since they had the manuscript and I had nothing to show for my virginity but a lot of promises on paper. I know that there are those who have said I sold myself cheaply, but I have always insisted on something more than hot air (admittedly, that can add to certain kinds of fun, but at the moment I was alone in my boudoir with a bad case of *financus interruptus*).

I splashed myself with *Oh Dick Alone* and called Jay Garon. "Where," I asked, "is my fifteen hundred?"

He called Mister Girodias and called me back: "Next week, he promises."

The following week, I rearranged the bed sheets prettily and called Jay Garon. "Where," I asked, "is my fifteen hundred?"



He called Mister Girodias and called me back: "Two weeks, he promises."

Two weeks passed. I repaired my mascara, painted my toenails—yes, Jungle Red—and called Jay: "Where," I asked....

Well, to make a sad story short, I did indeed get the fifteen hundred dollars, but not before my Avon lady had driven off in a brand new Cadillac; and, more tellingly, not until the book was on the racks, sporting that familiar green cover and looking, I had to admit, plenty classy. Not exactly kosher, it seemed to me, but, let's be realistic, once you have your hot hands on what you wanted so desperately, it's easy to forgive all that hard-to-get business that went before.

Besides, I could understand, I thought. Setting up a new business, in a new country: of course, it must be complicated and costly. At least now, however, the books were out there, which meant money was coming in; my royalties would surely be simpler to collect. This was, after all, Maurice Girodias. If you couldn't trust a hollyhock, whom could you trust?

Nor was there any question that there must be royalties, because in no time at all, that original edition had been replaced with a second printing, and a different cover: sexier, if a trifle less classy looking. Which meant that the book had already sold out its initial fifty thousand copies. At a twelve percent royalty, that check I was expecting would be very fat indeed. Let them laugh who will, not everyone gets a big fat one for their virginity.

My royalty statement came at last. I ripped the envelope open, and took out: a single sheet of paper. I shook it, shook the envelope, tore it seam from seam searching for the enclosed check. There was none. I returned my attention to the royalty statement, and saw that the book had sold a mere five thousand copies. It hadn't even, according to the royalty statement, earned back that paltry "advance," which in any case had been more of an "after."

"There must be some mistake," I wailed to Jay. "They've lost a zero, and I want it back."

He called Mister Girodias and called me again: "Book tallies are slow. It's a new operation. Wait for the next royalty statement. Oh, and he would love to have another book."

Well, yes, wasn't that like, come again on the tapioca? My wedding night was still unconsummated and we were talking another round of foreplay.

I replied that I would wait for that next royalty statement before I started another book. Six months to wait, then. A long time to lie breathlessly on your mattress waiting for what you want to come. Still, what was coming was also growing larger, always a happy state of affairs, it seemed to me. Before those six months had passed, the second edition of *The Gay Haunt* had been replaced on the racks by a third, with still another cover, and that edition, too, was flying out of the stores. One hundred thousand copies at least, then, and the second half of that was earning a fourteen percent royalty. I began to shop for a new peignoir and called my delighted Avon lady again, who mentioned that she thought the new Mercedes model was quite handsome.

The next royalty statement arrived. The book had now sold, it said, somewhere around ten thousand copies. I slipped back into my old chenille bathrobe, dabbed some Old Spice behind my ears, and called Jay. The Other Traveller, it seemed to me, was traveling by alleys and devious routes, as Rae Bourbon had once put it.

Jay agreed. He called Mister Girodias—who wasn't in, it seemed, but would call back.

He didn't. Jay called again. Mister Girodias was once again out of his office, but he would call back.

He didn't. And so it went for several weeks, while I restocked my makeup cabinet and waved to my Avon lady, who was as pleased as punch with her new Mercedes.

#

I never got that royalty payment. Not a sou. The Other Traveller folded; Girodias, I was told, had returned to Paris where, no doubt, he was happily cavorting with the money he hadn't paid me. I had been plucked. Royally. By a hollyhock.

I took another look at that Tupperware bowl. It wasn't prestige in there, after all, it was baloney. I knew that Maurice Girodias looked down his nose at the California pulp publishers, but I had worked with those people for years and found them gentlemen and ladies one and all (sometimes one and the same), for whom a handshake constituted a contract and one's word was bond; ironically amusing, then, to learn the true meaning of the word "sleaze."

