

ROY THOMAS' GREEN-LIGHTED
COMICS FANZINE

Alter Ego

SPECIAL ISSUE!
THE MARK OF

GIL KANE



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SOME MYSTERIOUS FORCE IS
COMPELLING ME TO DRAW A
PORTRAIT OF THE MAN WHO WILL
**CONTROL MY
DESTINY!**

AND BEGINNING:
**The Life & Times of
JOHN BROOME!**

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Caricature © Marie Severin



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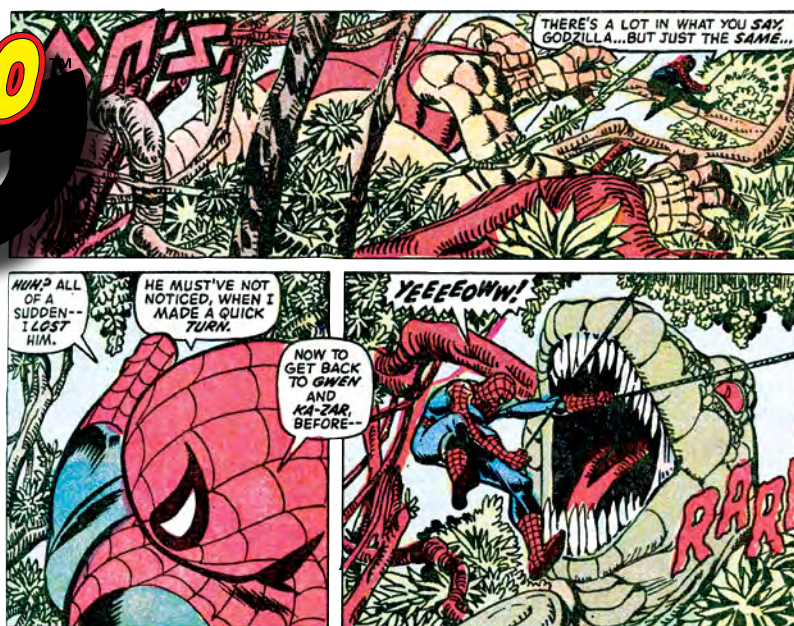
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On Our Cover: One of the coolest cover ideas that artist **Gil Kane** and editor **Julius Schwartz** ever came up with was the one for *Green Lantern* #19 (March 1963), in which a "mysterious force" compels GL to draw an image of himself being defeated by the villainous Sonar. The illustration was inked by **Murphy Anderson**. For this special issue dedicated to Gil, we substituted for the GL-vs.-Sonar image one which has always been a favorite of *Ye Editor's*: **Marie Severin's** masterful caricature of Gil done circa 1969 for the cover of *Alter Ego* [Vol. 1] #10. The result, we think, is a real winner—on which, for a change, the Silver Age *Green Lantern* is drawing Gil Kane! [Green Lantern cover art TM & © DC Comics; caricature © Marie Severin.]

Above: Equal time for Marvel—and for *Ye Ed* **Roy Thomas**, who scripted the above panels. Penciler/co-plotter **Gil Kane** (who else?) was known to say how much he enjoyed the "King Kong" takeoff the two of them did in the above-excerpted *Amazing Spider-Man* #104 (Jan. 1972) and the preceding issue. And no wonder, since it was his suggestion that the two of them do such a story while regular writer/editor Stan Lee was off scribing a screenplay with French New Wave film director Alain Resnais. Inks by **Frank Giacoia**. Thanks to Barry Pearl. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]



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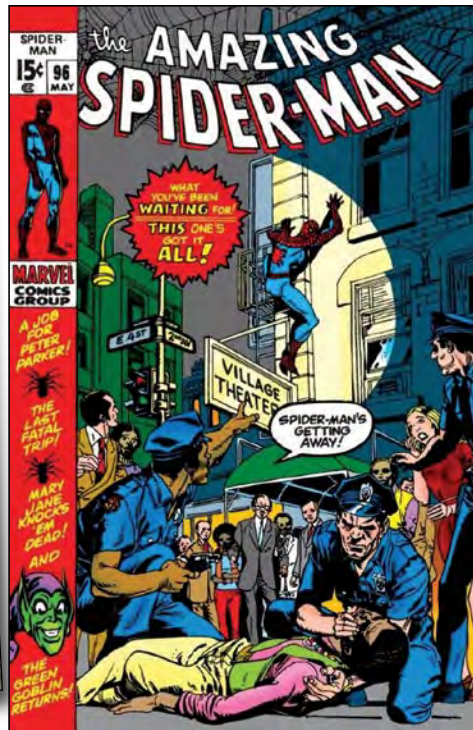
FIRST PRINTING.

This issue is dedicated to the memory of
Gil Kane, John Broome, & Richard Kyle



The Art & Times Of GIL KANE

by Daniel Herman



Left-To-Right Landmarks

Cover of *Showcase* #24 (Jan.-Feb. 1960), the third tryout issue starring the Silver Age "Green Lantern." Pencils by Kane; inks by Joe Giella. The cover of *Showcase* #22 was depicted in our previous issue. [TM & © DC Comics.]

First Kane cover for *Amazing Spider-Man*: #96 (May 1971). Pencils & inks by Kane for this first of the notorious non-Comics Code "drug issues." This and the previous cover are from the Grand Comics Database website. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]

Kane art used for the cover of a 2003 Ace paperback reprinting of the first year (1977-78) of Kane & Ron Goulart's newspaper comic strip *Star Hawks*. [TM & © United Media, USA, or successors in interest.]

If you've been watching the most recent big-screen incarnations based on the comic book heroes of DC Comics or Mighty Marvel, the ol' "House of Ideas," then, dear reader, you know how the much-maligned comic book has become the object of international renown and commerce. There have been many notable writers and artists responsible for creating the mythology which is the basis for these films. Foremost among the purveyors of the art of comic book storytelling—with a career spanning almost sixty years—was Gil Kane, the subject of this brief rumination.

Kane's work for DC and Marvel established characters and story lines that are still used by other writers and artists today. Kane's highly charged, elegant, athletic style of composition continues to be relevant and influential to today's comic book artists. Indeed, Kane's career reads like a history of the American comic book.

Kane, who was born Eli Katz in Riga, Latvia, in 1926, emigrated with his parents to the United States in 1930. He grew up in the



Gil Kane

at the 1970 New York Comic Art Convention.
Pic courtesy of Mike Zeck via Pedro Angosto.

Jewish immigrant neighborhood of Brownsville, in Brooklyn, New York. As with other artists who would eventually work in comic books, his first exposure to art and motivation to draw came from his experiencing, first hand, what is often referred to as the "Golden Age" of comic strips, which eventually laid the foundation for comic books. Every day and every Sunday, Kane read and studied such strips as *Prince Valiant*, *Tarzan*, *Flash Gordon*, *Buck Rogers*, *Dick Tracy*, *Little Orphan Annie*, *Terry and the Pirates*, and *Red Ryder*. The art and stories of these newspaper strips, combined with radio, pulp fiction, and the movies, all fired Kane's imagination and inspired him to seek out work as an artist in the fledgling comic book industry.

Kane started his career in comic books at the ripe old age of sixteen in the comic book "shops" of New York City, in 1942. His first work in the business was cleaning comic book pages penciled by other artists, and he quickly progressed to creating pages and then entire stories.



