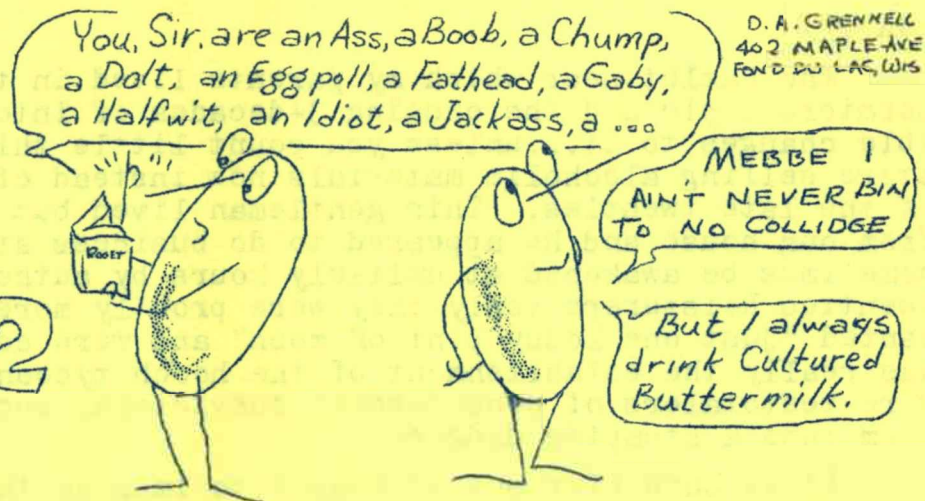


THE GOLDEN APPLE #2

February 1961
"FREE"



THE CRUST OF THE EARTH HAD PRETTY WELL COOLED BY THE TIME I WAS IN THE FIFTH GRADE.

or

Let's Update a Few Clichés, Hmm?

As I pointed out last issue, it is 1961 outdoors these days (and inside as well, most places). But there seems to be a large slice of the body politic which wotteth not of this.

All parents of teenagers, it is assumed, have very little right to pull the long face at their offspring for, Lo! in their own day they were fully as bad, indeed, much worse. Everybody knows that all they did when they were teenagers was to run helling about in Stutz Bearcats--- usually in the rumble seats thereof---dressed in coonskin coats, with long strings of beads and fringes on their dresses, swigging out of platinum-plated hipflasks at a chemical known as "Bathtub Gin," singing "Bye-Bye, Blackbird" and dancing the Charleston, watching Clara Bow movies (& not on TV, either), digging Rudolph Valentino, collecting membership cards in speakesies, etc., &c., ad nauseum.

I respectfully beg the permission to observe that I think this concept of today's teenagers' parents is rather over-alloyed with hee kow doung (a useful term in Low Cantonese dialect roughly synonymous with persiflage, or perhaps erroneous data might be closer).

I have personal, firsthand--I might even say intimate--acquaintance with the parent of at least one of today's teenagers (to say nothing of five more of tomorrow's) who has never, to my certain knowledge, danced the Charleston in the rumbleseat of a Stutz Bearcat while under the influence of bathtub gin, the whole while wearing a coonskin coat and/or long beads with fringes all over my skirt. More, I have never danced the Charleston under any circumstance whatever.

A sentence such as the above, in fact the entire preceding paragraph, constitutes an example gruesome of what can happen when you cut stencil through a pliofilm that has been used to cut too many other stencils and you can't see what you are saying.

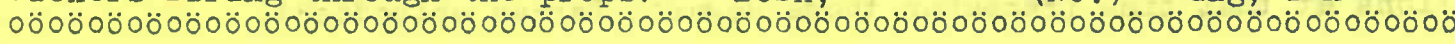
My memories of the Prohibition Era are somewhat nebulous as, I suspect, are those of many readers. My impression of the arrival of the 1929 Depression is acutely subjective, being the memory of my father saying that in the future we could no longer afford to buy the Milwaukee Journal, the Sunday comic section thereof being one of my major addictions at that time (remember those Hogarth Tarzan episodes?).