Well, I had learned a valuable lesson or two from it all: first, get the money and stick it in your garter before you roll down your panties. Also, save the makeup for the morning after, I don't care what your Avon lady advises.

These may seem minor points to you, but it is just such wisdom as this that has guided me down the sometimes-circuitous pathways and through the meadows of my life.

Plus, I still had that original book with its classy green cover, and the two other editions with their different covers, and I discovered, when I reread it long after, that it was a very funny book; so I was glad to have written it and to have it on the shelf, and delighted when, years later, Michael Bronski included an excerpt in his *Pulp Friction*. All in all, I think it's one of the better things I did, which is to say, the experience can't be considered a total loss.

Besides, I was a virgin again.

After centuries of repression [in America], it is now being admitted that man's erotic function is truly his central motor, and the source of all his most authentic drives and inspirations. It now becomes a fascinating task to give a meaning to our culture, by turning it into the exact and true expression of man's humanity, and to discover, through the humble mechanisms of sexuality, the infinite perspective provided by man's erotic design.

--Maurice Girodias, "Introduction," *The New Olympia Reader*

Darlings of Death

or

A Visit With Maurice Girodias

Recall by Thomas P. Ramirez

I have kept a diary since I was sixteen. My entry dated September 4, 1968, which referred to my Girodias contact, read simply, "Appointments with editors all day."

That's all, damnit! Far cry from my mundane 20- to 30-line entries today. If only I'd written down at least a few scraps of detail. But I think my eidetic memory of that day will carry me through fairly accurately. Bear with me.

I wrote twelve pornographic novels for Greenleaf that year and was probably turning out some of the best work of my porno career about then, among them some John Desmond takeoffs -- literature, almost! Even so it was an edgy time. Sales were down, checks were late, outlines were slow in being approved, and my diary registers frequent presentiments of doom.

The wheels were beginning to come off of the old porno wagon.

Be very afraid.

Daughter Vianne was returning from a long summer at an archaeological dig in England that fall, and we were driving to New York City to pick her up, and visit friends in the bargain. While there, I decided to conduct a little business, and see if I could scout up some extra book projects.

I had a Milwaukee agent at the time who handled my non-Greenleaf output, and he'd heard that Dell Books was considering a soft porn line, and would I be interested in trying something for them? He gave me the name of an editor, Bob Able, and I wrote a letter requesting a meeting while I was in New York.

Where I heard that Maurice Girodias was seeking new writers, I don't recall. Seeing as I'd be in Manhattan anyway, I sent a letter off to him also, presenting my background along with several plot line snippets.

One other contact: David Zentner, publisher of Bee-Line Books. I'd scanned some of his books, and figured I could bend my style to his porn list, which, as I recall, was on the soft side as compared to the anything-goes writing I was doing for Greenleaf at the time.

All three editors, seemingly intrigued by my long run at Greenleaf and the number of pornos I'd written (approximately 130 at that time), sent most cordial replies, and via several long distance calls, we made agreeable appointments -- all on the same day of my so-brief Big Apple visit. I'd see Able and Zentner in the morning, and Girodias in the afternoon.

And so, September 4, 1968:

My first interview, at 9:30, was with Bob Able. I would base a porno on the beauty contest industry, and had a fairly decent outline to show him. And on the side a couple of two paragraph synopses of other projects.



Thomas P. Ramirez and super cat Chessy,
Fond du Lac, WI -- Fall 1968.

Outcome: go home, write three chapters of the beauty contest novel (working title: *She Walks In Beauty*) and give me a look-see.

The 11 AM meeting with David Zentner was a total loss. And where he'd been most ebullient when we'd talked on the phone, that day he was distracted. His car was in the garage, and there were at least three interruptions wherein he went on at great length with his mechanic. Again, I proposed at least four novel settings, created especially for Bee-Line. In a word he was basically indifferent, and I left the office vowing not to bother any further with him.