He began his career in the comic book business near the very beginning, when comic books, for the most part, were packaged by businessmen to be sold to publishers. The emphasis was on getting the product finished and ready on schedule. Formula was the rule and the turnover of artists was high. Comic books attracted unemployed artists, illustrators who could not sell their work, and aspiring youngsters such as Kane. He was in good company; many who would become the stars of the second generation of artists to work in comic books started with him. In addition to Kane, the alumni of these shops reads like a “who’s who” of artists from the Silver Age of comic books: Carmine Infantino, Joe Kubert, and Alex Toth, to name but a few.

Kane was enthusiastic about working as an artist of comic book stories and was unrelentingly persistent, traits necessary in a business that at the time was more craft than art, but which, as Kane and many others realized, had the potential to become much more. These qualities, coupled with Kane’s desire to continually develop his art, marked his career. Although his enthusiasm got him in the door, his appreciation of the history of comic book and newspaper strip illustration and storytelling, an ability to be devastatingly self-critical, and an aptitude to grow beyond his influences helped to establish him as his career progressed. In his first year in the comic book business he went from shop to shop, looking for work. He was hired and quickly fired. He was rehired and fired, but he kept pitching himself and his samples and getting more work. Finally, he was interviewed by Jack Kirby, who gave him work pencilling pages for Simon and Kirby stories at DC Comics. Kirby was building an inventory of stories for his DC assignments, as he anticipated he would be drafted to fight in the Second World War. Finally Kirby received his draft notice. Kane was given a script and assigned a “Newsboy Legion” story, which he penciled and returned, only to learn he was fired. In 1943 Kane quit high school to dedicate himself, full time, to work as an artist. A year later, he was drafted into the Army and went off to fight in the war. When he returned, he went back to work in comic books, ready to make a name for himself. During his apprenticeship as a comic book artist Eli Katz had used a number of pen names, and he finally settled on one: Gil Kane.

Kane, however, needed to hone his skill as an artist and storyteller and he used the next decade to do just that. By 1949 he had found steady work at DC Comics with editor Julius Schwartz. At that time DC had attracted, through the good judgment of DC editors like Shelly Mayer, artists who helped define methods and conventions of comic book storytelling which influenced every artist in the business. The ranks of artists at DC Comics boasted



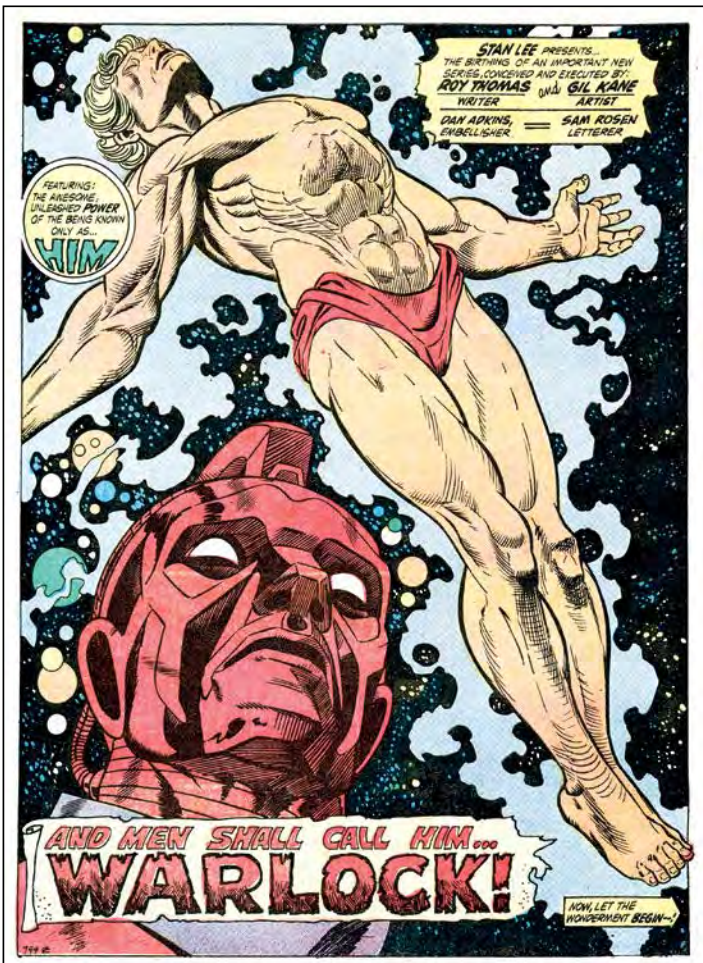
Star Spangled Banter

Eli Katz (the future Gil Kane), in the early or mid-1940s—and a Katz/Kane-drawn page from the “Newsboy Legion” adventure in *Star Spangled Comics* #35 (Aug. 1944). Scripter unknown. Thanks to Dan Herman & Elaine Kane for the photo, and to Eric Schumacher for the art scan. [SSC page TM & © DC Comics.]

the talents, among others, of Alex Toth and Dan Barry. Toth was preaching the gospel of inking, composition, and lighting scenes using strip artist Noel Sickles’ work as a prime example (Sickles’ partner and friend, Milton Caniff was also a pervasive influence on every artist picking up a pencil, brush, or pen to create a comic book story). Barry, whose pencils were clearly influenced by *Flash Gordon* strip artist Alex Raymond, also drew the attention of his fellow artists for his clean, elegant storytelling. Kane drank all of this in and continued to develop his own personal style of storytelling.

During the 1950s he worked in just about every comic book genre. Science-fiction material, romance, mystery, crime, and Westerns: Kane drew them all. It was during the late 1950s that Kane finally became identified with several of the strips he had been consistently pencilling for DC Comics: the “Johnny Thunder” strip featured in *All Star Western* and *The Adventures of Rex the Wonder Dog*.

Kane began to establish a vocabulary of stock shots for his stories that would become part of his signature style. He would acrobatically choreograph his characters as they literally glided in and out of their panels in tales of swashbucklers, cowboys, and super-heroes. He also continued to work on simplifying and refining his approach to the movement and anatomy of his characters. It was now possible to identify his stories by their look



Marvels

Two free-floating super-heroes (the first in the Negative Zone, the second in a symbolic depiction of outer space) from the Roy Thomas & Gil Kane team: *Captain Marvel* #17 (Oct. 1969) and *Marvel Premiere* #1 (April 1972) starring Adam Warlock. Inks by Dan Adkins. Thanks to Barry Pearl for the scans. The splash page of the third of their lead-feature co-creations, *Iron Fist*, was seen in *A/E* #136. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]

book fans and artists. Kane had a close working relationship with Thomas from which both men benefited. Thomas had access to one of the most talented second-generation artists at his prime. Kane defined the style of Marvel comic book covers for over seven years. In 1969-70, Kane and Thomas redesigned that company's own Captain Marvel and paid homage to the original Fawcett Captain Marvel. Kane also turned in work on "Spider-Man" stories, including the introduction of his and Thomas' vampire character Morbius (who was spun off into his own title) and penciling arguably the web-spinner's most important story of all time, "The Death of Gwen Stacy," which was scripted by Gerry Conway.

"Go West, My Boy..."