The hamlet near which my parents lived in those days was somewhat submicroscopic and the ensuing 3+decades of interim have wrought no visible changes to it...unless you count little things like the general store selling alcoholic materials now instead of the village bootlegger of the late twenties. This gentleman lived but a short way down the road from our house and he appeared to do business at all hours because we'd sometimes be awakened at unlikely hours by authentic Stutzfulls of Gay Twenties Roisterers (only they were prob'ly more like A-Model Fords) who wanted "just one lousy pint of moon" and were convinced that our place was really the establishment of the hooch tycoon. Since both my parents were teetotalers of considerable conviction, such antics used to put them into a stomping dudgeon.

It is hard (for me, at least) to imagine that I was a year younger than my oldest son is now--that is to say, 10--when they repealed the Umpteenth Amendment and ended the Noble Experiment. I remember reading an article in the newspaper at the time that carefully described the wonders of John Barleycorn to the palpitant readers; how there would be beers such as Lager, Pilsener, Dortmunder; also stouts and something called porter. But those last two never seemed to catch the public fancy. For a while the Guinness people had a branch in New Jersey which turned out minute flagons of their stout at 40 cents the 6-oz. §So much for fickle memory: I dug up one of the empties and find it was "Brewed & Bottled by Arthur Guinness Son & Co., Inc. at Long Island City, N. Y. Oh well, it was one of those places back east where they attempt to make their states seem bigger by keeping the speed limits lower.

BILL THALING, Box 352, Station D, Cleveland 27, Ohio, inquires after the comic mags mentioned last issue. So did others. Sorry, I do not have any left. Most were dumped at three for a nickel, most of the better ones were flogged off onto Juanita Coulson and Ted White and a very small but representative selection repose in my permanent files. §However--if any one wants to buy a bunch of middleaged sciencefiction mags, those I got. There's quite a few dupes of ASF from about '46 onward + dupes of many GSF, F&SF, FU, etc. §What I'd like would be for someone to drive up with a fairsize truck and a fistful cash offering a flat sum for the whole boodle, FOB Fond du Lac. §Martin Luther is said to have hated Satan with a fervor almost as keen as my own intense distaste for wrapping up parcels for mailing or shipment. §A bit of forewarning tho, pliz, so I can bulldoze the stuff into heaps. §Same for fanzines. Would prefer that the fmz go to someone who's never published one since I've never had a fan-pubber go thru my stack of unwanted fmz without he found at least one copy of his own mag with the staples still unremoved (I mean the ones used to hold it closed for mailing). The thudding silence that ensues over such a faux pas is best left to your morbid imagination. §Why go to Tucker and shell out perfectly good Jim Beam bourbon? I'd cheerfully GIVE them to anyone who'd haul them away. Bruce Pelz relieved the pressure a bit a couple years back but he hadn't room in his car for very many (another black mark for compact cars) and I wistfully waited for his return, throwing some few hundredweight of fmz into cartons labelled "Pelzines," only to desist finally for a couple of reasons: 1. I began to doubt if he'd be back and 2. I felt it was unfair to couple his name, even in my own mind, with fmz in the THURBAN I class.

"Now that I think of it, this is probably what has gone wrong with science fiction - can you name just one story where the spaceships have twin Vickers firing through the props?" --BoSh, "-" (No.) --dag, TGA



ON HAND: A Book...By Theodore Sturgeon, yclept SOME OF YOUR ^BL^O^O^O^OD.
(Ballantine N^o 458K, 35c, C.1961)

My confrère, M. Boggs, writing in his (alas, defunct) sapszine, Hurkle, produced a review of Mark Twain's Connecticut Yankee which I (a lout of notoriously peccable lit'ry tastes) would rate cheek by jowl with my other ~~piece~~ piece of literary criticism, Twain's own vivisection of James Fenimore Cooper's works. It would pay some of these faneds who like to reprint to dig this up for consideration. They could do much worse and usually do (you there, Les Gerber?). (H=favorite)

My reason for mentioning this is that I find it difficult to comment on Some of Your Blood without borrowing a few inlays from Boggs' original critique. It was his contention, as you may recall, that the protagonist/narrator of Yankee was, indeed, no yankee at all but a palpably obvious M_issourian just as Twain himself and was, ergo, probably a phantasy-image of the writer projected into the book as it was written...an occurance much more common than is generally supposed.

I have no intention of postulating that "George Smith," or Bela _____ (last name not given), is a projected image of Sturgeon. But even a cursory reading of the book will turn up enough inconsistencies to keep your eyes glazed a week.