(Later info on Zentner revealed that he was deep into telephone sex, and would ship consensual females to New York for one-night stands in fancy hotels. They got an all expense trip, a fancy dinner, and an expert screw for their troubles. Whim-wham, thank you, ma'am, and that was it. He wasn't even a bit sly about it; his ads specifically stated the terms. If the bimbos were willing, they got what they deserved.)

Thank goodness he was in phone conference with his mechanic the hour I spent with him, not one of his horny doxies. We'd never have had even superficial converse re. my novel proposals.

I met with Maurice Girodias at 2 that afternoon. When my cab drew up before the dingy building on 36 Gramercy Park, I was more than a bit disappointed. Nothing very promising here, I thought. It looked like more of a slum than a prestigious porno palace. Had the cabby goofed, and dropped me off at the wrong address?

But it was even worse when I came upon the grimy glass door with a simple 36 on its surface. No gilt-lettered Olympia Press banner? And that gloomy stairwell? Instantly I was reminded of my impoverished dishwasher grandmother's second-floor flat over a downtown Fond du Lac, Wisconsin tavern. As a boy, how I'd dreaded going up those filthy stairs to visit her!

Well, it was déjà vu all over again. There was a second-floor landing, I could see, and at the top some glimmer of light from a glass door. More than a little dismayed, I climbed those dark stairs, wondering with every step. Compared to these digs, the Dell and Bee-Line offices had been Versailles.

Reaching the landing, I tapped on the opaque-glassed door – again a 36 starkly contrasted upon the glass, and heard the soft voice call -- in slightly accented English -- “Please come in.”

And though time has dulled crystal-clear remembrance of that afternoon, there was one glaring thing that keeps the memory still fresh even today, and that was the dismal cubicle that the notorious Prince of Porn called his office. Thirty-seven years has not erased that stunning first impression.

There was no reception room, no secretary. An empty space – perhaps 4 by 6 -- one dingy window, and not even a chair to sit upon.

And here, exactly to the right was an open door. Where Maurice Girodias sat waiting. I swiftly took in the dapper, fashion-plate persona, the urbane demeanor and smile of the internationally known editor/publisher. Seated at a skimpy desk in a cubbyhole office that couldn't have measured more than eight-by-ten feet!

There was a chair here, plus another streaked window looking out on an equally grubby Manhattan rooftop landscape.

“Please, Mr. Ramirez,” he said, greeting me in an escargot-kissed accent, standing briefly to shake my hand. “Do come in. Sit down.”

We exchanged small talk for a time, more or less sizing each other up. Girodias was 49 to my 42 at the time,

but appeared to be considerably younger. He wore a dark suit, an elegant designer tie. As I said, dapper. He was thin, his face on the equine side, with a sharply receding hairline – all in all, to my mind, a distinguished, handsome man.

If he was aware of his bare-bones surroundings – there wasn't even a damned calendar on the wall – he never let on. To the right, behind his battered, paper-littered desk, was another door which led into yet another cubbyhole room filled with boxes almost to the ceiling, boxes of books I assumed, for there were loose stacks of the familiar green *The New Traveller's Companion* series editions piled haphazardly on the periphery of that porn pyramid.

I could only conclude that the office which Girodias had specified was an adjunct to another office elsewhere in Manhattan. Certainly no person of his eminence would choose this pigpen as a normal base of operations.

We talked for a bit about my eight-year tenure with Greenleaf, and about subject matter of some of my novels other than the severe larding of sexual activities, and he was quite interested (amused?) in the fact that I prided myself in providing a well-rounded book – with well-fleshed characters, interesting locales and situations, *and* fairly strong, sometimes even suspenseful plots.

Finally we got to the business at hand.

I had long been interested in Gille de Rais, the so-called “Beast of Brittany,” (1404 – 1440) who specialized in sexual torture and murder of numberless young boys kidnapped the depth and breadth of the fiefdom over which he ruled. Basically a homosexual, he nevertheless subjugated women as well. It is told that he kept the skulls of particularly beautiful lads on one of his fireplace mantels, and took them down often to kiss them. During the latter part of his life he conducted Satanic sacrifices of child victims, calling upon Beelzebub to help him --and his conniving alchemists -- change base metals into gold.