Two of Kane's hard-riding Western covers for Marvel: *Rawhide Kid* #96 (Feb. 1972), inked by Bill Everett, and *Kid Colt Outlaw* #222 (Feb. 1978), with inks by CK himself. Thanks to Nick Caputo & the GCD, respectively. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]



Bypassing The Real For The Unreal

by Gil Kane

A/E

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following article first appeared in *The Harvard Journal of Pictorial Fiction*

(April 1974), pp. 898-903. The HJPF was published in the first half of the 1970s by the Harvard University Comics Society, whose chairmen were Charles Wooley and Michael C. Young; it was, according to an online description, "dedicated to the scholarly treatment of comics as a narrative art form." By 1976 the magazine had metamorphosed under a different publisher into Crimmer's: *The Journal of the Narrative Arts*. Among pieces published in the original series were interviews with classic Tarzan artist (and art-anatomy teacher) Burne Hogarth and Mad creator Harvey Kurtzman. Circa 1973-74, comic book/graphic novel artist Gil Kane, however, elected to pen his own article for the magazine. There were a few minor false steps in the article's original publication which had to be addressed when reprinting it in *Alter Ego* (with the kind permission of Gil's widow, Elaine Kane). For one thing, probably through a proofreading error, following the editorial introduction which is reproduced beginning in column 2, the article proper as printed began with the sentence "Writing in an expansive, highly accessible style, Mr. Kane begins his exposition [etc.]," which obviously was part of the editorial intro, not Gil Kane's opening to his text. In addition, for some reason, the editors chose to print the first half or so of the article with no interior headings or divisions... then, roughly halfway through the piece, such breaks suddenly appear. We have left those as they were. In addition, there is the singleton phrase "Kurtzman's Unique Humanism" that pops up at the end of a paragraph for no discernible reason, preceding a short section on Kurtzman's work. We've assumed those three words were originally meant to be yet another interior heading, and have repositioned them as such.

These few items, however, are minor glitches compared to the intrinsic value of the article itself, which in many ways seems a follow-up to the groundbreaking interview EC fan John Benson conducted with Gil circa 1968-69 for the tenth issue of Vol. 1 of this magazine; that interview was reprinted in the 1997 trade paperback *Alter Ego: The Best of the Legendary Comics Fanzine*, which was reissued by TwoMorrows Publishing in 2008. Many of Gil's tenets are certainly worth debating—and Ye Editor, who used to argue good-naturedly with him from time to time over some of the same points, has noted his disagreements here and there in accompanying captions; but neither viewpoint should be taken as the final word on any matter, of course.

Special thanks to Barry Pearl for supplying us a copy of the text from his digital work *The Essential Marvel Reference Project: Newspaper and Magazine Articles*, to Aaron Caplan for a bit of textual help, and to Brian K. Morris for retyping it for editing for this magazine.



The Barbarian & The Prince

(Above right:) Kane's cover for the April 1974 edition of the *Harvard Journal of Pictorial Fiction* was a Kane-inked version of a figure he had penciled for the "Conan the Barbarian" tale in *Savage Tales* #4 (May '74); the two magazines would've gone on sale around the same time. The Marvel version was inked by Neal Adams & "Diverse Hands," with gray tones by Pablo Marcos. Since the *Journal* printing contained only a handful of illustrations, we've selected our own... and rather more of them. [© Estate of Gil Kane.]

(Above left:) Gil Kane (on our left) interviews Harold R. Foster, noted creator/illustrator of the King Features Syndicate Sunday strip *Prince Valiant*, at a luncheon held at Phil Seuling's New York Comic Art Convention over the July 4th weekend in 1970. Thanks to the formerly named Golden Age Comic Book Stories website. This photo originally appeared in the con's 1971 program book.



ORIGINAL INTRODUCTION FROM THE HARVARD JOURNAL OF PICTORIAL FICTION (April 1974):

Our distinguished guest author is one of the most respected and articulate artists in comics. Winner of the National Cartoonists Society Award for Best Comic Book Artist in 1972 and 1973 and an ACBAS [sic] special award for his book *Blackmark*, Mr. Kane was a visiting lecturer at New York University in 1973. Among his most acclaimed work are Johnny Thunder, Green Lantern, The Atom, His Name Is Savage, Spider-Man, and of course *Blackmark*. Writing in an expansive, highly accessible style, Mr. Kane begins his exposition with a consideration of film's relationship to comics as its narrative "big brother." The differences between the two art forms suggest that the unique nature of comics—a combination of visual storytelling and literary technique—is perfectly suited for fantasy material. [A/E EDITOR'S NOTE: All italicized paragraphs, as opposed to individual words, in the following article are the addition of the editors at HJPC, inserted into Gil Kane's text from time to time. We've chosen to set those italicized comments apart from the main text above and below it, for reasons of clarity.]

There can never be a direct, categorical comparison between film and comics as art forms; rather, the techniques of storytelling are mostly analogous. In film, there is the terrific difference of using real people and real props and places—there is not the barrier between the audience's credibility and the story. The one thing you can create in film is a feeling of actual participation, and in comics this is rarely felt. You often have the sense that you are a spectator some distance behind the action in comics—there is not the immediacy, the people rising out of their seats when watching an intense moment. A further reason this does not happen in a comic strip is, I feel, that comics depend too much on film technique and not enough on its own devices in order to make its dramatic points.

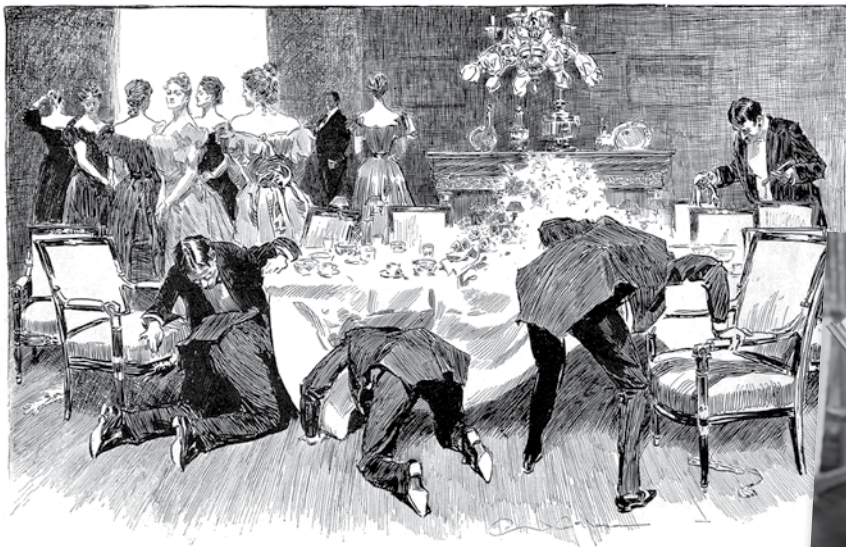
There were comics before film, and the whole illustrative technique that you see in *Little Nemo* or Charles Dana Gibson is an entirely different approach to storytelling. In film, the artist has certain advantages that in no way translate into the medium of comics; a character will say something and there is an immediate facial reaction, for instance. There is no way to record that type of acting subtlety unless you utilize literary techniques. And I don't think there are many comic purists who would have comics imitate film so closely that it becomes a series of pantomimes, where the artist would take 3000 pages to tell a 27-word story. It would break down the rhythm unnaturally so that it takes years for the simplest action to be described. At the same time, comics has something

that film does not, that film has never been able to interpolate properly—literary technique. A film seems unnatural when it is an intrusion. The director has to constantly show things happening in film; he doesn't in comics. Literary technique allows the comic artist to compress time, to compress staging, and, moreover, to create with words a picture more vivid than if you had seen it on film. That is why they are replaying the old radio dramas, because the power of one's own imagination is more effective than any artistic incarnation. Films, by incarnating the fictional scene completely, remove the imagination from the process.