Misunderstand me not, this is a very interesting book, in a clinical sort of way, albeit vastly revolting at the same time. If you enjoyed Lindner's The Fifty-Minute Hour, you'll like this; if you didn't you won't.

Its general narrative plan is one of those gimmicks so beloved by Campbell, the story-told-through-correspondence bit. It is saved from being the consummately dreary retchogen you might expect by a couple of things: Sturgeon, that immensely competent old pro, is never lousy in trite ways. Lousy he sometimes may be, but in such original ways and so in the grand manner that even his pediculosity partakes of an heroic stature.

In addition to, rather because of, the foregoing, a good-sized portion of the book is given over to first-person singular narrative by the analysand, himself. The entire book purports to be the contents of a psychiatrist's file-folder except for occasional interlardings of italicized comments from Sturgeon-the-writer to you-the-reader (G'wan, open th'file and read it! Nobody comin', I'll watch the door here an' you read it. G'wan! ...well, not quite that thick, but nearly).

So the FPS portion represents a vast manuscript which is the result of the psychiatrist's having told the patient to "go ahead and write up your life story; make a sort of book out of it."

One of the toughest tests of writing ability is for an intelligent person (and Sturgeon is nothing if not intelligent) to turn out a lot of pages of copy ostensibly written by a moron...and to keep it convincing. Sturgeon keeps things fairly well in hand but this only makes the occasional slip more glaring. Most of the off-tones occur in the matter of vocabulary. It's not quite ocrrect to term "Smith" a moron but he is largely innocent of formal education, except for a bit of vocational training at reform school. A person of such background might be presumed to possess a vocabulary in the 5-10,000 word range and I suspect that errs toward optimism. And yet occasional words turn up which aren't usually encountered much below the 20,000 word

level. "Macerate" pops up a couple of times (first on p.39) and I suppose it is remotely possible that a word like macerate might take root in the reform school milieu but it's so unlikely that the upcropment of it here strains at the credulity more than any of the psychopathic behavior details. §Even harder to swallow is "craze" which occurs on p.105 amid the transcript of the hypnotic regression session. The usage here is in the sense of "minute cracks on the surface or glaze of pottery," and, except for people with training in ceramics (none was stipulated for "Smith") it's a word-usage you just don't encounter below the 35,000 level or somewhere around that area.

There are others but I won't spoil your fun. You find'em and tell me. §Be it noted that this book may establish a new record for free-style typo's and sloppy proof-reading. Some of it is along the lines of "pipe wiring" on p.43 which Sturgeon probably meant as "pipe wiping," i.e., joining pipes by means of "wiping" the joints with a special solder made for the purpose. Others are pure typo's, or appear to be, such as crminal (73), careless (93), aorund (105), them (for "then, 123), want (s 128), and the altogether wonderful "opionions" on page 135. §I wonder if there is any significance in the fact that nearly all the ty-po's occur in the part written by the psychiatrists.

The main reason I seldom review books is that I rarely find one about which I can think of anything to say.

+++++
"The South Forty is the Floor of the Mpls. P.O." --Boggs
+++++

Of many fine and inspirational comments passed along via Boggs and sent here direct, I have but room for one this time and I'll pick this bit from a letter of Don A. Wollheim, (66-17 Clyde St., Forest Hills 74, N. Y.) for the sake of the esoteric yuk it may hand the cognoscenti: "Dean Grennell's Apple is cute. I wish he'd write more of those Avalon books."

In these latter days, Don, I only write under my own name in the gun magazines (and, indeed, not always there). Most of my fiction appears under my pseudonym of D. Willheim.

Postscriptures: A change in make-up makes this space available instead of being reserved for mailing address. § Members of the FATE tape club will be interested to hear that the tape is currently reposing at Fond du Lac (Boyd, uhh, I don't suppose...?). I have not yet heard it since I first have to disassemble my old Webcor and apply a spot of secret mixture (molybdenum disulfide plus castor oil) to its arthritic lower right motor bearing or else have the dulcet baritone of Harry Warner obligatoed with this raspy whining screech with which the Webcor pleads for more grease. § I expect to be under forced incommunicado until about mid-March due to an extremely heavy assignment of work and perhaps for a bit after that. Details next issue, if all goes well. § Remember: Death is Nature's way of telling us to slow down.

-- dag

caveat lector