The Riders At The Gate

BY BOB CRAFT
They are here. The pedantic gnomes rise from their rusty tombs to mischievously attack the ballet. The silver bullets of their shoes are brightly shining, their severe faces are set with that dangerous look common to those who have God's work to do.

Those second-rate men and superior barbarians have eyes as keen as they shine their blunderbusses preparatory for their attack on civilized men. In the old night in which they live they find solace for their limited thinking and their war cry splits the blackness. "All men shall know our beloved Darkness!"

And so, after a brief interval of prayer, they mount their blundered horses, wish each other the best of good fortune and depart on their ways.

The fly down the roads of Ignorance and Repression, their horses' hooves sparkling fire against the cobblestones. They stop only at a public gibet to relax the sight of the rotting bodies of past victims; Henry Miller, D.H. Lawrence, D.A.F. Saks. They laugh and as the night is cold they warm themselves from flaps of hot Dr. Pepper.

They continue onward, raising their horses for a moment in reverence at the imposing sight of the keep of the Arch Duke of Comstock.

They ride onward at the gallop and approach the Gates of the Lands of Censorship. They shout, "Ho, the gatemarks! We have come to do the bidding of our Council and of our God."

And so, they go without the gates and curse the sun for its light for they are not, in truth, used to light. They put on their disguises, so they will not be seen for the miserable tools that they are. Some put on the aspect of Supreme Court Justices, some don the robes of judges of state courts and still others must be satisfied with the garb of small-time cops, sheriffs and District Attorneys.

These villains check to see that their bodies are unrecognizable and their statures are in order. They check their lists of victims and there is a little quarreling over who will dispatch who.

This is settled and they depart severally to attack, not too little by little, but in the night like the crows tonight that they are, hiding behind the badge and the gun.

They make sure when they ford the rivers coming onto the country of Thought that their flint and tinder are kept dry, for there are books to burn, films to play.

And so they come among us, garbed not as we, nor garbed as Officials of the State, bedecked in Imperial Purple so that the outcry may be less from the people.

Even now, the first casualties are being reported, in Georgia, that state most susceptible to heathens and Goths, one of these blackguards has drawn first blood, declaring that the film, CANALINE, is obscene.

The ignorant that ruled this has either never seen the film or has not the wills about him to know what the film is about. The film explores one man's degradation through an examination of his sexual relationships.

It looks into the reasons why this man becomes what he is revealed as in the last scene. He has degenerated from dominating, blustering bully of women to a character from Genet's THE BALCONY. It is a sensitive film and a film that has something to say. It should never have fallen into the hands of the moronic Georgia court system.

Oh, but isn't it easy to see? The seized print being run in the back room of a jail in a hick Georgia town on Saturday night, the imbecile sheriff and his rotated dupes drinking cheap boozie and peddling the beliefs of 17-year-old girls run in on a hitch-hiking charge, getting thrills out of a slight glimpse of Ann-Margret's breasts and butt cheeks as they act out the very scene that they watch.

Except for a slight challenge from Southern California in recent years, Georgia has always been the most backward, ignorant and barbarous state in the Union and so perhaps some excuse can be offered. For after all, they are only being consistent. But the blackness, "All men shall know our beloved Darkness!"

Another dajger has found a mark. It comes doubly hard for it is from my homeland, Virginia. This news comes not from Lee County or any of those close down to Kentuck in the panhandle, it comes from Albemarle County, Indeed, in the shadow of Monticello and that of Mr. Jefferson himself.

Behold: Albemarle County Commonwealth's Attorney Charles Haugh and Albemarle County Sheriff George Bailey have declared that Francois Gay's THE NAKED MAJ is obscene and that it will no longer be "legal" for anyone in Albemarle County to offer for sale a reproduction of THE NAKED MAJA.

Sheriff Bailey, according to THE CHARLOTTESVILLE NEWS, "has been given via the press and network news that the representation of public niceties is obscene in Albemarle County."

The good sheriff does not stop there, however. Oh no, on July 3, Haugh and Sheriff Bailey advise Albemarle County storekeepers that they would be liable to "invent and prosecution" for the sale of "Playboy," "Penthouse" and other such magazines of the genre.

Sheriff Bailey has reported that all stores have complied with his request and it is impossible not to see him smile as he reports that one has removed even more than the necessary magazines "to the best of my ability."

Sheriff Bailey said that he was "very pleased and happy" over the reactionary ruling of the U.S. Supreme Court which unleashed tactics such as his.

More chilling than Sheriff Bailey's gleam over his new-found power is the way he performs The Pontius Pilate Mannere. "It is not for us law enforcement agents to make laws-we only enforce them." I was only following orders. I was only following orders, the phrase has a certain familiar ring.

The First Amendment is under fire again. We must be careful. For the riders are here and they are here, not with torches yet, but with the flint and steel in their pockets.

Thoughts For The Censor

OBSCenity...

Obscenity is whatever happens to shock some elderly and ignorant magistrate.

— Bertrand Russell

Obscenity and witches exist only in the minds and emotions of those who believe in them, and neither dogmatic judicial dictum nor righteous stropulation can ever give to them any objective existence.

— Theodore Schroeder

I know that the wiser sort of men will consider, and I wish that the ignorant sort would learn, how it is not the baseness or homelessness, whether of words or matters, that makes them foul and obscene, but their base minds, filthy conceits, or lewd intents that handle them.

— Sir John Harrington

So we can dismiss the idea that sex appeal in art is pornography. It may be so to the grey Puritan, but the grey Puritan is a sick man, soul and body sick, so why should we bother about his hallucinations?

— D.H. Lawrence

... AND CENSORSHIP

In the long run of history, the censor and the inquisitor have always lost.

— A.W. Grauwold

Literature should not be suppressed merely because it offends the moral code of the censor. ... Restriction of free thought and free speech is the most dangerous of all subversions. It is the one American act that could most easily defeat us.

— William O. Douglas

The first condition of progress is the removal of censorships.

— George Bernard Shaw

If we think we must regulate printing, thereby to rectify manners, we must regulate all recreations and pastimes, all that is delightful to man.

— John Milton

Don't join the book burners."

— Dwight D. Eisenhower

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