After an introductory warning that direct comparison of comics to film is limited, the author explains their common ground, their common attitude towards reality.

Reality is an interpretation. I have never seen reality on a movie screen; I have seen dramatically constructed situations. The strength of film or comics storytelling does not come from an ability to portray reality but rather from the expressive effects quite removed from "reality." There is no way to present life as it really is—you are presenting a theatrical synthesis which creates an expressive viewpoint from which the audience draws its own meaning.

Clarity of meaning is absolutely the most important thing in films, comics, or literature. As important as it is to be judicious using the artistic effects—you can slop an effect, you can overdo an effect—into a statement. Simply to dispense with sound or background music or anything else that dramatizes a situation, helps carry it, is pointless. For example, at one time I didn't like sound effects in comics, as a purist. I now think that, as Harvey Kurtzman used them, sound effects are fantastic, they are a part of the picture, brilliant in design, and they created in Harvey's work a strident quality, a sense of violence.



THEY ARE ONLY COLLECTING THE USUAL FANS AND GLOVES

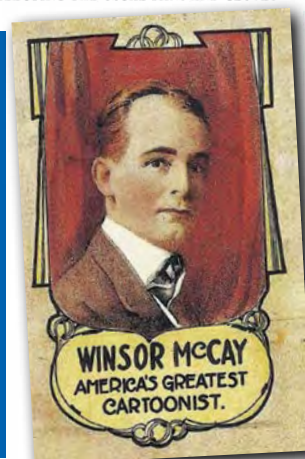


Charles Dana Gibson

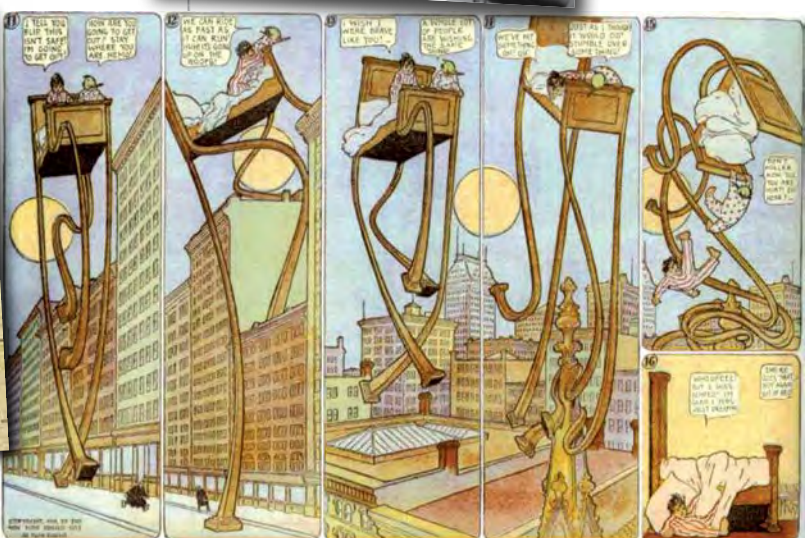
"Illustrative Technique"

(Above:) Many of Charles Dana Gibson's influential illustrations of the late 19th and early 20th centuries told a story, though he never drew an actual comic strip.

(Right:) Winsor McCay's Sunday feature *Little Nemo in Slumberland* is considered one of the best-drawn and most imaginative comic strips of all time. The installment from which these six panels are taken was published on July 26, 1908. [© the respective copyright holders.]



Winsor McCay





Vista Visions

Mounted heroes survey grand vistas, as visualized by Hal Foster in *Prince Valiant* above and by Jack Kirby below right in *Thor* #134 (Nov. 1966); script for latter by Stan Lee. Kane considered Kirby a "natural," and Foster a "non-natural." We'll leave that to him to explain. [TM & © King Features Syndicate, Inc., & Marvel Characters, Inc., respectively.]

and Frazetta, all of whom I admire tremendously, taken as four of the most singular artists, are four incarnations of "the creative personality."

For some reason or another, this business does not produce intellectuals among the artists. Ideas do not come from natural artists; ideas come from people who are not naturals, but from people who must consciously develop their skills. They are frustrated by their lack of facility and are forced to find alternatives to a situation. Toth has rarely had to examine an alternative to the way he draws because he is successful artistically so often with his first attempt. He has always had acceptance from the editor, acceptance from the publisher, a high level acceptance from all the professionals in the field. It works in everyday society, too; with that kind of acceptance, one never is forced to question what one does.

Deliberate Structure Versus Visceral, Imagistic Creation

Alternatives come from people like Hal Foster. Hal Foster is not a natural; Frazetta is. Caniff is not a natural; Noel Sickles is. These non-natural people are forced to integrate, to invent, to compensate. "When the imagination fails, the will perseveres." What some artists do naturally, others cannot and are forced to structure it intellectually. Foster is a very intelligent man applying a feeling for the material. His conquest is purely cerebral; his triumph is that of will and intelligence over (a lack of) natural facility. Men like Raymond, Frazetta, Kirby are all naturals; they keep rolling along on their tremendous figs [sic]. [A/E EDITOR'S NOTE: *I have no idea what word "figs" is a typo for. "Fights"? "Figures"?*]

Hal Foster has an understanding of writing and narrative that few others have, and it is largely because this is something that comes by deliberate choice and structure. Someone like Kirby, being a natural, has all this enormous play of attitude, feeling, and response constantly dancing before him. He creates and communicates vivid impressions which are often uncontrolled, then confused and redundant. While he is always quick to see the possibilities in a certain idea or situation, he is sometimes unable to develop them fully, effectively, as Foster was able to do. Their natural talents, their personalities bring forth the characteristics of their work.

Handwriting is used as a basis for analysis, as an insight into the personality. These are the personality's own scribbblings. The whole experience of one's life, ultimately, forms the quality of the writing: And if that is true—as I believe it is—with simple handwriting, what must be the fully drawn symbols of fantasy and strength, potency and impotence which cartoonists throw around all the time.

Explosiveness And Repression

Along these lines, the one thing you can see in Jack's work is an angry, repressed personality. First there is the extreme explosiveness of his work—not merely explosive, but I mean there is a real nuclear situation on every page. Then there is his costuming: on every one of Kirby's costumes there are belts and straps and restraints, leather buckles everywhere. There are times when he takes Odin and puts composition of symmetry and restrained power. His women are sort of sexually neutral. I don't think Jack is very interested in drawing women, but give him a fist or a rock or a machine. If his women have any quality at all, it is a slightly maternal one.

You certainly can't compare them to Frazetta's. Frazetta draws, putting a real carnal quality into the figure and then giving it a child's face. For some reason, Frazetta is not able to define the male faces; the heads are the least finished, the least characterized. Again,





I feel he has less concern with the individual characterization than with the overall effect.