Years back I had written a long article about him (never published) and considered that his depravities would be ideal for a historical porn novel similar to others Olympia had published.

Girodias was seemingly much intrigued with my idea, and questioned me extensively on the subject. How many boys had Gilles de Rais murdered (anywhere from 140 to 400 according to varying sources – one tower of his fortress at Tiffauges was filled 20-feet deep with bones and skulls), how had he managed to get away with such atrocities, and how and when was he brought to justice? And did I know that he fought beside Joan of Arc? (I certainly did.) He thought my proposed title, *Darlings of Death*, excellent.

“I expect that I'll be using brief lines in French,” I qualified, “scattered throughout the manuscript. Not enough to be burdensome to the reader, but inserts here and there for sake of authenticity. The research is pretty much done. The only problem I might encounter would be the matter of my not knowing much French. Inaccuracies might creep in.”

I definitely *do* recall how Girodias smiled smugly at that, and said, “Oh, that should be no problem at all. I'm sure we have someone here who could make such corrections.” *Bon mot*. And *do* pardon my French!

Further along he described certain changes of approach that he and his staff were considering in upcoming novels – they would be considerably more graphic than those currently on the market. (And how much more graphic could such be? I mused. A woman humping the spire of the Chrysler Building?)

As I said, 37 years – there is no way I'd be able to bring up exact details of our long conversation.

We visited for perhaps an hour and a half; Girodias seemed in no way anxious for the visit to be over. He even asked me about my background – schoolteacher – and my family, and was even curious about

Wisconsin. The time passed most amiably, and I felt that I certainly must have my foot firmly in the door.

I should submit a fairly detailed outline as soon as possible, Girodias said in parting. He would give it a very careful reading and let me know if he felt I should go forward with the novel. Again – it certainly seemed a most promising subject matter.

If I recall correctly, it was I who brought the afternoon to a close. My wife and son were attending a presentation of *West Side Story*, at the Lincoln Center that evening, and there was considerable commuting to be done. But just before I left, Mr. Girodias pressed perhaps six different paperbacks upon me, so that I might better assimilate the *The New Travellers Companion* style. Whatever happened to the books I carefully stacked into my briefcase that afternoon, I'll never know. Only one title, *My Mother Taught Me*, by a writer called Tor Kung, still remains in my mind. I particularly recall loaning it to a friend while working at a Chicago tabloid, and when the man was fired, the book went with him.

So, two days later, a nonstop drive back to Fond du Lac and back to the old routine. There was a Greenleaf go-ahead waiting, and I almost immediately tore into the next porno.

In late September I finally found some open time to do a ten-page outline of *Darlings of Death*, and promptly sent it off to Girodias.

He was nothing if not prompt. At 2:30 PM on October 4, I received a phone call from him, his voice soft, kind, and apparently enthusiastic about the proposal. Could I send him two or three chapters at my earliest opportunity?

I certainly could. And definitely buoyed up by his encouraging words, I was sure I'd soon be in the Olympia stable.

I launched into even more research, and ordered books from my son-in-law to be at Harvard. And around the edges, yet another book for Greenleaf.

On November 11, I began the actual writing of *Darlings* and turned out two, what-I-considered well-honed chapters, 50 pages in all. I thought I had the historical detail and mood down perfectly. In this portion Gilles de Rais kidnapped a local beauty for his wife, made their wedding night pure, sadistic agony, he jumped several maids, and later even an aged servitor, his one time nanny. There was also a homosexual sex orgy wherein court pages were hideously abused. As the chapter ended, frisky Gilles was buggering a stable boy. Enough sex for you, dear Maurice? What a smartass!

And so it went. I had this one knocked, but bigtime.

The manuscript went off to New York by first-class mail on November 20, 1968.

But – ouchee, ouchee – it was back in my mail box by November 29. Rejected flat out.

And did he have to be so fucking prompt? Couldn't he have left me in hopeful limbo a wee bit longer?

I was definitely thrown for a loop. The walls crashed down with a thunderous roar! And so much for personal contact.

I looked over the chapters and concluded that perhaps I'd included a bit too much historical background. Or was my touch a bit too heavy in the childhood sex experimentation scenes.