Erotic And Masculine Qualities

[Frazetta's] male figures are every bit as sensual as his females. By degrees, his men have become thicker, heavier—they are like blacksmiths. There is a meatiness, a haunch quality to his male figures, more and more. There are veins standing out on the arms, and you feel that they are so flushed with blood and packed with muscle that they must be pure appetite. And the women figures are so soft, so yielding and vulnerable with their childlike faces and gross bodies. He repeats those same attributes over and over; it's really the most erotic material, the figures loaded with erotic innuendo and sultriness.

By contrast, Hal Foster is the least erotic of all the heroic artists. There is a sparseness in his material—even his women are pristine. Originally, they were like any blonde from the early movies, pure and innocent. Even when he focused in on Aleta, Foster couldn't really draw a pretty girl. Her face was vapid, and the one characteristic she might have projected was an occasional "perkiness." He never had a feeling for women that was as sensible as his feeling for men.

Foster's men had a real masculinity. Even with the pageboy hair, Prince Valiant's masculinity is so clear in his face and in his authoritative actions. The unique thing about Foster is his reactions. Most artists create a situation around what is happening to the main figure in the drawing. Not Foster: he will have a figure in a central action and then figures reacting on an individual basis to that action. The result is a feeling of life and responsiveness; not merely an illustration but a dramatization, full of clearly set situations



Cherchez Les Femmes!

In his 1974 text, Gil compares and contrasts the women drawn by Kirby, Frazetta, and Foster. Submitted for your clockwise consideration:

Kirby's splash page for *Thor* #137 (Jan. 1967), featuring only the second page to showcase the warrior-goddess Sif. Script by Stan Lee; inks by Vince Colletta. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]

Frazetta's cover art for the 1960s Ace paperback reprinting of Edgar Rice Burroughs' *The Lost Continent*. [© the respective copyright holders.]

Aleta as wife, mother, and relatively sexless vamp, in a panel from Hal Foster's *Prince Valiant*. Precise date unknown. [TM & © King Features Syndicate, Inc.]



"An Old Ballet Dancer Like Me..."

The Legendary GIL KANE On His Own Art—And Others'

1986 Interview Conducted by Steve Whitaker

AIE

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION:

"This interview was conducted by Steve Whitaker at 1986's UK Comic Art

Convention on the Sunday afternoon, with Dave Proctor, Dale Cole, and numerous devotees sitting in." The foregoing was the only preface attached to the following lively conversation with artist Gil Kane when it was first printed in the British fanzine *Fantasy Advertiser*, not long after the actual event. We've followed the main text just as Whitaker transcribed and edited it... except that we've altered the punctuation (and Americanized the spelling) in places, since both punctuation and spelling are, naturally, an arbitrary feature in a transcription of a taped or digitally recorded interview. Our special thanks to Steve's brother, Richard Whitaker, for permission to reprint this insightful talk ...and to Steve Tice for retyping it.

Oh, and a P.S.: As one who collaborated and/or socialized with Gil for more than two decades between 1969 and 1991, first in New York City, later in Los Angeles, and who regularly spoke with him by phone till very shortly before his death in January 2000, I find it difficult if not impossible to believe that he actually used the word "whilst" in the several instances where it appeared in the interview as printed; so I changed that word to the more American-vernacular (and thus far more likely) "while." The meaning of the text, of course, is in no way affected by these slight changes. Perhaps the most astonishing thing about the interview is that at no point in the proceedings did Gil ever refer to Steve Whitaker as "My boy"... or, if he did, Steve chose to edit the phrase out of the printed version....

STEVE WHITAKER: Gil, I've always wanted to ask someone from DC about the big dispute that happened around 1965, where suddenly a lot of people disappeared from *National Periodicals*.

GIL KANE: They were cleaning house; it wasn't a dispute. Some people went onto pension very early. I remember one of the writer/editors, George... er... his brother became treasurer of the company....

DAVE PROCTOR: *George Kashdan?*

KANE: Kashdan! Of course—he was one of the prominent guys who was forced into retirement. I mean, he was fired, so he



Just Between Friends...

Gil Kane's self-portrait and montage of the most prominent comics heroes he'd been associated with up to that time was drawn as a surprise gift for his collaborator (and de facto editor) Roy Thomas in 1970. It was utilized as the flip cover of *Alter Ego*, Vol. 2, #2, which was published as part of *Comic Book Artist* #2 (Summer 1999)... and colored by Tom Ziuko. [Batman, Atom, Johnny Thunder, & Green Lantern TM & © DC Comics; Captain America, Hulk, Spider-Man, Captain Marvel, & Rick Jones TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.; The Shield TM & © Archie Comic Publications, Inc.; Blackmark & Savage TM & © Estate of Gil Kane. or successors in interest.]

immediately took advantage of the fact that he'd built up 15 or 20 years and began to collect his pension. Now, what happened back then was that Carmine Infantino came in as art director, then editor, then publisher and editor... for a while he was even president (of

My Life In Little Pieces

Beginning: An "Offbeat Autbio" By
Golden/Silver Age Writer JOHN BROOME

AIE

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION:

The importance of writer John Broome to the Silver Age of Comics can scarcely be overestimated. He belongs to a small pantheon that includes Julius Schwartz, Robert Kanigher, Carmine Infantino, Gil Kane, Gardner Fox, Joe Kubert, Stan Lee, Jack Kirby, Steve Ditko, Larry Lieber, Joe Simon (re The Fly), and perhaps one or two others. Broome's decade-plus scripting of DC's reconstituted Flash and Green Lantern series (scribing the second "Flash" story in 1956's Showcase #4 and co-originating the Hal Jordan "GL" in 1959) capped his fine work for editor Schwartz's two science-fiction comics, Strange Adventures and Mystery in Space, particularly his co-creation of "The Guardians of the Clockwork Universe" in the former's "Captain Comet" series. Nor should one ignore his contribution to latter-Golden-Age DC Comics, particularly his authoring more "Justice Society of America" scripts than anyone save co-creator Fox, commencing with the masterful All-Star Comics #35 (1947) and including all issues from #39 through that title's end in 1951's #57.

So when it became known that, at the turn of 1998—only a little more than a year before he died, and the same year in which he would make his one and only appearance at a comics convention—John Broome had published a small volume of memoirs, researchers of heroic-comics history were naturally eager to read it. In 2017 I was finally able to do so, with the help of Paul Trimble, whose account of a 2006 lunch in Paris with John's widow, Peggy Broome, was printed in Alter Ego #142. Soon afterward, again with the aid of others, I was fortunate enough to establish contact with their daughter, Ricky Terry, who like her mother still lives in the City of Lights, which had long since become the Broome family's second home. Ricky generously loaned me her own copy of her father's book, *My Life in Little Pieces: An "Offbeat Autbio,"* gave me permission to reprint it in Alter Ego, and also kindly sent me several family photos, which will see print in this and future installments.

My Life was printed in Tokyo, by publisher Meisou Shuppan, since Japan had become a third home to John. The memoir—it would be a bit of a stretch to term it a true "autobiography," nor was it intended as such—is a limited edition clearly meant for family and friends. Regrettably from a comics historian's point of view, it contains no direct references at all to the comic books, comic strips, or science-fiction pulp stories he'd written over the years. Rather, it's a non-linear amalgamation of anecdotes, reflections, and observations—but these are valuable in their own way, taking us inside the mind of one of the major comic book writers of the middle third



Memories Are Made Of This

(Left to right:) The cover of John Broome's 1998 memoir *My Life in Little Pieces*, featuring a drawing by the writer... JB's inscription to his daughter Ricky and her husband Dominique, upon the book's publication... and a photo of the Broome family over Christmas 1956: John, Peggy, and Ricky. With thanks to Ricky Terry. [Book cover © Estate of John Broome.]

To Rick-dick (and
Dominique too) from
her ever-loving

Dad

Jan 1998



of the 20th century. John (whom I had the pleasure to meet and talk with for a little while at the '98 San Diego Comic-Con) does offer fleeting word portraits of a bare handful of his comics contemporaries: Flash and Green Lantern editor Julius Schwartz and fellow scripters David Vern Reed and France "Ed" Herron.

Because his memoir offers few hard facts of John Broome's life, perhaps it will prove useful to present same up front, as an ongoing point of reference to a life that was lived out on several different continents:

Irving Bernard (John) Broome was born into a Jewish family on May 4, 1913. A fan of science-fiction from an early age, he began writing for American comic books in 1936 and for SF pulps in the 1940s. His representative for much of his post-World War II prose fiction work was his National/DC Comics editor, Julius Schwartz, who'd been an SF literary agent since the 1930s and kept his hand in that field even while on staff in the House That Superman Built. John got married in the late 1930s. In the early 1960s he and wife Peggy began spending much of their time in Paris. By 1966 they had moved there, after which his comic scripting greatly decreased; his last comics stories appeared in 1970. He continued to travel widely, eventually becoming an English teacher in Japan. He died on March 14, 1999, in Chiang Mai, Thailand, while swimming in a hotel pool on vacation with his wife. He was 85 years old.

And now, it's time to meet John Broome through his own words, as retyped for us by Brian K. Morris. The writer commences *My Life* in



Flash Of Two Artists

(Left:) John's editor, agent, and friend Julius Schwartz (on left) with Peggy & John Broome on an outing which one photo in daughter Ricky's possession suggests was taken in Gaylordsville, Connecticut, on Sept. 28, 1946. This snapshot was first supplied to A/E's editor years ago by Schwartz and previously appeared with other pics of the Broomes with Julie and his future wife in issue #38, the Julius Schwartz memorial issue... although Julie gave the date as July 6.

(Center & right:) According to the Grand Comics Database, John Broome's first script for National/DC saw print in *All-Flash* #22 (April-May 1946), with art by Martin Naydel and story-editing by Julius Schwartz, under editor Sheldon Mayer. Three decades later, DC had that tale redrawn by artist Edgar Bercasio (using Broome's original script) for *Four Star Spectacular* #1 (March-April 1976). The 1946 scan may be from microfiche; thanks to Jim Kealy for both. [TM & © DC Comics.]

Little Pieces with quotations from well-wishing friends, followed by an anecdote starring "Vern" (the aforementioned David V. Reed)... a short poem... and then we're into the first of Broome's many incident-laden essays. Stick along for the ride, which will be continued in most future issues of A/E until the book has been completely reprinted. You'll meet a man whom, I suspect, most of us would have enjoyed knowing better in person... although, for my own part, I'm simply glad I got to meet him, just once in my life....

Part I: Acknowledgements:

Some few friends who read parts of the text, or listened to the cassette, reacted in encouraging ways that helped keep me going. Here they are...

"...all told in Mr. Broome's uniquely personal style.

Hugh Wilkinson

"The piece entitled 'Oofy-Goofy' is absolutely a masterpiece."

Ken Woodrooffe

"I envy you your memories and your ability to write them down."

Kathryn (Kitti) Weissberger

Vern

Vern had the world by the tail. Maybe still has. He was one of the first pot smokers in the U.S. and today fifty years later he still smokes, unfiltered Camel cigarettes and pot (but won't touch acid or hard stuff).

Built like a smooth-limbed truck driver,



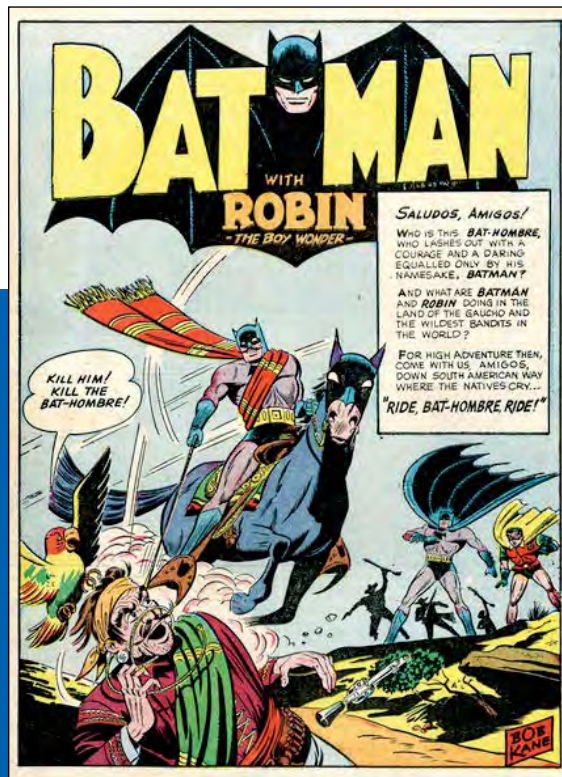
David Vern Reed

Vern, Baby, Vern!

(Left corner:) David Vern Reed—whom John invariably refers to in his memoir as "Vern"—in a detail from a group photo taken at a 1947 DC Christmas party. That pic originally belonged to Julius Schwartz, and this detail was kindly supplied to us by pro letterer Todd Klein; thanks also to Will Murray. Todd writes that Vern is seen quite small in the original photo, but that "former DC editor Jack C. Harris said it does

look like the man he worked with in the 1970s when Vern came back to write for DC. Harris said he was kind of scary, and reminded him of a mobster."

(Above:) The GCD records Reed's first script for DC as being the colorful "Ride, Bat-Hombre, Ride!" in *Batman* #56 (Dec. 1949-Jan. 1950). Pencils by Dick Sprang; inks by Charles Paris. Thanks to Jim Kealy. [TM & © DC Comics.]





PETE A. MORISI CREATED PETER CANNON . . . THUNDERBOLT WHILE WORKING FOR CHARLTON IN 1965. PAM (AS HE WAS KNOWN) ALSO CAME UP WITH A SNAZZY TWO-TONED COSTUME REMINISCENT OF A CERTAIN GOLDEN AGE HERO. AND NO WONDER! PETE HAPPILY ADMITTED BEING INSPIRED BY THE COOL HALF-AND-HALF COSTUME SPORTED BY THE 1940S DAREDEVIL -- CREATED BY JACK BINDER AND REFINED BY JACK COLE AND CHARLES BIRO. AND WHY?

BECAUSE PETE MORISI, RESPECTED COMICS PRO, WAS ALSO PETE MORISI, DEVOTED COMICS FAN! HOW BIG A FAN? YOU'LL FIND OUT AS WE ONCE AGAIN DELVE INTO PAM'S LETTERS TO HIS FRIEND, GLEN D. JOHNSON, IN . . .

The PAM Papers (Part 2)



Pete Morisi's cover to Peter Cannon... Thunderbolt, V3 #52 (June 1966).
[TM & © Estate of Pete Morisi.]