But why beat about the bush?

Here, let's have it in Girodias' own words:

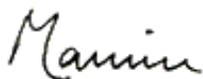
Dear Tom,

I have duly received yours of November 20 together with the Gilles de Retz manuscript and, alas, I must decline it, much to my regret.

The manuscript you submitted to us about one year ago [I have no memory whatsoever of sending a previous ms. to Olympia. I am firmly convinced he was confusing me with another writer. *Sic transit gloria mundi*, and all that rot.], because of the relative weakness of the theme, had at least a quality we never disputed insofar as writing was concerned. This new manuscript surprises me for the opposite reason: I find the style turgid, cliché-ridden and the attempted evokation (sic) of French medieval life is pretty dismal. What happened? Well, I don't know; maybe that was not your subject, but at any rate this is not our book.

Forgive me for being perhaps undiplomatic about my opinion of your work, but I prefer to be clear about my reasons in a situation like this. I am sure that you will find a publisher for the book, and please forgive me for this disappointing letter.

Best regards,



Maurice Girodias

Well, even though my pretty little feelings were hurt, I sucked it in and went on as best I could in my turgid and cliché-ridden style. I sent a reply asking if a rewrite might help. Girodias responded with a thanks, but no thanks; we were just too far apart on this one. At the same time he sent me two more books, *Barbara*, and *Forever Ecstasy*, adding, "Which will explain to you what I mean a thousand times better than all the lectures in the world."

I don't remember *Barbara* at all, but I do recall that *Forever Ecstasy* was another scorcher written by Tor Kung.

Maybe I should've changed my name.

Girodias also encouraged me to keep in touch, and to send along any ideas I might come up with. "Be assured," he wrote, "of my continued interest at all times for anything you might want to discuss with me."

That and a dollar will buy a cuppa coffee anywhere in town.

I got over it, I suppose. But I never bothered sending that outline and portion to any other editors. On February 6, 1970, the porno business definitely on hard times, I swallowed my pride and sent Girodias a portion and outline of a novel called *Ashes and Spit*.

This time there wasn't even a response from Maurice; instead his editorial assistant, Uta West, sent a polite rejection. "The tone and approach are somehow unconvincing and mechanical," she wrote.



Ashes and Spit was published by Midwood Books later that year under the title *Obedience*. It was a honey. Even if little Uta wouldn't agree.

Any lessons learned here? Not that I can think of. Perhaps humbleness? I wasn't as hot a porno writer as I thought? One shrugs such off and moves on.

Positives, anyone? At least I can honestly tell people who might be interested that I once met Girodias face to face, I chatted with him for an hour and a half. He was gracious and kind to me. For a brief time he buoyed up my hopes. What more could a beaten down old hack ask for?

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(When I informed Earl Kemp about this meeting, and the Gilles de Rais project I tried with Girodias--this a year or so ago--he told me I was lucky we didn't connect; Girodias was a stern taskmaster and – he was notorious for never paying his authors. A near escape? One will never know.)

Writing d.b.'s (dirty books) was generally considered a useful professional exercise, as well as a necessary participation in the common fight against the Square World—an act of duty.

--Maurice Girodias

Me and Maurice

Acknowledgments

By Earl Kemp

This book has been in the works for a long time, decades even. During those years, many people have contributed to its success. It would not be possible to list all of them here so I offer profound apologies ahead of time to anyone who helped with the project that I might have missed naming here. These are the people who made Me and Maurice:

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John Baxter
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Peter V. Cooper
Stanley Fleishman
Jay Garon
William L. Hamling
Jack Kahane
Brian Kirby
William Levy
Milton Luros
Greer Marechal
Henry Miller
Muffie Wainhouse
Uta West
David Zentner

Written pornography, it is finished. Finished! Visuals are coming, visuals are where it will be, that and high-toned classy books which hairdressers can hand their clientele. Softcore for the ladies, yes, but nothing for the gentlemen. Our basic audience would rather stare than read which they can hardly manage anyway. The ladies on the other hand will call it romance. It will be finished by 1972, just two years from now.

--Maurice Girodias