Charles Biro's gruesome Daredevil #6 (Dec. 1941). [© the respective copyright holders; Daredevil is now a TM of Marvel Characters, Inc.]

The PAM Papers (Part 2)

by Michael T. Gilbert

Last issue we published a sampling of correspondence between veteran comic book creator Pete Morisi and his pen-pal, Glen D. Johnson. We have more letters for you this time around, edited for clarity.

Glen, a retired teacher, is also a long-time fan and a former editor of the venerable fanzine *The Comic Reader*. I recently wrote to Glen requesting info on how he met PAM. He replied in a letter dated 2/17/17:

"While [I was] teaching on the Navajo Reservation in New Mexico in 1964, Ronn Foss visited me. He showed me an issue of a *Charlton Lash LaRue* and asked if I knew the artist. One quick look and I told him it was George Tuska. 'Wrong!' was Ronn's answer. 'It's Pete Morisi.' Ronn showed me where it was signed 'PAM.' I later found out that an editor told Pete he needed a more stylized look for his artwork. At the time, he was sharing an art studio with George Tuska and other artists. Pete asked George if he would mind if he drew in George's style, and of course George said it was all right with him. Pete said many times when he met with a group of artists he would yell across the room to George Tuska, 'Hey George, you still stealing my stuff?'

"I started corresponding with Peter in 1964 on a regular basis until his death. I visited him in New York City on three different occasions; the last time was in 1993.

"Pete always looked forward to retiring so he would have more time to spend on his artwork. With his job as a cop, he was always rushed. However, once he retired he never found very much work. Pete was very stubborn. He didn't want to do art unless he could pencil and ink. He could have found lots of work at DC if he was willing to pencil or ink, but not both."

Pete, who passed away in 2003, enjoyed discussing his profession. It's fascinating to hear his thoughts on the comic book scene of the '60s on, as well as on his fellow cartoonists and Charlton editors. PAM was also a hardcore comic art enthusiast, and his informal, chatty letters are similar to the gossipy emails I share with my own cartoonist pals. Let's start off with a bit of comic history, courtesy of PAM!



Separated At Birth?

(Above:) Pete Morisi's art was often mistaken for George Tuska's. Here's a Tuska page from *Crime and Punishment* #64 (Nov. 1953).

(Below:) And here's a Pete Morisi crime page from *Comic Media's Dynamite* #2 (July 1953). Kinda similar to Tuska, no? Both scripts unknown. [© the respective copyright holders.]



Lashing Out!

(Left:) A Pete Morisi panel from Charlton's *Lash LaRue* #82 (Feb. 1961). Scripter unknown. [© the respective copyright holders.]



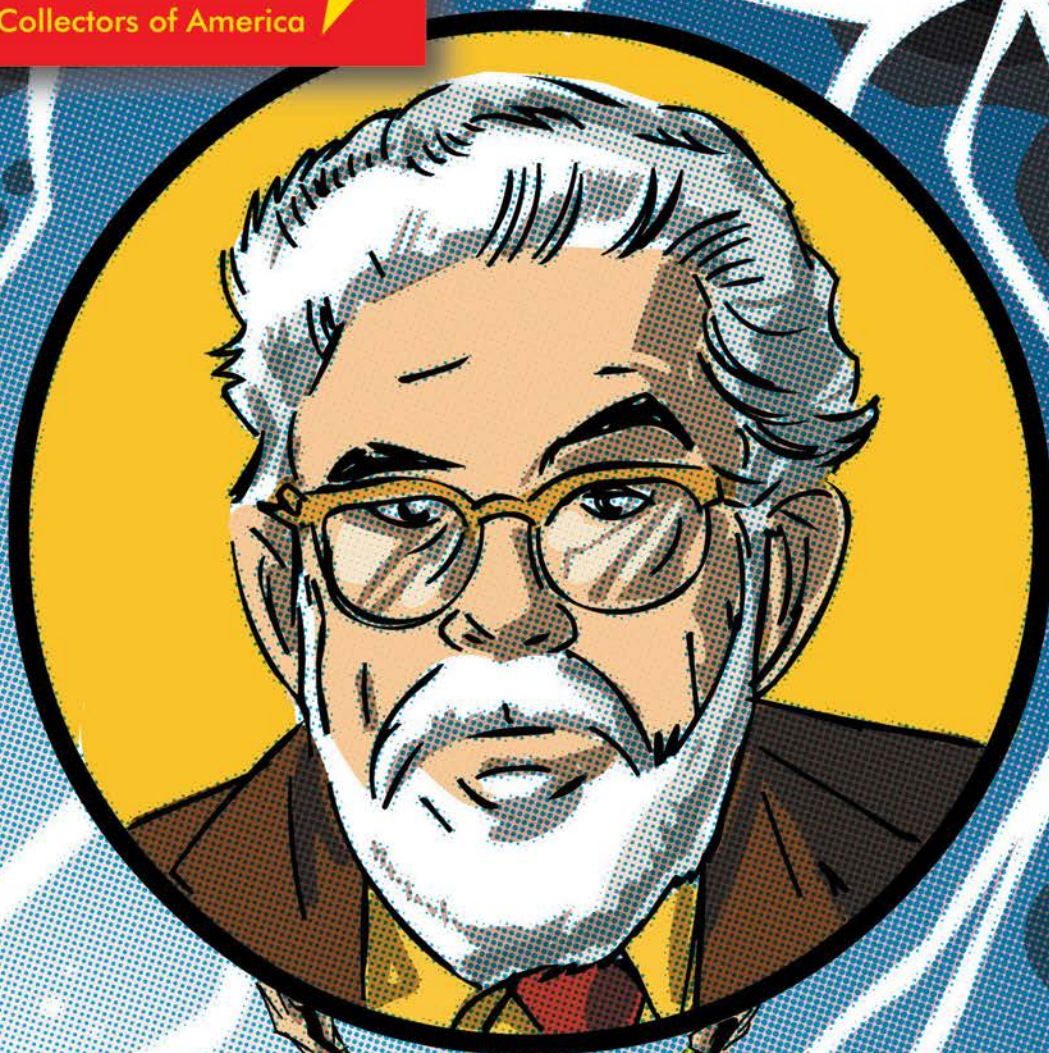
Glen Johnson
in 1964. Courtesy of
Bill Schelly.

P.C. HAMERLINCK'S

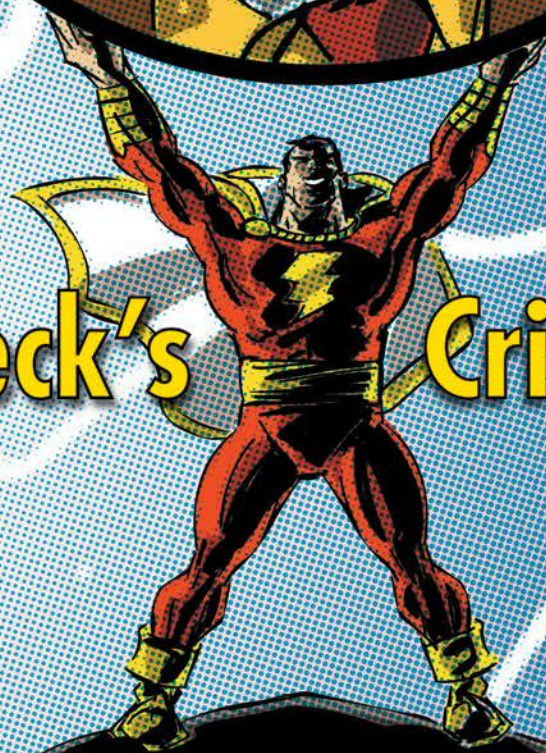
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#208
Nov 2017



C.C. Beck's Critical Circle



Art by Jay Piacopio
Shazam hero TM & © DC Comics.



"A Fabric Of Illusion"

C.C. Beck's Critical Circle & His Theory Of Comic Art

by Brian Cremins

AUTHOR'S NOTE: I presented a version of this essay, which is based in part on the introduction and first chapter of my book *Captain Marvel and the Art of Nostalgia* (University Press of Mississippi, 2016) at "Canon Fodder! A Cartoon Crossroads Columbus Scholarly Symposium" at the Ohio State University on October 14, 2016. I'd like to thank Trina Robbins and Paul Hamerlinck for generously sharing their memories of the Critical Circle as well as copies of these letters and essays. I'd also like to thank Jared Gardner at Ohio State for giving me the opportunity to present this material last fall, and FCA reader (and fellow teacher) Joe Musich for his kind and encouraging feedback on my work.

As all faithful FCA readers know, Paul has published some of the Critical Circle articles in these pages over the last couple of decades. What a pleasure that, as readers, we get to experience the insights of this small group of friends who shared ideas on politics, life, and comics three decades ago. Given the world that we now live in, we could learn a lot from the curiosity, kindness, and optimism of Beck and his Circle....

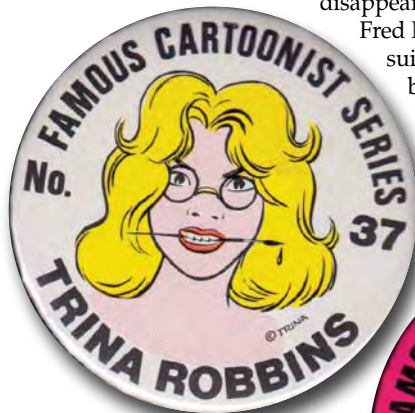
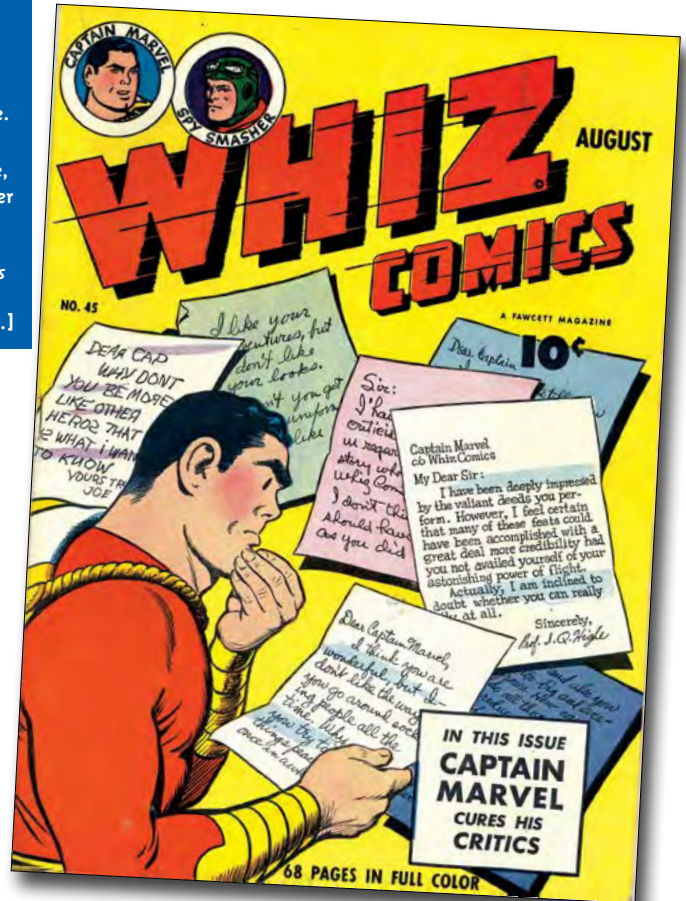
I'm sure you know this story. It's an old one, courtesy of Bill Parker and C.C. Beck: Billy Batson, a homeless young man who sells newspapers to survive, meets an old wizard in the shadows of a strange subway tunnel. The old man offers Billy a gift: a magic word that will grant him great power and restore a life stolen from him by his heartless uncle. The boy says "Shazam!," the old man disappears, and Captain Marvel—

Fred MacMurray in a bright red suit with a yellow lightning bolt across his chest—soon confronts and defeats a mad scientist named Dr. Thaddeus Bodog Sivana. In a 1974 interview, over three

Everybody's A Critic!

(Left:) The old wizard himself, C.C. Beck, snapped in 1977 at his Lake Wales, Florida, home. [© Charlie Roberts.]

(Right:) Back in the Golden Age, artist Beck and writer Otto Binder had Captain Marvel contemplating comments from "His Carping Critics" in *Whiz Comics* #45 (Aug. '43). Cover by Beck. [Shazam hero TM & © DC Comics.]



"We're Looking For People Who Like To Draw!"

C.C. Beck and Trina Robbins were both immortalized in the Famous Cartoonist button set from 1975. Art by Beck & Robbins, respectively. [Art © the respective artists.]

decades after our favorite hero's 1940 debut, Bruce Hamilton asked Beck to provide fans with "a capsule autobiography" for a collection of Golden Age Captain Marvel comics. Writing in the third person, Beck stressed that he "was never an editor or an idea man. He is an illustrator. Give him a set of blueprints of a building you have in mind and he'll make you a fine 'artist's rendering' of what it will look like when finished" (qtd. in Hamilton). Despite his insistence that, as a trained artist who had studied at the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts in the late 1920s, he served merely as "[a]n extension of the writer" (qtd. in Eisner 73), Beck was a prolific critic who wrote extensively about the theory and practice of comic book art until his death at the age of 79 on November 22, 1989.

Although he ceased working as a cartoonist in the early 1970s after a stroke affected his vision (letter to Robbins, August 25, 1989), Beck remained active in comics fandom in the U.S. and proved himself to be more of "an idea man" than he cared to admit. In the last two years of his life, he created and corresponded extensively with what he called the Critical Circle, a group of fans and fellow comic book professionals with whom he shared his unpublished essays, some of which eventually appeared

Edited by P.C. Hamerlinck

Another of the earliest Miller-Fawcett books is *Master Comics* #49 (April '44). This date, from its US counterpart, was in all probability the first British issue of *Master*, also from 1944. The only story is Otto Binder's "The Ghost Projector," wherein Captain Marvel Jr. faces off with Dr. Sivana. The 10¢ price box on the U.S. original has morphed into the L. Miller brand logo. The relative lack of pages (16 pages in the British edition) has also necessitated the storyline cover blurb to be reduced to just one hero from the lineup of five other strips from the U.S. version. The distinct lack of color on Mac Raboy's cover is just the way it was issued, but does lend itself to a little piece of period charm. There is no price on the cover, as many of these comics were sold for whatever the seller could get for them! Similarly, since they were undated, they were never defined as being a "current issue" of a periodical.